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Countdown 2027 📅

Alliance of opposition titans Sifuna, Gachagua and Kalonzo eye 2027 sweep



P.9 DAP-K leader Eugene Wamalwa, Wiper Patriotic Front's Kalonzo Musyoka, Linda Mwananchi's Edwin Sifuna and DCP's Rigathi Gachagua at the unveiling of Linda Mwananchi's secretariat in Nairobi on Friday, October 30, 2026. /X



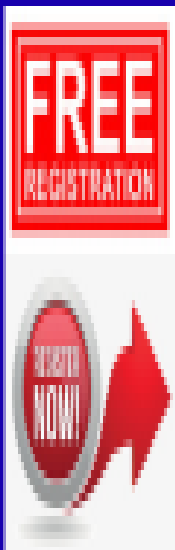
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Linda Mwananchi launches headquarters and unveils proposed secretariat

BY David Kimani

@themtkenyatimes

Some of the moments as captured in pictures

The Linda Mwananchi Party (formerly The Equitable Party) officially unveiled its national headquarters in Nairobi's Lavington suburb, launching a bold organizational structure designed to challenge the ruling government across all key political regions ahead of the August 2027 General Election.

Nairobi Senator Edwin Sifuna was proposed as party leader. He is supported by a deputy leadership team featuring former Meru Governor Kawira Mwangaza, Mavoko MP Patrick Makau, and former Law Society of Kenya President Faith Odhiambo. Vi-higa Senator Godfrey Osotsi takes the helm as party chairperson, with Caroli Omondi serving as Secretary General and Richard Onyonka as Treasurer. Trans Nzoia Governor George Ntembeya is slated to direct the presidential campaign.

The unveiling crystallized a formidable opposition realignment. Heavyweights including former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua, Wiper leader Kalonzo Musyoka, and DAP-K's Eugene Wamalwa attended the event to signal a united opposition front. Combining Gachagua's Mt. Kenya constituency, Kalonzo's Ukambani stronghold, Sifuna and Wamalwa's Western and urban bases, and dedicated coastal representation, the coalition establishes a geographic pincer aimed at sweeping the 2027 polls.



Editor's Desk

The Mt. Kenya Times



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NEWS IN BRIEF



Wiper leader Kalonzo Musyoka faced a hostile reception at Nairobi Senator Edwin Sifuna's presidential secretariat launch on Friday, being booed by delegates after cautioning against prematurely declaring Sifuna the opposition's flagbearer ahead of the 2027 general election. Kalonzo insisted the opposition must follow an agreed candidate-selection process, reminding the gathering that delegates had already mandated him to pursue the presidency at a conference on 10 October last year. "Be patient — I want my younger brother to follow the proper procedure, nothing else," he said. He nonetheless expressed openness to supporting Sifuna, Wamalwa or any candidate who emerged through the coalition's agreed process, warning that unity and sacrifice were non-negotiable. "We must be prepared to sacrifice everything we have and speak with one voice," he said.



Former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua challenged Nairobi Senator Edwin Sifuna on Friday to demonstrate real political control in Western Kenya, questioning why presidential aide Farouk Kibet repeatedly attacked Sifuna without facing pushback from the senator's supporters in the region. Speaking at the Linda Mwananchi secretariat launch, Gachagua also accused Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi of selling his Amani National Congress party to President William Ruto for KSh20 million and challenged National Assembly Speaker Moses Wetang'ula to account for 1,000 kilometres of tarmac roads promised to Western Kenya before asking residents to back Ruto again. "Build the roads first, then come and speak to us," he said. Gachagua declared his own presidential ambitions but pledged unconditional support for either Kalonzo Musyoka or Sifuna should the opposition coalition settle on either man. "I, Riggy G, want to be President of Kenya — but if they choose Sifuna, I will step up as director of his presidential campaign myself," he said, arguing the combined support bases of DCP, Linda Mwananchi and Wiper left Ruto politically exposed.



had been issued by his family or associates regarding his condition or the facility where he is receiving treatment. The incident has drawn concern from colleagues and contacts within Nairobi's political and administrative circles, where Mosiria remains a recognised figure from his tenure in county government.

Former Nairobi County Chief Officer Geoffrey Mosiria was hospitalised on Thursday evening after falling ill during a meeting in Nairobi, according to sources familiar with the matter. Mosiria, who served as a senior administrator in the county government, is reported to have taken ill suddenly, prompting those present to seek immediate medical attention on his behalf. The circumstances surrounding his sudden illness had not been officially confirmed by the time of going to press, and no formal statement



The Linda Mwananchi Movement will hold its National Delegates Convention on 13 November to formalise its leadership structure, as Nairobi Senator Edwin Sifuna unveiled the proposed team at the launch of the movement's headquarters and committed to opening offices in all 47 counties by month's end. Sifuna said the movement would begin its county rollout in Kwale, building on an existing network that already includes county chairpersons from 38 counties, many formerly affiliated with ODM. "When we said we were leaving, they thought we were leaving alone. They will know today that we are leaving with the foundation," he said. The movement has settled on The Equitable Party as its political vehicle and outlined an economic programme anchored on cutting KSh500B from government expenditure within the first 100 days in office to fund fuel tax relief, electricity tax removal and abolition of the Housing Levy.



The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission has defended its decision to include foreign nationals among the applicants shortlisted for the position of Commission Secretary and Chief Executive Officer, saying the vacancy was advertised openly and without any restriction on nationality. The commission said the post was publicised through national newspapers, its official website and social media platforms, a process that drew applications from candidates of varying nationalities. The IEBC maintained that publishing the names of all qualifying applicants, regardless of origin, was consistent with the terms under which the position was advertised and reflected standard recruitment transparency practice. The disclosure triggered public debate over whether a foreign national should be eligible to lead the secretariat of Kenya's electoral management body, with critics arguing the role demands a citizen steeped in the country's constitutional and political framework.

The Kenya Accountants and Secretaries National Examinations Board launched revised professional syllabuses on Thursday evening at the gala dinner closing the second KASNEB International Conference for Professionals in Nairobi, marking a significant update to the qualifications framework governing accountancy, finance and secretarial training in Kenya. The revised syllabuses, unveiled before an audience of finance and business professionals gathered for the two-day conference, are intended to align KASNEB's professional programmes with evolving industry demands, global standards and emerging areas of practice including technology-driven financial services and sustainability reporting. The launch signals a broader effort by the examinations board to ensure that Kenyan-trained professionals remain competitive regionally and internationally, at a time when the accountancy and governance professions are undergoing rapid transformation driven by digitalisation and tightening regulatory requirements across East Africa.



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Health The upgrade from a Level III to a Level IV facility marks a significant shift

Waiguru to commission Kianyaga Level IV hospital and eyes deputy president seat

The Kirinyaga governor inspects the near-complete 140-bed facility as allies publicly back her bid for the country's second-highest office ahead of 2027.

BY Rose Njeri

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Kirinyaga Governor Anne Waiguru announced Friday that the new Kianyaga Level IV Hospital will be commissioned before the end of the year, with equipping of the 140-bed facility already under way and construction fully complete.

Speaking during an inspection tour of the complex in Kianyaga town, Waiguru said the facility would offer comprehensive medical services to approximately 300 patients daily, incorporating a modern maternity wing, a newborn unit, surgical theatres, diagnostic laboratories, pre-natal and post-natal wards, kangaroo mother care, outpatient and inpatient units, and an emergency and accident section.

The upgrade from a Level III to a Level IV facility marks a significant shift in the county's healthcare capacity. Patients who previously required referral to Kerugoya County Referral Hospital will now receive specialist care closer to home — a change that health workers and residents in the region have long sought.

Waiguru framed the commission as the fulfilment of a campaign pledge made during her successful 2022 re-election bid. "There could be those who doubted wheth-



Kirinyaga Governor Anne Waiguru speaking during an inspection tour of the complex in Kianyaga town

er I would deliver, but you can now see I have delivered the development promise," she said. "The hospital is now here for all to see."

The visit, however, carried a political charge that extended well beyond healthcare. Waiguru used the occasion to openly campaign for President William Ruto's re-election in 2027, urging Mount Kenya voters to back a leader she described as best placed to serve the region's interests. She challenged residents to prioritise candidates with proven development track records over those riding on party affiliation alone. "After carefully assessing the competing political camps and their development agenda, I am convinced Ruto has the best interest for Mount Kenya," she said.

Waiguru also made her own

ambitions explicit. Having served the constitutional maximum of two terms as governor, she confirmed she was seeking the Deputy President position, citing her record in county governance and her earlier experience in national government as qualifications for the role. "I have finished my two terms and now I want to go up," she said. "I believe I have the qualifications and experience required to help navigate some of the challenges facing the country."

Her remarks drew immediate endorsements from two legislators present at the event. Nyeri Women Representative Rahab Mukami was unequivocal. "My Deputy President candidate for 2027 is Anne Waiguru — she is tested and proven," Mukami said, urging voters to rally

behind one of their own for the country's second-highest office. Kirinyaga Central MP Gachoki Gitari also threw his weight behind the governor.

Mukami went further, calling for greater inclusion of women at the apex of national leadership, noting that Kenya had yet to elect a woman to the presidency despite women constituting a majority of the electorate.

With the hospital set to open and a deputy presidential campaign now openly under way, Waiguru appears determined to convert a healthcare delivery story into a political one — and in Mount Kenya, where development credentials carry considerable electoral weight, the calculation may prove sound.

Two Kenyan firms join African nature-economy accelerator targeting \$10m investment



Acacia EPZ and ForestFoods

BY Rose Njeri

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Two Kenyan enterprises — gum arabic exporter Acacia EPZ and agroforestry farming group ForestFoods — have been selected for the inaugural cohort of the Nature-First Innovation Lab, a 12-month investment-readiness accelerator targeting nature-positive African businesses with a collective fundraising goal of approximately \$10 million.

The programme is run by FSD Africa in partnership with Systemiq and the African Natural Capital Alliance, and backed by UK International Development and Norway's development agency Norad. All five selected enterprises share a common characteristic: their revenues depend directly on healthy land, forests and soils.

Acacia EPZ, founded in 2015

by Sam Ombogo Nyamunga, exports gum arabic used in soft drinks, confectionery and medicines. With Sudan's supply disrupted by conflict, Acacia has emerged as a traceable, conflict-free alternative, growing revenues by 56 per cent in two years. ForestFoods practises syntropic agroforestry near Limuru, Naivasha and Naro Moru, integrating trees, crops and livestock to regenerate land.

Dorothy Maseke, head of the African Natural Capital Alliance Secretariat at FSD Africa, identified a persistent funding bottleneck the programme aims to resolve. "These five enterprises are already established and generating revenue. What they need now is support to get investment-ready," she said.

With an estimated 62 per cent of Africa's GDP dependent on nature, the stakes reach far beyond five companies.

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NYERI

Soda truck crash near DeKUT renews black spot alarm

A lorry overturns on the Nyeri-Mweiga road, scattering cargo and reviving long-standing safety concerns at a stretch that has claimed dozens of lives.



Soda truck crash near DeKUT

BY Mellisa Mwende

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A lorry carrying crates of soda and bread overturned on Friday near Dedan Kimathi University of Technology on the Nyeri-Mweiga road, scattering its cargo across the highway and drawing large crowds of students and residents to the scene.

The crash occurred at around midday at a section of the road that motorists have long identified as a black spot. Eyewitnesses said the truck lost control before overturning, leaving broken bottles and bread packets strewn across the tarmac. By press time, the cause of the accident had not been established and authorities had yet to confirm whether the driver or any other road users sustained injuries.

Residents who spoke to The Mt Kenya Times said the stretch becomes dangerously slippery during rains and suffers from poor visibility at the university junction. Despite serving heavy traffic — including students, public service vehicles and commercial trucks moving goods between Nyeri, Mweiga and Nanyuki — the road lacks adequate speed bumps, road markings

and pedestrian crossings near the institution.

Friday's incident is the latest in a series of crashes on the same corridor. On 28 March 2026, a lorry ferrying firewood collided with a Nyekicha Sacco 14-seater matatu on the same stretch, killing 16 people in one of the deadliest accidents in the region this year. In September 2026, a separate collision involving a lorry and a matatu on the same road left one person dead and 15 others injured.

Transport experts say the recurring crashes point to systemic infrastructure failures beyond individual driver error, and have called on authorities to urgently upgrade the road.

The incidents come against a worsening national road safety picture. National Transport and Safety Authority data shows Kenya recorded 3,995 road deaths between 1 January and 4 October this year — a 9.2 per cent increase on the same period in 2025. Independent road safety monitors estimate the true toll could be as high as 12,876 deaths in 2026, equivalent to approximately 43 fatalities every day.

Over 2.5 million learners complete national assessments as KCSE written exams begin Monday

BY Elizabeth Angira

@themkenyaintimes

Education Cabinet Secretary Julius Migos Ogamba has announced the successful administration of this week's national assessments, with more than 2.5 million learners taking part across the country.

Ogamba said the assessments had generally proceeded smoothly despite isolated operational challenges, including adverse weather conditions, administrative discrepancies and cases involving learners who required special arrangements and medical attention.

Speaking on Friday, after overseeing the opening of a Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) examination container at the Sotik Deputy County Commissioner's Office in Bomet County, the CS said all learners who reported to their designated assessment centres had been given an opportunity to sit their scheduled papers.

He attributed the successful administration of the assessments to coordinated efforts by the Ministry of Education, KNEC, the Ministry of Interior and National Administration, security agencies and other stakeholders.

The Kenya Primary School Education Assessment (KPSEA), which began on Monday, October 26, concluded on Wednesday, October 28, while the Kenya Intermediate Level Education Assessment (KILEA) and Kenya Pre-Vocational Level Education Assessment (KPLEA) ended on Thursday, October 29.

The Kenya Junior School Education Assessment (KJSEA) is scheduled to conclude on Friday, October 30.

Ogamba commended education officials, security agencies and other personnel involved in the exercise, urging them to maintain professionalism and uphold examination integrity as the country prepares for the main Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) written examinations.

The main KCSE written examinations, involving 1,048,355 registered candidates, will begin on



CS Education Julius Ogamba Migos at Sotik Comprehensive School monitoring the administration of the assessments

Monday, November 2, and run until Friday, November 20, 2026.

The oral, practical and low-candidate examinations, which started on October 19, are also scheduled to conclude on Friday.

The CS called on KNEC, County and Sub-County Directors of Education, as well as National Government Administration Officers, to ensure all examination centres are ready before Monday.

He said particular attention should be given to the deployment of examination personnel, security and transportation of examination materials, as well as addressing any outstanding logistical challenges.

Ogamba further urged relevant agencies to prioritise the welfare of candidates, especially learners with disabilities, those requiring medical attention and candidates in areas affected by adverse weather conditions.

He emphasised that every candidate must be given a fair opportunity to sit the examinations under appropriate conditions.

Meanwhile, the conclusion of KJSEA marks an important milestone for Grade 9 learners preparing to transition to Senior School in January 2027 under the Competen-

cy-Based Education (CBE) system.

Ogamba said the assessment, together with school-based assessments, would help determine learners' competencies and inform their transition to the next stage of education.

He assured parents and learners that the Ministry would conduct the Senior School placement process transparently and fairly, taking into account learners' performance, interests, pathway choices and other established criteria.

The CS urged parents to remain patient as the Ministry prepares to communicate the placement timelines and procedures through official channels.

He also thanked KNEC, the Teachers Service Commission, security agencies, education officers, examination centre managers, supervisors, invigilators, teachers, health workers and parents for their contribution to the national assessments.

Ogamba congratulated learners who had completed their assessments and wished those sitting their final papers success, reaffirming the government's commitment to ensuring credible, secure and fair national examinations.

Politics The coalition's arithmetic is, on paper, formidable. Sifuna's influence spans Nairobi's densely populated constituencies and reaches deep into Western Kenya

Alliance of opposition titans: Sifuna, Gachagua, Kalonzo and Wamalwa eye 2027 sweep

Linda Mwananchi Party unveils bold national leadership structure as opposition coalition targets every region from Mount Kenya to the coast

BY David Kimani

[@themkenyatimes](#)

The Linda Mwananchi Party — re-branded from the Equitable Party — yesterday unveiled a sweeping national leadership structure headlined by Nairobi Senator Edwin Sifuna as proposed party leader, with former Meru Governor Kawira Mwangaza, Mavoko MP Patrick Makau and Nairobi lawyer Faith Odhiambo among four proposed deputy party leaders, as the opposition movement positions itself to challenge the government across every major political bloc ahead of the August 2027 General Election.

The announcement, made as the party established its national headquarters in the Lavington suburb of Nairobi, crystallised what political analysts are now describing as the most structurally ambitious opposition realignment Kenya has seen since the 2002 coalition that ended Daniel arap Moi's era. The proposed configuration is not merely a party launch — it is the scaffolding of a national electoral machine designed to contest every region simultaneously, and to do so with leaders who carry genuine ground support in their respective territories.

The coalition's arithmetic is, on paper, formidable. Sifuna's influence spans Nairobi's densely populated constituencies and reaches deep into Western Kenya through his networks in the broader Luo Nyanza and Western alliance. Rigathi Gachagua, the former Deputy President who commands loyalty across the Mount Kenya region following his controversial impeachment last year, brings with him the Gikuyu, Embu and Meru vote — the very constituency that has historically determined the presidency. Kalonzo Musyoka, the veteran Wiper Democratic Movement leader, retains a stranglehold on Ukambani in the Eastern region and holds significant sway along the coast. Together, the three principals represent a geographic pincer that, were it to hold, could deny the government meaningful support in Nairobi, Mount Kenya, Western, Eastern and the coast — leaving it clinging to fragments.

"This is not about personalities," a senior opposition strategist said. "This is about structure. We are building ward by ward, constituency by constituency, and county by county."

The proposed leadership framework reflects that structural intent. Vihiga Senator Godfrey Osotsi has been proposed as party chairperson, with former Makadara MP Reuben Ndolo serving as deputy. Suba South MP Caroli Omondi is proposed as Secretary General — a role that places him at the operational heart of the party machinery — while Kisii Senator Richard Onyonka takes on the treasurer's brief. The inclusion of Faith Odhiambo, the former Law Society of Kenya president, as a deputy party leader signals a deliberate effort to project professional credibility alongside political muscle. Trans Nzoia Governor George Nantembeya, one of the more combative voices in opposition politics, will head the presidential campaign, with Odhiambo serving as his deputy in that structure.

Kawira Mwangaza's expected defection to the Linda Mwananchi Party is among the more politically charged elements of the announcement. Her departure from her current party adds a Mount Kenya woman's voice to the coalition and gives Gachagua's regional campaign a complementary figure who carries her own independent profile in Meru County. One deputy party leader position and a deputy chairperson slot have been explicitly reserved for the Coast region — a signal to coastal political figures that the coalition is not merely reaching out to them rhetorically but is prepared to institutionalise their representation at the top of the party.

No accounting of Western Kenya's opposition landscape is complete without Eugene Wamalwa, the Ford Kenya leader whose family name remains the most durable political franchise in the region. The Wamalwas — from the late Vice-President Michael Kijana Wamalwa to Eugene's brother, the former Cabinet Secretary Justin Muturi ally Musalia Mudavadi, and Eugene himself — have shaped Luhya politics across three decades. Eugene Wamalwa has



DCP's Rigathi Gachagua, Linda Mwananchi's Edwin Sifuna and Wiper Patriotic Front's Kalonzo Musyoka at the unveiling of Linda Mwananchi's secretariat in Nairobi on Friday, October 30, 2026 | Photo: X

maintained a steady if understated presence in opposition politics, and his Ford Kenya structures in Bungoma, Trans Nzoia and the broader Luhya belt represent organised grassroots machinery that no Western Kenya coalition can afford to ignore. His alignment with the emerging opposition front would consolidate Sifuna's Western networks and close one of the few remaining geographic gaps in the coalition's national map. Conversations between Wamalwa's camp and the Linda Mwananchi Party's architects are understood to be ongoing, though no formal announcement had been made by the time of going to press.

The political calendar gives the opposition approximately nine months before campaigns intensify in earnest, and the coalition knows that the window to consolidate is narrow. Kenya's opposition history is littered with coalitions that announced well and collapsed under the weight of competing ambitions, ethnic arithmetic, and the gravitational pull of government patronage. The 2022 Azimio la Umoja coalition, which came within a percentage point of the presidency, disintegrated within months of the election over dis-

agreements on resource sharing and the direction of engagement with the ruling Kenya Kwanza administration.

What distinguishes the current alignment, its architects argue, is that the principals have each independently crossed a threshold of commitment. Gachagua's impeachment in October last year removed from him any residual incentive to reconcile with President William Ruto's administration. Sifuna has consistently declined overtures from the government's side. Kalonzo, burned by what he has called repeated betrayals by former allies, has anchored himself to the opposition with unusual firmness. That convergence of personal political interest and genuine ideological distance from the ruling coalition is, analysts suggest, what gives the 2027 opposition effort greater structural integrity than its predecessors.

The government, for its part, is not standing still. Kenya Kwanza has moved aggressively to consolidate the administrative machinery, and senior figures close to the presidency have dismissed the opposition realignment as premature theatre. "The country is watching delivery,"

one government official said, declining to be named. "Coalitions are built on promises. We are building on roads, hospitals and jobs."

That argument will be tested on the ground. Inflation, unemployment among the youth, and public discontent over taxation — all of which fuelled the Gen Z protests that shook Nairobi in June last year — remain live political liabilities for the administration. The opposition's calculation is that by 2027, economic grievance will have matured into electoral fury, and that a united front across five or six regions can translate that fury into votes.

The Linda Mwananchi Party's Lavington headquarters will now become the operational base for that project. Whether the structure announced yesterday survives contact with the egos, interests and ethnic calculations that define Kenyan coalition politics remains the central question. History counsels scepticism. But the political geography of the proposed alliance — Nairobi, Mount Kenya, Western, Eastern and the coast simultaneously — represents, at minimum, a credible theory of how to win.

Business The carrier operates daily flights from Jomo Kenyatta International Airport's Terminal 2 to both Mombasa and Ukunda/Diani, the airstrip that serves the popular Diani Beach resort corridor

Fly748 targets festive coast rush with November discount extension

Domestic carrier fly748.com courts December holidaymakers at Nairobi tourism fair with daily flights to Mombasa and Diani and a 10 per cent fare cut running through November

BY Grace Wanja
@themkenyatimes

Domestic airline fly748.com is targeting Kenya's festive season travel market with extended airfare discounts and daily scheduled flights to Mombasa and Ukunda/Diani, as the carrier seeks to position itself as the preferred alternative to road travel for families

heading to the coast in December.

The airline is showcasing its passenger services at the Getaway Tourism Fair, running from Wednesday to Friday at Sarit Expo Centre in Nairobi, where aviation operators, hotels and tour companies are competing for the attention of holidaymakers beginning to plan their end-of-year travel. For fly748.com, the timing is

deliberate. December remains the single busiest travel period in Kenya's domestic calendar, driven by school holidays, Christmas festivities and the annual migration of urban families to the coast.

Fly748.com Head of Scheduled Services George Oduor said the fair offered a direct line to travellers at precisely the moment they are making booking decisions. "The fes-



tive season presents a wonderful opportunity for Kenyans to explore the beauty of their country," Oduor said. "The Getaway Tourism Fair brings together players across the aviation and hospitality sectors, giving travellers access to exciting offers as they plan their holidays. We encourage Kenyans to take advantage of these opportunities and experience the diverse destinations our country has to offer."

The carrier operates daily flights from Jomo Kenyatta International Airport's Terminal 2 to both Mombasa and Ukunda/Diani, the airstrip that serves the popular Diani Beach resort corridor in Kwale County. The route network is modest but deliberate, trained squarely on Kenya's most in-demand leisure destinations and designed to compete directly with the long-distance road journey that most coastal-bound travellers have historically accepted as the only affordable option.

To sharpen that competitive edge, fly748.com has extended its 10 per cent airfare discount throughout November, building on a promotional offer that ran through October. The extension gives prospective travellers an additional month to lock in reduced fares before the peak December travel window, when demand typically drives prices upward across all transport modes. Oduor was careful to frame the discount not as a concession on quality but as a broadening of access. "Our focus is on making air travel more

accessible without compromising the standards that matter most to our customers," he said. "Whether travelling for the first time or flying regularly, passengers should be able to enjoy a safe, reliable and comfortable travel experience at a competitive price."

Behind the promotional push lies an operational foundation that the airline's leadership is keen to emphasise. Fly748.com is the scheduled passenger brand of 748 Air Services (K) Ltd, a company with more than three decades of aviation experience in Kenya. That heritage — built across cargo, charter and specialist aviation operations — provides the carrier with maintenance infrastructure, regulatory familiarity and operational depth that newer entrants to the domestic passenger market typically lack. In a sector where safety record and operational reliability are the primary concerns of first-time flyers, the parentage matters.

Kenya's domestic aviation market has historically been characterised by high fares, limited competition and persistent questions about reliability, factors that have kept road transport dominant even on routes where flying would save several hours. The coastal corridor is among the most commercially attractive in the country, drawing not only leisure travellers but business passengers and diaspora visitors whose travel peaks precisely in the December period. Carriers that can demonstrate consistent scheduling and competitive pricing on

that route stand to capture a loyal repeat customer base.

The Getaway Tourism Fair, which concludes tomorrow, brings together stakeholders from across Kenya's tourism and hospitality ecosystem, from lodge operators and safari companies to airlines and travel agents. For fly748.com, participation is as much about brand positioning as it is about immediate ticket sales — placing the carrier alongside established names in the leisure travel space and signalling a long-term commitment to the domestic tourism market.

Kenya's tourism and hospitality industry has in recent years made a concerted push to grow domestic travel, recognising that a sector historically dependent on international visitors requires a broader base to remain resilient. Airlines that make coastal travel genuinely affordable for middle-income Nairobi families are, in that context, doing more than selling seats — they are widening the market itself.

Whether fly748.com's November discount is enough to shift booking habits at scale remains to be seen. But with daily flights, a three-decade operational pedigree and a fare promotion timed to catch travellers in the planning phase, the carrier has assembled a credible pitch for the December rush.

The coast is waiting. The question is how many Kenyans will choose to fly there.



Kenya-Russia The announcement caps months of painstaking diplomacy that began in earnest after the scale of Kenya's exposure to the Russia-Ukraine war became impossible for Nairobi to ignore

Ruto secures Russia pledge to halt Kenyan military recruitment

Putin designates Kenya a non-source country for enlistment as Nairobi appoints a defence attaché to repatriate and compensate citizens trapped in the Ukraine war.

BY James Mwangi
@themkenyatimes

President William Ruto announced yesterday that Russia has formally agreed to stop recruiting Kenyan citizens into its military, following bilateral talks with President Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin in Moscow on Friday — a diplomatic breakthrough that brings cautious relief to hundreds of Kenyan families who have spent months searching for sons, brothers and husbands swallowed by a war that was never Kenya's to fight.

Ruto, speaking after the conclusion of the Russia-Africa Summit, said Putin had confirmed that Kenya had been designated a non-source country for recruitment into the Russian military, effectively closing the enlistment pipeline that drew hundreds of Kenyans into one of the world's deadliest active conflicts.

"Thanked President Putin for confirming that Kenyans will no longer be enlisted into the Russian military because Kenya has been categorised a non-source country for recruitment into the Russian military," Ruto posted on his X account on Friday. "Informed President Putin that I have appointed a Defence Attaché at the Kenya Embassy in Moscow, who will liaise with the Russian Ministry of Defence in processing the return of Kenyans who were in Russia for military purposes," he added.

The announcement caps months of painstaking diplomacy that began in earnest

after the scale of Kenya's exposure to the Russia-Ukraine war became impossible for Nairobi to ignore or contain. What started as scattered reports of missing young men evolved into a national crisis — one that drew protesters to the streets, relatives to Parliament gates, and Kenya's foreign affairs machinery into urgent, repeated contact with Moscow.

The government has identified at least 289 Kenyans recruited into the Russian military, based on reports received from families and official inquiries, with 153 remaining unaccounted for and 69 confirmed killed in action or reported missing. Those are the verified numbers. The true scale is almost certainly larger. Kenya's National Intelligence Service reported that more than 1,000 Kenyans were recruited to fight for Russia in Ukraine, misled with promises of skilled employment before being sent to the frontlines. Continent-wide, at least 3,066 Africans from 40 countries were recruited into Russia's armed forces from October 2022, with 502 documented as killed in action by June 2026 — and Kenya sits at the top of the list of African nations supplying the largest numbers.

The human cost has been devastating and intimate in equal measure. Across Kenya, families have been searching for sons, brothers and husbands who quietly left the country after being promised jobs in Russia, only to disappear into a war that was never theirs. Some have been officially declared dead, others are logged as missing, while

many families have received neither bodies nor any word of where their loved ones are buried.

The grief has a geography. In Kisii County, Dennis Bagaka Ombwori, 39, became the latest Kenyan confirmed dead in the Russia-Ukraine war, his mother's wails filling their family home in Sikonga village. In Donetsk, one Kenyan was killed in what Ukrainian authorities described as a high-casualty assault, his body left unrecovered by Russian forces — he was found still carrying the passports of two other Kenyans. Two Kenyans, Evans Kibet and Macharia Willi Muniu, remain prisoners of war in Ukraine. In Nairobi, families gathered at Jevanjee Gardens to speak publicly about the grief and uncertainty consuming their households, after relatives were duped by Russian agents into frontline deployment.

The recruitment pipeline exploited Kenya's unemployment pressures with surgical cynicism. Many returnees and families of those still deployed say their relatives were lured or tricked — promised lucrative jobs or skilled employment abroad, only to be issued a weapon and directed towards Ukrainian trenches. Recruiters operated through social media, job agencies and personal networks, presenting what appeared to be credible employment contracts. The reality, for those who arrived in Russia, was starkly different. One message, widely shared among families of recruits and cited by rights organisations, carried a desperate warning from a Kenyan inside the war:



President William Ruto with President Vladimir Putin

"Kenyans, don't come here. Just death is patrolling here. My friends are dead with their money which we came here for. Please don't come. There is no champion in war."

A Kenyan government official had previously acknowledged that citizens were "irregularly recruited" and that many fell victim to "unscrupulous groups" in their desire to work abroad. Kenyan police made arrests connected to the recruitment networks, but the criminal architecture behind the operation — spanning multiple countries and exploiting legal loopholes in labour migration — has proved difficult to dismantle entirely.

The diplomatic groundwork for Friday's agreement was laid in March 2026, when Mudavadi travelled to Moscow and held talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, securing Kenya's placement on Russia's recruitment stop list. Friday's Kremlin summit elevated that commitment to heads-of-state level, lending it political weight that earlier undertakings lacked. According to State House, the two leaders formally agreed to designate Kenya as a non-source country for recruitment into the Russian military.

To give the agreement practical force, Ruto confirmed that a Defence Attaché has been appointed at the Kenyan Embassy in Moscow to work directly with Russia's Ministry of Defence, coordinating the safe return of Kenyans and determining how compensation claims for those affected — and for families of the dead — will be processed. Of the

Kenyans identified in-country, 77 had been on the frontlines, 38 in military camps, 52 in unclassified locations and 34 hospitalised under conditions that restricted consular access. The Defence Attaché's role will be to cut through that opacity and establish direct institutional contact with the Russian military establishment.

The talks in Moscow ranged considerably beyond the military crisis that dominated headlines. The two leaders agreed to expand Russian scholarships for Kenyan students from 70 to 300 annually and committed their governments to negotiating a bilateral labour agreement that would allow Kenyans to live and work legally in Russia — a structured channel intended, in part, to replace the dangerous informal pathways that recruiters have exploited. The two countries also signed five cooperation instruments covering economic cooperation, labour inspection and employment promotion, transport, diplomatic training and visa-free travel for holders of diplomatic and service passports.

Ruto acknowledged the longstanding diplomatic ties between the two nations, recalling that Russia was the second country to recognise Kenya's independence in 1963 and noting that Russia remains one of Kenya's leading suppliers of fertiliser. He pressed for increased Kenyan exports of tea and flowers to address a widening trade imbalance that currently favours Moscow. Putin pledged support for the expansion of United Nations

offices in Nairobi, the only UN headquarters located in the developing world, as the two leaders signalled a desire to deepen engagement amid a shifting global diplomatic order.

In a gesture that underscored the warming bilateral tone, Ruto extended a formal invitation for Putin to visit Kenya. If accepted, it would mark the Russian president's first official visit to the country and his first trip to Africa since 2018 — a visit that would carry considerable symbolic weight given Russia's expanding continental ambitions and Kenya's position as East Africa's diplomatic anchor.

The Moscow accord draws a formal line under a scandal that exposed, with painful clarity, Kenya's vulnerability to transnational labour exploitation and the limits of state protection for citizens pursuing work abroad. It also raises questions that will outlast Friday's handshake: how many Kenyans remain unaccounted for, what compensation will actually reach bereaved families, and whether the criminal networks that fed young Kenyans into a foreign war have truly been shut down or merely disrupted.

For the families still waiting — in Kisii, in Nairobi, in villages scattered across central and western Kenya — Friday's announcement in Moscow is the first credible institutional promise that those who can still come home will be brought home. Whether Russia honours it will determine whether this was a diplomatic victory or simply a more dignified form of delay.

Politics The Juja stopover was the latest in a sustained grassroots mobilisation drive that has taken Gachagua across Kenya's counties since his impeachment as Deputy President in October 2024

Gachagua, Kalonzo and Wamalwa take opposition campaign to Juja in Kiambu

With 283 days to Kenya's August 2027 general election, the united opposition opens a party office in Juja and signals that the battle for Kiambu County — and the Mount Kenya vote — has begun in earnest.

BY David Kimani

@themkenyatimes

Former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua took his Democracy for Citizens Party "Meet the People" tour to Juja in Kiambu County on Friday, opening a constituency party office and drawing Wiper leader Kalonzo Musyoka and DAP-Kenya's Eugene Wamalwa to his side in a show of opposition unity with 283 days to the August 2027 general election.

The Juja stopover was the latest in a sustained grassroots mobilisation drive that has taken Gachagua across Kenya's counties since his impeachment as Deputy President in October 2024. Friday's event, held at the newly opened DCP office along Kenyatta Road in Juja Farm, drew enthusiastic crowds that opposition leaders were quick to read as a signal of the political wind blowing through Kiambu — a county that will be among the most fiercely contested battlegrounds next August.

Addressing the gathering, Gachagua framed the exercise in explicitly constitutional terms, a register he has cultivated since his removal from office. "Your commitment and support will not go unrewarded," he told residents. "Together, we will restore our country to constitutionalism and the rule of law." Later, on his official X account, he was equally direct. "The great people of Kenyatta Road, Juja, Kiambu County, are commit-

ted to correcting past political mistakes and charting a new path. That is their right, and it deserves respect. In the next 283 days, they will turn out in large numbers to exercise that right — and they are ready to do so. Aluta continua!"

The language was deliberate and the mathematics precise. Two hundred and eighty-three days places election day squarely in August 2027, and every word Gachagua spoke in Juja was calibrated for that countdown. The reference to "correcting past political mistakes" was unmistakably aimed at President William Ruto's administration and, implicitly, at the parliamentary majority that voted to remove Gachagua from office two years ago. In Kiambu, where the memory of that impeachment remains raw, the message landed with force.

Kalonzo's presence at the Juja event reinforced a pattern of deepening coordination between the Wiper leader and Gachagua that has gathered pace in recent weeks. Just four days earlier, on 26 October, Kalonzo had visited Gachagua at his Wamunyororo home in Nyeri County for talks expected to advance efforts to agree on a single opposition presidential candidate for 2027. That meeting came a week after Linda Mwananchi leader Edwin Sifuna also held consultations with Gachagua at Wamunyororo on 20 October, a day after the former Deputy President returned from a two-month stay in the United States. The rhythm of these engagements — Wamun-

yororo one week, Juja the next — speaks to an opposition machine that is tightening its coordination with deliberate urgency.

Wamalwa's appearance alongside both men added a further dimension. His DAP-Kenya party has been involved in the Kalonzo-led Komboa Kenya alliance, which has signalled plans to begin formal talks with key opposition figures on a unified presidential ticket to challenge Ruto. His presence in Juja alongside Gachagua and Kalonzo underscored that whatever negotiations are under way behind closed doors, the public face of the opposition is, for now, one of studied solidarity.

The significance of Kiambu as a political theatre cannot be overstated. The county sits at the political and psychological heart of the Mount Kenya region, a bloc that delivered Ruto his winning margin in 2022 and which both the government and the opposition are now working furiously to define, claim and mobilise ahead of the next vote. Since his impeachment, Gachagua has reinvented himself as a central mobiliser within the United Opposition, with his DCP now operating across multiple counties and building structures designed to convert public sympathy into electoral infrastructure.

That infrastructure received a tangible boost in August, when DCP's candidate won the Ol Kalou parliamentary by-election in Nyandarua County — a result that strengthened

the party's national profile and provided momentum as it builds ahead of the general election. The opening of the Juja constituency office on Friday follows a similar pattern: physical party presence in key locations, each opening treated as a public event, each event generating social media content and local media coverage that extends the campaign's reach beyond those physically present.

The broader coalition that has coalesced around Gachagua — formally described as the United Alternative Government — brings together DCP, Wiper, Jubilee under deputy leader Fred Matiang'i, Martha Karua's People's Liberation Party, Justin Muturi's Democratic Party, DAP-Kenya and Peter Munya's Party of National Unity. It is a broad church, assembled from the wreckage of previous coalitions and animated by a shared objective: removing Ruto from power. Whether its internal tensions — over presidential candidacy, running mate selection and constituency-level resource allocation — can be managed through to polling day remains the central question of Kenya's pre-election politics.

Gachagua has made no secret of his own ambitions within that coalition. He remains confident that he is best positioned to lead the opposition challenge against Ruto, pointing to the growing popularity of DCP. Kalonzo, for his part, has maintained his own presidential aspirations. Reports of an understanding between the two men — with Gachagua backing Kalonzo as his preferred presidential candidate — have unsettled some opposition principals who fear being sidelined. The alliance is productive but not without friction, and the coming months will test the durability of the trust built in sitting rooms in Wamunyororo and on campaign stages in Juja.

What Friday's visit to Kenyatta Road made clear is that the opposition is not waiting. The DCP office in Juja is open. The countdown clock is running. And in Kiambu County — populous, politically volatile, and absolutely decisive — the campaigns for August 2027 are no longer a future event.

They are already here.



Former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua



Wiper leader Kalonzo Musyoka



DAP-Kenya's Eugene Wamalwa

Business Under the new arrangement, customers can place orders between 40 days and 72 hours before departure, with purchases delivered directly to their seats during the flight

Kenya Airways slashes duty-free prices with new inflight shopping service

National carrier partners with Safari Duty Free to launch digital pre-order platform offering passengers savings of up to 15 per cent from 1 November

BY Jane Njeri
@themkenyatimes

Kenya Airways on Friday launched a new onboard duty-free shopping service in partnership with Safari Duty Free, offering passengers prices up to 15 per cent lower than airport duty-free shops through a digital pre-order platform that takes effect on 1

November 2026.

The five-year agreement replaces the airline's existing inflight retail arrangement and introduces a dedicated Kenya Airways Duty-Free Webstore, allowing passengers to browse and purchase international brands, luxury goods, lifestyle items, travel accessories and gifts from their mobile devices or computers

before they board. It is a significant structural shift in how the national carrier approaches inflight retail — moving from a passive trolley-down-the-aisle model to an active, digitally driven shopping experience anchored in competitive pricing.

Under the new arrangement, customers can place orders between 40 days and 72



Kenya Airways on Friday launched a new onboard duty-free shopping service in partnership with Safari Duty Free

hours before departure, with purchases delivered directly to their seats during the flight. The platform will offer order tracking and round-the-clock customer support, while cabin crew will provide personalised assistance onboard. For the launch month running through 30 November, passengers will receive an additional five per cent discount on all products purchased through the webstore — stacking savings on top of the already reduced duty-free pricing.

Kenya Airways Chief Commercial and Customer Officer Julius Thairu framed the launch as part of a broader effort to raise the quality of the end-to-end travel experience. “Duty-free is an important part of the Kenya Airways customer journey,” Thairu said. “This launch reflects our commitment to continuously enhancing the travel experience by giving our customers more choice, greater convenience and better value.”

Under the terms of the partnership, Safari Duty Free will oversee product selection, merchandising, brand partnerships, digital retail integration and customer service across the programme. The company's Managing Director Vivek Mehra said the collaboration was designed to leverage complementary strengths. “This partnership combines our retail expertise with Kenya Airways' international network,” Mehra said, “to deliver a superior shopping experience for travellers.”

The timing of the launch is

deliberate. November marks the beginning of Kenya's peak festive travel season, when passenger volumes on international routes surge ahead of the December holidays. Travellers departing for Europe, Asia and North America — routes on which duty-free spending tends to be highest — will be among the first to access the new platform. For an airline that has spent recent years navigating financial turbulence and restructuring its commercial operations, strengthening ancillary revenue streams such as inflight retail represents a meaningful and relatively low-risk avenue for improving its bottom line without adding capacity.

The broader context matters. Inflight retail has historically been an underdeveloped revenue channel for African carriers compared with their European and Asian counterparts, where duty-free sales can contribute substantially to total ancillary income. The shift to a pre-order digital model — already well established among carriers such as Finnair, KLM and Singapore Airlines — gives Kenya Airways a structural advantage over traditional trolley retail by allowing better inventory management, reduced waste and the ability to stock products passengers have already committed to buying. It also extends the shopping window far beyond the flight itself, turning the airline's digital touchpoints into a retail channel in their own right.

For passengers, the practical benefits are straightforward.

Pre-ordering removes the uncertainty of whether a desired product will be available onboard, eliminates the pressure of making purchasing decisions mid-flight and, with prices benchmarked at up to 15 per cent below airport duty-free levels, offers a tangible financial incentive to engage with the platform rather than shopping at the terminal. The addition of order tracking and dedicated customer support addresses a long-standing frustration with inflight retail, where accountability for missing or incorrect orders has historically been difficult to enforce.

Whether the platform will deliver the passenger uptake and revenue growth Kenya Airways is counting on will depend largely on how smoothly the digital infrastructure performs in the early weeks of operation and how effectively the airline communicates the offering to its customer base. The architecture is sound, the pricing incentive is real and the partner brings credible retail expertise. Execution, as ever, will be the test.

For an airline with ambitions to reclaim its position as Africa's leading long-haul carrier, getting the details of the passenger experience right — including the small but symbolically important detail of what people can buy at a fair price on a long flight — is precisely the kind of incremental improvement that, compounded across millions of journeys, reshapes a brand.

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The power within me



I may be small, but my dreams are tall,
I may be quiet, but I can stand through it all.
I have a mind that loves to explore,
And a heart that hopes to do more.

Every mistake teaches me something new,

Every challenge helps me grow through.
I will keep learning, I will keep trying,
Even when the clouds hide the silver lining.

I don't need magic to touch the sky,
I just need courage to give it a try.
My future is a story waiting to begin,
And I believe in the power within.

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

A day without electricity



The lights went off while I was studying,
And my room became quiet and dark.
I could no longer use my television or phone,

So I sat near the window and watched the sky.
My family gathered and started talking,
Without screens between us.
I realized how much we depend on electricity,
And how little we notice it every day.
That evening taught me to value simple things,
And understand the importance of saving energy.

V. S. Nithiyasri
Class: 8D
John Dewey Matric Higher Secondary School,
Panruti -Tamilnadu

Be happy



All days may not be the same.
Some days may be happy and cheerful;
Some days may be gloomy and dull.
But we lead our lives with positive thoughts and a
positive mindset.
We may feel dejected at times.
Let us realise that every dusk has a dawn.

The way we react should change for the
betterment of our lives.
Let us be thankful for each and every day.
Let us strongly believe that whatever happens is
for our good.
What should reach us will never be stopped by
anyone.
Every day may not be good,
But let us try to see the goodness in every day.

KUMARESWARI S
GRADUATE TEACHER -ENGLISH
VKGHSS AYYANKALIPALAYAM TIRUPPUR
TAMILNADU

Dear little chalk piece



A Teacher's Nostalgia

I still remember you, my little piece of white,
You filled my classroom mornings with wisdom
and light.
Across the blackboard, you danced in my hand,
Turning words into wonders, helping young minds
understand.
Your dust on my fingers, your marks on my
clothes,

The joy of those moments, only a teacher knows.
Now a digital pen glides over a screen,
But I miss those old days, so simple, so serene.
You grew shorter each day as my lessons took
flight,
Yet you filled countless young hearts with
knowledge and light.
Oh, little piece of chalk, though we've drifted
apart,
You've left the blackboard, but never my heart.
New tools may teach, and new times may unfold,
But my chalk-dusted memories are more precious
than gold.
S.Manohar, M.A., B.Ed, .B.A, (Psychology)
Secondary Grade Teacher
Panchayat Union Primary School Velliyanai
Thanthoni Block
Karur Tamilnadu India

How can we motivate children to discover their skills?



Every Child Has a Unique Potential

In today's competitive world, many parents
and teachers constantly motivate children to
secure first marks, achieve top ranks, and excel in
academics.
Of course, academic achievement is important.
But is securing the first rank the only measure of
a child's talent?

Every child is born with unique abilities, interests,
creativity, and potential. Some children may excel
in academics, while others may shine in sports,
art, music, communication, technology, or other
fields.

Unfortunately, some parents unknowingly impose
their own unfulfilled dreams on their children.
They decide what their children should become
without understanding what they truly want.

A parent may dream of seeing their child become
a doctor, engineer, or government officer. But
have they ever paused to ask their child about
their own dream?

When Parental Dreams Become Children's
Pressure

I would like to share a real-life incident that made
me think deeply about this issue.

A girl had no interest in becoming a doctor.
However, her father strongly wished to see her
as a medical professional and insisted that she
prepare for NEET.

She appeared for the examination but could not
succeed in her first attempt.

Instead of understanding her interests and
emotional struggles, she was sent to a hostel for
further preparation. She was not allowed to use
her phone or communicate freely with others.

The restrictions and isolation made her
increasingly disappointed and emotionally
distressed.

She appeared for the examination again, but
unfortunately, she could not succeed in her
second attempt either.

This incident raises an important question:

Are we preparing our children for their future, or
are we forcing them to live our dreams?

A child who is already struggling with a
subject or career choice needs understanding,
encouragement, and guidance—not additional
pressure.

How Can Parents and Teachers Help Children
Discover Their Skills?

Parents and teachers play a significant role in
identifying and nurturing children's abilities.

Instead of comparing children with others, we
should:

- Encourage them to explore different activities
and interests.
- Observe their natural abilities and creative
thinking.
- Give importance to their opinions and
aspirations.
- Allow them to learn from failures without fear.
- Provide emotional support during difficult
situations.
- Guide them towards careers that match their
interests and abilities.
- Celebrate their individual progress rather than
focusing only on ranks.

Marks can reflect academic performance, but
they cannot measure the complete personality,
creativity, or future potential of a child.

The Difference Between Guidance and Force

There is a significant difference between guiding a
child and forcing a child.

Guidance gives confidence, while force may create
fear.

Guidance helps children make informed decisions,
while force may silence their true interests.

Parents should certainly share their experience,
explain career opportunities, and help children
understand the challenges ahead. But the
final career journey should involve the child's
interests, abilities, and willingness.

A successful child is not necessarily the one
who fulfils parental expectations. Success also
means discovering one's strengths, developing
skills, and finding a meaningful direction in life.

Towards a Generation of Confident Children

Every child deserves the opportunity to discover
who they are and what they can become.

Let us stop measuring children's worth only
through marks and ranks. Instead, let us create
an environment where curiosity is encouraged,
mistakes become learning experiences, and
individual talents are respected.

Do not force children to follow your dreams. Help
them discover the dreams within themselves.

Our responsibility is not to decide their
destination, but to guide them towards finding
their own path.

Children need roots of confidence, not chains of
expectations.

V. JAYANTHI
Graduate teacher
Creative Writer
PUMS Konganancherry
Chengalpattu district

Energy Trust, then, is the foundation upon which this entire undertaking must rest. Nuclear power carries a weight of public feeling unlike any other energy source

Kenya's nuclear future: A conversation the whole nation must own

As Kenya advances plans for its first nuclear power plant, the stakes extend far beyond engineering — demanding transparency, public trust and a skilled generation prepared to carry a decision that will outlast all of us

BY James Kilonzo
Bwire

@themkenyentimes

Kenya is approaching one of the most consequential energy decisions in its history, as the government advances plans for the country's first nuclear power plant — a commitment that will shape its economy, environment and public life for generations, and one that demands far broader public ownership than it has yet received.

Electricity is the invisible foundation of modern life. The choices a country makes about how it generates power determine the health of its industries, the reliability of its hospitals, the productivity of its farms and the quality of life in its homes. A nuclear programme, once begun, locks a nation into a path spanning not years but generations — from the first feasibility studies through construction, operation, eventual decommissioning and the long stewardship of spent fuel and radioactive materials. That is precisely why the conversation about nuclear power in Kenya cannot remain the preserve of boardrooms, technical committees and government offices. It belongs to everyone, because everyone will live with its consequences, pay for its costs and inherit both its benefits and its burdens.

Against that backdrop, a workshop convened in Kisumu by the Nuclear Power and Energy Agency, the Kenya Electricity Generating Company and Maseno University represents something genuinely encouraging. It acknowledges what too many large infrastructure projects ignore: that a programme of this magnitude cannot be carried by engineers and policymakers alone. It must be carried by a nation. When universities sit at the same table as government and the energy



NuPEA stakeholders at Kisumu hotel. Photo courtesy

sector, the conversation shifts from announcement to genuine dialogue. Citizens are no longer told what has been decided; they are invited to ask questions, raise concerns, test assumptions and contribute knowledge. That shift matters more than any single technical milestone, because the most sophisticated reactor in the world will fail in its social purpose if the society around it does not understand, trust and consent to it.

Trust, then, is the foundation upon which this entire undertaking must rest. Nuclear power carries a weight of public feeling unlike any other energy source. People hear the word and think of accidents, of invisible radiation, of waste that remains hazardous for periods longer than the entire recorded history of many nations. Those fears are not irrational. They are human, and they deserve to be met with patience, openness and evidence — not dismissal, condescension or the polished language of public relations. Fear that is ignored does not disappear. It grows in silence and hardens into opposition that no volume of technical reassurance can dis-

solve.

Earning public confidence requires truthful communication about both the benefits and the risks, transparency on site selection, honest answers to difficult questions about accidents, waste, cost and security, and a visible commitment to safety at every stage. It also requires intellectual honesty about uncertainty. A government that claims the programme carries no risks at all will lose credibility the moment citizens discover otherwise — and credibility, once lost, is extraordinarily difficult to recover.

Public engagement is not a public relations exercise to be ticked off a checklist. It is a constitutional and moral duty. It should begin early, continue consistently and include the voices of farmers, fisherfolk, women, youth, county leadership, religious institutions, civil society and the residents who will live closest to the facility. Engagement must be genuine rather than performative. Holding a meeting to inform communities of a decision already made is not engagement — it is notification dressed in the language of participation. Genuine en-

gagement means communities have real opportunities to influence outcomes, that objections receive serious and documented responses, and that the process retains flexibility to change course when concerns are legitimate. Communities that feel respected become partners. Communities that feel steamrolled become adversaries, and a nuclear programme cannot afford adversaries among its own host populations.

Equally critical is competence. A nuclear programme demands an entire ecosystem of skilled people: reactor physicists, nuclear and civil engineers, radiation protection specialists, environmental scientists, geologists, lawyers, economists, regulators and emergency planners. It demands institutions too — an independent regulatory authority, a capable owner-operator, robust emergency arrangements and a legal framework aligned with international conventions. Kenya's universities are the natural nurseries of this human resource. The Kisumu workshop rightly places capacity-building at the heart of the discussion. Academia

can contribute most concretely by developing curricula in nuclear science, engineering, radiation safety and nuclear law, producing graduates who understand not only how a reactor works but why a culture of safety, discipline and accountability must surround it. Nuclear safety is not primarily a matter of equipment. It is a matter of culture, and culture is built in classrooms long before it is tested in control rooms.

The regulatory architecture deserves particular emphasis. An independent, well-resourced regulator is as important as the plant itself — empowered to say no, to delay, to demand improvements and to inspect without interference. History has shown that the most serious nuclear accidents involved not only technical failures but institutional ones: cultures where inconvenient warnings were suppressed and schedules prioritised over safety. Kenya should study those lessons not to be discouraged but to be forewarned. The nation should equally resist any temptation to rush. A delayed but carefully prepared programme is far better than a hurried one that cuts corners. The costs of preparation are visible and immediate; the costs of unpreparedness are invisible until the day they become catastrophic.

Site selection involves far more than geology and proximity to the transmission grid. The land on which a plant may be built is not empty space. It carries histories, livelihoods, sacred sites and community bonds formed over generations. Land acquisition done poorly leaves communities poorer and resentful. Done well — with fair compensation, genuine consultation and long-term local benefit sharing through employment and community development — host communities become genuine partners rather than casualties of progress.

Radioactive waste is the question that outlasts everyone alive today and deserves an honest answer. How much waste will be produced, where it will be stored, who will pay for its long-term management and what arrangements will protect generations who had no voice in the original de-

cision — these are not secondary questions. They are central ones. Emergency preparedness must equally mean more than documents on a shelf: trained personnel, tested evacuation plans and regular community exercises so that people know what to do if something ever goes wrong.

The promise of nuclear power is real. It offers reliable, large-scale, low-carbon electricity that can complement geothermal, hydro, wind and solar in a diversified national energy mix, supporting industry, employment and Kenya's broader development ambitions. But that promise is conditional — it holds only if the programme is governed with integrity, financed responsibly and explained to the public without exaggeration or alarmism.

The workshop in Kisumu is valuable precisely because it opens space for questions before decisions harden into irreversible commitments. In the years between roadmap and reactor, the most important construction will not be of concrete and steel but of knowledge, institutions, skills and public confidence. Concrete and steel can be inspected with instruments. Confidence can only be inspected through conduct — observed in every meeting, every disclosure and every promise kept or broken. If Kenya builds those intangible foundations patiently, the plant will stand not merely as a source of electricity but as proof that the country can undertake complex, high-stakes endeavours with wisdom and genuine care for the people it serves. When those lights eventually come on, they should illuminate a nation that was informed, consulted, protected and proud of how the journey was made.

Agribusiness At a farmer outreach event held in Kathwana, Tharaka-Nithi County, on Friday, AFA distributed three metric tonnes of sunflower seeds, 1.6 metric tonnes of cotton seeds

AFA boosts sunflower, cotton and cashew nut farming in Tharaka-Nithi

The Agriculture and Food Authority steps up crop diversification programmes in semi-arid counties, distributing seeds and machines to help farmers earn more from their land.

BY Blaise Gitonga

@themkenyatimes

The Agriculture and Food Authority has intensified programmes targeting food security and poverty reduction in arid and semi-arid lands across Kenya, with farmers in Tharaka-Nithi and Meru counties among the latest to benefit from a government seed distribution and sensitisation drive.

At a farmer outreach event held in Kathwana, Tharaka-Nithi County, on Friday, AFA distributed three metric tonnes of sunflower seeds, 1.6 metric tonnes of cotton seeds and cashew nut seedlings to farmers in the region, as part of a broader push to diversify agricultural activity in semi-arid areas and improve rural incomes.

AFA board member Peterson Muthathai told farmers attending the programme that ASAL counties held significant untapped potential across a range of crops suited to drier climates, including nuts and oil crops, food crops, horticultural produce, miraa, pyrethrum, fibre crops and other industrial crops.

“We thank the government for focusing on farmers at the grassroots through programmes targeting arid and semi-arid areas to diversify their farming activities using crops that do well in those regions,” Muthathai said. “We have advised them to grow different crops that thrive in their areas to maximise profits.”

Beyond seed distribution, AFA used the Kathwana forum to signal its intent to revive Kenya’s struggling textile industry through increased cotton production. Muthathai painted a sobering picture of where the sector currently stands, noting that most ginneries across the



AFA Distributes Seeds, Seedlings to Boost Farming in Tharaka-Nithi at Kathwana | Photo: Blaise Gitonga

country had shut down, leaving cotton farmers with limited processing options and weakened market access.

“The textile industry in Kenya is in a deplorable state,” he said. “We are distributing seeds through societies to increase production as we aim to revive it. Through cooperatives, we will aim for higher production volumes to make it easier for investors to purchase our produce.”

He urged cotton farmers to form and strengthen cooperatives, arguing that higher collective output would attract investors and give smallholder farmers greater bargaining power. Muthathai also called on county governments to invest in value-addition centres and storage warehouses to help farmers preserve their produce and command better market prices.

On cashew nuts, AFA outlined plans to establish community nurseries through farmer groups and societies, with the aim of scaling up production in counties where the crop is viable. John Adhola, acting director of nuts and oil crops at AFA, said the authority was working closely with county governments to train farmers on best prac-

tices and improve profitability across the value chain.

Adhola also announced that additional sunflower oil extraction machines would be provided to farmers in Tharaka-Nithi County — a development that drew an enthusiastic response from those present. Sunflower farmer Elena Kathure said the machines would be transformative for growers who currently travel long distances to access processing facilities.

“We are happy that our group will be provided with a sunflower oil extraction machine by AFA,” Kathure said. “Bringing the machines closer to the people will help more farmers venture into sunflower farming.”

Dorothy Nditi, head of food security in the Office of the Deputy President, said the government’s agricultural strategy was designed to address the entire value chain, from production through to distribution, rather than focusing narrowly on farm-level output.

“The programme will bring diversification — it is giving farmers options,” Nditi said. “When one crop does not give good returns, you can get returns from other crops.” She

added that Kenya’s farmers were capable producers whose earnings were constrained not by what they could grow but by how effectively produce reached markets. “If we increase production and improve distribution, we will earn more income,” she said.

Kenya has 23 arid and semi-arid counties, covering approximately 88 per cent of the country’s total landmass. These areas are monitored for drought and vulnerability by the National Drought Management Authority. Tharaka-Nithi, the northern and marginal areas of Meru, and Mbeere Sub-County in Embu are among those classified as semi-arid, making them priority targets for programmes designed to build agricultural resilience in the face of erratic rainfall and shifting climate patterns.

Friday’s event marked a practical step in what AFA described as a sustained, long-term commitment to ensuring that farmers in Kenya’s most climatically challenging counties are not left behind by agricultural development prog




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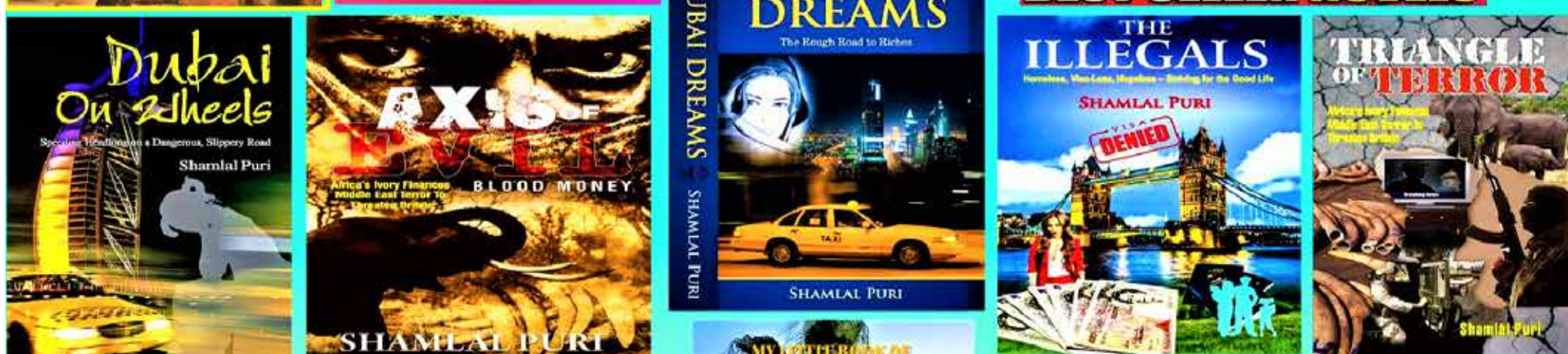
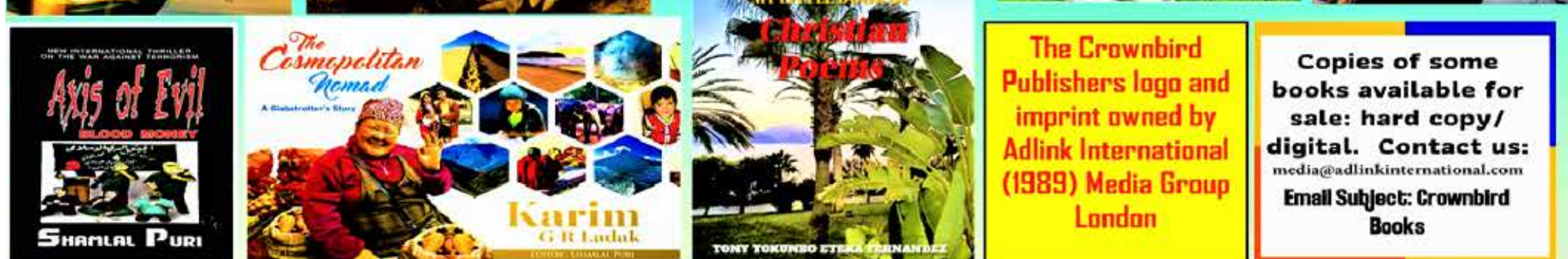
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Cartels The Competition Act arms the Authority with the power to impose fines of up to ten percent of turnover and to refer cases for criminal prosecution

The cartel's banquet: How Kenya's market masters feast on the bones of the poor



By: Jerameel Kevins Owuor Odhiambo
@themkenyatimes

Nearly two in every five Kenyans 39.8 percent of the population, roughly twenty million souls live below the national poverty line, unable to meet basic food and non-food needs. Rural counties in the arid and semi-arid lands record rates above 70 percent; Turkana alone stands at 82.7 percent. Meanwhile, the Competition Authority of Kenya has in recent years uncovered price-fixing, output restriction and market allocation among steel manufacturers, imposing penalties exceeding 338 million shillings, and continues to probe suspected collusion in bread, sugar and mattress markets. These numbers do not merely sit side by side. They form a single, brutal equation: when cartels dictate the price of steel, sugar, fertilizer and cooking oil, they impose an invisible tax that extracts the last coin from households already drowning.

This extraction is no accident of the market. It is the continuation of a long historical pattern. Colonial rule organised the economy around extraction for distant masters; post-independence elites merely changed the accents and the boardrooms. Land concentration, control of commodity chains and the quiet capture of licensing and import regimes created structural inequality that competition law was meant to dismantle. Instead, cartels have perfected the art of looking respectable while strangling the very competition that would allow ordinary producers and consumers to breathe. The steel cartel's coordinated price lists and import restrictions raised the cost of housing and public works in a country that claims to prioritise affordable homes. Fertilizer mark-ups and sugar manipulations keep maize meal and bread out of reach of the same children the state claims to educate. The correlation is clinical:



every percentage point of collusive overcharge deepens the poverty trap, widens the Gini coefficient that still hovers near 38.5, and converts economic growth into a private banquet for the few.

Consider the lived texture of this violence. A mother in Kitui watches the price of a two-kilogramme packet of maize flour climb because millers and traders have learned the profitable language of coordination. A smallholder in Trans Nzoia calculates that the cost of fertilizer has erased the slim margin that once kept the family above the line. A construction worker in Nairobi discovers that the iron sheets and rods he needs for a modest house now carry the silent surcharge of a cartel that treats the national housing agenda as an inconvenience. These are not abstract market failures. They are daily amputations of dignity. Cartels do not merely raise prices; they ration hope. They convert the constitutional promise of a decent standard of living into a cruel joke told in boardrooms where competitors become co-conspirators and the public be-

comes the paying audience.

The Competition Act arms the Authority with the power to impose fines of up to ten percent of turnover and to refer cases for criminal prosecution. Leniency programmes and forensic laboratories exist on paper. Enforcement, however, remains episodic and under-deterrent. Fines rarely approach the statutory ceiling. Dawn raids are infrequent. Settlements that avoid full admission of liability dilute the public record and weaken the deterrent signal. Probes into sugar and bread drag while households continue to bleed. The irony is exquisite: an institution created to protect the competitive process has become, through under-resourcing and political hesitation, an occasional spectator at the very feast it was meant to interrupt.

Structural inequality and cartel power feed each other. Concentrated ownership of key value chains from milling to steel fabrication creates both the capacity and the incentive to collude. Weak competition enforcement then entrenches that concentration, which in turn repro-

duces poverty across generations. The child denied adequate nutrition because of inflated food prices enters school already behind; the young adult who cannot afford materials for a small enterprise remains locked in informal survival. The human-rights dimension is inescapable. The right to food, the right to housing, the right to economic participation all are hollowed out when markets are captured. Competition policy is therefore not a technocratic luxury; it is a frontline instrument of social justice. To treat it as anything less is to declare that the Constitution's transformative vision stops at the factory gate.

What, then, must be done? The Competition Authority requires more than ceremonial support. It needs sustained budgetary independence, expanded forensic capacity, and political cover to pursue high-profile cases without quiet interference. Parliament must strengthen the statute so that criminal liability is more readily triggered and that directors face personal consequences. The Judiciary must treat cartel appeals with

the urgency reserved for threats to public welfare, refusing procedural gymnastics that delay justice for years. County governments and the national executive must stop treating trade associations as sacred cows and begin demanding transparency in pricing data across essential commodities. Civil society and the media must keep the names and the numbers in public view until the banquet is disrupted. Citizens themselves must refuse the fatalism that says "this is how things are." Every complaint lodged, every whistle blown under protection, every refusal to accept the inflated price as natural law chips at the edifice.

History offers no gentle exit. The colonial extractive logic was never fully buried; it merely learned new languages of corporate governance, of industry associations, of "market realities." Cartels are the contemporary expression of that logic. They thrive where enforcement is timid and inequality is treated as an unfortunate background condition rather than an engineered outcome. To rethink competition enforcement is therefore to confront the deeper architecture of poverty. It is to insist that the market serve the many rather than the coordinated few. It is to recognise that every collusive overcharge is a theft from the national project of human flourishing.

The numbers remain stubborn: twenty million Kenyans below the line, cartels still probing the edges of detection, growth that fails to translate into broad-based escape from want. The choice is categorical. Either competition law becomes a sharp instrument of economic justice, or it remains a decorative shield behind which the banquet continues. The poor cannot wait for polite incrementalism. They require the full force of the state investigative, prosecutorial, judicial and political directed against the quiet architects of scarcity. Only then does the fight against poverty move from rhetoric to material reality. Only then does the market cease to be a private hunting ground and become what the Constitution intended: a common space in which dignity is possible.

The writer is a social commentator

Gratitude The loss arrived against a backdrop of hard-won joy. Kambua and her husband, Jackson Mathu, had welcomed their first son, Nathaniel, in 2019 after years of waiting for parenthood

Shukrani: How Kambua turned grief into a song of faith

Kenyan gospel singer Kambua Mathu's journey from losing her newborn son Malachi to releasing a thanksgiving anthem redefines what faith looks like in the face of unbearable loss

BY Ashford Kimani
@themkenyentimes

Kenyan gospel singer Kambua Manundu Mathu released her song Shukrani in May 2021, three months after the death of her newborn son Malachi, transforming one of the most private tragedies a parent can endure into a public testimony about faith, grief and the complicated terrain between the two.

Kambua — as she is universally known — had spent years building a reputation as one of Kenya's most respected gospel musicians and television personalities, her music consistently pointing listeners towards trust in God through life's difficulties. Nothing in that public ministry, however, prepared her audience for the announcement she made on 15 February 2021: that Malachi, her second son, born days earlier, had died. The post was brief, honest and gutting. She asked for privacy. The public largely obliged.

The loss arrived against a backdrop of hard-won joy. Kambua and her husband, Jackson Mathu, had welcomed their first son, Nathaniel, in 2019 after years of waiting for parenthood. Malachi's arrival had brought fresh excitement — another child, another future, another set of firsts to anticipate. His death extinguished all of it at once: the first birthday, the first day of school, the ordinary milestones that parents begin imagining long before a child can walk. Grief of that particular kind is layered. Parents mourn not only the child but the life they had already started building around him.

For months, Kambua stepped away from social media and public life entirely. That withdrawal was itself a quiet act of courage in a media environment that tends to treat silence as a story. Public figures



Kenyan gospel singer Kambua Manundu Mathu

who sing about God's goodness are too often expected to demonstrate faith by appearing unbroken. The assumption is unfair and, frankly, unbiblical. Gospel musicians are human beings who experience devastation, confusion and sorrow like everyone else. Their ministry does not insulate them from grief; it simply means they eventually have to find a language for it.

When Kambua returned in May 2021, she spoke warmly about the prayers, messages, visits and practical support she had received. She was grateful — not performatively, but in the way people are grateful when they have genuinely needed others and found them present. Alongside that return came Shukrani, a word that means thanksgiving in Swahili, though in Kambua's hands it carries a weight that ordinary celebration cannot hold.

The song does not pretend that loss is easy or that grief resolves neatly into praise. What it does instead is something more honest and, ultimately, more useful: it holds sorrow and gratitude in the same space, refusing to let either cancel the other. A person

can mourn deeply while still acknowledging the people who showed up. They can sit in disappointment without surrendering hope entirely. Shukrani argues, quietly but firmly, that thanksgiving in the aftermath of pain is not the same as pretending the pain did not happen.

That distinction matters enormously in communities where grief is sometimes managed with religious language that, however well-intentioned, ends up silencing the bereaved. Telling someone to stop crying, to be strong, or to trust God more can unintentionally communicate that their sorrow is a spiritual failure. It is not. The Psalms are full of anguish. Jesus wept at Lazarus's tomb. Grief, expressed honestly before God and within community, is not a deficit of faith. It is faith doing the hard work it was always meant to do.

Kambua's story also draws attention to a grief that society frequently underestimates: the loss of a newborn. Because these children live so briefly, some assume the attachment cannot run as deep, or that the wound heals faster. Neither is true. Parents form

bonds with their children long before birth, and the death of a newborn does not simply erase those months of anticipation and love. Comments suggesting that a couple can simply try again are among the more quietly devastating things well-meaning people say. Every child is irreplaceable. Malachi was not a placeholder.

The responsibility that falls to friends, churches and communities in these moments is practical as much as it is emotional. Listening without redirecting the conversation, providing meals, remembering dates that the family will never forget — these are the

unglamorous acts of solidarity that matter most. Grief does not end at the funeral. For many bereaved parents, the weeks and months that follow, when public sympathy has quietly moved on, are the loneliest of all.

What Shukrani ultimately offers is not a formula for how to survive loss. Kambua herself never presents her experience as a model to be replicated. People grieve differently, heal at different speeds and sometimes require professional support alongside the prayers of their community. What matters is not the pace of recovery but the quality of the care surrounding it.

Nor should the song's message be read as suggesting that every tragedy must produce a triumphant testimony. Some losses leave marks that never fully fade, and faith does not always arrive dressed in triumph. Sometimes it looks like simply getting out of bed. Sometimes thanksgiving is not expressed through celebration at all — it is a quiet, daily decision to keep going, held together by faith, by love, and by the stubborn kindness of people who refuse to let grief be carried alone.

Malachi's life was brief. But in his mother's hands, his memory became something that reached far beyond their family — into the lives of anyone who has ever had to find a reason, however small, to remain hopeful when the ground had shifted beneath them.

Ashford Kimani is a teacher of English and Literature and writes on education and social affairs.

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Tanzania-Angola At the heart of the corridor lies the Central African Copperbelt, the mineral-dense arc spanning southern DRC and northern Zambia that holds some of the planet's richest deposits of copper

Tanzania and Angola forge trans-African rail link from ocean to ocean

A near 4,000-kilometre railway corridor connecting the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic through the heart of Africa's mineral belt promises to redraw the continent's trade map — if the financing, political will and engineering can match the ambition

BY James Mwangi

@themkenyatimes

Tanzania and Angola have agreed to build a transcontinental railway corridor linking the Port of Dar es Salaam on the Indian Ocean to the Port of Lobito on the Atlantic, traversing Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo in what would become one of the most ambitious infrastructure projects in African history.

Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan announced the agreement, framing it as a defining moment for continental integration. The proposed corridor would stretch nearly 4,000 kilometres across Southern and Central Africa, threading together existing rail networks — Angola's Benguela Railway in the west and the Tanzania-Zambia Railway Authority line in the east — with new greenfield segments through Zambia and the DRC to close the gaps that have kept the two ocean-facing systems disconnected for decades. When complete, a single freight consignment could theoretically cross the African continent by rail without ever touching a road or rounding the Cape of Good Hope.

The ambition is extraordinary. So is the complexity. But the political and economic logic driving the project is compelling enough that four nations, multiple international financiers and some of the world's largest mining operators are now paying close attention.

At the heart of the corridor lies the Central African Copperbelt, the mineral-dense arc spanning southern DRC and northern Zambia that holds some of the planet's richest deposits of copper, battery-grade cobalt and nickel — the very materials that global clean energy supply chains are scrambling to secure. At present, moving those minerals to export markets is expensive, slow and heavily dependent on road transport across borders that were not designed for the volumes now being demanded of them. A transcontinental rail spine would give mining operators something they currently lack: genuine optionality. Copper from Zam-



Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan

bia could move west to Lobito for onward shipment to Europe and the Americas, or east to Dar es Salaam for dispatch to Asian manufacturing hubs, depending on where prices and demand dictate. That flexibility has significant commercial value, and it is one reason why international interest in the project extends well beyond the four countries directly involved.

The western anchor of the corridor, the Lobito Corridor, has already attracted substantial Western backing. The Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment — a framework backed by the United States and the European Union — has committed significant financing to the Angolan segment, driven by a strategic calculation that securing reliable rail access to Copperbelt minerals is essential for energy transition supply chains. Washington and Brussels are acutely aware that cobalt and copper from this region will be indispensable for electric vehicle batteries and renewable energy infrastructure, and that whoever controls the logistics of extraction and export will carry considerable geopolitical leverage in the decades ahead.

The eastern leg tells a different story, one shaped by Cold War-era solidarity rather than twenty-first century supply chain strategy. The TAZARA

railway — the 1,860-kilometre line connecting Dar es Salaam to Kapiri Mposhi in Zambia — was built by China in the 1970s as a gesture of support for frontline states resisting apartheid South Africa. It has struggled with underinvestment and operational difficulties for much of its existence, but it remains the eastern backbone of the proposed corridor. China continues to invest in regional rail infrastructure across East Africa, including the Standard Gauge Railway networks in Kenya, Ethiopia and Tanzania itself, and its interest in the TAZARA's rehabilitation and integration into a broader transcontinental system is understood to be active.

That dynamic — Western money flowing into the Lobito end, Chinese infrastructure legacy anchoring the Dar es Salaam end — makes the Tanzania-Angola corridor one of the more geopolitically layered infrastructure projects on the continent. African nations are, by design, positioning themselves to benefit from the competition rather than be subordinated to either bloc. The involvement of four sovereign states in the governance of the corridor gives the project a regional character that no single external partner can easily dominate.

The energy dimension adds another

layer. Alongside the railway agreement, Angola has invited Tanzania to invest in its Lobito Oil Refinery project, with the Tanzania Petroleum Development Corporation evaluating an equity stake. The rail corridor, once operational, would serve as a distribution vector for refined petroleum products moving from Angola into Central and East African markets — transforming the railway from a mineral export route into a multi-commodity economic artery.

The engineering and financial challenges are formidable and should not be understated. The existing Benguela and TAZARA lines both use narrow gauge track — 1,067 millimetres — while Tanzania's newer Standard Gauge Railway is built to the international 1,435-millimetre standard. Bridging those two systems will require either dual-gauge solutions, standardised rolling stock capable of handling the transition, or transshipment terminals at gauge-change points. Each option carries cost and operational implications that will need to be resolved before the corridor can function as a seamless whole rather than a patchwork of connected but incompatible segments.

Cross-border harmonisation presents an equally demanding challenge. Customs clearance, transit

tariffs, border management protocols and security arrangements will need to be aligned across four distinct national jurisdictions with different regulatory traditions, bureaucratic cultures and political priorities. The history of African regional integration is littered with corridors that looked compelling on paper and stalled at the border post. Avoiding that fate will require sustained political commitment from all four governments, active support from the African Union and regional economic bodies, and financing structures that give each country a clear stake in keeping the whole system moving.

Capital mobilisation is the third constraint. Constructing missing greenfield links, rehabilitating deteriorating sections of TAZARA and upgrading the Copperbelt connections will require a scale of co-ordinated investment that no single government or development bank can provide alone. Public budgets, multilateral development finance and private sector concessions will all need to be assembled into a coherent package — a process that, on projects of this complexity, typically takes years.

None of those challenges invalidates the vision. The transcontinental corridor represents exactly the kind of African-led, African-designed infrastructure initiative that the continent's development economists have argued for decades is essential to reducing the structural dependence on extractive, export-oriented logistics built to serve external markets rather than internal ones. Landlocked Zambia and the eastern DRC stand to gain enormously from genuine access to two oceans. Agricultural producers, manufacturers and small traders across the corridor countries would benefit from lower transport costs and faster transit times. The project, if delivered, would be transformative.

The agreement between Tanzania and Angola has made the corridor real in a way that earlier proposals never quite managed. The financing is being assembled, the political will is visible and the strategic interest of global powers has injected urgency into a project that might otherwise have remained a planning document. Whether the execution matches the declaration will determine whether this becomes Africa's most important railway or its most instructive cautionary tale.

The tracks are not yet laid. But for the first time in a long time, there is a credible plan to lay them.

Health Lifestyle — the collection of daily habits covering sleep, food, movement, technology use, work, relationships and stress management — directly shapes that architecture, brick by brick

Mental health and lifestyle: Two sides of the same coin

The way we live shapes how we feel — and how we feel shapes how we live. Understanding that connection could change everything.



By: Wanjohi P. Mugambi
@themkenyaintimes

Mental health and lifestyle are not two separate conversations. They are the same conversation, and it is one that Kenya — and the world — urgently needs to have. Mental health is how a person thinks, feels and behaves each day. Lifestyle is how a person lives each day. The way we live affects how we feel, and how we feel affects how we live. That relationship, circular and unrelenting, sits at the centre of some of the most profound challenges facing individuals, families and communities today.

The first thing to discard is the misconception that mental health concerns only those with severe psychiatric illness — the person who has, as the old phrase goes, “lost their mind.” Mental health belongs to everyone. Every person has it, just as every person has physical health. Some days it is strong. Some days it is fragile. When it is strong, a person can manage stress, maintain relationships, concentrate at work and make sound decisions. When it is weak, small problems feel insurmountable, exhaustion becomes constant, hope fades, and anger surfaces without warning. Mental health is not a condition reserved for hospitals. It is the invisible architecture of daily life.

Lifestyle — the collection of daily habits covering sleep, food, movement, technology use, work, relationships and stress management — directly shapes that architecture, brick by brick.

Consider a young man from Mukuru, 23 years old. He grew up in a crowded house where several people shared a single room. After completing secondary school, work did not come. Days became weeks. He began waking late, spending hours motionless in bed, scrolling through his phone, eating once a day if at



all, withdrawing from conversation, stopping going outside. Within months, a heaviness settled over him that he could not name. He lost interest in everything — in bathing, in seeing friends, in the future he had once imagined for himself. He could not sleep at night but felt crushed by fatigue during the day. He began to believe, with quiet certainty, that he was a failure and always would be.

What he was living through was depression. Not sadness — depression. The distinction matters. Depression is a clinical state in which a person loses energy, motivation, hope and the capacity to feel pleasure in things that once brought joy. It alters sleep, appetite, concentration and self-perception. It does not discriminate by age, income or ambition. This young man was not lazy. He was not performing. He was ill, and the texture of his daily life was making him worse with every passing day.

His story illustrates a pattern that mental health professionals recognise clearly: lifestyle and depression feed each other. Depression disrupts sleep, appetite, movement and social connection. The disruption of those things, in turn, deepens depression. It becomes a cycle. Breaking it requires working on both dimensions simultaneously.

Sleep is where that work often begins. During sleep, the brain rests, consolidates memory, processes emotion and restores chemical balance. Without adequate sleep, a person wakes irritable, foggy and

emotionally brittle. Sustained sleep deprivation heightens the risk of anxiety and low mood significantly. In a world where screens dominate the evening hours — children watching videos, adults scrolling social media long after midnight — disrupted sleep has become epidemic. Depression compounds this. Some people with depression lie awake the whole night, their thoughts cycling without resolution. Others sleep 12 hours and still rise exhausted. The guidance is straightforward: seven to eight hours each night, consistent sleep and wake times, and screens switched off at least an hour before bed. Simple to state, harder to practise — but transformative when sustained.

Food shapes the brain more directly than most people realise. Fresh vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes and clean water support the production of neurotransmitters — the brain’s chemical messengers — that regulate mood, calm and energy. Diets high in processed sugars, excess salt and artificial additives promote inflammation that affects the brain adversely. Skipping meals drops blood sugar sharply, producing shakiness, anxiety and cognitive impairment. Depression typically distorts appetite in one of two directions: some people stop eating almost entirely; others overconsume, particularly sugary foods, chasing a brief chemical lift that deepens the crash that follows. Eating regularly, eating with balance and drinking

sufficient water are not trivial habits. They are foundational mental health interventions accessible to most people at low cost.

Movement is equally essential. The human body is built for physical activity, and when it is denied that activity, stress accumulates in ways that are both physiological and psychological. Walking, digging, dancing, stretching and playing all trigger the release of endorphins and other chemicals that reduce cortisol and elevate mood. For someone with depression, initiating movement is genuinely difficult. The body feels weighted, the motivation absent. But the evidence is unambiguous: even 30 minutes of moderate daily movement improves mood measurably. It need not involve a gym. Walking to the market, tending a kitchen garden, playing with children, or moving through nature — where sunlight and fresh air carry their own quieting effects — all count.

The young man from Mukuru began to recover when a community health worker encouraged him to walk for 20 minutes each morning, without his phone, simply breathing and greeting neighbours. The first days were hard. Gradually, the heaviness in his body began to lift.

Technology deserves its own honest examination. Phones and social media are useful tools, but their unmanaged use carries a real psychological cost. Extended time on social media exposes users to carefully curated images of other people’s success, relationships and material comfort. For someone already struggling — particularly a young person without stable employment — the comparison is corrosive. Seeing peers post about jobs and income when one has neither does not motivate. It diminishes. Boundaries with technology are not a luxury: designated phone-free hours, keeping devices out of the bedroom, and prioritising face-to-face conversation over digital interaction all protect mental health in measurable ways.

Relationships, perhaps more than any other lifestyle factor, anchor mental health. Human beings are social creatures. The need to feel connected, understood and valued is not sentimental — it is biological.

Isolation accelerates mental deterioration. Today, paradoxically, many people are profoundly lonely despite holding hundreds of digital contacts. Real connection requires presence: listening without judgement, speaking honestly, being physically there. Depression pulls a person inward, convincing them that they are a burden and that no one could truly understand. That withdrawal intensifies the illness. The young man from Mukuru began to heal in earnest when he joined a small neighbourhood youth group that met to talk, clean their surroundings and play football. He did not need to speak much. Simply being among people who accepted him without conditions gave him something depression had stripped away — the feeling of belonging.

Work and the absence of work both carry mental health consequences. Long hours without rest erode well-being. Unemployment and financial insecurity carry their own sustained stress, particularly in informal settlements where social pressure from family and community is unrelenting. The key protective factor, regardless of employment status, is daily structure: waking at a consistent time, having defined tasks, building in periods of rest and play, and making space for human connection. Routine is not monotony — it is a scaffold against hopelessness.

Finally, how we manage our inner lives matters profoundly. Across many Kenyan communities, particularly among men, the cultural instruction has long been to suppress emotion — to be strong, to cope alone, to not cry. Suppressed emotion does not disappear. It migrates — into headaches, stomach complaints, explosive anger, excessive drinking. A genuinely healthy lifestyle includes learning to identify emotions, name them accurately and express them constructively — through trusted conversation, journaling, prayer, physical activity or creative work.

Mental health is not separate from life. It is woven through every hour of it — through what we eat and how we sleep, through who we talk to and how long we stare at our phones, through whether we move our bodies and whether we allow ourselves, quietly and without shame, to feel what we feel. The young man from Mukuru did not need a diagnosis to begin recovering. He needed a walk, a meal, a group of peers and someone who took the time to notice. Sometimes, that is precisely where healing starts.

SPORTS
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Sports >> *The theft from the Manchesterplatz display case, where 23 people died in the 1958 crash including eight Manchester United players, has caused fresh anguish for the victims' families.

Thieves raid Munich air disaster memorial, stealing medals and sculpture

By **Martin Weche**

Thieves broke into a memorial display case at Manchesterplatz in Munich on Monday and stole a glass sculpture and medals commemorating the 23 people killed in the 1958 Munich air disaster, causing what the Manchester Munich Memorial Foundation described as profound emotional harm to the families of those who perished.

Munich Police told German media that the glass casing was smashed with a stone between 08:00 and 13:00 local time on 26 October. The display case, installed at the site where a British European Airways aircraft carrying the Manchester United squad and staff crashed on take-off on 6 February 1958 following a refuelling stop, had stood as a focal point for mourners, supporters and visitors from across the world. The plane was returning from a European Cup match in Belgrade when it failed to gain sufficient speed on a snow-covered runway. Of the 44 people on board, 23 died, among them eight Manchester United players.

Ifty Ahmed, chair of the Manchester Munich Memorial Foundation, said the theft had cut deep into communities that have tended the memory of the disaster for nearly seven decades. "They don't understand the damage that they've caused," he told the BBC. Yet Ahmed drew a line between what could be stolen and what could not. "Whatever they've taken from inside the showcase, they haven't taken our memories," he said — words that carried the quiet dignity of a custodian speaking on behalf of families who have learned to hold their grief with patience and resolve.

Ahmed confirmed that the exact number of medals taken remained unclear at the time of going to press. Manchester



Manchester United players celebrate after scoring against Leeds. PHOTO/MANCHESTER UNITED

United offered to pay for the repairs, though the foundation had already committed to covering the costs itself. The broken glass casing was replaced on the same day the damage was discovered — a small but telling act of collective determination from those who regard the memorial not as a monument to be managed but as a living space of mourning and remembrance.

Mark Salzmann, chairman of Red Docs Munich — a Bayern Munich supporters' group that assists in caring for the memorial — said it was his mother who first noticed the damage while driving past. Among the stolen items, he confirmed, was a glass sculpture originally presented to Munich's former mayor, Dieter Reiter, a piece of considerable symbolic significance. Salzmann's group routinely collects tributes left by visitors from around the world and places selected items in the display case, creating an ever-evolving archive of international solidarity around a shared tragedy. He said the stolen objects were unique and could not be readily replaced, though discussions

about possible substitutions were already under way with the foundation.

The grief, however, extended well beyond Munich and Manchester. Ahmed said supporters of Liverpool, Manchester City and Leeds United had all sent messages of condolence and solidarity following news of the theft — a reminder that the Munich disaster, though it struck one club with particular ferocity, has long carried a meaning that transcends football rivalry. Salzmann echoed that sentiment, describing the outpouring of support as confirmation of what those closest to the memorial have always known. "The connection between Manchester and Munich will never go away," he said.

The history of the Manchesterplatz memorial stretches back to 2004, when a commemorative stone was first installed at the crash site. The display case was added in 2020 and officially inaugurated in 2023, giving the memorial a more active curatorial dimension that has drawn increasing numbers of visitors. Approximately 1,500 people at-

tended the annual remembrance service at the site in February of this year, travelling from across the world to observe a moment of collective grief that has become one of football's most sombre rituals.

What the thieves took on Monday morning were objects. What they disturbed was something considerably harder to quantify — the carefully maintained peace of people who lost fathers, brothers and sons on a frozen German runway 68 years ago, and who have asked for nothing more than that the world remember.

Munich Police and Manchester United had not responded to requests for comment at the time of publication.

GET THE BEST OF WORLD

Sports >> *The Portuguese forward reaches 985 career goals after scoring three times in 15 second-half minutes as Al-Nassr beat Al-Khoolod 5-3 in the Saudi Pro League.

Ronaldo closes in on 1,000 goals with Al-Nassr hat-trick

By Martin Weche

Cristiano Ronaldo scored a hat-trick to help Al-Nassr to a 5-3 victory over Al-Khoolod in the Saudi Pro League on Friday, taking the 41-year-old Portuguese forward to 985 career goals and within striking distance of an almost inconceivable milestone. The game had been finely balanced at 2-2 when Ronaldo seized control, netting three times in a breathtaking 15-minute passage of second-half football to seal the win for the Saudi champions. Angelo Gabriel and Sadio Mane had earlier put Al-Nassr level after the home side threatened to make an afternoon of it, but Ronaldo — as he has done with metronomic regularity for more than two decades — rendered the contest academic before it could grow complicated.

Portugal team-mate João Félix was the architect of much of the damage, contributing four assists across the evening, two of them for Ronaldo's goals. It was a partnership forged on the international stage now bearing fruit in the Gulf, and it served as a reminder that even in the closing chapter of one of sport's most decorated careers, Ronaldo retains the ability to be the decisive figure in a match.

The hat-trick was the 67th of Ronaldo's career — a number so staggering it bears a moment's pause. Forty-four of those came during his magnificent years at Real Madrid, the theatre in which his legend was most comprehensively written. Ten were scored in the Portugal shirt, cementing his status as the all-time leading scorer in men's international football, a record that may stand for a generation. Three arrived at Manchester United, across two separate spells at the club where he first announced himself to the world, and three more at Juventus during his



Cristiano Ronaldo

three-year experiment in Serie A. Seven, including Friday's, have now been registered for Al-Nassr — a tally that continues to grow with a consistency that has silenced early sceptics who questioned whether the Saudi Pro League represented a dignified final destination for a player of his stature. Ronaldo joined Al-Nassr in January 2023 and has one year remaining on his current contract. In that time he has helped the club to the Saudi Pro League title and has added more than a century of goals to his career total in the kingdom. Yet it is the 1,000-goal landmark — 15 strikes away as of Friday evening — that now dominates the conversation surrounding every appearance he makes. No professional footballer in the history of the game has reached that figure in officially recognised competition. If Ronaldo gets there, and the trajectory of this season

suggests he will, it will constitute one of the most remarkable individual achievements in the history of sport. Al-Nassr are currently second in the Saudi Pro League table, one position behind leaders Al-Qadsiyah, though they hold a game in hand — a detail their supporters will regard with considerable optimism as the defending champions seek back-to-back titles. For Ronaldo, the collective pursuit and the personal one are running in satisfying parallel. There is a valedictory quality to this season that Ronaldo himself has done little to dispel. In August, he suggested that this was "probably" his last year playing — careful phrasing, characteristically noncommittal, but weighted enough to prompt the football world to pay close attention to every match, every goal, every record that falls. The five-time Ballon d'Or winner has claimed league titles in England,

Spain, Italy and Saudi Arabia, a breadth of achievement across four different football cultures that no player of his era has replicated. He has scored at every level, in every competition, against every variety of opponent, and he has done so with a dedication to physical conditioning that has defied the natural laws of athletic ageing. Friday's hat-trick was not a nostalgic footnote. It was a performance. At 41, playing in the 67th hat-trick of his career, Ronaldo did what he has always done — arrived in the moments that mattered and made the game his own. Fifteen goals stand between him and 1,000. If the last month is any measure, the wait will not be long.

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Can literary works heal human psychology?



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Literature has always been an important part of human life. People read novels, stories, poems, and other literary works not only for entertainment but also to understand themselves and the world around them. A good literary work can make a person think, feel, remember, and even change their attitude toward life. For this reason, literature can have a strong influence on human psychology.

The question of whether a literary work can heal human psychology is interesting and important. Literature cannot replace professional medical or psychological treatment, but it can support a person's emotional well-being. Reading about characters who experience difficulties, fear, loneliness, loss, or hope may help readers understand their own emotions. In this sense, literature can become a form of emotional support and psychological relief.

One of the main powers of literature is its ability to influence emotions. When people read a story, they often become emotionally connected with its characters. They may experience happiness when a character succeeds, sadness when a character suffers, or hope when a difficult situation improves. This emotional experience can help readers recognize and express their own feelings. Sometimes people find it difficult to explain their emotions in everyday life. A literary character, however, may experience exactly the same feelings. By seeing these emotions described in a story, the reader may realize that their own feelings are natural and understandable. Literature can also provide emotional relief. Reading a meaningful story can temporarily help a person move away from everyday stress and con-

centrate on another world. This does not mean that problems disappear, but it can give the mind an opportunity to rest.

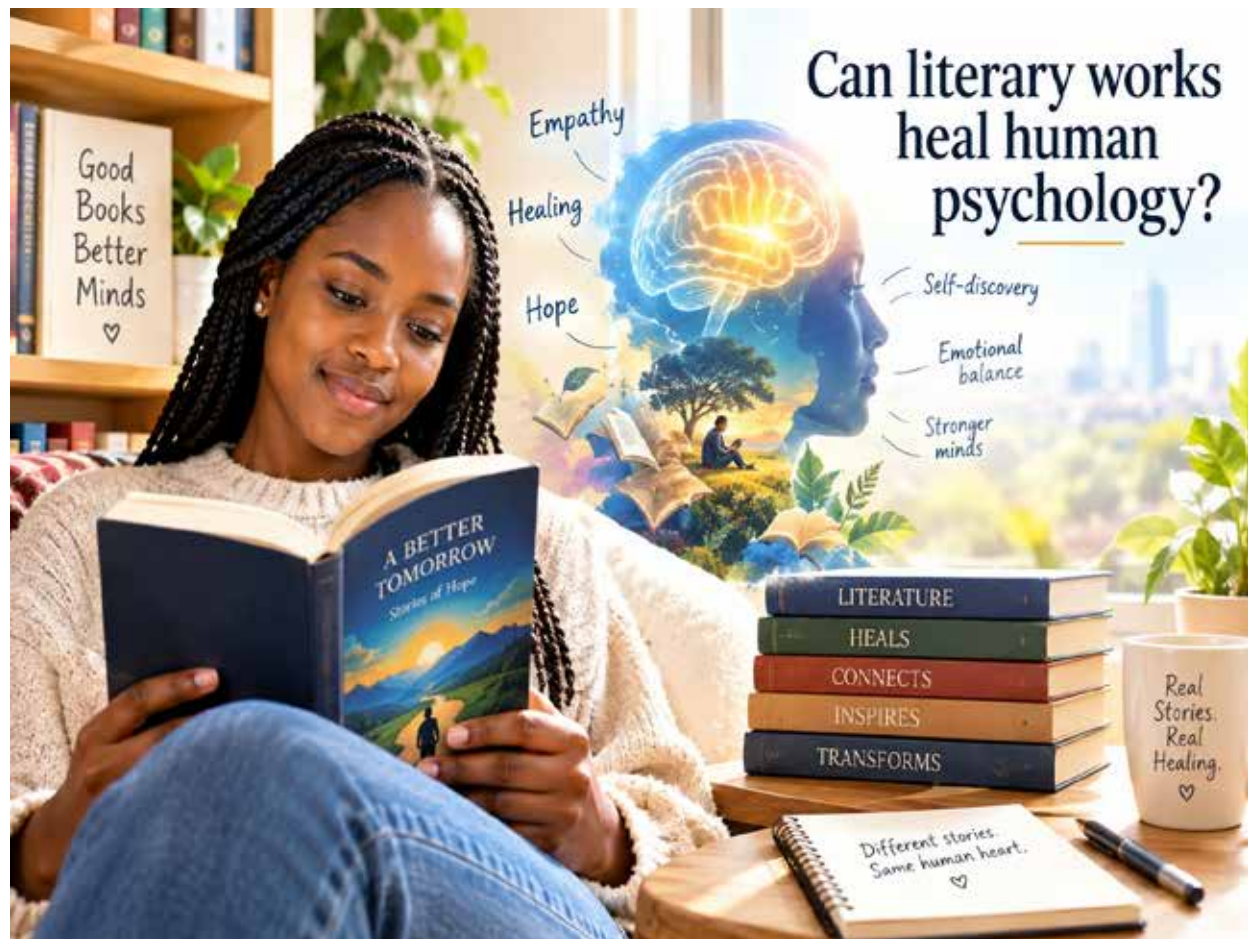
Another important function of literature is helping people understand themselves. Literary works often raise questions about love, friendship, family, responsibility, freedom, fear, morality, and personal choices. While thinking about these questions, readers may also reflect on their own lives.

For example, a character who makes a difficult decision may encourage the reader to think about similar decisions in their own life. A story about overcoming difficulties can give a person motivation and confidence. A character who learns from mistakes may show the reader that failure is not always the end of a journey. In this way, literature can encourage self-reflection. It can help people look at their experiences from a different perspective and understand their thoughts more clearly.

Literary works can also develop empathy. When readers enter the emotional world of another character, they begin to see situations from another person's point of view. This ability is especially important for human relationships. A novel may describe the life of someone who has a completely different background, culture, age, or social position. By reading about that person's experiences, the reader can become more understanding and less judgmental. Literature therefore has the potential to make people emotionally more sensitive.

Empathy is closely connected with psychological well-being. People who understand the feelings of others may build stronger relationships and communicate more effectively. Thus, literature can influence not only an individual's inner world but also their relationships with people around them.

Life inevitably contains difficulties. People may experience disappointment, failure, loneliness, conflicts, or major changes. Literary works frequently describe such experiences and show different ways characters respond to them. Stories about perseverance can strength-



A young lady reading

en psychological resilience. When readers see a character facing serious challenges and continuing to move forward, they may feel encouraged to deal with their own difficulties. Literature can remind people that difficult periods are often temporary and that human beings have the ability to adapt. Poetry can have a similar effect. A short poem may express an emotion that a reader has experienced but could not describe themselves. Such recognition can create a feeling of connection and reduce the sense of being alone.

It is important to use the word "heal" carefully. Literature alone cannot cure serious psychological disorders or replace professional treatment. A person experiencing significant emotional or mental difficulties may need help from a qualified psychologist, psychiatrist, doctor, or another appropriate professional.

However, literature can have a sup-

portive and therapeutic influence. It may reduce feelings of isolation, encourage positive thinking, stimulate self-reflection, and provide emotional comfort. Some approaches to psychological support also use reading and discussion of literary texts as part of broader therapeutic or educational practices. Therefore, literature should not be considered a medicine in the traditional sense. Its value is different. It works through emotions, imagination, reflection, empathy, and the human need to find meaning in experiences.

In conclusion, literary works can have a meaningful influence on human psychology. They can help people understand their emotions, reflect on their lives, develop empathy, find hope, and become psychologically more resilient. A powerful story can sometimes make a person feel understood at a moment when they feel alone.

Literature cannot replace pro-

fessional psychological or medical treatment, but it can be an important source of emotional and intellectual support. A book does not directly solve a person's problems; instead, it can change the way a person sees those problems. Sometimes a new perspective is the first step toward emotional strength and personal growth.

For this reason, literature can be viewed not only as art and entertainment but also as a powerful means of influencing the human inner world. The words written by an author may continue to live in a reader's thoughts and emotions long after the book has been closed.

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