



Kenya's gathering storm: Gachagua's sixth administration bid reshapes the road to 2027
Rigathi Gachagua stood before residents of Kware Stage in Rongai, Kajiado North, yesterday and said what an increasing number of Kenyans appear to want to hear: that the country needs to be reset

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Sifuna's rise: How a senator from Nairobi became Kenya's most watched politician ahead of 2027
Not long ago, Edwin Sifuna was known primarily to those who followed Nairobi's senatorial politics closely enough to care.

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Countdown 2027



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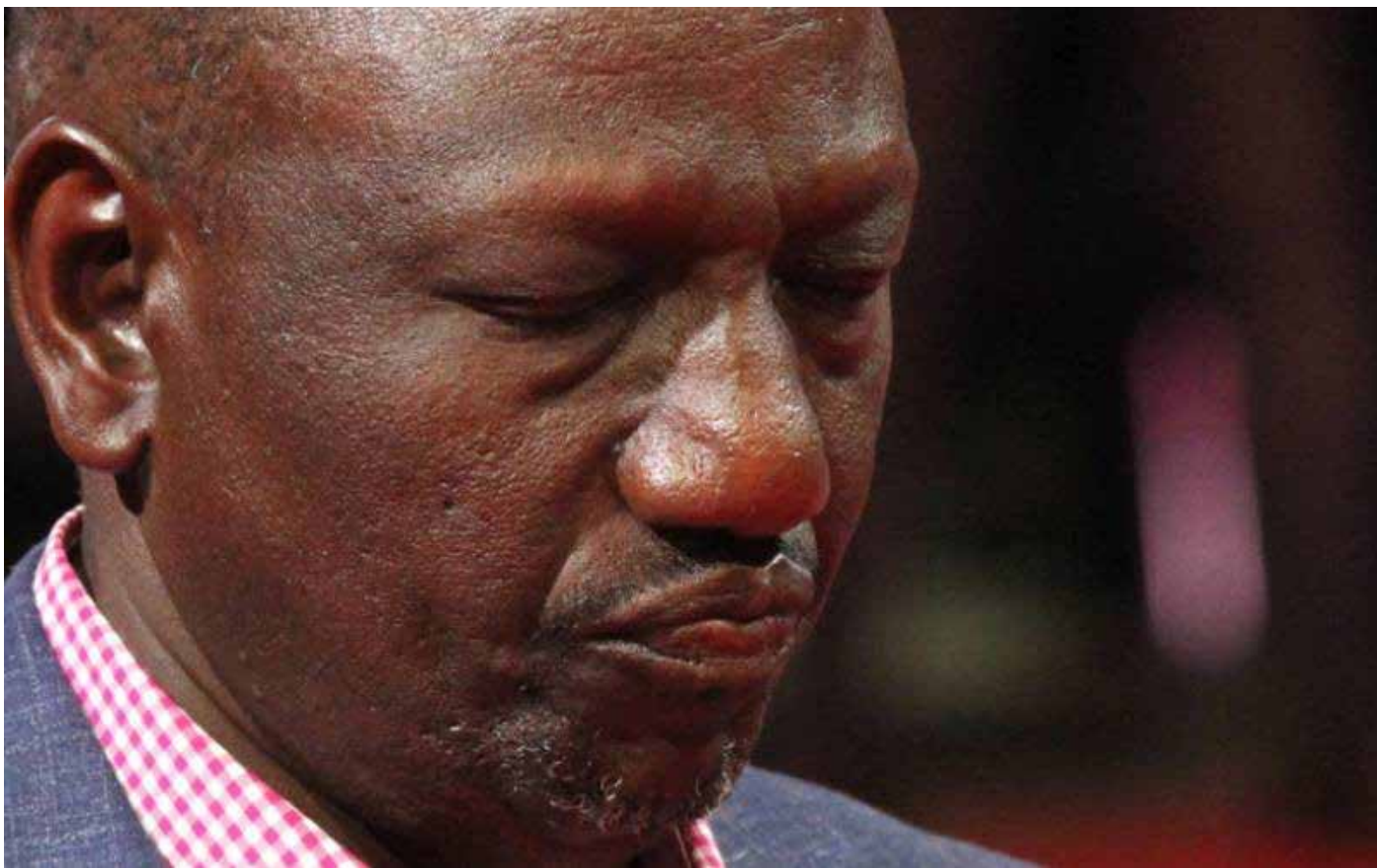
Lawyers warn Ruto's cabinet is now unconstitutional

President William Ruto is governing with a Cabinet that legal experts say is unconstitutional, after he failed to meet a court-ordered deadline to comply with Kenya's two-thirds gender rule, exposing every Cabinet decision taken henceforth to legal challenge.

The 120-day window granted by the High Court in July, within which Ruto was required to reconstitute his 25-member Cabinet to include at least two additional women, expired on Tuesday. The court had found that women held only seven of the 25 Cabinet positions — 28 per cent — falling short of the constitutional minimum of 33.3 per cent. With the deadline gone and no reconstitution announced, Kenya now has a Cabinet that practising lawyers describe as illegal, its decisions potentially void and its continued operation a standing breach of the constitution that Ruto swore to uphold.

The implications are serious, immediate and, for an administration already navigating turbulent political waters ahead of the August 2027 general election, potentially devastating. Law Society of Kenya president Charles Kanjama was unambiguous in his assessment. "It means any Cabinet decision or action is liable to be declared null and void and of no legal effect," Kanjama said.

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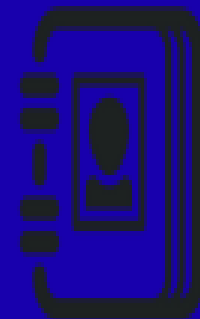
President William Ruto



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Gachagua's Kajiado tour reshapes the road to 2027

BY James Mwangi

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Some of the moments as captured in pictures

Former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua has taken his battle to the grassroots, systematically building a nationwide coalition that has the political establishment paying attention as the 10-month countdown to the 2027 general election begins.

During recent appearances in Kajiado North, Gachagua declared the country needs a "reset" to restore constitutionalism. Far from a standard political rally, his stops at Kware Stage and Gataka formed part of a calculated post-impeachment strategy. Gachagua is framing his 2027 ambitions not as a personal grievance, but as a crusade to establish Kenya's "Sixth Administration" and correct the failures of the current government.

A critical component of this strategy is Gachagua's focus on national issues that unite frustrated Kenyans. He sharply criticized President William Ruto's administration regarding the controversial 'Kazi Majuu' program, accusing the government of misleading youth into overseas work, including those now stranded in Russia. By seizing on public anxiety over youth employment and national credibility, Gachagua is attempting to expand his influence beyond his Mount Kenya base. As coalition-building intensifies across Kenya, Gachagua's movement from Mathira to a national stage is rapidly shifting the country's political arithmetic.



Editor's Desk

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NEWS IN BRIEF



County governments have been forced to take out overdraft facilities to cover improved salaries for Universal Health Coverage staff after the National Treasury delayed disbursing KSh8.9B meant to absorb the workers on permanent and pensionable terms, Council of Governors chairperson and Tharaka Nithi Governor Muthomi Njuki warned yesterday. Njuki accused the Treasury of deliberately crippling county operations through persistent revenue delays, saying the shortfall was strangling development projects and frontline service delivery. He called for greater accountability, merit-based leadership and measurable outcomes across county governments, arguing that the true test of governance was not policies drafted or institutions established, but the tangible impact on ordinary citizens' lives.



The Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday warned that corruption in Kenya's land sector carries consequences that can endure for generations, with EACC chairperson David Oginde urging surveyors to place public interest above personal gain when making decisions on land ownership, use and management. Oginde, speaking at the Institution of Surveyors of Kenya Africa Regional Conference in Naivasha, said land had historically been a flashpoint for conflict in Kenya and that professional negligence or complicity in fraud compounded that danger. "The tragedy of land-related corruption has serious consequences that can endure for a very long time," he said. Institution of Surveyors of Kenya president Eric Nyadimo pledged continued cooperation with the commission, which signed a memorandum of understanding with the institution in September to strengthen integrity in the land sector.



Health Cabinet Secretary Aden Duale yesterday announced plans to transform Kenyatta National Hospital from a general facility into a strictly specialised referral centre, a restructuring that would require patients to seek initial treatment at lower-level hospitals before accessing the country's flagship public health institution. The proposal marks a significant shift in how KNH operates, ending the long-standing practice of walk-in patients arriving directly at the Nairobi facility regardless of the complexity of their condition. Duale said the repositioning was intended to reduce overcrowding, improve the quality of specialised care and strengthen the referral chain across Kenya's public health system. The announcement signals a broader government effort to redistribute patient load more efficiently across the tiered network of county and national health facilities.



The Commission on Revenue Allocation has proposed KSh457.28B for county governments in the 2027/28 financial year, a KSh29.28B increase from the current allocation of KSh428B, with the additional funding earmarked for Universal Health Coverage staff salaries, public-sector pay reviews, nursing unions' collective bargaining agreements and an estimated three per cent rise in service delivery costs. The proposed figure represents 22.3 per cent of audited national revenue against a projected shareable pool of KSh3.25 trillion, comfortably above the constitutional floor of 15 per cent. "No Kenyan should be left behind," said CRA chairperson Mary Wanyonyi Chebukati, who described the recommendation as evidence-based and constitutionally grounded. The commission also proposed a KSh76.22B recurrent expenditure ceiling on county institutions to enforce fiscal discipline. The proposals now go to the Senate.



Konza Technopolis moved closer to its manufacturing ambitions yesterday as its first industrial investors began textile production at the technology city south of Nairobi, with management targeting 10,000 jobs as the facility scales up operations. The milestone marks a tangible shift for a project that has long been associated with digital infrastructure and smart-city development, signalling a broadening of Konza's economic model to encompass light manufacturing alongside its technology focus. Officials said the city was actively courting additional factory investors to expand its industrial footprint and accelerate employment creation, with textile production serving as the anchor for a wider manufacturing cluster. The 10,000-job target represents one of the most concrete employment commitments yet attached to the long-running Konza development programme.



The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights yesterday condemned the alleged abduction of Tanzanian political activist Twaha Salim Mwaipaya in Machakos County on 25 October, describing his disappearance as deeply troubling and demanding an immediate, transparent investigation into the circumstances of his removal. The commission said the incident raised serious concerns about Kenya's commitment to protecting political dissidents and refugees within its borders, warning that the country's reputation as a safe haven for those fleeing persecution was at stake. Mwaipaya, whose political activities in Tanzania had reportedly made him a target, vanished four days ago under circumstances the commission described as bearing the hallmarks of a forced disappearance. Kenyan authorities had not publicly accounted for his whereabouts at the time of this report.

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Economy The KSh5.2 trillion figure is the headline number from a visit that carries both economic ambition and considerable geopolitical complexity.

Ruto courts Russian investment in Moscow as Kenya seeks KSh5.2 trillion infrastructure push

The president's pitch to Russian investors at the Africa-Russia Summit signals a deliberate diplomatic and economic pivot with significant implications for Kenya's 2027 election calculus

BY Grace Wanja

@themkenyaintimes

The president's pitch to Russian investors at the Africa-Russia Summit signals a deliberate diplomatic and economic pivot with significant implications for Kenya's 2027 election calculus

By Grace Wanja

President William Ruto called on Russian investors to forge deeper economic partnerships with Kenya on Wednesday, pitching a KSh5.2 trillion infrastructure programme spanning the next decade as he attended the third Africa-Russia Summit in Moscow.

Ruto made the appeal at the Russia-Africa Economic and Humanitarian Forum, co-chaired by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Burundian President Évariste Ndayishimiye, who also serves as African Union chairperson. Speaking directly to Russian investors and business delegations, Ruto identified energy, mining, fertiliser production, engineering, transport and manufacturing as areas where Russian expertise aligned with Kenya's industrialisation priorities. "I am seeking to build a partnership where both countries can share prosperity," he told the forum, framing the engagement not as aid dependency but as mutual commercial interest.

The KSh5.2 trillion figure is



President William Ruto, Mama Rachael and President Vladimir Putin in Russian

the headline number from a visit that carries both economic ambition and considerable geopolitical complexity. Kenya has historically maintained close ties with Western partners — the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union — who together account for a significant share of the country's development financing, trade relationships and diplomatic support. Ruto's appearance in Moscow, in the company of African heads of state whose own relationships with Russia range from strategic alignment to

pragmatic engagement, will be noted carefully in Western capitals even as Nairobi insists the visit is purely about economic development.

That balancing act is not new to African diplomacy, and Kenya is far from alone in pursuing it. Across the continent, governments have become increasingly vocal about their right to diversify partnerships without ideological preconditions — a posture that has found growing domestic resonance as frustration with Western-imposed conditionalities on aid

and financing has deepened. Ruto's Moscow visit can be read partly through that lens: a president seeking maximum investment options for an ambitious infrastructure agenda, unwilling to limit his options to any single bloc of partners.

The domestic political context, however, adds a layer of urgency that pure diplomatic calculus does not fully explain. With Kenya's general election now less than ten months away, Ruto's administration is under mounting pressure to demonstrate tangible economic progress. The

KSh5.2 trillion infrastructure pledge — covering roads, energy, housing and industrial development — is the kind of transformative number that commands attention in a campaign environment, provided it can be backed by credible financing commitments rather than aspirational announcements. Russian investment, if it materialises in sectors such as fertiliser production and energy infrastructure, could provide visible deliverables that the government badly needs ahead of August 2027.

The fertiliser dimension deserves particular attention. Russia is among the world's largest producers of fertiliser, and Kenya's agricultural sector — which employs the majority of the rural population and underpins food security for millions — has been severely affected by fertiliser price volatility since the disruptions triggered by the war in Ukraine. Ruto's government made subsidised fertiliser one of its most publicised early interventions, and any arrangement that reduces Kenya's exposure to global price shocks would carry genuine policy value as well as electoral appeal.

Yet the visit is not without its complications. Several hundred Kenyan nationals have reportedly been recruited to fight in Russia's war in Ukraine under the banner of overseas employment programmes, and their families

have been among the most vocal critics of the government's handling of the situation. Gachagua, speaking separately this week, accused Ruto directly of having "deceived" young Kenyans with false promises of legitimate work abroad and called on the president, while in Moscow, to secure the return of those still trapped. "Their parents are desperately worried and crying," Gachagua said, in remarks that placed a human dimension on what the government has framed as a bilateral economic engagement.

Whether Ruto used his time in Moscow to raise the welfare of those Kenyans directly with Russian counterparts had not been confirmed at the time of writing. The silence, if it persists, will become its own political story.

What is clear is that the Moscow summit represents one of the more consequential foreign policy moments of Ruto's presidency — a public declaration that Kenya intends to pursue economic partnerships on its own terms, with partners of its own choosing, in pursuit of an infrastructure vision that will define his re-election pitch.

The investors were listening. Whether they will deliver is the question Kenya cannot yet answer.

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Politics The Kajiado North appearances — spanning Kware Stage and Gataka — form part of a broader political pattern that has accelerated sharply since Gachagua's impeachment in October 2024.

Kenya's gathering storm: Gachagua's sixth administration bid reshapes the road to 2027

The former deputy president is building a nationwide coalition from the grassroots up, and the political establishment is beginning to take notice

BY James Mwangi

@themkenyentimes

Rigathi Gachagua stood before residents of Kware Stage in Rongai, Kajiado North, yesterday and said what an increasing number of Kenyans appear to want to hear: that the country needs to be reset, that constitutionalism must be restored, and that the current administration has forfeited its moral authority to govern.

It was not a rally in the conventional sense. There was no official party banner, no declared candidacy, no formal campaign structure. Yet the message carried the unmistakable weight of a man who believes he is building something historic — and who wants the people gathered before him to believe it too. “We will not let you down or forsake you,” Gachagua told the crowd, his voice carrying the particular register of a politician who has concluded that his greatest political asset is the grievance he embodies. “Together, we will restore the dignity of our country and its people.”

The Kajiado North appearances — spanning Kware Stage and Gataka — form part of a broader political pattern that has accelerated sharply since Gachagua's impeachment in October 2024. Since his dramatic removal from the deputy presidency by a National Assembly vote of 281 to 44, on charges he has consistently disputed, Gachagua has pursued a methodical grassroots strategy that his allies describe as the foundation of a Sixth Administration — a government, they argue, that will correct what the Kenya Kwanza administration got wrong.

The framing is deliberate and politically shrewd. By positioning himself not as a disgruntled former official seeking personal rehabilitation but as the standard-bearer of a constitutional cause larger than any individual, Gachagua is attempting to transform personal misfortune into national purpose. “This cause is bigger than any one of us,” he told supporters in Kajiado. “We shall not relent, we shall not be cowed. We have a moral duty to bring justice and restore integrity to our nation.”



Rigathi Gachagua speaking to residents of Kware Stage in Rongai

Whether that message resonates beyond Mount Kenya, where Gachagua commands a loyal and emotionally invested base, will determine whether his 2027 ambitions constitute a genuine electoral threat or an elaborate exercise in political catharsis. The signs from Kajiado — a county that sits outside his traditional stronghold — are that his outreach is widening, though the depth of that support remains untested by any formal electoral contest.

The political environment into which Gachagua is expanding his campaign is volatile, uncertain and fertile with opportunity for anyone willing to channel public frustration. Kenya's cost of living remains punishingly high. Youth unemployment continues to define the daily reality of millions. The tax debates that triggered the deadly June 2024 protests have not been resolved to public satisfaction, and the government's credibility with young voters — never fully recovered since those events — remains fragile.

It is against this backdrop that Gachagua's most pointed attack this

week landed with particular force. Referring directly to President William Ruto, he accused the administration of deceiving young Kenyans with promises of overseas work opportunities — the so-called Kazi Majuu programme — and placing

them in danger. “You took our children to the battlefield in the name of Kazi Majuu,” he said. “You deceived them and put them in grave danger.” He then turned to the specific case of Kenyans reported to be stranded in Russia, urging Ruto, who was in

Moscow at the time, to personally intervene and facilitate their return. “Their parents are desperately worried and crying,” he said. “Please help bring back everyone still trapped there.”

The statement was aimed squarely at a government vulnerability — the welfare of Kenyan workers abroad — that has proven consistently difficult to defend. It also allowed Gachagua to occupy the emotional high ground on an issue where parental anxiety and national concern intersect, a position that translates readily into political capital.

With the August 2027 general election now less than ten months away, Kenya's political season is entering its most consequential phase. The electoral arithmetic is shifting. Coalition negotiations are under way in drawing rooms and hotel conference suites from Nairobi to Kisumu. Opposition figures who were adversaries eighteen months ago are testing the temperature of cooperation, and the government is watching Gachagua's grassroots momentum with an attention it does not always publicly acknowledge.

The man from Mathira is not yet on the ballot. But in Kajiado North on Thursday, he was already campaigning — and the crowds were listening.



Rigathi Gachagua speaking to residents of Gataka

Law The 120-day window granted by the High Court in July, within which Ruto was required to reconstitute his 25-member Cabinet to include at least two additional women, expired on Tuesday

Ruto's Cabinet is now unconstitutional, lawyers warn, as gender rule deadline passes

The president faces contempt of court risk and a legally compromised executive after failing to meet a court-ordered 120-day deadline to add women to his Cabinet

BY David Kimani

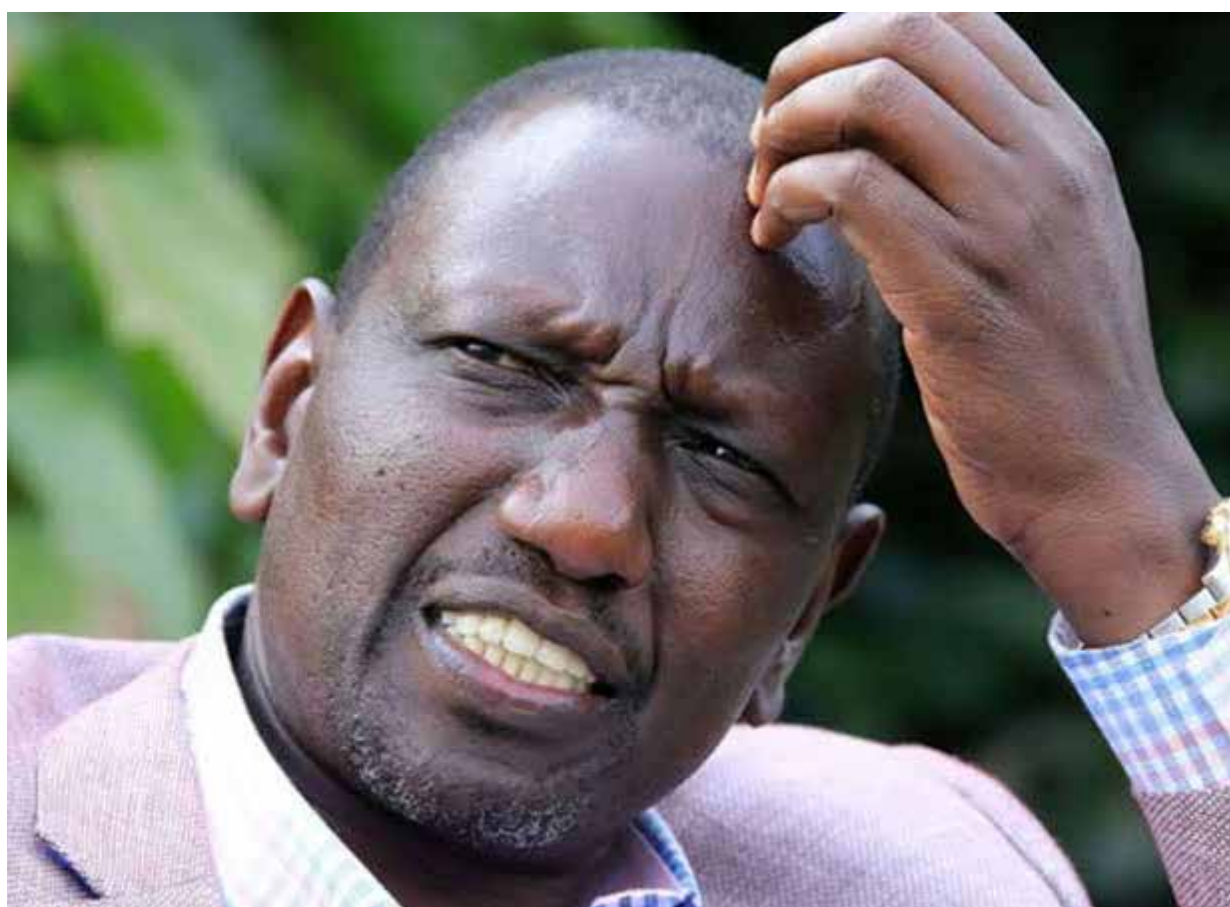
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President William Ruto is governing with a Cabinet that legal experts say is unconstitutional, after he failed to meet a court-ordered deadline to comply with Kenya's two-thirds gender rule, exposing every Cabinet decision taken henceforth to legal challenge.

The 120-day window granted by the High Court in July, within which Ruto was required to reconstitute his 25-member Cabinet to include at least two additional women, expired on Tuesday. The court had found that women held only seven of the 25 Cabinet positions — 28 per cent — falling short of the constitutional minimum of 33.3 per cent. With the deadline gone and no reconstitution announced, Kenya now has a Cabinet that practising lawyers describe as illegal, its decisions potentially void and its continued operation a standing breach of the constitution that Ruto swore to uphold.

The implications are serious, immediate and, for an administration already navigating turbulent political waters ahead of the August 2027 general election, potentially devastating. Law Society of Kenya president Charles Kanjama was unambiguous in his assessment. "It means any Cabinet decision or action is liable to be declared null and void and of no legal effect," Kanjama told media. His predecessor as LSK president, Eric Theuri, went further. "It is not a Cabinet recognised by law," Theuri said. "If it operates as such, they would be operating under a constitutional breach. Everything it does between now and the 2027 general election is subject to legal challenge, and any payment made to Cabinet Secretaries is liable to challenge."

Those are not theoretical warnings. They describe a practical legal vulnerability that opposition figures, civil society organisations and any aggrieved party with standing could exploit at any moment, in any court, against any decision the Cabinet takes. Procurement approvals, pol-



President William Ruto

icy directives, budget allocations, regulatory determinations — all of it now sits beneath a cloud of potential nullification. For a government attempting to demonstrate economic competence and institutional stability in the final stretch before an election, the timing could hardly be worse.

The case was brought by the Katiba Institute alongside other petitioners, who argued that the executive bore a clear constitutional obligation to honour the gender principle when nominating Cabinet members. That principle, enshrined in Article 27 of the constitution and given operational force across multiple provisions, has been a persistent source of tension between Kenya's political class and its constitutional commitments since the 2010 constitution came into force. Successive administrations have acknowledged the rule, cited logistical and political constraints, and ultimately failed to

meet it. Ruto's administration has now distinguished itself by being found in breach by a court and then failing to act even after a formal deadline was set.

The question of accountability is complicated by the constitutional protection that shields a sitting president from civil proceedings. The Supreme Court's March 2022 ruling in the Building Bridges Initiative judgment confirmed that a sitting president cannot be sued during their tenure under Article 143(2). This means that while Ruto bears political and moral responsibility for the non-compliance, the legal machinery must move against the Attorney General rather than the president directly. Katiba Institute counsel Joshua Nyawa explained the mechanics clearly. "Even if he is in contempt of court, the only person who can be sued is the Attorney General," Nyawa said. "The effect is to put the President liable for contempt of

court." It is a constitutional architecture that protects the individual while exposing the institution — and it places the Attorney General in an increasingly uncomfortable position as pressure mounts for action.

Ruto does retain one avenue of recourse. He could return to court to seek an extension of the deadline, acknowledging the lapse and asking for additional time to effect the required changes. But legal observers are sceptical that such an application would succeed, and for good reason. Theuri noted the fundamental difficulty: "He can go to court but will have a very hard time convincing the court on why he did not appeal in the provided time." A court that set a 120-day deadline, watched it pass without compliance and then received an application for more time would need compelling reasons — not merely political inconvenience — to grant the extension. None have been publicly offered.

The political context gives the legal crisis additional texture. This would not be the first time Ruto has been compelled to overhaul his Cabinet under pressure. On 11 July 2024, following the deadly Gen Z protests against the Finance Bill that proposed a raft of deeply unpopular tax measures, he dismissed his entire Cabinet — a move widely described as unprecedented in Kenya's post-independence history. He retained only Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi before assembling a new team, incorporating opposition figures and reassigning others in a sweeping reshuffle that reflected the political damage the protests had inflicted. A second significant Cabinet change, forced this time not by street pressure but by judicial authority, would raise uncomfortable questions about the administration's capacity to get even its basic constitutional obligations right.

For the broader Kenyan public, the episode lands against a backdrop of accumulated frustration. The cost of living remains high. Youth unemployment has not meaningfully improved. The economic promises of the Kenya Kwanza manifesto have not materialised at the pace or scale that was suggested during the 2022 campaign. And now the government's most powerful decision-making body stands legally compromised — its authority to act, spend and govern subject to challenge by anyone with the inclination and the legal standing to file a petition.

The gender rule is not a bureaucratic technicality. It is a constitutional commitment to equal representation that Kenyans voted for in 2010 and have been waiting to see honoured for sixteen years. The High Court gave the president 120 days to take what amounts to a modest corrective step. He did not take it.

The courts, and ultimately the voters, will decide what that failure costs him.

Politics Sifuna's response, according to Gachagua, was straightforward and, ultimately, one the former deputy president said he came to accept

Gachagua reveals tense exchange with Sifuna over 2024 impeachment as 2027 alliances take shape

The former deputy president says he confronted the Nairobi senator about their opposing positions during his dramatic removal from office two years ago

BY Yvonne Wambui
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Rigathi Gachagua has lifted the lid on a candid and uncomfortable conversation he had with Nairobi Senator Edwin Sifuna about the events surrounding his impeachment

in October 2024 — an exchange that sheds fresh light on the shifting political calculations driving Kenya's road to the 2027 general election.

Speaking during a media interview on Wednesday, Gachagua said he confronted Sifuna directly during a recent meeting, asking the senator

plainly how they could contemplate working together politically given their opposing positions during the impeachment process that ended his tenure as deputy president under President William Ruto. "I asked him how we could work together after everything that happened," Ga-



DCP leader Rigathi Gachagua with Nairobi Senator Edwin Sifuna at his Wamunyoro residence

chagua said, recounting the exchange with a candour that has become something of a trademark since his removal from office.

Sifuna's response, according to Gachagua, was straightforward and, ultimately, one the former deputy president said he came to accept. The senator argued that their differences had been rooted not in personal animosity but in the competing interests of the political camps to which each belonged at the time. Political leaders, Sifuna reportedly told him, make decisions based on the demands of their parties and the expectations of their supporters — not on the basis of individual relationships.

Gachagua said he found the explanation reasonable. The two men, he acknowledged, had never campaigned for each other, never shared a political platform and had operated from entirely different corners of Kenya's fractious political landscape. In that context, Sifuna's conduct during the impeachment, while painful, was not a personal betrayal in the conventional sense.

The conversation has drawn considerable attention precisely because it illuminates one of the defining features of Kenyan politics — the speed and ease with which former adversaries can find themselves contemplating cooperation, and the rationalisation that makes such realignments

possible.

The backdrop to that conversation is among the most turbulent episodes in Kenya's recent political history. In October 2024, the National Assembly voted by 281 votes to 44 to impeach Gachagua on charges that included gross violation of the Constitution and misconduct — accusations he vigorously disputed. The scale of the vote, cutting across party lines and catching many observers off guard by its speed, signalled the depth of the rupture within the Kenya Kwanza administration.

The Senate proceedings that followed on 9 October 2024 provided Sifuna's most visible moment in the affair. The senator declined to second a motion proposing the formation of a special committee to investigate the charges against Gachagua, a decision that drew scrutiny at the time and one that Gachagua's account now revisits from a different angle. The Senate ultimately proceeded with the matter in a full-house sitting, and Gachagua's removal was confirmed.

What his account of the Sifuna conversation reveals is less about the mechanics of the impeachment and more about how Gachagua himself has processed the experience — and how he is positioning himself for whatever comes next. The willingness to engage former opponents, to hear their explanations and,

crucially, to accept those explanations as politically coherent rather than morally disqualifying, suggests a man focused on the future rather than consumed by the past.

That future is increasingly being shaped by the gravitational pull of 2027. Kenya's political landscape is in a state of visible flux, with alliances forming and dissolving at a pace that challenges even seasoned observers to keep track. The prospect of former opponents cooperating — once a source of public cynicism — has become almost a defining characteristic of the current moment, raising legitimate questions about the role of ideology, policy and genuine public interest in political decision-making.

For ordinary Kenyans watching these developments, the Gachagua-Sifuna exchange offers something worth reflecting on. Political relationships, it confirms, are rarely permanent. Yesterday's opponent is not necessarily tomorrow's enemy, and the opposite is equally true. What matters, ultimately, is not the personal history between politicians but whether the partnerships they form and the decisions they make serve the people who elected them.

That test, for Gachagua, Sifuna and every other political figure navigating Kenya's pre-election terrain, is still very much ahead of them.

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Housing The High Court ruled on Thursday that President William Ruto's promises to reserve affordable housing units for teachers and police officers are legally void

Court voids Ruto's housing promises to teachers and police, ruling presidential pronouncements have no force of law

A High Court judgment strips away two of the president's most publicly repeated affordable housing pledges, exposing a pattern of executive overreach that lawyers say undermines Kenya's constitutional order

BY Joakim Mutuku

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The High Court ruled yesterday that President William Ruto's promises to reserve affordable housing units for teachers and police officers are legally void, finding that presidential pronouncements cannot alter allocation criteria established by statute without a basis in law or policy.

Lady Justice Patricia Nyaudi delivered the judgment, declaring that remarks made by Ruto on 3 June and 13 September 2025 — in which he announced that teachers and members of the National Police Service would each receive preferential access to a proportion of affordable housing units — carried no legal weight and could not lawfully override or supplement the criteria set out in the Affordable Housing Act and its accompanying regulations. The ruling is precise in its language and unsparing in its implications. "A declaration be and is hereby issued," Justice Nyaudi stated, "that the pronouncements made by the President on 3rd June 2025 and 13th September 2025, absent a statutory or policy basis, are of no legal effect and cannot lawfully alter or supplement the criteria for allocation of housing units established under the Affordable Housing Act and its Regulations."

The case was brought by petitioners John Maina Ndegwa and Marshalls Tito Ongoya, who challenged the constitutionality of proposals that would have reserved 20 per cent of affordable housing units for teachers and a further 20 per cent for police officers — effectively directing 40 per cent of a publicly funded national programme towards two specific professional groups on the basis of nothing more than a presidential speech. Their lawyer, John Maina, welcomed the outcome with characteristic directness. "The court found that that proposal is null and void; it is not supported by any existing law," Maina said outside court. "All Kenyans are entitled to the afford-



President William Ruto

able houses."

That last point — all Kenyans — cuts to the heart of what the ruling represents. Kenya's affordable housing programme, the centrepiece of Ruto's Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda and arguably the initiative most closely associated with his personal brand of governance, was designed as a universal intervention to address a housing deficit that affects millions of ordinary citizens across income brackets. The statutory framework that underpins it establishes allocation criteria intended to reflect broad public need. When the president stood before audiences of teachers and police officers and promised them dedicated portions of that programme, he was not announcing a policy — he was making a political gesture, and the

court has now said so in the clearest possible terms.

The constitutional significance of the ruling extends well beyond affordable housing. Kenya's 2010 constitution was designed precisely to prevent the concentration of executive authority that characterised earlier eras of Kenyan governance — eras in which presidential pronouncements routinely functioned as law, in which what the president said in a speech became, in effect, public policy, regardless of what Parliament had enacted or what regulatory frameworks required. Justice Nyaudi's judgment is a reminder that those days are constitutionally foreclosed. The president retains enormous executive authority, but that authority operates within a legal framework, not above it. A prom-

ise made at a public rally, however sincerely intended, cannot rewrite a statute.

Legal observers have noted that the ruling arrives at a particularly sensitive moment for an administration whose relationship with the judiciary has grown increasingly strained. Ruto is already facing separate legal pressure following his failure to meet the High Court's 120-day deadline to reconstitute his Cabinet in compliance with the constitutional two-thirds gender rule — a deadline that expired on Tuesday, prompting Law Society of Kenya president Charles Kanjama to warn that Cabinet decisions are now "liable to be declared null and void." Two significant judicial rebukes in the space of days paint a picture of an executive that is either unable or unwilling to operate within the boundaries the constitution sets.

The political context amplifies the significance of Thursday's ruling. The affordable housing programme has been both a flagship ambition and a lightning rod for public controversy since Ruto took office in September 2022. The housing levy — a statutory deduction from workers' salaries to fund the programme — triggered fierce resistance, legal challenges and sustained public debate about whether the government had the authority to compel contributions and whether the programme's benefits would be equitably distributed. The June 2024 Gen Z protests, which forced Ruto to dismiss his entire Cabinet and abandon the Finance Bill, were partly animated by frustration with the levy and the broader perception that public resources were being directed by executive preference rather than transparent policy.

Against that backdrop, the promise to reserve portions of the programme for teachers and police officers — two constituencies with significant organisational capacity and political weight — was widely read as an attempt to build loyalty among professional groups whose support could prove valuable. Teachers, represent-

ed by the Kenya National Union of Teachers and the Kenya Union of Post Primary Education Teachers, have historically been a formidable electoral constituency. Police officers, whose deployment and welfare decisions lie within the executive's direct control, represent a different but equally significant form of institutional leverage. The court's ruling removes both promises from the president's political toolkit and, in doing so, returns the affordable housing programme to the statutory framework that Parliament intended to govern it.

What happens next is a matter of both legal and political consequence. The government could, in theory, seek to amend the Affordable Housing Act or introduce supplementary regulations that would provide a lawful basis for preferential allocation to specific professional categories. Such a route would require parliamentary approval and would face public scrutiny about whether it constitutes genuine policy or legislative validation of an overturned political promise. Alternatively, the administration could accept the ruling and proceed with allocation criteria that treat all qualifying Kenyans equally — which is, after all, what the existing law requires.

For ordinary Kenyans who have paid the housing levy, registered on the programme's platforms and waited for units that have been slow to materialise, the ruling offers both reassurance and frustration. Reassurance that the courts remain willing to hold the executive to account. Frustration that the programme around which so much public expectation has been built continues to generate more legal controversy than completed houses.

With August 2027 approaching and Ruto's political standing under mounting pressure, the administration can ill afford a reputation for governing by announcement rather than by law.

The courts have now said so twice this week.

Politics Sifuna's rise has not been manufactured by a wealthy patron, engineered by a political party machine or gifted by circumstance

Sifuna's rise: How a senator from Nairobi became Kenya's most watched politician ahead of 2027

Edwin Sifuna's organic ascent from senatorial obscurity to national political force is unsettling the establishment and reshaping the conversation about who leads Kenya next

BY Bodo Simon
@themtkenyatimes

Not long ago, Edwin Sifuna was known primarily to those who followed Nairobi's senatorial politics closely enough to care. Today, he is the politician that members of the government cannot stop talking about — and that, more than any poll or endorsement, tells you something important about where Kenya's political centre of gravity is shifting. Sifuna's rise has not been manufactured by a wealthy patron, engineered by a political party machine or gifted by circumstance. It has been earned, incrementally and publicly, through a consistency of voice that Kenyans have found increasingly rare in their political class. He has championed constitutionalism and human rights without adjusting his position to accommodate the powerful, spoken uncomfortable truths at moments when silence would have been professionally safer and taken stands that cost him allies without appearing to cost him sleep. In a political culture where principle is frequently traded for proximity to power, that record stands out.

The establishment has noticed. Government-aligned politicians now devote a conspicuous portion of their public appearances to questioning

Sifuna's credentials, undermining his record and reassuring President William Ruto of his popularity. The irony is not lost on observers: when politicians spend more time managing their principal's ego than addressing the concerns of voters, they construct an echo chamber in which every act of flattery masquerades as governance. That they feel compelled to direct such energy towards a senator who holds no executive office is, in itself, a measure of how seriously they regard him.

His critics, among them Cabinet Secretary Alfred Mutua, have made much of what they regard as Sifuna's thin leadership CV. It is, paradoxically, one of his greatest assets. Sifuna carries none of the institutional baggage that attaches itself to politicians who have cycled through successive administrations — no corruption associations, no compromising alliances, no awkward record of switching sides when the money moved. For a generation of Kenyans who have grown weary of recycled political figures whose primary expertise lies in personal enrichment, that absence of baggage reads as a qualification.

It is the young in particular who have claimed Sifuna as their own, and this matters enormously in electoral terms. Kenya's youth, radicalised politically by the June

2024 protests that shook the government and grief-stricken by the lives lost in those demonstrations, are not looking for a polished technocrat with an impressive résumé. They are looking for someone who speaks to them honestly, defends their rights without conditions and appears genuinely angry about the same things that make them angry. Sifuna, by temperament and by record, fits that description more closely than most.

But his appeal is not confined to the young. Across Kenya's regions, including communities where his ODM party has historically struggled for traction, there is a growing constituency of voters who are simply exhausted — exhausted by debt, by the cost of living, by the persistent sense that the economy is being managed for the benefit of a narrow elite while the majority absorbs the consequences. These voters are not necessarily ideological. They want a steward, as one supporter in western Kenya put it this week, who respects them enough to speak honestly, acts justly and understands that the country's natural and economic resources belong to all Kenyans, not to those who happen to hold office.

The western Kenya dimension of Sifuna's story deserves particular attention. Luhya political leaders, including Siaya Governor James Oren-



Edwin Sifuna

go and voices from across the Mulembe community, have increasingly aligned themselves with his trajectory. The late Raila Odinga, whose political instincts were rarely wrong on questions of timing, notably declined to censure Sifuna even during periods of disagreement, instead warning those who sought to silence him to stand down. Kisumu Governor Anyang' Nyong'o went further, telling Sifuna's detractors publicly that they would live to witness his emergence as a major force. That emergence, it now appears, is well under way.

What Sifuna must navigate carefully as his national profile grows is the quality of the support he attracts. Political figures who sense momentum tend to attach themselves to it, and not all of them will share his stated commitments. Patriots who genuinely believe in the constitutional project he represents have a responsibility to remind him that broad coalitions are necessary in a democracy — but that ac-

countability cannot become a casualty of coalition-building. Kenyans who have been robbed, silenced or harmed by those in power expect that any administration flying the flag of constitutionalism will pursue accountability without selectivity. The rule of law, if it is to mean anything at all, must apply to everyone.

With August 2027 drawing closer by the week, Kenya's political landscape is being redrawn in ways that would have seemed improbable two

years ago. The government retains the instruments of incumbency and the resources that come with them. But incumbency, as Kenya's political history repeatedly demonstrates, is not destiny.

Sifuna has not declared a presidential candidacy. He does not need to — not yet. The conversation has started without him having to start it, and in politics, that is often the most powerful position of all.



Lecturers Not tears of sorrow. Tears of joy, relief and something that is difficult to name precisely but that anyone who has waited a long time for good news will recognise immediately.

Comrades erupt in joy as lecturers' strike comes to an end

Students across the university celebrated with tears, song and embraces after weeks of disruption finally gave way to the news they had been waiting for

BY Sharon Mumo
@themkenyaintimes

There are moments in university life that students carry with them long after they have collected their degrees and moved on. Thursday was one of them — not because of an examination passed or a result announced, but because

of a strike that finally, mercifully, ended. The news swept across campus like a current. Within minutes of the announcement that the lecturers' strike was officially over, students who had spent weeks in limbo — away from lecture halls, uncertain about their futures, quietly anxious about examinations and graduation timelines — poured out their relief in the most human ways possible. There were hugs. There was singing. There was dancing. And yes, for more than a few comrades, there were tears. Not tears of sorrow. Tears of joy, relief and something that is difficult to name precisely but that anyone who has waited a long time for good news will recognise immediately.



UASU Officials

“We have waited for this moment for a long time,” said one visibly emotional student, struggling to get the words out between a wide smile and glistening eyes. “I am so happy that we can finally return to class and continue with our studies.”

It was a sentiment that echoed across the campus as students reached for their phones to call parents and friends, sharing the development with everyone who had been worrying alongside them. For many families, the strike had not simply been an inconvenience — it had been a source of genuine financial strain and emotional uncertainty, with students continuing to pay rent and meet daily expenses while academic progress ground to a halt.

The weeks of disruption had touched every corner of student life. Lecture schedules fell away. Semester timelines grew uncertain. Students who had been counting down to final examinations or eagerly anticipating graduation suddenly found themselves in a frustrating holding pattern, with little clarity about when — or whether — normal university life would resume. Some had begun making contingency plans. Others had simply tried to stay positive and wait it out.

That waiting, it turned out, was not in vain.

Beneath the celebrations on Thursday, however, there was a quiet recognition among students that the interruption had left a mark on their academic progress. Weeks of missed lectures do not simply

disappear when a strike ends; they leave gaps in learning that require time, effort and institutional support to address. Many students, even as they celebrated, were already thinking about what comes next — about the timetables they would need, the catch-up sessions that would have to be arranged and the examinations they would need to prepare for in a compressed period.

That level of maturity and focus, even in the middle of genuine celebration, says something important about the character of the comrades who found themselves at the centre of this story. They celebrated because they had reason to celebrate. And then, almost in the same breath, they began thinking about how to make up for lost time.

The expectation now is that university management will move quickly to provide a clear and realistic academic timetable — one that acknowledges the disruption that has occurred and gives students a fair and structured path to completing the semester without unnecessary additional pressure. Students were

also reminded, as the celebrations wound down, to remain disciplined and to make the most of every day of academic time that remains.

It is advice they appeared ready to take. Thursday's scenes — joyful, chaotic, emotional and entirely human — carried within them the unmistakable energy of people who are genuinely hungry to get back to work. The strike may have forced them away from their studies, but it had done nothing to diminish their desire to succeed.

If anything, the disruption may have deepened it. There is something about being denied access to something you value — your education, your routine, your sense of forward momentum — that sharpens your appreciation for it once it returns. The comrades who danced and wept and rang their families on Thursday know that feeling well.

The lecture halls will reopen. The notebooks will come out. The long wait is over.



You don't lose people by setting boundaries. You filter who was real.



You need not make yourself small to fit
Inside the hearts that ask too much of you;
A friendship should have room for you to sit
And speak your mind, and let your dreams shine
through.

Some people leave when you begin to say
That certain words can hurt, and certain things
You cannot carry with you every day;
Their leaving does not mean your failure sings.

For those who love you will not ask you to
Abandon all the things that make you you;
They'll learn to see your side, as you see theirs,
And build a bond that kindness gently shares.

So draw your lines, and let your heart be kind;
Keep peace beside you, leave old fears behind.

- K. A. Santhoshi
9th std,
GMGHSS KOMARAPALAYAM
Namakkal district,
Tamilnadu,638183.

If I don't remember, you don't remember either, you don't even come



I don't know, you don't even write a single
message.
Damn that phone, it's always in your hands,
Over your pride, you just won't make a call...
Is this how our love is meant to end?
The consequence of a ruined dispute,
The essence of trust, love, and our vows —
You won't even write a single "I miss you"
message)
I know deep down you miss me too,
Because I miss you as well, I feel it inside.
Though if I write first, being the one to reach out,
You fail to value it, burning me, and then I burn in
pain.
My moody love, put your resentment aside for a
bit,
Let's make up, push our grievances to the past.
To be honest, I'm writing this because I have a pain
inside,

Spring has arrived, buy me a pair of shoes.
If you won't speak, silence is the best way —
Just quietly transfer some money to my card.
I won't ask for too much, troubling you heavily,
Just enough to get a new outfit and clothes.
So, is this how we agreed to live, my dear soul?
We postponed living happily for later.
If you keep burning me up with this behavior,
And staying offended,
Know that I'll burn you back by dressing up
stunningly!
Let's see if you can stay silent and not say a
word,
I'll nag you tirelessly, all dolled up and made-up.
Let me walk around wearing high heels proudly,
Let's see how you will endure that, I want to
watch.
If saying "let's make up" is so hard to do,
You've got all the pride in the world, oh let me die!
And if you come running up to my side later,
Don't you dare touch me with your jealousy, my
dear life.

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

Keep some wins only with God,



It is always better and the best.
He is the only one who is always with you,
Never pushes you down,

He always lifts you up.
Never is He jealous of your growth.
Even your own mother or siblings may be jealous,
They may hate you or have ego,

But God never has any evil.

Trust in the Lord at all times.
When the evil eye falls on you,
It hinders your growth.

Touch wood at all times.
It is he who sacrificed himself for us
Never showcase your victory to all,
All eyes are not good -

There may be evil eyes
Your achievements,
your good health, your success.
Let it be maintained secretly
Brinda. D

Creative writers
GHS Melpattampakkam
Cuddalore dist
Tamilnadu India

Never give up



I trained for years,
To reach my dreams,
Through endless struggles,
And silent screams.

I may fall down,
I may move slow,
But I keep trying,

And learn to grow.

Success takes patience,
And time to shine,
Every small step,
Makes the future mine.

Don't quit too early,
Don't lose your way,
Keep working hard,
You'll shine one day!

M. SANTHI
BT ASST
MPLGHSS
KARUNGALPALAYAM
ERODE

Forget and Forgive



What he did was wrong,
Why should I forgive him?
What she said was wrong,
Why should I forgive her?

When these questions rise in my mind,

I remind myself, time after time,
I don't want negativity to stay within me,
I want to feel light, happy, and free.

I want to welcome positive vibes,
And enjoy the little joys of life.
So, I let go of my anger and pain,
Instead of letting them rule my brain.

Why carry an unnecessary burden,
When life is short, with so much to do?
Why let someone else's actions
Steal the peace that belongs to you?
So FORGET AND FORGIVE.

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

The Unwritten Page



My life is a page no one has read,
With countless stories waiting ahead.
I may not know where the road will bend,
But I will keep walking until the end.

The clock never pauses, the days fly by,
Yet every small step helps me reach the sky.

I don't need applause to prove I am strong,
I just need the courage to keep moving on.

Let others build castles high in the air,
I'll build mine with patience and care.
For greatness is not a gift we receive,
It's the result of the work we believe.

One day, my story will clearly show,
How far a little courage can go.
And when I look back at the path I have drawn,
I'll smile with pride at how far I've gone.

D.Dhanyasri
Grade 8
John Dewey Matric Higher Secondary school,
Panruti, Tamil Nadu, India.

Corruption It is precisely at this intersection between public expenditure and citizens' lived experience that CACCOCs can contribute most

Kenya's war on corruption needs community soldiers, not just investigators

Kenya's anti-corruption gains remain fragile without empowered grassroots oversight committees that can detect theft before it happens



BY Fredrick Kipchumba Chelimo

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The Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission's recovery of assets worth KSh3.6B and the prevention of potential losses amounting to KSh10.4B represent a significant moment in Kenya's long and difficult campaign against graft. The figures, presented by EACC Chief Executive Officer Abdi Mohamud before the National Assembly's Departmental Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs on Wednesday, are impressive by any measure. Yet they also invite a harder question: how much more could Kenya protect if it invested as seriously in detecting corruption at the community level as it does in pursuing wrongdoing after it has already occurred?

That question points directly to the County Anti-Corruption Civilian Oversight Committees — CACCOCs — operating under the National Anti-Corruption Campaign Steering Committee, domiciled in the Office of the Attorney-General and the Department of Justice. These community-based structures are designed to bridge the gap between citizens, public institutions and the national accountability framework. Through civic education, social audits, community engagement and the referral of suspected irregularities to competent authorities, they offer a practical means of converting Kenya's constitutional commitments into action at



the exact point where public money is spent and public services delivered.

Corruption is typically discussed in the language of billions lost, properties seized and suspects prosecuted. These are important measures, but they represent only part of the picture. Behind every inflated procurement contract, stalled road, incomplete classroom or poorly equipped health facility stands a citizen whose taxes and expectations have been quietly betrayed. For a parent whose child studies in an overcrowded classroom, or a patient who arrives at a clinic to find essential medicines absent, corruption is not an abstract governance problem. It is a daily confrontation with denied opportunity and broken public trust.

It is precisely at this intersection between public expenditure and citizens' lived experience that CACCOCs can contribute most. A national institution may eventually investigate a procurement scandal involving billions, but community-based oversight can identify warning signs far earlier. Residents can question why a publicly funded road has stalled, why construction

quality appears inconsistent with approved specifications, or why official completion reports do not match conditions on the ground. Properly documented, such observations become intelligence for the institutions legally empowered to investigate, audit and prosecute.

The constitutional foundation for this work is clear. Article 10 establishes transparency, accountability and public participation as national values. Article 201 requires openness in public finance, while Article 232 reinforces the efficient use of public resources and accountability for administrative decisions. These provisions were never intended as elegant declarations alone. They demand practical systems through which ordinary citizens can scrutinise public decisions and participate meaningfully in protecting the national interest. CACCOCs are one such system.

Their presence across Kenya creates an opportunity to strengthen accountability beyond the reach of central offices and formal institutional processes. However, that the NACCSC website describes only 36 of the 47 county com-

mittees as operational is an uncomfortable indication of the gap between institutional establishment and genuine functionality. A committee that exists on paper but lacks training, transport, communication tools or an effective referral mechanism cannot consistently discharge its responsibilities. Establishing structures is the beginning; empowering them to deliver results is the real test.

The challenge is compounded by the fact that CACCOCs depend substantially on citizen volunteers. These individuals are expected to mobilise communities, organise public forums, conduct social audits, document concerns and follow up complaints — responsibilities that require discipline, technical knowledge and sustained engagement. It is neither realistic nor fair to demand professional standards of accountability from a community oversight network while withholding the basic resources required to function. Volunteerism reflects patriotism, but it cannot permanently substitute for a properly structured and adequately supported programme.

Strengthening CACCOCs must therefore begin with a clear national policy and operational framework. Parliament, the Attorney-General's Office and NACCSC should clarify the committees' mandate, standardise procedures and establish a predictable model of operational facilitation. Members need training in public finance, procurement, project monitoring, social auditing, evidence documentation and complaint handling. They also need simple, reliable tools for recording project status and reporting findings in a form that competent authorities can readily assess.

Equally important is a structured relationship between CACCOCs and institutions including EACC, the Office of the Auditor-General, county governments and procurement oversight bodies. The committees should not investigate criminal offences, compel witnesses or pronounce guilt — those responsibilities belong to institutions with the appropriate legal authority. CACCOCs should serve as responsible community entry points for public education, early warning and the refer-

ral of credible concerns. A well-documented community report should not disappear into administrative silence; it should be acknowledged, assessed and directed through proper channels, with reasonable feedback provided wherever legally permissible.

This collaboration must be protected against political capture, intimidation and conflicts of interest. Grassroots oversight derives its value from independence. If committee members become instruments of political rivalry or personal grievance, their credibility will rapidly erode. Their legitimacy must rest on impartiality, evidence and service to the public interest, regardless of political affiliation or the identity of those implicated.

The KSh10.4B in potential losses averted cannot automatically be attributed to CACCOCs, nor should the KSh3.6B in recovered assets be presented as their outcome without supporting evidence. The figures instead illustrate the national importance of prevention and recovery working together. The appropriate policy question is whether Kenya can build a system in which community intelligence complements professional investigation and institutions respond promptly enough to prevent avoidable losses.

Ultimately, Kenya cannot afford an anti-corruption architecture that becomes most visible only after public money has disappeared. The country needs a system capable of identifying warning signs early, encouraging citizens to report responsibly and ensuring that competent institutions act on credible information. The National Assembly, NACCSC and the relevant government departments should treat the strengthening of CACCOCs not as an optional administrative expense but as a strategic investment in constitutional governance — with appropriate training, standardised procedures, measurable performance indicators and genuine accountability for results.

Recovered billions matter. But the public value preserved through prevention matters just as much.

Motivation The question matters because mental pain thrives in silence, the way mould grows in a dark room. A wound in the body, left untreated, becomes infected

‘Are you ok?’: The question we forgot to ask

Three words, two seconds — and the power to unlock years of silent suffering in our homes, schools and communities



By: Wanjohi P. Mugambi
@themkenyatomes

“Are you ok?” is perhaps the shortest meaningful question in the English language, and yet it is the most avoided and the most powerful question we can ask one another. Three words. Two seconds to say. And yet it can open a door that has been locked for years.

In our homes, schools, workplaces and churches, we have learned to ask many questions. We ask what your mean grade is, what your salary is, when you will get married, where you have been — but we rarely pause to ask, with sincerity and patience, whether someone is truly all right. And even when we do ask, we often do so in passing, without meeting someone’s eyes, without leaving space for an honest answer. So the person on the other side learns to respond automatically: “I am fine” — even when they are anything but.

Look closely at daily life and it becomes clear that many people are not fine. They have simply mastered the art of pretending. Every morning, children walk into classrooms carrying more than books. Some carry hunger like an empty tin that rattles. Some carry fear from home, a cold shadow that follows them through the gate. Some carry pressure to perform like a heavy sack on a small back. Many carry a quiet storm of thoughts they have no words to explain. In staffrooms, teachers carry similar weights — low pay, overcrowded classes, family expectations and the burden of being strong for everyone



else. In markets and on farms, parents carry debts, grief and worry they never speak aloud. And so whole communities emerge where everyone is smiling in public and struggling in private, where silence is mistaken for strength.

The question matters because mental pain thrives in silence, the way mould grows in a dark room. A wound in the body, left untreated, becomes infected. A wound in the heart and mind, left untreated, becomes exhaustion, anger, broken sleep, persistent headaches and conflict. A student who was once engaged becomes withdrawn — a

flower closing before noon. A teacher who was once patient becomes irritable as dry grass near flame. A parent who was once warm begins to shout at those they love, not because love has ended but because the tools to manage pressure are missing. Children learn how to handle emotions by watching adults. If adults cope through violence, silence or alcohol, children copy the same pattern. Asking “are you ok?” is therefore not small talk. It is prevention. It is intervention. It is a bridge between suffering and support.

But asking the question well

is shared becomes lighter, like splitting firewood between two people.

Listening well after asking matters even more than the asking itself. Most people do not need immediate advice — they need to be heard. The Psychology of Whispers framework holds that every person carries quiet stories never yet told, stories that whisper inside and shape how they learn, love and work. Listening sometimes means not interrupting. It means resisting the urge to say “be strong” or “you are overthinking.” It means saying: “Thank you for telling me. That sounds heavy. I am here.” And sometimes it means simply sitting in silence with someone — like sheltering together under a tree when the sun is too hot, offering shade without many words.

In schools across Nyeri and throughout Kenya, making “are you ok?” part of the daily culture could transform entire communities — for learners, teachers and non-teaching staff alike. Imagine a classroom where every Monday begins with a five-minute circle in which learners share how they feel without fear of judgement. Imagine a staffroom where teachers gather once a week not to review schemes of work but to check on one another’s well-being. Imagine a home where phones are set aside each evening and every family member shares one good thing and one difficult thing from their day. These small rituals cost nothing, yet they teach children that emotions are not shameful, that asking for help is courage and that empathy is strength.

There are also moments when “are you ok?” reveals a struggle deeper than a friendly ear can reach. If someone has felt sad or hopeless for more than two weeks, lost interest

in things they once loved, is sleeping too much or too little, or speaks about not wanting to live — listening must be followed by connecting them to professional help. That may mean a guidance and counselling teacher, a community counsellor or a helpline: 1199 in Kenya, or 116 for children. Seeking professional help is not failure. It is responsibility — no different from going to hospital for malaria. And when we walk alongside someone to seek that help, we tell them: you are not alone, and your life matters.

We must also learn to ask ourselves the same question. Many people excel at caring for everyone else while forgetting to check on themselves. They pour from an empty cup until they collapse. So pause tonight and ask honestly: are you ok? What am I feeling? What does my body and heart need today? Perhaps you need sleep, or a walk, or to forgive, or to call someone you trust. Self-examination is not selfishness — it is stewardship. You cannot give light when your own lamp has run dry.

Our communities are struggling not for lack of intelligence or industry, but because we have ignored the inner life for too long. We have taught children to count, to farm, to read — but not to name their emotions, handle disappointment or resolve conflict without violence. Breaking that cycle begins with a simple question.

So today, look beyond grades, uniforms and titles, and ask the human being in front of you: are you ok? Ask the student who is always late. Ask the colleague who is always quiet. Ask the child who has stopped playing. Ask yourself. And when you ask, wait. Listen. Stay. For sometimes the most powerful medicine is not money or advice — it is simply the knowledge that someone noticed, someone cared, someone asked.

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Ballot box The literary image that fits is the hollow throne. Every five years the people are invited to place a new occupant upon it.

The ballot box's bitter mockery: Electocracy's iron grip on Kenya



By: Jerameel Kevins Owuor Odhiambo

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In August 2022, more than fourteen million Kenyans queued under sun and rain to mark their ballots. Twenty-two million one hundred twenty thousand four hundred fifty-eight citizens had registered. Official tallies recorded a turnout of sixty-four point seven seven percent. William Ruto secured seven million one hundred seventy-six thousand one hundred forty-one votes, fifty point four nine percent. Raila Odinga took six million nine hundred forty-two thousand nine hundred thirty, forty-eight point eight five percent. The margin stood at two hundred thirty-three thousand two hundred eleven votes. Power transferred through the formal machinery of counting. This is the cold fact. The issue rises from it like dust after a long dry season: the ritual of election has swollen into the whole of what we call democracy, while the living substance of democratic life withers.

Electocracy is the rule of the counted vote without the continuous sovereignty of the people. It is the stage on which ballots are celebrated as crowns while the crowned remain unaccountable. Democracy demands more. Democracy requires that power remain answerable every day, that institutions constrain the powerful, that the ordinary citizen's voice carry weight beyond the five-year spectacle, that equality of dignity shape the distribution of opportunity. Electocracy offers only the spectacle. We have perfected the counting. We have not perfected the rule of the people.

History on this soil teaches the distinction with blood and patience. At independence the promise was self-rule. Jomo Kenyatta's early years concentrated authority. Daniel arap Moi's long Nyayo era perfected the art of controlled participation. Multiparty politics returned in 1992, and with it the ritual of competition. The 2007 election exposed the hollowness. Over one thousand Kenyans died. Hundreds of thousands

fled their homes. Ethnic arithmetic turned the ballot into a weapon. The 2010 Constitution sought to rebuild the foundations: devolution, independent commissions, a stronger judiciary. The 2017 contests brought petitions and annulment. The 2022 contest produced a peaceful transfer. Each cycle refined the machinery of voting. Each cycle left the deeper structure of elite capture largely intact. Dynasties of name and network Kenyatta, Odinga, Moi, and the rising circles around them continue to shape the field. Ethnic blocs still deliver predictable majorities. The correlation is stark: high formal participation coexists with persistent elite insulation.

Look at the numbers that refuse to lie. Kenya's electoral democracy index hovers around zero point five five on the Varieties of Democracy scale. The liberal democracy index sits lower, near zero point four three to zero point four five. Freedom House continues to classify the republic as Partly Free. Corruption Perceptions Index scores linger near thirty to thirty-two out of one hundred, ranking the country around one hundred twentieth. Poverty remains stubborn: estimates place between thirty-nine and forty-five percent of the population below international lines depending on the measure. Youth unemployment and underemployment crush the gener-

ation that should inherit the future. Surveys place unemployment and corruption as the top national problems. The same citizens who stand in long queues to vote return home to face those same problems with little change in the structure of power. The correlation is not accidental. Electocracy measures success by the smooth conduct of elections. Democracy measures success by the transformation of lived conditions and the real subordination of rulers to the ruled.

The literary image that fits is the hollow throne. Every five years the people are invited to place a new occupant upon it. The throne itself remains the same shape: elevated, guarded by networks of patronage, insulated by the very rituals that claim to open it. The ballot becomes a golden chain. It binds the citizen to the system while the system remains free of the citizen. Irony saturates the scene. We celebrate the inked finger as proof of freedom. We endure the same patterns of inequality, the same ethnic calculation, the same quiet capture of public resources. The theater is elaborate. The audience leaves with the same script.

This is not a call for cynicism. It is a call for clarity and action. Political leaders must abandon the comfort of electocracy. Winning an election is not a blank cheque for five years of unaccountable rule. It is a tempo-

rary mandate that demands continuous justification through transparent governance, measurable delivery, and genuine consultation. The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission must earn trust not only on election day but through open processes, clean registers, and resistance to political pressure. The judiciary must remain the final guardian of constitutional limits rather than an occasional referee of elite disputes. Civil society and the media must refuse the role of cheerleaders for the counting exercise and insist on the harder questions of accountability between elections. The youth, who form the largest demographic and face the sharpest edge of unemployment and exclusion, must reject the reduction of their citizenship to a single mark on a ballot. Their demand must be continuous voice, continuous opportunity, continuous justice.

Ordinary citizens carry the heaviest duty. We must stop treating the vote as the full measure of our power. Democracy dies when the people accept the ritual as sufficient. We must organise beyond the five-year cycle: demand budget transparency, track devolved funds, challenge ethnic mobilisation that reduces us to voting blocs, insist that public office serve the public rather than the network that installed the office-holder. Correlation again drives

the point. Where citizens remain passive between elections, electocracy flourishes. Where citizens remain vigilant, the pressure for deeper democratic practice grows.

The original insight is this: electocracy reduces the citizen to a statistical input, a momentary participant whose only recognised power is the power to select among predetermined options. True democracy recognises the citizen as continuous sovereign. The difference is the difference between a plastic plant that looks green under artificial light and a living tree that draws strength from deep roots and changes with the seasons. Kenya has become skilled at manufacturing the plastic plant. The living tree remains underdeveloped.

We stand at a moment when the machinery of elections functions with increasing technical competence. That competence must not become the ceiling of our ambition. The republic deserves more than the regular transfer of crowns through counting. It deserves the daily practice of self-rule. Electocracy is not democracy. The ballot box's bitter mockery must end. The people must reclaim the full meaning of their sovereignty, not only on the day the ink is applied, but on every day that follows.

The writer is a social commentator.



World Cities The celebrations were held at the Kisii Agricultural Training Centre, on the outskirts of Kisii town, under the theme “Regenerating the City: Adequate Housing for All”.

Kisii hosts World Cities Day 2026, as leaders urge counties to strengthen waste management and plan housing together



CS Education Julius Ogamba Migos during celebration of World Cities Day held at Kisii County said that urbanization brings opportunities for employment, investment and better livelihoods | Photo:

BY Elizabeth Angira
@themkenyaintimes

County governments have been urged to strengthen waste management through reliable collection, segregation at source, recycling, material recovery and safe disposal, as Kisii hosted this year’s World Cities Day celebrations.

The call was made in a speech by Lands, Public Works, Housing and Urban Development Cabinet Secretary Alice Wahome, which was read on her behalf by Education Cabinet Secretary Julius Migos Ogamba.

The celebrations were held at the Kisii Agricultural Training Centre, on the outskirts of Kisii town, under the theme “Regenerating the City: Adequate Housing for All”.

Housing must come with

services

Ogamba said adequate housing goes beyond providing a roof over people’s heads. Residents also need clean water, sanitation, proper drainage, transport, public spaces, essential services and economic opportunities.

He said urbanisation brings opportunities for employment, investment and better livelihoods, but warned that poorly planned growth can worsen housing shortages, pollution, flooding and pressure on public services.

The national government, he said, was pursuing an integrated urban development agenda that brings together affordable housing, infrastructure, economic opportunities and improved municipal services.

In Kisii County, he cited the affordable housing projects in Ogembo, Suneka, Nyachenge, Nyanchwa and

Nyaribari Masaba as opportunities to expand access to housing, create jobs and stimulate local economic activity. Such investments, however, must be accompanied by adequate drainage, sanitation, waste collection, transport links and green public spaces.

He also stressed the role of modern markets in supporting small businesses, traders and agricultural value chains, saying their success depends on proper planning, reliable water, good hygiene and waste collection.

He urged county governments and municipalities to plan housing, markets and other infrastructure as one integrated urban system rather than as isolated projects.

Lessons on resilience and municipal capacity

Ogamba said programmes such as the Kenya Urban

Support Programme Phase 2 (KUSP2) and the Kenya Informal Settlement Improvement Project offer lessons on strengthening municipal institutions, integrated planning and resilient infrastructure.

Municipalities, he said, need the capacity to plan, budget for, deliver and maintain roads, drainage systems, markets, public spaces and waste management facilities.

He also pointed to the Building Climate Resilience for the Urban Poor (BCRUP) initiative as an example of efforts to address climate risks facing vulnerable communities.

Flooding, poor drainage, inadequate sanitation and environmental degradation hit residents of underserved settlements hardest, he said, making climate-sensitive planning, ecosystem restoration and inclusive green livelihoods essential.

He added that settlement upgrading should involve residents in identifying local priorities so that neighbourhoods become safer, more accessible and better serviced.

Kisii praised for restoration and waste recovery

The speech commended Kisii County for transforming the former Nyambara dumpsite into Etaya Governor’s Park, saying it showed how degraded land can be reclaimed and turned into valuable public space.

Ogamba also noted the Material Recovery Facility at the training centre as a step towards a circular economy, in which waste is recovered and reused wherever it is safe and economically viable. The facility is reported to handle up to 50 tonnes a day, but he cautioned that this figure should be confirmed with verified data.

“The success of waste man-

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Stadium President William Ruto announced that Bayern Munich and Ajax would play at the 60,000-seat facility on 5 January 2027, ahead of the Africa Cup of Nations

Talanta Stadium: Why foreign teams are taking centre stage while Kenyan football watches from the sidelines

The opening of Kenya's new 60,000-seat national stadium raises hard questions about domestic football, public investment and national pride

BY Ashford Kimani

@themtkenyatiimes

The inauguration of a national stadium should be more than a spectacular ceremony. It should be a declaration of national ambition, a celebration of local talent and a statement about the values that guide public investment. Yet Kenya's decision to open the new Raila Odinga International Stadium with a match between German giants Bayern Munich and Dutch powerhouse Ajax Amsterdam has raised a fundamental question: why should foreign clubs take centre stage when Kenyan football has waited so long for world-class facilities?

President William Ruto announced that Bayern Munich and Ajax would play at the 60,000-seat facility on 5 January 2027, ahead of the Africa Cup of Nations, which Kenya will co-host with Tanzania and Uganda. The fixture promises significant international attention and a rare opportunity for Kenyan fans to watch two celebrated European clubs on home soil. Both clubs have confirmed the arrangement. However, the excitement should not silence legitimate questions about the rightful place of local football in a defining national sporting milestone.

There is nothing inherently wrong with inviting Bayern Munich and Ajax to Kenya. Their global reputations, professional standards and international following could help promote Kenya as a serious sporting destination. The problem is not their presence; it is the decision to make them the principal attraction at the very event that introduces a major national facility to the public. A stadium built to advance Kenyan sport should first celebrate the people, institutions and athletes it is intended to serve. Instead, the inaugural fixture places European football at the heart of a Kenyan milestone, leaving local teams to watch from the margins.

Imagine the symbolism of Gor Mahia facing AFC Leopards in the



opening match. Alternatively, Harambee Stars could have faced one of the visiting European clubs. Either arrangement would have combined international glamour with local pride. Kenyan supporters would have witnessed a historic occasion in which their own players were not merely spectators but participants. Such an approach would not have diminished the stature of the stadium. On the contrary, it would have demonstrated confidence in Kenyan football while giving the inauguration a distinctly national character.

Major sporting infrastructure is justified by the benefits it brings to citizens. A stadium is not simply concrete, steel and a sophisticated playing surface. Its real value lies in the sporting opportunities it creates, the talent it nurtures, the livelihoods it supports and the memories it gives generations of supporters. The reported KSh145B figure cited in pub-

lic debate must, however, be treated carefully: critics have presented it as a projected long-term repayment cost, including financing, rather than the original construction contract price. Regardless of the final cost, Kenyans are entitled to ask whether decisions surrounding such a major investment adequately prioritise domestic sport.

Local clubs struggle with financial constraints, inconsistent infrastructure, limited commercial opportunities and difficulties attracting sponsorship. Their players need competitive exposure, their supporters deserve quality facilities, and their administrators need opportunities to build financially sustainable institutions. A national stadium cannot solve all these problems on its own. Nevertheless, its opening could have sent a powerful message that Kenya intends to elevate its domestic game rather than merely import sporting entertainment.

Gor Mahia, AFC Leopards, Shabana and other domestic clubs have passionate supporters who sustain football culture across the country. Harambee Stars, meanwhile, represent Kenya on the international stage. These institutions provide the foundation upon which a stronger football industry must be built. Giving a local team the inaugural honour would have created national interest beyond the novelty of seeing European superstars, generated valuable publicity for domestic players, encouraged young footballers and strengthened the connection between the new facility and Kenya's football community.

A match between Bayern and Ajax may attract international media coverage, but that exposure does not automatically translate into better local leagues, stronger youth academies or improved player development. Those benefits require deliberate policies and sustained investment. The danger is that Kenya may confuse the visibility of international brands with the development of its own sporting industry. A country

does not become a football powerhouse simply because famous foreign clubs visit. It becomes one when local players receive quality coaching, clubs are professionally managed and young talent has a credible pathway to the highest levels of the game.

International ambition and local inclusion are not mutually exclusive. With AFCON 2027 approaching, Kenya has legitimate reasons to demonstrate its readiness and attract global attention. That argument deserves consideration. However, it does not explain why local representation had to be absent from the headline fixture. Inviting one European team to face Harambee Stars would have offered a compelling compromise — bringing international stars to Nairobi while giving Kenyan players an opportunity to test themselves against elite opposition. The issue is not a choice between international recognition and patriotism. It is whether organisers exercised sufficient imagination to achieve both objectives simultaneously.

The government and stadium managers should now follow the inauguration with a deliberate programme to strengthen domestic football. Kenyan clubs should have fair access to the facility, with transparent booking arrangements and reasonable charges. Youth tournaments, women's football, school competitions and national-team fixtures should feature prominently in its calendar. Organisers should also publish clear information on the commercial arrangements surrounding the opening match, including sponsorship, public expenditure and expected benefits to Kenyan sport. Transparency would help citizens assess whether the event represents good value and whether its anticipated economic benefits are realistic.

Ultimately, the stadium's success will not be measured by one glamorous night or the prestige of the visiting clubs. It will be measured by the quality of football played there in the years that follow, the opportunities available to Kenyan athletes and the extent to which ordinary citizens benefit from the investment. Kenya should welcome Bayern Munich and Ajax — but it should not place foreign football on a pedestal at the expense of its own. A national stadium should not merely give Kenyans a grandstand from which to admire foreign football. It should give Kenyan football a stage on which to grow, compete and inspire.



There is nothing inherently wrong with inviting Bayern Munich and Ajax to Kenya. Their global reputations, professional standards and international following could help promote Kenya as a serious sporting destination.

World Cities The celebrations were held at the Kisii Agricultural Training Centre, on the outskirts of Kisii town, under the theme “Regenerating the City: Adequate Housing for All.”

Kisii hosts World Cities Day 2026, as leaders urge counties to strengthen waste management and plan housing together

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agement must not be measured by installed capacity alone, but by the quantity of waste responsibly managed and the improvements in residents’ experiences in their neighbourhoods,” he said.

He called for stronger segregation at source, reliable collection, recycling, composting of suitable organic waste and safe disposal of residual waste, and urged that the principles of the Sustainable Waste Management Act, 2022, be applied in homes, schools, offices, markets, institutions and businesses.

Partnerships and accountability

Sustainable urbanisation, Ogamba said, requires coordinated action by national and county governments, municipalities, communities, the private sector and development partners.

Residents, traders, women, young people, waste workers and community organisations should play a meaningful role in planning, implementing and monitoring local solutions, while the private sector and development partners should mobilise investment, promote innovation and develop sustainable markets for recovered materials.

He said these efforts must be backed by sufficient financing, skilled personnel, routine maintenance and clear accountability, and encouraged municipalities to set measurable targets and timelines and to track progress.

He also urged authorities to protect rivers, drainage corridors, wetlands and green spaces.

“Regenerating our cities is a shared responsibility, and the time to act is now,” he said, urging citizens to keep their neighbourhoods clean, separate waste at source and protect shared public spaces.

He reaffirmed the national government’s commitment to working with counties and other stakeholders to



CS Julius Ogamba Migos, Kisii County Deputy Governor Elijah Obebo during the celebration of World Cities Day. | Photo: Elizabeth Angira

build clean, safe, inclusive and climate-resilient towns where every family can access adequate housing.

Kisii eyes city status

Kisii Governor Simba Arati reiterated his commitment to environmental conservation and better urban areas as the county works towards elevating Kisii Municipality to city status. His speech was read by Deputy Governor Elijah Obebo.

Obebo said Kisii’s selection as host reflected progress in urban development. The county had also hosted World Clean-Up Day last month, where stakeholders focused on reducing food waste and promoting a circular economy.

“It means we are doing something in the right direction on matters of urban development, and someone is noticing,” he said.

He said Kisii faces challenges common to cities worldwide, including ageing infrastructure, climate change, a lack of affordable housing and social inequality.

Urban regeneration, he said, offered a sustainable way out and a chance for government, academia, the private sector and civil society to develop practical solutions together. Obebo cited the county’s Kazi Mashinani initiative as one of the programmes intensifying clean-up in urban areas.

He said the former Nyambara dumpsite, long an eyesore, had become a popular recreational space, especially among young people. Citing research that green spaces improve mental health and reduce stress and anxiety, he urged residents to use and protect the park, and said the county plans to establish more public spaces.

He said the county had finalised its first 10-year County Spatial Plan to guide land use, settlement, infrastructure and natural resource management.

Kisii and Ogembo already hold municipality status, and other urban areas will be elevated once their local land use plans are complete, in line with the Urban Areas and Cities Act.

Obebo also commended the national government’s Affordable Housing Programme, saying the housing and market projects would improve the urban landscape and expand access to housing and business facilities once completed.

He invited development partners, universities, the private sector and civil society to help develop evidence-based proposals to guide policy and investment.

“As a county government, we are committed to ensuring that all this shall be done because we are here, this is our time, and we mean it,” he said.

UN-Habitat: waste as a source of green jobs

UN-Habitat Kenya Head of Country Programme Beryl Khanyile said sustainable urban development requires more than homes: residents

also need secure land tenure, reliable basic services, clean neighbourhoods and ways to earn a living.

She asked leaders to keep in mind a family seeking a decent home through the Affordable Housing Programme, a woman selling vegetables beside uncollected waste, and young people looking for work.

This year’s theme, she said, does not mean starting from scratch. Regeneration means investing in existing neighbourhoods, improving services and making urban areas more productive, inclusive and resilient, with housing that is also climate-resilient.

Khanyile said UN-Habitat, working with the State Department for Housing and Urban Development and Kisii County, was strengthening the solid waste value chain to create green jobs for young people, alongside partners such as ‘Taka ni Mali’.

She commended Governor Arati for initiating the waste-to-value approach through the Material Recovery Facility, and the State Department for its leadership, which she said showed that adequate housing for all is within reach.

She also pointed to collaboration under BCRUP and related Sustainable Development Goals initiatives, which support local services, financing for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, and green employment.

“Waste is not a problem to be managed. If handled well, it is a source of dignity, income and greater opportunity,” she said.

Khanyile said Kisii’s story would be shared at the global observance in China as a model for other Kenyan towns.

“We want to show the world that this is already happening in Kenya,” she said, calling on stakeholders to turn the commitments made in Kisii into lasting action so that no family or neighbourhood is left behind.



Nyanchwa Affordable Housing Project in progress. | Photo: Elizabeth Angira

SPORTS
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BREAKING NEWS**Sports >>** *A dramatic penalty shootout at Anfield ended Chelsea's cup hopes as Wesley Fofana's decisive miss handed Liverpool a 6–5 victory and a last-eight tie against Bournemouth**Fofana miss sends Liverpool past Chelsea into Carabao Cup quarter-finals**

By Andalo Christine Ingutia

There are nights at Anfield that seem written in a particular kind of fate, and Wednesday was one of them. Liverpool edged Chelsea 6–5 on penalties after a 1–1 draw to reach the Carabao Cup quarter-finals, with Wesley Fofana's tame effort over the crossbar sealing one of the more heart-breaking exits Chelsea have suffered in recent memory.

Joe Gomez had just converted Liverpool's decisive spot kick when Fofana stepped up, the weight of Chelsea's cup campaign resting on his shoulders. He fired over. The home crowd erupted, and Chelsea's night was over — their fifth penalty shootout defeat against Liverpool, a record that is becoming something of a psychological burden for the Blues.

The tie itself had been tight, tense and thoroughly absorbing from the opening exchanges. Chelsea drew first blood in the 40th minute when Morgan Rogers converted from the spot after Ryan Gravenberch brought down Moisés Caicedo inside the area. It was a well-taken penalty, confident and composed, and it gave the visitors a lead that felt deserved at that stage.

Liverpool responded almost immediately, though, and in similarly straightforward fashion. Three minutes later, Fofana — who would go on to play such a pivotal role later in the evening — handled a corner in the penalty area. Cody Gakpo stepped up and sent his effort into the net to restore parity before half-time. Two penalties, two goals, and a contest perfectly balanced heading into the dressing rooms.

The second half offered more of the same competitive intensity without either side managing to force the issue in open play. Liverpool manager Andoni Iraola had made seven changes from the side that defeated Brighton



at the weekend, using the cup tie to rotate his squad and keep legs fresh. Chelsea manager Xabi Alonso also rang the changes but ensured his side remained organised and difficult to break down.

Both goalkeepers deserve considerable credit for keeping the scoreline level. Mike Penders, between the posts for Chelsea, and Liverpool's Giorgi Mamardashvili each produced important saves at key moments, denying what might otherwise have been match-winning opportunities. It was goalkeeping of a high order given the circumstances, and it ultimately ensured that the tie would be settled from twelve yards.

With the fourth-round tie going straight to penalties under Carabao Cup rules, the shootout unfolded with all the drama the occasion demanded. Chelsea substitute Valentín Barco struck the post. Liverpool's Kostas Tsimikas fired over. Penders then saved Gravenberch's attempt, handing Chelsea what appeared to be a decisive advantage. But Mamardashvili had other ideas, denying debutant Emmanuel

Emegha to keep Liverpool in it.

From that point, the momentum shifted unmistakably towards the home side. Gomez stepped up and converted with certainty, leaving Fofana needing to score to keep Chelsea alive. The French defender, who had earlier given away the penalty that allowed Liverpool to equalise, could not find the target. His effort sailed over, and with it went Chelsea's hopes.

For Liverpool, it was another step forward in a competition they hold dear. The Reds have won the Carabao Cup ten times, most recently in 2024, and they will host Bournemouth in the quarter-finals in December with genuine ambitions of adding to that tally. Bournemouth earned their place in the last eight with a convincing 3–0 victory over Aston Villa, and they will arrive at Anfield as difficult opponents despite the gulf in recent pedigree.

Chelsea, meanwhile, must dust themselves off and refocus on the Premier League. The cup had represented an opportunity to build momentum and chal-

lenge for a trophy, and they had shown enough quality across the evening to suggest they were capable of going deep in the competition. Fofana's miss will sting for some time, not least because it followed his earlier handball that gifted Liverpool their equaliser. It was a bruising personal night for the defender, and one that Chelsea's supporters will hope he can quickly put behind him.

The broader narrative, however, is one of Liverpool's remarkable resilience and their enduring capacity to win the big moments — even when, for long stretches, nothing separates the sides.

GET THE BEST OF WORLD

Sports >> *The RFEF suspended a full day of Spanish Cup fixtures in solidarity with victims of a deadly rail-way accident in Toledo province

Spanish football federation postpones 24 cup matches after Toledo train disaster

By Pascal Okoth

Football has a way of feeling enormously important — until something genuinely important happens. On Thursday, the Royal Spanish Football Federation, known by its Spanish initials RFEF, made that distinction with quiet clarity, announcing the postponement of 24 Spanish Cup matches scheduled for the day in response to a tragic rail-way accident in the province of Toledo.

The decision was swift, unambiguous and, in the view of many within Spanish football, entirely the right call. Twenty-four fixtures wiped from the day’s programme, clubs left to rearrange their schedules, supporters asked to wait — all of it done without hesitation in recognition of a nation mourning lives lost and families shattered by a disaster that had nothing to do with sport and everything to do with shared humanity.

The Toledo accident sent shockwaves across Spain, with the scale of the tragedy prompting an immediate response from authorities and institutions well beyond the railways and emergency services. The RFEF’s announcement arrived as one of the more visible gestures of solidarity, carrying the weight of a sport that commands enormous public attention across the country.

In a nation where football is woven into the daily fabric of life — where the Copa del Rey inspires genuine passion at every level of the game, from the largest clubs to the smallest provincial sides — the decision to suspend competition carries real symbolic force. It signals that the federation understands its place within Spanish society rather than apart from it.

The human reality behind rail-way disasters rarely receives the attention it deserves once the immediate news cycle moves



on. Beyond the official casualty figures lie families waiting for news, communities absorbing loss and emergency workers confronting scenes of considerable distress. In that context, the prospect of 24 football matches proceeding as though the afternoon were entirely ordinary would have struck many as tone-deaf, regardless of the logistical complications that postponement inevitably brings.

And those complications are real. Cup competitions involve months of scheduling, stadium preparation, travel arrangements, security coordination, broadcast commitments and squad planning. Postponing a single fixture creates a ripple effect; postponing 24 simultaneously requires significant administrative effort from clubs, federations and broadcasters alike. None of that, the RFEF determined, outweighed the importance of marking the moment properly.

The postponement also reflects something that football, at its best, has always understood — that the sport does not exist in isolation. Clubs and their supporters are part of commu-

nities, and those communities sometimes experience events that demand acknowledgement rather than distraction. Spanish football has demonstrated this before, pausing competition in the aftermath of national tragedies, and Thursday’s decision follows a consistent principle: when people are grieving, the game can wait.

For supporters who had been preparing to attend the postponed fixtures — making travel arrangements, planning their day around kick-off times, anticipating the particular excitement of a cup tie — the announcement will have brought disappointment. That is understandable. But most will also recognise the appropriateness of the decision and the values it reflects.

At the time of the RFEF’s announcement, replacement dates for the 24 affected matches had not been confirmed. Clubs and supporters were advised to follow official federation communications and their respective club channels for updated scheduling information. Given the volume of fixtures involved, the rearrangement process is likely to require careful coordination

with broadcasters and venue operators over the coming days and weeks.

Attention across Spain on Thursday, however, was firmly elsewhere — with the victims of the Toledo accident, with the families seeking answers and with the emergency services working at the scene. Football acknowledged that reality and stepped aside.

It is a small gesture in the face of genuine tragedy. No postponed match compensates for a life lost or a family left grieving. But gestures carry meaning, particularly from institutions with the public reach and cultural influence of a national football federation. The RFEF’s decision reminded everyone that the beautiful game, for all its commercial scale and competitive intensity, remains at its core a human pursuit — and that human lives, when placed on one side of the scale, will always weigh more than fixtures.

Spain’s cup calendar will resume. The matches will be re-scheduled and played. For now, the federation made the right call.

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SPORTS AS THEY HAPPEN



Bayern Munich and Ajax to open Talanta Stadium in Nairobi as Kenya bids to put itself on global football map

By: Collins Kibet

@themkenyatimes

Kenya is counting down to what promises to be the most significant moment in its sporting infrastructure history — and, depending on how it is managed, potentially one of the most consequential for the future of football in East Africa.

Bayern Munich and Ajax Amsterdam will face each other at the newly constructed Raila Odinga International Stadium at Talanta Sports City in Nairobi on 5 January 2027, in a fixture confirmed by both clubs on Tuesday. The match, announced by President William Ruto, will serve as the ceremonial opening of the 60,000-seat venue and is expected to draw football supporters from across Africa and generate international media attention of a kind Kenya has rarely experienced on the sporting stage.

The timing is deliberate. Kenya, alongside Uganda and Tanzania, is preparing to co-host the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations, and the government has made no secret of its intention to use the Talanta fixture as a dress rehearsal — a public demonstration that the country's infrastructure, organisational capacity and appetite for high-profile sport are ready for continental scrutiny.

On those terms, the choice of opponents is understandable. Bayern Munich, Germany's most decorated club, and Ajax Amsterdam, the Dutch institution whose tradition of producing world-class talent is unmatched in European football, carry global name recognition and international followings that few clubs can match. Their arrival in Nairobi will attract broadcasters, sponsors and sports tourists in numbers that no domestic fixture could replicate. For a stadium seeking to establish its place on the world map, the opening act matters enormously.

Yet the announcement has not been welcomed without reservation. Former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua has publicly questioned why Kenya's own clubs, or the national



team Harambee Stars, were not given the honour of featuring in the inaugural match. It is a question that deserves a serious answer rather than a dismissive one. A stadium built with public resources, intended to serve Kenyan sport, is being opened by two European clubs — and the domestic football community, whose players and supporters sustain the game at home through every difficult season, has been handed a watching brief.

Gachagua's criticism should not be read simply as political point-scoring. It touches on a genuine tension that Kenya's sporting authorities have never fully resolved: the relationship between international visibility and domestic football development. Hosting Bayern Munich and Ajax will generate excitement and, if managed well, economic activity. But excitement and economic activity are not, by themselves, a development strategy. Kenyan football continues to struggle with inadequate grassroots investment, limited coaching infrastructure, poorly managed club structures and insufficient youth competition. A single glamorous friendly, however well attended, cannot address any of that.

What it can do — if the surrounding

programme is designed thoughtfully — is create a platform. Organisers have an opportunity to attach genuine development content to the fixture: youth coaching clinics involving staff from the visiting clubs, interaction sessions between Kenyan coaches and their European counterparts, school football initiatives and a prominent role for local teams in the opening celebrations. A separate exhibition match featuring Harambee Stars or leading Kenyan clubs would cost relatively little by comparison with the main event and would send a meaningful signal about whose stadium this ultimately is.

The economic dimensions of the fixture will also attract close public attention. International sporting events of this profile can generate real business for hotels, restaurants, transport operators and the wider tourism sector. Nairobi has the capacity to benefit significantly if the commercial arrangements are well structured and local enterprises are included in the planning. However, those benefits will not materialise automatically. They require transparent contracting, proactive engagement with local business and a clear public accounting of what the event costs and what it returns.

Ticket accessibility is a related concern. According to reports published on Wednesday, tickets are expected to go on sale on 5 November through the official Talanta Sports City website, though pricing had not been publicly confirmed at the time of writing. Organisers should communicate clearly and early about price ranges, purchasing procedures and anti-fraud measures. A stadium built for the Kenyan public should not become, on its opening night, an event accessible only to those with the means to pay premium prices.

Transparency about the broader financing of the occasion is equally important. The government has indicated that corporate partnerships and a commercially sustainable model will underpin the event. The public deserves to know, in terms that are specific rather than aspirational, what the costs are, who is meeting them, what the expected returns look like and how any surplus will support future sporting programmes. A one-off spectacle funded by public resources and delivered primarily for international audiences would be a missed opportunity. A well-structured commercial event that generates revenue for stadium operations and grassroots football would be a

genuine investment.

The AFCON 2027 dimension adds further weight to all of these considerations. Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania are preparing for a continental tournament that will test their collective capacity in ways no single friendly can fully simulate. The Talanta fixture will, however, offer a real and visible test of crowd management, transport coordination, ticketing systems, security arrangements and international broadcasting logistics. Every lesson learned on 5 January will be worth applying across the months that follow.

The stadium itself is an impressive achievement. A 60,000-seat venue of international standard, built in a country where sporting infrastructure has historically lagged behind ambition, represents a significant commitment of public resources and political will. The question now is whether the occasion of its opening is used to begin building something lasting, or simply to stage something memorable.

Bayern Munich and Ajax Amsterdam will provide the spectacle. Kenya must provide the strategy.