



Kenya's school funding crisis: How long can public education run on empty?
There is a decision the Kenyan government can no longer defer. Public schools across the country are being asked to do more with money that has not kept pace with reality

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Maraga takes anti-graft pledge to diaspora as US lobby group backs his 2027 bid
Former Chief Justice David Maraga has launched a three-week campaign tour of the United States, pledging to diaspora Kenyans that he will jail corrupt officials

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Countdown 2027 The 2027 election will be the fourth general election since the Constitution came into force

Gender Election Deadlock

The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission has warned political parties that their candidate nomination lists will face direct scrutiny against the constitutional two-thirds gender threshold ahead of the 2027 General Election, marking the most direct enforcement posture the commission has adopted since the requirement was enshrined in the Constitution in 2010.

The warning, delivered by IEBC Commissioner Ann Nderitu at a high-level policy dialogue convened by the National Gender and Equality Commission in Nairobi, signals that the commission intends to move beyond awareness-raising and into active gatekeeping — examining party lists before candidates proceed to the ballot rather than observing gender imbalances only after votes are counted and seats distributed.

“Political parties hold the stake to nominate candidates. We need to have serious negotiations with political parties so that they nominate women for areas that they are likely to have persons elected, because political parties have their strongholds,” Nderitu said.

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IEBC Commissioner Ann Nderitu



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Ruto pledges 50,000 teacher promotions and new career framework within two weeks

BY MKT REPORTER

@themtkenyetimes

Some of the moments as captured in pictures

President William Ruto yesterday promised teachers a new career progression framework within two weeks and announced that promotions for the year would be scaled up to 50,000 — the largest single-year exercise in the history of the Teachers Service Commission — as he joined thousands of educators at Kasarani Gymnasium in Nairobi to mark World Teachers' Day 2026.

Ruto said the Salaries and Remuneration Commission had concluded its evaluation of the proposed career progression guidelines and that implementation was imminent. The announcement came alongside a commitment to double the teacher promotion budget from KSh1B to KSh2B, building on the 34,016 promotions already advertised.

"We celebrate our teachers as the heroes and patriots of our nation. They do more than teach our children. They shape the people who build Kenya," Ruto said.

The pledges are underpinned by a record KSh784.5B education allocation in the 2026/27 budget — the largest single-sector share in the national budget — of which KSh424.3B goes directly to the Teachers Service Commission to cover salaries and recruitment.

With August 2027 elections drawing near, the timing of the commitments will not be lost on Kenya's 350,000-strong teaching workforce.



Editor's Desk

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NEWS IN BRIEF



Kenya's tourism sector is gaining momentum but still punching below its weight, Kenya Tourism Board chief executive June Chepkemei said yesterday, as the country moves to broaden its attractions, address infrastructure gaps and grow industry revenues. Speaking ahead of the 16th Magical Kenya Travel Expo, Chepkemei said Kenya received approximately 2.7 million international arrivals and 5.2 million domestic tourists annually — a combined figure of nearly eight million visitors. While the numbers signal genuine recovery, she said the sector's full potential remained unrealised, with diversification and improved visitor infrastructure central to the board's strategy for closing that gap.



Nearly nine in every 10 children in sub-Saharan Africa cannot read or understand a simple text by the age of 10, according to World Bank estimates that place the region's learning poverty rate at 89 per cent. The figure is forcing a fundamental rethink among education leaders, who are under growing pressure to move beyond enrolment targets and focus on what children are actually learning once they reach the classroom. Despite two decades of sustained effort to widen access to education across the region, the data exposes a stubborn and widening gap between the number of children in school and the number acquiring even the most basic literacy skills.



The Social Health Authority yesterday extended existing contracts with county health facilities to October 14, buying time for services and claims to continue uninterrupted while facilities complete the paperwork required under new agreements. The extension follows talks held Monday between the Ministry of Health and the Council of Governors, who reached an agreement on the contracting framework covering public health facilities under the 2026-2029 cycle. The arrangement ensures patients at county facilities are not caught in a gap between the outgoing and incoming contract periods, with both the national government and county administrations now working to finalise the new agreements ahead of the revised deadline.



Education Cabinet Secretary Julius Ogamba yesterday called on university lecturers to return to work, telling striking staff that the government had fully met its obligations under previous collective bargaining agreements and was ready to resolve remaining disputes through dialogue. Speaking during World Teachers' Day celebrations, Ogamba said all salary arrears under both the 2017-2021 and 2021-2025 Collective Bargaining Agreements had been cleared in full, drawing a line under what he described as a longstanding problem that had weighed on university staff for years. "The government has committed to safeguarding the welfare of our lecturers, and has demonstrated this commitment through action. As we speak today, all arrears under the 2017-2021 and 2021-2025 CBAs have been paid up, fully," Ogamba said.



Lecturers at Dedan Kimathi University of Technology in Nyeri yesterday joined the ongoing university staff industrial action, with members of the Kenya University Staff Union's DeKUT branch walking off the job over the stalled conclusion of the 2025-2029 Collective Bargaining Agreement and unpaid salary arrears stretching back to 2021. The strike adds Dedan Kimathi to a growing list of public universities where staff have downed tools, piling further pressure on the government to accelerate negotiations and clear the backlog of outstanding payments that union members say have remained unresolved for four years despite repeated assurances from university management and the Ministry of Education.



Teachers' unions yesterday renewed demands for sweeping reforms in the profession, pressing the government to promote Early Childhood Development Education teachers, absorb unemployed P1 teachers into the public service and grant Junior Secondary Schools greater administrative independence. Speaking during World Teachers' Day celebrations, Kenya Union of Post Primary Education Teachers chairman Omboko Milemba singled out ECDE teachers as among the most consistently overlooked in the profession despite their foundational role in shaping learners' earliest educational experiences. "On promotions, the forgotten teacher, the teacher who is not here and who must be sought to be brought here. That is the ECDE," Milemba said, calling on the Teachers Service Commission and the government to make good on long-standing commitments to the cadre.

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Politics Njuki used the occasion to rally residents behind the re-election of President William Ruto

Njuki declares for Senate as Tharaka Nithi's 2027 race takes shape

The outgoing governor enters a field already crowded with aspirants, setting up a direct contest with his predecessor

BY Dennis Mutua
@themkenyaintimes

Tharaka Nithi Governor Muthomi Njuki yesterday formally declared his intention to contest the county's senatorial seat in the 2027 General Election, bringing significant weight to a race that was already drawing interest from across the county.

Njuki, who is serving his second and final term as governor, made the announcement while addressing residents during the distribution of free certified seeds at Kamwimbi in Igambang'ombe Ward. He said residents had long been pressing him to seek the Senate seat, and that he was now making his intentions unambiguous.

"I want to become a senator who will make a difference — championing the interests of Tharaka Nithi at the national level and ensuring the county benefits from resources and development programmes from the national government," Njuki said. He also directed an unmistakable message at political players who had not factored him into their 2027 calculations, telling them his declaration had now settled the matter.

Njuki used the occasion to rally residents behind the



Tharaka Nithi Governor Muthomi Njuki addresses residents during a past function in the county. Njuki, who is serving his second term as governor, has now declared his intention to contest the Tharaka Nithi senatorial seat in the 2027 General Election.

re-election of President William Ruto and Deputy President Kithure Kindiki, urging voters to base their decisions on leaders' performance rather than political rivalry. He argued that a Kindiki presidency after 2027 would place Tharaka Nithi in a strong position to attract national development resources.

His entry puts him in direct competition with former Tharaka Nithi Governor Samuel Mbae Ragwa, who is seeking the same seat. Njuki was pointed in his assessment of Ragwa's record, questioning what the former gover-

nor had to show for his time in office and suggesting that Ragwa's reported intention to contest whichever seat Njuki pursued revealed an ambivalence about the Senate position itself. If Ragwa simply wanted an elective seat, Njuki argued, the governor's race — now open with his own departure — would have been the more logical choice.

Other aspirants who have expressed interest in the seat include Igambang'ombe MCA Njeru Ing'ara, Muthambi MCA Morris Maugu and John Marete, who is seeking the position on a Wiper par-

ty ticket. The field is taking shape against the backdrop of a significant shift by incumbent Senator Mwenda Gataya, who has redirected his political focus toward the Tharaka parliamentary seat, leaving the senatorial contest without a defending champion.

With Njuki now officially in the race and Gataya stepping aside, the 2027 Senate contest is expected to intensify sharply as aspirants move to consolidate support across Tharaka, Maara and Chuka/Igambang'ombe constituencies.

Elders crown Winnie as Raila's heir in Bondo succession ceremony

The anointing of the late opposition chief's daughter sets Luo Nyanza's political direction ahead of the 2027 contest



Winnie Odinga

BY Joan Atieno
@themkenyaintimes

The Luo Council of Elders formally anointed Winnie Odinga as the political heir of her late father, former Prime Minister Raila Odinga, at a ceremony in Bondo on Sunday, drawing a clear line of succession in Luo Nyanza less than a year before the August 2027 general election.

Raila, who died on October 15 last year in India at the age of 80 following an unsuccessful bid for the African Union Commission chairpersonship, received a state funeral attended by President William Ruto and several African heads of state. His death left an immediate question over the future of the Orange Democratic Movement and the political direction of Luo Nyanza — a question ODM's National Executive Commit-

tee attempted to answer by appointing Oburu Oginga as acting party leader.

Sunday's ceremony in Bondo went further, investing Winnie, an East African Legislative Assembly Member of Parliament, with the symbolic authority of the elders' endorsement. "She carries the spirit and the vision of her father. She is the one who will hold what he has built," the council chairman told the gathering.

The endorsement does not resolve the contest for Raila's political legacy — Treasury Cabinet Secretary John Mbatia and others have signalled their own ambitions — but it places Winnie at the centre of that conversation with the weight of tradition firmly behind her.

The elders have spoken. The campaign clock is running.

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Education Capitation was designed with a clear and worthy purpose: to ensure that every Kenyan child could access education regardless of their family's financial circumstances

Kenya's school funding crisis: How long can public education run on empty?

Capitation rates frozen for years while costs soar — and it is the children who will pay the price

BY Collins Kibet

@themkenyatimes

There is a decision the Kenyan government can no longer defer. Public schools across the country are being asked to do more with money that has not kept pace with reality, and the consequences are becoming impossible to ignore. President William Ruto has acknowledged the need to review the per-student capitation grant — the funding formula that underpins public education — but acknowledgement alone will not repair a system under serious strain.

Capitation was designed with a clear and worthy purpose: to ensure that every Kenyan child could access education regardless of their family's financial circumstances. By funding schools directly on a per-learner basis, the government intended to lift the burden from parents and guarantee that socioeconomic status did not determine a child's right to learn. The principle remains sound. The problem is that the economics around it have shifted dramatically while the funding has not.

Enrolment in public schools has grown steadily. The cost of food, water, electricity and learning materials has risen. Schools need more teachers and more support staff to manage larger populations of learners. Buildings require maintenance. Equipment wears out. Yet the capitation grant that is supposed to cover all of this has stagnated. The result is a structural deficit that school management teams are left to navigate largely on their own.

When government funding falls short, the gap does not simply disappear. It is absorbed — unevenly and unfairly — by those least equipped to carry it. Parents, many of whom are already stretched thin, find themselves asked to contribute amounts they cannot comfortably afford. Teachers and staff in some institutions end up covering costs from their own pockets. Neither solution is sustainable, and neither is acceptable as a long-term arrangement for a system that serves millions of children.

The effects on the quality of edu-



Kenya's school funding crisis

cation are direct and measurable. Schools without adequate resources cannot invest in appropriate learning materials. Teachers working in overcrowded classrooms struggle to give learners the individual attention that good teaching requires. Ageing infrastructure goes unrepaired. Libraries go unstocked. Laboratories go without equipment. These are not abstract concerns — they are the daily conditions inside which Kenyan children are expected to learn and inside which teachers are expected to perform.

The deeper risk is the widening gap between public and private education. Children whose families can afford private schools are, in many cases, receiving a meaningfully different educational experience from those who cannot. Allowing that divide to grow — by failing to ade-

quately fund the public system — is a policy choice with long-term consequences for equality of opportunity in Kenya. A country that starves its public schools is not simply managing a budget line. It is making a decision about whose children's futures matter.

The argument for increased capitation is, at its core, an argument about investment. A well-educated population feeds a more competitive economy, a more capable workforce and a more stable society. The reverse is equally true: inadequate investment in public education produces skills gaps, higher unemployment and, over time, greater pressure on public resources in other areas. The cost of not funding schools properly does not disappear — it is simply deferred and compounded.

Increasing the capitation grant is

necessary, but it is not the whole answer. The government must also ensure that funds are managed transparently and effectively once they reach schools. Adequate teacher numbers must be matched to enrolment figures. Infrastructure standards must be set and enforced. Basic utilities — water and electricity — must be treated as non-negotiable requirements rather than optional extras. Teachers must be motivated not only through fair remuneration but through professional support, clear career pathways and the resources they need to do their jobs properly.

Any revision of the capitation formula must also account for the real variation in what different schools need. A school in a remote rural area faces different cost pressures from one in an urban centre. Class sizes, infrastructure conditions, security

requirements and access to utilities will all affect what adequate funding looks like in practice. A flat national rate may not serve every school equally, and the government would do well to build that nuance into any revised framework.

Kenya's public education funding crisis is, ultimately, a question of political will. The diagnosis is not in dispute. The funding gap is real, its effects are visible and its trajectory, if left unaddressed, is predictable. What is required now is a genuine commitment — backed by a credible plan and sustained budgetary action — to ensure that every child sitting in a public school classroom has a fair chance at the education they were promised.

That promise has been running on a shortfall for too long.

Politics The warning, delivered by IEBC Commissioner Ann Nderitu at a high-level policy dialogue convened by the National Gender and Equality Commission in Nairobi

Kenya's gender election crisis: Will 2027 finally break the deadlock?

With August elections less than a year away, the constitutional promise of equal representation remains unmet — and the pressure on parties, Parliament and the IEBC has never been greater

BY James Mwangi

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The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission has warned political parties that their candidate nomination lists will face direct scrutiny against the constitutional two-thirds gender threshold ahead of the 2027 General Election, marking the most direct enforcement posture the commission has adopted since the requirement was enshrined in the Constitution in 2010.

The warning, delivered by IEBC Commissioner Ann Nderitu at a high-level policy dialogue convened by the National Gender and Equality Commission in Nairobi, signals that the commission intends to move beyond awareness-raising and into active gatekeeping — examining party lists before candidates proceed to the ballot rather than observing gender imbalances only after votes are counted and seats distributed.

“Political parties hold the stake to nominate candidates. We need to have serious negotiations with political parties so that they nominate women for areas that they are likely to have persons elected, because political parties have their strongholds,” Nderitu said.

The statement crystallises a long-running frustration that has shadowed Kenyan electoral politics for fifteen years. Article 27(8) of the Constitution requires the State to take legislative and other measures to ensure that no more than two-thirds of members of any elective or appointive body are of the same gender. The provision has been partially implemented in county assemblies through a gender top-up mechanism. In the National Assembly and Senate, it has remained, election after election, a constitutional aspiration without a legal vehicle to deliver it.

The 2027 election will be the fourth general election since the Constitution came into force. The pattern is now well established: the obligation is acknowledged, the debate is revived, proposals are tabled, Parliament finds reasons not to pass them, and the election proceeds with a legislative chamber that fails the constitutional test. The question being asked with increasing sharpness



IEBC Commissioner Ann Nderitu

by gender advocates, constitutional commissions and development partners is whether 2027 will be different — or whether Kenya will simply repeat the cycle one more time with greater sophistication and equal ineffectiveness.

The dialogue that brought Nderitu's remarks to public attention was attended by legislators, constitutional commissions, electoral institutions, women's parliamentary groups and development partners. It was, by all accounts, a room full of people who understand the problem thoroughly. What it reflected, more than anything, is that Kenya's gender representation challenge is not primarily a knowledge deficit. It is a political one.

NGEC chief executive Purity Ngina drew a distinction that goes to the heart of the deadlock. Individual voters, she argued, exercise a constitutional right when they choose their representatives. The State, separately and in addition to that right, carries a constitutional obligation to ensure that the final composition of Parliament reflects the two-thirds principle. These are not competing duties — they are parallel ones. The failure to implement the gender rule cannot therefore be justified by pointing to how voters chose to vote.

“The Constitution protects my right to choose my representative and at the same time, Article 27(8) requires the State to take legislative and other

measures to implement the principle that not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointed bodies shall be of the same gender,” Ngina said. “We should not place that responsibility on the individual voter but to the State in accordance with the Constitution.”

This framing matters enormously in the context of the proposals now before Parliament. Critics of the top-up mechanism — which would add women to Parliament after an election to address any gender deficit — have long argued that it overrides the democratic will of the electorate. Ngina's argument, and the constitutional logic underpinning it, is that the democratic will of the electorate and the State's obligation to ensure representative composition are distinct matters, and that conflating them has served primarily to block implementation indefinitely.

Gender Cabinet Secretary Hanna Wendot said the government had submitted a report and draft legislative proposals to Parliament in 2024, proposing amendments to the Constitution, the Elections Act and the Political Parties Act. Among those proposals was a top-up arrangement for both the National Assembly and Senate, modelled on the mechanism that has worked in county assemblies. The proposals have not yet been enacted. Time is running short.

The proposed Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, contains

provisions that would require political parties to comply with the two-thirds gender principle when submitting parliamentary nomination lists. If passed and enforced, the provision would give the IEBC the legal basis to do exactly what Nderitu described — to check lists at the point of entry rather than observe imbalances after the fact. It would also shift a significant portion of the responsibility for gender compliance onto parties themselves, where, as Nderitu correctly noted, the real leverage lies.

Political parties control who gets on the ballot. In a country where party strongholds are as entrenched as they are in Kenya — where certain parties can essentially deliver a seat in specific constituencies regardless of the individual candidate — the nomination decision is frequently the election decision. A woman nominated by the dominant party in a stronghold constituency has a realistic path to Parliament. A woman standing as an independent or for a marginal party in the same area has a far steeper climb. The IEBC's push for parties to field women precisely in their areas of established dominance is therefore not a symbolic request. It is a structural intervention directed at the point where representation is actually determined.

NGEC chairperson Rehema Jaladesa, speaking at the same forum, did not attempt to disguise her exhaustion with a debate that has been run-

ning since 2010 without resolution. Her candour was striking and her question rhetorical only in form.

“Isn't it fatiguing? Are you not as tired as me?” Jaladesa asked, describing the years of constitutional debate, legislative failure and electoral repetition that have surrounded a requirement that has been in force for fifteen years.

The fatigue is understandable and the frustration is legitimate. But fatigue has not produced urgency in Parliament, where the proposals that could resolve the matter have stalled repeatedly. The political economy of legislative change on gender representation is complicated by the fact that the legislators who must pass the reforms are predominantly male and represent a system that currently advantages them. Self-interest and constitutional obligation do not always align, and in this case they have consistently failed to do so.

For women considering the 2027 elections, the practical implications of all this uncertainty are significant. Gender advocates at the dialogue urged aspirants to be strategic — to align themselves with parties that hold genuine support in the constituencies they intend to contest, and to begin building those relationships now rather than waiting for the formal campaign period to begin. The structural environment may be imperfect, but within it, the choices aspirants make in the coming months will have direct consequences for whether the two-thirds principle inches closer to reality or recedes once more into the language of constitutional aspiration.

The 2027 general election is less than a year away. The IEBC's preparations are underway. Parliament is debating. The proposals exist. What remains to be seen is whether the accumulated pressure of fifteen years of failure, the formal enforcement posture of the electoral commission and the imminence of another election cycle will finally produce what previous cycles did not: a legal framework that converts a constitutional obligation into an electoral reality.

Kenya has promised its women equal representation since 2010. The country is still waiting to deliver on that promise.

Unity In a statement issued following Linturi’s recent interview with Meru media stations, Mucheke said she welcomed his frankness, describing honesty and courage as essential qualities

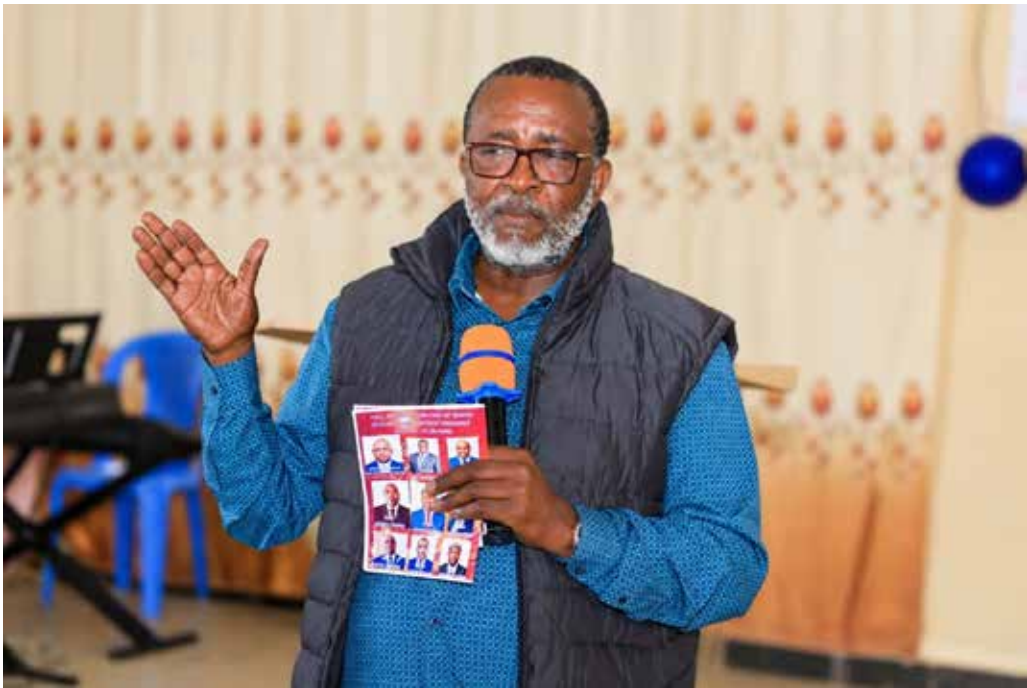
Mucheke commends Linturi over Meru unity call

The ambassador says honesty and courage matter most when politics threatens to divide

BY Brian Gitonga
@themtkenyatimes

Kenya’s Ambassador to the Netherlands, Halima Yussuf Mucheke, has praised former Agriculture Cabinet Secretary Mithika Linturi for speaking openly about the need for the Meru community to unite around shared interests. In a statement issued following Linturi’s recent interview with Meru media stations, Mucheke said she welcomed his frankness, describing hon-

esty and courage as essential qualities at a time when political competition could easily drive communities apart. “I wish to commend Mithika Linturi for his candid and forthright statement. At a time when our politics can easily divide us, honesty and courage in expressing our position are important,” she said. Her statement centred on the need for the Meru community to find common ground despite differing political views, while also acknowledging leaders from the region serving at various levels of government. Mucheke noted that all those eyeing the Meru governorship were sons of the soil, but pointed to Deputy President Kithure Kindiki as the only Meru son currently serving at the national level. “Let us also remember that all those aspiring for the governorship are sons of the soil, but at the national level, Kithure Kindiki remains the only Meru son serving at that level. This is therefore a moment for Merus, for the first time, to speak with one voice



Former Agriculture Cabinet Secretary Mithika Linturi | Photo: Courtesy

in support of our own, just as we have consistently stood with and supported our neighbours,” she said. Mucheke was clear that community solidarity did not require uniformity of opinion. Differences in political thought, she argued, should not stand in the way of coming together when a genuine shared interest was at stake. “There is nothing wrong with supporting our own while respecting everyone else. Unity does not mean that we must all think alike; it means that, when it matters, we can come together around a common interest,” she said.

She urged the community to look past internal disagreements and organise itself so that its collective voice carried weight, while maintaining respect for others. The ambassador closed by returning to where she had begun — crediting Linturi for breaking the silence and starting a conversation she described as long overdue. “Kudos, Mithika Linturi, for speaking candidly and putting this important conversation on the table,” Mucheke said.



DP Kithure Kindiki | Photo: Courtesy



Ambassador Halima Mucheke. | Photo: Courtesy

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NTSA Somewhere between the first warning and the final funeral, responsibility becomes blurred. One institution points to another

NTSA cannot regulate road safety by passing the buck: Kenya needs a clear separation of policy, regulation and enforcement



BY Fredrick Kipchumba Chelimo

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"The true measure of any road-safety system is not how eloquently it explains a crash, but how effectively it prevents the next one."

Kenyans must rise against this murderous trend. There is something profoundly unsettling about the way Kenya has learned to live with road deaths. A crash happens. Families receive the devastating news that a loved one will never come home. Communities gather around coffins. Leaders send condolences. Government agencies issue statements promising investigations. Then, as the public grief slowly recedes, the machinery of the country resumes its familiar rhythm, until another crash tears another family apart.

Somewhere between the first warning and the final funeral, responsibility becomes blurred. One institution points to another. An agency explains the limits of its mandate. Officials invoke jurisdiction, procedure or enforcement. Yet the dead do not distinguish between government departments. They were travelling on Kenyan roads, within a transport system ultimately maintained and regulated in the name of public safety.

This is why the continuing debate around the National Transport and Safety Authority should not be reduced to an argument about one accident, one official statement or one institution. It is a much larger national question about

whether Kenya has constructed a road-safety architecture in which responsibility is sufficiently clear to prevent death rather than merely explain it afterwards.

The numbers are difficult to absorb precisely because behind every statistic is an unfinished human story. Kenya recorded 5,009 road fatalities in 2025, up from 4,748 in 2024, while reported road accidents rose from 11,165 to 11,638 over the same period. Earlier figures had already revealed the scale of the crisis, with thousands losing their lives within a single reporting period. Pedestrians, motorcyclists, passengers and other vulnerable road users continue to carry a disproportionate share of the danger.

These are not numbers on a government spreadsheet. They are fathers who did not return home, mothers whose children are now growing up without them, young people whose futures disappeared on a stretch of tarmac, workers whose families depended on their daily earnings and passengers who entered vehicles believing that the state had done enough to ensure their safety. That is what makes the mandate of NTSA so important.

The authority was established to regulate and coordinate significant aspects of road transport and safety. Its responsibilities encompass vehicle inspection and certification, licensing, regulation of public service vehicles, road-safety strategies, research, safety education and other regulatory functions. At the same time, the National Police Service remains central to traffic-law enforcement.

In principle, there is nothing wrong with dividing these functions. Modern government depends upon institu-

tions possessing specialised responsibilities. The problem begins when the boundaries between those responsibilities become sufficiently indistinct to allow accountability to evaporate.

When a regulator identifies an unsafe vehicle, who ensures that it is actually removed from the road? When a dangerous operator repeatedly violates the rules, which institution has the final responsibility for stopping that operator? When police officers encounter a vehicle whose regulatory status is questionable, do they have timely access to the information necessary to act? When a road is officially recognised as a black spot, who is responsible for ensuring that the warning produces physical or operational intervention before another family pays the ultimate price? These are not academic questions. They are questions of life and death.

The tragedy at Salama on October 3, in which at least 17 people died in a multiple-vehicle crash along the Nairobi-Mombasa highway, brings the issue into painful focus. NTSA moved to investigate the circumstances and described the area as a known black spot. That response is necessary. But the designation of a location as a known black spot should also provoke an uncomfortable national question: if the danger was already known, what was done before the latest deaths? A black spot should be a call to action, not a geographical obituary.

Kenya does not lack laws. It does not lack regulations. It does not lack agencies. It does not lack committees, strategies, policies or official speeches about road safety. The country has repeatedly demonstrated an impressive ability to produce adminis-

trative frameworks. What remains less convincing is the ability to translate those frameworks into sustained prevention.

The Ministry of Roads and Transport has continued to develop regulations dealing with matters including vehicle inspection, school transport, drink-driving and commercial service vehicles. Such measures may be important. But another regulation, by itself, cannot make a dangerous road safe, a reckless driver responsible or an unroadworthy vehicle disappear. The harder question is what happens after the regulation has been written.

A mature transport-safety system should make responsibility visible. The Ministry should provide clear policy direction. The regulator should have defined and enforceable regulatory authority. The police should possess an equally clear enforcement mandate. Road agencies should be responsible for infrastructure interventions within their respective jurisdictions. Investigators should identify not only immediate causes but systemic failures. Parliament should scrutinise whether recommendations are actually implemented. Most importantly, there must be no institutional hiding place between these functions.

The danger of measuring road safety through administrative activity is that government can appear busy while the roads remain dangerous. The number of licences issued, vehicles registered, inspection certificates processed and enforcement operations conducted may make impressive entries in annual reports. But they are not the ultimate measure of safety. The real questions are much more uncomfortable.

How many lives were saved?

How many unsafe vehicles were prevented from operating? How many repeat offenders were removed from the road? How many known black spots were corrected? How many recommendations arising from previous crashes were implemented? And, most importantly, are road deaths actually declining because of the interventions undertaken? Those should become the language of accountability.

Parliament's previous consideration of reforms to the NTSA framework suggests that the institutional question is already on the national agenda. The opportunity should now be used to undertake a comprehensive review of the entire road-safety chain rather than repeatedly responding to individual tragedies in isolation.

Kenya needs a publicly understandable responsibility matrix showing who makes policy, who develops regulations, who licenses, who inspects, who enforces, who prosecutes, who investigates crashes and who is responsible for ensuring corrective measures are implemented. The public should not have to become constitutional lawyers and administrative experts simply to discover who was responsible after their relative has been killed on the road.

There is also a deeper moral question here. Government authority exists ultimately to protect the public interest. Where an institution possesses the power to licence, inspect, regulate and certify, that power must be accompanied by corresponding responsibility. Where another institution possesses enforcement powers, those powers must be supported by clear information, resources and direction. And where responsibilities intersect, there must

be mechanisms that ensure cooperation rather than bureaucratic retreat.

Kenyans do not travel on NTSA roads, police roads or Ministry roads. They travel on Kenyan roads. When they die, they do not die according to institutional jurisdictions. Their families experience one loss, not a collection of administrative responsibilities. That is why the culture of passing the buck must end.

The country does not need another cycle in which tragedy produces outrage, outrage produces promises, promises produce committees and committees eventually produce reports that gather dust until another tragedy forces the same conversation. Kenya needs prevention. It needs clarity. It needs measurable accountability. And it needs institutions prepared to accept that regulatory authority is inseparable from public responsibility.

The Salama tragedy should therefore become more than another investigation. It should be an opportunity to ask whether the architecture Kenya has built around road safety is actually capable of delivering the safety its name promises. Because ultimately, the legitimacy of a road-safety authority cannot be measured by the number of licences it issues, vehicles it inspects or statements it releases after disaster. It must be measured by the number of people who leave home in the morning and return safely at night.

"A government that can explain why people died after the crash has happened has fulfilled only the smallest part of its duty; the greater duty is to build a system in which fewer families ever have to receive that terrible call."



Politics “I will not steal from you, my family to steal from you, or those I work with to steal from you,” Maraga told the gathering.

Maraga takes anti-graft pledge to diaspora as US lobby group backs his 2027 bid

The former Chief Justice is campaigning in America with a blunt promise and registered foreign support — but the road to State House remains steep

BY David Kimani

@themkenyaintimes

Former Chief Justice David Maraga has launched a three-week campaign tour of the United States, pledging to diaspora Kenyans that he will jail corrupt officials, protect public resources and bring Singapore-style accountability to Kenya if elected president in August 2027.

Speaking to supporters in the United States on Sunday, Maraga — the presidential flagbearer for the United Green Movement party — delivered a message stripped of political ambiguity. He would not steal. His family would not steal. Those he appointed to serve would not steal. And those who did would face consequences.

“I will not steal from you, my family to steal from you, or those I work with to steal from you,” Maraga told the gathering. “Kenyans have not given that money to you to put it in your pocket. I will guard that for you.”

The directness is deliberate and characteristic. Maraga built his public reputation on bluntness — most memorably in September 2017 when, as Chief Justice, he annulled the presidential election on constitutional grounds, a ruling that shook the political establishment and established him, in the eyes of many Kenyans, as an institution that could not be bought. Whether that judicial legacy translates into a viable presidential campaign is the central question his 2027

bid must answer, and his current American tour suggests he is at least serious about testing it.

His reference to Singapore and the late Lee Kuan Yew was pointed. The city-state’s transformation from a developing country into one of the world’s most prosperous and least corrupt economies is a model that Kenyan politicians invoke often and implement rarely. Maraga’s invocation of it was both aspirational and diagnostic — an implicit acknowledgement that Kenya’s failure to achieve comparable development is not a resource problem but a governance one.

“We are talking about Singapore in Kenya. You know what Lee Kuan Yew did to make Singapore admirable,” he said.

Lee governed Singapore for three decades with a combination of economic discipline, institutional integrity and zero tolerance for corruption that brooked no distinction between political allies and opponents. He prosecuted ministers, friends and civil servants alike. The result was a state in which public resources were managed with an efficiency that became the envy of the developing world. Maraga’s invocation of that model will resonate with diaspora Kenyans who have watched, from abroad, the systematic looting of a country whose potential they know intimately and whose failures they feel personally. Whether it resonates beyond the diaspora, with voters in Kisumu, Eldoret,

Nakuru and Nairobi who have heard similar promises from many politicians before, is an altogether different question.

The tour has produced a tangible institutional development that goes beyond campaign speeches. Documents filed under the United States Foreign Agents Registration Act show that Vanguard Africa, a Washington-based democracy advocacy organisation, entered into a formal agreement with Friends of Maraga on September 2, 2026, to provide advisory, international advocacy and public engagement support. The filing, submitted to the US Department of Justice, states that the support will focus on elevating Maraga’s profile and ethical leadership and on supporting free and fair elections in Kenya. Vanguard Africa will provide the services on a pro bono basis until November 30, 2026, after which the two parties will review the arrangement at a strategy meeting scheduled for December.

The FARA registration is significant for several reasons. It signals that Maraga’s campaign has acquired a degree of international institutional support that most third-party candidates in Kenyan elections never achieve. It also introduces a layer of formal documentation and transparency — an irony that will not be lost on observers, given that the campaign’s central theme is accountability. Vanguard Africa describes itself as a non-profit dedicated to supporting democratic gov-



Former Chief Justice David Maraga

ernance and free elections in Africa. Its decision to back Maraga pro bono reflects a judgment, at least at the organisational level, that his candidacy represents something worth investing in.

But the political mathematics of Kenya’s 2027 election are formidable, and Maraga’s path to State House runs through terrain that has defeated more established political figures than him. President William Ruto is seeking a second term from a position of institutional advantage. He controls state resources, commands the loyalty of a significant portion of the legislature and has spent much of 2026 making political peace with former adversaries — most recently attempting to broaden his coalition ahead of what promises to be a fiercely contested election.

The opposition landscape, meanwhile, is fragmented and still finding its post-Raila Odinga shape. The former Prime Minister’s death in October last year removed the single most powerful unifying force in Kenyan opposition politics. What has emerged in his absence is a field of ambitious figures — including Wiper leader Kalonzo Musyoka, who made an unsuccessful presidential run in 2022, EALA member Winnie Odinga, freshly anointed by

Luo Council of Elders as her father’s political heir, and a constellation of smaller candidacies including Maraga’s — all competing for space in a political environment that has not yet produced a credible coalition capable of challenging Ruto’s incumbency.

Former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua, impeached in October 2024 and now leading the Democracy for the Citizens Party, adds a further disruptive variable. His base in the Mount Kenya region — which delivered Ruto his decisive margin in 2022 — is no longer reliably in the president’s column, and the scramble for Central Kenya’s votes will be one of the defining contests of the 2027 cycle.

Maraga’s proposition is different in kind from most of his competitors. He is not positioning himself as the standard-bearer of a regional bloc or as the culmination of a long-running political alliance. He is presenting himself as a character candidate — a man whose record speaks for itself and whose appeal, if it exists, must cross ethnic and regional lines to mean anything at the ballot box. That is a harder pitch in Kenyan politics, where identity networks remain powerful determinants of electoral outcomes, but it is not an impossible one. The 2017 election nullification

made Maraga a national figure in a way that transcends the usual categories.

The diaspora, for its part, is a constituency worth courting. Kenyans abroad remit billions of shillings home annually and carry significant influence over family voting decisions in their home counties. A diaspora that is energised behind a candidate can translate into material and political support that extends well beyond the votes of non-resident citizens. Maraga appears to understand this, and the three-week American tour, combined with the Vanguard Africa partnership, suggests a campaign that is thinking about how to build international credibility alongside domestic momentum.

Whether it is enough will depend on what happens in Kenya over the next ten months. The coalition negotiations, the legislative battles over electoral law, the gender representation debate and the ongoing economic pressures on ordinary Kenyans will all shape the political environment into which every candidate, including Maraga, must ultimately make their case.

He arrives back from America with a pledge, a partner and a story. The question Kenya’s voters will answer in August is whether that is enough.

University Cheryl Bwana, a hotel attendant known to everyone as Cheche, explains it plainly. “Namba tano, tunamaanisha 50. Namba tatu, tunamaanisha 30” — number five means 50 shillings

Maharagwe number tatu: Decoding Chuka University’s campus food language

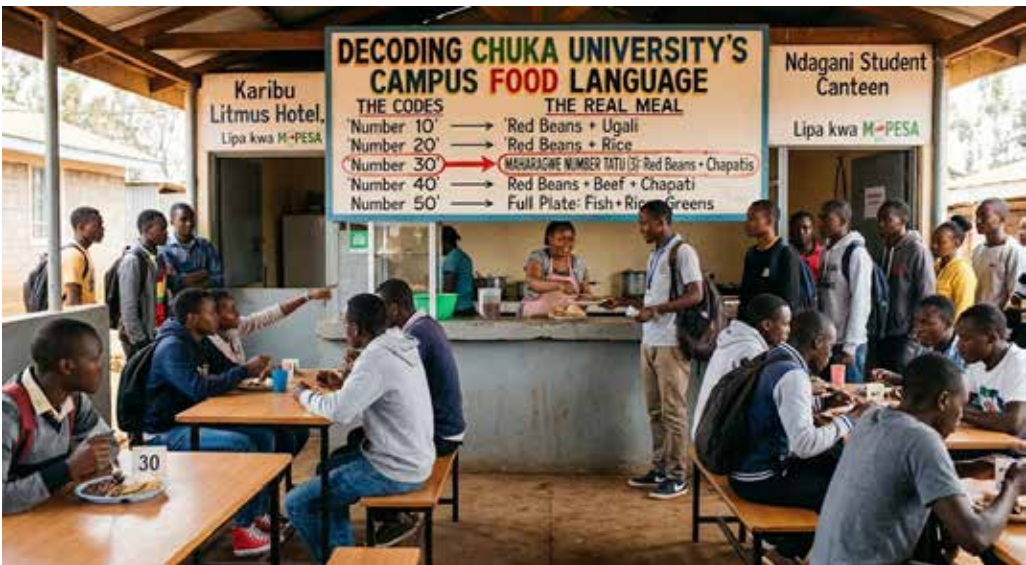
Around Ndagani’s hotels, what you order matters far less than knowing the code

BY Sallo Gobana
@themkenyatimes

Walk into a hotel near Chuka University and order a meal the conventional way, and you may be met with blank stares. For first-year students, getting food around campus can feel less like placing an order and more like attempting to crack a secret code — because, in a very real sense, it is. The system is built around price, not product. At Litmus Hotel in Ndagani, located along the busy Meru-Nairobi Highway, the numbers on a

customer’s lips do not correspond to items on any menu. They correspond to how much money that customer is willing to spend. A viral video of the ordering system at Litmus brought the practice to wider public attention, but for regular customers and hotel staff, it has long been an unremarkable part of daily life. Cheryl Bwana, a hotel attendant known to everyone as Cheche, explains it plainly. “Namba tano, tunamaanisha 50. Namba tatu, tunamaanisha 30” — number five means 50 shillings, number three means 30. The logic is

discreet by design. Some customers, she says, simply do not want those around them to know how much they are spending. A person eating a 20-shilling meal would prefer their neighbour not know the details. The coded language makes that possible without awkwardness. What began as a quiet work-around has, over time, become part of the social fabric of eating around campus. Regular customers walk in and ask confidently for “number two beef” or “number five” without a second thought. First-year students, encoun-



tering the system for the first time, often need a swift tutorial from a classmate or an amused attendant before the logic clicks. The confusion can produce genuinely funny moments. At Kings B along Ndagani Marine Road, owner David Githaiga recalls a first-year student who spotted what she thought was an extraordinary bargain. Told that “choma” cost 55 shillings, she asked whether she could get a kilogram of it — imagining she had stumbled upon some impossibly cheap nyama choma. What she did not yet know was that at Kings B, “choma” refers to chapati served with cereal soup, not roasted meat. The misunderstanding, Githaiga recalls with a grin, is far from unusual. His hotel takes a more flexible approach than some. Rather than fixed combinations tied to price points, Githaiga lets customers build their own

meals according to preference and budget. The vocabulary is different but the underlying principle is the same — students should be able to eat with whatever they have in their pockets, without having to explain or justify it. Cheche is equally clear on that point. The system at Litmus, she says, has been in place for years and has never been about excluding anyone. “Hata kama ukiwa na 50, 30. Litmus, utapata chakula 30, chakula 20. So nyote mwarikaribishwa Litmus” — even if you have just 20 or 30 shillings, there is something for you. Everyone is welcome. That accessibility is the quiet heart of the whole culture. Behind the comedy of confused first-years and the novelty of a price-coded menu lies something more straightforward: a student population managing tight budgets in a way that preserves a measure of dignity. The coded language means

nobody has to announce how little they have. A 20-shilling meal arrives without ceremony, ordered the same way as a 50-shilling one, and nobody at the next table is any the wiser. Learning the codes, for most students, happens naturally — through daily meals, overheard conversations and the gentle correction of more experienced comrades. By the time a student reaches their second or third year, the language is second nature. By the time they graduate, it is part of what they remember. Around the hotels of Ndagani, ordering food has always been about more than food. It is about belonging, about navigating student life on whatever resources you have, and about speaking the language of the place you now call home. In Chuka, you do not just order a meal. You have to know how to ask for it.



Chuka University

The Art of Growing



Oh years, oh years, where did you go?
One moment I'm two, crying at the world I barely know
The next, I wake up- grown, wise and tall
Carrying life's weight, yet standing victorious through it all
Looking back now, through a lens bright and clear

I see the magic in the things held dear
Friends, love and opportunities found
Lost bits and treasures in between
The beautiful chaos of the life I have seen
Oh years, oh years, where did you go?
I'm waking up to a brand- new glow
With a heart full of wonder and a spirit so free
Grateful for the big, the small and everything in between
And all that will perfectly align in the new era.
Mary Blessing Ahairiirwe

Drug addiction: The torment of the soul



A breath of pleasure, a fleeting ease,
Behind it, a thousand agonies and sufferings,
A betrayal of freedom:
Drug addiction is the torment of the soul.
A dark, bottomless ravine,
A dagger plunged into hearts,
A poison that people fail to understand:
Drug addiction is the torment of the soul.
Life is beautiful, do not poison it,
Do not stain your pure heart.

Do not play with death:
Drug addiction is the torment of the soul.
The end of all this is the grave,
Do not do yourself harm.
Instead, engage in zikr,
Drug addiction is the torment of the soul.
Zoirboyeva Sevinch was born on August 3, 2007, in Khavos District, Syrdarya Region, Uzbekistan. From 2023 to 2025, she successfully graduated from the Syrdarya Specialized School of Arts. Since her school years, she has developed a strong interest in creativity, visual arts, and literature. She is currently a second-year student at the Faculty of Architecture of Tashkent University of Architecture and Civil Engineering. Alongside studying the principles and professional aspects of architecture, she continues to develop her interest in fiction, literature, and the arts.

No one truly knows



Who I really am,
In the field of love,
I stand bewildered and amazed.
My face wears a smile,
Even as I crumble within,
In the eyes of others,
I am a happy woman.
I have a daughter, I have a son,
Alhamdulillah.
One is my eyebrow, the other my eye,
I am rich with my children.
My wealth, my entire world—
Thank God, my mother is alive.
Grateful for what I have,
I am close to Allah.
Is the market of love
Closed to me forever?

I am a young sapling
That never found its owner.
Searching and searching,
I finally closed my eyes,
Surrendered to destiny,
I am an innocent crescent moon.
I gave my affection,
Yet received none in return.
I drank from the wine of love,
But was never satisfied.
Saying "Love is not for me,"
I waved my hand in resignation—
Loving without being loved,
I am longing for true love...
I loved, I cherished,
And I burned through love.
I learned how cheap
Human love can be.
Surrendering her devotion
Only to God Himself,
In my solitude,
I am with Allah alone.
By: Amirova Nodira
A student of the Psychology program at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Alfraganus University, Republic of Uzbekistan.

The Author of Our Hope



Sidra Safdar
BS Induction – M.A. English 2
University of Chenab, Gujrat, Pakistan
A Humble Dedication to Our Teacher
MUHAMMAD ADNAN GUJJAR
Before you came, our thoughts were quiet shadows,
A Sanctuary of the Soul kept deep within
We walked like lines of Incomplete Lyrics,
Waiting for our true song to begin.
You saw the spark when we were Bloody

Overthinkers,
Lost in doubts we could not clarify,
You taught our minds to rise and break the binaries,
And gave our silent wings the strength to fly.
You spoke to us of courage, bold and steady,
Reminding us You Are to Conquer every fearsome space,
You built our trust and made us stand resilient,
A rising Lioness of Grace.
To you, perhaps, You Are My Untold Tale,
A chapter written soft with quiet care,
But in the halls of our university journey,
We found the wisdom that you chose to share.
For We Are Stories leathered bound in time,
A golden page within our student life,
Illuminated by your light of insight,
Guided through the beauty and the strife.
Thank you for unlocking hidden talents,
For teaching us to trust in who we are—
You made us see the strength we held inside us,
And turned our fading light into a star.

Wings of Becoming



A butterfly once lived in the dark,
Unaware of the wings it carried within.
It waited, it struggled, it quietly grew—
Not knowing what it would become.
Becoming takes its own gentle time;
Some journeys bloom in silence.
Every struggle reshapes the soul,
Every pause prepares us to rise.

Do not measure your path by another's;
Every heart has its season to unfold.
What seems like waiting may be growing,
What feels like darkness may hold wings.
Trust what is changing within you,
Even when the way is unclear.
The ending you fear may be a beginning—
A new self quietly drawing near.
One day, you will look back and know:
The waiting was part of your flight.
You were never meant to remain the same—
You were becoming your own light.

V Durgadevi
Graduate Teacher
GHS Nesal
Tiruvannamalai District

Keep some wins between you and God



Keep some wins between you and God.
God gives us a beautiful life. Everyone has some dreams and plans that they share with God.
Some people never reveal their plans openly to others.

Instead, they pray to God, saying, "My dear Almighty God, please guide me and help me achieve success."
When they achieve their goals, they express their gratitude and say, "Thank God!"
Some victories are meant to remain between you and God because God is the giver of success, but the price of success is hard work.
_G.YasminSirajudheen
Secondary grade teacher Melmalayanur block Villupuram dt

Politics “Every child is supposed to be in school. Our children should be learning and preparing for their future, not being exposed to labour,” Mogaka said.

MP Mogaka calls for joint action to keep children in school and end child labour

BY Elizabeth Angira
@themkenyaintimes

West Mugirango Member of Parliament Steve Mogaka has called on parents, government agencies and other stakeholders to work together to ensure that every child of school-going age is in school and protected from child labour. Mogaka said children should be in classrooms receiving education rather than being engaged in labour and other activities that could interfere with their education and future. Speaking at Nyagachi Secondary School during a prayer day, the MP urged parents to take responsibility for their children’s education by ensuring they attend school regularly. He said education is a shared

responsibility and should not be left to teachers and schools alone. “Every child is supposed to be in school. Our children should be learning and preparing for their future, not being exposed to labour,” Mogaka said. He called on parents to closely monitor their children and ensure that they report to school and remain committed to their studies. According to the MP, some children risk missing out on education when they are involved in labour or other activities that take them away from school. He urged parents facing economic challenges to seek available support rather than allowing their children to engage in work that could affect their education. Mogaka also called on government agencies and other

institutions responsible for child protection and education to strengthen efforts to identify children who are out of school and help them return to learning. He said no child should be left at home when they are supposed to be in school. The legislator stressed that protecting children from child labour requires the involvement of the entire community. “It is everybody’s responsibility to ensure that every child gets proper education. Let us not expose our children to labour work. Child labour is illegal. Let us ensure that every child gets an education,” he said. Mogaka further urged community leaders, teachers, parents and relevant government agencies to work together to address the challenges that prevent children from attending school.

He said children who remain out of school are at risk of losing opportunities that could help them build better lives and contribute to the development of their communities. The MP encouraged parents to create a supportive environment at home and to work closely with teachers to monitor their children’s progress. He also urged schools and education stakeholders to follow up on learners who are frequently absent and establish the reasons behind their absence. Mogaka said the fight against child labour should begin at the community level, with parents and local leaders taking an active role in protecting children. He maintained that every child has a right to education and should be given an opportunity to attend school without being forced into labour.



West Mugirango Mp Steve Mogaka has called for a joint action to keep children in school and end Child labour. | Photo: Elizabeth Angira

His remarks come as schools and communities continue to call for greater attention to children’s education, particularly those from vulnerable families who may be at greater risk of dropping out. Mogaka said concerted efforts by parents, schools, government agencies and the wider community would help ensure that children remain

in school and are protected from practices that could undermine their education and future. He urged all stakeholders to make keeping children in school a shared priority and to take action whenever a child is found to be out of school or engaged in child labour.

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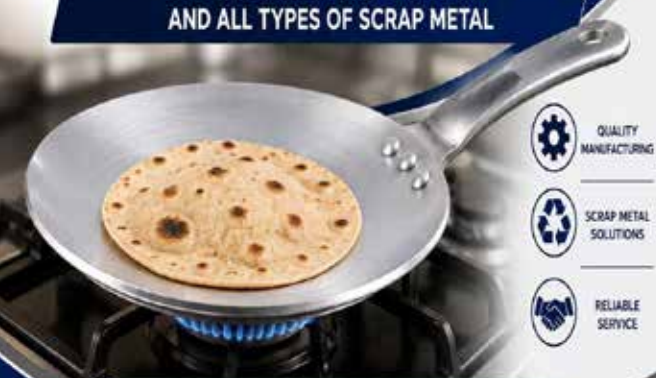
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Business Mohamed steps into the role at a moment of considerable movement across Kenya's banking sector. Technological innovation, shifting customer expectations and intensifying competition

I&M Bank appoints Abdi Mohamed as chief executive

The new CEO takes charge as the lender doubles down on digital growth and deeper customer engagement

BY Hadassah Karangu
@themtkenyatiimes

I&M Bank Kenya has appointed Abdi Mohamed as its new Chief Executive Officer with effect from October 5, 2026, following regulatory approval by the Central Bank of Kenya.

Mohamed steps into the role at a moment of considerable movement across Kenya's banking sector. Technological innovation, shifting customer expectations and intensify-



I&M Bank Kenya has appointed Abdi Mohamed as its new Chief Executive Officer

ing competition among lenders are reshaping what banks must offer and how quickly they must move to remain relevant. The days when a broad branch network and a range of conventional products were sufficient to hold customer loyalty are giving way to a more demanding environment — one in which speed, convenience, personalisation and digital accessibility increasingly determine where people choose to bank.

His appointment is therefore expected to bring renewed

focus to I&M Bank's growth agenda, its digital transformation priorities and its efforts to deepen relationships with both existing and prospective customers. The bank will be watching closely how Mohamed translates those ambitions into tangible services and experiences that resonate in a crowded and fast-moving market.

The wider context is significant. Kenyan banks have invested heavily in digital platforms and mobile banking in recent years, and the ability

to keep pace with that shift — while maintaining sound governance and financial stability — has become one of the defining tests of executive leadership in the sector. For a new chief executive, that balance between innovation and discipline is not an occasional consideration but a constant one.

For I&M Bank, the change in leadership represents more than a straightforward transition at the top. It arrives at a defining moment for an institution, and an industry, being reshaped by forces that show no sign of slowing. As Mohamed begins his tenure, the bank's attention will turn to how effectively he positions I&M to grow, compete and serve Kenyans through what promises to be a period of continued transformation across the financial services sector.

Kanjama joins global legal leaders at London ceremonial opening

BY Grace Wanja
@themtkenyatiimes

The Law Society of Kenya president's appearance alongside the UK Lord Chancellor and regional bar presidents signals Kenya's growing presence in international legal circles

By Grace Wanja

Senior Counsel Charles Kanjama, President of the Law Society of Kenya, attended the ceremonial opening of the English Legal Year in London yesterday, joining a gathering of senior legal figures from across the Commonwealth and beyond.

Kanjama was pictured alongside the East Africa Law Society President, the President of the Law Society of England and Wales, the UK Lord Chancellor and Kenya's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom — a line-up that reflected both the occasion's prestige and the breadth of Kenya's engagement with in-



Senior Counsel Charles Kanjama with EALS President, UK Law Society President, Lord Chancellor, and Kenya High Commissioner during the ceremonial opening of the English Legal Year.

ternational legal institutions.

The ceremonial opening of the English Legal Year is one of the oldest traditions in the common law world, marking the resumption of the legal calendar with formal proceedings that draw senior judges, bar leaders and government officials from across jurisdictions rooted in English legal tradition. Kenya, as a common law country, maintains close professional ties with the English bar, and the presence of the Law Society of Kenya's president at such a gathering carries institutional weight that extends well be-

yond the individual.

Kanjama's appearance is consistent with a profile that reaches beyond domestic practice. His engagement with regional and international legal bodies has established him as one of the more recognisable Kenyan voices in cross-border legal discourse.

The East Africa Law Society's representation at the event further underscores the region's growing visibility within global legal conversations — a development




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Justice The numbers do not lie; they accuse. They accuse a political class that inherited the colonial architecture of extraction and simply painted it black

The phantom of freedom: Kenya's social justice as elite inheritance in disguise



By: Jerameel Kevins Owuor Odhiambo
@themkenyetimes

In Kenya today, one hundred and twenty-five individuals command more wealth than forty-two point six million of their fellow citizens seventy-seven percent of the nation. Nearly half the population scrapes by in extreme poverty, a figure that has swollen by seven million souls since 2015 even as the economy posted respectable growth. The richest one percent clutch seventy-eight percent of the country's financial wealth. Fewer than two percent of Kenyans own more than half the arable land; a microscopic zero point one percent of large-scale holders control thirty-nine percent of farmed earth while ninety-eight percent of smallholders, averaging a pitiful one point two hectares, squeeze onto the remaining forty-six percent. For every hundred shillings a man earns, a woman receives sixty-five. Only thirteen percent of women hold legal title to agricultural land. Sixty-eight percent of ordinary government revenue vanishes into debt servicing and salaries, leaving the rest of the budget to starve health, education, and social protection. These are not abstract ratios. They are the cold arithmetic of a republic that still dares to speak of justice.

This is the factual wound. Everything else is the infection that has festered around it for six decades.

The numbers do not lie; they accuse. They accuse a political class that inherited the colonial architecture of extraction and simply painted it black. When the Union Jack came down in 1963, the White Highlands did not vanish into egalitarian mist. They changed hands. The same logic that had declared African land "idle" and African labour cheap was repurposed by a new elite who spoke the language of African socialism while practising the economics of enclosure. Sessional Paper Number Ten of 1965 promised freedom from poverty, ignorance, and disease; what it delivered was a hierarchy in which some regions were declared produc-



tive and worthy of investment while the arid and semi-arid lands home to pastoralists, the historically marginalised were treated as residual afterthoughts. The Mau Mau fighters who died for land and dignity watched, from the grave, as "willing buyer, willing seller" schemes legitimized the very dispossession they had rebelled against. The rebellion was unfinished because the prize was privatized.

Consider the correlation that refuses to die. Colonial policy created two nations under one flag: a settler economy of large estates and a native economy of reserved labour. Post-independence Kenya perfected the model. Today the coast still hosts generations of squatters on ancestral soil more than sixty-five percent of residents in Kilifi, Kwale, and Lamu lack formal titles while vast tracts elsewhere lie idle under elite ownership. Food insecurity climbs; two point two million face acute hunger even as the Global Hunger Index labels the crisis "serious." The same land that could feed the nation is locked in speculation and political patronage. Inequality is not an accidental by-product of growth; it is the deliberate outcome of a system that treats public resources as private inheritance.

Gender inequality is the quiet violence that compounds the rest. Women perform five times more unpaid care work than men. Asset ownership in male-headed households is three times greater. A woman from the poorest quintile faces a one-in-

two chance of unemployment; a man from the richest faces one-in-five. Legal reforms exist on paper, yet the lived reality is that land remains a masculine fortress and the labour market a patriarchal sieve. Violence against women continues its grim ledger: hundreds of femicides, thousands of assaults that the state registers with bureaucratic fatigue rather than urgency. Social justice that ignores half the population is not justice; it is a partial amnesty for the powerful.

Youth stand at the sharpest edge of this betrayal. Unemployment and underemployment are not statistics; they are the daily amputation of possibility. A generation raised on the rhetoric of digital transformation and Vision 2030 discovers that the formal economy has no room for them, that informal hustling is the only available citizenship, and that police batons remain the state's preferred language of dialogue when they demand better. The Gen Z protests of recent years were not mere restlessness; they were the body politic rejecting a diagnosis of chronic elite capture. The state's response lethal force, disappearances, media blackouts revealed the true hierarchy of values: order above justice, silence above accountability.

Corruption is the solvent that dissolves every reform. Kenya's score on the Corruption Perceptions Index hovers in the low thirties. Scandals multiply like weeds after rain: edible oil, fertilizer, health procurement, youth service funds. Billions disap-

pear while hospitals demand cash upfront from the dying and schools ration textbooks. The public purse has become a trough. Those who feed from it speak piously of austerity for the poor while insulating themselves from consequence. The judiciary, the anti-corruption agencies, the parliamentary oversight committees each has moments of courage, yet the overall pattern is one of selective blindness. Impunity is not a bug; it is the operating system.

Regional disparities complete the map of abandonment. Ten counties Mandera, Wajir, Garissa, Turkana, West Pokot and their neighbours remain trapped in multi-dimensional poverty while Nairobi's skyline gleams. Climate shocks, drought and flood, do not invent these inequalities; they expose them with merciless clarity. The Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda and other slogans sound progressive until one notices that the structural foundations land concentration, regressive taxation, elite control of credit and contracts remain untouched. Growth without redistribution is simply the acceleration of divergence. A rising tide that lifts only the yachts is not a tide; it is a private wave machine.

Social transformation worthy of the name cannot be a technocratic adjustment. It requires the dismantling of extractive institutions and the construction of distributive ones. Land reform that goes beyond cosmetic titling to progressive taxation of idle holdings and genuine redistribution of underutilized estates. Tax systems

that stop punishing consumption by the poor while offering breathing space to property owners. Public investment that prioritizes the arid lands and the urban informal settlements with the same intensity once reserved for the highlands. Gender parity enforced not as token appointments but as structural redesign of ownership, care, and decision-making. Youth employment treated as a national security imperative rather than a residual labour-market problem. And above all, an end to the culture of impunity that makes every reform reversible.

The actors who must act are not mysterious. The executive must abandon the politics of patronage and confront the concentrated power of its own allies. Parliament must pass and fund the laws that match the Constitution's promises rather than the interests of donors to campaigns. The judiciary must treat economic and social rights as justiciable and urgent, not aspirational poetry. County governments must stop treating devolution as a new arena for elite capture. Civil society and the independent media must refuse the comfort of foundation grants that mute their critique. Faith communities must move beyond charity to prophetic confrontation of structural sin. And citizens especially the young must convert digital outrage into sustained organisation that cannot be tear-gassed into silence.

Kenya's tragedy is not scarcity of resources or scarcity of intelligence. It is scarcity of political will to break the chain that links the colonial farm to the contemporary estate, the settler title deed to the elite title deed, the rhetoric of Uhuru to the reality of inherited privilege. Social justice is not a destination that arrives with economic growth; it is a continuous struggle against the gravity of elite self-interest. The alternative is a nation permanently divided into those who inherit the land of milk and honey and those who inherit only the dust. History has already written the first chapters of this betrayal. The next chapter is still unwritten. It will be authored either by the determined many or by the comfortable few. The choice, as always, belongs to those willing to make it costly for injustice to continue.

The writer is a social commentator.

Education Digital resources, ICT, STEM approaches and competency-based methods are reshaping what effective teaching looks like

Beyond celebration: Why Kenya must put teachers at the centre of education reform

BY Ashford Kimani
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As Kenya joins the rest of the world in marking World Teachers' Day 2026, the occasion offers more than a moment for applause. Under the theme "Standing with teachers: 60 years of protecting the profession, advancing its status and shaping our futures," it is a call to account — and to action.

Teachers are central to every functioning education system. They do far more than deliver lessons and mark scripts. They nurture talent, kindle curiosity, build confidence and prepare young people to engage meaningfully in society. Their influence radiates beyond the classroom into families, communities and the broader national development agenda. How well Kenya supports the people entrusted with delivering education will, to a significant degree, determine the quality of that education.

The 2026 theme carries particular weight because it marks six decades since the 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers. That milestone invites stakeholders to take honest stock of how far the profession has been protected and what remains unfinished.

Kenya's education system is in active transition. The Competency-Based Education curriculum places emphasis on practical skills, learners' individual talents and real-world application. For that approach to deliver on its promise, teachers must be adequately prepared and consistently supported to translate curriculum expectations into meaningful classroom experiences. Policy announcements alone will not move the needle. Educators need relevant professional development, effective school leadership, appropriate learning materials and the conditions in which to understand and respond to the different needs of their learners.



Teacher in class

Several institutions featured in the World Teachers' Day programme carry complementary responsibilities in that effort. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development works on curriculum design, review, evaluation and the supply of support materials. The Centre for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education in Africa supports capacity-building in STEM through training and research. The Kenya Education Management Institute focuses on strengthening leadership and management across the school system. These roles are distinct but interdependent: curriculum development, teacher training and school leadership must move together if reform is to be understood and effectively implemented on the ground.

The programme's recognition categories — spanning early years educators, school leadership, inclusive education, ICT integration, mentorship, sustainable development and early-career teaching, among others — reflect the breadth of what good teaching actually involves. They challenge the narrow view that educational success is best measured through examination results alone. Effective teaching encompasses mentoring, creating inclusive classrooms, encouraging creativity, promoting safety and equipping young people with skills that outlast any syllabus.

Yet recognition, however well deserved, is not a substitute for structural support. Awards can inspire excellence; they cannot replace the

professional environment that makes excellence possible. Lasting improvement requires sustained investment in professional development, constructive feedback, capable leadership and the resources teachers need to do their jobs properly. Every educator deserves those conditions, whether or not they ever hold a trophy.

The status of teachers is inseparable from the conditions in which they work. Professional respect must be visible in how educators are treated day to day, how their concerns are handled and whether they have genuine opportunities to participate in decisions that shape their working lives. The Kenya National Union of Teachers and the Kenya Union of Post-Primary Education Teachers play a critical role here. Their work — advancing welfare, rights, remuneration, career progression and professional development — provides teachers with a collective voice that individual educators cannot exercise alone.

Constructive engagement between teachers' representatives, government and other education stakeholders is not optional. Social dialogue creates the space for concerns to be raised honestly, competing priorities to be weighed and solutions to emerge through consultation rather than imposition. When teachers believe their professional voice carries weight, education reform gains a far more durable foundation for implementation.

Protecting the profession also means acknowledging

the scale of what is asked of teachers. They are expected to support diverse learners, uphold professional standards, absorb curriculum changes, integrate new technologies and help maintain safe learning environments — often with limited resources and under considerable pressure. Meeting those expectations demands institutional support, clear communication and policies that reflect an honest understanding of complexity.

Digital resources, ICT, STEM approaches and competency-based methods are reshaping what effective teaching looks like. But technology and new methodology are only as effective as the training and resources behind them. The programme's emphasis on innovation and ICT

integration points to a growing need for adaptable educators — teachers who can support learners with varied abilities, encourage participation and connect classroom learning to the challenges of real life.

That responsibility cannot fall on individual teachers alone. Institutions must provide relevant training and professional guidance. School leaders must foster collaboration and the sharing of effective practice. Parents and communities must create home environments that value learning and reinforce children's development.

Ultimately, strengthening the teaching profession is a collective undertaking. Government agencies, training institutions, curriculum devel-

opers, school leaders, unions, parents and communities each shape the conditions in which education takes place.

World Teachers' Day 2026 should therefore be more than ceremony. It should renew a concrete commitment to policies and partnerships that protect teachers' professional standing, widen development opportunities and improve the quality of learning across the country. Sixty years after the international recommendation on teachers' status, Kenya has the opportunity to turn recognition into sustained action.

The message is plain: teachers cannot be expected to shape the future without the tools, respect and support required to do so. When Kenya stands genuinely with its teachers, it stands for every learner whose potential depends on quality education. The true measure of this year's celebration will be the lasting commitment to making that principle real.

SILAS MWAUDASHENI NANDE

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Health For a long time we have misunderstood PTSD among youth because we have treated it as a memory problem. We believe that if a young person can forget what happened, they will heal

PTSD and youth: The whispers we have not learned to hear

Trauma among Kenya's young people is real, widespread and largely unnamed — and the healing is already happening, if we know where to look



By: Wanjohi P. Mugambi
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Post-traumatic stress disorder is often described as a condition that belongs to soldiers returning from war, to survivors of major disasters, to people who have experienced extreme violence. In Kenya, we have confined this definition to the spectacular, and in doing so we have missed the ordinary trauma that lives quietly in our villages, our schools and our homes. I encounter PTSD every day — not in a hospital ward, but in classrooms, youth groups and the quiet corners of churches and market places. It wears a school uniform. It carries firewood. It sits in matatus trying to get to college. It is carried by young people who have experienced loss, rejection, domestic violence, economic collapse, sexual abuse and the slow, grinding trauma of growing up in environments where they are told to be strong before they have ever been allowed to feel safe.

For a long time we have misunderstood PTSD among youth because we have treated it as a memory problem. We believe that if a young person can forget what happened, they will heal. But trauma does not live in memory alone. It lives in the body, in the nervous system, in the whispers that linger long after the event has passed. In my work and in my book, *Psychology of Whispers*, I describe these as persistent internal voices that tell a young person they are no longer safe, that they are not enough, that they are a burden, that they will never succeed. When a young person loses a parent, fails an examination the whole village was waiting for, watches a family fracture through separation or domestic violence, or is publicly humiliated by a teacher or a parent, the event ends but the whisper remains. If that whisper is carried alone — unheard and unheld — it grows. It becomes what clini-



cians call PTSD.

In our context it shows up as constant anxiety, sleeplessness, irritability, withdrawal from friends, sudden anger, frequent unexplained headaches and stomach pains, poor concentration and a creeping sense of hopelessness about the future. Many young people in Nyeri, Gilgil and across the country are living with these symptoms but have no name for what they carry. They think they are lazy. They think they are possessed. They think they are weak. Society tells them to be resilient, to pray more, to stop being dramatic. This only deepens the wound.

Youth have their own ways of healing, and we have not paid nearly enough attention to them. The formal mental health system in Kenya matters, but it remains out of reach for most young people. There are too few psychologists and psychiatrists, and even where they exist, the cost is prohibitive and the stigma is steep. A young person in Othaya or Turkana will not walk into a counselling clinic. They will not tell their parents they are depressed for fear of being told to man up or dismissed altogether. We must therefore look honestly at how youth already heal themselves when given a safe space

— and strengthen those indigenous approaches rather than replace them.

The first way youth heal is through being heard without being fixed. In our organisation, ULTO, we run listening circles in schools and youth groups. These circles have no expert, no podium and no advice. We sit together — as our grandmothers once did when shelling peas — and one person speaks while the others simply listen. The one rule is that we do not interrupt, correct or offer solutions. We witness. I have watched a 17-year-old boy who had not spoken for two weeks after his father lost his job speak for four minutes — not because he was asked to explain himself, but because he was invited to share. I have watched a young mother who dropped out of school due to early pregnancy cry for the first time without being told to stop. The healing is not in the talking alone. It is in the experience of no longer carrying the story in isolation. Trauma thrives in isolation. Healing begins the moment that isolation is broken.

The second way youth heal is through naming what they carry. In our circles we ask a simple question: what whisper did you carry today? That question gives language to an internal experience that otherwise

feels formless and overwhelming. When a young person says aloud that today their whisper told them they were a failure because they did not get a university place, we can work with that whisper. We can ask where they learned that their worth lives only in their grades, and who benefits when they believe they are a failure. Naming externalises the problem. It separates the person from the pain. A young person learns that they are not the whisper — they are the one who hears it — and that they can choose which whisper to feed. This is emotional intelligence that requires no textbook.

The third way youth heal is through the body and through meaningful work. Young people are not healed by sitting and talking alone. They heal through movement, through purposeful activity, through ritual. When an old mugumo tree fell near our school, the elders grieved it as one would grieve a library, a court, a church. We planted ten more trees with young people — not as a branded project, but as an act of mourning and of hope. What we do not mourn, we do not protect. Many young people carry ecological and familial grief that has never been named because our culture demands they

remain strong. Planting a tree, cleaning a river, sweeping a compound together, playing football without a scoreboard, dancing, drumming — these are not leisure activities. They are ways the body releases what the mouth cannot speak. PTSD lives in the body as tension, as shallow breathing, as clenched fists. It must be released through the body.

The fourth way youth heal is through purpose and service. A young person who has been made to feel worthless by unemployment or poor results recovers a sense of worth when they are trusted to serve others. In ULTO, we give young people responsibility — to hold listening circles for younger children, to mentor primary school learners, to lead environmental activities. When a 19-year-old who was told he is a failure helps a ten-year-old who has stopped speaking to find their voice again, something shifts in him. He learns that his pain has given him eyes to see pain in others. This is post-traumatic growth — the understanding that trauma does not only wound but, when held in community, also teaches compassion.

Finally, youth heal when adults create the conditions for rooting, not only blooming. Our society praises blooming — good grades, visible success, performance. But some seasons a young person is not meant to bloom. They are meant to root, to go deep, to gather strength in the quiet. We must allow young people seasons of rooting without shaming them as lazy or lost. Some years we bloom; some years we root. Both are growth and both are necessary.

PTSD among Kenya's youth is real, widespread and largely unnamed. It is caused not only by war and disaster but by the everyday experiences of loss, rejection, poverty and humiliation that too many young people carry entirely alone. The healing is already happening — in circles, in soil, in service — and our role as teachers, parents, policymakers, and institutions such as the Teachers Service Commission and the Ministry of Health is not to import expensive models that never reach the village, but to strengthen what young people are already doing. Train peer listeners. Create safe circles in schools. Include mental health in medical cover and school programmes. Speak openly and reduce stigma.

If we care for the young person who is holding pain, that young person will one day hold the nation with compassion.

Teachers “Right from the morning assembly, it was the teachers who raised the flag, sang to the children and preached. They literally did everything,” Arimi said. ---

Mwiteria teachers celebrate their day — and speak plainly about its challenges

From raising the flag to leading assembly, educators at one Meru school turned the occasion into something genuinely their own

BY Brian Gitonga

@themkenyatimes

Teachers at Mwiteria Comprehensive School marked World Teachers’ Day yesterday with a celebration that was equal parts reflection and candour — honouring the profession while speaking honestly about the pressures that come with it.

The occasion brought together serving teachers, retired educators and learners at the school in North Imenti Constituency, with the day’s activities designed to put teachers front and centre in a way that went beyond the usual speeches. From the morning assembly, it was the teachers who raised the Kenyan flag, led the singing and addressed the children. Head teacher Juliet Arimi said that was exactly the point.

“Right from the morning assembly, it was the teachers who raised the flag, sang to the children and preached. They literally did everything,” Arimi said.

Retired teachers were also invited to interact with younger colleagues and share lessons drawn from long careers in the classroom. Arimi said the intergenerational exchange was intended to give newer educators a clearer sense of what the profession demands over time. Learners were not left out either, joining in through singing and other activities that kept the celebrations warm and inclusive.

Arimi said the occasion was an important reminder of how far teachers’ influence reaches — into health, aviation, administration, education and virtually every professional field. Yet she was equally candid about the challenges that educators continue to face, including from some parents and community members who, she said, do not always appreciate the decisions teachers make in guiding children.

“Teachers encounter many challenges. They work very hard, but at times you might have parents who do not appreciate the work you do,” she said.

She appealed to parents to weigh teachers’ overall contribution rather than judging them on isolated incidents, noting that educators, like anyone else, were not immune to occasional mistakes. Tensions, she added, often arose when teachers



Juliet Arimi, the headteacher at Mwiteria comprehensive school addresses the press. | Photo: Brian Gitonga



Teachers at Mwiteria Comprehensive School take part in cutting a cake in celebration of the teachers day. | Photo: Brian Gitonga

tried to correct learners’ behaviour — a responsibility she described as inseparable from the job.

“There are instances when we try to correct and discipline a child because

a teacher cannot stay with a child without correcting their behaviour, discipline and even education. These are the times you find that the community does not understand,” Arimi

said.

The implementation of Competency-Based Education also came up as a source of friction. Arimi said some parents push back when learn-

ers are asked to bring materials for practical activities, even though such exercises are designed to help children identify and develop their individual abilities and talents. She was firm that CBE could not achieve its objectives without teachers, learners and parents working in concert.

Within the school itself, however, that spirit of cooperation appears well established. Mwiteria Comprehensive School has 265 learners in early childhood development and education, 611 in the primary section and 270 in junior school. Despite teaching across different levels, Arimi said the staff operate as a single unit — a quality she credited with much of the school’s growing reputation in the constituency.

“When you come here, you cannot tell the difference among the teachers because we know what brought us here is teaching these children, and therefore we work as a team,” she said.

That teamwork extends well beyond the classroom. During football training, music festivals and other co-curricular activities under CBE, teachers cross the boundaries of their assigned sections freely. An ECDE teacher might coach junior school students through a music piece; a primary section teacher might turn up on the football pitch. Arimi said teachers also make a point of celebrating learners’ achievements across all levels, not only in the sections they teach directly.

“Even in games such as football, all these teachers work as a team. During music festivals, you can find an ECDE teacher teaching music to junior school students. That is why we work as a team,” she said.

She also acknowledged parents for the support they have shown the school, saying their cooperation alongside teachers’ commitment had been central to its progress.

World Teachers’ Day is observed annually on October 5. For the staff at Mwiteria, yesterday’s celebrations were both a moment of pride and a straightforward conversation about what it genuinely takes to educate and nurture children — day after day, year after year.

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Sports >> *The MAVOCK League brought convoy, Mass, music and a new gate back to St Mary's Kyamuhunga — and reminded Western Uganda that alumni bonds run deep

When the hill roared again

By **Mukama Phillip Kahigiriza**

It was not simply a reunion. It was a reclamation — loud, proud and deeply felt. This past weekend, the hills of Kyamuhunga trembled with something that has no easy name: the particular joy of people returning, together, to the place that made them.

Old boys and old girls of St Mary's Kyamuhunga Vocational School converged on their alma mater in Bushenyi for the annual MAVOCK League, the alumni gathering that has grown, over the years, into something far larger than football. This year's edition was spectacular by any measure — a single day that held a road convoy, a Holy Mass, a concert, a shared meal and the blessing of a new gate built by the alumni themselves.

It began before sunrise. By morning, the heart of Bushenyi town was already alive with colour and noise. Dozens of cars draped in MAVOCK colours gathered alongside boda boda riders revving in formation, all lining up for the convoy that has become one of the event's most recognisable traditions. Residents stopped to watch. Traders waved. Children cheered. As the procession snaked through the winding roads toward Kyamuhunga, horns blaring and jerseys catching the wind, it sent a message that needed no translation: these hills are still home.

On the school grounds, the mood shifted. The alumni gathered for Holy Mass, and Fr Allan — long regarded as both spiritual father and friend to the MAVOCK fraternity — delivered a homily that drew genuine reflection from the crowd. He challenged the old students to remain custodians of the values Kyamuhunga had planted in them: hard work, discipline and a commitment to service. For many, it was a moment of quiet reckoning, a



The MAVOCK League brought convoy, Mass, music and a new gate back to St Mary's Kyamuhunga

reminder that the years and the achievements mean less if the roots are forgotten.

What followed was pure Kyamuhunga. Fr Allan, in an act that brought the gathering to laughter and warm applause, took to the fire himself and cooked pork for his guests. The aroma spread. Plates circulated. Titles and professional distances dissolved and, for a stretch of the afternoon, they were simply students again — eating together, laughing together, exactly where they belonged.

As evening came, Western Uganda artist Truth 256 took the stage and turned the school grounds into something close to a concert hall. Old boys, old girls, teachers and current students sang together and danced shoulder to shoulder, the kind

of scene that confirms music carries across every generation without losing a note.

The emotional centrepiece of the day, however, was not the performance or the convoy. It was a gate. The new main entrance to St Mary's Kyamuhunga Vocational School, fully championed and financed by the old students through MAVOCK, stood nearly complete at the edge of the compound. In a solemn ceremony, it was blessed and prayed over. Hands were laid. Prayers were offered. More than a few people who had left this place years ago carrying little more than a certificate and a sense of direction found tears on their faces.

That gate is not simply an entrance. It is a message written in concrete and iron, addressed to

every current student who will pass through it: someone who once sat where you sit came back and built something for you.

The MAVOCK League has become exactly that kind of thing — an exercise in identity, in network, in the deliberate act of giving back. It demonstrates, year after year, that a vocational school set in the hills of Bushenyi can produce men and women capable of organising, mobilising and building lasting expressions of loyalty to where they came from.

This past weekend was history made in real time. St Mary's Kyamuhunga Vocational School is no longer just a school. It is a movement. And MAVOCK remains its beating heart.

GET THE BEST OF WORLD

Sports >> *Zidane’s side trailed at the break but four second-half goals, two from the Bayern winger, sent Belgium home empty-handed

Olise lights up Paris as France turn deficit into demolition



By Andalo Christine Ingutia

France produced a commanding second-half comeback to beat Belgium 4-1 at the Stade de France yesternight, handing Zinedine Zidane another confident result as his tenure as Les Bleus head coach continues to take shape.

It had not looked that way at the interval. Belgium were the better side in the opening 45 minutes and took a deserved lead through Dodi Lukebakio in the 34th minute, leaving the home crowd subdued and Zidane’s side with serious questions to answer. The absence of captain Kylian Mbappé, ruled out through injury, had

left France short of their usual cutting edge in attack, and Belgium defended their advantage with composure to the break.

What emerged from the tunnel was a different France entirely. Zidane’s side pressed higher, moved with greater urgency and pinned Belgium deep inside their own half. The turnaround began in the 76th minute when Désiré Doué found the equaliser to lift the Stade de France back to life. Four minutes later, Rayan Cherki put France ahead for the first time, and what had looked like a difficult evening was suddenly a platform for something special.

Michael Olise had come off the bench and was growing in in-

fluence with every passing minute. The Bayern Munich winger brought energy and directness to France’s attack that Belgium had no answer for. In the 88th minute he struck to make it 3-1, and in stoppage time he struck again — his second of the night completing a performance that was difficult to watch and impossible to ignore. Four goals in the final stages, and a 4-1 final score that rather flattered the scale of Belgium’s first-half performance.

For Zidane, the result carried significance beyond the scoreline. His early matches in charge have centred on striking the right balance between established players and a younger generation

pushing hard for recognition. Against Belgium, with Mbappé absent, it was that younger group that stepped forward. They took responsibility when it was needed, and delivered.

The victory also strengthens France’s position at the top of their Nations League group and adds momentum to a Zidane project that is beginning to find its voice. For Belgium, it will be remembered as a night of opportunity squandered after a promising start. For Olise, it was one more performance — increasingly hard to dismiss — that suggested his role in this France side is only going to grow.

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SPORTS AS THEY HAPPEN

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Kakyeka calls: Eight teams, one title, no mercy



By: Mukama Phillip Kahigiriza
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Worth Noting:

- Eight clubs qualified. Twelve did not. The Grand Finale is set for November 7 at Kakyeka Stadium in Mbarara — the cathedral of Ankole football — and nothing about what follows will be straightforward.
- Kasananga FC top the table with 41 points and a record that borders on the extraordinary. In 19 matches, they conceded five goals. Five. Across nearly five months of football, their defence was breached so rarely it almost defies belief. Twelve wins, five draws and two defeats, with a goal difference of +21 built not on spectacular thrashings but on precise, suffocating victories by the odd goal. They arrive at Kakyeka as the team everyone must solve — and so far, almost no one has.



It is done. After nine matchdays that felt, at times, like bare-knuckle combat, the KISOBA League Season 5 regular season has concluded. What the final standings reveal is not merely a table of points and goal differences. It is a document of survival, artistry and, for at least one team, heartbreak of the cruellest kind.

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Kasananga FC top the table with 41 points and a record that borders on the extraordinary. In 19 matches, they conceded five goals. Five. Across nearly five months of football, their defence was breached so rarely it almost defies belief. Twelve wins, five draws and two defeats, with a goal difference of +21 built not on spectacular thrashings but on precise, suffocating victories by the odd goal. They arrive at Kakyeka as the team everyone must solve — and so far, almost no one has.

Two points behind them sit Giants

FC on 39, and if Kasananga are the immovable object, Giants are the force that has been dismantling opponents with something close to joy. Twenty-eight goals scored, a league-best goal difference of +22, 11 wins and only two defeats. They are the team neutrals will want to watch. Those two dropped points will have sharpened a hunger that was already considerable.

Third and fourth belong to Elites FC and Jamaican Bees FC, level on 34 points and representing two distinct but equally effective philosophies of the game. Elites conceded four goals in 19 matches — a figure so low it seems less like a defensive record and more like a point of principle. Nine wins, seven draws and three losses, with game management that would draw admiring nods from the most disciplined coaches in the sport. Jamaican Bees, alongside them on 34, offer something different: relentless, exhausting industry. Eighteen goals scored, five conceded, seven draws — a team that will run and press and harry until the final whistle regardless of the scoreline. In a single-elimination finale

where nerves can dissolve the most carefully laid tactics, that work rate is a serious weapon.

Then comes the triangle. Ghetto FC, Team Haven FC and Men of Men FC each finished on 33 points, having arrived at that identical total by entirely different routes. Ghetto brought flair and 23 goals. Haven brought resilience — two losses in 19 matches, nine draws and an almost supernatural reluctance to be beaten. Men of Men brought minimalism so pure it becomes its own kind of artistry: 13 goals scored in 19 games, four conceded, and a place in the finale secured by winning matches 1-0 and then doing it again. There is a long tradition in football of teams like this going further than anyone expects.

Valiants FC complete the eight on 32 points, separated from elimination by a single point. Nine wins, five draws, five losses — not the most eye-catching profile in the bracket, but they are here, and teams that survive by their fingernails through a regular season often carry a particular kind of calm into the knockout rounds. They have nothing to lose at

Kakyeka, which makes them quietly dangerous.

The cruelest number in the entire table belongs to a team that will not be at Kakyeka. Platinum FC finished ninth on 31 points — one point outside the qualification places — having scored 29 goals and posted a goal difference of +21, identical to that of table-toppers Kasananga. Eight wins, seven draws, four losses. In most seasons, that is a finalist's record. This season, it is a footnote. Somewhere in the reckoning of missed chances and late equalisers, one point slipped away and the mathematics became merciless.

Below Platinum, the middle of the table tells its own story. Millennium-Kooko FC finished tenth with 30 points and only three losses — fewer than several of the qualified sides — but nine draws that kept sharing points they needed to keep. Bello Gallico on 28, Galaxy on 26 with 11 draws, and Lords on 25 were the teams that made the regular season genuinely unpredictable, taking points off the leading sides and keeping the title race open deep into the campaign.

At the foot of the table, the numbers are stark. Cheetahz FC, Erudites, Navies and Descendants of KLEP finished between 15 and 18 points. Eminent FC, Gong FC and Lykans FC conceded 37, 38 and 42 goals respectively across the season. The margins were painful, but these were clubs that turned up for 19 weeks and competed. That counts for something.

What happens at Kakyeka on November 7 is genuinely open. Does Kasananga's extraordinary defensive discipline hold under the pressure of a final? Can Giants' attacking football overwhelm a bracket full of teams that have made a virtue of conceding nothing? Does the minimalism of Men of Men FC find a way to frustrate its way to a trophy? Does the ghost of Platinum FC's points haunt the stadium?

KISOBA League Season 5 has been a full and absorbing story. The finale will be its last word.

Kakyeka awaits.