

Kenya risks being a captured state

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By THE LINK WRITER

KENYANS are seen to have a “business-as-usual” approach to corruption, but a new report published by the International Peace Institute shows that our extreme tolerance to impunity is having devastating consequences and is, in fact, undermining the State’s legitimacy.

Endemic corruption and powerful transnational criminal networks have entrenched state institutions and eroded public confidence in them, says the report by International Peace Institute.

Peter Gastrow, the author of the report titled “Termites at Work: Transnational Organised Crime and State Erosion in Kenya” says that rampant corruption within the Police Force, the Judiciary and other State institutions has allowed criminals to penetrate political institutions.

Powerful criminal networks with links to Parliament currently pose a big threat to the creation of laws, policies and regulations that could help curb money laundering and drug trafficking. Governments that lack the capacity or the political will to counter such penetration, he says, run the risk of becoming “captured states” – that is, states whose government structures have become captives of uncontrolled corruption.

If this goes unchecked, he warns, the criminal networks could penetrate the East African Community and cause havoc in neighbouring countries as well.

This could result in the kind of lawlessness

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Prof. George Saitoti, Internal Security Minister

“Militia groups in Somalia have started to profit from drugs trafficked into Kenya. The port of Kismayu in southern Somalia is used to import drugs into Kenya.”

Africa struggling to meet rising education demand

By THE LINK WRITER

THE global demand for secondary education has risen exponentially, says a new United Nations report, which adds that governments, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, are having a hard time keeping up and many children are being left out.

The 2011 Global Education Digest, released by the Institute for Statistics of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), says there are only enough seats for 36 per

cent of children who want to enroll in secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa.

“There can be no escape from poverty without a vast expansion of secondary education,” said UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova. “This is a minimum entitlement for equipping youth with the knowledge and skills they need to secure decent livelihoods in today’s globalized world.”

In many ways, secondary education is a bridge for young people from the world of school to the world of work, or a bridge between primary education and continuing

higher education.

She added that “an educated population is a country’s greatest wealth,” and that the inequalities presented in the report, especially in relation to girls’ exclusion from secondary education, have enormous implications for the achievement of development targets, from child and maternal health and HIV prevention to environmental security.

Globally, secondary schools have been accommodating almost 100 million more students each decade, with the total number growing by 60 per cent between 1990 and

2009, says to UNESCO. With more and more children attending and completing primary-level education, demand for places in secondary education has risen by leaps and bounds.

Yet, the agency adds, a child in the last grade of primary school only has at best a 75 per cent chance of making the transition to lower secondary school in about 20 countries, the majority of which are in sub-Saharan Africa. The region also has

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that has turned many countries, such as Mexico and Colombo, into murderous, violent places where drug lords and criminals hold organs of the State hostage, a scenario that is just too horrific to imagine.

The following highlights from the report are most worrying:

- Increased volumes of heroin from Pakistan and Iran, and cocaine from Latin America, are being transmitted through Kenya. At least 10 major international drug trafficking networks, headed mainly by West Africans, but also involving Kenyans, are responsible for the bulk of the cocaine and heroin trafficked into and through the country.
- Drug money is increasingly being used to attain positions of influence, particularly in politics.
- Militia groups in Somalia have started to profit from drugs trafficked into Kenya. The port of Kismayu in southern Somalia is used to import drugs into Kenya.
- Kenya is the biggest market for counterfeit goods from India and China.
- A Kenyan cartel comprising current and former MPs, activists linked to politicians – including a prominent businesswoman – and customs personnel are working with a network of Chinese, Somali and Pakistani criminals to smug-

gle drugs, counterfeits and other illicit commodities through the port of Mombasa.

- During the first nine months of 2010, at least 10 small arms seizures were reported on Garissa road en route to Nairobi from Somalia. The UN's Dadaab refugee camp in northern Kenya is sometimes used as a storage facility by arms smugglers.
- Corrupt staff at the Dadaab refugee camp is involved in human trafficking and the sale of "slots" for refugees wishing to migrate to South Africa, Europe and the United States.
- Eastleigh in Nairobi is East Africa's hub for the smuggling of migrants and the trafficking of women and children. About 50 girls, mainly from Somalia are trafficked every week from north-eastern Kenya to Nairobi.
- In 2010, a staggering \$2.1 billion found its way into the economy without the government being able to explain its source.
- Funds laundered from Kenya sometimes end up with al Shabaab in Somalia.

If no action is taken, there is a huge risk that State institutions will be eaten up from the inside by criminal elements. As a result, the legitimacy of the State will be undermined.

Kenya will crumble as criminals



Kenya's security forces display their arsenal

will be at the helm, making laws to suit themselves and bribing their way through murder, drug and human trafficking, sale of illicit arms and a whole range of criminal activities.

The report recognises that the

current reforms in the Judiciary could restore the public's confidence in government institutions.

However, these reforms must be accompanied by far-reaching steps to counter crime, corruption and impunity, including the appointment of

special police taskforces to investigate these crimes and taking drastic action against those involved in corruption.

Unfortunately, the government appears unwilling – for whatever reason – to take these steps.

Nacada cracks the whip

By LUKE KAPCHANGA

THE National Agency for the Campaign Against Drug Abuse (NACADA) has embarked on a rigorous exercise to nab violators of the Alcoholic Drinks Control Act 2010.

According to Aggrey M. Buseña, who is the acting National Coordinator of NACADA, the agency is carrying out random inspection of outlets selling alcoholic drinks, manufacturers and importers of alcoholic substances to ensure compliance with licensing regulations including operating hours and packaging.

"We are undertaking sampling and analysis of the quality of alcoholic drinks being sold to the public countrywide in the swoop," he said, adding that through the exercise, the agency seeks to develop and validate guidelines for promotion/advertising of alcoholic drinks.

The exercise being undertaken through the Rapid Response Initiative by NACADA has also incorporated public education campaigns through meetings, dissemination of IEC materials, sensitization forums and mass media.

"Our teams are in the field conducting random inspections of alcohol manufacturing and selling premises. Those who are found to be flouting the provisions of the Act will face the law," he said.

He stated that the inspection began in Nairobi area and will continue countrywide.



UNDER ARREST: The agency is carrying out random inspection of outlets selling alcoholic drinks.

"So far, our teams have visited Starehe, Kamukunji, Makadara, Embakasi, Langata, Njiru, Kasarani, Westlands, Dagoretti and Athi River", he added.

A total of 24 persons (11 male, 13 female) have been arrested in the exercise and will soon be arraigned in court.

The agency had noticed that

most operators flout the law in the following ways:

- Selling without licenses
- Outlets retaining patrons in their premises so that they may drink outside licenced hours
- Allowing patrons to drink at off-licence/wines and spirits outlets
- Selling distilled alcoholic products in plastic bottles

- Failing to observe public health standards including provision of clean toilet facilities, medical certificates, etc.

He urged operators who have not complied with the requirements of the Alcoholic Drinks Control Act 2010 to close down their businesses lest they face the full force of the law.

Africa struggling to meet rising education demand

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a shortage of secondary school teachers.

At the same time, sub-Saharan Africa has made the greatest gains of all regions, with gross enrolment ratios rising from 28 per cent to 43 per cent for lower secondary and from 20 per cent to 27 per cent for upper secondary education between 1999 and 2009.

"Nevertheless, more than 21.6 million children of lower secondary school age remain excluded from education across the region and many will never even spend a day in school," states UNESCO.

Girls are the hardest hit by this inequality, the report says. In sub-Saharan Africa, the enrolment ratio for girls in lower secondary education is 39 per cent compared to 48 per cent for boys.

Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in which the gender disparities against girls are getting worse at the upper secondary level, with 8 million boys enrolled compared to only 6

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Othaya School unveils ambitious strategic plan

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

OTHAYA Boys High School has unveiled a five-year strategic plan which will steer development projects estimated to cost Kshs198 million.

The plan which was unveiled by the Kimathi University College of Technology Principal Prof Ndirangu Kioni, seeks to transform Othaya Boys to a haven of excellence.

"A strategic plan provides a framework through which programmes and activities in the school can be implemented through an effective and holistic way," said Kioni when he unveiled the plan during a prize giving ceremony at the school.

Kioni who was accompanied by the school's principal Dedan Muriithi and School BOG chairman Wilson Mwaniki said that the plan adopts a comprehensive analysis of the existing school capacity and systems which propagates an effective society at large.

The plan is also aimed to improve the infrastructure of the school which has been elevated into a Centre of Excellence by the District Education Board.

"The school has developed from a single harambee stream to four streamed provincial boarding school with a student population of 903 boys. The student's discipline has greatly improved over the years with gradual change from



Othaya Boys High School Principal Dedan Muriithi (left) and Kimathi University College Principal Prof Ndirangu Kioni (right) with a parent during the unveiling of a five-year strategic plan. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

imposed to self discipline. This has been attributed to continued guidance and counseling by parents, teachers and other stakeholders," said the principal of the school.

However, the school is faced

by several challenges including shortage of teachers, stocking the library, expansion of the sporting activities and dining hall and completion of the dormitories to reduce congestion in the dormitories," he

added.

Muriithi said the school which was established in 1964 has developed over the years in terms of infrastructure, student population and academic performance.

Karima head teacher honored by Kibaki

By PETER MUTUKU

THE Principal of Karima Girls High School in Nyandarua County Catherine Irungu has received a state recognition for her great role in the advancement of girl - child education and community development.

In awarding her the Head of State Commendation (HSC) Civilian Division medal, President Mwai Kibaki acknowledged Irungu for providing

leadership in helping girl's access university education and mobilizing communities towards development.

Central PC Japther Kiplimo Rugut who read the citation before presenting the head teacher with the medal said Irungu had led her team of 35 teachers in ensuring that about 110 candidates who sat for last year's Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examination in the school scored grade B and above while all

the others attained minimum university qualification of C plus.

"The principal has been extending her service to the country by getting involved in development projects in the schools in the neighbouring Kinangop area," said the PC.

Thanking the President for the award at the brief function held in the PC's board room, Irungu said the recognition would inspire her and the Karima School Community to work

even harder.

"I attribute my success to the co-operation I receive from my 35 - strong teaching staff, 30 non-teaching staff and the local community who keep my school well supplied with goods and services," the joyful principal said.

The mother of three and Kenyatta University graduate who began her teaching career in 1988 said she also finds time to mentor students and teachers in other schools in the neighbourhood of Karima and chair the Nyandarua County Drama Festival Committee. She is married to banker Philemon Kibiru who accompanied her to the function.

Besides, she said, Karima admits all the top girls from the neighbourhood as part enhancing the bonds between her school and the community.

Irungu, who has previously served as Principal of Mathaithi and Tumu Tumu Girls schools in Nyeri County, also finds time to serve on the committee of the Kinangop Plateau Association, an environmental conservation organization that promotes bee keeping in the area as a way of keeping locals from harmful exploitation of natural resources.

Asked how she was able to juggle the many roles she plays, the head teacher said everything was possible if one was focused adding that "I believe commitment, resilience and the good health God has given me keeps me going," Irungu said.



Central PC Japther Kiplimo Rugut (left) with Karima Girls High Principal Catherine Irungu before being presented the Head of State Commendation medal at PC's boardroom in Nyeri town recently. On the right the Principal's husband Philemon Kibiru at PC's boardroom. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Give full bursary to needy students — state urged

By BOB OMBATI

PARENTS and teachers from Gusii region have appealed to the government to consider offering full scholarship to needy students who qualify for admission in national schools.

David Nyang'au, a parent says that majority of students from poor backgrounds are forfeiting their chances in national schools as parents cannot afford to raise the money demanded by such institutions.

Nyang'au urges the government to sponsor such students to enable them excel and realize their dreams.

He at the same time points out that the ongoing elevation of some schools to national status may further disfranchise needy students in case the fee is revised upwards to match the acquired status.

Another parent, Maranga Mgoya called on the government to set aside funds in the budget to support students from poor backgrounds who secure places in national schools since they are few. Mgoya notes that the bursary fund channelled to students in national schools is inadequate to support their education.

Nyanhwa Boys boarding high school Principal, Timothy Oboso proposes that national schools start projects which engage students regularly to enable them raise some money to pay their school fees.

"No child should forfeit his or her chance to join a national school due to lack of school fees. Education foundations and education stakeholders should concert their effort to aid them fully," says Oboso. He urges managers of national schools to introduce both learning and working policy to enable students from poor families earn little income to add up to their school fees.

Kisii boys and Nyabururu Girls boarding high schools are among several schools which have been elevated to national status with their respective principals, Casper Maina and Elmelda Ochenge saying they are ready to embrace the status.

Meanwhile, the enrolment and transition rates in Kisii Central District have registered remarkable improvement owing to the success of the subsidized Secondary Education (SSE).

Area District Education Officer (DEO), Martin Mwalo says that the transition rate to Secondary schools currently stand at 83.17 percent, with a gross enrolment of 85.5 percent and a net enrolment of 82.7 percent.

He observes that the transition rate surpasses the national figure which stands at 76 percent.

The DEO notes that last year, 5692 candidates sat for KCPE examination compared to 5813 who have been registered for this year's exam, adding that in 2010, a total of 2,843 girls did the exam against 2,970 boys while 2,712 girls will sit for the exam this year against 2,980 male candidates.

Mwalo says a significant number of KCPE candidates find their way into local secondary schools while others join provincial and national schools, thus increasing the transition rates.

He says the district has 58 public secondary schools with 6 private ones, adding there are 157 public primary schools which churn students to the schools and those in the neighbouring districts.

"Almost every primary school has a secondary school. Therefore students are assured of places in secondary schools within their localities regardless of their performance in the exams," says the DEO, adding schools compete for students to have enough students to comply with requirements set by the Ministry of Education.

Is Bungoma ready for self government?

As the country gears up towards a devolved system of government, uncertainty appears to cloud the establishment of the new units as it becomes apparent that some of them are insolvent.

In Bungoma County, for example, there is a general feel that the national government should be allowed to run the affairs of the county until such a time the county is strong enough to survive on its own.

Article 190(4b) of the Constitution allows the national government to assume the responsibility for relevant functions especially in cases where the particular county lacks the requisite capacity. History is replete with intricate cases of mismanagement coupled with endless political intrigues that have cost the county stability in development.

And although focus now is being shifted to political contests as all and sundry declare their interests in becoming the Governor or senator in the county, critical issues have been relegated to the periphery. But of concern is the absence of effective governance which may necessitate intervention by the National government.

Why should this be?

The trend of development right from independence can help shed some light for the county. It is widely acknowledged that the first African to hold the current equivalent of Bungoma county council chairman, Pascal Nabwana put in place structures for development which remain unrivalled to date.

Being a selfless leader he held the post from 1959 – 1963 and was the brain behind the Bukusu welfare association which helped prominent

COMMENT

By LUKE KAPCHANGA

personalities from the region including the late veteran politician Masinde Muliro to attain education.

He rallied the community towards efforts to get its own district from North Kavirondo. Bungoma had a vibrant cooperative movement that put it on the Kenyan map for economic and educational sector.

With independence and Nabwan out of the way, the political leadership started dismantling everything he stood for, and poverty crept in as a permanent feature.

At the helm of power, Masinde Muliro relentlessly spearheaded a campaign that saw the Welfare association being dismantled despite having played a pivotal role for his education, and a vehicle for development that espoused Luyia unity. With that very action, community members were almost criminalized while coming up with development initiatives aimed at poverty alleviation.

On their part, the political elites developed a systematic agenda of mass scale poverty creation, by ensuring that institutions of employment and job creation collapsed. When the late Elijah Wasike Mwangale entered the political scene, the economic fortunes of the region sunk deeper.

The advent of multi-party had a foothold in Bungoma for a very simple reason, the residents were made to believe that the new political dispensation would usher in a new era of mean-

ingful development which was lacking during Mwangale's tenure.

Bungoma became a stronghold of opposition politics as a new breed of leaders amongst them Musikari Kombo and Mukhisa Kituyi joined the political scene.

With time, the two had the privilege of getting cabinet appointments, and true to the politics of Bungoma they too became strangers to the people they were supposed to represent and any effort to change economic dynamics remained elusive.

Poverty in Bungoma became more entrenched as Ford-Kenya strengthened its political base in the area and the district acquired a distinction as a Millennium district. This meant that the proportion of poverty was very high, and it was frequently mentioned every time the Millennium Development Goals were cited.

This affirms the need for the National government to intervene and manage the affairs of Bungoma county government once the devolved system becomes operational.

When you analyze the functions and powers of the county government in agriculture, control of pollution, trade development and regulations, besides ensuring and coordinating participation in governance, you get scared, with the people jostling for the positions. Agriculture which is the major economic mainstay accounts for almost 90 percent of the poverty in the area yet it has all the potential to be the engine of growth.

The cooperative movement which brings to light the Malakisi ginner, Kitinda dairy, Nzoia Sugar Company, has been mismanaged at the behest of the political class. The same institu-

tions have created a perfect environment for the suffering of the residents making them "begging farmers".

This is so, because the elected leaders are political tourists and have no economic attachment to understand the suffering of the people, what they go through, and the possible solution. Take the case of Nzoia Sugar factory with a debt portfolio of Kshs.26 billion, against an asset value of Kshs.8 billion. The company has become insolvent, yet the top management is comprised of sons of the county.

Nzoia is the only sugar factory with the least payment rates at Kshs.3,300 per ton, while other millers are paying above Kshs.3,800, but the political class has not raised any finger.

Overall, corruption at the mill is at all times high and theft has become the order of the day leaving farmers at the mercy of illegal cartels that have amassed wealth at their expense.

On pollution, before the closure of Pan African Paper mills, residents – without any support of political leadership sought the intervention of International Finance Cooperation- who helped manage pollution.

For years, the political class were in the good books of the company executives, when residents of mainly Webuye, bore the impact of pollution related effects, without recourse.

With trade, it remains a laughable affair, as local do not own businesses. All viable enterprises are run successfully by what locals call outsiders, and the elites from the community find it very difficult to spot an investment opportunity. Locals have only managed to infiltrate the hotel industry- yet the popular menu is alcohol.

But still they have not managed to

develop the hotel industry to exploit the underlying potential in the sector.

The very same elites, do not know underlying opportunities, and hence do not know who is investing where, the returns and likely impact on the economy- this spells a disaster if they are given the mandate of running the show of development.

The best case study for this purpose is the CDF whose infrastructure in general is billed to last at most not more than ten years, yet they are the yard stick of development for most of the serving politicians in their respective constituencies.

The political elites in Bungoma have not embraced a participatory approach in development and still believe they have a monopoly of ideas.

It is for this reason that they cannot be entrusted with ensuring and coordinating the participation of communities in governance at the local level.

The current political contests are a clear manifestation that poverty alleviation is not part of the agenda.

The forums, which these very leaders use to declare their interests have been reduced to talk shows where their main focus is how to revive the collapsed industries- manifesting closed thinking and lack of innovations in their style of leadership.

Leadership in the county is about sharing positions and quietly retreating to Nairobi, and occasionally makes technical appearances in functions and funerals to fulfill their egos. Residents must therefore arise and take ownership in the ongoing processes to bring to an end to the retrogressive political legacy that has dominated the area for decades.

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

THE Government is committed to addressing the challenges affecting health professionals.

The PS Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation Mark Bor said in Nyeri recently that the Government is considering long term strategies for ensuring that health professionals are attracted to work and live in the hard to reach areas.

"Nurses will receive consideration in this respect. I have discussed your issues with national leaders and I wish to assure you that the Government will address these issues alongside others across the entire civil service," said the PS.

He admitted that the health professionals including nurses are faced with numerous challenges such as low staffing levels, promotion and other incentives necessary for their career development.

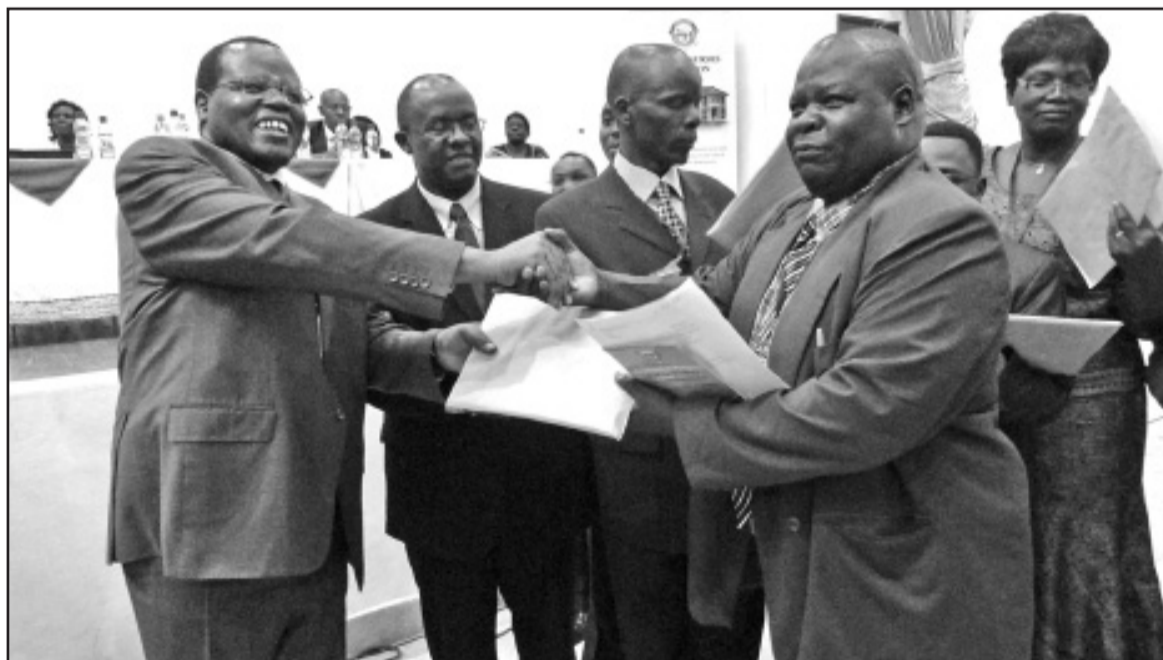
Others have been working in insecure areas like Maragua and Kajiado where the institutions are raided at night.

He said the Government has so far hired about 35 nurses in every constituency.

Bor was speaking at Kagumo Teachers College in Nyeri County during official opening of the National Nurses Association of Kenya's annual Scientific Conference and 54th Annual General Meeting.

Also present was the association national chairman Luke Sim-

Public Ministry to address challenges facing medics



Public Health PS Mark Bor (left) with National Nurses Association of Kenya top officials awarding some of the best nurses during the annual Scientific Conference and 54th Annual General Meeting at Kagumo Teachers College in Nyeri recently. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

ba Kodambo and National treasurer Jeremiah Maina and Chief Nursing Officer Chris Rakuom.

This year's conference theme is "Towards Vision 2030, the role

of the nurse."

"The Ministry in collaboration with all stakeholders in the health sector has put in place a comprehensive, balanced and

coherent National Health Policy Framework. This policy framework will seek to provide guidance across the health spectrum for actions required to attain the

Country's overall health goals," added the PS.

He said good health is expected to play an important role in boosting economic growth, poverty reduction and the realization of Vision 2030.

"At the moment, over 10 million Kenyans are faced with starvation due to the current drought being experienced in Northern Kenya. This has posed great challenges to the provision of public health services as many individuals and families are forced to migrate in search of water, food and pasture. The challenge to ensure continuity of treatment for persons on prolonged medication such as TB, HIV/Aids is enormous," he added.

Bor also announced that from next year, the country will have a new system government in place with services being devolved in the 47 counties as provided in the constitution.

The association chairman Kodambo announced that the nurses will down tools if nothing is done including hiring of more nurses by December this year.

School transport faces danger over insurance cover

By MALACHI MOTANO

A CRISIS is looming in public schools following revelations that the government will no longer finance insurance cover for school vehicles.

Parents will now have to pay between Sh600,000 and Sh1 million annually for insurance premiums per school depending on the value of the vehicles.

The government halted the cover in December last year. It is now emerging that students are being transported without insurance cover, as many schools opt for the purchase of third party insurance as opposed to comprehensive cover.

Previously, the government has been spending between Sh200 million and Sh300 million annually to provide comprehensive insurance cover for all public school vehicles, including vans, pickups and even tractors.

"The situation is bound to get worse as the government only paid premiums for 1,753 buses during the 2010/2011 financial year. The cover expired on September 30 this year, meaning that all schools' vehicles will be on the roads illegally if individual institutions do not renew the premiums," says Cleophas Tirop who is the Chairman of the Kenya Secondary Schools Heads Association (KSSHA). The move seems to have caught school administrators by surprise and caused extreme confusion since most head teachers claim that they have not received any official communication from the Government informing them of the plan to stop providing subsidy for the insurance.

"Schools just received circulars banning the hiring out of buses. But every time individual school applies for insurance for a new vehicle, they are informed that the Government is no longer responsible for the funding," he adds.

He says that it is not logical for the Government to transfer this responsibility to parents, noting that the cost of premiums is too high for schools to afford. "While most schools with new buses have found it hard to afford the cover and either grounded the vehicles or used them without insurance, others have already opted to purchase third party insurance as opposed to comprehensive cover".

"We fear many other schools could go for third party cover since it has the lowest cost premiums. This will be a major risk since the school buses cannot be compensated in case of an accident. This will also expose our students and teachers to liabilities" says Tirop.

The move is punitive to parents as it comes at a time when most of them are grappling with the high cost of living. The insurance cover cannot be prioritised in schools until the New Year; a situation I believe will result in a major transport crisis in the institutions countrywide.

A number of schools that acquired buses on hire purchase risk having the vehicles confiscated. Most of the new buses are bought on hire purchase and one of the conditions by the banks is that if you are to continue servicing the loan, the bus must have comprehensive cover. You must thus pay the installments and the premiums simultaneously and if you default on either of the two, the bus is likely to be repossessed.

Wilson Sosion, the Chairman Kenyan National Union of Teachers (Knut) terms the decision shameful, especially coming in the wake of revelations of massive misappropriation of funds meant for free primary education.

"If insurances are being withdrawn and money is being stolen, it is a paradox. The Education Ministry was recently rocked by a scam where officials could not account for Kshs4.2 billion meant for the Free Primary Education programme.

Wako wants more national schools built in Busia

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

FORMER Attorney General Amos Sitwila Wako wants national schools put up at the constituency level.

The former state legal adviser says the current policy that allows two national schools in every County was inhibitive and would still block majority of students from getting access to such schools.

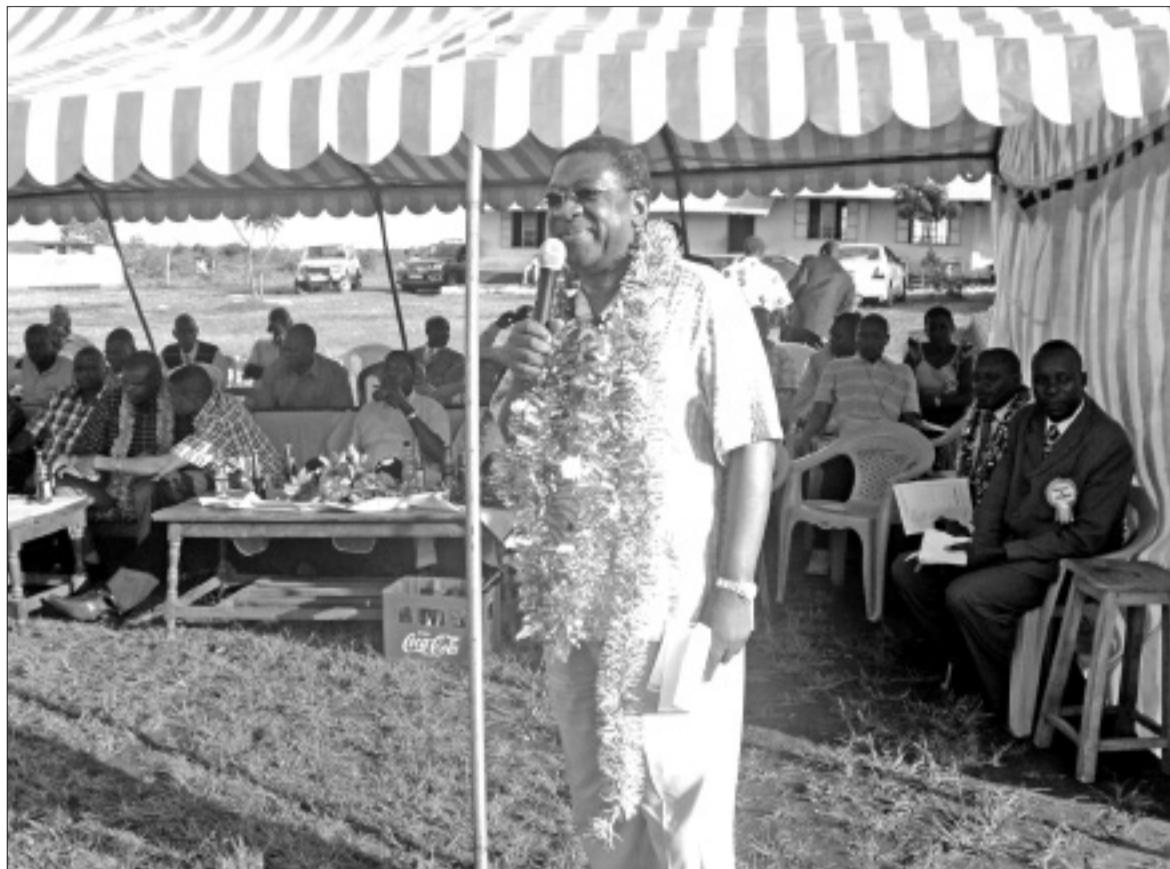
He said that a large County like Busia should not be confined to only two national schools considering that it has a total of 413 primary and 200 secondary schools with each posting high enrolment figures.

"Two national schools per county are not enough and that implies that majority of students in the respective counties will end up being locked out of such institutions due to limited space," said the former AG, adding that in Busia County only one percent of students will join the two national schools.

Speaking at a funds drive at Murende secondary school in Matayos division of Busia district where he was the chief guest recently, Wako said that in order to ensure that qualified students are not locked out of national schools due to limited chances, each constituency should have one national school.

"In order to ensure all qualified students are accorded space in national schools, there is need for each constituency to have a national school meaning that Busia County which currently has five constituencies with high enrolment figures will have five national schools and that will definitely cater for more students," said Wako.

Speaking at the same function, the school's principal, John Wabwire Makokha appealed to the Nambale Constituency Develop-



Former AG Amos Wako addressing parents, teachers and students at Murende secondary school in Matayos division Busia district during the fundraiser. Photo/Nyakwar Odawo

ment Fund committee to allocate more funds to the school to aid in the construction of additional classrooms as enrolment figures had shot up to 313 students.

Makokha at the same time appealed to the Teachers Service Commission [TSC] to post more teachers to the school saying that the school required an additional nine teachers to boost the current number which stands at seven teachers.

The Busia District Education Officer John Owino said he will liaise with the Teachers Service Commission and the ministry of education to ensure additional teachers are deployed at the school to manage the increasing student population.

The chairman of Bukhayo welfare association Humphrey Nakitare who also addressed the occasion on his part called upon Busia County leaders to put aside their differences and unite for the sake of development under new county government structure.

Nakitare said that Busia County stood to gain a lot under the new system of government considering that the region has a lot of resources especially being a border town.

"Busia County stands to gain a lot under the devolved system of government because it has a lot of resources apart from being a border town," said adding that without unity no tangible development can be realized.

He at the same time dismissed

suggestions by local leaders that the position of governor be occupied only by administrators considering that they have administrative skills capable of running the county effectively.

He said the post should be open to all interested parties irrespective of their professions so that electorate can make their decision on who to elect as their representative.

"Nobody should be denied the opportunity to contest for the post of governorship. It should be open to all willing aspirants and it is none other than the electorate who can decide who to elect and who not to elect," said Nakitare, adding that Kenya is a democratic country where any eligible person is free to vie for any position of leadership.

Thriving slum school needs school bus

By LINK CORRESPONDENT

MATHARE Valley is a slum completely overflowing with about half a million people.

"It is compact, it is dirty, and there is no sanitation. Imagine in your mind just where you'd never want to live, and that's what Mathare Valley is like," says Craig Dyer with Bright Hope International.

Kids go hungry and have no schooling. Brokenness is everywhere. There is, however, one brilliant light shining.

"In this dark patch of the world is a light: a single church that is sharing the Gospel, is loving people, and is working to help the needy—especially young kids," says Dyer.

Mathare Community Outreach is transforming the lives of children in the slums with a thriving school. The school whose population currently stands at 1,425 provides slum children with the opportunity to get quality education and two meals a day.

"It is like an oasis. It is a chance for them to get a meal, some teaching, and for somebody to really show that they care about them," says Dyer.

The school's approach to education and the Gospel is clearly working, too. "Kids are coming out of the slums, going to college, and moving on from the slum community because of the school."

This amazing community has had its share of suffering. A fire in

December caused some damage, and other needs are significant with 64 teachers on payroll and 1,400 mouths to feed. One of their biggest needs, however, is actually something quite ordinary: a school bus.

"One of the things that they've desperately wanted is to be able to take some of these kids and get them out and take them into the rural areas of Nairobi and of Kenya—to just show them nature, and to give them an experience other than an urban, city, slum setting."

Many children know nothing of the world outside of the slum. This could open up their eyes to God's creation, providing them with learning and growing experiences mentally, but spiritually as well.

Beyond the obvious allowance

of the occasional field trip that a school bus would provide, a bus could actually help generate income, as well. The school plans to rent out the bus when it is not in use to help pay for teachers' salaries, making the school less dependent on aid from outside sources.

Bright Hope wants to raise enough money to buy a bus for the school. The cost is \$40,000, and the ministry has already raised \$18,903, so they're almost halfway. For the final push, Bright Hope is asking you to consider a small \$10 donation today to bring joy to the hearts of these 1,400 kids in Mathare Valley.

To donate to this noble cause text **BHOPE BUS** to the number **85944**.

Africa struggling to meet rising education demand

From page 2

million girls, according to the report.

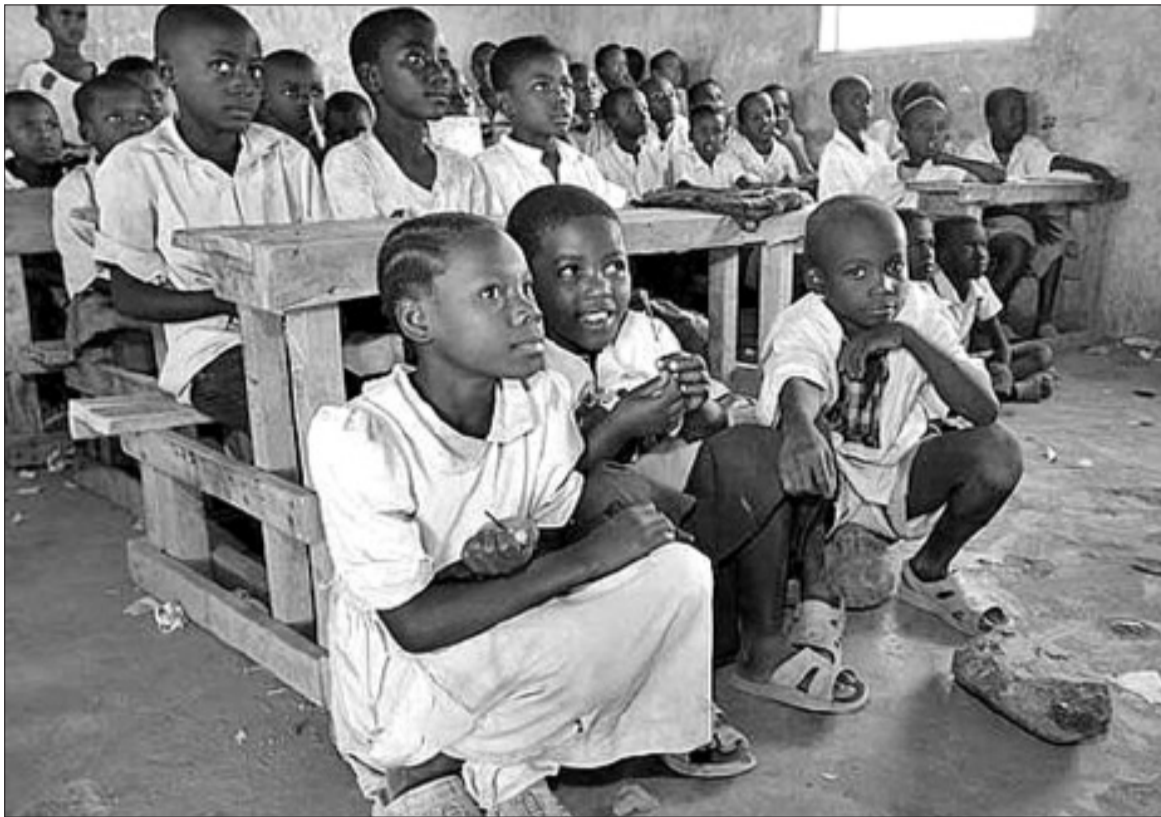
Girls also face significant barriers in South and West Asia, although the situation is improving. About 35 million girls were enrolled in lower secondary education in 2009, with the female gross enrolment ratio reaching 69 per cent compared to 53 per cent in 1999.

The prospects for girls have been improving in other regions such as East Asia and the Pacific, where the lower secondary gross enrolment ratio for girls grew from 75 per cent to 91 per cent between 1999 and 2009.

Significant improvements have also been made in the Arab States, with the female gross enrolment ratio for lower secondary education rising from 67 per cent to 82 per cent over the same period.

Across the region, girls are also more likely than boys to complete lower secondary education in three-quarters of countries with available data. However, challenges remain at the upper secondary level, where there are enough school places for just 47 per cent of girls and 49 per cent of boys of upper secondary school age to enroll, states the report.

"All of these data underscore a central message: secondary education is the next great challenge," states Hendrik van der Pol, Director of UNESCO's Institute for Statistics.



Pupils in a class in a slum area.

"According to the Digest, about one third of the world's children live in countries where lower secondary education is formally considered to be compulsory but the laws are not respected. We need to translate the commitment into reality."

Albert Motivans, Head of Education Indicators and Data Analysis at the Montreal-based Institute,

said that even though much attention has been paid to improving the coverage and quality of primary education, there is now a greater recognition of the vital role of secondary education, especially for development.

It is also important at the societal level, with important benefits for societies and economies, he added. "Secondary education

helps support a more skilled workforce. This can help lead to poverty reduction and economic growth goals. It helps to support a population which is healthier and which participates more actively in society. And thus, secondary education also acts as a kind of a bridge at the society level, from one level of development to the next."

By LINK CORRESPONDENT

WHEREAS ICT has penetrated many sectors including banking, transportation, communications, and medical services in the country, the educational system continues to lag behind. Further, recent report by the National Council for Science and Technology indicates that computer use in Kenyan classrooms is still in its early phases, and concludes that the perceptions and experiences of teachers and administrators do play an important role in the use of computers in Kenyan classrooms.

The dilemma which arises in providing educational technology stems from a lack of financial resources and a limited distributive capacity. In addition, the government has not been able to employ teachers, and provide resources to keep up with demand.

Martin Mungai, a secondary school teacher says that lack of qualified teachers to teach ICT in schools has curtailed the implementation process. "While the demand for ICT learning has been tremendous, the number of teachers who are trained to teach ICT cannot meet the demand," he says adding that there are more students willing to be taught computing skills than there are teachers to transfer the skills.

He says the situation has been aggravated by lack of computers despite the spirited efforts by government agencies, NGO, corporate organizations and individuals to donate computers to as many schools as possible.

"There still remains a big percentage of the schools unable to purchase computers for use by their pupils," he adds.

Challenges face computer education in Schools

The teacher says that many schools are still not yet connected to electricity mainly due to the fact that many parts of the country have not been connected to the national electricity grid.

"Consequently those schools that fall under such areas are left handicapped and may not be able to offer computer studies," he says.

He says computers are still expensive and majority of the individuals and schools cannot afford to buy a computer and consider it as a luxury item.

While a good number of schools have benefited from donated used computers, they have not been adequately equipped with the same on maintenance and repair, hence its very common to see a schools computer lab full of broken down computers, some repairable and some not. This has actually been a major problem, and the government has now put strict measures on any person, NGO or corporate bodies willing to donate second hand computers.

Further, computers in schools have been targeted by thieves who usually have ready markets to another party at a much less figure. This has made many schools to incur extra expenses trying to burglar proof the computer rooms. This extra expense makes some schools shy away from purchasing computers for their students.

There is still a strong perception

especially by the older generation that computers require highly skilled personnel to operate them, while this may not be the case, some school administrators also fear that their students will be exposed to adult sites and other undesired sites, through the use of the internet. Some also fear the infection of viruses to their computers leading to data loss, while this may be true to some extent, proper education on the safe use of computers and help alleviate some of these fears.

Teachers also fear that they may be rendered irrelevant by the introduction of computers at the classroom. Majority of teachers still regard themselves as main authorities in the classroom and anything that threatens the status quo is deemed an enemy of the classroom.

Most schools are unable to connect to the World Wide Web, due to the high costs involved in the connectivity. On average, it may cost approximately Kshs 11,400 per month to connect to about 15 computers on a bandwidth of 128/64kbps. This is considered as very expensive for a very slow speed.

Leaders who are charged with looking at the interests of a given community do not see the need to purchase and subsequent installations of computers to their schools as a priority. They consider health care, provision of water and other amenities as

more important than buying computers for their schools.

ICT can play a significant role in equalizing opportunities for marginalized groups and communities. But the paradox is that for those groups that are unable to cross the technology divide, ICT is yet another means to further marginalize them. Education has a major role to play in resolving this problem. Thus, unless ICT becomes part of both the delivery and content of education, the disadvantage will deepen and development will suffer.

But the failure to use ICT is itself a result of the digital and knowledge divides that exist, and their causes are deeply embedded in the complex historical and socio-cultural context of the country. Fortunately, with the Vision 2030 goals, the government has begun to implement strategies that will address these paradoxes.

The government has among other things come up with an ICT policy that aims to improve the livelihoods of Kenyans by ensuring the availability of accessible, efficient, reliable and affordable ICT services. The national policy addresses several sections, among them includes; Information technology, Broadcasting, Telecommunications and Postal services. However, it is the section on information technology that sets out the objectives and strategies pertaining to ICT and education.

Bungoma education score card

By LUKE KAPCHANGA

WHEREAS the number of candidates sitting for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examinations in Bungoma East district has been rising each year, performance still remains poor with only a few students managing to transit to the next level.

In the year 2010, the total number of students stood at 5312, out of which only 35 qualified to join National schools with Lugulu mixed boarding primary school producing 22 students.

The school which registered 259 candidates is the only one which has been able to maintain impressive performance over the years.

Generally more girls than boys register for KCPE in the district.

In 2010, there were 62 more girls sitting for the examination than boys, and the figure stands at 117 more girls in this year's exam.

The district has registered 2723 candidates, out of which 272 are registered at Lugulu mixed boarding primary, where the head teacher has promised to surpass the mean score of 352 marks.

The long serving KNUT executive secretary of Bungoma West, attributes failure by some students to secure places in National schools to poor bursary management.

"In Bungoma West we agreed with the bursary committee, to allocate needy students with the entire fees, yet this proposal has never been implemented," said Fred Sichangi.

The DEB had resolved that needy students who secure places in National and Provincial schools should be awarded full sponsorship.

He however said the resolve has been derailed by corruption and lack of clear mechanism to identify needy cases which has resulted in the awarding of bursaries to undeserving cases.

Sichangi added, "The money is always allocated to undeserving students, and committee members collude to share it out later after writing cheques".

He expressed support for the new system where disbursement will be done at the school level as this will ensure all needy cases benefit from the fund.

He said the bursary committee which will now comprise of KNUT, PTA, BOG, and principals will help to identify all needy cases and award them with bursary.

Similar sentiments were expressed by his counterpart from Bungoma East, Aggrey Namisi, who said that only genuine cases will benefit from the disbursements.

They said the past mode disbursement had denied bright students their bid to join national schools due to their inability to raise the required amount of fees.

Mudavadi rails at Bungoma politicians

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

THE deputy Prime Minister Mr. Musalia Mudavadi is challenging politicians in Bungoma County to rise above parochialism.

Mr. Mudavadi instead wants the politicians in the third largest county in the country to focus on big issues that can benefit the residents.

He says that it is absurd for politicians in the region to waste their energies, time and other resources fighting for trivial matters.

Consequently, Mudavadi urges the political leaders to fight for establishment of industries in the region that can guarantee permanent job opportunities to the youth.

Mudavadi was responding to Bungoma political leaders' complaints against a construction company which is currently undertaking road work in the region. He was speaking recently at Namachanja high school in Bungoma town during a funds raising meeting in aid of the school where he was the chief guest.

Some local political leaders had earlier accused H-Young a construction company rehabilitating Webuye-Malaba Highway of allegedly refusing to employ local youths as casuals.

The leaders led by Bungoma mayor Patrick Suleji and Bungoma county council vice chair John Weyusia threatened to mobilize residents to storm the company's premises at Bwema with a view to ejecting the managers out.

Mr. Mudavadi, who is also minister for local Government challenged the politicians to be visionary and strive to achieve long term solutions to the youth unemployment problem.

"Luhya leaders should crusade for creation of industries but not for the youths to work on roads, work that will end within a year," Mr. Mudavadi advised.

The deputy prime minister wondered what else the youths employed as casuals will do after completion of the road work. "We should begin to see beyond short lived issues and exploit investment opportunities if we want our people to develop socially and economically," he says.

Mr. Mudavadi further challenged local politicians to desist from activities that can discourage both local and foreign investors from investing in the region.

Squabbling, malice and use of unorthodox means to address issues, Mr. Mudavadi adds that will scare away investors.

Tumutumu forest invaded by outlaws

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

RESIDENTS of Tumutumu area in Mathira West district are protesting over wanton destruction of Tumu Tumu forest by illegal loggers and charcoal burners who have invaded the ecosystem.

The illegal loggers are targeting indigenous and Eucalyptus trees for charcoal burning and crafting handles for folk jembes, axes and knives among other household items.

Green Belt Movement environmentalists and community conservationists want the government to intervene and save the 700 acre forest in Nyeri County from further destruction.

The groups found some indigenous trees already cut down, huge logs in the forest and areas marked for charcoal burning.

The local community led by Green Belt Movement extension officers Lydia Kimani, Julius Githariga and Kahuho Mathai accused the Nyeri County Council of abetting the destruction of the forest by allegedly withdrawing council askaris manning the forest.

"We urge the government through the Kenya Forest Service to halt the destruction and restore the forest to its lost glory," said Mathai.

Kimani said the forest was massively destroyed in the previous regime and "we took upon ourselves to rehabilitate it, but our efforts are being frustrated by the loggers."



Green Belt Movement official Kahuho Mathai shows the abandoned logs at Tumutumu forest in Mathira West in Nyeri County. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

She added that "The county council in whose custody the forest lays has been unable to protect it."

They expressed fears that the area may become prone to drought if the destruction is not contained and the perpetrators face the law.

Most of the tributaries and streams in the area have dried up.

They added that three wells that

originated from the forest have already dried up due to massive destruction and particularly of indigenous trees.

During the pre-colonial era, the forest was managed and protected by the nine clans in the area before it was handed over to the Nyeri County Council in trust of the community.

Nyeri County Council clerk David

Nga'ng'a when reached for a comment said the council has not withdrawn their officers from the forest but was faced with the challenge of protecting the ecosystem as loggers were threatening them.

He added that a meeting held recently by the council looked into ways of having armed patrol from Kenya Forest Service to address the problem.

Busia residents raise concerns over make-shift bridge

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

RESIDENTS of Mundulusia and Mabale, Busia County, are up in arms over failure by the local municipal council to recarpet the dilapidated road network connecting the two villages.

Led by their spokesman Salim Muturi, the residents accuse local councillors of failing to allocate funds to repair the access road which is duly registered with the public works and the Municipal Council.

The residents say that during the rainy season, the area becomes impassable and they have to contend with unreliable make-shift structures erected over a stream that passes through someone's land.

"During the rainy season, the residents and especially school children at Mundulusia and Mabale primary

schools are forced to use a make-shift foot bridge to access Busia town and respective learning institutions hence endangering their lives," adds the spokesman.

He cited a recent incident where a ten year old pupil escaped death narrowly after he slipped and fell into the water while crossing through the temporary bridge. "He was fortunately rescued by a good samaritan who was using the flooded bridge at the time," said Muturi, adding that the road should be recarpeted without further delay to avert any unwarranted loss of lives.

He appealed to the area District Commissioner Mwiandi Gitonga to intervene and push for the recarpeting of the access road as local leaders seem to have ignored the plight of the residents.

"We are appealing to you to inter-

vene and possibly visit the said make-shift foot bridge and see the risks that residents are exposed to on a daily basis and especially when it rains," said the residents in a memo copied to the District Public Works Office.

The local civic leaders however said that plans are underway to recarpet the dilapidated road network. Councilor Wilberforce Ochuka of Burumba civic ward and his Mayenje counterpart Councilor Emmanuel Wafula Simiyu said that the road will be constructed in the next financial year through the LATF kitty.

"We will give the road network first priority in our next Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan (LASDAP) process so that funds from the LATF kitty may be set aside to facilitate the construction of the said road for easy access," said the two civic leaders.

Police foils Sagana brewers' devious move

By MORRIS GITHENYA

POLICE in Murang'a have thwarted a plot by illicit brewers to relocate their operations to the banks of Sagana River, to evade police swoops.

The security agents, led by Murang'a East district security committee were shocked when they found that brewers had established a safe haven at the banks of the river where the illegal trade was thriving.

The security team was attracted at the site by huge fumes of smoke which to their amusement turned into a chang'aa brewing yard with drums planted on the water for distillation purposes.

Natembeya and his deputy OCPD Misheck Kiptum watched helplessly as brewers took off in fear that the officers had spotted their hideout and had come to arrest them.

"It is a surprise that we came here on a totally different mission only to find open brewing dens along the river banks. Most of the brews in Murang'a East are smuggled through the river," said Natembeya.

The hideout was spotted moments after security officers in Mukurwe-ini District apprehended brewers from Kirinyaga South District and handed them to the authorities.

Fall of cement factory causing jitters in Kilifi

By BEKADZO TONDO

KILIFI town council has been losing about Kshs2.5 million per month following the collapse of the Mombasa Cement Company.

The Clerk, Mr Ibrahim Jilao, said the civic body has been receiving Kshs2.3 million cess fee from the cement processing plant every month but since its collapse last month, the company has not remitted any money to the local authority.

"Mombasa cement company has been one of our major sources of revenue but since its collapse last month, the local authority has lost income since

the factory is not in operation' says Mr Jilao.

Speaking to The Link in his office, the clerk said the council is now seeking other avenues to generate income to supplement revenue collected through internal sources.

Mr Jilao said the council has already set up a task force to look for other revenue sources and beef up the current cess collection fees from the bus park and at the quarries.

He said the councillors had teamed up with the council staff to seal loopholes that promote losses and ensure effective collection of the revenue.

"We have set up a task force comprising of council staff and civic lead-

ers to ensure all revenue is collected to bridge the financial gap left by the collapse of the Mombasa cement factory," said Mr Jilao.

The clerk further said the council with the support of about 250 traders at the Kilifi open air market has demolished unplanned business structures to put up well designed market stalls.

"The demolition of the kiosks was done voluntarily by the traders after a unanimous endorsement by the traders to pave way for the construction of market stalls," said Mr Jilao.

Mr. Jilao said once the market stalls become operational, the council will be able to collect enough revenue and restore hygienic standards in the town.

The chair-lady for the council Esther Kache decried the town was littered with garbage and urged the council staff concerned with the general cleaning of the town to improve their services.

"Kilifi town which is set to be developed into a resort city by 2030 must be clean and unplanned structures demolished to pave way for well designed buildings.

The chair lady further revealed that the council intends to undertake a head count of its staff to expose ghost workers.

Mrs Kache suspected that the council could be paying salaries to ghost workers and the situation will be rectified once the head count is conducted.

The Link

Enhancing governance for all

Kenya risks being a 'captured state'

KENYA risks losing its credibility and indeed its very soul to criminals, if that have not happened already. The deepening corruption that permeates all sectors of society, including religious ones is really disturbing.

The country is increasingly becoming a paradise to criminals of all shades and colors. From drug lords, gun runners, armed robbers, kidnapers, money launders, smugglers name them. They have all pitched their bleeding tents here.

It is even more disturbing to note that the criminal underworld has penetrated the country's key state organs (legislature, executive and judiciary) if reports on this are anything to go by. The newly published report by the *International Peace Institute* warns that criminal activities threaten the very fabric and legitimacy of the state.

The unfortunate thing is that there are far too many willing accomplices within the state institutions. Endemic corruption and powerful transnational criminal networks have entrenched state institutions and eroded public confidence in them, says the report.

The report titled "*Termites at Work: Transnational Organised Crime and State Erosion in Kenya*" argues that rampant corruption and impunity have allowed criminals to penetrate political institutions and weave powerful criminal networks with links to all important institutions in the country, including parliament. The situation is so serious the report warns of Kenya becoming a 'captured state' just like Russia, Mexico and Colombia, among others.

If this goes unchecked, activities of the criminal networks could result in the kind of lawlessness that has turned many countries into murderous, violent places where drug lords and criminals hold organs of the State hostage, a scenario that is just too horrific to imagine.

It is disheartening to note that about ten major international drug trafficking networks, headed mainly by West Africans, but also involving Kenyans are responsible for the bulk of the cocaine and heroin trafficked into and out of the country. The long and short of this is that there is need for a major cleanup operation to rid the country of the criminal gangs before it is too late.

Overhauling the police force should be the beginning point. Kenya needs a clean police force to assist the new judiciary in reestablishing people's confidence in the country's justice system.

We do not want to see a Kenya where mafia gangs have control of everything like in Russia where there are over 8000 murderous gangs controlling almost 75 percent of the economy.

The state should study this report and act on it immediately.



COMMENTARY

Freedom of information: Africa sees the light

THE right to freedom of information has experienced both successes and adversity since article 19 last celebrated Right to Know Day in 2010.

At the international level, the most important development has been the growth in the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), with 20 organisational signatories and 22 partner countries, including the World Bank, the UK Department for International Development, the United Nations Development Programme, and most recently, the Commonwealth, which has pledged to stand behind the Initiative.

Nearly 50 countries have also joined the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), including the United States and 12 countries have achieved compliance.

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) has garnered commitments from over 40 nations to improve access to information in their countries.

There has also been substantial debate on the development of new international or regional conventions on access to environmental information for the upcoming UN Summit on Sustainable Development in Rio to mark the twentieth anniversary of the 1992 Earth Summit. The most substantial national developments over the past year have taken place in Africa. There are now 10 African countries that have a law or national regulation establishing the right to freedom of information.

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf signed the Liberian Freedom of Information Act in October 2010, the first country in West Africa to adopt a right to information law and after almost two decades of delay, President Goodluck Johnson signed Nigeria's 2011 Freedom of Information Act in May.

New national ordinances on access to information have also been adopted in the Republic of Guinea and Niger. After years of inaction, Uganda passed its Access to Information Regulations in April 2011, implementing the 2005 Access to Information Act.

The African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights' Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Information, Ms Pansy Tlakula, is exploring ways to create a model freedom of information law to set out best practices for countries across the continent.

Many other African countries have also made progress. The government of Rwanda has proposed a fairly progressive bill and Kenya has added a freedom of information law to its list of priority legislation to pass before August 2012. In Senegal, a draft law developed by civil society received support from the prime minister and government officials, creating a national coalition to drive the bill forward. Mali and Burkina Faso have started discussions on developing laws.

In August 2011, a regional meeting in Nairobi resulted in the promise by Kenya, Tanzania, Burundi and Rwanda of renewed efforts to pass laws, and an undertaking to ensure effective implementation of laws by the governments of Uganda and Ethiopia. Kenya became

COMMENT

By LUKE KAPCHANGA

the first sub-Saharan country to launch the Open Data Initiative, and joined Tanzania to formally lodge their letters of intent to be part of the Open Government Partnership (OGP).

In September 2011, the Pan-African Conference on Access to Information adopted the African Platform on Access to Information (APAI) – a regional declaration indicating support for the right to information principles. The APAI elaborates on the right to freedom of information, and sets out minimum standards for access to information at a national level.

The landmark regional declaration declares that the right to know is vital for good governance and a fundamental right of all people.

In America, the legislative assembly of El Salvador passed the Law on Access to Public Information in December 2010, and the National Assembly of Guyana approved the Access to Information bill on 15 September.

The National Assembly of Ecuador approved a law regarding the National Register of Published Information. Chile has seen great success in its access to information law, reporting 53,000 requests in two years. The government of Jamaica is considering repealing the Official Secrets Act.

As one of the founding partners of the OGP, the Brazilian government recently co-launched a multilateral initiative aimed at supporting national efforts around the world to promote transparency, fight corruption, strengthen accountability and empower citizens. In sharp contrast however, the Brazilian government still has not implemented its own national right to information bill.

In Asia, Mongolia adopted the 2011 Law on Information Transparency and Freedom of Information on 16 June. The government of Cambodia published a draft Law on Access to Information, which has been met with muted praise by international organisations.

Selangor became the first state in Malaysia to adopt a freedom of information law on 1 April 2011, and it looks likely that the state of Penang may follow in 2012. On 7 June 2010, Thailand's Official Information Commission made a landmark decision that guarantees access to information by the public on environment and health. Indonesia and the Philippines have recently joined the OGP.

In Europe, the only substantial development is the adoption by Ukraine of the 2011 Access to Information law, signed into effect by President Yanukovich on 3 February 2011.

There has also been some progress in the development of a bill in Spain to replace the country's weak provisions in its Procedures Act.

In the Middle East and North Africa, new national ordinances on access to information were adopted in Tunisia. In Egypt, over a dozen variations of access to information bills

have been proposed by government bodies and civil society groups.

One of the most depressing setbacks over the past year has been the killings of right to information activists in India such as that of Sonu Sharma who was hit by a car on 13 February 2011 after her father, Jagdish Sharma submitted a right to information request to find out which local officials were siphoning off his pension.

At least ten right to information activists were killed in similar circumstances, and harassment is increasingly being used to intimidate those who submit requests.

In South Africa, the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party continued to push for the adoption of the Protection of State Information bill, which was heavily criticised for interfering with the right to information, but delayed its final adoption after large public protests in September 2011.

In Hungary revisions to the Constitution and the right to information and privacy laws undercut the independence of the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Commissioner, while the government of Poland is currently considering amendments to weaken its law.

The European Union Commission continues to push for a revision of its internal regulations, which will weaken the right of European citizens to obtain information from EU bodies.

Several other countries have seen continued long term delays in passing bills. While the government of the Philippines has committed to the OGP, its freedom of information bill remains doubtful after 14 years before parliament and with a president unwilling to commit.

The Venezuelan government created a centre to "compile, analyse and integrate" information in the public interest, but still does not have a specific access to information law that secures the right outlined in the country's 1999 constitution. Bolivia's weak bill has been before parliament for two years but remains stagnant, and a bill before the government of Argentina remains stalled.

The Brazilian freedom of information bill, predicted to have been enacted in 2011 after being approved by almost all government bodies, was delayed at the final stage and is facing significant undermining from a committee overseen by former president Fernando Collor de Mello.

The Sri Lankan parliament, in the aftermath of accusations of widespread war crimes, overwhelmingly rejected a freedom of information bill put before them by the opposition United National Party on 21 June 2011.

The Botswana freedom of information bill, although weak, remains stuck, and the government has instead issued a directive to all public servants to sign a declaration committing them to complete confidentiality.

In Paraguay, a bill developed by civil society has been approved by the House of Representatives but rejected by the Senate.

The government of Colombia is attempting to severely punish public servants who disclose government documents, regardless of public interest, under the Intelligence Bill.



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Kibaki orders ministers to revive KPCU

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

PRESIDENT Mwai Kibaki has directed the Ministry of Cooperative Development and the Ministry of Agriculture to work out modalities of reviving the cash strapped Kenya Planters Cooperative Union (KPCU) within six months.

Speaking at Kabiru-ini grounds in Nyeri during the official opening of this year's Central ASK show, Kibaki said while the Government has achieved much in reviving collapsed agricultural institutions, KPCU remains at risk due to past mismanagement.

He therefore directed the two ministries to work out modalities of reviving it within six months.

At the same time, the Head of State directed the Commissioner of Police to work closely with the Ministry of the Agriculture to eliminate coffee theft which has become rampant in most parts of Central Province and a threat to the lives of coffee dealers.

"The coffee theft has become rampant and a threat to the lives of coffee dealers. I direct the commissioner of police to work closely with the Ministry of Agriculture to eliminate the menace," he added.

He noted that the economy in Central Kenya region is based largely on tea and coffee.

"The reforms we have instituted in these sub sectors have yielded major gains. As regards coffee, earnings have increased tremendously from a partly Kshs850 million in year 2006 to Kshs3.8 billion last year. The coffee industry is now profitable and I urge farmers to increase production by adopting recommended crop husbandry practices," he added.

Kibaki was accompanied by Cooperatives Minister Joe Nyaga, Special programmes Minister Esther Murugi and Kieni MP Nemesyus Warugongo among others. On horticulture, small scale farmers in Central Province earned Kshs14.5 billion compared to Kshs10 billion in year 2006.

"To further promote horticultural production in this region, my Gov-



President Kibaki (second right) with Cooperatives Minister Joe Nyaga and Special Programmes Minister Esther Murugi at Kabiru-ini grounds in Nyeri during this year's ASK show. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

ernment will construct an addition six fresh produce markets at a cost of between Kshs30 and Kshs40 million each this financial year. These fresh produce markets will go a long way in meeting the need for a clean environment for fresh horticultural products," said the Head of State.

On rice farming, the farmers from the region earned Sh 5.2 billion last year up from Sh 3.3 billion the previous year.

"To further increase rice production, we have started the construction of a water reservoir and expansion of Mwea Irrigation Scheme at a cost of

Kshs8.2 billion. This investment is expected to increase the area under crop from the current 10,000 hectares to 16,000 hectares and benefit over 20,000 farmers," Kibaki said.

The Government has also stepped up measures to promote fish farming throughout the country.

"In this region, 300 fish ponds have been constructed in each of the 29 constituencies in the last two years. To further promote fish farming, the Government is funding construction of three shallow dams in every constituency in the region. We expect these dams to avail new employment opportuni-

ties for the youth. We shall also put up a mini fishing processing unit in Nyeri town to further boost fish farming," said the Head of State.

He therefore urged the youth to take up the fish farming business and benefit from the proposed fish processing unit.

Affordable electric power has also been set up with 3, 882 public facilities in Central Kenya are targeted for electrification by next year.

So far 3, 286 or 85 per cent of the facilities among them 1, 818 trading centers have been connected to the national grid.

Hard look at Bungoma County's prospects

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

BUNGOMA County may face so many hurdles in her development endeavours.

The problems came to the fore recently during a forum organized by the National Cohesion and Devolution at a Bungoma hotel.

The forum, whose main objective was to enhance stakeholders' engagement with the challenges and opportunities that come with devolved governance in counties, was facilitated by Friedrich Ebert Shifting (FES).

Participants at the two day forum noticed that although there are many investment opportunities in Bungoma County, the challenges are equally many.

One of the facilitators, Mr. David Wafula said that investment opportunities in Bungoma County can be identified by examining and understanding the structure and functioning of its economy.

Mr. Wafula identified agriculture, manufacturing industries, building and construction, provision of serv-

ices and tourism as some of the sectors that can provide ideal investment opportunities in the county.

He however, pointed out that for these investment opportunities to be fruitful and propel the county to prosperity, there must be a development framework and a central planning authority for Bungoma County.

A development framework, Mr. Wafula said involves deciding how factors of production (land, labour and capital) will be allocated among different industries or sectors in the County.

This, he claimed is a technique aimed at achieving certain pre-determined and well defined aims and objectives as laid down by a central planning authority.

Consequently, Mr. Wafula underscored the need for a central planning authority to harmonize development in the county and avoid duplication of efforts.

Mr. Wafula however observed that lack of adequate trained personnel may be an impediment to the harnessing of the county's resources for

development.

"High quality manpower consistent with the county's natural resources and requirements need to be developed through the establishment of more polytechnics, colleges of technology and technical training institutions alongside university," he said.

Low levels of local entrepreneurship, insufficient investment capital, insecurity, corruption, political patronage and HIV/AIDS were also identified as some of the challenges that may hamper development.

Other identified challenges were leadership wrangles, political dishonesty and treachery, ethnic biasness, conflict over land use, poor transport and communication network, land fragmentation and high costs of farm inputs.

Bungoma County covers an area of 3,031.2 square kilometers with a population of 1.6 million people. Its annual population growth is 4.3 percent this being one of the highest rates in the country.

Security in the county is wanting.

There are only 500 police officers in the entire county.

This means that one police officer is supposed to guard 3,200 people. The internationally recommended standard ration is 1:450.

One of the participants of the forum Mr. Wabwoba Mukhamule emphasized the need to revise community policing approach.

Mr. Mukhamule argued that inclusion of retired police officers in the programme worsen the situation since the officers are in most cases accused of complicity in robbery crimes. Mrs. Alice Sitawa, a participant from Mt. Elgon said improvement of infrastructure should be given top priority in Mt. Elgon to alleviate marketing of farm produce.

She also called for positive socialization of the people of Mt. Elgon in order to achieve peaceful co-existence in the area.

Mrs. Sitawa at the same time appealed to Bungoma county residents to change their perception of leaders from being hand out givers to policy makers.

Nambale outlines priority activities to fund

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

NAMBALE Constituency Development Fund (CDF) Committee plans to spend a total of Kshs72.1million in the current financial year to complete projects identified during the 2010/2011 financial year.

Addressing stakeholders during a District Executive Committee meeting recently, the Nambale CDF Committee chairman Joshua Mulesi said that among the projects earmarked to benefit from the funding include infrastructure, health facilities, bur-saries and agriculture.

Other projects set to be undertaken by the CDF committee include the construction of cattle dips in various locations in the constituency considering that the region is highly infested by tsetse fly that have adversely affected the livestock sector.

The CDF chairman at the same time said there is need to involve technical departments to conduct feasibility studies prior to the implementation process to ensure that identified projects are sustainable and viable and enjoy ownership by respective communities. The chairman said a total of Kshs4.6million will oversee the completion of various health facilities initiated during the last two financial years.

Mulesi said the fund committee had approved a proposal by the residents requesting them to allocate funds towards the construction of the health centers. The CDF chairman had lamented that majority had to walk for long distances to access health facilities such as Nambale Health centre and Busia district hospital even when faced with emergencies. "Majority of the constituents had proposed that funds be allocated to facilitate the construction of health centres at the grassroots level in order to bring essential services closer to the people considering that majority of them are residing far away from major health centres," he said.

The limited number of health facilities in the area had forced expectant mothers to seek the services of traditional birth attendants who are inexperienced hence leads to the high maternal mortality rates, he added.

Busia District Medical Officer of Health Dr Evans Kiplagat on his part commended the Nambale CDF committee for the gesture saying the move was timely and go along way in decongesting Busia District Hospital which served patients from across the border of Kenya and Uganda.

"Busia District hospital also serves patients from across the border of Busia Kenya and Uganda considering that the nearest hospital in Busia (Uganda) is Tororo which is miles away from the boarder," said the medical officer of health. However, he urged expectant mothers to desist from seeking the services of traditional birth attendants as they lacked expertise in handling emergency cases.

Among the health centres funded by the Nambale CDF committee include Kisoko dispensary which has been allocated Kshs 0.4million, Lwanyange dispensary -Kshs 0.6million, Malanga dispensary-Kshs0.5million, Nasira dispensary-Kshs 0.4million, Buyofu dispensary-Kshs0.5million, Musokoto dispensary-Kshs0.5million, Igara dispensary-Kshs0.3million,Nasewa dispensary -Kshs 0.3million, Muyafwa dispensary-Kshs 0.5million, Bukalama dispensary-Kshs0.3million with Burumba dispensary in Busia municipality getting Kshs 0.3million to facilitate in the completion of on-going projects.

Kieni West DC bans brews packed in plastics

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

KIENI West DC Abdi Mohammed has banned the sale of all plastic packed alcohol in the district.

The DC who was speaking during a meeting with over 100 bar owners from Mweiga area said that it is now illegal to package alcohol in plastic bottles.

Mohammed who was accompanied by Nyeri Police boss Kirunya Limbitu warned those who will be found selling alcohol in plastic containers will be arrested and charged in court and the alcohol destroyed.

The administrator noted that some traders were packaging lethal products in attractive plastic

bottles to conceal poisonous contents which resulted in unwarranted loss of lives "Bar owners must now sell what is fit for human consumption," he said.

Speaking recently after a meeting with Central PC Kiplimo Rugut, the administrator said that the government is exploring ways through which deaths can be prevented. This comes after over 30 people died in Central Kenya after taking illicit brews in the past one month.

"The patrons in the bar today should not be deaths of tomorrow. We want to chat the way forward and put up short term and long term measures to ensure that not a single person dies over lethal

brews," said Mohammed.

Limbitu called upon the bar owners to ensure that they work within the stipulated drinking hours or face the law.

"The law is very clear that bars are only allowed to operate between 5pm to 11pm during the working days and 2pm to 11pm on holidays and weekends. Operators are only allowed one hour grace period after closing hours after which operation fagia becomes effective," said the police boss.

The two who were speaking when they read the Alcoholic Drinks Control Act 2010 unto the bar owners maintained that the crackdown on illicit brews will continue.



Kieni West district bar owners listen keenly during a meeting called by area DC Abdi Mohammed at Mweiga Catholic hall recently.

Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Lurambi MP moves to assuage critics

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

LURAMBI Constituency Development Fund Committee (CDFc) has disbursed a total of Kshs. 3.2 million to some secondary schools and a health facility in Navakholo District.

The disbursement of the cash comes barely four months after education stakeholders accused the CDFc of bias against the area when it comes to public resources allocation including.

Local education stakeholders had in May this year accused area MP Manyala Keya of favouring Lurambi and municipality divisions at the expense of Navakholo division.

Navakholo division has since been elevated to district status and is one of the 80 newly created constituencies across the country.

The current area MP Mr. Keya

who is also gender and children assistant minister is placed in Lurambi constituency.

His critics and in particular Navakholo residents read mischief in his allocation of the public resources in the constituency.

During the May meeting at Chebuyusi high school, the stakeholders led by Mount Kenya university dean, school of Law Prof. Moni Wekesa said that there was wide disparity in the allocation of CDF among the constituency's three administrative divisions.

They claimed that Navakholo division had then been allocated a paltry Kshs. 600,000 out of over Kshs. 80 million the CDFc had received from the treasury.

Despite the fact that the recent allocation of CDF cash in the area is an improvement over the previous allocations, the residents still have a bone to pick

with the MP.

The residents led by ODM leader Mr. Amos Oyallo accuse the MP of doing nothing to improve infrastructural development in the area, particularly roads.

All the roads in the region according to Mr. Oyallo are visibly impassable especially during the rainy season.

The schools that benefited from the recent allocation of CDF money in the new district are as follows:-

- Namirama Girls - Kshs. 700,000
- Chebuyusi Boys - Kshs. 700,000
- Namundera Mixed - Kshs. 300,000
- Sidikho Mixed - Kshs. 300,000
- Sivilie Mixed - Kshs. 300,000
- Mungakha Mixed - Kshs. 300,000
- Sienga Mixed -Kshs. 300,000

The only health facility which benefited for the CDF kitty is Kharanda dispensary. It was also allocated Kshs.300,000.

Bahari resident happy with CDF

By BEDKAZO TONDO

RESIDENTS of Ngerenyi location in Bahari Constituency have benefited immensely from CDF allocations in the past four years.

The residents say that they have managed to get several projects funded through both the CDF and Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF) disbursed by Kilifi County Council.

Led by the area Councillor Elvis Gambo Mwambeni, the residents say that community projects in the ward have been funded to the tune of Kshs 20 million through both the two devolved funds d over the same period.

Most of the funding has been channelled towards the education sector where classrooms, laboratories and toilets have been built.

Area MP Fundi Gunda said classrooms were built to create room for the large number of students enrolled in local schools.

The MP who spoke at Ngerenyi secondary school, said the school was built at a cost of Kshs 16 million using CDF funds.

The MP who attended the meeting donated an additional Kshs3 million through the CDF to aid in the construction of a laboratory at the school. The area councillor said Kilifi County Council disbursed Kshs 1million to the school through LATF which was used to buy desks for Ngerenyi secondary school while another Kshs 500,000 was spent in the construction of an Administration Block for Ezamoyo primary school

Lutsangani Secondary School received Kshs2.4 million to aid in the construction of two classrooms and a computer laboratory.

Other areas that have been funded include the office of the provincial administration where funds have been used to construct an office for the chief and toilets.

Water projects have also received funding which has gone into the construction of a new pipeline and water tanks. Funding in the health sector has been used in the construction of health centers. Councillor Mwambeni said Kshs 2.1 million went towards the construction of a maternity wing at Ngerenyi dispensary. He said the project was initially allocated Kshs800,000 but later received additional Kshs 1.3 million from the CDF to oversee its completion.

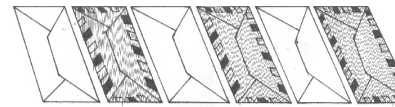
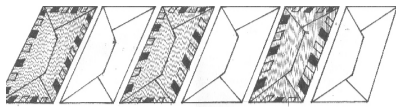
He said the Sosoyo water project was a joint initiative by the CDF which donated Kshs 5 million while LATF gave Kshs 500,000 to buy a water tank to serve the area.

The civic leader who is also a member of the Bahari CDF committee said that only projects that had been prioritized by the community received funding.

Meanwhile Lutsangani Secondary school requires additional classrooms to cater for the large number of students in the school.

The school's PTA chairman Joseph Masha said the school also lacks enough houses to accommodate teachers in the school, a computer lab, dining hall, a library and enough toilets.

He appealed to well-wishers to assist equip the school with basic facilities as most parents are faced with financial constraints and cannot afford to meet the extra costs.



Cheating in exams reflects depravity in society

THE approach of national examinations should not be the anxiety-filling phenomenon it appears to candidates, teachers, parents or guardians.

An exam is a tool used to determine how much and how well, teaching and learning had been conducted. Psychologists have, over the years, develop fool-proof techniques to guide education. There is, therefore, no basis for the fear with which some candidates, teachers, parents, guardians and schools approach a national examination. Some look for ways to access papers a few days or hours before candidates sit for them.

This behaviour implies some students are poorly prepared, hence lack the confidence needed to face exams. Alternatively, students had low motivation to learn because, with sufficient motivation, they would either have made student complaints about poor teaching or taken an individual interest in their studies. This would have obviated the anxiety that pervades schools during exams.

Motivation refers to willingness to act towards a valued goal. Apart from intrinsic factors, extrinsic or external factors also motivate any normal student. Recognition or approval from teachers, the promise of good grades and other rewards can sustain effort in learning.

Confusion of purpose and low ambition among most students is what causes them to wake up to the reality of an approaching national examinations unprepared. Hence a fear of examinations. Hence a desire to cheat.

Some unscrupulous people feed on this confusion of purpose. The complicity of students, parents and teachers reflects the moral depravity that pervades other aspects of our society, including a political culture of reaping where we never sowed.

Cheats never prosper. A student who got prior access to examinations lives with that lie, that hypocrisy until they die. Teach that to all students.

**Concerned Kenyan,
Kisumu City.**

Develop other cities to decongest Nairobi

A WHOOPING Kshs.200 billion is needed to decongest Nairobi and restore its green city in the sun reputation of yesteryears. Part of the plan entails replacing old residential estates which occupy prime areas close to the Central Business District like Kalereni, Shaurimoyo, Ziwani, Bahati and Ngara.

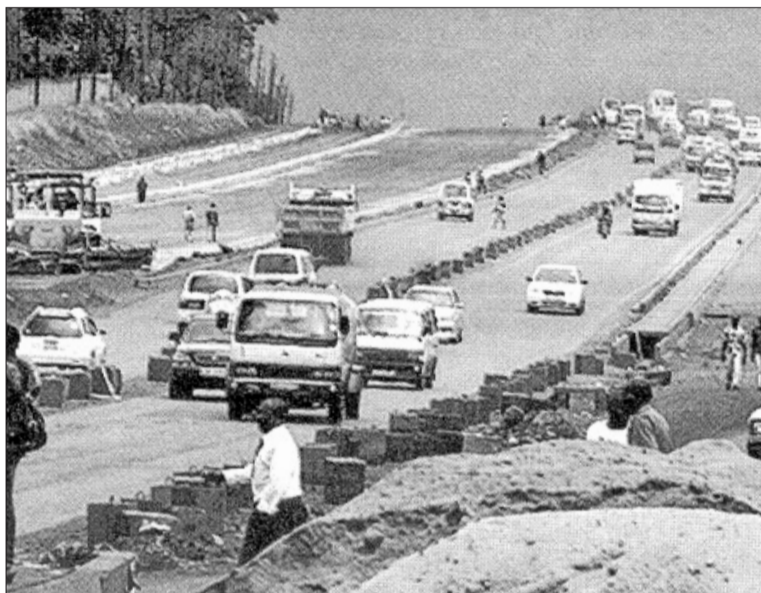
The idea will also see update of infrastructure and revolutionize transportation system. It is good that plans for an efficient commuter system are already in top gear. The ultra-modern commuter rail system and the massive alteration of roads network will see the agony of traffic jams eliminated. The idea of major make over is not new and is merely being revisited. Kenyans might recall such a plan was mooted in the mid 90s but was allowed to die quietly.

At that time, Egyptian construction giants Arab Contractors was said to have been the front runner in undertaking the massive project. Nairobi has over time suffered from inadequate planning, inefficient land use and wrong land tenure policies.

The cumulative results have seen an explosion in expansion of slums and other informal settlements, leading to suffocating congestion. The downward spiral was catalysed when local authorities overwhelmed by rural to urban migration disengaged from construction of residential housing leaving the responsibility to private developers.

Unfortunately, this move also invited land acquisition and construction frenzy without proper planning and infrastructural development.

Today a number of housing estates which initially had been meticulously planned have suffered defacement through uncoordinated extensions, turning some residential areas into slums.



Motorists on a finished section of Thika Road, Nairobi as work continues.

We all understand the pressure that is brought to bear arising from rural to urban poverty flight and the subsequent negative consequences.

However, both central and local government authorities have not made the situation any better by allowing uncontrolled mushrooming of slums. Kibera takes the dubious distinction of being the largest such slum in the continent and has lately been turned into something of a subject of curiosity for tourists and visiting dignitaries.

Urban planning is saddled by numerous challenges not least because of the big financial base needed to ensure planned and orderly housing development. It is because of this reason that the proposed update scheme in exciting Nairobi's lost allure can be restored with plans such as restoration of the old estates.

However, even as decongesting Nairobi is planned, it might be a good idea to give priority to technicity like

Malili and serious thought to upgrading other urban centres far away from Nairobi. I have in mind Isiolo or Marsabit because of the immense potential both have to open up the vast northern Kenya.

The point is that even as City Hall keeps an eye on ensuring that Nairobi remains a top city, the government should train their eyes on other urban centres. The economic benefits arising from such a move will be tremendous and what is more, it is bound to enhance equity and spread wealth.

Recently, Nairobi experienced tragedies in the form of slum fire that killed over 100 people. There were also deaths arising from collapsing buildings under construction all testimony to laxity of standards the city suffers from. Kibera alone with an area of 700 hectares reputedly has over one million residents.

**Mathew Mutula,
Via e-mail.**

Our MPs are wasting time and tax payers' money

HARDLY almost four years after the disputed General Elections, are our politicians once again setting their sights on the next one in 2012?

How inconsiderate can they be! It is quite shameful for them to begin thinking of their selfish political survival, yet some Kenyans are still internally displaced, and the sad memories of the barbaric killings of our fellow Kenyans are still fresh in our hearts.

The formation of the grand coalition government was based on the principle of reconciliation and the realisation that we went wrong and so we need to accept one another as brother and sister.

It really hurts to see politicians meeting in the constituencies in the name of becoming together. Pray, what in particular they celebrate!

Their success of lying to wananchi that they will bring 'development', or is it that they have been holing themselves up in Nairobi since the formation of coalition government and now they feel they are strangers back in their constituencies?

If they were mindful of development as they claim to be, they would put the money they spend on those parties to better use, like paying for school fees for poor students in their constituencies.

My own MP being seen once in a year since the election. We need development badly.

To add salt to injury, these politicians use those to groom their party candidate for the next General Election.

Some have even gone a notch higher to say that certain ethnic communities will unite to get the needed numerical strength to beat candidates from other groups.

Funny enough, this is done with the full knowledge that it is the same ethnic chauvinism that threatened to tear our dear country apart in 2007.

In my view, this is a period when every Kenyan should be on his/her knees praying to God for peace to reign again to our country.

Otherwise, if our politicians keep on dividing us, I am afraid that we are destined for the same situation that we were in 2007/2008.

**Concerned Kenyan,
Naivasha.**





The editor welcomes letters and comments on a variety of issues. The letters should be brief, topical and issue based. The editor reserves the right to edit for brevity or clarity.

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Kenneth calls for peaceful coexistence

By MORRIS GITHENYA

WITH general election drawing close, a cross section of leaders in the country have embarked on campaigns to sensitize the public on need to remain united irrespective of their ethnic background.

Planning and National Development Peter Kenneth has been preaching peace urging Kenyans to use the existing mechanisms in resolving their differences.

Gatanga Mp has been in Nyanza, Coast, Rift Valley and Western Kenya emphasizing on the need for Kenyans to embrace peace and support development programmes.

"We must remain united at all times as nobody will be rewarded for fighting his neighbour. There is need for tolerance as there are mechanisms that can be used locally in resolving disputes," said Kenneth.

At the same time, fifteen members of parliament across the political divide have joined the fray in drumming up support for Kenyan unity.

The team identifying itself as right minded Kenyans led by Maragua Mp Elias Mbau says the country must remain united to help attain the social, political and economic pillars outlined in Vision 2030.

Others members of the team included Daniel Muoki (Mwala), Muturi Mwangi (Kiharu), Maina Kamau (Kandara), Clement Wambugu (Mathioya), Alex Mpuri (Tharaka Nithi) among others from counties of Nakuru and Kitui.

The group plans to visit all parts of the country to preach unity and urge Kenyans to nurture peace.

"Our main agenda is to help Kenyans to learn to coexist peacefully irrespective of their ethnic background during the electioneering period," said Mbau who is the team leader.

Meanwhile, a spate of robberies and murders targeting motor cycle operators has raised alarm in Murang'a region.

In the last one year, tens of operators have been found murdered and their motor cycles missing after they are hired by passengers who turn killers and robbers.

The latest incident involved Njuguna Mbugua who was allegedly hired by a male passenger to take him to Irembu village before he was shortly found murdered and motor cycle missing.

As the incidents go up, operators plan to withdraw their services at night in efforts to stem the spate of murders.

State to improve sanitation of markets

By KAVYU-KURA

THE government has earmarked Kshs320 million to assist in the improvement of the working environment for small scale traders in Kitui County before the end of the current fiscal year.

The Director of Markets Patrick Mutua Nzoka said recently that the government was keen at availing secure, clean and environmentally conducive trading environment for small income traders to create wealth and improve family incomes.

"We are seeking to help Kenyans in the low income bracket to engage in business by ensuring that areas designated for business are secure and of high sanitary standards," said Mutua during a tour of modern markets under construction at Matuu, Nguni and Kabati towns in eastern province.

He pointed out that the upcoming markets will be fitted with close

circuit cameras for night security surveillance. "The security systems will also be connected to police stations for back up," he explains.

He added that Data collected by CCTV cameras may also be stored in the outer space to minimize interference by hackers and vandals.

The director who was received by the chairperson of the Mwingi County Council Town planning and markets committee, Wanja Kimondiu and in Kitui by the County Council Chairman Cllr. Nzyoni Mung'uye expressed concern that the contractors would not be able beat projects completion deadlines.

He noted that the works moved at very slow pace. "Although the quality of the work is pretty impressive, I am dismayed by the sluggish pace at which the contractors are doing the work. The Kabati contractor is expected to complete the work by end of October while the Nguni works

should be completed toward the end of November but the work appear to have fallen behind schedule," lamented Nzoka.

He also reminded the contractors of the need to ensure the 25 percent of the each site is planted with grass and trees not only to abide by the Nema requirement but to make the places beautiful, attractive and hospitable.

The director asked the local authorities under whose jurisdiction the modern markets were being put up to invite local entrepreneurs to fund the construction of shops commonly known as lock-ups around the markets to help enhance security.

"The local authorities should allocate the small plots for the shops around the market sites to capable merchants who should put up structures that conform to the design and standard of the markets. Experts at my office will do the design and costing," said Mr. Nzoka.



Cllr Mung'uye, Director of Markets Mr. Patrick Nzoka (centre) and Arch. Nugi (right) addressing a stakeholders meeting at the Kabati. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

Kisii leaders wants debt cancelled

By BOB OMBATI

OVER 10 civic leaders in Kisii Municipal council want the government to waive Kshs. 23 million loan owed to the National Housing Corporation to save it from bankruptcy.

Mayor Alloys Mosei says the highly indebted civic authority is cash strapped and cannot be able to service the debt which has appreciated due to the high interest rates.

Mosei says the council is indebted to the tune of Kshs250 million and has missed out on this year's Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF) allocation until it clears the outstanding statutory debts.

The mayor was briefing Housing minister, Soita Shitanda who paid him a courtesy call before the commissioning of phase one of 40, two-bed roomed Housing units funded by the Corporation at Nyanchwa Estate, Kisii town. The minister advised the council to allocate NHC land in exchange of a waiver as it was hard to write off the debt since the funds were externally sourced.

Shitanda, who was accompanied by the Corporation's board chairman, Bosire Ogero among other officials urged the council to give both his ministry and the Local Government a go head to draft a cabinet memo which is to be presented to parliament for approval to hasten the process.

The councillors however said the council was unable to establish an open air market to ease congestion within the town centre since the land between the bus park and Kisii town was still owned by the government.

"We appeal to the government to surrender the land so that we can put up the market and expand facilities to cope with the town's increased population and economic activities," said Mosei, stressing Kisii town was an economic hub in Nyanza region.

The leaders told the minister that the council had allocated part of the land to the judiciary to pave way for the construction of law courts but the project has not taken off since the land belongs to the government.

The minister told managers of local authorities to protect public land which will be used in the development of county government's infrastructural and social facilities by 2013 when they will be operational. Mosei told the minister that the council was repossessing all illegally acquired land and assured him the council has adequate land for future development.

Shitanda said his ministry will handle policy issues while the county governments will deal with Housing development under the new constitution and urged the civic leaders to embrace changes under the new law. He said the NHC will build more Housing units in phase two, adding that currently it was implementing 90 similar projects in 90 towns countrywide.

The demand for housing, noted the minister was increasing adding that currently Kakamega town had a shortage of 9000 houses following the establishment of Masinde Muliro University, which has pushed the demand upwards. "Kakamega town has only 3000 houses as opposed to the 12,000 housing units required to meet the demand," said Shitanda, adding some students and residents were forced to stay in slums due to the shortage in decent houses.

He said the Corporation was constructing 1300 houses in Kibera slums near schools, markets and health facilities through private partnership with similar projects being implemented at Mavoko County in partnership with Iranian investors.

Otuoma speaks on compilation of youth data

By JOEL JUMA

THE Government has started compiling data to determine the number of youth in all the 47 Counties.

Sports and Youth Affairs minister Paul Otuoma says some Counties have failed to incorporate youths in their planning programmes because they do not have their data.

"It is sad that the ongoing consultative meetings on how the Counties will operate are leaving out the youth," laments Otuoma.

Otuoma says that the youth in the country account for over 12 million of the total population, and therefore it is imperative to establish their numbers at the county level to assist in planning and allocation of resources after

the introduction of the devolved system of Government from next year.

Otuoma explains that District Youths officers and the department of Registration of persons will collaborate in the compilation of the data to enable the Government plan for their inclusion in key decision making organs in the Counties.

The minister also challenges other Government departments to give youths tenders for them to generate income.

He says that youth run companies should be awarded tenders by both private and public bodies to improve their financial bases.

Otuoma reveals that the government has disbursed over Kshs4.5 billion to youths since the inception of the Youth Enterprise Fund (YEF) in the country adding that it was sad that some constituencies

were not using the funds to promote ventures by young people.

He disclosed that Kakamega County has received over Kshs90 million with over 3,100 groups benefiting from the kitty.

Otuoma was speaking at Kakamega Muliro Gardens during the opening of the Youth Enterprise Fund meeting for the stakeholders drawn from the nine constituencies of the Kakamega County.

The National Youth Enterprise Fund Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Mwatata Mwandale and the Western Upper Regional Commissioner Peter Okwanyo also addressed the meeting.

The Kakamega County Council Chairman John Shimaka and his Butere/Mumias counterpart Modekai Nandwa said it was unfair for MPs to cling on power without giving room to the upcoming gen-

erations.

Shimaka and Nandwa said old guards should pull out of politics to give room to the young people contesting in the next polls to avoid unnecessary competition in the campaigns.

Mwandale challenged local authorities to set aside land for youths to put up stalls. He explained that some youths were not able to invest in commercial activities due to lack of space in trading centres.

He added that the fund was ready to profile and train youths on how to explore investment opportunities in various Counties in the country.

He said that fund was partnering with financial institutions to train the youth on formulation of proposals for their investment and funding.

Kibunjia assures Kenyans on election violence

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

THE National Cohesion and Integration Commission chairman Mzalendo Kibunjia has assured Kenyans that strategies have been put in place to ensure no violence will erupt during the next general elections.

Kibunjia who was speaking in Nyeri town after a one-day-peace forum attended by leaders from Central Kenya said the commission is working on strategies that will ensure no violence in 2012.

"We are working on an early warning, early response especially in hot spot areas to ensure that there will be peace before and after the polls expected next year. We are speaking to communities telling them that this is an event just like any other," said the chairman.

He said an SMS number will be made public where everybody can report any kind of conflict if it occurs in their areas.

"Kenyans have said never again. This SMS will be free and anybody from any network can report any kind of violence. From there, the authorities can deal with it. The process of healing and reconciliation is still ongoing," he added.

Kibunjia who was accompanied by Commissioner Alice Nderitu added that they are engaging several communities in peace forums especially after the Hague Six returned to the Country.

The chairman regretted that tension had started building up in some areas in the country during the confirmation of the cases

at ICC court adding that they will have to ensure that measures are put in place in case there will be some people who will be made answerable to the charges.

He added that the issue of tribal animosity must be brought to an end. Kibunjia urged politicians to be in the fore front in campaigning for peace during their campaigns.

Journalists will also be trained

on how to report from the hot spot areas.

Commissioner Nderitu said Kenyans have been put into open dialogue over the ICC tension adding that such complaints have been reported to the Commission.

"We have also engaged communities from several areas in the country over stereotyping. We shall later hold a conference over

the issues to ensure the issues are addressed," added the Commissioner.

She added that they have received several complaints about universities which appear to promote ethnicity and have therefore engaged the Ministry of Higher Education to ensure that all staffs and students are from different parts of the country.



Some of the participants who attended peace conference at a Nyeri hotel recently. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Kiambere sacks staff from TARDA

By KAVYU-KURA

THE fate of ten employees of the Tana and Athi River Development Authority (TARDA) hangs in the balance after the Mwingi based Kiambere Water and Sanitation Company (KMWSO) terminated their services.

The employees are part of the initial 14 employees seconded by TARDA to KMWSO two years ago to help improve management of the pipeline that that supplies water to about 50,000 residents.

The employees resisted the move to second them to KMWSO and proceeded to file a case in court to have the decision reversed or formalised with benefits being paid to them if they were to be taken over by a new employer.

But even before the case was determined, the employees-at least ten of them have been sacked after they differed with the management of KMWSO over the status of their employment.

Trouble for the TARDA employees started when they were invited and declined a KMWSO staff vetting exercise which would have seen them

re-apply for jobs with the company insisting that they were employees of TARDA and their contracts had not been legally terminated.

As the axe fell on the ten with the KMWSO management accusing them of gross misconduct after they skipped a staff vetting exercise.

The KMWSO managing director Paul Kinuba wrote letters to the affected workers asking them to show cause why they should not be summarily dismissed but the workers were not bothered by the MD's prodding thus leading to the eventual termination of their services

The Link established in early October that all the 10 workers who had been seconded to the KMWSO by TARDA through TANATHI Water Board skipped the vetting and thus resulting to the radical decision by the KMWSO board to terminate their services.

The affected workers received their letters of termination of service from the KMWSO MD Kinuba dated September 30 informing them that their services had been terminated with effect from October 1 and were expected



KMWSO MD Paul Kinuba.

to vacate offices and hand over to immediate supervisors by October 3.

While confirming the dismissal, the KMWSO board chairman Josphat Mulyungi said that an earlier decision not to pay the errant staff their September salaries has been revoked and they will now get the pay as a send off gesture.

The terse letters of termination of services, are copied to the TANATHI BOARD and TARDA Chief executive officers and read in part, ".....this is to inform you that your services to KMWSO have been terminated with effect from 1st October 2011."

"Arrange to hand over to your immediate supervisor any company property in your possession and vacate company offices and work stations by 3rd October 2011. Note and act accordingly," added MD Kinuba.

Although some of the dismissed staff said that their sacking was likely to disrupt waters supply, as those left did not have the technical expertise to run the Kiambere-Mwingi water pipeline that has already suffered a major breakdown causing acute water problems, Mulyungi dismissed it as wishful.

"I can assure you there will be no crises following the removal of the 10 workers. Already the TANATHI has posted technical expert to man the water pump at the Kiambere dam water intake and normal water supply will resume once the pump is repaired," Mulyungi told The Link.

Implementation of Vision 2030 in top gear

By PETER MUTUKU

THE implementation of the country's development blueprint, the Vision 2030 development strategy is in top gear.

The strategy aims at making Kenya a newly industrialized, middle income country providing high quality of life for its citizens by the year 2030, through its Economic, Social and Political pillars.

The country has registered a decline in poverty index from 56 percent in 2000 to 45.9 percent in 2006, attributable to improved governance and management of public resources and implementation of key reforms in various sectors of the economy.

In 2002, when Narc took over power Free Primary Education was introduced by President Mwai Kibaki. The National Gross Enrolment in Primary school rose from 93 percent in 2002 to 107.7 percent in 2007 while the Net Enrolment rate for 2006 was 86.5 percent attributed to the introduction of Free Primary Education.

Policy and institutional arrangements have been strengthened in the gender sector to promote women participation in development, including the establishment of the ministry and commission in charge of gender issues.

Affirmative action has also been introduced in the recruitment and promotions of personnel in the public sector.

On the health front, the government has increased the coverage on immunization to over 80 percent and facilities have improved in public health centres and drug accessibility.

The successful implementation of the MDG based Economic Recovery Strategy has seen immunization coverage rise to 72 percent in 2007.

About 68 percent of children under-five years are also receiving bed nets to protect them against mosquitoes that facilitate the spread of malaria.

The ring fencing policy on the budget expenditure on health projects has helped improve maternal health care. Ring fencing is the case whereby the agreed allocations to a particular sector remain the same no matter what happens to the revenue. While other sectors may experience cuts in budgets, the ring fencing protects the Health, Education and Poverty sectors from such cuts. The proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel increased from 42 percent in 2003 to 56 percent by 2007.

Adopted by the world leaders in the year 2000 and set to be achieved by 2015, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provide concrete, numerical benchmarks for tackling extreme poverty in its many dimensions.

The MDGs also provide a framework for the entire international community to work together towards a common end and making sure that human development reaches everyone, everywhere.

If the goals are achieved, world poverty will be cut by half, tens of millions of lives will be saved and billions more people will have the opportunity to benefit from the global economy.

PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE

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Security begins with you

MANAGER'S COLUMN



By
**JANE
MURUTU**

I AM writing this column with a heavy heart. This is because many Kenyan have lost their lives while several others are nursing serious injuries due to terrorist acts of mindless, heartless people who have no respect for human life.

In the neighboring Somalia, the Kenyan Army soldiers have put their lives on line in an operation dubbed Linda Nchi (protect the nation) targeting Al Shabab insurgents who are known for killing, maiming and kidnapping innocent civilians in Somali and the entire Eastern Africa region.

As Kenyan authorities try to stabilize Somalia so that peace

can return to the region, it's vital for the public to remain calm and vigilant since security begins with you as an individual. Let us desist from spreading fear, rumours and panic, especially on social network media. But most importantly, the AlShabab militia should lay down their arms and embrace dialogue as the best means of settling disputes.

Meanwhile, as we approach the end of the year, we are happy to note that almost everything has

gone on well as planned in the project. In the last one month we have held communication and coordination meetings where our networks were introduced to Frontline SMS and Crowd Mapping technologies for crisis response. In addition, the networks shared experiences on coordination and networking, challenges and lessons learnt.

In the first week of November in conjunction with the Ministry of Justice and National Cohesion, we held the second set of the Provincial Dialogue meetings in Nakuru, Kisumu and Kakamega respectively to generate feedback to the draft cohesion policy. We are waiting to hold a final National Policy Dialogue meeting in Nairobi, on the 8th of December.

The venue will soon be communicated to you.

The coordination office appreciates your unwavering support and cooperation and it's our sincere hope that positive impacts of the project will continued to be experienced in future. You need to practice what you have learned through the project.

We are aware that the networks need to be strengthened further. We are optimistic that the structures created through partnership for peace will be active, united in purpose to rally the communities they work with in order to realize lasting peace and security to this nation.

As Sir Winston Churchill once said "It's not enough that we do our best; sometimes we have to do what's required."

Eldoret hosts final Rift Valley peace meeting

BY JOSEPH AWUONDO

THE final provincial communication and coordination meeting for the year for Rift Valley Peace Partners was held in Eldoret 16-18 October 2011. The discussions were fruitful as each of the three sub networks reported on the developments, experiences, achievements and lessons from the activities and events they had attended and organized.

The Coalition for Peace Network in North Rift (COPEN) network reported that it had not only been registered but had also forwarded a funding proposal and was waiting for positive communication from USAID. NABOK (Narok, Bomet and Kajiado Network) said

they had attended several events on invitation by other organizations, such as Tamasha Peace Foundation. NABOK Network is now associated with Sisi ni Amani, an organization doing substantial peace activities in both the Rift Valley and Nairobi Provinces. The NABOK shared the challenges of distance and expansiveness of the area, communication breakdown and resources.

The NABOK members from Narok indicated that there was tension within the Massai fraternity which was tied to land. The CSOs within the network were engaging the actors and hope the standoff would be resolved amicably.

BAKENA (Baringo, Kericho and Nakuru) Network equally had a lot to share. They indicated that courtesy of their relevance and visibility in peace processes, majority of their members had joined various DPCs.

The network and the District Offices had organized several peace meetings in conflict areas and through Action Aid and a US based peace organization, 50 of their members had been trained on conflict issues.

Finally, the networks had a chance to learn about domesticated technology for peace which is part of the Partnership for Peace Project inventions. Every network went through instructions and installations of the FrontlineSMS and establishment of Crowdmap-Ushaidi Platform. The process which looked complex at the beginning became interesting and quite practical. On understanding the idea and successful installation and creation of the platform, Evans form CEPED, a BAKENA CSO member was heard saying, "this is an excellent idea and I expect to

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The writer is the Co-Manager of the Partnership for Peace Project. For comments or suggestions write to: partnershipforpeace@gmail.com

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Kenya needs to improve prevention mechanisms



By **JOSEPH OWUONDO**

AN international peace and security organization, Safeworld, held a highly successful two-day workshop for Western Kenya Block in Eldoret. The workshop

which was to develop a case study on early warning (EW) for Kenya brought together early warning from around the country.

The experts developed a common understanding on EWR from regional experiences, identified existing gaps and challenges of Conflict Analysis in EW and enriched European Union responses systems in situation of vulnerability. Safe world has established an experience sharing system for existing early warning mechanism in Kenya to delineate EW systems in Kenya.

From the discussions, it became clear that Kenya needs to improve its preparedness for conflict prevention and peace recovery interventions. The current strategy adopted from Wajir peace efforts is not sufficient to deal with the needs of complex peacebuilding and conflict transformation. A careful analysis will certainly reveal the weaknesses in the current system. For instance, the NSC was established without the backing of a nationwide conflict analysis or survey. It was based on piecemeal, regional or issue specific analyses and surveys.

In my view the process of upward communication and centralization of conflict work has failed peacebuild-



Better strategy required to manage peace efforts in Kenya.

Photo/File

ing and conflict transformation processes in Kenya. Centralization route as observed makes the process of early warnings channeled to national level to be counterproductive.

The National Policy on Peace Building again states relationship between early warning and response. However, outlines gaps in response and relationship between the civil society and the government. The policy takes cognizance of the sig-

nificance for state and non state actors to partner in peacebuilding activities. Even so, the document is silent on early warning does not bring out the very best on government and civil society partnerships on interventions. These matters are fundamental to attainment of vision for peaceful and stable Kenya. And the mission to promote sustainable peace through collaborative institutional framework between state and

non-state actors may just remain impressive to readers and writers like me and you, if not critically relooked into proper framework developed.

As Michael Lund, rightly observed in his book Preventing Violent Conflict: "...early warning occurred in several instances but did not precipitate any action. Strong potential conflicts or even the outbreak of violence were not in themselves sufficient to generate preventive action."

Eldoret hosts final Rift Valley peace meeting

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leverage our work in all aspects to greater heights" He also indicated that he would share the Idea with his colleagues and explore further on how they could help their partner organizations on the same. Madam Njoki, called a few days later indicating she was interested in understanding more on the technology and how she could use it to strengthen women participation in

peace issues.

The Technology for peace, training and installation is freely provided by Konrad Adenauer Stiftung on request. The writer of this article will be more than willing to share the idea and further explore on other applications of the concept. On request the same organization will provide trainings for communities and organizations on fundamentals of peace for grassroots organizations. This can also be done

by project's local experts from the project regions before or after the project time elapses.

Personally, am very humbled to have had a chance to acquire training on this technology courtesy of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and EU. I will be more than willing to help any organization interested in understanding or using the ICT for Peace Platform

Congratulations to Nyanza Peace Partners. Now that you have formed

the Nyanza Partners for Peace Alliance, you are set to greater heights. Those organizations who wish to read more about the alliance can get in touch with project team in Nyanza through the contacts provided in this supplement.

Courtesy of Partnership for Peace Project and Nyanza Provincial Administration, there is a project in the making. Keep posted from the Alliance's Platform:

www.nyanza.crowdmap.com



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Nandi County roots for peace

By LAWRENCE KOECH

HAVING featured prominently in the ongoing pretrial confirmation hearings at the Hague as 2007/2008 post poll violence hotspot, young leaders in Nandi county are swiftly moving to create an "island of new politics", an island they say shall be free of chaos.

Led by the chairman of Rift Valley Development Trust, Mr. Denis Kogo and a host of community based organizations, the team is spirited to make an overhaul in the way to run politics in Nandi County.

The group is set to roll out massive campaigns to sensitize the public of the immense powers bestowed to them by the new constitution.

First in their menu is the introduction of a code of political conduct to be used during elections to vet aspiring political leaders in Nandi County. The team comprising of opinion leaders, youth, women, and elite from the region are already holding meetings in various parts of the County to drum up support for this course.

"We want to do away with political rallies ,revealed Mr. Kogo .Plans are in top gear to create Nandi County code of political conduct" (NCCPC}).



Young leaders in Nandi county are swiftly moving to create an "island of new politics"

This is expected to the template to be used to weigh moral, professional and political suitability of leaders that shall govern the Nandi county government. "We are tired of empty rhetoric of politicians who swear heaven only to deliver hell to the electorate," said Mr. Kogo.

Already plans are underway to rebrand Nandi County as a peaceful area through radio programs, bill-

boards and banners at entry points such as Chepsonoi, Mulango and Chemelil.

They are facilitating public forums where aspiring leaders can come together with Wananchi in live public debates to discuss among other things, development, and issues to do with governance of public resources within the County.

Though they agree that this is a

new phenomenon in the country, only proficient in other democracies abroad, they are rearing to give it a shot irrespective of the status quo. Aspiring candidates who have shown interest in various elective posts in the forth coming general elections under the new constitution, and have asked not to be mentioned are jittery of the process of interactive debates with wananchi.

They claim that this is part of a scheme to lock out other candidates. They further asserted that some non-governmental organizations have been bankrolled by foreign individuals with ill motives to terminate innocent political careers. "Their licenses should be revoked and their activities cross examined" added another who asked for anonymity due to sensitivity of the matter.

Despite fierce opposition from some politicians, the group has received massive support from the public and the government .The campaigns is expected to culminate in to one big conference to be held towards the end of the year in Kapsabet town.

The Code of Conduct will be endorsed and adopted during the Kapsabet forum.

BY DAVID MWAMBARI

MY beautiful, I did not realize how much you meant to me till now when I heard that you have been coerced into war. I did not notice my deep love and appreciation for you till this day when my dreams with you are threatened to become nightmares of grenades spreading in your city and your youth shooting at neighbors.

See, I came to you with scars on my heart, my memory haunted by rivers of blood that had claimed my own. I arrived in your loving and welcoming arms carrying cadavers in my memory of my mother Rwanda. Yours, was to care for me, your children welcomed me and shared all they had. On your Nairobi Street hard work was defined, you taught me the ways of capitalism yet in your villages you reminded me of community values. I was only a teenager, fragile, idealist and you

Cry the beloved Kenya

allowed me into your classrooms. Your environment though often painted with harsh realities equipped many of us to live in any Cities in the world. In-fact one can become global citizen by simply interacting with your visitors. Now I join many who wallow in our own tears as we hear words like "imminent threat", "terrorist attack", "invasion of a neighbor", "xenophobia" associated with your peaceful nature. Your soul used to host, raise, nature millions of your neighbors' children regardless of their background. How many Ugandans, Ethiopians, Somalis, Rwandans, Burundians, Sudanese, and Mozambique etc have you given a second chance in life? Did we contaminate your people with our memories? What has happened Kenya what's happening to you?

Yes we all complained about your matatus traffic, immense corruption, poverty, politicians and of other challenges you have. Yet these do not replace the millions of good things you have been for Africa, for the world. You can be associated with all these social ills but never war. I was down town Nairobi when terrorist put a knife in your eye and I saw you forgive them after. The youth with machetes were right on my door in Adams-ngong road in 2007 post election violence, yet Kenya you struggled hard to avoid engaging in civil war like your neighbors. Why now?

Who will reconcile enemies? Will Wangare Maathai rest in peace with these grenades? Where will treaties be signed if your hotel lobbies have blood? Where will Princes propose and

where will princess vacation? How will your brilliant children birth presidents for powerful countries if they die in wars? Where will the poor hustle if bus stations are not safe? Where will world marathoners practice if your hills hail hell? Has your patience been stretched too thin?

You are a Kenya that gives the poor upward mobility probably best country where one can find class status malleable in Africa. You are the Kenya that welcome a teen like me and give freely whatever you have to offer. You are the peaceful Kenya, the loving neighbor why now? Whose war are you fighting?

David can be reached via email: mwambari@sanejo.org



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PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE

Talais of Kericho decry historical injustices

By **JOHN NYAMBUNE**

THE Laibon or Talai clan in Kericho County is a forgotten lot. The community has been marginalized by successive regimes since independence.

From atrocities committed by the colonial government to the eventual loss of their ancestral land to the Kipsigis community, the clan today lives in squalor.

The clan members told the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) in Kericho town that they are victims of injustices perpetuated by successive governments.

In a memorandum to the commissioners led by Tecla Namachanja, the Laibon community said their grievances seemed to have fallen on deaf ears in all the successive governments. In the memorandum drawn by among others David Ng'asura (a son of the Laibon) and Bill Ruto (a historian and researcher).

Their suffering dates back to January 7, 1914 when Koilegeen, his brother arap Boisio and Kibuiguut were arrested by the British administration (under the "Native Removal Act of 1909) and taken to exile in Fort Hall, Nyeri and Meru respectively. The aim of the British administration was to disorganize the people who planned to resist their rule.

The Laibon leaders later died in exile. Back home, their clansmen who had grown in population to cover most parts of the Kipsigis County, were also tortured by the colonialists, said the memorandum.

In order to alienate the clan that had proven formidable, the colonial government moved all members of the community in 1934 to Gwassu (Lambwe Valley) in the former south Nyanza under the "Laibon removal Ordinance" of 1934 CAP of the then constitution.

The area was heavily infested with Tse Tse flies, mosquitoes, snakes and other wild animals. The colonialists thought this would help in killing and markedly reduce the population of the clan that had resisted the rule, the Ng'asura and Ruto told TJRC commissioners at Kericho Teachers Training College.

Between 1934 and 1962, the Laibons went through untold suffering along Lambwe Valley, with many dying of malaria, small pox as livestock perished due to rampant east coast fever and rinderpest outbreaks.

A total of 111 Laibon men with wives and children totaling 698 and 2096 cattle, sheep and goats trekked for 13 days to Gwassu under a colonial administrator called Mr. O'Hara, and later a commander identified as Blunt.

The Laibons have demanded for com-



President Kibaki



Former President Moi

penation from the British government for the suffering they went through at Gwassu and have urged the Government to give them land.

When they were brought back to Kericho County in 1962, the Laibons claim they found their land had been grabbed by members of the Kipsigis community and the colonial government then "squeezed" them into a tiny farm at the outskirts of Kericho town near the Prisons Annex. They have lived at the site since then in horrible conditions, the TJRC heard.

"When the Laibons returned to Kericho

in 1962, they found their land had been demarcated and given to the Kipsigis people. They have never been formally resettled ever since," said the memorandum in part.

The Laibons showed the commissioners letters between them and successive governments of Kenyatta, Moi and President Kibaki claiming no one was ready to listen to their grievances. They have even written to the Queen of England.

In a letter dated September 3, 2009, they say in part: "Your Majesty, you are the only one to bring a lasting solution to our plight. May be you can invite us to

discuss and negotiate the compensation issue".

The Talai clan (Laibon or Oorkooik) trace their ancestry to the Nandi County in the mid-19th century following the killing of a pioneer Orkoiyoot called Kipnyolei arap Turugat by the community's warriors. Arap Turugat was the chief Orkoiyoot among the Nandi. However, towards the end of his leadership, members of the community lost confidence in him after his prophecies lost tact in the community.

The last blow came when hundreds of warriors died in a war he had spearheaded against the Luo community. The irate warriors conspired to kill him and installed Koitaleel arap Somoei as their Orkoiyoot.

This was followed by the dispersion of the Laibon people with Turugat's three other sons, Kipchombe arap Koilegeen, Kiptanui arap Boisio and Kibuiguut being forced out of the community to live among their Kipsigis cousins.

Arap Koilegeen lived at Cheerire in Kiptere in Belgut, Kibuiguut proceeded to the eastern side of the Kipsigis county and set base at Binyiny in the present day Kipkelion district, while Boisio lived in Mombwo village of the present day Bureti district.

The Laibon people were always at loggerheads with the British colonialists and Orkoiyoot arap Turugat had predicted the coming of the white man, according to the Kalenjin oral history. He told his Nandi tribesmen to rise against the white man and resist his authority by all means. And the Nandi did this as was proved by the famous Nandi resistance.

The resistance to the British rule subjected the clan to suffering which has spilt over to many generations.

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Annan calls for clear policies to support new law

By PETER MUTUKU

The process of implementation of the new constitution is generally on track with the critical legal and institutional framework for implementation in place, peace negotiators said in a new report just published.

The report released by the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation (KNDR) chaired by former UN chief Kofi Annan noted, however, that there was a clear need to begin building the capacity, particularly of nascent institutions and to develop clear and coherent policies to support their work.

According to the report conducted by South Consulting, about half of all Kenyans were happy with the progress made in implementing the Constitution.

"The general view that the constitution presented an opportunity for change in the style of managing public affairs had sustained confidence in the implementation process," said the report. The report further noted that reforms in the judiciary were viewed as the biggest change the country had seen since the promulgation of the new constitution.

The report found that both the transparent process through which judicial officers were appointed and the high integrity standards demanded of applicants, were responsible for an increase in public confidence in the judiciary. "This satisfaction can only be sustained by the achievement of real results," says the report.

The focus of the report was progress in the implementation of the constitution, electoral reforms and preparedness for the next General Elections and the legacy of post-election violence, especially the continuation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) process in Kenya and the problem of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

Regarding the legacy of Post Election Violence, public opinion showed that over half of Kenyans believed that the government lacked the will to investigate or prosecute suspected perpetrators of the post election violence, according to the report.

Also in the report public support for the ICC remained high, with up to 65 percent of Kenyans happy with the ICC and 64 percent who trust that ICC can effectively protect witnesses.

"These findings suggest that public confidence in the government's ability to fight impunity, and to address the post election violence, remains low and that there are very high expectations for the ICC to deliver justice to the victims," the committee noted.

On electoral reforms and preparedness for elections, the South report noted that while new legislation was important, the institutional capacity of the body that would manage the elections was critical.

The report stated that laws would mean little without the agency to enforce and impose sanctions on those who breach them, particularly in Kenya, where electoral violence, because of impunity, appeared to have transformed into a culture.

The report also cautioned that politicisation of the process of establishing the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) threatened to lay a foundation for future conflicts over decisions on election issues.

Mui residents demand a piece of the coal cake

By KAVYU-KURA

THE residents of the coal-rich Mui basin in Kitui County recently spelt out tough measures that must be upheld by investors who intend to commence mining in the area.

Representatives of the community living within the 500 square kilometre coal belt with about 400 million tons of coal deposits straddling Kitui and Mwingi regions, nominated the Mui Mines and Minerals Company Limited to negotiate benefit sharing terms with the ministry of energy and investors.

During a coal delegates meeting held at the Mathuki Secondary school in Mui division of the Mwingi East district, Nairobi based lawyer Erick Kyalo Mutua was nominated the spokesman of the Mui coal basin community with

the mandate to negotiate, make inquiries and communicate on behalf of the coal-belt community.

The meeting chaired by a retired Provincial police officer Charles Mukungi demanded that the ministry of energy recognizes the local community as an indispensable stakeholder in the coal mining business and involve it in every step of planning and execution of the mining process. Further, the participants sought the enactment of legislation that would specifically deal with the coal industry and provide for the establishment of an autonomous authority to run the coal industry just as is the case with sugar, tea and coffee industries.

The meeting also demanded that the coal extraction factory must be set up within the Mui basin and offer 90 percent of jobs to locals. They insisted

that the community should be entitled to 80 percent of the royalties derived from the mineral resource. Additionally, they want to be enlisted as shareholders of the firms that will win tenders to mine coal.

The residents also want the underground method of coal mining be used to minimize population displacement as opposed to the environmentally unfriendly and disruptive open cast mining method. They said those who will be eventually displaced must be substantially compensated and resettled in an organized and humane manner.

Lawyer Mutua had earlier told the meeting that unless the community remains alert and stands firm in protecting their rights, they risk being shortchanged in the deal. "You must be wary of the ongoing negotiations as the deal

once sealed will have far reaching implications on your lives and future generations," he warned.

Mutua said that already some officials at the ministry of energy have started playing dirty tricks and have unconstitutionally withheld the names of directors of a Chinese firm that had been pre-qualified to start mining coal.

"It was unconstitutional for them to have withheld the information from me since the law now allows the public to access information held by the government. This is an overt indicator that something sinister is happening and we must be wary and alert not to be shortchanged as other people reap highly from the initiative," said Mutua.

Mutua who is also the chairman of the Mui Mines and Mineral (Company) limited registered as a public entity noted that it was extremely suspect for the ministry of energy to have pre-qualified a firm to mine coal while land owners had not been consulted on their entitlements in terms of compensation and plans for resettlement.

Another lawyer Justus Muniyithya had told the affected community that they stand to lose out as the coal mining gets underway unless they come together through a legal entity that will represent their collective interests and fight for their rights.

Muniyithya who is based in Mombasa and has been consulting for the communities in Kwale over their disputes with Tiomin firm that mines titanium, told the Mui basin residents they must demand to be active partners in coal mining business but not passive by standers if they were to benefit appropriately.

A don at the school of Architecture and Building at the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology Dr. Titus Kivaa Mbiti said the mining of coal would stimulate the achievement of vision 2030. He thus stressed the need for the local community to strategically position themselves so as to reap full benefits.



Lawyer Erick Mutua addresses the meeting flanked by colleague Justus Muniyithya and University don Dr. Titus Kivaa Mbiti. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

IDPs plan marches to press for overdue settlement

By LINK CORRESPONDENT

INTERNALLY Displaced Persons still residing in camps plan to stage demonstrations in major towns starting this month to press the government to resettle and compensate them.

The lobby's chairman, Mr Elijah Sikona, says the demonstrations will be held from November 7. Addressing IDPs in Ogembo Town, Mr Sikona took issue with the government for conducting a skewed resettlement programme

dubbed Operation Rudi Nyumbani.

He says up to date, the records are not clear on how many people were resettled in the programme. He also says IDPs want to know how the Kshs4.2 billion, which was allocated during this year's budget for the resettlement of IDPs, has been used.

He alleged that IDPs have been turned into cash cows by some unnamed politicians who have also hatched a plot to buy their votes next year. "We have close to 800,000 IDPs in camps and

some politicians are using them as a tourist attraction to earn cash," Mr Sikona claims. He asked all IDPs to come out in large numbers and support the demonstrations.

The IDPs drawn from Kenyena, Nyamache, Nyamira and Gucha South districts claim that they have never received any money from the government like other IDPs in other camps.

IDPs in Gucha say the government has failed to listen to their plight and has ignored them since they were displaced

in 2008. Led by their chairman, Mr Robert Onsoti, they said they will not relent until the government compensates and resettles them. Mr Onsoti alleged that the more than 2,000 in Gucha only received four kilogrammes of maize each from the government in 2008.

He said they are yet to receive the initial Kshs10,000 from the Ministry of Special programmes, adding, most people are living in pathetic conditions with their children dropping out of school for menial jobs because of poverty.

Rights body calls for inquest into Mt. Elgon atrocities

By LINK CORRESPONDENT

THREE years after her husband's disappearance, Phyllis Chamnai Kipkeyo from Mount Elgon, cannot stop thinking about him. She does not know if he is dead or alive. All she knows is that he was one of the over 300 people said to have disappeared during an insurgency in the region between 2006 and 2008.

"He was an administrative officer in charge of Chebwek sub-location in Mt. Elgon. But in April 25, 2008, Kenyan army soldiers came to our house and took him away for questioning about the security situation in the area," said Kipkeyo, 49, a mother of six.

Insecurity in the area deteriorated in 2005 after the militia group, Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF), was formed to seek redress for alleged injustices that occurred during a land distri-

bution exercise in the Chebyuk settlement area. But by 2008 the SLDF had been accused of killing several hundred people, and committing offences such as torture, rape and theft.

However, when the government launched a military operation to flush out the militia, both the Kenyan Army and SLDF arrested hundreds of people who were never seen again. Many are assumed dead.

A report released by Human Rights Watch (HRW) appealed to the Kenyan government to open an inquiry into the arrests, to exhume suspected mass graves and to investigate atrocities committed by both the army and the SLDF.

The 48-page report called "Hold Your Heart" is based on field investigations and interviews conducted in Western Province, where Mt. Elgon is located. The report says that between

2006 and mid-2008, the SLDF killed an estimated 750 people and the Kenyan Army an estimated 270.

HRW has called on the International Criminal Court (ICC) to determine whether crimes falling within the court's jurisdiction were committed in Mt. Elgon and to consider opening an investigation into the violence.

"I also believe that the ICC should broaden its investigation in Kenya if the Kenyan government is unable or unwilling to carry out these investigations," Ben Lawrence, a researcher at HRW, told The Link.

The ICC is currently prosecuting six suspected instigators of Kenya's 2007 to 2008 post-election violence, when 1,200 people were killed, women were raped, homes and stores were looted and destroyed, and 600,000 people were internally displaced. It is believed that

the over 300 missing people were killed and buried in mass graves in Mt. Elgon, Lawrence said. "Most of the residents we talked to pointed out 10 particular sites, which they said the army told them are areas where the bodies were buried," said Lawrence, one of the lead researchers of the report.

Kipkeyo may have seen her husband just before he was buried in one of these mass graves. After his arrest she was instructed to give the army a list he had compiled naming members of the SLDF who had been terrorising the area.

"I had known about it. But on that day I was really confused to a point that I could not locate it immediately. But a few hours after they had left, I found the list and took it to the Chepkube tea factory, where the soldiers were camping," she said.

Oparanya defends state development record

By LUKE KAPCHANGA

PLANNING Minister Wycliffe Oparanya has refuted claims that politics plays a key role in the implementation of development programmes.

Oparanya instead says that development programs are implemented based on priorities identified by beneficiaries and not political interests.

“Most of the development projects are channelled through line ministries, and allocations depend on listed priorities by respective communities. There is no way a political leader will influence development in his or her area, without going through district development committees, which are tasked with such matters”, he said.

Mr. Oparanya says that communities must therefore push their development agenda without necessarily expecting political involvement.

He cited his ministry which has valuable information on the needs and expectations of different areas in the country. He challenged residents to create conducive environment in their respective areas to help attract private investment.

Addressing journalists in Webuye Town, the Minister absolved political elites from Western Kenya against accusations that they had failed to initiate any meaningful development saying that for any meaningful investment to occur, one has to consider better returns before taking the risks, and this may be one reason, why locals fear.”

Oparanya however blamed divisive politics which he said had contributed to under development in the region adding that leaders in the community lacked a clear political direction. “The Luhya community will never vote as a block because of narrow and individual interests of leaders,” he pointed out saying that “These people are scattered everywhere, due to their different ethnic background and will never work as a team.”

Last year, Equity Bank CEO, James Mwangi challenged elites from Western province to exploit the business potential in the region.

Speaking at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Mwangi said the area had enormous opportunities but residents lacked entrepreneurial skills.

Operation Smile exercise held in Nyeri

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

ABOUT 120 patients in Nyeri benefitted from a free exercise by the Operation Smile Mission of Kenya.

Ali Hassan who brought his six year-old boy from Mandera lauded the good work by the volunteers as his boy is now be able to smile and play with other children without being shameful.

“It has been a shame when playing with other children in the school. But now he will be able to smile again. We took three days to arrive here for the operation. I’m happy now that the exercise was worth as it is a lifetime job done on him,” said his father Hassan.

The 120 people with a cleft lip or cleft palate were operated at the Nyeri Provincial General Hospital during the one week exercise.

A clinical coordinator Julia Kibe said the exercise was successful with patients from all over the country and one from Tanza-

nia being very happy as they were able to smile after operation.

Others had come from Moyale, Mombasa, Samburu, Mandera, Kisumu and Nairobi among other areas.

But one of the shocking cases was that of a 14-year-old boy who is mentally challenged.

He was allegedly burnt on the face by his parents and dumped at the hospital early this year.

He had to be operated in order for him to look like a normal child.

Kibe said the case is one of the successful cases and the boy was able to smile again.

The exercise started with screening at the hospital recently.

The exercise, which cost at least Kshs10 million sought to ensure that the patients with deformities are able to smile again.

Safaricom Company was among the sponsors of the event with their contribution of Kshs1.7 million.

A trustee of Safaricom Founda-

tion Josephine Ndambuki said they wanted to make positive contributions to Kenyan communities by implementing projects that provide sustainable solutions to their social challenges.

“In our quest to assist the less fortunate in the society, apart from education, we have invested in a cross section of sectors among them health, economic empowerment, environment, arts and culture and music and sports. These projects have gone a long way in transforming lives in the country for the past ten years,” said Ndambuki.

Operation Smile has so far conducted the exercise in Kisumu, Nairobi and Nyeri towns and the organization now plans to set up a Garissa site so that the people from the area can benefit. They also plan to put up different sites in every County.

Operation Smile in Kenya is a non-governmental charitable organization which repairs child-

hood facial deformities.

“Together we can create smiles, change lives and heal humanity. Approximately one in every 500 Kenyans babies is born with a cleft lip or cleft palate. In Kenya, there are many children who never receive this life-changing surgery. In as little as 45 minutes, one cleft lip surgery can change a child’s life forever,” said Macharia Kiruhi who is the chairman of Nyeri site.

The Nyeri site has held four missions in the past five years with more than 500 patients benefiting from the free services.

Operation Smile is now present in 51 countries including Kenya.

Shitanda unveils Kisii housing project

By BOB OMBATI

THE government has commissioned housing units at Nyanchwa estate in Kisii County to address housing shortages currently being experienced in the economically progressive town.

Housing Minister Soita Shitanda said the project will help rid the town of slums whose growth is difficult to stop.

Soita said 60 percent of Kenyans in urban areas reside in slums, adding that the government has rolled out a multibillion programme that seeks to build affordable houses and provide Kenyans with decent housing.

The minister challenged civic bodies to set aside land to enable the National Housing Corporation (NHC), to construct more housing units as majority of the urban dwellers were living in deplorable conditions.

He disclosed that NHC will start phase two of the project in Kisii town and told the council to avail land for the project which will highly benefit the local people on completion.

The Corporation, said the minister was implementing the Housing project in 90 towns nationally and appealed to beneficiaries to maintain them in good condition.

He said NHC was partnering with the local authorities, the government and private sector in implementing the project which had collapsed in the 70s due to mismanagement.

According to documents obtained by The Link, a two-bed roomed unit costs Kshs. 2.65 million. Beneficiaries are required to deposit 10 percent of the total cost and clear the balance within 18 years. Some beneficiaries — Joseph Gikony and Annah Ondieki said they were delighted and urged the ministry to build more houses to benefit more people.

Soita said the Ministry has Drafted a Bill to streamline the construction industry and compel contractors to seek registration with the Ministry of Public Works. The Draft Bill, noted Shitanda had been forwarded to the Attorney General and would soon be tabled before parliament for debate.

The minister said contractors who do shoddy work will have their licenses revoked. “Days when contractors would get paid for shoddy work are gone. The government will not condone contractors who sacrifice quality work in order to reap profits,” said Shitanda.



Neurosurgeons operate one of the children at Nyeri Provincial General Hospital recently during the free operation by the Operation Smile Mission of Kenya. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Building of public library underway in Busia County

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

PLANS are underway to put up a Kshs70 million public library in Busia County.

According to Mary Wafula who is the coordinator of the Busia Community library, the proposed public library will go a long way in promoting a reading culture in the County

The library coordinator at the same time said that on its completion, the public library will accord readers especially the students who are unable to afford the high cost of books the opportunity to get access to a variety of reading materials.

“Once the library is completed, the Kenya National Library Services (KNLS) will equip the facility with assorted reading materials,” said the coordinator, adding that even well-wishers have also pledged to provide books.

She appealed to the entire community including leaders

to contribute funds towards the project to hasten the construction process that is scheduled to take off at the beginning of next year.

“So far we have been able to fund raise a total of Kshs100,000. We have as well managed to acquire a two acre parcel of land for the establishment of the reading facility,” said the coordinator, adding that another fundraiser will be done to raise more funds.

The coordinator of the Busia Community Library at the same time lauded Nambale Constituency Development Fund Committee for allocating a total of Kshs0.6million in the last financial year for the purchase of reading materials.

The representative of Maria Library services based in New York which is the main sponsor of the proposed project Harmke Kruithof on her part said that her organization has set aside a total of Kshs25million that will oversee the construction process.

She said that they will also

mobilize their friends and other organizations to contribute towards the project.

The Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) Busia branch executive Mark Oseno lauded the initiative saying it was timely considering that Busia as a county has been without such an important facility for a long time.

He appealed to the residents of Busia to develop a positive attitude towards books saying it will enable them to keep abreast with changes in society and the world at large.

“The people of Busia should change their attitude towards reading,” said the union official adding that majority of people in the area are engaged in cross border trade at the expense of reading hence the high illiteracy levels.

Oseno said that he will mobilize union members in the Busia County to chip in and donate books towards this important course.

Kakamega youth groups get state funds

By TITUS MAERO

THE government through the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) has disbursed Kshs 90 million to over 3000 youth groups in Kakamega County over the last four years.

Minister for Youth and Sports Dr Paul Otuoma says that Kshs 29 million has been channeled to 712 youth groups through constituencies in the area, while Kshs 61 million has been disbursed through the financial intermediaries.

The Minister who spoke during a stakeholder's forum organised by the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) at the Muliro Garden in Kakamega town, said the disbursement of the funds was a clear indication that many youth had taken advantage of the opportunities provided through the fund.

"However there is still a sizeable number that has not taken advantage of the available resources because of lack of information or due to challenges relating to accessibility of the services," he points out.

He says the forum, facilitated by the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF), aims at exploring ways through which the youth can be assisted achieve their potential.

The lawmaker observed that the youth, especially the unemployed had lately become a concern to the nation as evident by discussions in the media, as well as in other forums.

The meeting which drew participants from the eleven districts of Kakamega County also attracted leaders from the grass root level such as the Sub chiefs, chiefs, District Commissioners, Civic Leaders among others.

YEDF Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Mr Juma Mwatata who was present at the meeting said that plans are underway to streamline the disbursement of the fund to make it more accessible to the youths.

Mwatata said already five new constituency based loan products have been launched to ensure that as many youths as possible are able to access financial services.

The CEO said YEDF personnel will use motor bikes to facilitate their movements at the grassroots level.

The CEO further pointed out that the fund directory is being compiled to help the youth market their

products and form linkages with large enterprise firms.

He said the directory would provide a comprehensive list of youth enterprises in the country and serve as tool to lobby for procurement from youth enterprises by both the public and the private sector.

Mwatata called on young people aged between 18 – 35 years who are in business to visit youth offices countrywide for listing in the directory.

"Last year about 100 youth exhibited their products and made useful contacts. Those who stood out were sponsored to exhibit at the National Youth Trade Fair in Nairobi," he said.

Murang'a parents oppose upgrading of schools

By MORRIS GITHENYA

PARENTS in Murang'a are opposed to plans to elevate Provincial Secondary schools into national schools.

The parents say, with the increased cost of living, many of them have turned to the bursary fund and well-wishers to sustain their children in national and provincial schools.

Most parents can hardly afford the fee charged by national and provincial schools due to the exorbitant fees charged by the institutions.

Ms. Mary Mukami details how his brother had to drop from Nairobi school five years ago as the family could not afford to maintain him in the school.

"Many parents are suffering silently as they struggle to educate their children in national schools in the hope of getting goods results at end of the year," said Mukami.

She says elevation of the schools to national status is an avenue of blocking children from poor

families from accessing quality education.

Investigations by The Link have established that some national schools hike fee on flimsy grounds that range from introduction of dubious projects which have no impact on the learning process.

Those unable to cope with the demand for more money, she said, have no option but to withdraw their children leaving room for the able to take up vacancies.



Kenyan Catholic Church Head John Cardinal Njue chats with Planning and National Development Assistant Minister Peter Kenneth during a church function. Photo/Morris Githenya

In Kigumo District, stakeholders are divided on whether or not to elevate Njiiri high school into a national school.

Currently there are fourteen national schools in the country but the

figure will shot up following a policy by the Ministry of Education to establish more national schools at the county level to increase access.

In Murang'a County, Murang'a High School and Kahuhia Girls have

been elevated into national schools and are currently awaiting funds from the government to put up required facilities to match with their newly acquired status.

By BEKADZO TONDO

AT the click of a button, learners in Kilifi County will now be able to access over 3000 books, thanks to introduction of a new technology which may soon confine libraries in the area to oblivion.

The new technology dubbed as an e-Reader will function as an electronic library and provide learners with instantaneous access to the hundred of free books which are digitally available.

Intranet and email access will also be available through the device and content on the eReaders will be tailored specifically to capture each stage of child's development and this may include the reading age, activity locality and access to WI-FI.

The gadget has been developed by Yellobric charity, a UK based charitable organization and is currently being used to manage an electronic library at Mnarani primary school in Kilifi county.

According to the co founder of the electronic technology, Mr. Gavin

Kilifi County launches e-library

Paterson, the computerized gadget is portable and has been powered with a battery which can last for a month.

"Yellobric charity is dedicated to the distribution of eLiterature to the developing world to ensure that learners access reading materials at the touch of a button," said Mr. Paterson.

Mr. Paterson who was accompanied by an English teacher from London Mr Peter McCallum was speaking to teachers, pupils and parents of Mnarani primary school in Kilifi when he officially handed over the gadget to the school.

The technology founder said the new technology transcends barriers presented by limited facilities saying that learners will now be able to access different types of books.

"The fact that you can place the device in a child's hand and provide all the material required for their education is incredible and Yellobric is committed to ensuring that the technology

is replicated in other learning institutions," said Mr. Paterson.

Mr Paterson and Mr McCallum spent hours at the school to sensitize teachers, pupils, parents and other residents from the area community on how to use the device which is the first of its kind in Africa.

The school head teacher Mr. Hassan Abdalatif thanked the organization for donating 20 eReaders units to the school saying the gadgets will enhance teachers capacity to instil knowledge in simplified methods.

The head teacher said the devices will not only benefit the teachers and the pupils at the school but even the community

The chairlady of Kilifi town council Mrs. Esther Kache who presided over the ceremony appealed to other well wishers to donate education materials like text books to schools in the area.

Teachers at the school hailed the

introduction of the eReaders gadgets in the school saying the device will arm them with valuable information to improve on their skills.

"The gadget will provide us with a variety of reference books for teaching English as well as story books that will help promote the culture of reading," said Ms Ramtu Kambi who is an English teacher at the school.

A retired education officer Mr. Rophus Karuke said the eReaders will reduce the financial burden on parents who have in the past been required to spend huge amounts money to buy text book and text books for their children.

Mr. Paterson revealed that his organization is running a similar scheme in Malawi.

"We have constructed a primary school in Northern Malawi and we are in the process of completing a computer room which will be equipped with e-Readers devices" said Mr. Paterson.

Multi-choice takes satellite sets to schools

By BOB OMBATI

A NON Governmental Organization has installed DSTV satellite equipment in 56 Resource centres in the country.

Multichoice Company's General Manager, Stephen Isaboke says the company is keen on enhancing educational programs across Africa by equipping learning centres with an array of reading materials to enhance teaching and learning in schools.

Speaking after installing the sat-

ellite-fed TV at Nyamache Secondary School in Kisii County, he said the DSTV education bouquet will provide students with channels that have been enriched with educational content to enhance their learning experience.

Isaboke observed the Bouquet runs in eight channels and covers History, Mindset Learn, National geographic, Wild Discovery, Animal Planet and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

He notes that Television can be used to bring abstract ideas to life

making it a powerful medium for teaching and learning, adding that the school has been given a TV set, decoder and a smart card.

The Manager observed that the company will send quarterly timetable for the Mind set

Learning programmes and urged teachers to read the schedules and integrate them in their lessons to benefit the students.

The school's Principal, Jarred Ahidi lauded the company for the initiative, saying the equipment will expose learners to many issues relat-

ing to the environment, education and

wildlife to help shape their attitudes towards life.

"I am impressed that my school is among the 56 beneficiaries nationally. It is a great honour and I promise to ensure that the equipment is used properly to benefit the students," said Ahidi in his office.

Isaboke said the company will continue servicing the equipment and urged the school administration to report whenever there was a problem.

Virtues of exclusive breast feeding extolled

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

THE Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation has embarked on a campaign that seeks to encourage mothers to exclusively breastfeed their babies in the first six months in Kakamega North district.

Western Provincial Director of Public Health and Sanitation, Dr. Q.B. Ahindukha, says mothers must stop giving children other foods besides milk at least in the first half-year.

"Exclusive breastfeeding reduces child mortality by 13 per cent because the milk has all the essential nutrients needed by the child and also boosts the body immune system," he said.

He said the most prevalent diseases among children in the region include malaria, pneumonia diarrhoea.

Dr. Ahindukha said for every 1,000 children born in the region, 121 die before attaining age five. "This can be reduced if children are breast fed for a long time," the medic said.

He urged fathers to be involved in child care by encouraging mothers to breastfeed children as one of the high impact intervention measures in promoting child health.

Dr. Ahindukha said other activities being undertaken by the ministry include distribution of long lasting treated mosquito nets, immunisation, vitamin A supplementation, deforming, deliveries handled by skilled health staff and family planning.

He said the activities help to lower the mortality rate in the region and urged parents to co-operate with health staff.

Mothers who have been identified to have followed instructions and exclusively breastfed their children were awarded with three sufurias of different sizes, packets of milk and nappies, clothes for children.

Mumias Sugar Company contributed Kshs.100,000 towards the event and the gifts intended to encourage mothers to practice exclusive breast-

feeding for the stipulated period. Over 500 residents attended the event.

Meanwhile, a cultural centre is being constructed at a cost of Kshs.20 million in Samia District, Busia County. The Busia County's Cultural Officer, Mr. Steven Makhanu, said the facility will comprise of a multipurpose hall and artifacts.

The hall, Mr. Makhanu added, will include a restaurant that is slated to provide indigenous foods, a library and conference facilities.

Besides drama and music that are rich in local traditions, vital information on language, environment and nutrition shall be accessed at the facility, said Mr. Makhanu. The officer said that the centre whose construction will be completed next year will attract tourists and researchers.

Mr. Makhanu urged locals to engage in visual arts as this could earn them a living, adding that financial support for those participating in cultural festivals at grassroots level.

Group offers relief water to needy Kenyans

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

AN international charitable organization has embarked on an ambitious project that seeks to install water pumps in drier parts of Western province. Humanity First, an international charitable organization, has commissioned ten hand water pumps in the province.

The pumps costing at Kshs2 million have been built within school compounds to serve hundreds of residents of remote villages of Mumias, Webuye, Matungu and Kakamega districts. Mansoor Ahmed Shah, who is the Chairman of the trust fund, says the main aim of the organization is to empower communities to support themselves.

"When we teach a man how to fish instead of giving him fish whenever he is hungry, that to us is real help granted," he told pupils, teachers and the community around Ematawa Primary School in Marama Central Location, Butere District.

The head teacher of Ematawa Primary School, Mr. William Aswani, says since the pump was set up about three years ago at the institution, hundreds of villagers, including pupils, have used it for domestic purposes.

"Initially, our pupils had to make about two kilometer trips to and from Eshitukha Stream to fetch water but now we are the suppliers of this commodity to the community at large," says Mr. Aswani.

The organization has so far built a tuition block at the school, donated

desks and has pledged to donate at least five computers to serve all 657 pupils. "We look forward to a very strong bond between Humanity First and this school and hope to strengthen it more," says Mr. Shah.

A total of 32 hand pumps have been set up in different parts of the country and are among 700 such facilities spread in several parts across the globe.

Humanity First was set up in Kenya in 2006 and has responded to a wide range of modest scale local disasters while focusing on longer term solutions to problems afflicting the Kenyan people. On July 30 this year, 16 volunteers arrived at the Dadaab Refugee Camp on the Kenya-Somali boarder with foodstuff to help mitigate the suffering of over 400,000 refugees.

The organization that draws financial support from donations in 11 countries and has volunteers in 27 countries across six continents where it operates, has so far committed US\$ 50,000 (approximately Kshs.5,085,765 by current exchange rate) for the distribution of aid, with 10 per cent of the amount having been raised in Kenya.

The non-profit making organization has approved a budget for a range of water projects, including rehabilitation of hand pumps and potentially spring hand protection projects in North Coast and rural areas of Kisumu.

It has also set up medical facilities to fight tropical diseases such as Malaria, apart from providing relief to flood victims.

State changes tact in race against Aids

By PETER MUTUKU

THE government has embarked on an ambitious project in the fight against HIV/Aids as the deadline for Millennium Development Goals (MDG) draws closer.

The programme, which is being piloted at the Kenyatta and across the country, targets all patients visiting public medical facilities with plans to replicate it to private hospitals.

Peter Cherutich, the Deputy Director and Head of HIV prevention at the National Aids and STI Control Program (NASCOP), says under the initiative HIV testing will be carried out on a routine basis to ensure that majority of Kenyans know their HIV status to effectively fight the disease.

"Making testing an everyday issue is the best way we can ensure that a great proportion of the population is aware of their HIV status to effectively fight the disease," he notes.

The new testing method, he said will make AIDS lose its special status in the country's health system.

"This will help in plans to integrate HIV care and public health care.

HIV will cease to be a special disease and thus the stigma previously associated with the disease will become a thing of the past," he says.

In Kenya, traditionally, government hospitals have a special unit for HIV/AIDs patients. Experts believe this system has derailed the fight against HIV since people fear visiting the centres for treatment or testing for fear of stigmatization.

Nascop estimates that 100,000 people are infected with HIV in Kenya every year. However about 40 per cent do not know their HIV status.

"These untested people are hampering the government's efforts to control the spread of HIV and prevent new HIV infections," the doctor says.

Cherutich notes that HIV is a different kind of disease because one can stay with it for a long time and risk spreading before it is detected. "You can stay with it even for over 10 years before you realize that you are sick or contract any opportunistic infections. Chances are that you would have spread it to others," he says.

Thus only routine testing can eradicate cases of people who are HIV

positive, but do not know their status, infecting others. Cherutich notes that routine HIV testing in Kenya will further eliminate cases of testing by proxy, especially for men, who believe when their wives are HIV negative, they are also negative.

Through the method, Kenya aims at achieving 80 percent rate of HIV testing among its approximately 40 million people by 2013.

This move will help reduce HIV infection rates in line with Millennium Development Goals (MDG). MDG six, which focuses on HIV, among other communicable diseases, outlines that by 2015 countries should have begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDs and halt new infections. This, in particular, targets populations aged between 15 and 24 who are at the highest risk.

According to the goal, people in this age group should also have comprehensive knowledge on HIV/AIDs.

The goal further targets that a sizeable population of those with advanced HIV infection should have universal access to treatment and anti retroviral drugs.

Remembering the king of Kamba politics

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

HISTORY will perhaps credit the late Ukambani political heavy weight, Mulu Mutisya for two things.

The first is his role as the Kenya African National Union (KANU) Ukambani supremo during the heyday of Moi's rule.

And the secondly would be his role as the National Soil and Water Conservation Programme chair, despite his known low levels of formal education.

During his height at the National soil and water conservation programme, there was a memorable Kiswahili phrase, Mmomonyoko wa udongo, meaning soil erosion, in every village in Kenya.

The late Mutisya travelled across the country urging people to protect soil and water in the interest of food security and future generations.

Wherever he went, Mutisya person-

ally took a jembe and a spade to demonstrate how soil and water should be protected.

People everywhere were indeed involved in soil and water protection exercise through digging of terraces and planting trees in designated areas.

The firebrand soil and water conservation programme however diminished with the demise of Mutisya and by extension Moi's rule.

Presently however, the Government through the water resources management authority (WRMA) and the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) is in a frantic effort to revive soil protection programme.

Dr. Saul Kiberenge, of water resources management authority western province, is urging Kenyans to conserve soil.

Kiberenge argues that if urgent measures are not taken to protect soil

from being washed away by rivers and rains water, then sooner or later this country will become unproductive in terms of food security.

He claims that WRMA in conjunction with NEMA are currently sensitizing the communities whose land borders rivers on the danger of messing up with the 30 metre river bank strip.

The WRMA official adds that the authority is in the process of training registered groups on how to take care of the rivers and water catchment areas.

Kiberenge discloses that already WRMA has identified three (3) groups, Mukhweso, Nambacha and Sirigoi, all from Navakholo District, to be trained on the techniques of the sub-catchment management plan on river Lusumu.

He was speaking recently at Navakholo District Headquarters where he urged a group of 60 people picked for the training to take the lessons seriously.

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MRM donates desks to poor Kitui school

By KAVYU KURA

KISIUNI primary school in the peripheral areas of Tseikuru District of Kitui County is in dire need of help.

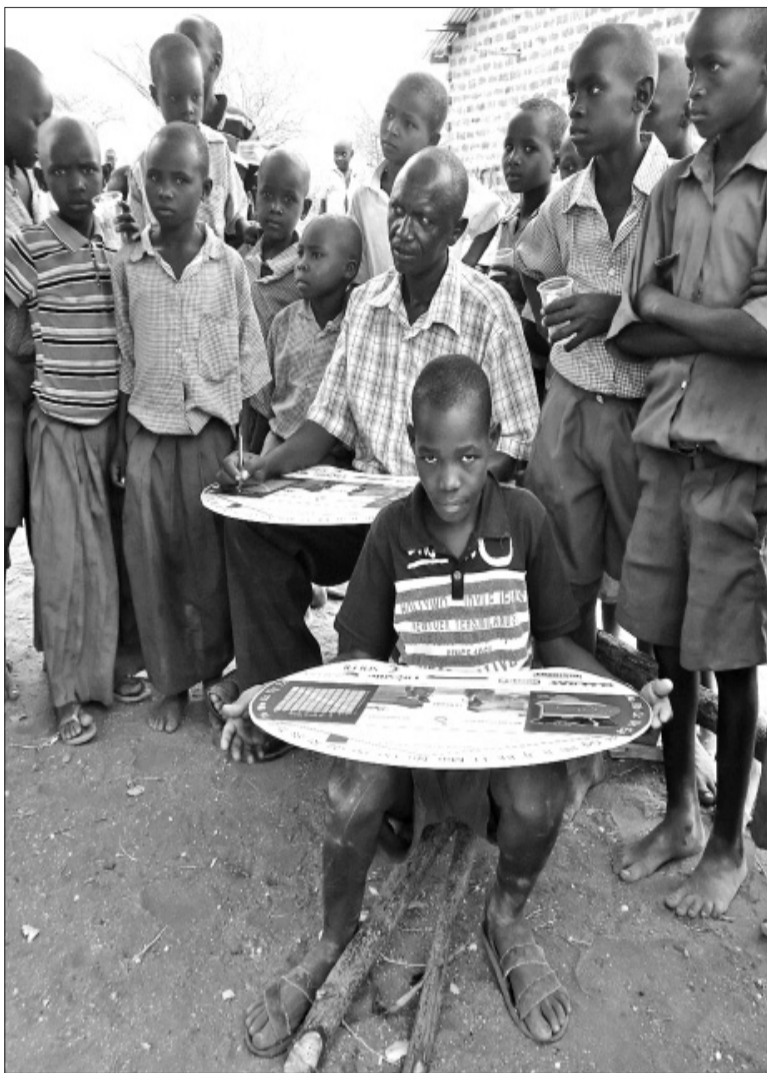
The 100 pupils at the school in Kaningo location of Musavani division use makeshift grass thatched and mud walled structures as classrooms despite funds channeled to schools through the infrastructural improvement program to aid in the upgrading of facilities.

The situation is aggravated by the fact that the available ramshackle classrooms have gaping holes on the wall and learners can catch a glimpse of what is taking place outside the classroom with ease. But learning still continues unabated with pupils using the earthen floor as their desks.

Save for a few incidents where learning is occasionally disrupted by vicious conflicts between the locals and armed pastoralists from Tana River and Garissa regions who have encroached in the area, the school remains in operation.

This is albeit the fact that many parents have withdrawn their children from the school and relocated to safety after a few residents sustained injuries in a conflict between the two groups.

The school's head teacher Samuel Mwendwa Kithome says the school's population, which currently stands at 87 pupils, is not enough to effectively support infrastructural development that would ensure a conducive learning environment.



Mr Samuel Kithome, headteacher and Kioko Muthui, a standard three pupil, sample the use of the desks as other pupils look on.
Photo/Kavyu-Kura

"We therefore appeal to donors and well-wishers to move in and help improve the situation," he adds, saying that the school lacks

enough teachers and that he was the only Teachers Service Commission (TSC) hired tutor. The other five are engaged by community.

He spoke as Mabati Rolling Mills (MRM), a multinational company donated 200 Lap-desks to the school.

The head teacher who was elated by the gesture, said the Lap-desks will not only help the pupils to write on a level surface but will aid the learning process as features such as the map of Kenya, the alphabets, a multiplication table, national anthem and the colours of the national flag have been imprinted on the surface.

He said that at the moment World Vision NGO is financing the construction of two classrooms while the Mwingi north Constituency Development Fund (CDF) has offered to build another classroom at a cost of Kshs500,000.

The Mabati Rolling Mills Team led by the Cooperate Affairs manager Tom Moore Ogola was shocked by the deplorable state of the school. The school had been identified for the MRM support by the humanitarian World Vision Non-governmental organization that operates in the area.

MRM's Ogola who was accompanied by a finance manager Nancy Mbugua and Benson Wanyonyi from the administration department said the lap desks that were portable were ideal for learners in such a school who would move with the boards and learn from other areas during skirmishes.

World Vision helps Taitas to get birth certificates

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

PARENTS in Ghazi area within Voi District, Taita Taveta County, have finally managed to secure 9,600 birth certificates for their children through an initiative launched by the World Vision, Kenya, the Voi Constituency Development Fund, Departments of Registrar of Births and Deaths and Education.

Area District Commissioner, Mr. Raphael Lemaletian, urged parents in the area to take advantage of the initiative to obtain the certificates early enough to avoid last minute rush. He said now that birth certificates were mandatory in the registering for National examinations, parents and guardians should apply for them immediately the children are born. The administrator ordered chiefs and the assistants to arrest parents whose children are not in school.

A senior Programme Officer with the World Vision-Kenya, Mr. Gerishon Mwakazi, said the programme was carried out by the organization at the cost of Kshs.850,000. He said the initiative had saved parents and guardians money lost through brokers who purport that they can obtain the certificates faster at a fee.

The County's Registrar of Births and Deaths Officer, Mr. Francis Waweru, said the main constraint his officers had experienced include failure by some parents and guardians to obtain National Identity cards that were mandatory in the issuance of birth certificates. The District Education Officer, Mr. Michael Machora, said the transport expenses and ignorance among parents and guardians were the major setbacks considering that civil registration was done at Wundanyi, the Headquarters of the former larger Taita District.

Shitanda orders audit of his CDF team

By JOEL JUMA

MALAVA MP Soita Shitanda has appealed to the National Tax Payers Association (NTA) to probe his CDF management team.

The Housing Minister said he wants projects assessed to determine their impact in the constituency.

He explained that he is planning to contest for the post of Governor and therefore his record in management of devolved funds should be known to the residents in the County.

"I have performed well on management of CDF. I should now be audited without fear," said Shitanda who was speaking during the inspection of projects by the National Constituency Development Fund Board members led

by the Public Relations manager George Muruli.

Shitanda and the Malava CDF Chairman Nathan Anaswa said allocation of funds is done in consultation with the communities.

Muruli said the board was satisfied with the implementation of projects in the constituency.

The NTA Coordinator Davis Adieno and the Western Regional Coordinator Evelynne Khamala have already dispatched a team of auditors to Malava.

They said the team has visited various projects in the constituency and that they were compiling a report from the exercise. "We have started auditing projects in Malava constituency as the MP has given us the go ahead," said Adieno.

Shitanda becomes the second minister from the County to

have his CDF projects audited after Planning minister Wycliffe Oparanya. Both Oparanya and Shitanda have declared their interest to run for the post of Governor in Kakamega County.

Adieno explained that the demand to have NTA audit projects in Khwisero was high adding that his organisation was pursuing the matter with the board.

"Many people want us to take the audit team to Khwisero and Ikolomani constituencies," said Adieno.

Shitanda explained that MPs should not fear having projects in their respective constituencies audited as public funds should benefit the communities without discrimination.

"I have distributed projects in all corners of the constituency and



Mr Shitanda

that is why I want to replicate my strategy in the entire County," said Shitanda.

Muruli explained that the board has agreed to work with NTA on monitoring and evaluation of projects in the country.

By TITUS MAERO

KATECO increases loans to members

THE Kakamega Teachers Savings and Credit Co-operative Society (KATECO) Limited has disbursed loans totaling to Kshs 754 million in the first quarter of this year.

KATECO Chairman Joseph Sagalla says that the disbursement of the credit was a great improvement compared to Kshs 694 million that was disbursed to its members over the same period last year.

Speaking during the organiza-

tion's special delegates meeting in Kakamega town, the official observed that despite the success made by the Sacco, there are still various challenges facing the society including a high rate of defaulters and competition from various financial institutions.

He, however, said that some of the measures that have been put in place to check negative effects arising from loan disbursement include expansion

in terms of volume in business and branches, as well as recruitment of more qualified staff.

Further, Sagalla said, plans are underway to expand the volume of business and branches and encouraged staff members to continuously learn new skills to make them more competent and add real value to the Sacco.

He said studying has become the

trend world wide as a means to keep abreast with the emerging technological innovations adding that quite a number of staff have completed their studies and more were studying.

Sagalla said that although the Sacco has complied with requirements of the Sacco Societies Regulatory Act (SASRA), the society is still being levied deposits guarantee levy which, he said, was too high.

Let women claim their lands rights under new law

By LUKE KAPCHANGA

KENYAN women have to seize the opportunities in the new constitution to claim their rights to access and own land.

Both men and women have to come out and display their active understanding of the constitution in its implementation so that its benefits are enjoyed across board.

It is widely believed that gender sensitive provisions governing ownership of land and property provide an opportunity for women to engage in policy dialogue which gives them public voice.

The UN Women, a civil society initiative has started public education activities countrywide to popularize the provisions on women and property ownership as provided for in the constitution and National Land policy.

Their objective is to encourage communities to abandon practices that bar women from inheriting family land.

Therefore the media, has been chal-

lenged to highlight in their stories issues affecting women, particularly on land ownership. This was discussed during a one day seminar at Kisumu, which brought together journalists and civil society representatives.

The UN Women aims to enhance participation of women in decision making over land management and use, and accelerate legislation and implementation of gender sensitive laws regarding land and property.

It was observed that Women in Kenya have experienced gross disparities in land ownership as well as discrimination during succession, transfer of land and exclusion in land decision making processes. Majority have suffered degrading and life threatening consequences for their lack of property rights resulting into absence of economic security.

This denial of equal property rights puts women at the greater risk of poverty, disease, violence and homelessness.

Land as an emotive issue, is the prin-

cipal source of livelihood and material wealth for majority of people and carries cultural significance.

The constitution guarantees equitable access to land rights, efficient, productive and sustainable use of land by all, prohibiting gender discrimination in law, customs and practices.

Both the constitution and the National land policy of 2009, call for institution of a transparent and accountable system of land administration, and guarantee the protection of women's rights to land and related resources.

This includes the provision for joint spousal registration and documentation of land rights. It is widely believed that if effectively implemented, the new charter will likely bring a significant change towards equitable access to land, sustainable land use and secure land rights.

The Constitution will override the cultural barriers that have continued to limit women's ability to access, control and own land.

Women's ties to land have historically been mediated by their relationship to men in patriarchal societies.

Their attempts to assert their rights in ways challenging customary land tenure system is likely to continue being perceived as disruption to gender relations and society. The land laws in Kenya were developed against a customary law system in which women had no rights to own land. The process of land adjudication, consolidation and registration crystallized men's absolute ownership and control of land.

Women traditionally had limited rights to access or use of land, and were excluded from decision making processes as men held majority of seats in institutions such as land boards that adjudicate land issues.

For the country to reach equality, women should obtain adequate land rights that are both socially and legally recognized. The challenge is now upon women, to take up the opportunity pro-

vided by the constitution and land policy to confront the deeply entrenched cultural barriers and obstacles such as poverty traps, ignorance of law and illiteracy that hinder access, control and ownership of land.

To empower women to effectively engage in these reforms, the UN Women has formed partnerships with civil society groups with prior experience and interest in women and land issues to promote civic engagement and awareness.

The eight month pilot project, aims at providing knowledge and experience in areas of women rights to land and property ownership and generate learning for a longer term project. The UN Women-Kenya was formed in January, comprising of several UN agencies on gender. Partners include African Women and Child Feature Services (AWC), AL-DEF Kenya, Centre for land, Economy and Rights of Women, Kituo cha Sheria and The Women's Research Centre and Development Institute.

Depleted Maragoli forest set for rehab

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

PLANS are underway to rehabilitate the depleted Maragoli forest in Vihiga County.

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) test will be undertaken to determine the best way to conserve the ecosystem. Conservationists say that unless an EIA is done, the resource will be subjected to environmental damage that may affect the region.

Community members along Maragoli hills have already formed a community forest association to manage the ecosystem and ensure sustainable utilization of the forest.

The proposed rehabilitation exercise covers three broad zones, namely Zone 1 Agro forestry/residential that covers a large portion of trust land covering Muguva, Dabwongo, and Ludonyi villages.

The plan recognizes that residents are legally occupying the land although some families have settled into the gazetted forest zone.

The second Conservation/protection zone is the most fragile and highly depleted area that is a source of rivers and streams. Zone 3 neighbours the forest adjacent to villages.

Mr. Samuel Munene, the secretary of the association, says deforestation of the ecosystem has generated negative impact that has forced residents to reforest the area.

"Our environment is worsening by day. We no longer experience adequate rainfall, soils are infertile and erosion is taking place which has left land with huge rocks and no farming practices to be carried," adds Mr. Munene.

He says rocks falling on the hills can cause death to those occupying the land that has no soil and thus the need



A panoramic view of Maragoli hills. Conservationists are concerned over the rising rate of deforestation at Maragoli forest. Photo/File

to undertake an elaborate reforestation program to avert such calamities.

Though the rehabilitation exercise has been opposed by residents living along the hills, Mr. Munene says the group will not be relent in their efforts to restore the ecosystem, adding that with the assistance of the Government, thick vegetation will flourish.

Mr. Nebert Auke Odanga, a member of the rehabilitation committee, says they will ignore opposing groups that have been sabotaging the plan by uprooting the seedlings.

Residents opposed to the rehabilitation plan fear that the Government

may eject them from the forest and leave them with nowhere to turn to.

A resident along the hills, Mrs. Margaret Rwengedero, says they were living in fear of insecurity since the forest is home to wild animals such as monkeys that have been destroying crops and believe reforestation should not be done since the land initially belonged to the community.

"We cannot allow the Government to plant trees since the thick vegetation was a den for criminals and we could not leave our children at home for they were also in danger of being attacked by wild animals, especially leopards

that were common here," said Mrs. Rwengedero.

Maragoli forest lies in Vihiga district in Western Province along Luanda-Majengo road. The forest is part of the communal land in the larger Kakamega district. In 1942, the Kakamega County Council acquired a loan of Kshs 47,000 and after failing to repay, it offered the land to the Government that gazetted 395.1 hectares as Government forest. The land was placed under the Kenya Forest Service.

The remaining 66 hectares in trust land belongs to communities living in Muguva, Dabwongo and Ludonyi

villages inside the forest. After being gazetted as Government land, different trees were planted, generating thick vegetation that forms the present-day Maragoli forest.

Settlers in the forest were moved out by the Government and resettled in Sirwa in Nandi district, as others were discouraged on hearing rumours of the new settlement, forcing them to remain.

Back in 1970s to 1990s, the Maragoli forest was symptomatic of the beauty of vegetation in western Kenya that provided an ideal settlement for wildlife, adequate rainfall in Western and Nyanza regions. It also acted as a tourist attraction because of its proximity to the Maragoli settlement cave (founder of Maragoli sub-tribe who originated from Rusinga Island). Destruction of the forest started in 1992 when a former provincial administrator started selling trees to saw millers who ferried timber in lorries.

The ecosystem served as a source of grass for livestock and herbal medicine. It was also a source of honey, thatching grass and clean water. However, residents joined hands with loggers to cut down trees for the burning of charcoal and making frames that were transported to Kisumu and Eldoret.

Families started competing for pieces of land in the cleared forest which led to total destruction, leading to the degradation of soil from erosion as residents were less concerned about conservation measures.

Today Maragoli Forest has lost its former glory with huge rocks along rivers and streams that flow through the forest. The rivers contain silt and no trees such as pines, mugumo and eucalyptus that previously covered the region.

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

MORE Kenyans are slated to benefit from seafarer jobs after the country joined the International Maritime Organisation White List.

Kenya Maritime Authority Director General, Ms. Nancy Kariguthu, says about 90,000 officers' jobs and 423,000 ratings are available in the market.

She was addressing local and international maritime stakeholders at the World Maritime Day Celebrations at

Bandari College, in Mombasa.

Ms. Kariguthu says as part of the policy making mandate of KMA under Vision 2030, her organization has a task of presenting new frontiers for wealth and job creation to increase the country's GDP.

She said KMA in collaboration with the Kenya Institute of Education have developed a curriculum from artisan level to degree level, with cours-

es that will ensure Kenyans compete in the global maritime job market.

"The potential for economic growth through the increase in foreign remittances is visible in the maritime job market today," Ms. Kariguthu says.

Ms. Kariguthu says Kenya would do well to emulate the Philippines that provide the maritime world with over 200,000 jobs. She says the sector

was experiencing a shortfall of about 70,000 staff, and Kenyan sea farers would do better if they take up opportunities available in the sector.

The official says sea farers should equip themselves with requisite skills considering that high standards that are required to command the high seas.

"I would like to stress that the world has grown into a global village, more so for seafarers, for whom

I would like to urge not to look at the local market but at the international markets, where certification is a necessity and also where remunerations are high," she advised.

She says KMA was working towards developing a promotional strategy jointly with the private sector to encourage foreign ship owners and management companies to employ Kenyan seafarers.

Kenya finally joins Maritime white list

Coffee boom back in Central

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

COFFEE farmers in Central Province earned Kshs 4.4 billion last year. According to the annual report, Central Provincial Cooperative Officer Mutugi Mwenje said out of this about Kshs 3.7 billion was paid to farmers.

This was an increase in payments compared to year 2009 when the crop earned Kshs 4.3 billion while farmers received Kshs 3.3 billion.

"However, coffee production decreased in year 2010 to 95.2 million kilogrammes compared to 110.5 million kilogrammes in year 2009 which was a decrease of 13.8 per cent. This was due to unfavorable weather conditions," said Mwenje.

The Cooperatives Officer said the coffee sector was also affected by many challenges including poor crop husbandry, lack of credit facilities especially for marketing societies and lack of value addition especially in the dairy and coffee sector.

Other challenges that affected the coffee sector included lack of guaranteed prices especially in the international markets, lack of market research and market information to the societies and members, poor infrastructure leading to high operational costs and hawking of coffee by members of cooperatives to the extent that some marketing societies like Kiambu, Kirinyaga and Murang'a counties became unviable.

There were also coffee thefts at factories leading to losses, low adoption level of ICT amongst staff/management committees in the co-operatives and selection of coffee milling and marketing agents.

Meanwhile, rice farmers from Central Kenya earned about Kshs 120 million last year.

Central Provincial Cooperatives Officer Mutugi Mwenje said in the annual report that out of this, Kshs 108.2 million was paid to the farmers.

"In the year 2010, rice production was 2.5 million kilogrammes compared to 2.4 million kilogrammes in the year 2009 which was an increase," added the officer.

Meanwhile, pyrethrum farmers produced 2,364 kilogrammes the same year compared to 2,415 kilogrammes in year 2009.

"Gross sales accounted for Kshs 243,045 out of which Kshs 223,433 was paid to farmers," said Mwenje.

The urban savings and credit cooperative societies granted its members loans in the year 2010 which amounted to Kshs 7.2 billion as compared to Kshs 6.3 billion in year 2009 while loan repayment in year 2010 was Kshs 13.6 compared to Kshs 8.3 billion in year 2009.



Kimabara Coffee Factory workers in Mathira district prepare coffee ready for sale at the factory recently. Coffee farmers in Central Province earned Sh 4.4 billion last year Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

Ways to cushion Kinango from famine devised

THE Government with support from development partners is exploring alternative sources of livelihood to manage the recurrent drought and famine in arid and semi arid areas.

Among initiatives set for introduction include goat rearing project which has been earmarked for implementation in the dry parts of Kwale County, namely Kinango and Lungalunga.

Samaritan's Purse, a local Non-Governmental Organisation plans to introduce a goat rearing project that would survive the hostile climate.

According to a Livestock Officer with the NGO Samson Njenga, the project dubbed "Kinango Livestock Programme" seeks to assist the poor become less vulnerable to drought and poverty by creating alternative sources of income.

Njenga says the goat rearing project best suits the area as goats are less risky to rear than cattle. The drier it is, the better for a goat which can go for three to seven days without water.

Goats hardly receive any medical care. The most common goat diseases include pneumonia, foot rot, intestinal parasites and food toxicity but the project takes care of treatment with

farmers only required to buy drugs.

Samaritan's Purse is currently holding meetings with community members to explain how the programme that targets the poor will work.

Mr. Njenga says beneficiaries are to get two female goats and one buck of the Galla goat variety. The breeds are more productive and bigger than local breeds and to ensure the programme spreads to other farmers, a beneficiary is supposed to repay three goats in two years before the animals are passed to other farmers.

A beneficiary cannot sell an animal until they have cleared their debt.

Kinango Veterinary Officer, Dr. Awich Nunda, says goats are also less susceptible to drought and diseases than other livestock. This and their ability to survive drought makes them an ideal source of income for the community.

Goats are resilient and thrive in semi arid conditions and can hardly succumb to harsh climatic conditions. Goats need less water than cattle and sheep do and feed on a broader spectrum of vegetation than other livestock. Not only do they graze, they also browse on leaves and soft backs from shrubs.

A goat is the only animals, other

than a domestic cat, that is known to swiftly revert to the wild, and it is probably this quality that makes the two animals among the most enduring.

Goats reach puberty between 6-15 months based on the breed and nutrition status. With a gestation period of 150 days, a goat can have at least two kids in one year. Some breeds have up to three kids at a time which can add up to six new goats in one year.

The Kinango Livestock Production Officer, Ms. Nelly Katsutsu, says despite the erratic rainfall pattern in Kinango to sustain any form of maize production, it has always been enough to improve the quantity and quality of pasture. She says pans and earth dams also collect enough water from the surface run-off to sustain the animals. As a result, the livestock production officer says goats are usually in good body condition.

She says goat keeping has potential to be a major income earner for local communities with the ready market for the animals and their milk. A goat is retailing between Kshs 2,500 to Kshs 3,500, while the milk goes for Kshs 50 per litre.

The Livestock Production Officer

says despite the potential, farmers in Kinango are yet to fully embrace goat rearing as a source of income. She says despite training and advices to farmers, many community members have not adopted modern methods of animal husbandry. She says farmers are unwilling to try out improved breeds that would give them more meat and milk.

Ms. Katsutsu says farmers in Kinango are obsessed with maize production and are unwilling to pay attention to other forms of farming that would assure availability of food.

Ms. Katsutsu says different organizations run programmes that seek for the improvement of the quality of goats in Kinango yet few farmers take advantage of the programmes to improve their stock.

Goat farmers have in the past been left at the mercy of middle men who buy the livestock cheaply and sell them at twice or thrice the price. Samaritan's Purse has eliminated the challenge by linking farmers to markets. The first lot of goats was delivered directly to Pungu slaughterhouse, which serves Kwale and Mombasa Counties, earlier this year.

Drought pushes Mwingi residents into misery

By PETER MUTUKU

THE drought situation in Mwingi District has pushed most families in the area to poverty and starvation. Today, most parents can hardly afford to provide basic necessities to their families owing to the prolonged periods of drought and persistent famine in the semi arid region.

A report by the children's department reveals that most parents are abandoning their children in the face of starvation. Data shows that child neglect tops the list of reported cases at 228 mainly blamed on the high levels of poverty among residents.

Majority of children in the six Districts of Mwingi Central, Mwingi East, Mwingi West, Kyuso, Mumoni and Tseikuru have been left under the care of aged grandparents.

Family separation and divorce, she adds coupled with domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse by young parents had been identified as some of other common causes of child neglect.

According to the Children's Officer Jacinta Mwinzi, the situation has resulted in increased cases of child labour, school dropout, child abuse (both physical and sexual), dehumanising treatment, child trafficking and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

She says that many children had dropped out of school at a tender age or had failed to enrol in school, thus denying them prospects for a bright future.

"A high number of the out of school groups seek employment as herd boys, house girls, shamba boys, matatu touts and cart and wheel barrow pushers in market places, porters at bus stops, scrap metal collectors and other unhealthy and degrading occupations," she says.

She says girls are the hardest hit with some of them being turned into sex slaves.

She says child trafficking prevalent in the District with many children being shipped out to far away areas such as Nairobi and Mombasa where they are usually abused.

The officer says sexual harassment directed towards girls and boys were on the rise in the region adding that girls bear the heaviest brunt of the abuse.

She claims the high cases of incest involving parents and relatives are often reported to her office, alongside other common forms of sexual abuse which mainly point to teachers, neighbours, parents workmates and friends.

The officer says child battering and verbal abuse is also common while FGM was quietly taking place in sections of Mwingi where girls undergo the cut either through coercion or of their own volition.

The report says due to the high school dropout rate the literacy levels have dropped, with most youth becoming adults before they attain basic education.

Further, the children continue to perform poorly in national examinations despite the opportunities created by the Free Primary and subsidised secondary education.

The officer says poor planning, lack of role models, proper leadership, absence of political goodwill and misplaced priorities in addressing issues relating to children had a bearing on the sad state of affairs that had relegated children to degrading lifestyles.

Nzoia cane farmers up in arms over graft

By LUKE KAPCHANGA

SUGARCANE farmers allied to Nzoia Sugar Company are up in arms following revelations that managers at the factory are secretly selling their crop to competitors.

The farmers say that the factory is likely to face cane shortages once it resumes its operations at the end of this month.

Farmers claim that this is part of an elaborate strategy by the management to run down the factory before the proposed privatization of the company.

The management of Nzoia started

selling cane to Butali, West Kenya and Mumias sugar companies in early August to frustrate board of directors who are currently spearheading a campaign against poaching.

The Nzoia out Grower Company (NOCO) which is supposed to intervene in situations where cane is supplied directly to millers without farmers consent has remained non-committal over the issue.

NOCO whose membership currently stands at 47,000 cane farmers is mandated to negotiate on behalf of farmers the terms of supply, co ordination of production, harvesting and transportation of cane.

Its objectives include promoting the interest of farmers besides ensuring enough supplies to meet the required threshold by the Nzoia factory.

They also provide financial support to members within the crop production chain to help in land preparation, planting, cultivation and supply of goods and related services.

The revelations came amidst stiff competition by millers who are paying between Kshs. 3,900 - 4,100 per ton, while Nzoia pays Kshs. 3,100 per ton.

Contacted for comment, the MD, Saulo Wasilwa said, "we have an undertaking with the Ministry of Agriculture to supply other millers with mature

cane as the Company was yet to resume operations after the company temporary shut down to allow for annual maintenance.

The MD was however unable to explain why they have kept the board of directors in darkness about the supply deal despite not following the correct procedure.

In late July, the company's management came under sharp scrutiny after it emerged that they had allocated Kshs 10million to oversee the anti poaching campaign. Sources indicate that Nzoia Sugar factory lost an estimated Kshs. 274,442,720 through poaching during the 2009/2010 financial year.

By KAVYU KURA

Bee keeping in Mwingi faces imminent collapse

WANTON degradation of forests coupled with the prolonged drought has conspired to rob Mwingi region of its allure as a producer of high quality honey.

A honey production expert David Muinde laments that other factors like poor harvesting methods, poor management of beehives and use of outmoded log hives for bee keeping have contributed to about 90 percent drop in honey production.

Muinde who is an expert in bee management and honey production is dismayed by the fact that Mwingi residents including the honey refinery depot in Mwingi town have to rely on honey imported from Tanzania to meet local demand.

Speaking to The Link on the sidelines of the Kyuso district World Food Day celebration at Kamuwongo market recently, Muinde said local bee keepers were constantly encouraged to adopt modern bee keeping methods to save the lucrative industry from collapse.

"We have enlightened beekeepers on the need to discard the old fashioned log hives that lead to a general decline in bee population during honey harvesting season in favour of the modern Langstroth hives that give high honey yields and allow broad daylight honey harvesting," said Muinde.

He added that bee keepers were also constantly encouraged to spearhead the campaign against deforestation that denies bees a conducive environment for pollination and

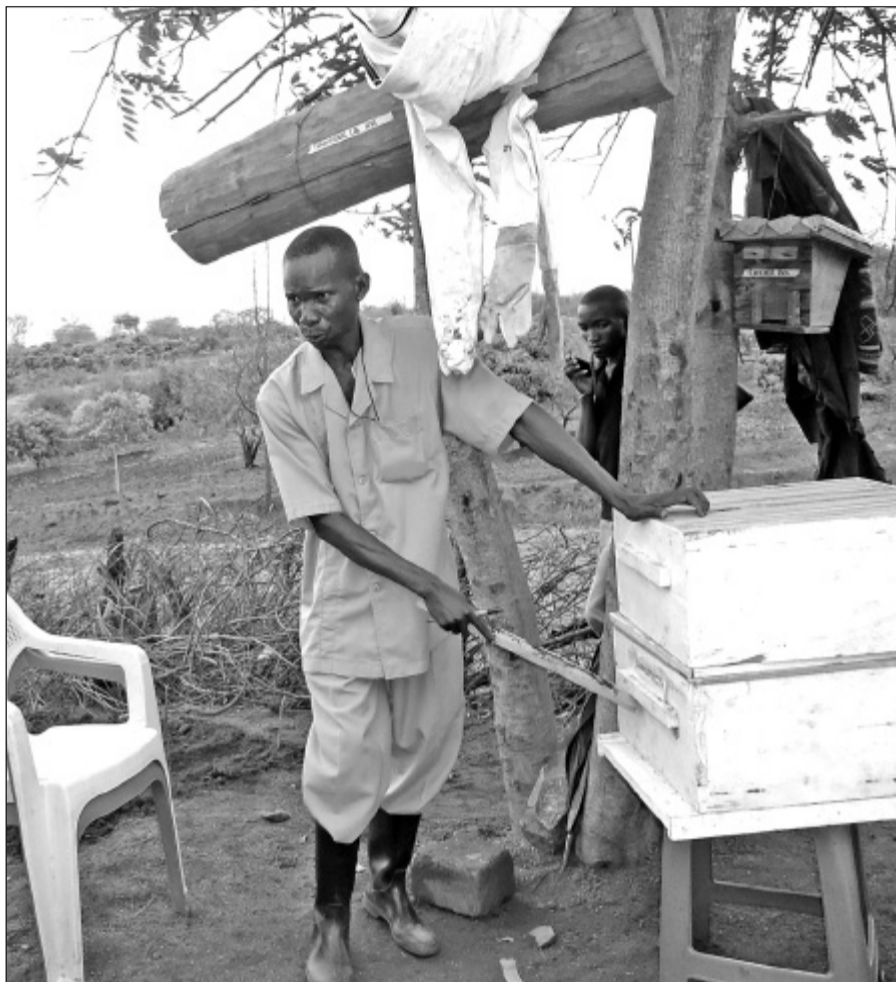
honey making.

"The widespread and indiscriminate felling of trees for charcoal burning in most parts of Mwingi has adversely affected sources of water which is crucial not only for bee survival but for honey production. We encourage bee keepers to prepare sugar syrups for their bees in times of drought and water scarcity," said Musyoka.

The poor honey yields have adversely affected operations at the Mwingi town honey refinery reputed for production of the best eco-honey both for local and international market. The refinery-Mwingi Honey Place- was not only operating under capacity but was on the verge of closure for lack of raw honey.

A manager at the refinery, Joseph Mutua, said the fact that the factory has been sourcing raw honey from far off places was not only expensive but quality has also been compromised as the honey cannot compare with the original Mwingi honey.

He lamented that due to low production, his organization has been unable to meet local and external demand for its eco-honey that was in February last year voted the best pure organic honey in Africa during a trade fair held in the Germany city of Nuremberg.



Honey production expert in Kyuso district David Muinde shows the modern Langstroth hive while the oldmoded log hive hangs above his head. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

Machakos farmers to grow drought tolerant crops

By PETER MUTUKU

THE government plans to give out drought tolerant seeds to farmers in Machakos District to minimize effects of drought that has grossly affected agricultural output in the area.

A monitoring report indicates that farmers in the area have incurred heavy losses from crops they had planted in the last season.

Speaking to The Link at his office, Machakos District Agricultural Officer, Mr Nicholas Nzombe, urged farmers to embrace drought resistant crops such as cowpeas and sorghum which can survive harsh climatic conditions to increase food production and fight famine in the area.

Mr Nzombe also asked farmers to prepare terraces in their land in order to prevent soil erosion.

The agricultural officer asked farmers to plant certified seeds and buy fertilizers such as C.A.N and D.A.P in authorized dealer outlets.

He said that the department is currently liaising with the Kenya Meteorological Department at the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) in Katumani in Machakos to help provide farmers with valuable information on the rainfall patterns for the coming planting season.

Elsewhere, consumers in Machakos County have hailed the Government for the move to reintroduce price control measures on consumer goods, saying they have been at the mercy of exploitative traders.

A jubilant group of residents told The Link the law on price control was long overdue after some traders exhibited greed for huge profits without regard to the economic status of the consumers.

Led by a resident, Mr Douglas Mutiso, they said most families had abandoned essential ingredients in their menu such as sugar while rationing consumption of staple maize meal due to soaring costs leading to malnutrition.

Kibos sweetens sugar prices to entice farmers

By JOEL JUMA

KIBOS Sugar Company in Kisumu County has announced new payments for cane delivered to the factory. The company said it will pay Kshs4, 350 per tonne of cane delivered to the factory, making it the highest paying sugar mill in the country.

Managing director Henminder Singh Saini said the prevailing market forces prompted the new payments. "The price of sugar has gone up. We cannot continue to pay farmers the same amounts of money when what they are producing is fetching large sums of money," he added.

Mumias Sugar Company pays Kshs4, 185 while Butali Sugar Mills and West Kenya Sugar Company in Kakamega North District pay Kshs3, 800 and Kshs3, 700 per tonne respectively. Kibos further announced that farmers will be paid on a weekly basis.

"We will not delay any payments. Farmers will get paid on a weekly basis," he added.

Kibos was the first sugar mill in the country to put up weighbridges near the farms. Kibos, which sponsors Kalplony Limited, further announced it will put up a Ksh5 billion sugar mill at Nasewa area in Busia County. Kaplony indicated that it has already applied for a license from the Kenya Sugar Board (KSB). Saini said he will put up a factory in Busia as soon as he is issued with a license.

"We have already conducted a feasibility study which was done by a firm from India. The environmental impact assessment test and factory site layout are also complete," added Saini.

The mill, if put up, will be the fifth in Western Province. The fourth mill in the region is the Butali Sugar Mill built at a cost Kshs3 billion in Kakamega North District and commissioned in January.

West Kenya Sugar Company in Kakamega North District and Africa Polysat have also shown interest in setting up a mill at Nasewa. There has been a lot of controversy surrounding the establishment of a factory in Nasewa area. Farmers have been demanding that a factory in Nasewa land should be put up on leasehold.

Saini has said he is ready to comply with conditions set by Busia cane farmers. He said he has taken into consideration all concerns raised by farmers in the area. He added that the factory would be modern and that they would later diversify production. "In future, we will go into co-generation and pulp and paper production," stated Saini, in an interview with *The Link*.

He noted that about 500 people will be employed on a permanent basis in the initial stages and 2, 000 on contract terms. "We project to give the Government Kshs700million in revenue in the early stages," he explained.

The chairman of Western Development Initiative Association Joseph Baraza said Busia farmers want better pay and good working relations with the mill which will be set up at Nasewa.

"Farmers do not want frustrations. They want to be paid promptly, probably on a weekly basis," said Baraza.

Following failure to construct the proposed sugar factory in Busia

County more than 20 years ago after the government bought the land and the subsequent collapse of Busia Sugar Company, farmers in the area have been exploited. Saini noted that Kibos has put up two weighbridges near the farms and has been paying farmers on weekly basis.

Farmers had protested the sale of

Nasewa land by Mumias Sugar Company (MSC) to recover a debt from the defunct Busia Sugar Factory.

Saini noted that they had bought the land but stopped the transactions for the matter to be cleared.

MSC confirmed that the title of land under dispute is in the name of Busia Sugar Company and the documents are in possession of KSB. MSC insisted that it is only interested in recovering a debt BSC owed it.



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By **BRIGHTON KAZUNGU**

KENYA Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) Mtwapa in Kilifi County plans to launch a biological control of pests in Bahari district this year.

The project which is a joint initiative with the International Centre for Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE) targets the mango fruit fly which has caused massive destruction of mangoes over the years.

The Bahari District Agricultural Officer, Ms. Jane Kanamu, says the project initially targets 250 farmers

who are engaged in cash crop farming and have recorded high production of the fruits.

She said farmers have incurred heavy losses due to the fly that has damaged the fruits before maturing. "The two bodies have offered to provide experts who will train extension staff in the ministry of agriculture on biological control of the pests throughout the mango season beginning last month to the end of February

2012 when the season ends, she says.

Ms. Kanamu says the 250 farmers who will undergo the training will become trainers of other farmers after their graduation, especially on the use of biological methods to control the mango fruit fly.

Farmers have for many years incurred heavy economic losses after most of the produce got rotten either before maturing or immediately after maturity.

"It has been common in the past to see only 100 mangoes getting sold after maturity out of thousands due to the effect of the pest," says Katana Nzai, a prominent farmer in Kikambala Division.

He says he has over 300 trees but his harvest has been minimal, fetching him less than Kshs.10,000 per season. Other farmers have also been urging the Government to put up processing factories to avoid heavy losses

incurred for lack of reliable market during the production season.

"Our fruits got wasted at the Mtwapa processing season due to the low demand by the only factory serving the region," they said.

The Coast Development Authority Director, Mr. James Mangi, said in Kilifi recently a new fruit processing factory has been set up in Tana River County to ease congestion at Mtwapa factory.

Tetu coffee farmers protest over graft

By **JOSEPH MUKUBWA**

ABOUT 100 coffee farmers of Thiriku Coffee Society in Tetu District have protested over the alleged mismanagement of the society.

The irate farmers marched for more than one kilometer from the society headquarters protesting over financial mismanagement and accusing the society chairman Erastus Mathenge of harassment and selling their coffee without their consent.

Shouting anti-chairman slogans, the farmers demanded for immediate Government intervention.

"The society ordered fertilizer worth over Kshs1.2 million which they paid but the company that delivered the commodity continued to demand payment from us. The fertilizer, they claimed had now accumulated interest amounting to shillings Kshs6 million," claimed one farmer Samuel Muita.

Another farmer John Kirugumi claimed that the chairman Mathenge has delivered about 243 bags to a miller



Farmers at Thiriku Coffee Society in Tetu district of Nyeri County protesting over mismanagement allegations of the society. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

which was intercepted at Gathaiti area and returned to the factory.

The farmers added that their demand to know why the coffee was being delivered

without a permit landed them in court and the case was dismissed recently.

"The chairman has been harassing and intimidating us whenever we demand audit reports of the society. We are appealing to the government to dispatch auditors to scrutinize the society books of accounts and unveil the truth," added Muita.

The irate farmers claimed they had been barred from delivering their produce to the society and wondered where they would be taking their berries which is their only source of income.

However, contacted for comment, the chairman dismissed the protestors accusing them of being troubleshooters.

"Some of them vied for various seats in the last AGM and lost. They should be contented and wait for the next election and contest the seats instead of demonstrating," he said.

He refuted allegations that the society had denied them access to accounts.

The chairman added that currently farmers were being deducted money to recover Kshs 30 million loan advanced to the society by Cooperative Bank.

Increasing productivity critical to food security

By **SARAH IMMENSCHUH**

HIGH-LEVEL policymakers, leading academics, and representatives from farmer and trader organizations and the private sector gathered in Ethiopia to identify investment priorities and policy options that can help increase agricultural productivity in Sub-Saharan Africa, thereby reducing rural poverty, hunger, and malnutrition in the region.

The November 1-3 conference "Increasing Agricultural Productivity and Enhancing Food Security in Africa: New Challenges and Opportunities," was co-organized by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the African Union Commission (AUC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA). Speakers and participants will showcase opportunities to improve agricultural productivity and explore how they can be effectively implemented through the framework

of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme.

In the past decade, many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have experienced historically rapid economic growth and notable social change, yet poverty, hunger, and malnutrition remain widespread problems. With a large proportion of the population living in rural areas and working in agriculture, the solution to these problems largely lies in increasing agricultural productivity. To achieve this African Heads of State and Government committed to "allocate at least ten percent of the national budgetary resources to agriculture and rural development policy implementation within five years" as part of the 2003 Maputo Declaration to accelerate six percent annual agricultural growth. However, many countries have not put their commitment into practice.

As a first step, African countries need to gear their efforts to increase investment in agriculture. But it is not sufficient, and right priorities

and sequencing are equally important. Agricultural productivity can be achieved in many ways including spreading knowledge of improved practices to smallholders, increasing the use of high-quality seeds and fertilizer, properly irrigating land, developing strong institutions, linking producers to markets, and appropriately addressing disease and conflict. Urgent actions—especially improving capacity and farmer support systems—are needed among all competing tasks.

Research-based evidence is required to tailor these methods to specific needs. But then this evidence must be communicated to users. FARA's executive director Monty Jones said, "We must go beyond just research to increase productivity. Strengthening extension services and infrastructure, and implementing policies that support agricultural productivity and increase rural incomes will reduce hunger and poverty."

According to Josué Dioné, direc-

tor of UNECA's Food Security and Sustainable Development Division, "Increasing agricultural productivity in Africa calls for broader policy and strategic frameworks that encompass the whole agriculture value chain, including agribusiness and agro-industrial sectors as well as farming." Sustainably meeting food demands in the future—despite a growing population and diminishing natural resources—will require a greater emphasis on productivity growth.

"Increasing agricultural productivity is not a panacea to all problems, but it can make a significant positive contribution to resolve issues of food insecurity in Africa," said Shenggen Fan, IFPRI director general.

In order for agricultural productivity to improve the lives of the poor, it needs a supportive environment, particularly increased access to markets.

Markets in particular pose a major challenge to poor people in rural areas. "Improving rural infrastruc-

ture to facilitate trade of goods—both at the country level, and across borders—would serve as an opportunity to improve food security in Africa," said Abebe Haile-Gebriel, director of the AUC's Rural Economy and Agriculture Division.

Experts at the conference examined issues related to: science, technology, and innovation in agriculture; rural services and access to inputs; markets, trade, and regional integration and value chains; investments, institutions, and policies for supporting agriculture; agriculture, nutrition, and health linkages; agriculture and climate change mitigation and adaptation; capacity development for agriculture through education and training; and the nexus of agriculture and the rural nonfarm sector in growth and poverty reduction.

"Innovations in investment, institutions, technology, strategy, and partnerships will enhance productivity and greatly enhance food and nutrition security in Africa," said Fan.

Pastors cleanse Mwingi black spot

By KAVYU-KURA

ARMED with Bibles, Hymn books and Holy Oils, Christians in Mwingi recently invoked divine intervention to end road carnage at a notorious black spot along the Nairobi-Mwingi-Garissa where 13 people perished in a grisly accident recently.

Christian faithfuls congregated for roadside prayers to cleanse the Thitha junction in Mutwangombe area near Mwingi town, where the killer accident. The interdenominational prayers were preceded with a march along the road as the faithful sang praises to God and sprinkled a mixture of holy anointing oil and white iodised salt on either side of the road at the place where the Manderu bound bus crashed.

Rev. Julius Nyerere of the Mwingi town's Messiahship Worship centre led the prayers with assistance from by Pastor Isaac Isika of the local Jesus Sacred Assembly. He declared that accidents that often occurred in the area were the work of evil spirits that would hence forth remain subdued.

Nyerere said that with the pouring of the holy anointing oil on the area around the Thitha turn-off known to be a notorious black spot, the power of death that had reigned in the area for long had been effectively demolished.

"This place is now secured from the invasion of the devil that had repeatedly caused bloodshed. The yoke of the devil has been effectively broken and there will be no more fatal accidents," Rev. Nyerere said.

During the prayers, Pastor Isika

said the accident that killed 13 people was caused either by the evil powers of the jinnis or witchcraft because it was inexplicable how an accident could happen on such a smooth and straight stretch of the highway.

"This is obviously a spot where no one would expect any accident to occur. It is an altar where lives are of-

fered as sacrifice through the powers of wizardry or jinnis which we have today come to declare subdued," said pastor Isika.

He said that the evil minded people who could have gotten the jinnis from Mombasa, Tanzania or even Garissa in search of easy wealth could have cast the jinnis at the Thitha junctions as

predators who would kill and suck the blood of road users through accidents.

"Those who perform evil acts of planting jinnis at this junction are doomed because we have come to subdue them. We have come to exorcise the demons and other evil charms from this place," declared pastor Isika at the Thitha junction prayers.



The faithful and their pastors gather at the spot where 13 people died. Photos/Kavyu-Kura

By JOEL JUMA

ASSISTANT Minister Manyala Keya has told MPs from Kakamega County to stop engaging in smear campaigns as they seek to ascend to positions of power created by the new constitution.

Keya took issue with Planning Minister Wycliffe Oparanya for using the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) kitty to undermine him while campaigning for the post of Governorship. Keya said the minister and Ikolomani MP Bonny Khalwale should keep off the affairs of Lurambi constituency in their campaigns.

"They should concentrate on their affairs as they also have their problems in managing the CDF kitty in their respective areas," said Keya who is an assistant minister in the ministry of Gender and Children Affairs.

He explained that the devolved Government should unite MPs at the county level. Keya said he will lobby to have the CDF kitty retained when the County Governments are created.

Keya cautions colleagues against mudslinging

"Most MPs are opposed to the phasing out of the CDF kitty despite the fact that the Government has allocated funds to help in the completion of all projects in the current financial year," he said.

The assistant minister was speaking during a tour of CDF funded projects in his Lurambi constituency.

Oparanya and Khalwale have constantly accused Keya of not using the CDF money to rehabilitate roads in the constituency. Khalwale even threatened to summon Keya before the Parliamentary Accounts Committee (PAC) for grilling over the matter.

Keya who was accompanied by the National CDF Board Public relations Manager George Muruli said he will ensure that all projects initiated by the former Lurambi MP late Newton Kulundu are completed.

Keya urged MPs to ensure that the Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF) is also debated in Parliament before

elections are held. "LATF may not exist as its structures are to be handled by the Governors," said Keya.

Muruli urged MPs to complete all stalled projects before the next elections. He explained that 70 per cent of MPs lost their positions in the last regime, which resulted in the abandonment of their projects.

Meanwhile, a Kakamega-based community based organization (CBO) has urged the Government to encourage public-private partnerships in addressing the needs of widows and orphans. Reaching the Un-reached CBO said addressing the needs of the two groups would be futile if the Government does not join hands with the private sector.

The director of the CBO Andrew Amukoa lamented that the Government and the private sector each go their own way in addressing community problems. "We need to have a system that

encourages joint participation to complement each other," he added. Amukoa was speaking during a graduation ceremony of widows from Kakamega who had been trained on various skills.

The over 30 widows received free training on tailoring and hair dressing courtesy of Reaching the Un-reached. They were each given a sewing machine and a small capital to open tailoring shops at their places of choice.

Also present during the occasion was Joan Hadlow, the coordinator Reaching the Un-reached, UK. Hadlow said the increasing number of widows and orphans should be a cause for concern. She said the HIV/Aids scourge has led to the rise in the number of orphans and widows, a matter which should be addressed jointly by all stakeholders. "Majority of bread winners are men. This means that when a woman is widowed, she is left with no source of income," she added.

Kosgey gets nod for senate seat

By LAWRENCE KOECH

CIVIC leaders and council members of Nandi Kaburwo have unanimously endorsed Industrialisation Minister Henry Kosgey to run for the senate seat in Nandi County come next year. Led by the chair of Nandi county council Mr. Joel Malel the leaders have vowed to marshal support behind honorable kosgey in his bid for the senate. "There is no other more qualified leader than Mr. Kosgey" said Mr. Joel.

In a well attended closed door meeting convened by the council and graced by top officials from the

Nandi council of elders – kaburwo at the county hall, they expressed their confidence in the leader. "We shall stand by you just as we have done during the ICC pretrial confirmation of charges at The Hague" asserted Mr. Malel.

The politician who skipped mentioning matters surrounding the ICC hearings thanked the civic leaders for their confidence in him and promised to work as a team with whoever shall be elected to govern the county government. He expressed concern that residents in Nandi County should be ready to go aboard on new mode of county governance. He observed

that the devolved funds shall proof challenging to manage and called on professionals of reliability and highest levels of clear-headedness to offer their expertise to the benefit of the county.

He alluded that culture will go along way in governing Nandi county. Amid applause laughter from the pensive civic leaders from Nandi south, Nandi north, Tinderet, Nandi east and Nandi central, the leader emphasized that kalenjin community operate on unwritten code of conduct that observe discipline, self respect and honor to God and that this and other tenets shall be inculcated in the day to

day running of the county.

Mr. Kosgey is among the six suspects mentioned by ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo as having played chief role in the post poll violence that rocked Kenya in the 2007 general elections. This has on the face of it augured well for the politician who is more celebrated as a brave son of the soil. In retrospect the pretrial hearings at The Hague has, to many political observers, served to be a blessing in disguise for the leader and his fellow suspects. This has earned them more political mileage and this could explain their unparalleled blanket endorsement.

Busia residents question safety of purifier

By JOEL JUMA

Residents of Busia County have expressed fears over the safety of a water purifier being introduced to them.

Some locals are going round saying the machine is being given to them to control their population in the pretext of purifying water.

They allege that the machines are fitted with family planning chemicals.

"We are told that the Government has plotted to reduce our population for unknown reasons. The way the machine works is very suspicious," said Alfred Etyang.

He noted that when one pours 20 liters of water in the machine, about 10 liters disappears mysteriously.

The mystery surrounding the operation of the machines has paved way for the spread of rumors discouraging the use of the gadgets.

An educator on the use of the machines Isaac Emaja termed the rumours as baseless.

He said the machine does not use any chemicals to purify water but rather uses a cartridge that sieves out germs.

"The gadget is cheap, long lasting and provides an environmental friendly way of purifying water. It uses a cartridge that has very tiny pores which cannot allow bacteria and other toxic substances to pass through. It does not contain chemicals," stated Emaja.

He added that the high rate of illiteracy in Teso, has contributed to ignorance that poses a big challenge in the success of the project.

The Malaba Dispensary clinical officer Henry Obonyo urged residents to disregard the rumors terming them as misleading and malicious.

He confirmed that the gadget is absolutely safe and there has never been any reported case of harm because the machine is free from chemicals.

"In fact, the machine is safer than chemicals that you buy from shops because it only uses a cartridge that acts as a sieve to filter germs. The machine is 100 percent safe for domestic use. I personally use it in my home," he said.

Western region has very high prevalence of water borne diseases, a situation that prompted the government to move in to curb the problem. Most homesteads have been supplied with the gadget in the region.

New water project gives hope to Nyeri residents

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

BEING healthy is an important aspect of our daily lives and a large part of it is influenced by what we eat and drink.

This has been made a reality since more than 140,000 residents of Nyeri Municipality can now enjoy enough supply of treated water through the Nyeri Water and Sewerage Company (NYEWASCO).

Previously, the company could only cater for a population of 50,000 consumers but through its new Water Treatment works at Kamakwa, it has been able to serve 9,000 more consumers with treated water and with enough capacity to cater for the future projected population of 200,000 by the year 2015.

Moreover, Kiganjo Township which has had an independent water supply through pumping, is now being served with treated water, by gravity, from the new Kamakwa Water Treatment works.

Speaking to visitors from Mavoko and Garisa Water and Sewerage Company (GAWASCO and MAVWASCO) at Kamakwa treatment works, the plant manager Charles Kiiru says that the new works could deliver a capacity of 21,000 meters cubic per day. The gigantic plant consists of a



Horse pipework at Nyewasco water treatment plant at Kamakwa at the outskirts of Nyeri town.
Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

chemical dosing building, basins, horizontal flow sedimentation tanks,

rapid gravity sand filters, filter gallery and pipe work, a pumping station, reinforced concrete clear water tank, chlorine dosing and PH correction room, administration building, generator room, backwash collection pond and sludge drying beds and an elevated steel tank on a tower.

"The Nyeri Water Supply Project was funded to the tune of Kshs850 million by the German government through its bank for international development-Kreditanstalt Fur Wiederaufbau (KWF).

This was after a feasibility study was carried out between 1994 and 1998 by HP Gauff Engineers", added Kiiru.

Nyeri Water and Sewerage Company was incorporated on September 1997 and commenced its operations on July 1998, registered under Ny-

eri Municipal Council. On October 2005, the company signed a Service Provision Agreement with Tana Water Services Board and became its Agent. Its five-year-period tariff was approved on October 2008 by Water Services Regulatory Board (WASREB).

The company entails of a sewerage works at Kangemi and at Kiganjo, a water treatment works at Kamakwa, an intake at Ihwa along Chania River, water distribution network, infill sewers and storage reservoirs at Tetu, Mathari, Hill Farm, Golf Course and Ngangarithi.

Jointly with the Tana Water Service Board, NYEWASCO has continued to express frantic efforts in offering treated water and sewerage services to residents within the Nyeri Municipality.



Sludge drying bed at Nyewasco water treatment plant at Kamakwa at the outskirts of Nyeri town.
Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Orange launches tech to curb counterfeiting

By HENRY OWINO

THE Orange Telkom has launched a new technology to curb the supply of counterfeit drugs.

The initiative dubbed Mpedegree will help subscribers to detect counterfeit drugs that have infiltrated the local market.

Subscribers will be able to detect fake drugs by scratching out the pad on the pack of the medicine to reveal the serial number then text it to 1393 for verification.

Orange Kenya boss Mickael Ghossein says the new technology aims at protecting Kenyans from unscrupulous dealers in the market.

Mr.Ghossein says Orange has partnered with the government, pharmaceutical manufacturers and other likeminded firms to help stem the

vice.

The Telkom Kenya CEO was addressing journalists at a hotel in Nairobi where he demonstrated how the new technology works.

"For now we are putting two types of drugs in the market for trial but the system is expected to roll out to all medicinal drugs with time," Ghossein said.

The technology is expected to be emulated by other mobile phones providers as a way of curbing substandard drugs circulating and being bought by innocent Kenyans at the expense of their lives and pockets. Most of the counterfeits are sold cheaply yet they do not provide any remedy to medical conditions.

Prof Anyang Nyongo, the Minister for Medical Services said the new initiative will be adopted by

the Government Chemist and the Pharmaceutical and Poisons Board to fight the infiltration of counterfeit drugs in Kenya.

Prof Nyongo described the move taken by the Telkom Kenya as a good synergy between the health care and ICT sectors. He added that the launch has come at the right time, when reports indicate an influx of counterfeit anti-retroviral drugs on sale in Kenya.

"The introduction of m-Pedegree in Kenya is emboldened by the fact that it will be addressing an existing need in the local medical system. In fact the production, trafficking and distribution of counterfeit drugs are spreading and threatening the health and lives of the people and potentially destroying the economic foundation of the country," Prof Nyongo

expressed.

Counterfeits hurt the economies of developing countries such as Kenya as well as developed nations and affects governments revenue.

A survey conducted by the World Health Organization in 2007 estimated that approximately 20,000 people lose their lives every year due to the consumption of fake medicines, especially anti-malaria pills.

The report further revealed that if such medicines were strictly checked and controlled for their quality, about one million lives would be saved annually. It has been alleged that in Kenya, counterfeit drugs account for over 30 per cent, which translates to an estimated sum of Kshs.13billion annually.

The Minister said the Government has undertaken serious measures to

prevent and suppress the production and distribution of counterfeit drugs by introducing stringent rules on designated entry points where drugs can be imported into the country.

He singled out the development of a national laboratory to test drug quality as some of the measures that have undoubtedly contributed very much to the reduction of counterfeit drugs. He however said all the efforts cannot fully succeed without collaboration from stakeholders such as Telkom Kenya and other likeminded firms.

"Consumers' bodies, individual bodies companies, industry associations and NGOs and more so the government has a key role to play, supporting responsible media initiatives, to educate the public buying so that it becomes socially unacceptable to have counterfeits," he added.

World Vision helps Taitas to get birth certificates

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

PARENTS in Ghazi area within Voi District, Taita Taveta County, have finally managed to secure 9,600 birth certificates for their children through an initiative launched by the World Vision, Kenya, the Voi Constituency Development Fund, Departments of Registrar of Births and Deaths and Education.

Area District Commissioner, Mr. Raphael Lemaletian, urged parents in the area to take advantage of the initiative to obtain the certificates early enough to avoid last minute rush.

He said now that birth certificates were mandatory in the registering for National examinations, parents and guardians should apply for them immediately the children are born.

The administrator ordered chiefs and the assistants to arrest parents whose children are not in school.

A senior Programme Officer with the World Vision-Kenya, Mr. Gerishon Mwakazi, said the programme was carried out by the organization at the cost of Kshs.850,000.

He said the initiative had saved parents and guardians money lost through brokers who purport that they can obtain the certificates faster at a fee.

The County's Registrar of Births and Deaths Officer, Mr. Francis Waweru, said the main constraint his officers had experienced include failure by some parents and guardians to obtain National Identity cards that were mandatory in the issuance of birth certificates.

The District Education Officer, Mr. Michael Machora, said the transport expenses and ignorance among parents and guardians were the major setbacks considering that civil registration was done at Wundanyi, the Headquarters of the former larger Taita District.

Women urged to go for early cancer tests

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

BREAST cancer remains a killer disease mainly due to lack of awareness and a body to coordinate treatment.

This is despite assurances by doctors who say breast cancer is a curable disease if diagnosed at an early stage.

Aga Khan Hospital Manager in charge of pharmacy and outpatient services, Dr. Sultane Sherman, says the disease has been shrouded in stigma.

In last year's exercise, about 1,000 people, mostly women, were screened and 10 of them found to be carriers of the disease. "This illustrates the gravity of the matter," said Dr. Sherman. Emphasis should be put on early detection for men and women as young as puberty stage.

Speaking at a Breast Cancer Awareness Walk held recently, Dr. Sherman, said the hospital has partnered with the Breast Cancer Survivors-Coast (BRECASCO) in offering necessary financial and psychological support to victims and survivors.

Mombasa and Coast Tourist Association chairman, Mr. Mohamed Hersi, said breast cancer had taken a heavy toll on survivors since the disease is expensive to treat.

Hersi, who is also the General Manager of the Sarova Whitesands, says the institution has in the past five years partnered with BRECASCO to offer support wherever necessary.

Mombasa Mayor Ahmed Mohdhar said the municipality will partner with BRECASCO to sensitise community members on breast cancer and create awareness that is vital for early diagnosis and treatment.

Mohdhar presented cash donations to BRECASCO worth Kshs.100,000 from Kisauni Member of Parliament, Mr. Ali Hassan Joho, and Kshs.20,000 from himself. MTN business presented a cheque for Kshs.50,000 and Aga Khan Hospital Mombasa said it will spend one million shillings in screening and treatment.

The Breast Cancer Awareness Walk was flagged off at Aga Khan Hospital with the procession ending at the Aga Khan Club in Mombasa.

Nyeri women wants bigger role in new law

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

NYERI County women claim that women have received a raw deal in the ongoing implementation of the constitution.

The over 50 women leaders from the six constituencies of Nyeri County and who met in Nyeri town recently said that women issues have not been considered in implementation of the constitution with women being appointed to lower positions.

The women who were launching the women's report on the implementation of the constitution decried that after carefully monitoring implementation of the constitution for one year, the women's issues have not been considered at the implementation stage.

The women were speaking during a forum known as 'Foundation for women's rights in Kenya, Mabadiliko ni Sasa' at Elleemos Conference Centre in Nyeri town.

In a statement which was read by the Nyeri Women Lobby Group chairperson Margaret Nyathogora, they demanded that more women must be appointed to senior positions both at the national and county level.

"In the case of the two thirds gender principle, we continue to see women being appointed to lower positions. Women have not participated in the constitution implementation process because they do not have information and there is little understanding of the constitution," said the women.

Nyathogora continued, "We are concerned that MPs are insensitive to our plight. They do not make efforts to



Nyeri County aspiring Senator and former Cabinet Minister Mutahi Kagwe (left) speaking during a women forum in Nyeri town recently. On the right is the Nyeri Women Lobby Group chairperson Margaret Nyathogora. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

consult with us on the issue of implementation. They are making laws for their own interests,"

They therefore demanded that the Government must allocate resources to provide civic education at the local level.

"The Government and MPs must consult with women at the grass root level on implementation of the constitution and more women must be appointed to senior positions both at the

national and county level," they added.

The women leaders also said that the Government must start putting measures to address social economic rights such as the right to food, education, health and housing to avoid people dying of hunger and also end camps of IDPs.

They resolved to work together as women to hold leaders accountable in the implementation of women's right in the constitution.

Nyeri County aspiring Senator and former Cabinet Minister Mutahi Kagwe who gave his key note address urged women to apply in large numbers for all the positions available at the local and national level so that they can be active in politics.

However, the women observed that there is increased transparency in appointment of public officers through advertisements, public interviews and vetting.

Runaway drug abuse ruining lives

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

ALCOHOL and drug abuses in Kenya have risen to unprecedented levels.

The rising crime rate, HIV/Aids prevalence, school unrests, dysfunctional family units, poverty and premature deaths are in most cases attributed to alcohol and drug abuse.

Apparently no part of the country is safe from the menace that has negatively affected the health, social and economic productivity of the nation. The Provincial Commissioner Western province, Mr. Samuel Kilele admits that the menace of drug abuse is currently felt across the country. Mr. Kilele says that alcohol and drug abuse is responsible for insecurity, malnutrition, poverty and transmission of HIV/ AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

He points out that the enormous negative social-economic and health impact of alcohol and drug abuse to Kenyans is a major concern to the government. "Considering that majority of those affected are Kenyans in their prime of productivity, the Government is worried that alcohol and drug abuse may seriously impede the attainment of development targets as set out in vision 2030 and the Millennium Development Goals," he says.

The PC notes with dismay that the country's economic development blueprints are likely to be watered down since the production section of the nation's work force has become too intoxicated to undertake any meaningful work. Mr. Kilele laments that although over 90 per cent of people in Western province know about the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse, the substance abuse is rampant in

the region.

He claims that 17 percent of adult people in the province abuse alcohol, including chang'a, 7.6 per cent abuse tobacco, while 1.4 percent smokes bhang and 1.5 percent chew miraa. The drug culture, Mr. Kilele reiterates that contributes to insecurity through thefts, illicit brews, drug trafficking and money laundering. "There is also fear that proceeds from the drugs trade may fuel terrorist activities," the PC adds.

To counter the scenario, the PC reveals that the Government through National Campaign Against Drug Abuse (NACADA) Authority is committed to fighting alcohol and substance Abuse.

He adds that NACADA has initiated programmes to build the capacity of key players to wage a successful war against drugs. "NACADA has focused on taking a multi-sectoral approach in combating alcohol and drug abuse through various partnerships with key stakeholders including the media," the PC says.

Noting that the media can influence the behaviour and attitudes of the society, Mr. Kilele challenges the media fraternity to report objectively on issues of alcohol and drug abuse and the effects thereof. "Your report on alcohol and drug issues will have a human touch, showing how the menace affects society in its entirety," the PC says.

Mr. Kilele made the remarks recently in a speech read on his behalf by assistant Provincial Commissioner, Western, Mr. Charles Igiha at a Bungoma hotel during a two day seminar on alcohol and drug abuse for journalists and media practitioners based in western region.

In his speech, the PC reiterates that

western province faces serious challenges from alcohol and drug abuse.

The challenges, the PC says have tended to pull back social-economic development including uptake of devolved funds and participation in national development agenda.

"It is expected that by the end of this seminar, you will be able to report objectively on issues of drug abuse and give more space in both print and electronic media" the PC told over 30 journalists who attended the seminar.

The two day training of media personnel in western and North Rift regions was facilitated by NACADA Authority.

One of NACADA Authority facilitators Dr. Richard Gakunju passed the participants through signs, symptoms and effects of alcohol and drug abuse.

Dr. Gakunju named the most commonly abused drugs in Kenya in order of prevalence as alcohol, bhang, miraa, inhalants and prescription medicines.

He disclosed that alcohol contains ethanol, a very poisonous chemical that adversely affects body organs immediately or gradually over the years.

"Alcohol affects organs such as the brain, heart, liver, stomach, pancreas, Kidneys, skin and bones among other", Dr. Gakunju said. Dr. Gakunju added that alcohol causes a very serious liver disease called cirrhosis which results primarily from chronic abuse of alcohol.

"The liver is damaged because it is first organ of the body that alcohol passes through once absorbed in the blood stream and also one that metabolizes the alcohol poison," he said.

On tobacco, Dr. Gakunju said that there is no safe tobacco whether chewed,

sniffed or smoked.

He named health problems linked to tobacco chewing and sniffing as mouth cancers, gum disease, throat cancer, heart disease and stroke. Bhang use Dr. Gakunju, claims that it leads to psychological dependence, poor immunity, shrinkage of the brains and impotence among other harmful effects.

"Use of bhang will lead to mental illness, lung diseases chromosome abnormality, suppression of the immune systems and interference with the male and female reproductive functions," he said.

Effects of miraa use Dr. Gakunju said include problems with the reproductive systems in both men and women. The men, Dr. Gakunju said develop uncontrolled release of sperms followed by infertility and impotence. In women, Dr. Gakunju added that the vagina becomes very dry which, makes it difficult to have sex and leads to painful intercourse and frigidity.

On inhalants Dr. Gakunju said that they all contain organic solvents which have a very damaging effect on the brain and lungs. In conclusion Dr. Gakunju challenged the media to highlight the magnitude and effects of drug abuse in society to influence relevant policy interventions. "We want you also to expose illicit drug trade and trade intoxicants targeting vulnerable populations; he said. A drug is any chemical substance which when taken into the body will modify or alter the way body functions from its normal state or from the abnormal to normal state.

And drug abuse is the non-medical use of drugs such as alcohol and affects productive life of an individual.

KARI releases wheat varieties resistant to stem rust

By MALACHI MOTANO

THE Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) has developed two new wheat varieties resistant to the deadly wheat rust disease.

The deadly mutant fungus, Ug99, named after their discovery in Uganda in 1999, is spread by wind-borne spores. By 2003, most of Kenya's wheat varieties had been identified as susceptible to the fungus which causes infected plants to produce fewer seeds or die.

The two new wheat varieties, dubbed Eagle10 and Robin, were developed by KARI after years of research.

Though not nearly as widely grown as maize or rice, wheat nevertheless is an important component of the country's domestic food production - being grown on about 4 percent of the country's arable land (160,000 hectares out of 4,000,000 hectares of arable land), according to Peter Njau, a plant breeder at KARI.

Since 2005, KARI has screened over 200,000 wheat germplasms, of which only 10 percent were found to have some resistance to Ug99. Of the 10 percent, only a handful could adapt to the Kenyan environment, according to KARI plant breeder Peter Njau.

The selected varieties then underwent advanced trials in wheat growing areas and at the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Services (KEPHIS).

"The first step of screening involved identifying some wheat germplasm which were resistant," he explained.

Then, the experts evaluated these



KARI has developed two new wheat varieties resistant to the deadly wheat rust disease. Photo/Malachi Motano

lines, checking if they would be suitable for commercial production in Kenya. Those which looked like a good bet were then developed further for the Kenyan farmer.

"That was how Eagle10 and Robin wheat varieties were born," explained Njau at the KARI centre in Njoro, Rift Valley. "Both varieties have very good baking and bread-making qualities."

Only time will tell

Though the new varieties were found

by scientists at KARI to be resistant to both Ug99 and yellow rust, only time will tell if they will offer satisfaction to Kenyan wheat farmers.

KARI in Njoro is one of only a handful of screening centres for stem rust resistance around the world.

Eagle10 was selected for lower altitude regions such as lower Narok, Naivasha and Laikipia in Rift Valley, while Robin is for the medium to high altitude areas like Njoro, Mau Narok and Timau.

Uncontrolled, wheat rust, which requires intensive chemical control, may account for yield losses of 50-70 percent. The high cost of chemicals is a barrier to wheat farming for most smallholders.

Farmers who attended a field day at KARI expressed optimism about the new wheat breeds. "That disease [Ug99] was a disaster to wheat farming; it turned out that I would not make any profit having spent too much on fungicides," said Peter Thiongo, a

former wheat farmer.

"I planted corn in my five-acre farm, where I had for many years been growing wheat, but I am optimistic that the new varieties will save me money which I spent on fungicides, and I am ready to plant when seeds are available," he said.

Seed multiplication

KARI is working with the Kenya Seeds Company to multiply the seeds. "We are expecting to have produced more than 10 tons of the new seed variety by the end of this year," said KARI director Ephram Mukisira.

KARI has set aside 12 hectares in Njoro exclusively for wheat breeding.

"I urge farmers to go back to wheat farming knowing that the new varieties have a much lower cost of production."

Farmers have been abandoning wheat farming over the last few years due to losses caused by Ug99. Production costs went up by 40 percent between 2001 and 2011 with farmers this year having to spray wheat with pesticides three times a season at a cost of Kshs9,000 (US\$90) per acre.

Kenya imports about 60 percent of its wheat needs, according to the Ministry of Agriculture. Population growth and a decrease in domestic production, with some farmers switching to maize, to some extent explains this figure.

At present, KARI is screening another 27,000 wheat lines with a view to finding better yielding lines which will be released directly as varieties.

Nineteen varieties, screened earlier at KARI in Njoro, have already been released to eight countries.

Farmer scores big by thinking out of the box

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

MR. MWASINGU Mcharo is a rejuvenated man. He has become a beacon of hope to farmers in Mwachabo location, Mwatate District, in Taita Taveta County.

The relatively green plantation in his farm is a far cry from dry fields that are a dominant feature in the area.

Mcharo has abandoned traditional crops such as maize and beans and set up sorghum plantation which has produced prolific results and increased his earnings.

Mr. Mcharo's 24 acre piece of land is adorned with Gaddam, a variety of Sorghum that does so well in arid regions besides being in high demand in the brewing industry as its flour is considered to have high nutritional value.

In a single season, he has been able to harvest 85 bags of the cereal and

claims the yield would have been higher had preying birds not invaded his farm in their thousands.

"The birds were so many that I had to hire boys to scare them away until I harvested. But I am grateful for what I got. I have sold a lot of sorghum and have some left for my family," he says.

The farmer says that he has settled for sorghum after successive seasons of total crop failure due to the unpredictable weather patterns. He was tired of planting maize that realized low returns because of inadequate rainfall but was encouraged by curiosity on traditional crops the ministry of agriculture has always been popularizing.

"I am glad I listened to the agricultural officials," he says. Mr. Mcharo's success story has been presented as an example of how technology can be applied to heal a culture of crop failure. The traditional seeds intended for use

in arid regions have been scientifically tested and approved by relevant Governments. The Ministry of Agriculture has been aggressively educating farmers on the benefits of adopting traditional crops, such as sorghum, millet, green grams and cowpeas that usually flourish in dry weather conditions.

The Mwatate District Agricultural Officer, Ms. Irene Wanjiku, says the only guarantee to food security, sustainability and self-reliance was through adoption of drought resistant crops.

"The seeds given to farmers are certified and of high quality. Mr. Mcharo is a living example that bumper harvest is a reality even in dry areas and we're encouraging everybody to adopt alternative crops," says the officer. She attributes the slow uptake to long traditions of planting maize and beans that are prone to erratic weather patterns common in the district. "Maize

and beans need steady rainfall. Why take the risk when we have crops that aren't held hostage by the elements?" says Ms. Wanjiku. She says the district has not experienced a decent harvest in more than four years.

Farms have turned into dry patches dotted by withering stalks of maize as the only evidence that farming once thrived in the region. As water pans are rapidly drying up, putting lives of cattle and owners in peril. The sporadic rainfall has been too little for any positive effect on farm production, thus complicating the delicate food situation.

It is in the light of the monumental challenges in the struggle to ensure food security that the campaign for adoption of traditional crops was launched. "We'll continue urging residents to embrace the production of traditional orphaned crops as part of efforts to stave off hunger," says Ms. Wanjiku.

The seeds given by the ministry are part of a programme that compels farmers to surrender back to the ministry twice the quantity of seeds they harvest.

The seeds are later issued to others who plant and also return them to the ministry. The revolving seed fund is meant to have as many farmers as possible access the resources.

"The seeds cannot be enough for all farmers at the initial stages, hence a condition that beneficiaries surrender back what was given to them with an extra and equal amount from their harvest. That way, we have enough seed stock to give to all the farmers," Ms. Wanjiku says.

Mr. Mcharo's achievement has vindicated the ministry's determination to introduce sorghum farming. It has also reinforced the ministry's commitment to have farmers spare a thought for other crops to forestall food insecurity.

New law seals loophole

CONTINUED FROM
OCTOBER ISSUE

ELECTION petitions have in the past exposed the deficient nature of the judiciary in resolving political disputes. Inordinate delays blamed on widespread corruption and entrenched systems of patronage have essentially marred the hearing of election petitions and completely eroded public confidence. Aggrieved parties have therefore opted for other remedial measures as witnessed during the 2007 General Elections which saw the country plunge into civil anarchy following a disputed Presidential poll.

The petitions have in fact predominantly revolved around the issue of whether or not the respondents were properly served and purely dealt on the procedural question of service instead of the substance of respective cases. The cases have taken a litigation route rather than serving as a potential avenue to indict the electoral process. This is despite the importance attached to the process.

And although the recent handling of petition cases has helped to reinforce the independence of the judiciary as well as strengthen democratic ideals, the Constitution (Article 87 (3)) has introduced a relatively new concept in serving of petitions and directs that now petitions may be served directly or by advertisement in a newspaper with national circulation.

Further, the newly enacted Elections Act has introduced a ceiling within which election petitions must be resolved. The Act provides that petitions must be heard and determined within six months by the High Court.

The Act also imposes severe penalties for breach of the electoral law and commission of electoral offenses during the campaign and voting period to deter candidates

from engaging in activities that later become subject matter of election petition.

The new legislation makes it illegal to engage in vote buying and in exceptionally high campaign expenditure.

The Act also provides that an election can be postponed in case:

(a) there is reason to believe that a serious breach of peace is likely to occur if the election is held on that date; or
(b) it is impossible to conduct the elections as a result of a natural disaster or other emergencies,

The powers to postpone the elections have been vested on the Independent Electoral and Boundary



In this second part of our continuing review of the electoral laws in Kenya, our Sub-Editor FAITH MUIRURI brings you an incisive analysis of the provisions for petitions, postponement of elections and submission of party membership lists among others.

The new law makes voter education a continuous process and directs IEBC to prepare a voter education curriculum.

Submission of party membership lists

IEBC a party membership list at least three months before the nomination of the candidate.

The party lists are to inform among other things the basis of proportional representation in terms of gender.

The constitution (Article 90 (2)(c)) stipulates that except in the case of County assembly seats, each party list must reflect the regional and ethnic diversity of the country.

While supporters of a presidential candidate must be registered members of the candidate's political party, independent candidates have been exempted from the provision and their supporters do not have to be registered members of any political

party.

The IEBC has powers to supervise elections for members of parliament, senate and county representatives and must ensure political parties participating in the general election nominates and submits a list of all the persons who would stand elected if the party won respective seats.

The Act sets out basic procedures in the settlement of disputes arising from party nominations which are to be handled by IEBC but excludes election petitions and other disputes that may arise after the declaration of election results.

Election Petitions

County election petitions

The new law provides that any cases challenging elections at the County level are to be heard and

“There is reason to believe that a serious breach of peace is likely to occur if the election is held on that date.”

Commission (IEBC), which may appoint another date for the holding of the postponed election.

The new electoral law makes it mandatory for political parties sponsoring candidates in the election to submit to the



President Kibaki ready to sign the new constitution into law after the successful referendum.

Photo/File

es in electoral process

determined by the respective High Court within six months.

The new law stipulates that aggrieved parties must file their petitions in the High Court within twenty eight days after the results are published in the Gazette;

The law provides that an election court can direct the Commission to issue a certificate of election to a President, a member of Parliament or a member of county assembly if—

- (a) upon recount of the ballots cast, the winner is apparent; and
- (b) that winner is found not to have committed an election offence.

Scrutiny of votes

The new law provides guidelines that may be followed in the scrutiny of votes during the hearing of a petition. The law mandates an election court to determine the mode of scrutiny during the exercise. The votes in dispute can only be struck off in case —

- (a) the name of a voter is missing on the register or list of voters assigned to the polling station at which the vote was recorded or who had not been authorized to vote at that station;
- (b) votes were cast after an in-



A voter casting his vote during the referendum. Photo/File

“The law mandates an election court to determine the mode of scrutiny during the exercise.”

ducement such as bribery, treating or undue influence;

- (c) the vote of a person guilty of impersonation at the election;
- (d) the vote of a person proved to have voted in more than one constituency;
- (e) the vote of a person, who by reason of conviction for an election offence or other reasons was disqualified from voting at the election; or
- (f) the vote has been cast in favour of a candidate who has been disqualified or the facts causing the disqualification, or after sufficient public notice of the disqualification or when the facts causing it were notorious.

The law further directs that elections cannot be declared void merely by reason of non-compliance with any written law as long as it is conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the Constitution.

Determination of election petitions

An election petition under this Act is to be heard and determined within the period specified in the Constitution. The constitution (Article 87 (2)) outlines that all petitions, excluding presidential elections, are to be filed within

twenty eight days after the declaration of the election results by the IEBC.

An election court has been mandated to determine the validity of any question raised in the petition. The court then submits its verdict in writing to the Commission and the relevant Speaker indicating whether an election offence has been committed.

The law mandates the speaker to publish a report under this section in the Gazette. The Commission can consider the report and delete from the voters register the name of a person who is disqualified from being registered.

Referendum Petitions

The new provides that procedures in an election petition are to apply in a referendum petition.

The Act (Section 88(1)) outlines that the conduct, result and validity of a referendum can be challenged through a petition to the High Court.

The petition challenging the conduct, result or validity

ration of results

The Independent Electoral Boundary Commission has been vested with powers to announce the results of an election seven days after close of polling. Further, section 36 (3) of the new legisla-

“An election court has been mandated to determine the validity of any question raised in the petition.”

of a referendum must —

- (a) set out the facts relied on to invalidate the referendum;
- (b) identify the specific matter or matters on which the petitioner relies on to justify the grant of relief.

Determination and decla-

tion empowers the commission to determine the order and manner in which the results of an election are to be declared.

Under the new law the Commission can only hear disputes arising from party nominations.