

CDF set to be axed

By MUSA RADOLI

THE future of the multi-billion shillings Constituency Development Fund (CDF) may be sealed forever under the new constitutional dispensation as a technical committee at the treasury works out modalities that may decide its fate.

The CDF which has over the years since its introduction been transformed into a fat cow and political tool by most legislators and their cronies is likely to face the axe as the government strives to streamline national fiscal allocations to conform to the demands of the new constitution.

The most critical issue being checking on duplication of resources as the 47 counties are expected to receive 15 per cent of the national cake to run their operations including 0.5 per as an equalisation fund to the marginalised communities.

Considering the fact that the devolved county governments will be in charge of the constituencies under them, direct allocations to CDF will amount to duplication and wastage.

Indeed the ministry of finance has already established a technical committee known as The Fiscal Decentralisation Kenya which is working out the technical fiscal modalities that may eventually seal the fate of the Constituency Development Fund as Treasury seeks a new system of funding the grassroots.

CDF currently enjoys 2.5 per cent of the national revenue which is transferred to the fund by the central government. Of the money collected, 75 per cent is divided equally among constituencies and 25 per cent shared on the basis of poverty index outlined by the Ministry of Planning and National Development.

The Committee says that Local Authorities Transfer Fund (LATF) is also expected to be phased out.

The Fiscal Decentralisation

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Obure now ready for cowboy contractors

By FAITH MUIRURI

PLANS are underway to introduce a new set of rules to reign in on cowboy contractors in the country. The law that proposes the establishment of a National Construction Authority will help to address massive corruption witnessed in the construction industry over the years.

The body outlined in the National Construction Authority Bill 2011, is replete with powers to sanction and blacklist rogue contractors who have in the past led to excessive losses in billions of shillings.

Already, the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) board has enlisted the support of anti-corruption commission to recover substantive amounts of money lost through poor workmanship.

The Authority seeks to among other

things provide a legal and institutional framework for the development of local construction industry (See special report on Pg 14)

According to the law proposed by the Minister for Public Works, Chris Obure, contractors who engage in professional misconduct will be deregistered and in some instances attract imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year.

Further, the law stipulates that contractors who undertake work whose

value exceeds Kshs5 million will be required to pay a levy equivalent to 0.25 percent of the total value of work.

The new law comes in the wake of hue and cry by local contractors who feel that they might be losing out on some of the major capital projects because new conditions set by donors had blocked local firms.

Local traders and firms involved in construction are questioning the

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Road under construction: The establishment of a National Construction Authority will help to address massive corruption witnessed in the construction industry over the years. Inset: Public Works minister, Chris Obure. Photo/File

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Obure now ready for cowboy contractors

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rationale of shifting towards China when the balance of trade is tilted towards the Chinese.

Contractors who spoke on condition of anonymity lament that most firms have dwindled due to the stiff competition from Chinese firms.

"Many of us may be forced to close down or lay off staff due to unfair competition," one of the contractor intimates.

The construction sector – housing and roads – has attracted the highest number of Chinese companies with key roads in the country under rehabilitation or construction by them.

Among the major projects undertaken by the Chinese firms include the expansion of the Kisumu airport, rehabilitation of the Moi International Sports Centre, expansion of Thika-Nairobi highway, the Sondu Miriu power plant interface and oil exploration in northern Kenya.

However, most local companies have been locked out as majority are viewed as shadowy contractors who have been paid for non existence roads or shoddy work.

A recent progress report by the National Anti Corruption Campaign Steering Committee (NASSC) reveals that public coffers have been looted dry as contractors inflate prices of construction.

"Some operate in cartels that deny the government value for money paid," adds the report addressed to the President Mwai Kibaki who is the patron of the committee.

The report by committee at the same time notes that failure to involve professionals such as engineers, ar-



A section of finished road along Thika Road in Nairobi.

chitects, quantity surveyors or public health experts especially in regard to projects undertaken through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) kitty may have led to the shoddy work witnessed in many parts of the country.

"There are no clear tendering and procurement guidelines and/or procedures and tenders are not usually advertised. This invites corruption through irregular award of tenders and nepotism. The lowest bidder is not always awarded a contract and some contractors were said to be bribing key CDF committee members to "win" tenders," reads the report in

part.

The report further states that failure to advertise tenders has often led to single sourcing which is by definition illegal since it contravenes government tendering and procurement regulations.

"In such underhand deals, some committee members collude to "win" tenders then sub-contract to their kin and kith. Usually, tender winners have the blessings of the sitting MP or are given to his/her close relatives, friends or associates," says the report.

A similar report by the Transparency International revealed that major construction and medical supplies

projects are sometimes awarded following hefty bribes by contractors.

In its report, TI blames cartels behind the endemic corruption and political leaders who aid them in looting State resources.

The report concludes that the billions if salvaged could fund other anti-poverty programmes like housing, more roads and public works and help assure pupils in primary schools 10 years of free education.

However, with the new regulations, the sector is highly expected to witness a rebound that will redeem integrity and transparency in the management of public resources.

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Kenya Team Leader Kamau Thugge says that the technical committee has established that: "The CDF has no place in a system where the governor is accountable for resources allocated to the county. The Local Authorities Transfer Fund, which takes up five per cent of all income tax collected in the country, may also be discontinued."

Mr. Thugge who is currently

working with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) after working with the treasury as an economic secretary says that he was recalled from Washington in the United States to be in charge of the transition to the devolved financial system in the country which has for decades since independence been controlled from the central government fiscal systems under the old constitutional dispensation.

He says that his team is working hard to ensure that under the new constitution fiscal transition is also devolved accordingly to the county governments as stipulated by the constitution, which means the constituencies will also have to look up to their respective county governments that will have their own individual and independent budgetary considerations.

Under such circumstances it will

be impossible for the central government to continue rolling out cash to the constituencies in the counties and it also remains to be seen whether any of the 47 counties will be keen to retain the CDF in their counties with MPs wielding immense powers over the funds.

Though architects (the MPs) of the CDF are expected to strongly resist that move, they may have no option but to try and craft some kind of new legislation that might ensure the survival of the fund as a legitimate entity under the new constitutional dispensation.

Past reports by The Institute of Social Accountability (TISA) in regard to governance and management of the CDF and many other devolved funds under the old constitutional dispensation indicate that they have been subject to widespread abuse and Mr. Thugge's team members says that although it appears like translating the requirements of the New Constitution into reality is proving to be a challenge for budget makers, they have already set the current devolved funds on the firing line since their continued existence may only act as a burden to the central government.

They also argue that the county governments will be better placed to set grassroots development priorities with the communities' involvement and oversee the management of the funds at that level than the central government under the new constitutional dispensation.



A defunct CDF funded project lying idle in a bush in Nambale. Photo/File

Varsities told to align with Vision 2030

By FRANCIS ONTOMWA

UNIVERSITIES and middle level training institutions have been urged to impart knowledge and skills that are relevant to vision 2030.

Director of Strategy Vision 2030, Andrew Toboso, has said that for Kenya's graduates to compete globally, it is imperative that higher education courses remain pegged to demands at the global market.

"There are numerous opportunities for Kenyan graduates all over the world if our skills become competitive and market driven" he noted.

Speaking during this year's Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST)'s Careers Week opening ceremony on Tuesday, Toboso pointed out that all present fresh opportunities for research and development must be geared towards addressing emerging challenges and opportunities globally.

He criticized the move to disband certain course in the arts, saying that they were needed for the country to make meaningful economic progress.

"What Kenya needs is a holistic approach to development, we need legal experts, social scientists, performing artists, sportsmen and others in the quest to realize vision 2030" he said.

The running theme during the four day workshop is "Exploiting versatility in career prospects and opportunities in achieving vision 2030".

The director revealed of a comprehensive skills inventory currently undertaken in the education sector that targets to facilitate strategic and systematic planning for the country's future development needs.

He urged industrial bodies and partners to give students opportunities for attachment in a bid to make their learning experiences relevant.

Others who graced the occasion were Masinde Muliro University vice-chancellor Prof. Barasa Wangila, Street Smart Chief Executive Officer Geoffrey Kioko among others. VC professor Wangila asked students in pioneering courses to hold their horses and remain patient as they break the ground.

He said, they should not be worried on the past job trends saying emerging trends have been given importance in those courses but rather move with confidence in the job market in their areas of specialization.

KUPPET rift widens as officials split over leadership

By JOEL JUMA

LEADERSHIP wrangles at the Kenya Union of Post Primary Education of Teachers (KUPPET) have deepened further after officials in Kakamega County split into two camps.

Kakamega and Mumias branches are likely to run as independent entities after leaders differed on which district should produce the County Executive Secretary.

A meeting convened to build consensus ended in disarray.

Kakamega branch executive secretary Harrison Otato has maintained that he will be contesting for the Executive Secretary while his Mumias counterpart Macdaff Rapando has drawn a line-up that excludes him.

The two have since come up with two parallel line-ups, which have split members in the County.

Otato's camp is reportedly allied to the union's national Chairman Misori Akello while Rapando is said to get support from the secretary General Njeru Kanyamba.

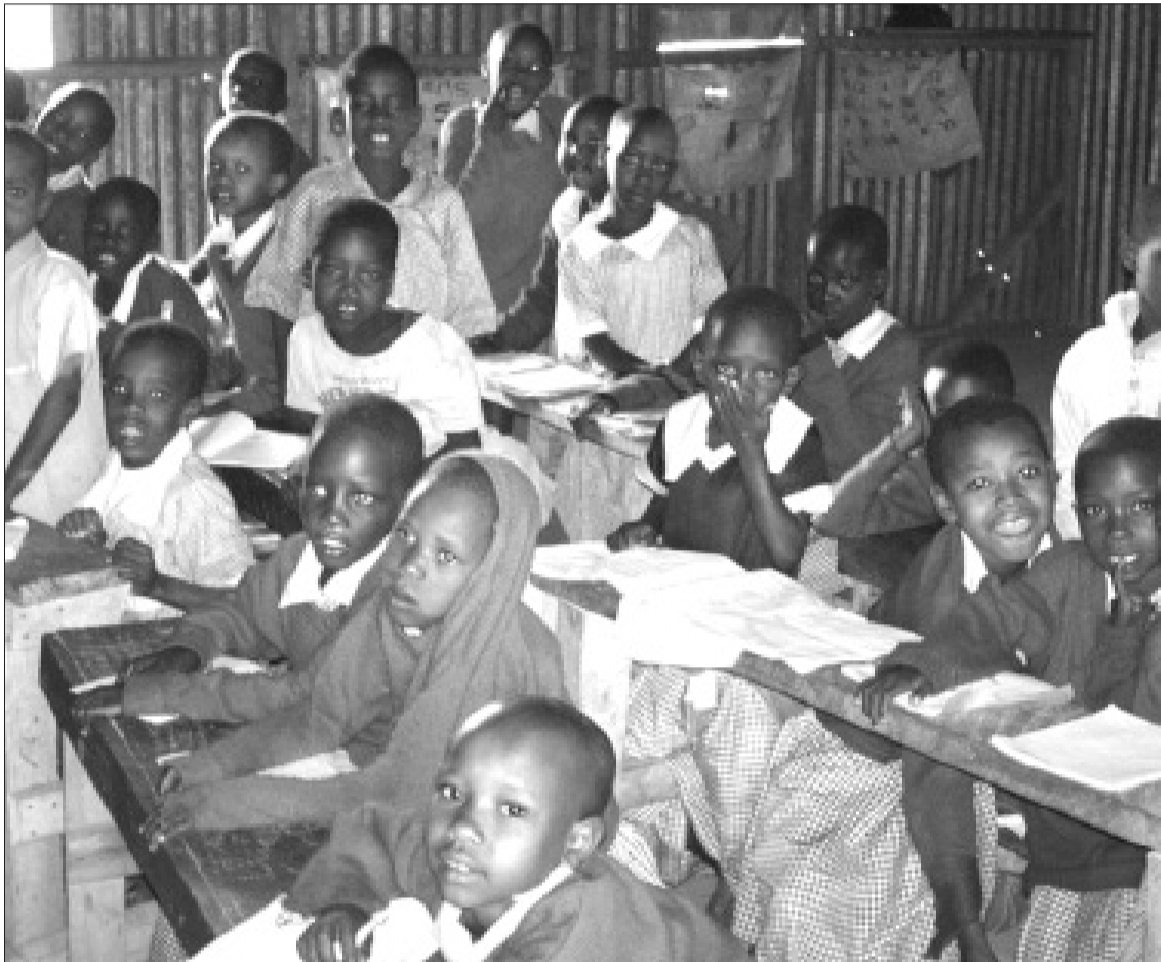
Otato said Kakamega branch should be allowed to produce a candidate for the Executive Secretary seat because it has over 700 members.

He argued that Kakamega also has the Headquarters of the Ministry of Education where most secondary schools cases are handled.

He added that Rapando should step down because he has failed to recruit teachers in his Mumias, Matungu, Butere and Khwisero districts.

Rapando's branch has 320 members.

Rapando disputed the claims saying that Kakamega branch has been in existence for many years



Primary pupils in class. Leadership wrangles splits Kuppet Kakamega branch into two groups.

and should have more than 1,000 members.

Rapando said teachers have asked him to contest for the post and that he cannot step down because of a resolution made by union officials. "Let us meet at the ballot," said Rapando.

Kakamega branch assistant treasurer Akaka Shisoka said Otato and Rapando should harmonise their lists to prevent the union from splitting.

Kanyamba and Misori are also

locked up in leadership battles after they both declared to run for one seat.

The two are both contesting for the Secretary General slot. Kanyamba has his own line-up as well as Misori.

Kuppet national Vice Chairman Zaddock Kisiyena said Misori's line up has brought together officials who include the national treasurer Njenga Mwethi, assistant secretary General Lewis Nyakwebwa and many other provincial

council officials.

Kisiyena said Misori's camp has already visited Coast, Eastern and North Eastern provinces for campaigns.

Vihiga branch chairman Milemba Imboko has also declared interest to run for the local executive secretary seat. Imboko is backing Kanyamba for the executive secretary seat.

He will be opposing his branch executive secretary Mark Amendi during the polls.

Othaya teachers blamed for poor performance

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

LACK of commitment by teachers and poor syllabus coverage are some of the major challenges affecting education sector in Othaya.

Nyeri South District Education Officer Jackson Kaberia says that teachers negative attitudes towards their work, their classroom management and their interaction with pupils had adversely affected education standards in the area.

"Low level of commitment, poor syllabus coverage and unwillingness by teachers to plan their work are some of the challenges affecting education sector in the region," adds the DEO during a prize giving day at Kianguthu Primary School in Othaya.

Kaberia says that the situation has been compounded by weak management systems in some schools and the poor state of physical facilities which were not conducive for learning.

The DEO who was accompanied by the patron of the school Kanyi Kimondo however says the district has very committed stakeholders

"We also have adequate trained teachers, adequate learning facilities, willing students, supportive parents and stakeholders and adequate textbooks," he added.

The DEO says many learning institutions have access to piped water and electricity and access to Free Primary Education funds and Free Secondary Education.

Nyeri South district is one of the eight newly created districts carved from the larger Nyeri district.

The district has 78 primary schools out of which 56 are public while 22 are private schools. There are 34 public secondary schools.

Study reveals increased sexual activity in schools

By BEKADZO TONDO

MORE girls than boys are registering a high incidence of sexual activity in the country.

A survey by the Ministry of Education indicates 75 per cent of girls were engaging in sex compared to boys who recorded 69 per cent.

The survey which involved 2584 students from selected high schools in Nairobi reveals that 25 percent of the student respondents admitted to have multiple sexual partners.

The study indicated that 39 percent of the students had sex with opposite sex while 16.7 percent had sex with same sex partners.

The report further says that same sex behavior was noted to be rampant in mixed secondary schools.

The findings were made public during a two day workshop for principals, secondary school Board of Governors (BOGs) and Parents and

Teachers Association (PTA) in Coast region on mainstreaming HIV/AIDS under total war against the epidemic held at Mombasa polytechnic

According to the director of Policy Partnership and East African Community Affairs' Mr. Kiragu Magochi, the findings could be worse in some other provinces.

Mr Magochi who officially opened the workshop said there was need for managers of secondary schools in the country to form HIV/AIDS intervention programs to create awareness among the students.

He that said teachers, BOGs and PTAs play an important role in equipping learners with knowledge and skills on the prevention of HIV/AIDS

The director at the same time said the ministry of education has in place an education sector policy on the HIV/AIDS which aims at facilitating a broader understanding and strengthening of partnerships between educa-

tion and service providers in the fight against the scourge. The director at the same time cautioned teachers' against discriminating their colleagues and students who have contracted the disease and instead support them.

"I urge teachers to avoid discriminating fellow teachers and students who might have contracted the disease but instead to support and give them courage," said Mr Magochi.

Director of education in Coast province Mr Tom Majani said cases of sex among students in the area had risen to worrying levels.

Majani said chances of students contracting HIV/AIDS were high because the students do not use preventive measures due to lack of information.

The director said school managers have an obligation to ensure that awareness and advocacy forums were held regularly to sensitize students on the dangers of engaging in early sex.



Girls are registering a high incidence of sexual activity than boys in the country. Photo/File

Directive on state secrets violates new Constitution

THE recent directive by the Government barring ministers from disclosing state secrets is an affront to the spirit and letter of the new constitution which provides for the right to access public information. Article 35 in the Bill of Rights obligates the State to publish and publicize any important information affecting the nation.

It is acknowledged that the State may reasonably withhold information pertaining to sensitive issues like national security which action may deny the exercise or protection of any right or freedom contained in the Constitution. However, this does not warrant abuse or justifications to cover up irregular and illegal activities involving public officials. A definition on the nature of information that should be kept secret is therefore in order. The directive as currently communicated can be interpreted as aiming to contain information on corruption incidents and whistle-blowing by government officers, especially com-

ing hot on the heels of increased scrutiny of Cabinet Ministers by the legislature in its watchdog role. The onus is on the President and Prime Minister to justify and refine or withdraw the directive, as a demonstration of their commitment to the full and successful implementation of the Constitution.

The Government must wake up to the new reality borne by the Constitution that gives a great sense of being to transparency and accountability. Being a Constitutional right, access to information takes precedence over legislation such as the Official Secrets Act which has been used repeatedly to hold back vital public information thus fuelling a facilitative environment for corruption and impunity to thrive

A freedom of information (FOI) law has been elusive to Kenyans, despite a decade-long clamor by the civil society. Both the Bomas draft Constitution and the Wako draft (rejected in the 2005 constitutional referendum) contained provisions for this funda-

COMMENT

By SHEILA MASINDE

mental right. Continued advocacy led to the publication of the FOI Bill, 2007. However, the Bill was not prioritized in house business and it lapsed as the curtains were drawn on the Ninth Parliament in December 2007. The Bill is yet to be republished, and efforts to engage relevant government offices on its status have come a cropper amid conflicting information from state officials on Kenya's standing as far as the Bill is concerned.

An FOI law is not among the enabling legislation prioritized in the fifth schedule of the new Constitution neither is a specific timetable for Parliament to enact such legislation provided. Parliament is unlikely to enact the law in the next five years given its jam-packed legislative agenda. Access

to information is a constitutional right even without enabling legislation. However a law laying out the mechanisms of accessing public information and what constitutes exempted information amongst other requisite details is urgently needed.

Kenyans are still oblivious of the outcomes of various corruption investigations and commissions of inquiry. This would not be the case if freedom of information was the rule. The recent graft scandals in the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Water and Defense could have been averted if interested parties and the public had open access to information on the procurement processes. Access to such information would enable effective monitoring and ensure transparency. It is also the key that will open the door to critical information required to hold public officials accountable.

Kenyans must begin testing the Government's commitment towards the actualization of this right. This can be done by plac-

ing requests for records on the: disbursement and utilization of devolved funds like the Constituency Development Fund, procurement and issuance of medical supplies at local hospitals, allocation of low cost housing units, expenditure of free education funds by local schools, allocation of water projects, qualification of individuals appointed to the public service, amongst other information. Government responsiveness in this matter largely depends on the pressure mounted by the public.

Finally, the government should commence the proactive release of public information and recast the primordial oath of secrecy, like the one ministers and their assistants were reminded to uphold recently, and similar laws that impede integrity in the country. Only a small spectrum of public affairs should enjoy secrecy. That spectrum is what needs to be clarified to give public officials guidance on how to deal with information in their custody.

Teachers call for repair of Busia schools

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

PRIMARY school heads in the Busia County are appealing to the government to allocate more funds to assist in the renovation and upgrading of learning facilities in the region.

The head teachers say that most schools in the area are currently faced with a number of challenges that range from inadequate teachers to high pupil population and lack infrastructure.

The head teacher of Bulanda primary school Mr. Alfonus Masakha says that school requires additional teachers to cater for the high enrolment figures which currently stand at 2,500 pupils.

He says that despite the hiccups, the school has continued to register improved performance from a mean score of 243.28 in the year 2008 to 260.73 in last years from Kenya certificate of primary Education (KCPE).

"In order for the school to do much better, I am appealing to the government to send us more teachers to reduce the high teacher pupil ratio which currently stands at 1:59. The school also requires additional classrooms to accommodate the high pupil population," the head teachers said.

The school head at the same time commended the government for allocating Kshs2.9 million under Economic Stimulus Programme (ESP) to assist in the construction of five more classrooms.



School heads appeals to the government to allocate more funds.

Photo/File

The head teacher revealed that he has further sought help from Nambale Constituency Development Fund (CDF) committee to aid in the construction of additional classrooms to help accommodate the rising student population.

"I am appealing to the government to chip in so that we can introduce school feeding programme to help retain the orphaned vulnerable children (OVCs) in the school," he says

adding that the school management committee intends to construct toilets, repair dilapidated classrooms, introduce boarding facilities to give the candidates ample time to concentrate in their studies.

The school head at the same time revealed that the school has been picked among those set for elevation into a model school and appealed for more funds to facilitate the speedy renovation of the schools.

"In order for the school to do much better, I am appealing to the government to send us more teachers to reduce the high teacher pupil ratio which currently stands at 1:59. The school also requires additional classrooms to accommodate the high pupil population."

Education key to peace in communities — Bishop

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

EDUCATION is a requisite tool for peaceful co-existence within communities, a church minister says.

Bishop Shadrack Juma of Church of Christ in Africa (CCA), Kakamega Diocese argues that educated people stay peacefully with each other.

The church minister, appeals to the Luhya community to educate their children to guard them against manipulations during electioneering period.

Bishop Juma notes that majority of the youths who easily fall prey to the politicians' destructive activities are illiterate or semi-literate. He, however, urges the youth regardless of their level of education, to desist from participating in destructive activities at the whims of selfish politicians.

The prelate tells the youth not to demand weapons with which to harm people from politicians but affordable education, jobs and responsible leadership.

This, the church minister says will compel the politicians to change from confrontational tactics to diplomacy while dealing with their opponents.

"Once you refuse to take handouts from the politicians they will see the need to embrace peace," the bishop tells the youths.

The devolved governance structures, bishop Juma says will require youths who can manage the decentralized resources effectively but not hecklers.

Consequently, the church leader appeals to politicians from the area to ensure that youths acquire high levels of education. This, Bishop Juma adds will enable the youths to gain skills and become professionals who can spur economic growth of the region.

He notes with regrets that politicians misuse the youths and dump them every other general election and even during the plebiscite.

Official decries poor education in Kwale

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

DEBATE may be raging elsewhere throughout the country over admission ratio to national schools between public and private primary schools but in Kwale County, most candidates scored less than 200 marks in KCPE, locking them out of the contest.

Kwale District Education Officer Wilbert Nyangweso, citing past experience, further expresses fears that not all 14 students selected to join national schools will make it.

There are parents in the County who for a number of reasons, prefer sending their children to local schools even when they have qualified to join national schools, says Mr. Nyangweso.

He says top among the challenges for parents are high fees, expensive shopping list and the costly long distances the children have to travel.

Mr. Nyangweso says though the transition rate in Kwale District was 80.31 per cent for the 2009 class, the number does not reflect the true picture on the ground. The percentage represents children who are expected to take up Form One slots in public schools, notwithstanding the many hurdles that deny the candidates an opportunity to join secondary school.

His Kinango district counterpart, Mr. Maina Wanjau, says transition has been rising steadily from 27 per cent in 2007 to 63 per cent in 2009.

The rate for last year's class is yet to be calculated but he is upbeat as the area has doubled the number of secondary schools from eight in 2007 to 16 this year.

Mr. Wanjau agrees with Mr. Nyangweso that even with increased access to secondary school, some children cannot make it.

He cites the case of a girl who was set to join Kenya High School in 2009. Her mother was mentally ill and her father had abandoned the family. No sponsor was forthcoming to enable the girl take up her place in the national school. The Verkaart



Admission ratio to national schools between public and private primary schools is raging.

Development Trust sponsored her to Kwale Girls' Secondary School.

Mr. Wanjau says well-wishers at times raise funds for the beneficiaries first year in school, only for some of them to be forced out of school in Form Two or Three for lack of fees.

Mr. Nyangweso says the constituency bursary fund, that should save needy students, has many vested interests, mainly because individuals in the committees that oversee the distribution of the money have too many people to please. The result is disbursement of meager amounts of cash that is too little to meet outstanding fees balances.

Many parents in the County, especially the illiterate ones, have a carefree attitude towards education and see no value in keeping a child in school for eight years. For such parents taking children to secondary school is stretching the matter.

Mr. Nyangweso says last year, he

had to threaten a parent with police action after he withdrew a class eight son from school. The father, a trader in Mombasa, plucked the pupil – who went on to score 370 marks in last year's KCPE – out of school to oversee the family business.

The DEO says it will be an uphill task to keep the pupil in class, given the father's attitude.

He says failure by parents to send children to secondary school discourages younger pupils from working hard. Mr. Nyangweso says many primary school students drop out during tourism's high season to comb beaches and hang out in tourist's favourite joints and those lucky enough to pick foreign tourists appear to lead better lives than their peers who proceed to secondary school. Such boys and girls become the role models for those in school and enjoy an elevated status in the community, making secondary

school education a poor alternative.

Mr. Nyangweso and Mr. Wanjau say sponsorship has boosted transition rates. Equity Bank will sponsor four students from Kinango and 12 in the entire county.

Mr. Wanjau says the full scholarships will cater for fare to school, pocket money and school fee.

He says Kenya Commercial Bank and the Kinango Professionals Forum will also sponsor more students.

But the biggest secondary school student's sponsor in the county is the Verkaart Development Trust.

The Trust funds secondary school education for orphaned and vulnerable girls. This year, 480 girls will benefit from free secondary education.

Mr. Nyangweso says that the Trust has improved the transition of girls into secondary school.

He, however, hopes a well-wish-

er will come forward to help boys. "There are many boys who are unable to go to secondary school because their parents are too poor," he said.

The coordinator of the Verkaart Development Trust, Ms. Beasy Mbogo, says that the Trust has found it difficult to raise funds for boys. Its founder had at inception established that girls' access to education in Kwale was way below that of boys.

Ms. Mbogo says that the Trust's attempt to take boys to secondary schools did not get support from their Dutch sponsors.

Ms. Mbogo says the Trust has reconstructed 72 primary schools in the County to ease learning for the students. It has also built four secondary schools. The sponsorship beneficiaries are in three of the secondary schools.

The Trust picked 500 students last year for sponsorship but has decided to reduce the number to 40 per class to boost the quality of education, said Ms. Mbogo.

She says that they are currently sponsoring 1,500 students, adding that the Trust has been forced to stop the programmes targeting vulnerable girls in primary schools as the aid, channeled through school heads, hardly ever reached the beneficiaries.

Ms. Mbogo says of the 1,400 beneficiaries who have sat KCSE since the programme began, only six have qualified for university. The poor results, with many of the girls getting grade 'D' or below, attributing the trend to poor attitude.

Ms. Mbogo observed that absenteeism is rife among the girls. She carries out monthly checks and each time she discovers at least five absentees. "The schools have medical facilities but some of the girls insist on being treated by traditional healers at home," she says.

There have also been cases of girls dropping from after getting pregnant. As a result, some sponsors have pulled out after most beneficiaries performed poorly.

Huge losses due to text books theft in Murang'a

By MORRIS GITHENYA

THE government is losing millions of shillings in a syndicate that involves the stealing of text books in public primary schools.

A report by DFID indicates that 5.8 million books have been lost since the beginning of 2003 when the Free Primary Education was introduced.

In Murang'a North region, about 23 learning institutions have lost text books worth millions of shillings in raids over the past three months.

Sources divulge that the text books are later sold in the backstreets through established cartels.

The Link has established most schools affected by the vice have refused to comply with a directive that requires

books are delivered during the day to enable them to be registered and distributed to pupils.

Schools in Mathioya District have registered 19 break-ins between December and January, during which books bought with funds sourced from free primary education programme have been stolen.

The latest incident occurred at Gikindu primary school near Kiria ini market where a school guard Samuel Kigotho was brutally murdered after a gang struck and stole text books.

Mathioya acting DC Musee Mwanzia however said security has been beefed up near the schools to help safe guard the books.

Between December 15, 2010 and February 2 this year, he said, more than 19 primary

schools have lost text books valued at millions of shillings in a spate of robberies.

In Kiharu area, books valued at Kshs.25,000 were stolen from Gathuki-ini primary school.

In Gikindu primary school, police arrested suspects found with text books bearing the school's official rubber stamp.

Gitugi and Karung'e primary schools lost text books worth Kshs200,000 and Kshs100,000 respectively.

Murang'a East DC George Natembeya said security measures have been taken to ensure none of the government books to curb the raids.

Natembeya called on communities neighbouring learning institutions' to be alert and respond to distress calls raised by school guards.



DFID report indicates that 5.8 million books have been lost since the beginning of 2003.

Varsity signs pact with water body

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

TANA Water and Services Board (TWSB) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Kimathi University College of Technology. The five year MoU was signed by CEO Eng. Moses Naivasha and the KUCT Principal Eng. Ndirangu Kioni at the university Resource Centre in Nyeri County.

"The MoU will help integrate joint research in areas of mutual interest, provision of laboratory services for testing water quality, student attachments, training in areas such as water engineering, water conservation strategies especially on waste water re-use and other techniques of water resources management, sharing facilities and undertaking of joint resource mobilization in water related matters," said Kioni.

The principal added that the signing comes as a strategic joint initiative that combines the strengths and expertise of both organizations in an effort to meet the foreseen regional market demand for water and sanitation services.

"This collaboration between KUCT and TWSB will be undertaken through the Centre for Water Resources Conservation and Management. This is a university centre attached to the Department of Civil Engineering. The centre boasts of qualified technical staff in water engineering, public health engineering, environmental and Geomatic Engineering," he added.

The Centre once equipped will be a rich resource for conducting research in water resources management in response to climatic changes, surface and groundwater modeling and water quality monitoring and water resources conservation and land use – managing water resources as a shared responsibility and recognizing other line-sectors (i.e. Environment, land, forest etc), catchment and river basin management, abstraction and pollution control measures for water

resources and water laws and policies to address dynamics of water resources.

Others areas set to benefit include appropriate water resources management for sustainability - artificial groundwater recharge from rainwater, integrated water resources and environmental management and wetland conservation and management and hydrology and hydrogeology - informatics and related services – data collection, documentation and dissemination (information networking), water and disaster management –drought, floods and landslides, archiving and dissemination of information, water GIS-database and indigenous technology in water.

It is will also cover water, education and community by creating awareness through community outreach programmes on water conservation, gender

issues on water resources management and time management, study the relationship between water resources and poverty, studies on water conservation in agriculture, demonstration sites for community outreach and also training and consultancies on any other emerging issues in water and related disciplines.

Tana Water Services Board is among eight other Water Services Boards in the country and works towards increasing access to safe, adequate and sustainable water and sewerage services to both rural and urban populations in six counties of Nyeri, Murang'a, Kirinyaga, Embu, Meru and Tharaka-Nithi.

The board covers an area of 19,169km² with a population of 4,238,439 (2009 Census) with about 80 per cent living in the rural areas. 40

per cent of the area is either arid or semi arid.

To increase access to water and sanitation services for the residents, TWSB is currently implementing a five-year strategic plan (2009-2012). Under the Strategic Plan, TWSB intends to meet water demand by employing a bulk supply approach. The new approach will involve tapping water from the three main water towers: the Aberdares Ranges, Mt. Kenya and the Nyambene Hills, which will then be supplied to a grouped number of distribution schemes to serve the residents.

KUCT is one of the 19 Public Universities and a constituent college of Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) and has a strong emphasis on scientific and technological programmes.



KUCT Principal Mr Ndirangu Kioni (left) chats with Tana Water Services Board CEO Mr Moses Naivasha after the signing of the MoU. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Kuria community told to value education

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

NYANZA Provincial Director of Education (PDE), Mr. Geoffrey Cherongis, has told members of the Kuria Community to discard retrogressive cultures that interfere with the education of their children.

"It is very unfortunate that the Kuria community still puts a high premium on circumcision of both boys and girls at the expense of the education of school-going children." Mr. Cherongis said during a stakeholder's forum held in Kehancha town.

The provincial education boss expressed dissatisfaction with the overall performance of schools in last year's KCPE examination, in which the area was ranked poorly nationally.

He said no district could register good performance if parents, teachers and leaders ignored the spirit of cooperation in handling education matters.

He said the Government was aware of the plight of many schools in the area which he cited as including shortage of teachers, the lethargy exhibited by some teachers who fail to do their work effectively, leading to pupils sitting for examinations without having completed syllabuses.

The two districts of Kuria have a total teacher-deficit of 660 in primary and 150 in secondary schools.

As a measure to ensure accountability, Mr. Cherongis warned head teachers against misappropriating school funds, calling upon them to be good managers of the institutions for better results.

He said some 28 head teachers in the region had been demoted because of financial mismanagement and failing to ensure that syllabuses are completed within the required period of time. The education boss also cautioned head teachers against forcing pupils to repeat classes, saying the move has occasionally led to unwarranted drop-outs.

During the meeting attended by area MP, Dr. Wilfred Machage, participants blamed cattle rustling, feuds between teachers and schools committees, poor inspection and supervision of schools and retrogressive culture for the poor performing in last year's KCPE.

Dr. Machage said he would prevail upon the community elders to change the December circumcision calendar, which he said interferes with preparation of students for national exams.

Busia's dismal KCPE performance

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

THE low transition rates from Primary to Secondary schools in Busia District have been blamed on forced repetitions.

Data availed to The Link reveals that there has been massive repetition and transfers of pupils and teachers respectively to other schools.

In 2010 for instance, the actual standard seven population in was 2661 pupils.

However, the district registered a total 1,822 candidates of which 959 were boys whereas 863 were girls

who registered for the national examination.

This clearly indicated that a total of 839 pupils were either asked to repeat standard seven or transferred to other schools where they registered for the exam.

The number of candidates who sat for the exam had gone down by 112 compared to the previous year (2009) where a total of 1,934 candidates had attempted the exam. The number of girls also dropped remarkably by 96 the previous year.

Busia district also registered a significant drop during last year's

Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examination with a mean score of 100.1 compared to 105.81 in the previous year.

In the larger Busia County which has 6 districts namely Busia, Teso North, Samia, Bunyala, Teso South and Butula districts, Busia district led with a total of 11 (four girls and seven boys) candidates who scored 400 marks and above out of the possible 500 marks.

In Teso South district under Amagoro constituency which scooped second position, a total of five candidates (2boys and 3girls) managed to score

400 marks with 388 candidates scoring between 300 and above.

Samia district in Funyula constituency came third with three candidates managing 400 marks and above.

In Butula district only 2 boys managed to scoop 400 and above.

Teso North district was ranked in the fifth position with only one girl scoring 400 marks while Bunyala district in Budalangi constituency was ranked in the last position with no candidate scoring 400 and above.

Overcrowding and acute teacher shortages are mainly to blame for the poor performances.

Starehe students get help from KCB

By MALACHI MOTANO

KENYA Commercial Bank has given 20 scholarships to needy Starehe Girls and Boys Centres students

The bursaries worth KShs5.4 million were announced by the KCB Foundation Chairman Susan Omanga during a cheque handover ceremony held at a Nairobi hotel.

"KCB Group is delighted to present these outstanding students who would otherwise fall in the cracks, with school fees support that will see them through their education for the next four years" she said

The Students who are in form one mostly received KShs2.8 million for the boys where each of the ten students got KShs70,000 per year for a period of 4 years and the girls on other hand got 2.6 million from the kitty.

Omanga said the bursaries were in line with the KCB Foundation's education support pillar that aims to improve literacy levels in the country by providing access to needy but bright students. This year alone KCB has spent KShs 25 million in support of education.

Also present at the ceremony was Matthew Kithara, Director, Starehe Boys Centre and School who praised

KCB for its commitment in the lives of the young students, sentiments which were also echoed by Margaret Wanjohi, the Director Starehe Girls' Centre. The Starehe Scholarship brings to 70 the number of students funded by the KCB Foundation to pursue secondary education.

Omanga also challenged the private sector to invest more in the education sector to ensure even a greater number of bright students from needy backgrounds get an equal chance to finish their formal education.

"We do recognize the government's introduction of free second-

ary education in public schools. This however, is only limited to tuition that represents just about 25 per cent of all necessary fees" she said. In its bid to support the education sector this year, the KCB Foundation has partnered with Computer for Schools Kenya to establish ICT laboratories in various locations of the country.

The partnership so far saw KCB launch 8 laboratories in 2010 at a cost of 2.9 million. This year the Foundation intends to put up another 18 computer laboratories in various counties with the aim of realizing one laboratory per county by 2012.

By MALACHI MOTANO

PARENTS in Isiolo town are worried that their daughters in secondary schools are being lured into prostitution by long distance truck drivers, the military and the patrol police at a time when the HIV prevalent rate in the area is 4.7 percent.

Joel Lobengula, a head teachers, at Webera Secondary School and also a father to a form three student regrets that his 17 year old daughter has dropped out of school after getting impregnated by a truck driver, according to her close friends who had seen her severally in at 'The Hills', a famous night pub in the town.

Isiolo town is a highway stop over town for the trucks that go to Moyale and Ethiopia among others. There are also many military barracks surrounding it, for example, the 47 para -batallion troop. The area DEO Domnic Opek says it is because of the harsh economic time that makes school girls look at prostitution as the alternative.

"Most of the families in Isiolo countryside are large. You may have parents having 21 children. Now that he may not take care of them well, boys will resort to pastoralism while their daughters opt for prostitution, resulting in many cases of early pregnancies and high risks of HIV infection"

According to Doctor Kiriga, who is in charge of the district HIV programme in the country's urban areas, about 30 per cent of school going age (15-19) are HIV positive. "This is why the government has ordered schools to start teaching sex education despite protests from religious organizations."

The high rate of HIV infection in schools is linked to the incidence of Aids-related illnesses among those aged between 16 - 22. Students from poor communities for example the pastoral communities like the Turkana, Samburu and the Borana in the Giant Isiolo County are particularly likely to be infected and develop Aids.

Also at risk are young girls

Alarm over student prostitution in Isiolo



Agness Heir, is adventure-loving student from France at the exit of Isiolo town. Photo/Malachi Motano

married off for wealth (cows-large herds). The Health official says poverty is a major determinant for HIV infection among female students whose families cannot meet the cost-sharing regime in Kenya's education.

"Some female students with funding problems especially at the higher learning level (tertiary colleges) are in relationships with rich men, especially in return for assistance to pay tuition fees. For

every ten female students with HIV, there are 14 to 15 male students who are infected with the virus."

Figures from the local World Health Organisation reference centre on HIV/Aids indicate that 30 per cent of Kenyan students seeking admission to foreign universities are infected.

According to Maritim Songok, head of the HIV/Aids laboratory at Kenya Medical Research Institute,

the prevalence rate, which was 25 per cent in 1995, is still rising.

So far the United Nations Children's Fund has offered to supply education materials to public learning institutions.

The 800 km journey I was supposed to cover in three days took five days. I was supposed to request for a lift from Isiolo to Malaba from a truck driver, to see if he would ask me to join him in his bed along the way.

Parents urged to stop transfer of students

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

FREQUENT transfers of pupils from one school to another, negatively impacts on their performance in National exams, an education official says.

An official from Bungoma South District Education office, Mrs. Joan Oyamo claims that pupils who move from one school to another every year, perform poorly in National exams due to stress.

Most parents remove their children from schools which post poor performances during the Kenya certificate of primary education (KCPE) and enroll them in schools with good results.

In some schools, the irate parents lock the gates and demand for the transfers of head teachers and other teachers perceived not to be working hard to improve the academic standards.

Mrs. Oyamo, however, hints that good performance in every school is a result of collective responsibility of teachers' pupils and parents.

She challenges parents to take stock of their investment in the education of their children before transferring them to schools which post sterling performance.

The education officer points out that good performance is always associated with proper investment in the sector by all stakeholders.

Consequently, Mrs. Oyamo asks parents to take good care of the teachers' welfare and at the same time ensure that their children are provided with the necessary learning materials.

"How do you expect your children to perform well in KCPE when you do not feed them well, provide them with books and other materials," she asks.

Mr. Oyamo, at the same time urges parents to be open with their children while discussing matters that affect them both at school and at home.

The education officer was speaking recently at Wacheke A.C.K primary school during the institution's Annual General Meeting (AGM).

HelpAge takes campaigns against AIDS to schools

By HENRY OWINO

HELPAge Kenya that is known for its advocacy in the promotion of rights and entitlements for older persons infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, now targets schools to create more awareness to the general public.

The organization came up with primary and secondary schools national Essay/Art competition initiative intended to arouse awareness and self-motivation among the students. This was aimed at involving the schools to advocate for AIDS free society and specifically unreserved respect, care, and support for the older persons.

The Art/Essay competition question theme was, "working with HIV infected and affected older persons to claim, safeguard and promote their rights"

The entrants were expected to highlight through essay or art the concerns and problems of infected and affected older persons and suggest practical ways the government, communities and institutions including schools need to implement in order to

promote and provide for the rights and entitlements to prevention, care and support.

The competition was open to both private and public schools in upper primary from class 4 to 7 and Forms 1 to 3 for secondary. Age and gender were not considered as eligibility criteria for entry.

Among the students who entered in the competition, twelve emerged victorious with 3 students from each slots and category. These winners received participation certificates, shopping vouchers and reward for the school.

Speaking at the function, the HelpAge Kenya Programme Officer, Erastus Maina said more of such school initiatives would be carried out in future and urged teachers to encourage their students to participate.

Mr. Maina said the older people's rights are human rights and need to be respected by others. He added that if it were not for death, then everybody would grow old since it is the age factor.

He added that the peer education

program is aimed at equipping Older Persons' with skills that will allow them to provide support to their peers in relation to increasing awareness of HIV/AIDS, accessing VCT and ART services, rights and entitlements, and coping with the psychosocial impact of HIV/AIDS.

The program will train 150 Older Persons as peer educators every year to provide accompaniment on HIV prevention to five Older Persons.

Globally, there were 83 male Older Persons for every 100 female Older Persons among those aged 80 and over in 2009. About 80percent of older men are still married compared to only 48percent of older women. Again 14percent of these older persons live alone.

Globally, 24percent of male older persons and 14percent female older persons are economically active in developing countries. In Kenya, 76percent male older persons for every 100 are economically active, whereas, 50 female older persons for every 100 are economically active.

In Kenya, 18percent of female old-

er persons and 9percent of male older persons live alone. HIV prevalence stand at 8percent for adults aged between 50-54 in Kenya (KAIS 2007).

Ms. Jane Muguhe from Kenya Institute of Education (K.I.E) said they have included older persons in the education curriculum, where they offer they educate them through the K.I.E media and provide them with special teachers who speak their language and understand them best.

Ms. Muguhe reiterated that older people are very vital in any given society and should not be looked down upon as they provide solutions to very technical issues. She said there is a proposal to have special programme for old persons in schools so that they feel more comfortable and attract more to join.

Mr. Charles Mugenda from ministry of education said the ministry is working out plans to see how it will support the older persons in schools both infected and affected. He said older people are free to join any public school of their wish to continue with education.

Mr. Mugenda said the ministry recognizes the elderly and many have joined either to start from class one or to continue from where they had stopped schooling. He added that age should not be a limitation factor for any older person thirst for education.

Present at the function were the older persons from Central, Nyanza and Nairobi provinces, parents, teachers and students from all over the eight provinces in the country.

Mama Rhoda Ngima aged over 80 said she was very pleased with HelpAge Kenya for coming up with an initiative to advocate for their needs. Mama Ngima said old people are human beings just like any other person but the government and some NGOs agencies have deliberately ignored the elderly group.

Mama Ngima called upon the Kenyan government to support the older persons because they carry heavy burden apart from being affected. Her advice to the young generation is to hold on until they are officially married, traditional style or through church.

The Link

Enhancing governance for all

Science can help resolve conflicts

US PRESIDENT Barack Obama has in the recent past spoken strongly on the need to promote science-based technologies to “protect our planet, and create countless new jobs for our people”. His words have significance not only for the United States, but also for the Arab world.

Arab countries are now beginning to look at how to promote political stability and revitalize their social institutions in the aftermath of the seismic political changes — partly prompted by high levels of youth unemployment — that have been sweeping across the region in the past few weeks.

There are good reasons to be optimistic that a shift from authoritarian to genuinely democratic rule in countries such as Egypt and Tunisia will help science to flourish. Scientific communities in both nations have shown widespread support for the protestors’ demands.

These countries now have the opportunity to use their full potential to build modern knowledge-based economies. But they cannot achieve this on their own — more than ever, they need the support of the international community. And this is where science diplomacy, an idea that has gained support in recent years, could come into its own.

But science diplomacy — the use of scientific cooperation as a tool of international diplomacy — can never substitute for political initiatives. Nothing illustrates this more clearly than the lack of any significant follow-through to, or indeed impact of, a speech given by Obama in Cairo in the summer of 2009, in which he publicly advocated the use of closer scientific contacts between the United States and Muslim countries as a form of “soft diplomacy”.

But science diplomacy can be invaluable when it provides the basis for a genuine scientific partnership between two (or more) countries — and especially when such partnerships allow the sharing of skills and experience, for example through joint teaching or research projects.

The danger of this approach, of course, is that the stronger partner may come to dominate, for example in planning or implementing a research project. And collaboration with developed country partners should not undermine attempts to create regional initiatives. North-South partnerships are often the only way to create the critical mass required to get a viable local research community off the ground, but are not a substitute for local capacity.

The virtue of scientific partnerships is that skill-sharing can help countries produce potentially valuable research results, and at the same time enhance their capacity to produce more results. In turn, if skill-sharing takes place within a supportive environment, it strengthens the platform on which a vibrant knowledge economy can be built.

Western countries could use scientific partnerships to help restore political stability to the countries of the Arab world in the months ahead. Done in a genuine spirit of partnership, this can lay the groundwork for advancing science and innovation without developed countries being accused of doing so purely in their own interests — although undoubtedly this is a situation that can benefit both sides.



COMMENTARY

Billions lost annually through graft due to secrecy

COMMENT

By SAMUEL MBITHI KIMEU

FINANCE Permanent Secretary Joseph Kinyua was recently reported in the media stating before a Parliamentary Committee that between 25-30% of the national budget, or about 270 Billion Shillings is lost through corruption annually. This may be the first time that such a senior government official has disclosed the extent of theft of public resources. By putting a percentage and a figure to it, PS Kinyua allowed Kenyans to authoritatively project the loss they suffer every year in the hands of corrupt public officials. The local dailies ably elaborated what this money could do if put into good use to illustrate the enormity of this loss. This theft has been going on for a long time and needs to be eliminated. At the core of this loss is the issue of access to information as a critical tool in the fight against corruption.

It is recognized that corruption thrives where projects are executed under the cover of secrecy and the public has little access to critical information to enable them question the planning and prioritization of projects as well as expenditure of public resources. Unfortunately restriction of access to information in the hands of public officials seems to be a government policy. The Official Secrets Act and official practice not based in any law have cast a long shadow on our public affairs since the colonial and single-party era. Public servants operate under an inexplicable aura of secrecy that has its roots in a bygone era when government affairs were siri kali, irrespective of the nature and purpose of the information. The result is that the extent and justification of secrecy in Kenya’s public affairs is virtually unknown and could cover important matters of state security

to mundane issues of every day to day administration. Legislation and policy has failed to define the realm of secrecy justifiable in public affairs in a democracy like Kenya, giving public officials a wide discretion that is often abused. Ultimately, the public is ill facilitated to play its watchdog role.

Despite the vague nature of our information communication regime, time and again Kenyans have been treated to calls from high ranking government officials reminding civil servants to uphold state secrets. These calls are least satisfactory, especially because they tend to be issued during or after corrupt schemes in government have been unearthed. More importantly, the calls are blanket and do not define what exactly state secrets are and seem to largely serve the purpose of intimidating whistle blowers and civil servants from disclosing information that may be embarrassing to government officials. It is no wonder that corruption has become so entrenched. The public becomes the ultimate loser by being denied information that may be critical for development or holding government officials to account. Eventually the result is the kind of waste that the Permanent Secretary was decrying.

The government needs to facilitate the public and public-spirited civil servants to play their watchdog role and perform the patriotic duty of safeguarding public resources. There is perhaps no greater way to do this than the enactment of an access to information law that enables

the public to get information from public offices as a matter of entitlement. This law needs to be prioritized as it has an impact also on the roles of various commissions established under Agenda 4, including the Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission. As a public official privy to critical information on a matter that is the subject of interest to these commissions, what protection is there that disclosure of that information will not lead to official reprisals? It is instructive that the Waki Commission prioritized the enactment of an access to information law. This however seems to have fallen off the table and is least mentioned in official circles as a matter of concern.

Section 35 of the Constitution now enshrines access to information as a fundamental right. The Bill of rights is not one of those parts of the constitution that are suspended and came into effect upon promulgation. While this is now a right enforceable in law, the public can only benefit fully from this provision if a legislative framework is elaborated. In the meantime, it would be a good step forward for government to issue a circular clarifying that matters relating to prioritization of development projects, public expenditure and who benefits from public resources are matters of public interest that require full disclosure. This will go a long way in reducing the waste of public resources that has accompanied the administration of devolved funds, the economic stimulus package and public resources generally. Access to information is the key missing pillar in the fight against corruption.

The writer is the Executive Director of Transparency International-Kenya.



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Nyeri churches join fight against hunger

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

WITH the looming famine in some parts of Mukurwe-ini district, the church has come up with a strategy to fight hunger in the area and the larger Nyeri County through the introduction of quick maturing and drought resistant crops.

The Redeemed Gospel, Gospel Outreach and End Time Message Churches through a Self Help Group namely The Redeemed Agricultural Entrepreneurs (TRAE) note that biting hunger in some parts of the county such as Mukurwe-ini and Kieni districts can only be conquered through increase of root crop production.

The Self help group has been in operation for one year, propagating drought resistant crops such as yams and sweet potatoes which they later sell to locals at a reduced price.

“Our campaigns have been geared towards promoting drought resistant crops as people have been storming our homes to purchase yams seedlings and sweet potatoes cuttings,” says the group’s coordinator Mrs Lucy Njeri who adds that they sell seedlings locally and during field days.

Unlike in the traditional way where farmers use bones to propagate yams, they use fresh yams to propagate yams seedlings through Mini-sett technology which takes about five months to propagate. Yams propagated the traditional way takes two years to break dormancy and propagate.

“The use of Mini-sett yam technology can increase yield dramatically to an average of 34,090 kilograms per hectare, as opposed to 15,909 kilograms when the traditional method is used,” says Njeri.

Mini-sett yam technology involves the use of yam vine or fresh yam tubers to propagate the plant.

“We were taught this technique by one of us who had been trained by the Kenya Agriculture Research Institute (KARI) in Embu county in year 2004, but it was until



Some of the church members work in their sweet potato farm in Mukurwe-ini district. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

last year that she started using the knowledge,” says the group Secretary Mrs Milka Gichuki.

The group also bought five types of sweet potato cuttings from KARI that include Nars pot, Tainung, SPK 004, Bungoma and Kembu 10 all of which take about 3-4 months to mature and can give a yield of about 80-90 bags per acre.

Milka says they have managed to generate Kshs100,000 from the sale of sweet potato cuttings and yam seedlings in the past one year, where yam seedlings costs Kshs100 while a potato cutting goes at Kshs2 per cutting.

She says if they get funds, they intend to purchase machines which they will use to make flour from both yams and sweet potatoes. This they say will enable them store them for a long time. They also in-

tend to prepare sweet potatoes crisps and sell them in supermarkets.

“We shall also encourage other farmers to grow them in large quantities so that we can buy from them and add value and sell them,” says Njeri.

The Central Province Provincial Director of Agriculture Mr. Mr J.M. Gachingiri has praised the work done by the group, claiming they are playing a pivotal role in the fight against hunger in the County. Last year, Gachingiri sponsored two of the group members to and from Mukurwe-ini to Kabiru-ini ASK show ground in Nyeri, where they showcased their farming techniques.

Mukurwe-ini District Agricultural Officer Mrs Beatrice Theuri also boosted their morale by taking two of the members to five days training on farming recently.

Plans to assist cane farmers fall apart

By JOEL JUMA

PLANS to assist sugarcane farmers to access over Kshs500 million for cane development have fallen apart.

The Kenya Sugar Board (KSB) said it was still withholding the money because the management is yet to agree with Equity Bank on the interest rates to be charged on the loans.

“The board is still negotiating with the bank so that the money can be loaned out to farmers at an interest rate of less than 10 per cent,” said KSB Director Mohammed Mukhwana.

Mukhwana and, his colleague, Billy Wanjala, said the board is against the bank’s demand to charge an interest rate of 15 per cent.

The two noted that plans to disburse the money last year aborted after Treasury insisted that Equity Bank should be subjected to competition over provision of the funds.

“We were forced to advertise after the Treasury questioned the criteria used in awarding Equity Bank the deal,” said Mukhwana.

The directors were speaking at Malaha market in Mumias District during a meeting with farmers.

Cabinet minister Wycliffe Oparanya and farmers led by the Mumias Sugar Cane Growers Association Executive Director Simon Wesechere recently called for the dissolution of the board.

Oparanya (Planning) urged Agriculture Minister Sally Kosgey to dissolve the board for engaging in leadership wrangles at the expense of farmers.

Wesechere accused the board of not serving the interest of farmers as it has failed to purchase and distribute fertilizers to cane growers.

Constitution: Let experts take charge

By MUSA RADOLI

PROFESSIONALS must take a centre stage in the implementation of the new constitution which is currently being derailed by politicians.

A consultant with the Association of Professional Societies of East Africa (APSEA) Mr. Gideon Ochanda says that the new constitution has a transitional period of five years during which a lot of legislation and policy changes have to be mediated unfortunately by some organs of the old constitution.

He says that it is paramount that professionals engage the implementing institutions and organs, not only to give their input but also to monitor and evaluate the entire process to protect the interests of millions of Kenyans and the nation as a whole.

Says Mr. Ochanda: “APSEA as a conglomeration of core professional associations has to be on the thick of things. The legislative and policy baskets whether private or public are first and foremost technical and in many respects guided by professionals.” The Consultant says that there are at least 700 existing legislations and more than 60 new ones that must be looked at afresh to harmonize them with the new dispensation.

He says that the professionals should also monitor the initiation of bills and the litigation process by actively engaging with the implementation organs.

In a report entitled: “The Constitution of Kenya and the Role of APSEA in its Implementation”, Mr. Ochanda points out that apathy by the general public to internalize the new constitution is likely hamper the implementation process.

According to the report, the other

challenge will be the initial balkanization of certain areas because devolution if not handled well in the initial stages might leave some counties behind for longer periods of time than anticipated. At the same time there will also be temptations to throw people out of their jobs, particularly those who may not be indigenous to the counties where they work.”

Other challenges expected include possibilities of endless litigations because the constitution places a heavy premium on the judiciary.

Further, some individuals who are keen on maintaining the status quo are likely to slow down reforms.

“The transitional arrangements are fairly complex against a fairly unfriendly environment. The constitution suspends the implementation of the changes in some structures of the government to sustain transition. The same organs are under threat of extinction in the new constitution. They include the numerous task forces started by ministries, the role of the Attorney General, the Chief Justice, the ministry of justice, parliament among others,” documents the report.

It goes on to state: “Transitional timelines not getting honored is yet another challenge. Parliament and the executive are constantly at war. There is a divided chain of command in the government yet the constitution insists on compulsory consultations between the president and the prime minister.”

The other likely challenge to be expected in the implementation process according to the report lies with the place of counties in the transition, because the national government is supposed to facilitate, build the capacities and transfer county functions in phases, therefore if there is



President Kibaki during Promulgation of the new Constitution.

no adequate good will combined with resistance for change expected in the state bureaucracy, devolution will be greatly challenged.

The report also identifies the massive public service personnel as yet another challenge since at the moment it is a foregone conclusion that the entire service is a central government bureaucracy consuming up to 78 per cent of the national budget, hence the new constitution drastically reduces the functions of the central government, limits its tentacles and takes away a minimum 15.5 per cent of the national budget to counties, what next?

Here critical queries arise whether the national government can run its development portfolio with just 6.5 per cent of the national budget? Or will the national government hive out its lower ranks of the civil service personnel to the counties? Will

the counties accept them and at what cost?

The public administration (provincial administration) and the local authorities have so far already generated a huge confusion as to their future and place. So far the respective parent ministries indicating a stay on position while the entire personnel still go with the positions taken by the ministry heads that appear to be playing politics – it is in the reverse of the provisions in the new constitution.

The report says that the counties will be bolting out after 2015 and are most likely to take over the all the public service employees who are currently at the district level and below as part of the national government facilitation to the counties. However, the critical part is that in practice, the counties might only need less than half of the number since most are likely to be downsized.

Body unhappy with Tourism Bill 2010

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

MOUNT Kenya Tourism Circuit Association has dismissed the Tourism Bill 2010 saying it has many flaws and shortcomings.

The association which is a body representing tourism stakeholders in Mt. Kenya region said the Bill has flaws and shortcomings that need to be corrected before it becomes law.

The Bill has already gone through the first reading in Parliament and is now at the committee stage after it was published by the Minister for Tourism Najib Balala in the Kenya Gazette.

"The first fundamental flaw in this bill is the proposed tourism marketing strategy. The bill gives the centralized Kenya Tourism Board (KTB) monopoly to market Kenya and its diverse and unique regions.

Historically and practically this approach has not borne much fruit and has ended up promoting two regions and reducing Kenya's tourism products to the detriment of other regions and the industry as a whole," said the association CEO Mr Simon Wachira.

Speaking to a press conference at the association offices in Nyeri town recently, Wachira who was accompanied by the association board members said the approach contradicts the new constitutional dispensation and spirit of devolution.

"The Bill does not create a mechanism to address issues of curriculum development and examinations. The growth of education cannot be ignored. Trained human resource is critical to the growth of the industry. This can only be guaranteed through maintenance of high standards," the CEO added.

Others who attended the press conference included the



Officials of Mt. Kenya Tourism Circuit Association speaking to the press in Nyeri town recently where they criticized the Tourism Bill 2010. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

association chairman Mr Simon Kathata and Secretary Mr Charles Karuga.

The association threatened to move to court if the Bill is not amended adding that it negates gains envisioned in Vision 2030.

"We propose that the earlier agreed proposal of stakeholders to establish regional tourism boards during the Utalii validation conference be reinstated in the Bill," he added.

They said there is need for regional tourism boards as they

were better placed to articulate required interventions in their respective areas and complement KTB in international marketing adding that this is the best practice adopted by fast growing tourism destinations like South Africa, Botswana, Morocco and others.

"Tourism is the only export product consumed at source. Communities are the producers and custodians of this product. This Bill deprives them the right to government funding by removing the only arrangement

available of Tourism Trust Fund and replacing it with a fund to finance government operations only," the association added.

The association proposed that the Bill should have a provision for affirmative action to promote community, SME's and informal sector participation in the growth of the industry and its sustainability.

They also proposed that the Bill establishes under the proposed research institute a curriculum development and examination organ like KASNEB.

Gatara MPs demand payment for their people

By MORRIS GITHENYA

MURANG'A MPs want Gatara residents fully compensated before they are relocated to pave way for the construction of a dam in the area.

Led by Planning and National Development Assistant Minister Peter Kenneth, the MPs who include Muturi Mwangi (Kiharu) and his Maragua counterpart Mr. Elias Mbau, say that residents will remain at the site until they are properly compensated to give room for the construction of the 4km square dam in Gatara area of Kiharu constituency.

On completion, the dam is expected to boost water supply in Nairobi and its environs.

However, speaking at Kaganda market, the MPs said they will soon deploy lawyers and valuers to ensure that residents are not shortchanged in the process.

"Before you agree to relocate to another site, the water company must provide you with clean water, health, education and other infrastructural facilities as part of the compensation plan," said Kenneth.

He said some people in Ndaka-ini area in his constituency were currently languishing in misery after they were duped in a compensation plan.

"Nobody should give way for the construction of the dam until he or she is fully compensated," said Muturi.

Maragua Mp said after those affected by the dam are fully compensated, they must be provided with domestic water among other basic necessities.

"Residents of Ndaka-ini lack clean water despite hosting the dam which provides a large percentage of water consumed in Nairobi," said Mbau.

Webuye behind in projects implementation

By LUKE KAPCHANGA

WEBUYE constituency lags behind in the implementation of projects undertaken through a government plan covering the period between 2002-2008.

The constituency has managed to complete a mere 48 percent of the projects, according to statistics from the Ministry of Planning, National Development and Vision 2030.

The district development analysis captures 96 projects and programmes, which were to be implemented between 2002-2008 covering Webuye and Ndivisi divisions.

An estimated Kshs.900 million

was earmarked for the projects but 38 projects never started.

The 48 per cent achievement is attributed to the introduction of Constituency Development Fund, Local Authority Transfer Fund, and the Youth Enterprise Fund as major catalyst which spurred the implementation.

Roads projects were the most affected with just one project being implemented out of seven projects slated for Kshs200million.

Education was billed as the highest beneficiary Kshs.350 million pumped into projects in the sector. However, data reveals that three projects listed for development never took off.

Achievements in the sector

nevertheless included impressive enrolment figures in primary schools which stood at 99.5 per cent and 32.6 per cent in secondary schools.

Dropout rate also declined during the period under review to 14 percent up from 55.3 per cent in primary schools, while in secondary it stands at 9 per cent.

The success was largely due to the Free Primary Education program, Free Secondary Education program, CDF bursary and construction of physical facilities and provision of furniture, and school feeding program.

Culture, recreation and sports for the five year plan received Kshs1.3million. However only two

projects benefited from the allocation but three others never took off.

On agriculture a total of Kshs.20 million was released to oversee the completion of projects geared towards strengthening agricultural extension services and improve access to credit.

Short comings in the implementation of the projects is blamed on shortages of technical staff by implementing agencies, delayed and inadequate funding and changes in government policies.

Decentralization of funds through CDF, LATF resulted in drastic change of plans with some projects being abandoned halfway.

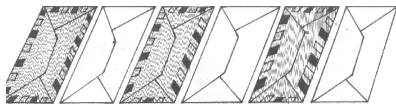
"Devolved funds which were highly politicized developed their

own project identification processes, disregarding those in the plan, hence leaving most untouched," reads the report.

The high levels of poverty are said to have affected projects implementation, especially those that required community contribution to attract donor funding.

Political interference in devolved funding led to duplication projects which negated the essence of planning and made it impossible to efficiently utilize resources.

The report recommends that politicians be sensitized on government policies and the capacity of the communities be enhanced to utilize devolved funds in a sustainable manner.



Leaders should stick to law and save us embarrassing drama

THE country is now used to situations where political appointments are made based on who knows who. It starts with the interested candidates lobbying viciously for the positions, ranging from regional representation to the survival of 'my people'.

In the psyche of our so-called leaders; cronyism nepotism, tribalism, my people syndrome among others, are totally ingrained. To overcome this behaviour, there is only one way. To stick to the tenets of the Constitution. Advertise all the positions that are vacant at national level and let those qualified apply.

The current Constitution provides for the above process. Therefore, it is very difficult to understand where all the brouhaha regarding the appointment of the Chief Justice (CJ), Attorney General (AG), Director of Prosecution and Director of Budgeting is coming from.

Of significance, there have been efforts, reflected in the papers that the two principals should meet and agree on the appointments to pre-empt plunging the country into conflict as seen in 2007/2008. To begin with, Kenya does not belong to the two principals, in essence, have failed Kenyans by not implementing the processes provided for in the Constitution. The disappointments have been in plenty since 2002. Kenyans expected more.

The response by leaders is also a total let down for Kenyans for two reasons: First, leaders should not appear in public shouting like children as they are supposed to be referent of the public. How can somebody differentiate these leaders from toots? They have lost sense of reason. They fail to deal with issues like IDPs, starvation, and corruption, and turn to their tribes for solace after they have indulged themselves in mischief.

Second, in Kenya there is always acrimonious occurrences when political positions are being filled that selection should be done regionally. This regional representation is subjective and has helped to entrench tribalism. It is alien to merit, which is the quality that Kenya desperately needs. If we have to learn from the private sector, where meritocracy is valued, the results are obvious.

Kenyans would have been saved from the current acrimonies if the Kibaki nominees declined the positions. By subjecting us to unnecessary quarrels, they are also violating the Constitution, as they can remind the person appointing them that the law is being flouted. Our educated lot should endeavour to do things properly, to save us from going the North Africa and the Middle East way in the future. The time is now.

However, it is important to note that Kenya is full of best practices as demonstrated in the private sector. There are institutions doing Kenyans proud without heads being linked to any regional representation. Can our emulate them? All those Kenyans, leaders, diplomats and others, who are advocating for the two principals to meet to solve the impasse are not calling a spade a spade. They should just tell the principals to follow the law.

This process if endorsed, will gradually remove the cancer of nepotism, patronage, regionalism, tribalism, sycophancy and cronyism from our system. It will remove our leadership from subjectivity to objectivity.

Prof. Philista Onyango
Via e-mail

Let's stand firm and defeat swindlers who are opposed to reform agenda

THE main reason Kenyans reformists were maimed, jailed and killed was to get a new constitution that would provide an environment for the country to prosper, and halt the imperial presidency that had no respect for human rights and enhanced the culture of impunity.

We hoped to nurture good governance in public institutions guided by the new constitution.

The political debates, allegiance shifts, sycophancy and unethical utterances that we have been experiencing from our elected leaders in relation to the implementation of key sections in the new constitution is a clear manifestation of who among the politicians are either reformist or conformist.

We must make anti-reformists — particularly those who rejected or were undecided during the referendum on the new constitution — understand that implementing the document selectively so as to vest power on an individual is a recipe for the violation of human rights and unequal distribution of resources. Yet that is the very reason some Kenyans paid with their lives to have a new constitution.

History has it that imperial presidency has demonstrated barbaric acts of land grabbing, political assassination, detention without trial, wanton destruction of our natural resources and so many evils arising from stupid governance.

Upon the promulgation of the new constitution, all members of the Executive, Legislature



Presidnet Kibaki and PM Raila at a YES rally during the campaign of the new Constitution. Photo/File

and the Judiciary took an oath to protect and defend the new constitution. It would be unethical to go against the same document that they swore to protect.

Kenyans must be wary of chameleon-like political players who change tune based on their individual gains at the expense of the beloved country Kenya. Most of these individuals who have swindled Kenyans and amassed wealth while serving in previous and current regimes have not been happy with the new constitution. They have now-regrouped with a view to diluting the Bills that are yet to be tabled in Parliament, they are eager to take advantage of any loophole for their selfish and

ethnic interest.

Political intrigue, blackmail, tribal chieftains, brinkmanship, deceit and arrogance have characterised the political leadership in Kenya, yet these have no room in this new constitution that emphasises high levels of integrity.

Our leaders must cultivate self control, patience and humility. They must desist from public utterances that fuel ethnic animosity. Instead they must ensure the constitution is implemented to the letter to guarantee equitable distribution of resources and respect of human rights. This constitution is the bedrock of good governance.

Fred Opundo,
Nairobi.

Do not allow wastage of cash meant for removing lake weed

THE local press recently reported that Lake Victoria Environmental Management Programme (LVEMP) and local authorities, the World Bank and the government will spend Kshs.2.2 billion in the next two years to combat water hyacinth in Lake Victoria.

Unfortunately, the bulk of the Kshs.2.2 billion will go down the drain through endless seminars in five-star hotels, overseas trips, high salaries for expatriates, luxurious 4x4 vehicles, allocations to inept and non-existent to NGOs, CBOs and corrupt local authorities.

It will be a repetition of failed past efforts to control the hyacinth.

At the moment, some "experts" from the USA are spending billions of dollars to control hyacinth in rivers and lakes in the DRC, through the use of weevils and other insects.

The experts will not tell DRC what the weevils will feed on after killing off the hyacinth.

With the current scramble for scarce natural resources in the world, it is wrong to merely remove and then destroy the water hyacinth without putting the weed to serious economic use.

An industrious Kenyan is already making fertiliser from hyacinth removed from Nairobi dam. The man proposes to do the same in Lake Victoria. The government must talk to this man.

The Nile perch fish received same contempt treatment from East Africans when it was first introduced to the lake. Today, even skeletons, scales, skins, gall bladders and other uneatable left overs of the Nile perch are put to some use. We should do the same to water hyacinth and thank those who accidentally or maliciously introduced it in the lake.

Finally, water hyacinth deserves to be treated as an important natural resource. It is not menace or punishment to man. God forgive our ignorance in the use of water hyacinth.

S.R. Athembo Onyuro,
Kisumu.



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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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Nyeri County residents claim ESP funds misused

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

A CROSS section of Nyeri residents want an audit done on funds earmarked for projects under the Economic Stimulus Programme (ESP) in the area.

The residents who were giving their views at a meeting prepared by African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) said that a significant proportion of the funds meant to build fish ponds cannot be accounted for.

According to the residents some of the ponds have turned into breeding grounds for mosquitoes as they were never completed.

"Many of the locals hurriedly

formed groups in order to get money but when the money was not forthcoming; they abandoned the ponds which have now become breeding places for mosquitoes and hazardous to our being. There was no visibility study which was done. The ponds are white elephant projects," said Mt Kenya Human Rights Commission coordinator Mr Samuel Wandimi.

Speaker after speaker said some of the fish ponds dried up since the water was not enough while others have overgrown weeds as construction in most of the ponds stalled after consultations failed.

The residents drawn from Tetu,

Nyeri Town, Mathira, Othaya, Mukurwe-ini and Kieni districts were presenting their views to APRM council who were visiting Nyeri during a meeting held at IFAD hall in Nyeri town.

It was chaired by a council member Kareithi Njogu who comes from the Nepad desk under the Ministry of Planning and Vision 2030.

The meeting was attended by among others Karatina mayor Mr Christopher Kamau and Maendeleo ya Wanawake Nyeri branch Chairperson Mrs Emma Njora.

Meanwhile, other residents lamented that misuse of Constituency Development Funds is still rampant

in Nyeri County.

A Kieni Social worker Mrs Esther Wamuyu said that it is unfortunate that some CDF projects which were started by former MPs in Kieni and Mathira constituencies were abandoned by their successors.

Miss Anastashia Wanjiru from Kieni said the misuse of funds is still rampant in the area and strict measures need to be put in place to control the misappropriation of funds.

Mr Wachira Migwi who is a person with disability lamented that Nyeri County has no sports facilities for people with disability.



A boy checks at some of the fish ponds at Ngangarithi area at the outskirts of Nyeri town Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

State set to revamp fishing industry

By BEKADZO TONDO

THE government has set aside Kshs3 billion to revamp the collapsed fishing industry in the country.

According to the Minister for Fisheries Development, Mr. Amason Kingi, the project is being financed with support from the World Bank.

Speaking to *The Link* in Kilifi, Kingi noted that the funds will help in the construction of cooling plants in different parts of the country.

Kingi said fishermen have over the years suffered huge

losses due to lack of better storage facilities.

"With the cooling plants in place, fishermen will be able to preserve their produce and look for better market," he said.

The minister further noted that refrigerated vehicles will be bought to serve areas where farmers can hardly access cooling plants.

Under the programme, he said farmers will receive cash to acquire modern fishing gears to improve on their production.

Mr. Kingi regretted that the vast water mass in coast province remain unexploited in fish

production.

He noted that 94 percent of the fish production in the country was mainly concentrated in the lakes and rivers with Coast Province managing to produce a paltry 6percent.

At the same time, he said the government had introduced the fish farming as a measure to revive the collapsed fishing industry in the country.

He said each of the constituencies under the program will construct 300 fish ponds to be managed by groups, individual farmers and education institutions.



Mr. Kingi

Bifwoli under fire over CDF

By JOEL JUMA

Residents of Bumula Constituency in Bungoma County want the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) accounts frozen to pave way for an independent audit.

Through their lawyer Boniface Ot-sula, the residents want the accounts frozen until the Kenya Anti Corruption Commission (KACC) completes its investigations.

"Residents do not want the CDF committee to make any further withdrawals until investigations are completed," he added.

An audit report for the 2008/2009 financial year cited embezzlement of Kshs37.4 million earmarked for a water project in Bumula.

The Controller and Auditor General report on appropriation accounts indicated that an expenditure of Kshs37.4 million had been incurred yet there were no benefits to residents.

The report indicated that no dam had been constructed as entailed in the project.

"Instead, the contractor laid pipes from an existing water project known as Malakisi Water Station, which supplies water to Malaba town," read part of the report.

In the letter to KACC director PLO Lumumba dated January 27, 2011, the residents said the Constituency Development Board Secretariat had failed to address their complaints.

They further said their complaint to the former director of KACC had not been dealt with either.

"This time round, please come to our aid and help rescue our CDF," they said in the letter.

Former PC Maurice Makhanu, civic leaders and the business community among other leaders signed the letter.

They cited the construction of a water dam and laying of pipes in Mukwa, Kibuke and Siboti locations as one of the projects KACC should investigate.

"The project was commissioned by President Kibaki in 2007. Kshs37 million was spent but locals have not seen a drop of water," read part of the letter.

They further cited alleged allocation of funds to a secondary school twice, yet the institution received only the first batch of the money.

"Netima Secondary School and St Patrick Netima Secondary School are one and the same school. However, an allocation of Sh900, 000 and Sh800, 000 was made to the school but only the latter was received," residents claimed.

However, area MP Bifwoli Wakoli, who is also Lands Assistant Minister, dismissed the allegations as baseless.

He claims those behind the allegations were driven by political motives.

In the letter to KACC, residents further claimed the CDF committee was funding ghost projects.

They said Kshs2.4 million was allocated to Kabula Dispensary for an ambulance yet no vehicle has been purchased.

"Other questionable expenditures include the purchase of Kamaeti Secondary School bus, construction of CDF office, cattle dips, chiefs offices among others," said Joseph Wekesa, a resident from Kabula location.

Nyeri County acquires a new law courts

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

NYERI County has acquired multi-million magnificent courts.

The Nyeri Law Courts Complex which is situated in Nyeri town was officially opened recently by Chief Justice Evans Gicheru.

The project took more than three years to be complete.

The complex is fitted with communication gadgets which are essential accessories needed to ensure the efficient administration of justice in the courts.

"The design and layout of this court has moved away from the traditional idea of what halls of justice usually look like. Facilities for storage, retrieval and communication at broadband speed are incorporated in this building."

While commissioning the project, Gicheru emphasized the need for the courts to have modern facilities in order to serve the public better and ensure timely delivery of justice to all.

He said one of the most important responsibilities of the judiciary is to provide space and amenities needed by magistrates and judges to operate from as they help decide critical issues of the day.

"The increasing number of cases coming before the courts continues to create demands of

different kinds. When we contemplate the caseload in the courts today, there can be no comparison with the caseload at the time of the construction of the old court building," said the CJ.

Among those who attended the function were Central PC Mr Kiplimo Rugut, the Registrar of the High Court Mrs Lydia Achode, Public Works PS Mr John Lonyangapuo, Nyeri High Court judge Mr Joseph Serгон, magistrates and lawyers among others.

He promised the public that the judiciary will continue to put up modern facilities and refurbish the existing ones in order to provide dignity and privacy of those who seek redress before the courts or those who have cause to appear there.

Gicheru reminded judges and magistrates of their role as guardians of the rule of the law saying they have a particular responsibility to protect the constitutional rights of each and every citizen as well as the integrity of the constitution by which those rights exist.

He said the provision of modern facilities by the judiciary will ensure these responsibilities are met by providing the necessary facilities for upholding the constitutional responsibility bestowed on the judicial officers under the new constitutional dispensation on behalf of the citizenry.



The new magnificent Nyeri Law courts complex.

Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Union threatens employers with court action

By BOB OMBATI

THE Kenya Union of Commercial Food and Allied workers (KUCFAW) will soon move to court to seek redress against employers who contravene existing labour laws and the new constitution.

The newly elected Kisii branch KUCFAW secretary Andrew Nyamasege says that the labour laws and the new constitution are very clear on the freedom of employees and therefore employers who oppress and engage in dictatorial practices will face legal action.

He said that many companies have been noted to be barring their employees from joining trade unions against their constitutional right and labour laws, hence said the union shall not sit back and watch its members suffer.

The secretary says that the union has the backing of the law and thus is geared at staging a real battle against such oppressive employers.

The official who was elected unopposed during an exercise overseen by Kisii Central district labour Officer, Joshua Nyiera at Gusii county council hall urged employers to improve working conditions and pay their

workers well lest they face the wrath of the union. Nyamasege lamented that some firms paid their workers salaries and wages ranging from Kshs. 1500 to Kshs. 2000 per month.

And, Kisii Branch Kenya Building, Construction, Timber and allied employees (KBCTAE) union Secretary, Leonard Ombati, who was re-elected said the union will sensitize its members on their rights to challenge exploitative employers in order to curb the practice.

The Secretary faulted rich people who capitalize on workers ignorance to underpay them, stressing this was un-

constitutional and greatly hampered the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the achievement for vision 2030.

KUCFAW caters for workers serving in distributive and commercial sector including Supermarkets, shops, food manufacturing industries such as Unga millers, KCC among others.

Tobacco industries, banks and financial institutions and security companies among other sectors not mentioned here are some of the areas that the union champions for the rights of employees.

CDF projects idle: German Ambassador

By MORRIS GITHENYA

A SIGNIFICANT proportion of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) Projects in the country are lying idle despite the enormous public resources pumped into them.

German Ambassador to Kenya Margit Hellwig – Boette says it is unfortunate that vast amount of resources spent on the projects had not translated to any meaningful change due to poor leadership and lack of planning.

Speaking after touring C.D.F projects and those supported by Germany in Gatanga constituency, the envoy said that in future development funds should solely be directed to projects that will have the greatest positive impact on majority of the people.

The ambassador who was flanked by Gatanga MP Peter Kenneth and C.D.F committee members led by their chairman J.G. Thiga said projects jointly initiated by Germany and local residents over the last 2 years had been completed.

Kenneth said in the last seven years, C.D.F had planted 3 million trees to conserve the environment.

He said C.D.F projects in the constituency had registered the desirable impact because they had picked on fewer projects.

He called for more funds to be channeled into the C.D.F kitty.

CDF managers to sign performance contracts –Raila

By JOEL JUMA

Constituency Development Fund (CDF) managers have been included in performance contracting programmes.

Prime Minister Raila Odinga says the move seeks to raise the standards of resource management at the grassroots level.

Raila also announced that public officers in both Central and County Governments will be required to sign performance contracts.

He said CDF managers have been brought on board to ensure Government projects are implemented as expected.

Raila further said the move will encourage efficiency in opera-

tions.

He noted that the Government will enlist the support of stakeholders from the private sector to see that the economy of the country continues to grow to the satisfaction of Kenyans.

Raila made the remarks in a speech read on his behalf by assistant minister the Office of the Prime Minister Alfred Khang'ati during the official opening of a three-day workshop on performance contracting in Kakamega.

Permanent Secretary Richard Ndubai, Deputy Secretary in the Office of the President Fred Ndunga and the Director of Vision 2030 Andrew Toboso also addressed the meeting.

Raila said the Economic Re-

covery Strategy for Employment and Wealth Creation of 2003-2007 had

recommended sweeping reforms in the management of the public service.

He explained that the Government is fully integrating the performance agenda by cascading critical management skills in bureaucratic levels.

Toboso and Ndunga said DCs are required to attend all training programmes for them to monitor the implementation of the contracts effectively.

"If the DCs fail to monitor the implementation process, then they should blame themselves for poor delivery of services at the grassroots," said Ndunga.



PM Raila

PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE

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New tool for reporting conflicts launched

AFTER participating in the last provincial policy dialogue meeting, the third one in February, I can conclude that the Partnership for Peace project is well on the way.

In all the three meetings that have taken place, we have had a good mixture of participants from both civil society organization, provincial administration and other important stakeholders. Policy focused discussions have taken place and a number of recommendations have been highlighted which will be further discussed with policy makers in Nairobi in April this year.

In the Rift Valley the deliberations focused on Negative Ethnicity which influences and cuts across all sectors of society from political alignment to job recruitment. It was concluded that Negative Ethnicity was the main cause of discrimination and that the Government, with help of other actors, needs to make sure that the policy of National Co-

MANAGER'S COLUMN



By
**HANNA
CARLSSON**

hesion and Integration is followed to the letter.

The policy makes discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and race a crime.

In Kakamega, Western Province, the topic was the right to own land, an issue that has been haunting Kenya since the colonial time when white settlers pushed away the natives and took their land. The Mount Elgon area was used as a case study. There is a National Land Policy in place and also the new constitution deals with land rights. Both legal frameworks set out to correct historical injustices that led to inequitable land distribution as well as eliminating gender-based discrimination in land ownership. Notwithstanding, the participants emphasized the need of full implementation and highlighted the need to make sure the policies

were not politicized.

The meeting in Kisumu dealt with resources, with a special focus on the Sugar and Fishing Industry. This article was written before deliberations on the working papers took place but the outcome will be published in a later issue of this supplement. However, so far the participants, especially from civil society organizations, have aired their concerns about the negligence of the provincial administration to act swiftly on the early warning signs and conflicts. On the other hand, the provincial administration present stressed that that was not usually the case but before they intervene they need information sources to be validated and the motive to be expounded. Considering the constraints that most provincial administration offices in Kenya have this task may be overwhelming.

However, the good news is that a new tool has been initiated for citizens to report any sign of tensions or open conflicts. The tool is a public platform called Amani Kenya @ 108. The platform was a public initiative to

engage Kenyans in adding their voice to peace-building efforts in Kenya. Managed by the National Steering Committee on Conflict Management and Peace-building (NSC), funded by the United Nations Development Programme-Kenya (UNDP), the platform integrates text messages, incident reports and media reports. Any citizen can report through the available means which are text message (to 108), email (to amani@nscpeace.go.ke), Facebook (amanikenya108), twitter (#amanikenya108) or the website, www.nscpeace.go.ke/108. All reports received are validated and thereafter the correct institutions are contacted to take action. The platform, correctly and widely used, will help to strengthen peace and conflict prevention efforts in Kenya.

Information sharing is one of the most important tools in conflict prevention and peace-building, therefore, I encourage all the readers to actively use this tool.

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

TJRC moves on despite setbacks

After attending a Reflection Forum on the work of the Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) in Kisumu last month, it was clear that many people, including members of civil society organisations, did not have a clear idea about exactly what the TJRC does. This was rather alarming given the importance of civil society support to the TJRC, not to mention the importance of the TJRC for those working for peace in Kenya. Thus it calls for a thorough introduction to the role of the TJRC.

The TJRC was created in order to fulfil the accountability component of Agenda Four of the Na-



By **HANNA
CLIFFORD**

tional Accord signed in 2008. Although the TJRC was created immediately following the post-election violence, it is responsible for investigating and reporting on all human rights violations in Kenya between 12th December 1963 and 28th February 2008. The overall goal is to provide Kenyans, as individuals and as a nation, with the opportunity to heal past wounds and build peace, by establishing a definitive account of past crimes and ending impunity.

The TJRC's mandate does not only cover a long time-frame of abuses, it is also concerned with a wide variety of crimes, from physical injury to economic crimes - such as illegal land acquisition - from the marginalisation

of communities to fuelling of ethnic tensions. It is authorised to investigate and identify not only individual perpetrators of such crimes, including holders of public office, but also public institutions, organisations, the State itself, and those working on behalf of the State. Although the TJRC cannot arrest and prosecute those responsible for human rights violations, it can recommend for their prosecution by the government.

It also offers support to victims of past crimes, such as witness protection, as well as making recommendations as to how people should get redress, for example through reparations. To prevent future violations, the

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The Partnership for Peace Project is responsible for the views reflected in this supplement.



Resettlement of Saboats begins soon

BY JOEL JUMA

THE re-settlement of families that were displaced by activities of the defunct Saboot Land Defence Force is set to commence soon.

Survey of land in Chebyuk has been finalised and the 1,732 beneficiaries identified for settlement.

Western PC Samuel Kilele says beneficiaries will start to get their allocations from March.

Kilele says the beneficiaries are expected to use their allocations to engage in farming activities. "The survey work is almost complete and the Ministry of Lands is set to issue ownership documents to the families," adds Kilele.

Kilele says he does not expect any disputes in the allocations, as the exercise will be conducted in a free and fair manner.

The PC made the remarks in a speech delivered on his behalf by the Lower Western



Victims of post-election violence in 2007 are still living in tents.

Regional Commissioner Rashid Muhammad during a peace meeting held at a Kakamega workshop organised by the Partnership for Peace Project brought together par-

ticipants from both private and public sectors from the region.

Kilele toured Mt Elgon with the members of the task force appointed by President Mwai Kibaki to oversee the process.

The PC said the Government is set to ensure that peace prevails during the allocations and warned that gangsters contemplating to re-group will be face the full force of law.

Western Kenya Human Rights Watch Executive Director Job Bwonya said the Government should engage all stakeholders before the list of the beneficiaries is made public.

Bwonya said the selection of beneficiaries could generate animosity among residents if the matter is not tackled collectively.

"We should avoid a situation where some people will go back to the forest to revive their attacks on the beneficiaries," said Bwonya.

He said the provincial administration contributed to previous skirmishes following disputed allocations.

Kilele, however, said only genuine squatters will benefit from the allocations. He said tribalism will not be dragged into the allocations.

Fix youth employment to avoid conflicts

BY OLUOCH AYALO

EXPERTS in various fields grappled with how to deal with rising youth unemployment and underemployment.

Suggested remedies to this problem have been varied in both concept and application but what is evident is that most of these attempted solutions have fallen short, with very few success stories.

The underlying factor is always captured by some certain negative development indices like low GDP, high poverty levels, food insecurity, high rate of unemployment, low access to health care, among others but what is perplexing is how comes all these great minds get it wrong most of the time.

In most African states, the youth

constitute about 60% of the population, yet the rate of unemployment in most of these states stands at an average of 35 per cent, considering both the formal and informal sectors. This is despite countries like Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Egypt and Zimbabwe having vast numbers of the youth population who are highly skilled and academically qualified either wallowing in poverty, disease, desperation and crime or a concoction of all these elements.

The current historic people driven revolutions we are witnessing in African states like Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Lybia, Morocco and Djibouti are all driven by the so called 'facebook generation' of young people who clearly feel the incumbent leadership in these countries have failed to address their issues. Youth

unemployment and poverty (in the face of high corruption, concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, the constant widening gap between the rich and the poor, dictatorship and lack of respect for the principles of democracy) is very much at the heart of these uprisings'. It is a sad day for Africa when the youth, in order to make themselves heard feel they have no choice but to resort to mass demonstrations which however peaceful, creates chaos, destabilizes law and order, negates economic development and hurts investor confidence. Kenya which was caught up in the 2007 post election violence is still recovering from the effects of that conflict which saw massive looting, killing, rape, burning of property and eviction of people from their homes. The idle unemployed youth

in Kenya were the major civilian perpetrators' in committing these atrocities and were too willing to be used to do the politicians billing.

There is strength in numbers and two heads are better than one. The youth in Africa have the potential to achieve economic success for themselves and by extension accelerate the rate of development on the continent by harnessing their knowledge and skills to pursue group income generating projects.

This is not anything new, but there needs to be a multidimensional strategy aimed at making social capital work and herein lays the African challenge. Most African governments do not have youth empowerment legislation in place. Some lack

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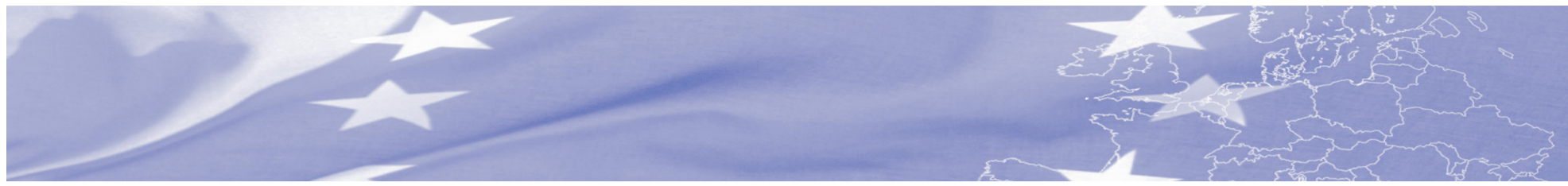
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TJRC moves on despite setbacks

From Page 15

TJRC is looking at ways to transform the current social and political institutions— both procedurally and in terms of the values which underpin them. The findings and recommendations will be included in a final report by the TJRC, which is expected to be released towards the end of this year.

The central mechanism which the TJRC will use to create a full picture of events over the last 45 years is through public hearings, which are to be conducted throughout Kenya. Since the TJRC was first established in 2008, it has been working— albeit slowly— towards the holding of the hearings, which will begin shortly. In order to gather as much evidence as possible for the hearings, the TJRC spent 5 months touring the country collecting statements from people affected by or witness to human rights violations. The statement-taking phase is now complete, with the TJRC having recorded around 20,000 statements, and analysis of that and the rest of the evidence is now underway.

The hearings will provide a platform

for those affected by crimes to have their stories told and will be an opportunity for those accused of crimes to be faced with the devastation their actions have caused. This is a crucial initial step in the process of reconciliation as it is not until a full account of events is in the public domain that people can move forward to reconciliation. Due to the scale of abuses, however, it is not possible that each person who provided a statement to the TJRC will be able to speak at the hearings, even if they were directly affected by a particular crime. Instead the Commission will call upon certain individuals, whose experiences can together give a representative picture of the violations.

There will be three kinds of public hearing, designed to cover the different types of violations committed. The first type of hearings to take place will be those dealing with individual perpetrators followed by institutional hearings, which will focus on the actions of public institutions or private organisations, such as the military, media, business groups and sections

of civil society. The third type of hearing will deal with cases, such as those relating to land, women, children and grand corruption.

The schedule for the hearings begins in Northern and Upper Eastern Kenya then moves to Nairobi and Nyanza, Central and Rift Valley, Lower Eastern and Coast, and finishing in Western and Mt Elgon regions. These will be followed by institutional and thematic hearings. The hearings are public and people are urged to attend.

Following the hearings the TJRC will be supervising community dialogues between different groups that may have experienced previous tensions and conflict. This will allow people to mediate conflicts better in the future so that there is a reduced chance of violence breaking out. Another of the mechanisms hoping to be used by the TJRC will be to provide perpetrators with the opportunity to publically acknowledge and repent for their crimes through a Truth Telling Commission. A similar process was used in South Africa after the end of Apartheid to bring reconciliation to a

deeply divided nation.

The TJRC has been dogged by controversy since its inception. The appointment of Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat as Chairman of the TJRC brought the credibility of the Commission into question due to his alleged involvement in a number of the violations being investigated. The Commission has also been criticised for failing to do enough to inform people of their activities, particularly the process of statement taking.. These issues aside, and with the appointment of an interim Chairperson Tecla Namachanja, the TJRC is moving forward with its work.

That the TJRC succeeds in its goal of revealing the truth and bringing justice to Kenyans is something we are all stakeholders in. Unless people can move on from the past with a belief that people have been held to account for their crimes, it will be difficult for Kenyan's to sustain lasting peace.

Clifford is an intern at the KAS, Kisumu office

Fix youth employment to avoid conflicts

From Page 16

national youth policies or programs that are integrated to support the village and slum grassroots youth. These are fundamental structures which are necessary foundations for the youth to succeed through social capital.

The government of Rwanda has a five year plan for promoting youth employment within the framework of a program they call Youth Employment Network or YEN. These strategies though noble need to focus much more on the strengths and capacity of the African youth and one is certainly the ability to achieve economic development collectively with the net effect of improving income levels of individual members of these groups and by extension improving the standard of living of their families. The strategies would also be much more effective if intergraded into the general economic and fiscal plan of the country for example Kenya's economic long term blueprint—

“Vision 2030”.

The private sector is an integral partner in supporting the development of the youth through social capital (guided by the established government framework). Banks and other financial institutions can come up with innovative loan packages to support youth groups as a source of starting or working capital, support them in developing business plans, provide training on book keeping and provide incentives to motivate those groups that utilise their funds effectively. Other forms of support by the private sector could include training on current technology, internal governance of the groups, and registration of business entities, intellectual property rights, mentorship programs and promotion of business best practices and models.

The youth groups are the final piece of the puzzle and probably the most important one. Several challenges face these youth groups but these can be summarised into one: how to establish and sustain income



Youth during post-election violence in early 2008. Photo/File

generating youth groups.

None of these challenges are insurmountable and with proper planning, partnership, collaboration and goodwill the African youth may be uplifted from the ferocious cycle of

poverty that is the cause of conflicts in Africa.

The writer is the Chairperson of Youth Reconciliation Forum of Kenya (YOREF-K).

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PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE

The difference between ICC and TJRC

BY HANNAH CLIFFORD

THERE are often so many different institutions, organisations and acronyms, many people find it hard to keep up and know which is which. Two of the most important of these dealing with the post-election violence are the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) and the International Criminal Court (ICC). Despite their importance there is often confusion about where one ends and the other begins. Let's get some clarity.

The most important difference between the TJRC and ICC is that the TJRC operates at a national level, while the ICC is an international court which exists above the jurisdiction of any single nation, including Kenya. Within any country there is a judicial system which has a hierarchy governing the national court system. The ICC is a criminal court which functions outside and above the Kenyan national judiciary.

The ICC is an independent international organization based at The Hague in the Netherlands. The Court is the creation of the international community, which came to consensus over the need for an international court to try the perpetrators of the world's most serious crimes, such as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The ICC was established by the Rome Statute, which 120 States adopted in 1998. The international community has long aspired to the creation of a permanent international court, and, in the 20th century, it reached consensus on definitions of The Nuremberg and Tokyo trials – the first trials to take place at an international level - addressed war crimes, crimes against peace, and crimes against humanity committed during the Second World War.

In the 1990s tribunals like the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, were established to put an end to impunity for crimes believed to be too serious to go unpunished. However, because these tribunals were established to only try crimes committed within a specific time-frame and during a specific conflict, there was general agreement that a permanent, independent criminal court was needed. The TJRC in contrast is not a criminal court. Rather, it is simply a commission which, although working at the national level, has no powers to arrest or prosecute people. The TJRC can only investigate, record and make recommendations relating to the perpetrators of crimes.

Another key difference is that the TJRC is mandated to investigate a wide number of crimes, including all human rights violations, economic crimes, and inciting violence. The TJRC can also investigate people and institutions at all levels, from community leaders to state institutions. The ICC is mandated to prosecute only those accused of the most serious crimes and at the highest level of responsibility. This is why the ICC is only proceeding with the prosecutions of the alleged six key organizers of the violence – the so-called Ocampo Six – and not any of the lower level criminals who were out in the streets



Justice Waki hands over his Commission's report on Post Election Violence in Kenya to President Kibaki. Looking on PM Odinga. Photo/File

during the post-election violence.

The TJRC is able to investigate the foot-soldiers of the post-election violence, along with others it finds responsible, and recommend that they are prosecuted by the national courts in Kenya. It is then left to the courts and police to deal with such people. Why, then, can this not happen for the Ocampo Six – why can't the national courts prosecute at the highest level also? This was the intention following the post-election violence when the Waki Commission – so named after its Chairman Justice Philip Waki - was established.

After the power-sharing agreement was signed the new government set up the Commission of Inquiry on Post-Election Violence (the Waki Commission) to investigate the violence and recommend action to be taken by the government. In its final report, the Waki Commission recommended the creation of a special tribunal; one that operates at the na-

tional level but is independent of the ordinary judicial system and is run by both local and international judges and prosecutors.

The Commission found Kenya's ordinary judicial system to be incapable of offering justice for the victims of the post-election violence, due to the enormity of the crimes committed and the pervasion of political pressure. The issue of judicial integrity was of particular importance given that many of those behind the violence occupy positions of influence within the government. Finally the Waki Commission recommended that, failing the creation of a special tribunal, the Commission would require the mediator-Kofi Annan to pass a sealed envelope with the names of chief suspects to the International Criminal Court (ICC). The Kenyan parliament voted against a constitutional amendment bill establishing the proposed tribunal as directed by the Waki Commission

Although Kenya is a signatory to the Rome Statute, which gives the ICC the legal authority to prosecute any people believed to be responsible for serious crimes, the Statute declares that the Hague Court can only exercise jurisdiction when the state in which crimes are committed is unable or unwilling to prosecute crimes itself. As the Kenyan Government had demonstrated it was unwilling to prosecute the perpetrators itself, the ICC's mandate was invoked. The Chief Prosecutor for the Kenyan case, Justice Luis Moreno-Ocampo, thus sought permission to proceed with the case against the six suspects. There was judged to be enough evidence to try the Ocampo six for crimes against humanity and crimes of aggression. The six suspects are waiting to be called before the court.

The TJRC is funded by, and thus reliant on, the Kenyan National Government in order to carry out its work. The government pays the salaries of the Commissioners and staff as well as financing its resources as opposed to the ICC process which is independent of any government's influence.

While the TJRC and ICC have many differences, they also share an important similarity: in order for both to succeed, they rely on the support of the Kenyan people. Where the criminals seek to delay and dodge justice, the people must be there to demand the law is upheld. When criminals attempt to silence victims through bribes and intimidation, people must speak out in support of the truth. When criminals use hate speech to distract us from the wickedness of their actions, the people must reject their poison.

Kenyans are already working in this direction, through the signing of a petition to oppose the deferral of the ICC cases; through the attendance of conferences held by the TJRC; by recording statements with the TJRC statement takers; and by applying pressure on President Kibaki after he attempted to place sympathetic allies in positions responsible for bringing justice. So keep pushing for justice!

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MPs demand immediate release of roads fund

By JOEL JUMA

PARLIAMENTARY Transport Committee wants the Government to immediately release the last tranche of over Kshs300 million meant for the rehabilitation of roads in the constituencies.

The Committee said the state of roads was worrying in many constituencies, adding that the ministry of Roads must disburse the money to enable constituencies improve their dilapidated road networks.

"We are almost winding up the financial year and delays by the Government to release the money amounts to corruption," said the Committee Chairman David Were.

Were and committee members who included Vice Chairman Isaac Muoki, Yusuf Chanzu, captain Clement Wambugu, Edwin Yinda, Dr Wilbur Ottichillo and a political activist Joseph Wamoto said that the state of roads was pathetic in rural areas.

All the constituencies require over Kshs14 million as part of the last disbursement from the Government for roads rehabilitation.

The Government allocated Kshs27 million to each constituency this year for roads rehabilitation.

Contractors who applied for tenders in Kakamega County have not been given the jobs due to lack of money.

The ministry was allocated over Kshs104 billion to road works in the current financial year and the committee is assessing how the money was utilised.

The committee expressed shock that some roads have not been completed despite the Government having paid the contractors. They cited Eke-



Government should release funds to complete road construction.

ro-Buyangu Road where over Kshs 2.2 billion has been spent and yet the road remains incomplete.

Speaking at Bumala market during the inspection of the roads and structures constructed by the Government under the Economic stimulus programme, Were said that the committee wants to ascertain the progress of the projects.

"We know the Government is in the process of planning for the next financial year and we want to avoid a situation where the money is returned to the Treasury because it was not used," said Were.

The Matungu MP explained that the Minister for Roads Franklin Bett should advise Treasury to release the money to avoid stalling of projects.

Were also said the committee will summon Transport minister Amos Kimunya to explain why airstrips in the country are not well maintained.

He explained that a tour of some of the airstrips indicated that the fields have

been ignored. "Animals are being grazed in the airstrips especially in Busia and Bungoma," said Were.

Mudavadi urges farmers to buy shares

By JOEL JUMA

Deputy Prime Minister and minister for Local Government, Mr. Musalia Mudavadi, has urged tea farmers in Vihiga and Kakamega counties to actively involve themselves in the management of industry.

Mudavadi told farmers to buy shares at Mudete Tea Factory as a way of enhancing their bargaining power in the management of the firm.

He regretted that tea farmers in the two counties had not shown interest in acquisition of shares at the factory.

Mudete Tea Factory is one of those enlisted for privatisation by Kenya Tea Development Agency.

"Farmers in this region have been allocated over Kshs10 million but it is sad that they are not turning up to purchase shares and time is running out," said Mudavadi.

Mudavadi said agriculture will play a key role in the management of Vihiga County adding that farmers should start to invest in tea farming.

"A large section of our county is full of rocks and investment in the shares should not be underestimated," said Mudavadi.

Mudavadi was speaking at Kisangula Secondary School during the inspection of Constituency Development Fund projects.

The school has received over Kshs2.6 million from the CDF kitty.

Mudavadi said farmers can buy the shares through installments which may entail piecemeal deduction of their monthly earnings.

This, he said will ensure that they are not burdened in the acquisition of the factory.

He noted that over Kshs13million has been released by the Government for development projects in Sabatia Constituency.

Mudavadi said MPs who are delaying to submit proposals to the National Constituency Development Fund National Board should blame themselves for non-implementation of projects in their respective areas.

He said education programmes rely on CDF money and wondered why some legislators were not adhering to the set guidelines.

"We cannot blame Planning Minister Wycliffe Oparanya over the delays," said Mudavadi.

He noted that over 500 students have benefited from the CDF kitty this month in Sabatia constituency.

He said Kshs6 million was allocated to needy students especially students who were selected to join national secondary schools.

He spoke even as the Kenya Primary Schools Head Teachers Association Western branch secretary David Ikunza said many pupils who were selected to join national schools may not report due to lack of fees.

"We have received cases where some parents in Kakamega are opting to enroll their children to day schools due to lack of fees," said Ikunza.

Beware of conman giving fake jobs to Mombasa residents

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

THE Mombasa Municipal Council has unearthed an employment scam in which a city-based conman has been fleecing unsuspecting job seekers of cash for non-existent jobs at the local authority.

The local authority has raised the red flag over a trick merchant who has allegedly duped several job seekers to part with between Kshs.80,000 and Kshs.200,000 to secure the non-existing vacancies.

Town Clerk Tubman Otieno, says a number of victims have

walked into his office armed with fake appointment letters bearing the Town Clerk's logo, but the letter head bearing the emblem of the Nairobi City Council.

Mr. Otieno also regretted that the appointment letters also bore his forged signature.

"Employment scams are real

and people should be wary of fraudsters, and notify law enforcers when asked to part with cash in order to secure employment in any organization", he cautioned.

Speaking in his office recently, Mr. Otieno added that people should not be duped. "We are not employing anybody neither have we contracted anyone to hire people for us."

The Town Clerk was speaking to the press after turning away a young man who walked into his office with a letter of appointment reading: "Appointment as a senior clerk at treasury department local pensionable post". Mr. Otieno said he empathized with the job seeker and offered to call the trickster who secured him the phantom job only for the man who picked the phone to disconnect the line upon inquiries.

The fake appointment letter goes ahead to give the salary scale as Kshs.21,000 per month with a Kshs6,000 house allowance.

The chief officer said this was the third case, adding that a young woman had also fallen victim to the fraudster, who she paid Kshs.75,000 to secure employment at the Mombasa Municipal Council.



Mombasa Municipal Council Hall

Concerns over insecurity in Sabatia

By JOEL JUMA

A TEACHERS union has petitioned the Government to address the rising cases of insecurity in Sabatia District, as thugs continue to target schools in the area.

Kenya Union of Post Primary Education of Teachers (Kuppet) said education standards in the district are likely to drop drastically if the trend is not reversed.

Speaking after a branch executive committee meeting, provincial council secretary Omboko Milemba and the Vihiga branch executive secretary Mark Amendi said that panic has gripped the district's teaching fraternity.

"Teachers are coming to us to ask for assistance to get transfers to other areas," Amendi added.

He challenged the Government to assure teachers that their security is guaranteed.

"Something must be done very fast. Officers must be reshuffled and supplied with enough vehicles and equipments," Amendi added.

Recently armed thugs raided two secondary schools in the district and attacked teachers before making away with unknown amount of money.

The raid came just a day after a gang hacked to death Joram Chagusia Mbogani, who was Vokoli sub-location assistant chief.

The thugs raided Moi Girls Vokoli and Keveye Girls. A teacher at Vokoli was injured and is still admitted at Mbale District Hospital.

A teacher at Chavakali High School was attacked in a separate incident. The cases prompted Deputy Prime Minister Musalia Mudavadi to call Internal Security PS Francis Kimemia to protest over the rising insecurity.

Mudavadi, who is the area MP, asked Kimemia to reshuffle the security machinery in Sabatia.

He further requested the PS to provide area police officers with more vehicles for night patrols.

Milemba said teachers in the area are living in fear, particularly the principals.

"Teachers will not deliver if they worry about their lives," he added.

Speaking on phone, Milemba also called on the Government to reshuffle the police and bring in additional officers.

Mt. Elgon elders demand their dues

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

VILLAGE elders who presided over a vetting exercise in Mt Elgon have appealed to the Director of National Registration Bureau to intervene and assist them get their outstanding dues.

The elders say that they were recruited through the provincial administration to assist in the identification of eligible persons to be issued with the national identification cards as Mt. Elgon district is a border town.

However, the elders led by Mr. Matayo Psisei expressed concern saying that despite the government releasing their payments, they are yet to receive their payments save for Kshs500 paid to them recently after they bitterly complained to the Mt. Elgon District Registrar of Persons.

"The district registrar of persons has failed to assist us despite our persistent appeal to his office for intervention," they said, adding that during the financial year 2008/2009, the government released a total of Kshs324, 000 and Kshs174, 000 during the financial year 2009/2010 to the district to facilitate the vetting exercise.

However, efforts to get comments from the Mt. Elgon District Registrar, Mr. Robert Nayere on the issue did not bear fruit as he could not be reached.

At the same time the residents expressed concern over the delay by a contractor to tarmac the 52kilometre road from Kamukuywa to Namwela through Kapsokwony three years ago despite the funds having been allocated to facilitate the construction of the same.

"We are earnestly appealing to the Roads Minister Mr. Franklin Bett to



Mr. Kajwang: Immigration minister

intervene as a matter of urgency and compel the contractor to speed up the construction of the road which is in bad state or another contractor be awarded the tender to complete the road," the residents said.

The irate residents further said that the road from Kapsokwony to Kopsiro is completely impassable such that for one to travel to Kapsokwony from Kopsiro, he/she is forced to pass through Chwele, Kimilili. "We are appealing to the Kenya Roads Board (KRB), the local authority through the Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF) and Mount Elgon Constituency Development Fund [CDF] committee to allocate us funds from their respective kitties to facilitate the construction of the said road for the sake of the realization of development in the county," they said, adding that farm-



Mr. Kapondi: Mt. Elgon MP

ers were incurring huge losses due to the poor road network.

The residents at the same time complained that the funds allocated towards the construction of the said road had not been properly accounted for since the allocation does not reflect the amount of work so far undertaken. However, the residents lauded the Kenya Red Cross society for funding the opening up of Kubra (Kopsiro), Katama and Cheptais feeder road.

The Mount Elgon Residents Association (MERA) chairman Mr. John Ochemo, on his part said that the association has embarked on monitoring and evaluation of all the projects financed by devolved funds such as Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF), Constituency Development Funds (CDF), Poverty Eradication Funds, HIV/AIDS Funds

and the Kenya Roads Levy Fund to ensure transparency and accountability in the utilization of taxpayers' money.

"The association will utilize every resource at its disposal to carry out a spot check on all the projects in the region that have been done by the respective devolved funds to ensure they are properly done for purposes of transparency and accountability," said Ochemo, adding that incase of audit queries, the association will forward the same to the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission (KACC) so that legal action can be taken against those concerned.

The association chairman said that currently they were compiling data of all the projects that have been done by the devolved funds in the district as well as the amount allocated to each project to facilitate easy monitoring and evaluation.

Plans afoot to uplift Kakamega Airstrip

By JOEL JUMA

KAKAMEGA Airstrip requires Kshs74 million to have it expanded to the required standards as set out by the Kenya Civil Aviation Authority (KCAA).

A study conducted by the Kenya Airports Authority (KAA) established that essential facilities are urgently required to have the airstrip comply with the international standards that can attract more airlines.

The airstrip lacks a fire fighting engine, weather centre, electricity and land that can be used as a safety landing site for aircrafts during emergency period.

KAA Manager in charge of Eldoret Airport Peter Wafula said during a tour

of the Parliamentary Committee on Transport that a runaway covering over 150 meters was required at the facility to avoid take off problems for the aircrafts. "We need a parking yard and taxi ways that are far from the run ways," said Wafula.

This, Wafula told committee members who included Committee Chairman David Were, MPs Yusuf Chanzu, Dr Wilbur Ottichillo, Walter Mbat, Edwin Yinda, Clement Wambugu that water supply was required at the airstrip.

"We need a fire fighting engine to be on stand by as part of complying with the standards for airports," said Wafula who oversees the airstrips in Western province and Rift valley regions.

Kakamega Airstrip started operating last year after it was officially launched by the Deputy Prime Minister Musalia Mudavadi with 540 airlines being the first users of the facility. The number of passengers using the facility has since grown to 983.

Were urged the Government to source for an alternative land where the community around the airstrip can be settled before evicting them to pave way for expansion of the airstrip.

Over 20 acres of land is required from the community during the expansion.

Area DC Mohammed Birik and Shinyalu MP Justus Kizito said the Government was still sourcing for land

before the families can be issued with notices of movement.

Kizito who is the area MP said compensation for the families whose trees were brought down last year should not be delayed by the Government authorities. "The Government should also lure more airlines to fly to Kakamega as part of improving tourist flow in the region," said Kizito.

Kizito explained that the road to the airstrip needs to be tarmacked to improve accessibility to the facility.

Were however said that the committee will make its recommendations to the ministry of Roads and that of Transport to have the money included in their annual financial year budgets.

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

THE structure and administration of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) is set for a major review in order to make it effective and transparent.

In response to reports of alleged misuse of the devolved fund in various constituencies, the Fund's top administrators met in Nairobi recently to review how to structure and come up with solutions for its effective operationalisation. And there are renewed hopes that the Fund's operations will steadily be streamlined for the benefits of more ordinary Kenyans.

The review is guided by recommendations by "a reform panel headed by former MP for OI Kalou, Mr. Karue Muriuki, who is the brainchild of the CDF concept. Other members

of the panel include Wilfred Onono (accountant), Grace Kiptui (lawyer), James Okundo (financial analyst), Joseph Mukui (director of Rural Development) and Njeri Wachira who represents the Attorney General.

As the streamlining process gets underway, adjustments will have to be made to the report to ensure the recommendations conform to the requirements of the new constitution on devolved funds.

Under the new constitution, while the CDF retain its share of funding from the national budget, more money will go to County governments. The law makes counties the focal point for devolution and devel-

opment. Among the changes recommended by the Karue report include an increase of the Fund from 2.5 to 3.0 per cent of the national budget, creation of new organs to oversee CDF projects at constituency level.

Other reforms include the involvement of private sector in the fund's operations as it remains the most effective method of devolving resources. "We are in the process of making necessary changes and an adjustment in order to ensure the CDF operates more efficiently and effectively for the benefit of Kenyans," the Fund's Chief Executive Officer, Mrs. Agnes Odhiambo, said. Mr. Karue said that once effected the

reforms will streamline operations of the Fund to achieve the set objectives in a more accountable manner, pointing out that the Fund's main challenge lies in the organizational and structural weaknesses especially at the constituency level where it should benefit as many Kenyans as possible.

CDF has been lauded the world over as an ingenious innovation worth replicating elsewhere in Africa. It has transformed the lives of many people at grassroots level by financing construction of roads, schools, medical facilities, social amenities and education bursaries for bright but poor children.



Mr. Karue: Former MP

CDF may be restructured soon

Shitanda carps at Kibunja

By JOEL JUMA

CABINET Minister Soita Shitanda has accused the National Cohesion and Integration Commission of sleeping on the job. Mr Shitanda argued that the commission is not taking action against MPs who are issuing inflammatory statements that could divide Kenyans.

He told the commission's chairman, Mzalendo Kibunja, to act on leaders who are disregarding the new Constitution on matters that relate to human rights. Mr. Shitanda said legal action should be taken on legislators who are attacking one another at public rallies in premature campaigns ahead of the 2012 elections.

The Housing Minister explained that ODM and PNU MPs should be forced to respect the new constitution.

"We are being forced start thinking about the next General Elections, which is many months away," said Shitanda, who was speaking in Kakamega town.

He noted that both ODM and PNU MPs were misleading Kenyans with their assertions that Parliament could be dissolved with the ongoing wrangles. He said the Government has not formulated laws to govern elections, adding that the National Accord and Reconciliation Act was still in intact till the next polls.

Shitanda without making reference to individuals, urged Kibunja to take action against leaders campaigning for top positions with abusive language. "We are still working on new legislations. Our focus should be directed towards the implementation of the new Constitution," said Shitanda.

Meanwhile, Parliamentary Committee on Roads and Housing has expressed concern over congestion in public schools that benefited from the Economic Stimulus Programme. The committee said it is regrettable that some schools that benefited from the over Kshs630 million fund are yet to complete projects to allow more intakes. "We are worried that some money may be returned to Treasury because of delays by contractors to complete projects," said the committee chairman David Were.

He noted that each constituency was allocated Kshs30 million to upgrade one secondary school selected by education stakeholders in the area. Were said Treasury should not be blamed if the money is returned as schools identified in project are yet to utilize the funding.

He told MPs to push the schools identified by the District Education Boards to hasten their respective projects as the financial year is almost winding up. The legislator was speaking at St James Bulimbo Girls Secondary School in his Matungu Constituency during an education stakeholders meeting.

The Kenya National Union of Teachers (Knut) branch executive secretary John Wesonga and the chairman of the Kenya Secondary schools Head-teachers Association Regional Chairman Hezekia Akang'o also addressed the meeting. The legislator noted that Kakamega High School and Mabole Secondary School in Butere district are yet to complete their projects. "It is only at Mwitoti in Mumias and Koyonzo in Matungu where I have seen new projects that prove the schools were in need of the money," said Were.

He told MPs whose schools are yet to complete project to act to reduce the suffering of students. "We need more classrooms and laboratories to achieve quality education. Congestion of students should have gone down when the Government released money," said Were.

Were urged the Minister for Roads Franklin Bett to release the Kshs300 million meant for rehabilitation of the roads by next month. He explained that a meeting between his committee and the Minister agreed to have MPs get the money by next month to improve on their roads in constituencies.

Trouble looms in Yatta over grazing rights

By PETER MUTUKU

HERDERS from North Eastern Province have moved their cattle to a ranch in Kitui County in search of pasture and water, raising fears of possible conflict with local residents.

Officials of B2 Yatta Ranching Cooperative Society have asked the government to ensure the intrusion of herders with their thousands of animals does not lead to conflict.

And in a move to forestall any possible conflict, lower Yatta DC Gideon Sirai said proactive measures have been taken to ensure a win-win situation was reached.

There is enough grass and water to feed the animals for a period but harmony must be maintained by all to avoid causing security problems," said Sirai.

The DC said animals in the ranch were there for a limited time

and should leave after the expiry of the lease period.

The DC said the pastoralists had hired a section of the ranch to fatten animals before they are off-loaded for the market, but a rival group contesting part of the ranch had also done the same.

B2 Yatta Cooperative Society Vice chairman Joseph Mulila says the arrival of herders from neighbouring province was of concern, pointing out that the nomadic group often uses threats to graze.

Mr. Mulila says the ranch had also introduced animals from North Eastern Province for fattening, but the rival Ngwamuka community based organization had done the same, raising competition for resources.

"Our dams are in danger of drying up because of the large herds of animals from neighbouring Garissa County," says Mulila.

The District Livestock Produc-

tion Officer Joseph Kirea visited the ranch to assess viability of the fodder and water and advise the ranch officials whether or not they could lease it out.

Mr. Kirea said the ranch had sought technical advice which will ensure mutually beneficial contingency measures were taken for all stakeholders.

"The ranch can either lease out some sections, or cut the grass and sell the fodder as hay," said the livestock officer adding that seeds of mature grass should also be harvested for sale and generation of revenue.

The B2 officials expressed fear that the large herds traversing Mwingi and Kitui regions could also cause an outbreak of livestock diseases.

Jacob Mutua, the treasurer of the ranch said outbreaks of fires had triggered degradation of the ranch



Cattle at a ranch in Kitui County in search of pasture and water.

Fraudsters target land buyers in Kakamega

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

A PROVINCIAL administrator in Kakamega County has raised alarm over the increasing cases of fraudulent acquisition of land in the area. The Navakholo Division Officer (DO) Miss Mary Kisaka says that scores of unsuspecting residents have been duped in fraudulent land transaction deals.

Miss Kisaka further points out that many parcels of land have changed ownership in the area without the consent of land control board as required by law.

The administrator, as a result, cautions land buyers and sellers against disregarding the land control Act cap 302 of the laws of Kenya during land transaction process. "Any dealing or transaction in agricultural land, which does not go through the land control Board, will be deemed as null and avoid," she adds.

She says that the land control Act cap 302 clearly stipulates that any dealing and transaction in agricultural land must go through the land control Board.

The provincial administrator reiterates that land buyers should either follow the correct procedure or continue to use short cuts and suffer the consequences.

She at the same time cautions area residents against interfering with existing boundary alignments mapped by the survey expertise. "Uprooting main boundary marks and intruding into Gazzeted public paths is illegal and can attract litigation" the administration warns.

Many public paths leading to water points in the region and especially animal watering points along the rivers have been interfered with.

A civil society organization based in Bungoma County concurs with Navakholo Division officer's assertion that cases of fraudulent land acquisition are rampant in Kakamega County. The co-ordinator of torture survivors organization, Mr., Taiga Wanyanja, cites land parcel N/Wanga/Matungu 487 which he claims was fraudulently acquired.

Mr. Wanyanja says that the recent eviction of Mr. Panyako Wabwire Dondi from the land he had occupied for over 40 years was "inhuman, mischievous and a gross violation of the law".

The lobby group co-ordinator is as a result appealing to the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission (KACC) to probe the history of this parcel of land.

Building of Kilifi market faces huddles

By BEKADZO TONDO

THE construction of a Kshs10 million market in Kilifi is embroiled in controversy after the traders rejected the project.

According to the more than 300 traders, the planning process was not inclusive and therefore did not address their needs.

The traders argue that the government plan will automatically lock out small business entrepreneurs who form a large bulk of the population.

The traders who spoke during a stakeholders consultative meeting vowed to resist any attempts to implement the project unless the initial plan is repackaged to include their concerns.

They suggested that the proposed market be put up at Mnarani or Kibaraini as they were centrally placed to fetch good money for the traders.

Leaders present at the meeting led by Bahari MP Benedict Fondo Gunda, Kilifi town clerk Ibrahim Mohamed and civic leaders said they will only allow the project to kick off if the plan is

changed to meet their demands.

The Mp said that the current design discriminated against traders especially those who operated food joints, salon, tailors and therefore must be changed to accommodate all entrepreneurs.

Gunda said the Economic Stimulus Project (ESP) funded market must meet the desirable standards and provide adequate space for traders.

Clerk Mohamed said he will soon convene a special full council meeting to deliberate on the matter further before they settle for a lasting solution.

"I have called for a special council meeting and that of the town planning to enable us discuss the matter in depth and get a lasting solution before I can comment to the press," said Mr Mohamed.

Kilifi Township councillor Mr Athman Matano said the government should build a modern market with special stalls to accommodate all traders.

Mr. Matano said as per the plan given out by the government, the design of the market is not suitable for the traders.

Mobile ID centers popular with the public

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

AN identification card is one of the most important documents in Kenya, just as it is in other countries.

It is a requisite legal document in all transactions between the people themselves, between the citizens and the government, and between the people and other institutions.

Acquisition of the document is, however, tiresome and expensive in terms of several trips one makes to vetting and registration centers

Majority of youths, especially in the rural areas are yet to acquire Identity cards due to the strenuous process.

The provincial registrar of persons, western, Mr. John Onzere is now calling on registration clerks in the region to decentralize services to the villagers.

This, he says will enable majority of the people who cannot trek long distances in search of the documents to apply for them at their door steps.

Mr. Onzere, appeals to the political leaders and provincial administration to sensitize citizens on the importance of having IDs as he dispatches personnel to the villages.

He discloses that in Kakamega County alone, over 20,000 youths applied for the document through various mobile registration centers within one week

The provincial registrar, as a result, calls on the district registrars of persons in his area of jurisdiction to move registration clerks from the offices to the field. He claims that the move will bear fruit since the targeted group will be reached and registered.

The registrar of persons, at the same time is, appealing to people who had earlier applied for the documents to check for them at their nearest collection centers.

Mr. Onzere was speaking recently at Muliro Gardens in Kakamega town during a vetting and application for IDS exercise. During the exercise, hundreds of people from the municipality and adjacent areas applied for the documents.

Mukurwe-ini groups get cash from Youth Fund

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

FOURTEEN youth groups from Mukurwe-ini district have benefited from a disbursement of Kshs700,000 through the Youth Enterprise Development Funds.

The groups received a cheque of Kshs50,000 each presented to them by Youth assistant Minister Mr Kabando wa Kabando who is also the local MP at Giathugu Youth Polytechnic's hall recently.

During the function, the Assistant Minister warned that the government will terminate contractual arrangements with financial intermediaries that fail to disburse loans earmarked for the youth.

"Intermediaries withhold government funds, then loan to general credit lines at exorbitant interest rates. This is fraud. They must disclose and account for the funds. Shortchanging in my ministry will be punished," he warned.

Kabando lauded some youth groups who had done well in loan repayment and also utilized the funds fully.

"These youths were from different active registered youth groups from all corners of the constituency who had qualified for Youth Enterprise Fund loan. The youth groups are expected to utilize the funds in the income generating projects and be self reliant," said the assistant minister.

He singled out some groups for their successful initiatives which include German Alpine goat rearing, bee keeping, and fish farming, amongst others.

"You ought to be self reliant and watchful on all the development projects within your regions. This will help in ensuring that everyone is involved and playing a role in achieving the development goal of Vision 2030," he added.

"Groups that have shown unique success in their program have received cash grant of Kshs525,000 and dairy goats worth Kshs 0.5 million while others received rabbits and entrepreneurial industrial equipments. A few have received entrepreneurial facilities like Television set," he said.

Four youth polytechnics in the constituency have been revived



Youth assistant minister Mr Kabando wa Kabando (centre with specks) presents a cheque of Kshs50,000 to Kaini Gichungu Youth Group. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

which will ensure access to industrial skills and apprentice to facilitate in job and wealth circulation.

Central Provincial Director of Youth Affairs Francis Kariu who also attended the function lamented that drug abuse and alcoholism are the biggest challenges affecting youths in the country.

He challenged the youths to be industrious and identify opportunities in their areas which will economically empower them.

Kariu said that micro investments were the way forward and he congratulated the youth group members for the various projects they had started in their regions.

The youths urged the government to help keep open the opportunities available through the youth Enterprise Development Fund for both the groups and individuals.

UK NGO assists Nyaribari residents

By BOB OMBATI

A BRITISH-based Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) has embarked on an elaborate programme that seeks to equip schools in Nyaribari Chache constituency with computers.

Health and Education Instrumental Resources (HEIR) international president, Dr.Peder Bo Nielsen says the project will also be replicated in health facilities to enhance their efficacy.

Nielsen who spoke when he donated five computers to Nyankororo secondary school recently, said that the organization will set up a resource center in the constituency to service and supply computers to all schools in the area to help learn-

ers acquire compute knowledge and skills.

Nielsen who was accompanied by the Organization's directors, Innocent Abayi, Gilbert Mangwa and Lise Nielsen urged the schools and health facilities to fully utilize the computers to attract more support from the organization.

Poverty Eradication Commissioner, Edward Mogusu urged alumni of various schools to support their former schools to help uplift their standards of education and performance in national exams.

Mogusu, who is also the area Constituency Development Fund (CDF) Secretary challenged professionals from the area who had relocated to foreign countries to assist develop schools in the area.

"It is prudent that the alumni support educational projects in their respective schools to supplement government efforts," said Mogusu during the function at the school.

The commissioner also urged Kenyans residing abroad to invest in the newly created counties to fast track development and help in the attainment vision 2030.

He said such initiatives will help create jobs for thousands of graduates and spur the country's socio-economic and political development.

The school Board chairman, Daniel Anyona and Principal, William Machani appealed to well wishers to support in the development of the school to enable students maximize on the Free Day Secondary Education.

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CREADIS transforming lives in Bungoma

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

WHEN it was formed and registered as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in 2000, little did people know or imagine that it will eventually benefit them.

Community Research in Environment and Development Initiatives (CREADIS) is one of the pioneer NGOs in Bungoma County and by extension, western province.

High poverty levels in western Kenya drove Mrs. Gladys Nabiswa, the executive director to form the NGO as a response to this issue. "This densely populated region in Kenya suffers from endemic poverty which is why I formed CREADIS to address this problem through a holistic approach integrating different sectors", Mrs. Nabiswa says.

Mrs. Nabiswa adds that CREADIS reduces poverty and empowers the poor, disadvantage and vulnerable communities by building their capacities.

The executive director says capacity building enables the targeted groups to exploit their full potential and drive their own development processes.

The programs through which CREADIS undertakes to empower people include:

- Community health and nutrition
 - Agriculture and environmental management.
 - Gender and Governance
 - Community Economic Development
- Community health and Nutrition projects have enhanced community care and support of OVC, especially those affected or infected with HIV/AIDS.

CREADIS takes a holistic approach to improving their standards of living by not only supporting the children, but also supporting their care givers.

Children receive both educational and health support while caregivers engage in income generating activities such as chicken or dairy goats, in order to economically empower them.

Consequently, the living standards and development of 920 OVC have been improved and 38 caregivers received income generating activities through this program that began in 2006.

This program, funded by Academy for Education and Development and the Stephen Lewis Foundation, addresses food security by engaging care givers in income generating activities.

It also improves access to secondary and higher education for the OVC by co-paying their school fees. Through this program, 10 OVC are now attending tertiary institutions and 66 OVC are attending secondary school.



Officials inspect CREADIS project in Bungoma.

"I had lost hope in education while still in form one because of financial constraints, but I thank CREADIS for stepping in and paying my school fees. With this support I was encouraged to work hard in school and attained a mean grade of B+ in KCSE, 2009", says Mr. Tobias Wanjala, one of the beneficiaries.

The smile on Ms Dory Nasimiyu's face is infectious, as she lauds the organization and speaks of her future plans.

"I never believed one day I would keep a goat in my compound, I thank CREADIS a lot for what it has done to restore my health and economic status. I hope to live longer so as to ensure that my children get quality education" says Nasimiyu.

The CREADIS community Health and Nutrition Department Field Officer Mr. Joshua Mutanyi, reiterates that the NGO's overall objective is to reduce poverty and empower the poor in order for them to achieve sustainable livelihoods and live dignified lives.

"It is just about improving the lives of OVCs by ensuring they have access to psychosocial support, education, nutrition, shelter, and child protection" says Mr. Mutanyi.

The assistant Director and project Manager of community Health and Nu-

trition Janet Kilavuka says, most of the OVC are always neglected, adding that unless someone intervenes they may not live a comfortable life.

Under agriculture and Environmental management program, the NGO focuses on improving the health status of pregnant mothers and children under the age of 2 years through promotion of consumption of Orange Fleshed Sweet Potatoes (OFSP). The organization supplies sweet potatoes vines to expectant mothers attending antenatal clinics, thereby, merging agriculture and health.

OFSP are rich in Vitamin A, Vitamin C and beta-carotene and all these boost immunity and prevent blindness. Cultivation of OFSP addresses food security because they only take two and a half months to mature and can be cultivated year round.

Biodiversity conservation through recycling of sugarcane waste into charcoal briquettes, an activity under the environment programme, is one of the jewels in CREADIS' crown since it was voted the best innovative project in western region by the World Bank and awarded Kshs.200,000.

"This project was rated one of the most innovative. We received a reward. The community is now aware of envi-

ronmental conservation. They are doing something to contribute to conservation rather than waiting for the Government," says Mr. Geoffrey Kololi Wanyama, program manager.

Gender and Governance program focuses mainly on increasing the political, social and economic benefits for women and youth. CREADIS conducts civic education sessions, trainings and awareness creation on devolved funds with women and youth to create greater access to these resources.

"Our eyes were opened when CREADIS came to our area. We used not to question use of devolved funds. But now we can question," says Mama Sarah Omwenda, a village elder in Ichinga, Mumias district.

Ms Jaime MacGrane, youth associate from the Coady International Institute working in CREADIS' Gender and Governance sector, admits that the program has been very usefully in informing community members, especially women and youth about the Government devolved funds.

Ultimately, CREADIS' interventions through its programs will improve the quality of life for the people of western province and North Rift where they have ongoing projects.

Relisa members to get new share certificates

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

FORMER employees of the defunct Kenya Railways Corporation who bought Relisa house through shares will be issued with new shareholders' certificates.

The Relisa society National chair Mr. Michael Sande said, rise in value of the house precipitated the society to issue new certificates to members to match the current valuation.

Mr. Sande was speaking recently at Bungoma railway station in Bungoma County during Bungoma branch Release Annual General meeting (AGM).

The National chairman was accompanied by his deputy Mr. Idd Omar and the society treasurer Mr. Stephen Juma at the meeting attended by about 120 members.

Mr. Sande disclosed that the house which is situated in Nairobi city centre was bought in 1986 at Kshs. 11.5 million by 14,000 members. Each member, he added contributed Kshs. 800 through the then Railway Savings and Credits Co-operative Society.

The initial shareholders certificates Mr. Sande said, reflected the Kshs. 800 which the members paid, adding that the amount was at some point raised to Kshs.1,400 to match the value of the house. He told members that valuers recently put the house at Kshs. 139 million, which is why the society is in the process of issuing new shareholders certificates.

Mr. Sande said that according to the current value of the house each shareholder will be issued with a certificate worth Kshs. 4,800.

The society chair asked branch delegates to ensure that all members are issued with the new shareholders certificates. He further asked the members to liaise with delegates with a view to updating the records.

During the meeting, two members were elected as delegates to represent Bungoma branch at the National level.

The elections supervised by Mary Mwangi from Bungoma South District Co-operatives Officer's office (DCO's) saw Mr. Philip Amwayi and Mr. Ben Waitwa elected as branch delegates.

Italy funded projects in Rabai

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

Residents of Rabai district are among beneficiaries of Kshs.23.3 million development projects implemented under the Kenya Italy Debt for Development Programme (KIDDP).

Mwele Simakeni Water Project, which was commissioned recently, is one of the five projects implemented under the KIDDP project.

An estimated 12,000 people are expected to benefit alongside several institutions, including schools, dispensaries and market centres. Agriculture is also expected to improve, with water available for minimal irrigation and watering livestock in Mwele Kisuruni and Buni Kisimani sub-locations.

Institutions to benefit include Isaac Nyondo, Lugwe, Benyoka and Kailo primary schools as well as Rabai and Canon Kituri secondary schools. Rabai Academy Compassion, Bengo and Humanist nursery schools will also access water.

Health facilities that will draw water under the programme are Bengo Health Centre and Rabai Sub-district Hospital. Speaking during the commissioning of project, KIDDP director, Mr. Martino Melli, hailed the partnership with local community through the Government that had helped realize success for the project.

"This is one of my happiest days. To see the glowing faces of community members gives me great joy," he

said.

Mr. Melli asked beneficiaries to form strong committees to sustain the project, saying his government had also financed capacity building for the current 13-member committee whose members, he added, had been trained on plant operation and maintenance, and book keeping.

He asked beneficiaries to utilize the water well to uplift their living standards and ensure food security through irrigation. The project comprises the installation of four water storage tanks, construction of 15 kiosks, eight VIP latrines and five communal water points.

Coast Water Service Board Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Mr. Hamisi

Mwachai, said the project will improve education as children will be relieved of the burden of fetching water and get quality study time. He said women will get more time for other domestic chores for development and earning income for the families.

Mwachai said women spent a lot of time searching for water, especially during the dry seasons. Before the construction of the project, many residents walked for over 15 km to fetch untreated water from the Kombeni River and other shallow wells.

The CEO said Mwele Simakeni Water Project involved laying of 11.5 km of pipeline from Mazeras to Rabai. The project would be extended to Kaloleni district. Mwachai said Kilifi/

Mariakani Water Service Company (KIMAWASCO) that is charged with water provision had installed a master meter for the scheme.

Rabai DC Carolyn Nzwili urged the management committee to ensure prudent management of the facility and commended KIDDP for addressing the perennial water crisis in the district that was created towards the end of 2010.

She urged residents to ensure all problems affecting the programme were immediately reported to relevant authorities for quick action, but also asked residents not to ignore environmental concerns and water-harvesting options.

A resident, Mr. Johnson Chengo, lauded the new project, saying it brings relief to area residents who previously had to walk long distances in search of water.

Nyeri matatu operators move to comply with new rules

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

MATATU operators in Nyeri County have launched a secretariat to fast-track the phasing out of the 14-seater Public Service Vehicles.

The nine member secretariat which was launched recently at a Nyeri hotel and attended by members of the 20 transport saccos from the county will also ensure that the new reforms become effective.

The secretariat has partnered with the Kenya Vehicle Manufacturers, Equity Bank and the Coopers Motor Association among others.

The secretariat will also ensure that sanity is maintained on the roads and regulate the sector.

"Our service will be customer based just like any other business. There will no pushing or pulling of passengers like before. We do not want to have unfair competition," said the Mr Peter Theuri who is the organizer of the secretariat and also the chairman of Nyena Sacco.

Theuri said they will also partner with police and the Nyeri Municipal Council to ensure that Michuki rules are adhered to.

The saccos which attended the meeting included Gathuthi, Kian-du, Marua and Kamakwa among others.



Nyeri Matatu operators during a meeting recently at a Nyeri hotel where they launched a secretariat to brace new reforms. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

The new rules also requires that only vehicles whose carrying capacity is 40 and above will be allowed within the City centre.

Mrs Beatrice Githange who is an official at Kenya Vehicle Manufacturers based in Thika said they are ready to assist in the matatus reform.

started booking for the buses as part of the new reforms," she added.

Over 100 matatu operators attended the launch in Nyeri town.

New container terminal to decongest port of Mombasa

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

THE completion of the US\$235 million (19 billion) second container terminal at the Mombasa Port is expected to more than double the handling capacity of what is already the region's busiest port.

The new terminal will occupy a 48.4 hectare site west of the Kipevu Oil Terminal. The project includes the extension of the railway line that currently serves the container terminal operated by the Kenya Ports Authority (KPA).

KPA managing director Gichiri Ndua, says that the port had handled 14 million tones of cargo by the end of the third quarter of 2010, compared with 13.7 million tones handled in the same period in 2009.

This represented a growth rate of 2.1 per cent as container traffic recorded an impressive growth rate of 11.5 per cent.

The authority's focus for the current financial year includes meeting the targets set in the 2010/2011 Performance Contract with the Government. The targets

involve attaining or surpassing the ship turnaround time of three days, and return on investment of 14.7 per cent. It also includes the construction of a new access road and the installation of new buoys and markets in the maritime access channel.

Information released through the Port website, indicates that the second container terminal will have an annual throughput capacity of 1.2 million TEUs (TEU is a 20-foot equipment unit used in

measuring capacity in container transportation).

The project has been financed entirely through soft loans from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), making it the largest Japanese-funded project in Kenya.

Work on the scheme started in 2009 and is being supervised by Japan Port Consultancy Limited. KPA has already decided that the second terminal should be operated by a concessionaire in liaison with the authority's own container handling facility.

The total freight handled by the port rose by over 10 per cent from 16.41m tones in 2008 to 19.06 million in 2009, while the total transit cargo rose from 4.8m tones in 2009, representing an improvement in the regional economic performance.

Until 2007, the Port experienced the handling of too many in-bound containers and not adequate space to stack or handle them. The long-standing issue had pushed up costs for importers and caused headaches for the port authority. But the problem was finally solved with the establishment of a series of container freight stations located off-port and run by independent operators.

The second container terminal concessionaire will be free to arrange for the procurement of fork lift trucks and terminal tractors.

However, the main container handling equipment, including the ship to gantry cranes and the rubber tyred gantries, will be provided by the Japanese as part of the loan agreement.



New containers at Mombasa Port

Victoria water board on ambitious mission

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

THE Lake Victoria North Water Services Board (LVNWSB) in collaboration with the Busia water department has embarked on an ambitious project aimed at ensuring the provision of adequate clean water to the community.

The project entails the construction of two water treatment plants in the region and the installation of four more new water tanks within Busia municipality. The project also includes the construction of sewer lines in order to reduce the rampant cases of waterborne diseases like cholera and typhoid.

In an interview with The Link at his office recently, the Busia District Water Supply Manager Mr. Bush Orondo said 80percent of the work has been done and the impact is impressive as the supply has been increased to cover Alupe, Burumba and Air strip areas. On completion of the remaining work, the production of water is expected to go up to a total of 7,000 cubic units per day.

The water supply manager at the same time said that the department has gone an extra mile to construct a total of 26 water kiosks in the region which are currently selling clean water at Kshs2 per 20 litre Jerican.

"In order to own a water kiosk, one is required to pay a deposit of Kshs. 3000 which is relatively cheap and I am now appealing to the local community to invest in this project," Orondo said, adding that out of the 26 water kiosks, three have been funded through the Nzoia Phase II project whereas seven of them have been funded by the Trust Fund.

However, the manager lamented that frequent pipe bursts, high operational costs in terms of electricity bills, water theft as a result of illegal connections, frequent power outages, lack of large consumers such as factories, universities and major hotel industries as some of the impediments that continue to affect the project.

He said that the situation has been compounded by the mushrooming of boreholes with Busia town alone having over 100 of them.

Orondo further said that the Ministry plans to shut down some of the boreholes most of which have been constructed closer to the pit latrines adding that the situation has contributed a great deal to cases of waterborne infections.

At the same time, a spot check carried out by The Link at the rural areas revealed that majority of the water kiosks have been without water for the last three months allegedly as a result of frequent pipe bursts.

One of the beneficiaries of the water kiosks, a resident of Rest Estate within Busia municipality who gave her names as Ms Christine Omoth expressed concern saying that since the installation of the water kiosk by the department of water in September last year there has been frequent water shortages for two consecutive months hence incurring a big loss in terms of electricity bill.

Since the installation of this water kiosk in September by the department of water, there has been frequent water shortages for two consecutive months," said Catherine, adding that the situation has caused her to incur big losses in terms electricity and water bills.

Lake Victoria Basin Commission to build office in Kisumu

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

THE Government has donated land in Kisumu for the construction of the Lake Victoria Basin Commission comprising the five-member East African Community.

The commission, which concluded its eighth council meeting in Kisumu last month, will construct its new headquarters on the 2.8 hectare piece of land on the shores of Lake Victoria.

Currently, the Lake Victoria Basin Commission occupies rented offices at the Re-Insurance Plaza Building in Kisumu.

The sectoral council of ministers that brought together permanent secretaries, ambassadors and other senior government officials from the EAC, adopted the progress report on the implementation of the Mt. Elgon Regional Ecosystem Conservation Programme (MERECP).

The meeting further directed the LVBC secretariat to improve the absorption capacity for phase two of the Lake Victoria Environment Management Project (LVEMP II), MERECP and Partnership Agreement Fund.

The LVBC secretariat was commended for successfully organizing the first ever Lake Victoria Basin Investment Forum in Mwanza, Tanzania last year, which it said would go a long way in enhancing the livelihoods options in the region.

Forestry and Wildlife Ministry Dr. Noah Wekesa said all stakeholders must be involved in the implementation of the strategy framework



Dr. Noah Wekesa addressing the Lake Victoria Basin Commission in Kisumu recently.

for the management and development of the Lake Victoria Basin to positively contribute to turning the region into an ideal social-economic growth zone.

He invited the private sector and

development partners to partner with the LVBC in realizing the vast investment opportunities in the region.

Dr. Wekesa said the Lake Victoria Basin continues to face a wide range of environment threats and challenges

that need to be addressed.

“Key among them are destruction of water catchment areas by human activities, discharge of agro-chemicals, waste and refuse into the water bodies, loss of bio-diversity, water

hyacinth infestation of the water bodies paralyzing transport and other related social-economic activities, increasing incidences of poverty and declining quality of life among the people,” said Dr. Wekesa.

“The situation is bound to get worse in the light of the current energy, food, water and financial crisis. Negative impacts of climate change are predicted to have adverse impacts to our economics and peoples livelihoods,” he said.

The minister said multi-sectoral strategies and approaches are required in order to address these issues and challenges.

He said Kenya is committed to provision of enabling policies, legislation and infrastructure to ensure effective conservation, management and exploitation of the environment and natural resources.

He thanked France, Norway, Sweden, Finland and the World Bank, the East African Development Bank and other development partners for their continued support to the LVBC, which is geared towards improving the lives of the riparian community.

Others in the Kenyan delegation included Livestock Development minister Dr. Mohamed Kuti, assistant ministers Peter Munya (East African Community) and Simon Ogari (Transport), Permanent Secretaries David Nalo (EAC), Mohamed wa Mwachai (Forestry and Wildlife) and Kenneth Lusaka (Livestock Development) and Kenya’s High Commissioner to Tanzania, Mr. John Muintinda.

Jubilation as Wote civil servants house nears completion

By PETER MUTUKU

CIVIL servants in Makeni District headquarters can now breathe a sigh of relief as construction of their houses at Wote town nears completion.

The project also includes construction of the District Headquarters and many civil servants in the area are now optimistic that they will soon have decent dwelling quarters in addition to better offices.

The housing scheme has dragged for over 20 years and the works stalled sometime in 1992 but revived when President Mwai Kibaki’s came to power. The upcoming modern quarters situated adjacent to the district administration block are set to accommodate over 200 public servants.

Hope in the project was revived mid last year when the government released Kshs800 million for its completion.

The construction company, Unispan, moved onto the site immediately to commence work for the completion of the 203 units that were scheduled to be completed within a two year contract between the ministries of Public Works, housing and Unispan Building and Construction Company.

The housing scheme has been among the 224 Government housing projects that stalled across the country.

Construction of 179 housing units has so far been completed.

Speaking at his office, the site manager, Mr. Dexter Jhikas, says the units are in four categories, each on its site.

These include a one floor maisonette on a quarter acre piece of land with a parking bay and garden which will serve as the District Commissioner’s residence.

The DCs residence also houses ten other units, each with a four bedroom

house in a secluded enclosure containing self contained servant quarters with a parking bay and flower garden.

The ten mansions will house top senior Government officers in the District who will share a basket ball court and parking bay for visitors.

The second site, which is 300 meters away from the DCs house, has 30 maisonettes each with a three bedroom house that has a servant quarter and a flower garden. The 30 houses are meant for district departmental heads. This site accommodates a common basket ball court and parking bay for visitors.

The third and fourth sites which lie adjacent to each other have two storied flats of ten and 17 units respectively. Each unit has six houses comprising two bedrooms.

Mr. Jhikas says the third and fourth sites will house middle level public officers, including security officers. The

sites have common parking bays, playground for children and a basket ball court. The civil servants quarters will be installed with water, power and modern facilities including a solar water heating system.

Over 400 local youth have been engaged by Unispan, majority of who have been providing unskilled labour.

“We are also using local skilled workers,” says the engineer.

But the contractor faces a major challenge of water scarcity that has forced the company to hire dealers to ensure constant supply. The project stalled in 1992 after the contractor withdrew despite almost 90 percent of work having been done.

“Thanks to the Government over its resolve to complete stalled projects. We are soon shifting to decent houses,” said Maxwell James, a youth officer working at the District Headquarters.

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

THE Ministry of East African Community has pledged to fast track three key areas of its integration mandate in the next three months.

EAC Permanent Secretary David Nalo said the areas are the legislative framework to operationalise the Common Market Protocol, increased public and stakeholder awareness on the integration process and the elimination of non-tariff barriers.

Mr. Nalo said the ministry had already identified 27 pieces of legislation that require amending and aligning to the Common Market and the new Constitution.

Mr. Nalo said the Government had a duty to educate the citizenry on the implications of the new Constitution not

only on their lives but also for the East African Community integration process.

He said lack of awareness about the processes involved in the implementation of the various stages of the East African Community integration was a major impediment.

“We must radically transform our approach to creating awareness beyond the traditional means,” said Mr. Nalo.

“We must involve all stakeholders in this exercise, the civil society universities, Parliament and the ordinary wananchi. I look forward to creative proposals to be executed over the next 100 days,” he told participants at the ministry’s second Rapid Results Initia-

tive (RRI) workshop was organized in collaboration with the Public Service Transformation Department in the office of the Prime Minister. A similar workshop was held last December.

He said the RRI and results-based management were introduced to fast-track the implementation of the new Constitution using the RRI.

On the controversy over the non-tariff trade barriers, Mr. Nalo said such barriers are on the rise even after many of them were eliminated when the customs union came into effect in 2005.

“Practically every country is complaining about these barriers. Rwanda is complaining about insecurity along the Northern Corridor. Kenya is raising

the issues about arrests of truck drivers in Burundi while Tanzania is imposing new standards on Kenyan goods,” said the PS.

He urged bureaucrats to go easy on restrictions. “Many government departments do not realize that some of their actions, although well-intentioned, instead cause hiccups for integration.”

He said the EAC ministry would in the next few days roll out a massive sensitization programme to cover all the 47 counties.

Mr. Nalo thanked both the local media for giving wide coverage to the integration process saying the media has been a true champion for its enormous support towards regional integration.

Sango installs solar panels in Siaya schools

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

A US-based non-governmental organization, Sango Association, has started installing solar lighting panels in 15 primary and secondary schools in Usonga location, Siaya district.

During a recent visit, the organisation’s chairman, Mr. Otieno Ochieng, said they will also sink five boreholes for the local community at a cost of Kshs2 million courtesy of Rotary clubs of Bariton, in Chicago. He lamented over frequent power blackouts that interrupt learners’ concentration on studies, but was optimistic that the solar project would improve local education standards by giving students more study time beyond normal school hours.

Mr. Ochieng, who was accompanied by a representative of the US District 13 Rotary Club, Mr. Larry Barnet, said a survey carried by Sango Association established that many pupils in rural areas of Nyanza were disadvantaged because most schools had no power to allow extra time for studies.

Sango officials presided over the installation of the first solar panel at Diburo Primary School where they told beneficiaries to ensure the facilities were used for educational purposes.

They said the union was also sponsoring 38 needy students in various secondary schools

Crops failure may lead to famine in Central Kenya

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

CENTRAL Provincial Director for Agriculture Mr Joseph Gachingiri has said that about 730,000 people in Central Kenya are faced with starvation.

Gachingiri said the current drought season has affected 730,000 people out of a population of 4 million in the region.

He said inadequate rainfall in the lower parts of the region had resulted in total crop failure with farmers barely recording any harvests.

The director noted that despite the fact that the region had projected to produce 1.2 million bags of maize, only 200,000 bags of maize are expected this season creating a huge food shortfall due to crop failure.

Gachingiri who was speaking in Nyeri town however noted that no drought related deaths have been reported. The most affected areas include Thika East, Murang'a South, Kiharu, Kirinyaga South, Kieni East, Kieni West, Nyandarua North, Nyandarua Central and Limuru (Ndeiya) which are mainly ASAL lands.

The short rains ended prematurely in mid December before maize and beans had matured in the lower parts of the province, which forms the main growing area for the crops.

"The yields will be drastically reduced to five bags per hectare of maize, and one bag per hectare of beans during the next harvest season. The water levels in the rivers within the regions have also decreased. I advise farmers to use drip irrigation as it is more efficient and utilizes minimal amounts of water," said the director.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Livestock Development in the region requires approximately Kshs1.1 billion to assist in the mitigation of adverse effects in the next two months.

The Central Provincial Deputy Director for Livestock Development Mr Theuri Warugongo said the department intends to take mitigation measures since the rains are not expected until late March this year.

The affected areas have a popula-

tion of about 35,000 herds of cattle and 27,000 goats and sheep.

The drought has also affected average milk production in the area which has gone down from 6 litres to 4 litres per livestock with the prices of milk also expected to rise due to scarcity.

"The situation has been worsened by intrusion of herds of livestock from other regions resulting to over utilization of water and forage leading to environmental degradation since these re-

gions have not fully recovered from the 2009 drought," said the director.

Warugongo says that in order to curb the situation, the department is carrying out intensive training for farmers on fodder conservation in form of silage and hay but currently there is no fodder or pasture to conserve.

The department is also planning on short interventions such as livestock off take, emerging livestock feeding, and restocking programmes.



Crop failure has been reported in many parts of Central Kenya like this farm in Nairutia in Kieni west district. This will lead to low production in this season. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Fishing project gives hope for coast youths

By BEKADZO TONDO

THE Economic Stimulus Fish Enterprise Programme is set to employ 45,000 workers from 15 constituencies in coast region.

About ten people will be offered direct jobs in the construction of one fish pond. A total of 1,300 fish ponds are set to be constructed in every constituency bringing the total to 4,500 ponds.

According to the director of fisheries development in coast region Mr. Nicholas Ndekethe, the ministry will offer special training to selected farmers to equip them with knowledge on how best to undertake the project.

Mr. Ndekethe says that his officers will offer the necessary expertise in the construction of the ponds and equipping them with appropriate fingerlings based on their suitability and needs of the beneficiaries.

The officer further says the stocking is to be done in the appropriate rates and ratio as outlined by aquaculture extension officers.

Speaking during the official launching of the programme in four constituencies in Kilifi County, the minister for fisheries development Mr. Amason Kingi said the programme will address food shortages in Kilifi county.

Minister Kingi said his ministry plans to put up cold rooms to ensure that farmers do not incur losses.

The minister said that Bahari, Ganze, Malindi, Kaloleni and his Magarini constituency will benefit from the programme.

The minister at the same time said the government was in the process of recovering grabbed fish landing sites along the coastal region.

He notes that most of the sites have been grabbed by influential investors among them foreigners and said all those sites will be reverted to the local fishermen.

Tana River County has potential to feed all Kenyans

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

ALTHOUGH Tana River County has enormous potential to feed her 240,000 residents, drought and unpredictable weather patterns have frequently conspired to subject the people to starvation.

The district's capacity to boost the Government's Strategic Grain Reserves, has perennially been frustrated by poor rainfall patterns.

The Tana River District Agricultural Officer, Mr. Ahmed Haji Bunu, says the County has the potential to grow adequate food, especially maize, that could feed the entire country.

Mr. Bunu says soils are favourable for the production of maize, cow peas, green grams, rice, bananas and cassava. The conditions are also ideal for other crops, including sim sim, coconut, sugar cane, cashew nuts and cash crops such as mangoes, citrus, cotton and vegetables.

Mr. Bunu says apart from the Hola and Bura irrigation schemes, there are 3,500 hectares of land with capacity to produce five tones of maize per hectares. However, current production is just 1.8 tones per hectare.

The Regional Development minister, Mr. Fred Gumo, says cow peas can be produced in 1,050 hectares but current production is confined to only 185 hectares. He says the potential for rice production stands at 800 hectares that can produce five tones per hectare. However, currently 160 hectares under crop produces 0.6 tones per hectares.

Mr. Bunu says bananas which are the staple food crop for the local community has production levels at 350 hectares, with an output of 0.7 tones per hectare.

Potential production for mangoes is 1,500 hectares that can produce 50 tones per hectare. However, current production is 782 hectares capable of producing 20 tones per hectare.

Mr. Bunu said there are four major farming systems practiced in Tana River County such as rain-fed agriculture taking place along river line and hinterlands. Irrigated agriculture is undertaken at Hola and Bura Irrigation schemes.

Traditional flood recession agriculture along river Tana is practiced by the pastoral communities.

Projects undertaken by the department are funded by the Government and donors. They are Njaa Marufu Kenya (NMK), National Agriculture and Livestock Extension Programme (NALEP). The so called orphaned crops, are jointly funded by NALEP-SIDA.

Some of the groups that have benefited from Njaa Marufu Kenya fund include Chewele bee keeping, Onduke youth group livestock trading, Kipini small-scale traders, while those that have benefited from NALEP-SIDA programmes are Nanighi and Biskidera.

Mr. Bunu says NALEP seeks to fund agricultural activities as part of their efforts to eliminate food insecurity. Project beneficiaries include Kilelengwani group that is involved in oil crop promotion and extraction (sim sim).

Another group is the Galole Broad Based Community Organisation that is undertaking the Neem soap making project. Mr. Bunu says the orphan crops project involves cassava clean seed multiplication where 2,000 cuttings are bought from Kari, Mtwapa and distributed to farmers for multiplication.

The County has a poor record of meeting the County's demands of about 27,000 metric tones of grains per year only producing 12,000 tones.

Mr. Bunu attributes insufficient food production to unreliable rainfall, floods, drought and unpredictable weather patterns. Efficient mango production has been suffering because of poor road network, leading to about 50 per cent loss.

The main challenges behind food shortage include inadequate and poor

rainfall patterns, low base farmer income that often leads to poor investment in the activity.

Other causes include illiteracy, floods, poor road network, ethnic conflict, high prevalence of pests and diseases. Poor land tenure and lack of vibrant and well organized market groups have also been blamed for the low production of foods.

The agricultural officer says in order to achieve sufficient food production, there should be increased grassroots extension approaches that involve women and youth in decision making on investment and ownership.

He says feeder roads should be improved for the easier transportation of farm produce to markets. He said the land tenure system should move from current communal and Government trust lands to individual ownership.

Mr. Bunu says in order to minimize the impact of prolonged drought, production using pumps should be encouraged while irrigation potential of Hola and Bura schemes should be maximized.

He says wildlife-human conflicts can be checked by initiating constant dialogue between various groups and ensuring respect to private property.



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Tea factories seek certification to sell in world market

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

TEA Factories planning to explore the lucrative Global Markets will have to attain the Rain Forest Alliance Certification by the year 2015.

The certification requires factories to educate their workers and farmers from their catchments areas on various environmental practices that have been stipulated in a charter the factories are supposed to sign.

Among the environmental conservation practices required include proper use of pesticides, controlled cultivation along river beds and restrained use of child labour.

Kenya Tea Development Agency (KTDA) Zone IV board member Mr. Peter Kanyago, while addressing farmers during the Annual General Meeting at Gitugi Tea Factory in Nyeri County said RIPFOM, an International Company that buys Kenya's tea will not purchase tea from factories which will not have acquired the certification.

"Our buyers want to know the steps we have taken in conserving our environment and also improving our produce," said Kanyago.

The Board member noted the factories in Nyeri County were working to ensure they acquire the Certification before the deadline to continue selling their produce to the Company.

He said farmers from the region had continued to deliver good tea and advised them to keep good crop husbandry to boost their production.

Kanyago says Tea Research Foundation is in the process of introducing more viable clones that will yield more produce than the current ones.

"We will advise our farmers to replace their old clones with new



Tea farmers of Ragati Tea Factory in Mathira district during the AGM recently. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

ones as the plantation farmers have already introduced them," added the board member.

Among the five tea factories in the County, it is only Iria-ini Tea Factory which currently has the Rain Forest Certification.

"The factory is also Fair Trade, ISO 9001 and 22000 and UTZ Solidaridad Certified," added the chairman of the factory Mr Hutchison Wanjohi.

Kanyago says the factory is set to become the first to do value addition of tea if plans by a UK based company to buy tea directly from the factory succeed.

He added the plan would boost the income of the farmers.

Reports from various facto-

ries indicate crop production increased last year than that of the previous years but the KTDA board member says though production is higher, tea prices have not been as good as last year urging farmers to continue tendering their crops to get more yields.

Last year, farmers in Chinga Tea Factory were paid Kshs616 million for the green leaf delivered while Iria-ini and Gitugi Tea factories paid Kshs553 million and Kshs 433 million respectively which was about 70 per cent of the total revenue.

Reports from the three factories however indicate production cost had increased last year compared to the previous years.

The whole of Nyeri County which has about 30,000 tea farmers was paid over Kshs 2.7 billion as the total returns last year.

Other factories include Ragati which received Kshs552 million and Gathuthi Kshs540 million.

Apart from Iria-ini and Ragati which have leased land to plant trees for firewood, the other factories are seeking to buy land for the same issue.

"The company has continued to develop the Luisoi farm by planting more trees and putting in place necessary infrastructure and it is expected that the whole farm acreage will be put under tree plantation before the end of the next financial year. The company

will also continue to seek and identify suitable parcels of land for tree planting in order to minimize on costs," added the Ragati Tea Factory chairman Mr Eustace Karanja.

And due to high manufacturing costs, Kanyago adds that plans by the factories and KTDA to start Hydro power generation at Gura River in Othaya were in the final stages and the contractor will be working on site in the first week of April.

"The Gura Hydropower Project was initially intended to produce three megawatts of electricity but we have been informed it can produce five megawatts. This is a joint project of Iria-ini, Gathuthi, Chinga and Gitugi tea factories," adds Kanyago.

The Project was established to help cut the rising cost of power used by the factories. It will also produce extra power to be sold to the national power provider Kenya Power and Lighting Company.

Recently, tea factories from the Region adopted a modern technology of weighing green leaf using Electronic Weighing Systems which the board member says has been well received by the farmers.

Other initiatives adopted by some of the factories include Fair Trade funded projects where farmers practice Bee Keeping and Fruit farming to boost their income.

The activities were first introduced at Iria-ini Tea Factory which is currently pursuing a briquette making project.

The briquette which is a compressed biomass form of charcoal is intended to supplement the use of firewood in the making of tea.

Kanyago hailed the factory's management for being in the front line in embracing new projects.

Coffee production drops in Othaya due to heavy rains

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

PROLONGED period of rainfall registered last year led to lower coffee production in Othaya.

The heavy rainfall led to poor flowering of the crop thus leading to drop in coffee production according to Othaya Farmers Cooperative Society chairman Mr Newton Mwangi.

Speaking during this year's Annual General Meeting which was held at Approved School Grounds recently, the chairman said the production dropped from 3.6 million Kilogrammes in the year 2009/2010 to 905,137Kgs for 2010/2011 season.

The coffee was from the 19 coffee factories affiliated to the farmer's society which has about 15,000 farmers.

About Kshs130 million has already paid to farmers for this season with Kamoko Coffee Factory fetching Kshs48.95 per Kg of coffee which was the highest price.

Average farmer was paid Kshs35.37 per Kg.

The society purchased their own milling plant last year from Brazil and has milled all the coffee parchment and Mbuni for 2009/2010 amounting

to 724.99 tonnes.

Over 300 farmers attended the meeting which was peaceful unlike other years marred by violence.

The society is moving to the next level of value addition through acquisition of a commercial roaster, grinding machine and packaging machine.

These will help to market coffee at various supermarkets in the country and selling of the coffee locally.

"I'm urging all the members to improve on quantity and quality coffee in order to take advantage of good and attractive prices in the market. Good quality coffee is currently fetching very high prices in the auction," he added.

By the end of the year, the society will have computerized part of the society especially the headquarters as they now have five computers as part of improving technology.

The management committee has entered into contract with members that in normal circumstances it will always pay 80 per cent of the net income received from the marketers after the reduction of the milling charges and the society to retain 20 per cent for operations.



Othaya Coffee Farmers enjoy coffee from the Othaya Farmers Coffee Mill during this year's AGM of Othaya Coffee Farmers Cooperative Society at Approved School Grounds recently. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Lake Vitoria facing imminent death

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

AFRICA'S largest lake is under siege, with life-sustaining waters and fish increasingly polluted by sewage, industrial waste and chemicals.

The lake and the 30million people, who rely on it in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, face an uncertain future as the contaminants abet countless diseases and cut fish catches as water levels fall for various reasons.

"In terms of water quality and quantity, the situation is bad and worsening," said Ladisy Chengula, a natural resources management specialist for the World Bank. "We don't know where it will end up".

The Presidents of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda have jointly called for action to reverse the trend but that will require an indeterminate amount of study. Along a beach in Kisumu, Kenya's third-largest city, no fewer than 500 vehicles a day are soaped up and scrubbed down by some 300 car washers, leaving effluent to drain into the lake despite a ban on the activity.

"I know that I'm polluting the lake but I have no alternative job," says Patrick Otieno, who for the past three years has washed cars here, earning daily wages of about Kshs.300.

"I have to eat at the end of the day," the 29-year-old says, thankful for having a job in a region where the unemployment rate hovers at 30 percent. Mr. Otieno, his car-washing colleagues and others who work on the beach number about 1,000 – and they toil all day in an area with just a single public pay toilet.

"People are using alternative bush places," says Erick Muok of the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEM-

RI) that has monitored the grooving health hazards posed by both human waste and other pollutants.

"One hundred per cent of car washers are schistosomiasis infected," says KEMRI's Diana Karanja. "It's very rare to find somebody in good health among the people dealing with the lake. Most of the residents are sick."

Schistosomiasis, bilharzia, cholera, pneumonia, diarrhea and skin diseases are among the water-borne or abetted illnesses that afflict Lake Victoria residents with increasing frequency, health officials says.

And the human excrement expelled into the lake from Kisumu car washers is by far one of the least of the pollutants.

"Millions of liters of untreated sewage sludge flow into the lake every day from major urban centres along the lake shore." The UN environment Programme (UNEP) said of Victoria in its 2006 assessment of East Africa's lakes. This contamination, coupled with chemical and fertilizer run-off from lakeside industry and agriculture, has had a devastating effect, contributing to a disturbing rise in anoxia, lack of oxygen, in the lake water, it said.

"Nearly half of the lake floor currently experiences prolonged anoxia for several months of the year, compared to the 1960s when anoxia was localized and sporadic," UNEP said.

"The sanitation is becoming alarming," says a geology lecturer at a local university, who co-authored a UNEP report and has called for hefty increases in fines for polluters.

"Another major problem is the



Car washers clean vehicles inside Lake Victoria.

amount of sediment going into the lake because of deforestation from people who need firewood," he said.

Over the past four years, the water level of Lake Victoria has ebbed by 1.5 meters (five feet), bringing it to only 17 centimeters (6.7 inches) above the lowest-recorded level in 1923.

Some researchers have accused Uganda of diverting water from rivers and streams that feed Victoria for hydroelectricity but many say blame for the lake's poor health is due to a variety of factors, including poverty.

Karanja believes the drop is a

result of a vicious cycle, saying the more people need the lake to survive the less they will respect the precious and fragile nature of its resources.

The falling lake levels are affecting East Africa's economy.

Providing potable water, hydroelectric power and inland water transport, the lake also supports many industries, such as agriculture, trade, tourism, wildlife and fisheries.

The lake basin serves as a major source of employment for an estimated 30million people.

About three million people are engaged, directly or indirectly, in

subsistence and commercial fishing. More than 80 per cent of the population is engaged in agricultural production as small-scale farmers and livestock owners. The low water levels have begun to affect Uganda and Kenya's electricity supply, prompting unprecedented power cuts.

Uganda has resorted to severe power rationing, with some areas having electricity for less than five hours in a day. Ugandan industrialists predict harder times ahead for the industrial sector, saying escalation in operation costs will force them to shut down, costing thousands of jobs.

The irony of water crisis in Kisumu

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

THERE are many ironies in Kenya, and Kisumu is one of them. The town and its environs sit on the shore of the world's second-largest fresh water lake, Lake Victoria, yet it is among the many areas that suffer an acute shortage of clean drinking water. But thanks to concerted government efforts supported by development partners, Kisumu has started enjoying a reliable supply of clean water.

The United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) has stepped in to assist curb the spread of water borne diseases

by funding projects to supply clean drinking water for Kisumu County residents.

The UN agency has mobilized rural communities of Kisumu to sink 50 wells at strategic schools, 20 boreholes and 200 shallow wells in the Western Kenya region.

Other development partners have also chipped in with a Kshs13 billion grant in liaison with the Government to enable Lake Victoria South Water Services Board (LVSWSB) supply clean water for domestic and other uses.

LVSWSB was established in 2004

with a mandate to improve water and sanitation infrastructure at community level through the identification of challenges frustrating efforts to achieve adequate water supply to residents adjacent to Lake Victoria.

The Board was mandated to tackle the challenges which for decades had led to massive water shortages and poor sanitation. It was also required to deal with water supply issues, the lack of which led to waterborne diseases such as cholera, typhoid, diarrhea and bilharzia.

LVSWSB Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Mr. Michael Ochieng said that

the Board is required to reduce, by half, the number of residents without access to clean water by 2015, one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Mr. Ochieng pointed out that Koru dam, located in Muhoroni District (formerly Nyando), is one of the projects whose target is to tackle persistent flooding and water supply problems in rural areas served by LVSWSB. "Other areas to be covered by the programme include Bomet, Kericho, Kisii, Kisumu, Homa Bay, Siaya and Bondo, among others," the CEO said recently at LVSWSB offices in Nyalenda.

The project serving Kisumu County was built in 1965 to provide water to the expansive area until 2005. However, the infrastructure's capacity has been overstretched by the fast growing population.

Mr. Ochieng said that in Kericho, the infrastructure requires upgrading to cope with the rising demand for water for the next 20 years, adding that working with development partners since 2005 has enabled the company to mobilize huge amounts of resources.

"In Kericho, Kshs1.3 billion has been allocated to expand projects in Kericho, Keroka and Isebania through funding from the African Development Bank (ADB), while Migori has received Kshs.800 million," says Mr. Ochieng. "We also received funding from German government to upscale water supply at Timbilil, Nyahera, Kisii, Ugunja, Sega and Ukwala at a cost of Kshs.3.5 billion," he says.

Another project that is set to benefit under UN-Habitat programme is the Kisii water supply through which the Government projects to boost Kegati water services at a cost of Kshs.70 million. "This will increase the supply to 12,000 cubic meters per day and the project was expected to be ready by August 2010 but delayed due to circumstances beyond the Board's control," he says.

Mr. Ochieng says Kshs.800 million will go towards the expansion of Bondo and Sakwa water supply and the Sidindi/Malanga supply expansion to cover up to 2032 at a cost of Kshs.800 million through ADB funding.

"Under the Nile Basin Initiative in Bomet through funding by Netherlands, LVSWSB has mobilized Kshs.1.6 billion from which Kshs.600 million will boost supply in rural areas and Kshs.1.2 billion will target urban areas," he says. The expansion of Kisumu supply has started in earnest with the rehabilitation of Dunga uptake and intake plant completed.

"This will tremendously boost Kisumu water supply by 24,000 metric cubic meters per day, thus the City is assured of water supply 24 hours every week," he said.

The company will construct huge storage reservoirs, a new sewerage plant and repair Nyalenda and Kisat ponds to facilitate anticipated supply.

"LVSWSB will use the Kshs.2.8 billion and a further Kshs.3.4 billion to ensure sustainability of the supply without hitches up to 2032," the CEO said.

Mr. Ochieng was optimistic, saying that Kisumu water supply will hit the 45,000 cubic meters per day mark, up from current 21,000. LVSWSB targets 48,000 cubic meters by 2032.



Residents wash vehicles along the shores of Lake Victoria.

Orphans graduate at Kaheti Youth Polytechnic

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

THIRTY-SIX students mostly orphans have graduated at the newly refurbished Kaheti Youth Polytechnic in Mukurwe-ini District.

The students who are mostly orphans and vulnerable children received certificates, tools and equipments to start their work immediately after graduation.

Youth and Sports Assistant Minister Kabando wa Kabando who is also the area MP presided over the colorful ceremony at the polytechnic hall.

The course was sponsored by non-governmental organizations which include USAID through APHIA II and Vision Garden which paid for the upkeep including purchasing tools and equipments presented unto them.

More than Kshs2 million has been used in the institution by these sponsors.

The Government through the Ministry of Youth and Sports supported the institution since last year by giving Subsidized Youth Polytechnic Tuition (SYPT) funds which have gone a long way in enhancing academic and development activities in the institution.

The graduands were urged by the chairman to use the knowledge and skills they have gained to advance their future careers.

"The graduands will now be



Youth Assistant Minister Mr Kabando wa Kabando (right) awards graduands of Kaheti Youth Polytechnic with a certificate and one equipment each in Mukurwe-ini during the graduation of the polytechnic recently. Photo/Joseph Wambugu

self reliant and supportive as they now have income generating projects. We shall also be monitoring them to see how they are continuing with their work," said Kabando.

Kabando assured the institution

that it will continue to get support from the Government since it is helping the orphans and vulnerable students in the society.

The chairman of the Board said the main challenge is paying salaries to the instructors from the

money sourced from parents and urged the Government to at least post two Government paid instructors.

More funds are also needed to enhance development in the facility.

Ukambani mango farmers get market advice

By PETER MUTUKU

TECHNO-SERVE, a nonprofit organization, wants mango farmers in Ukambani region to stop selling their produce to agents but deal with outlets that offer better prices.

"With the onset of the harvesting season, you should avoid dealing with brokers and instead come together in groups and target reliable buyers, including juice manufacturing firms and honest individual mango traders who are ready to offer you reasonable price for the popular fruit," Ms Jane Biashara, a representative of the NGO in Mwala District.

The NGO's mission is to help small entrepreneurs to build ventures that create income for them and their families.

She says local farmers had for long not enjoyed economic returns from the venture yet most of them produced high quality mangoes fit for export to international markets.

She attributes the problem to lack of reliable market and over exploitation by agents who offer farmers depressed prices but resold fruits three or four times higher in Nairobi and surrounding urban centres, thus making huge profits.

"Agents are buying grade one of

the apple mango variety which should be preserved for export at about Kshs15 which is low compared with what the same would fetch at the international market," she said.

She said Tommyatins and Ngow that are the other two high grade varieties were fetching as little as below Kshs5 and utmost Kshs10 which was outright cheating. Production of local breeds such as Batawi, Sabre, Peach, Harries and Dodo had diminished because most farmers had adopted grafting to enhance quality.

She accuses the agents of taking advantage of farmers ignorance and impoverishment to exploit them.

She says she was optimistic the Government through the Horticultural Crops Development Authority (HCDA) and other relevant agencies were working to strengthen the market for mangoes by creating linkage between the lot and the lucrative market outlets locally and internationally.

Ms Biashara was presiding over the official launching of the new Mwala Mango Farmers Association in Mwala town which has a membership of 1,400 farmers. The growers are drawn from Masii, Mbiuni, Mwala and Kathama areas.

The farmers lamented at the massive exploitation by middlemen and commended efforts by stakeholders to revamp the subsector. "We appreciate the Government efforts and those of techno-serve for coming up with strategies to ensure we get reliable market for our produce and production of quality fruits which meet standards at the lucrative global markets," Mr. Kennedy Muli Kivai who was picked as the chairman of the forum.

Techno-serve has trained groups of mango farmers on productivity, marketing and venturing into new outlets and has provided them with a list of 40 potential buyers.

Mr. Kivai says in Kangundo and Makueni districts, the farmers were most affected by exploitation by brokers for failing to join cooperative societies where they could bargain for better prices.



Mango farmers in Ukambani to sell their produce to better offers.

NEMA told to lift ban on sand harvesting

By PETER MUTUKU

SAND harvesters in Mwingi District want the ban imposed by National Environmental Management Agency (NEMA) lifted.

The harvesters who include Mwingi Town Council and Mwingi Sand Harvesters Cooperative Society argue that the ban had adversely affected their operations as they had collectively lost direct income amounting to Kshs300,000 they have been collecting as revenue.

The Town Council chairman, Mr. Felix Musya Nzung'u, says his authority had lost an average of Kshs0.2 million it has been collecting on a weekly basis as cess.

Meanwhile, Mwingi Sand Harvesters Cooperative Society Secretary Charles Ndambuki says the union had lost up to Kshs100,000 it has been raking in on weekly basis from the sale of sand to transporters.

Cllr Nzung'u said although the harvesting ban was feasible due to adverse environmental degradation caused in the past five years, it had destabilized the council's financial base.

He says the council initiated the sand harvesting ban in consultation with Nema with hopes that with the March and May rains, the multi-million enterprise would resume once the council resumes tax collection.

Ndambuki says the harvesting and selling ban had effectively denied the 12 permanent staff of Mwingi Sand Harvesters Cooperative and the 600 people working as casual labourers a source of livelihood.

He has expressed fear that the ban was likely to lead to increased cases of crime as those who used to work in the quarries are likely to try out dishonest means of eking out a living.

The Sacco boss has expressed concern that the cooperative stands to lose heavily and may not give annual dividends due in March.

He said the union members normally collect dividends of between 30 and 40 percent of their shares.

Mwingi District Nema officer in charge, Ms Patricia Wambua, in collaboration with the provincial administration banned sand harvesting in January following public outcry over massive sand harvesting resulting in the shortage of water as drought sets in.

The residents said harvesting activities had led to destruction of seasonal rivers from which they collected water for domestic and livestock use especially during the dry spell.

Tobacco declared world leading killer

By PETER MUTUKU

TOBACCO is said to be among the leading causes of preventable deaths as it kills about five million people globally on a daily basis.

It is estimated by the year 2020, tobacco related deaths will reach 10 million in Kenya alone, where smoking prevalence in men is estimated at 19 percent and less than one percent in women.

A survey on tobacco use among school going children conducted by the Global Youth Tobacco (GYTS) in 2007 indicates that 13 percent of children are smokers. Out of the total, 15.8 percent are boys and 10 percent are girls.

There are other national prevalence surveys that have been conducted, including the GYTS of 2001, GSHS in 2003, KHDS 2003, Nacada in 2004 and 2006.

All the surveys indicate rising levels of tobacco use among Kenyans and school going children in particular.

The surveys by the authoritative anti drug crusaders were all in agreement that tobacco is a drug of first abuse among children and young people in Kenya. Tobacco acts as a gatekeeper drug and many users graduate from the drug to hard substances.

Other studies have shown tobacco production and consumption has led to deaths, disability, diseases, environmental degradation, poverty and exploitation of women and child labour in Kenya.

A recent study by Nacada has revealed that the most commonly abused drugs in Kenya include alcohol and tobacco products.

"Current trends in alcohol and drug abuse point to a bleak future if nothing is not done to reverse the scenario," says Aggrey Busena of Nacada.

The official told a recent workshop on development of curriculum on alcohol and substance abuse that there was urgent need to incorporate drug abuse prevention and management in efforts to stem the rising tide.

He says there was rising use of drugs, including tobacco, bhang (Marijuana), miraa (Khat) and heroin.

About 1 percent of the population use bhang, with the highest population in Coast Province.

Busena says alcohol consumption has gone up to 17 percent over the 2003-2007 period, while a study in Nairobi schools indicates alcohol initiation age had gone as low as 12 years. Over 15 percent of youth aged 16-17 have consumed alcohol.

The official urges Kenyans to take part in the campaign against the substance and consider it a serious issue since consumption of drugs was destroying the youth.

Committee formed to resolved sugar rows

By JOEL JUMA

A CAUCUS of five MPs from Kakamega County has been formed to end legal battles between Butali Sugar Mills and West Kenya Sugar Company.

The legislators want to have the disputes between the two companies resolved to stop the suffering by the cane farmers who have invested in the sugar industry.

MPs Ben Washiali of Mumias and Manyala Keya of Lurambi are leading the talks aimed at ending the woes facing the stakeholders of the sugar industry in the Malava and Lugari sugar zones.

"We shall include the provincial administration in resolving the disputes as Kenya sugar Board has failed in its mandate," said Washiali.

Washiali and Keya explained that they want to reach out on the management of West Kenya with a view to withdrawing the cases against Butali in Court so that the matters can be settled by leaders from the County.

They explained that Kakamega

County requires more factories that can create employment and also improve the economy of the residents adding that shutting down Butali will work against the spirit of implementing policies of Vision 2030.

The MPs said that cabinet minister Soita Shitanda was applying confrontational methods, which will not restore harmony among the two investors.

Shitanda who is the minister for Housing was reported to have said that he will lead farmers to demonstrate against West Kenya Sugar Company following their decision to block Butali from crushing cane, barely a month after the machines were commissioned by Prime Minister Raila Odinga.

Washiali said that they have enlisted services of MPs David Were (Matungu), Cyrus Jirongo of Lugari and Moses Wetangula from Sirisia to assist in the arbitration process.

The MPs were speaking in Kakamega town following reports that Butali Sugar Company has stopped crushing cane after the rival

company went to court to contest over the issuance of the crushing license.

The farmers led by James Barasa urged Government to resolve the matter arguing that their livelihoods are at stake with the unending court battles between Butali and West Kenya Sugar Company.

"Our Government should move in and protect us. We are tired of continuous court cases," they said.

A three-judge bench, comprising of High Court Judges Jeane Gacheche, George Dulu and Daniel Musinga reinstated extensions orders barring the newly opened factory from operating.

The court order now stays in place until the petition by West Kenya Sugar Company is heard and determined in April.

Residents now want the Government to stop investors from undermining development of the region.

"This is like taking us for a ride. Some of our children have already secured employment at the firm while some of us benefited from the first Kshs7million pay cheques given to over 100 farmers," said Barasa.



Sugarcane farmers in dilemma due to row over two factories.

Mugeni's inspiring grass to grace story

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

WHEN Margaret Mugeni, 49, lost her husband who was the sole breadwinner sixteen years ago, her life turned into a wade in murky waters. She woke up to the reality of the void and was suddenly faced with enormous task of raising her seven children single handedly.

The untimely death of her husband, a former Warrant Officer with the Kenya Army, in 1994 inspired her to venture into economic activities to make ends meet.

Today, Margaret who is the chairlady of a community based organization known as Busibwabo Widows and Orphans HIV/AIDS Women group is smiling all the way to the bank after an ambitious project they set up bore fruit.

The group which is made up of twenty members with sixteen of them being women and four men are currently engaged in poultry keeping which has helped boost their income. Margaret says the group was formed in 2003 with the aim of consoling bereaved women following the demise of their spouses.

"Most of us had thought that after the demise of our spouses who were the sole breadwinners, we would become beggars," says the chairlady, adding that the group has strengthened and even encouraged them to work even harder towards their survival. "At the moment, we are engaged in poultry keeping with financial support from the Ministry of Agriculture sponsored Njaa Marufuku Kenya which has advanced Kshs102,000 to the group," adds the chairperson.

She says the project has bailed them out of poverty and over-dependence on handouts from well-wishers especially politicians who have always taken advantage of their situation to manipulate them for their own selfish interests.

Margaret says her husband died when her first-born son was just about to join form one, but is quick to add that since she joined the group she has been able to pay school fees for her son who is now at Egerton university undertaking a computer science course whereas others are in various secondary schools in the province.

Another member, Lillian Vihenda, the group secretary on her part lauded the project saying she, too, has been able to educate her children, buy uniforms since the demise of her spouse a few years back. One of the beneficiaries who gave her names as Margaret Oduori said during the December festive season she managed to raise Kshs60,000 after selling ten cocks. "The money helped me complete our brick house that had stalled since the death of my husband five years ago," says Margaret Oduori, adding that the project has changed her life a great deal.

Magnam to weed out hyacinth

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

A COMMUNITY Based Organization (CBO) has embarked on a process to remove water hyacinth on the shores of Lake Victoria.

The Magnam Environmental Network, is also engaged in a campaign that seeks to implore the community on the need to embrace sustainable methods of fishing to help conserve the environment.

The group's coordinator Michael Otieno Nyaguti says that since inception, the group has been working closely with vari-

ous schools and the local community to come up with environmental interventions such as awareness campaigns, market cleanups and tree planting among others.

"The group members have constructed a community water point next to the blocked lake where villagers draw water for washing and domestic consumption. The water point is a great relief to the local community especially at this time that a large proportion of the water mass is covered with water hyacinth and hippo grass weed," Otieno says, adding that the water point also serves as a fish sanctuary,

with an inlet that allows mature fish to return to the lake without any hindrance.

The group members are also appealing to the government and especially the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission (KACC) to move with speed to help end illegal fishing.

"Officers from the fisheries department have continued to contravene the fisheries Act by issuing licenses to those engaged in the illegal vice," they said adding that corrupt illegal Beach Management Unit (BMU) committees have continued to operate with impunity.

Otieno at the same time said that

Magnam Environmental Network is currently engaging the Korando community in tree planting exercises.

"We have also initiated an urban forestry approach to the residents of Kisumu on a pilot basis where we encourage the planting of fruit trees," the group coordinator said, adding that it was high time the Lake Victoria Environmental Management Programme (II) considered working with the community based organization in collaboration with the beach management units (BMUs) in the region.

Nyeri tea farmers paid billions

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

ABOUT 30,000 tea farmers in Nyeri County last year were paid a total of Kshs 2.7 billion from the sale of their crop.

This is the total income that the farmers got in form of monthly proceeds and the end of the year payments commonly known as bonus in the year which ended last June.

The farmers were from the five tea factories which include Ragati, Chinga, Iria-ini, Gathuthi and Gitugi tea factories who delivered the green leaves to the factories.

KTDA Zone IV board member, Mr Peter Kanyago, said this is one of the highest amount paid to farmers in the recent past.

Speaking during the Annual General Meeting at Ragati Tea Factory in Mathira district, Kanyago said Ragati farmers were paid Kshs552 million.

Chinga Tea Factory received the highest amount of Kshs 616 million, Iria-ini got Kshs 553 million while Gathuthi was paid Kshs 540 million and Gitugi Kshs433 million.

“The crop production was high due to the favourable climatic conditions and about 70 per cent of the total revenue was paid to the farmers,” said the board member who is also the chairman of Chinga Tea Factory.

Ragati Tea Factory chairman Mr Eustace Karanja said the factory’s 8,000 farmers were paid 71 per cent of the total revenue and the factory plans to pay



KTDA Zone IV board member Mr Peter Kanyago (right standing) with directors of Ragati Tea Factory in Mathira district during the factory’s AGM recently. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

farmers 75 per cent this year.

Karanja told farmers that due to high manufacturing costs, the factory is joining hands with other factories from Kirinyaga County in order to produce hydropower. The Hydro power project is expected to take two years.

“The manufacturing costs increased last year. The average manufacturing cost for the year was Kshs71.96 for every kilogram of made tea against the

average manufacturing cost of Kshs 60.63 per Kg for the previous year. There was an increase of cost by Kshs11.33 per every kilogramme of made tea,” noted the chairman.

During the meeting which was held under tight security, one of the directors Mr Evan Mwai was endorsed to continue serving as a director until his term is finished despite stiff opposition from a cross section of farmers.

“The crop production was high due to the favourable climatic conditions and about 70 per cent of the total revenue was paid to the farmers.”

CIA draws list of Kilifi women leaders

By BEKADZO TONDO

A CIVIL society organization has developed a data base for potential women leaders in Kilifi and Mombasa counties.

The data availed during a workshop for women leaders at a Kilifi hotel revealed that about 220 women leaders have so far been identified

The data base developed by Community Aid International (CIA) was mooted to empower women leaders to contest for the many political seats outlined in the new constitutional dispensation. According to CIA executive director Mr Joseph Kwaka, the data base will form the basis through which strong women leaders will be propelled into positions of power both at the local and national levels.

Mr Kwaka said the data base contained educational background of the listed women, their work experience and therefore making it easy to refill any available opportunities where women are required. “We have many educated women in the province with adequate capacity to hold senior positions in the government and political scene but due to lack of a data base, they have not benefited,” said Kwaka.

Women leaders who spoke including the former chairlady of Kilifi town council Asha Karisa said that women hardly benefitted from leadership positions despite forming the large number of voters during general elections.

Former Deputy Director of the Kenya Airports Authority Ms Naom Sidi, challenged women voters to support their own to enable them capture the available elective political positions in the Kilifi County. She said the data base created for potential women leaders will serve as reference point for the government and other organizations seeking to fill in positions with qualified women leaders.

She insisted that parents must accord equal opportunities to all their children to help secure their future especially the girls who are currently disadvantaged in the region.

USAID unveils massive aid for Nyanza, Western

By JOSEPH OJWANG

USAID has disbursed Kshs120 billion to improve health care system in Western Kenya.

The five year project under AIDS, Population and Health Integrated Assistance (APHIAplus) will cover all districts in Nyanza and Western provinces. The project aims at improving and expanding sustainable facility based services for HIV, TB, reproductive health, family planning, malaria and maternal child health.

Western Kenya APHIA plus director Dr. Ambrose Misore says they will work closely with the government and non governmental agen-

cies to strengthen health care services throughout the two provinces.

Misore says that studies have shown that diseases such as HIV, malaria and tuberculosis are causing greater suffering and death in Western Kenya than any other part of the country.

He says that they will also improve and expand civil society activities to increase healthier behaviors, including prevention programs that target populations at higher risks. “We are set to meet community based organizations and youth groups in every district to integrate them in our work to enable us have bottom up approach in improving health care system to the

locals,” he said.

Speaking during the launch of the program in Kisumu, Misore announced that the project will also improve home and community support program for people and families infected and affected by HIV/Aids, including orphans and other vulnerable children. He says that the new health project for comprehensive health service delivery was awarded to the programme for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) to improve the health of Kenyans in the Western region of the country.

“PATH and its partners will implement the APHIAplus project in Western and Nyanza provinces which ends

in December 31, 2015,” he says. Dr. Misore also noted that this is USAID’s largest health investment to Kenya under the US President Barack Obama’s Global Health Initiative.

He noted that APHIAplus will build on the systems already created by APHIA II Nyanza that ended last year after successful work. “We are not new, what we are going to do is to build on the already existing avenues created by APHIA II Nyanza that has come to an end,” he said.

He announced that they will purchase three motor boats to be used in Lake Victoria to reach far flung areas in Islands within the lake.

Dr. Misore says that they will be

able to reach the entire vulnerable group in the two provinces regardless of where they are. “These two provinces are hit by numerous diseases and majority of the locals live in abject poverty. It will be upon us to come in and improve on their lives,” he said.

USAID Office of Population and Health director Lynn Adrian says the health care project is very elaborate and seeks to improve access to health care services and strengthen the capacity of communities to manage their own health. Adrian says that USAID has redoubled their effort to assist the government in ensuring that they meet the Millennium Development Goals on health by the year 2015.

New National Construction Authority

INTRODUCTION

THE National Construction Authority is anchored by an Act of Parliament, 2010. The Act introduces a relatively new concept that sets out basic requirements for the registration of contractors, the standardization and improvement of construction techniques and materials, accreditation and certification of skilled construction workers and construction site supervisors. At the outset, the Authority has powers to, among other, things blacklist rogue contractors and promote the establishment of construction companies.

The Authority comes into force as the Kenya Anti Corruption Commission (KACC) hires six engineers to work with the Kenya National Highways Authority (KeNHA) to monitor quality countrywide.

Functions

Section 5 (1) empowers the authority to oversee the construction industry and coordinate its development. Further, other functions as specified under Section 5 (2) include:

- Promoting and stimulating

development, improvement and expansion of the construction industry

- Advising and making recommendations to the Minister on matters affecting or connected to the construction industry
- Undertaking or commissioning research into any matter relating to the construction industry
- Prescribing the qualifications or other attributes required for registration as a contractor under this Act
- Assisting in the exportation of services connected to the construction industry
- Providing consultancy and advisory services with respect to the construction industry
- Promoting quality assurance in the construction industry
- Encouraging the standardization and improvement of construction techniques and materials through :
 - (i) Initiating and maintaining a construction industry information system
 - (ii) Providing, promoting,



The construction industry in Kenya has over the years been turned into a conduit for swindling tax payers of billions of shillings. Shoddy and unfinished work due to inflated construction costs underpin the sector, infiltrated by shadowy contractors. This has prompted the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) board to enlist the support of anti-corruption commission to recover substantive amounts of money lost through poor workmanship. However, the newly established National Construction Authority is bound to change all that by providing legal and institutional frameworks for the industry writes our Sub-editor FAITH MUIRURI.

reviewing and coordinating training programmes organized by public and private accredited training centres for skilled construction workers and construction site supervisors

- (iii) Accrediting and registering contractors and regulating their professional undertakings

- (iv) Accrediting and certifying skilled construction workers and construction site supervisors

Powers of the Authority

Section 6(1) is explicit on the powers of the Authority which range from:

- (i) Awarding certificates of proficiency to contractors, skilled construction workers

and construction site supervisors

- (ii) Imposing fees or any other charges as it deems fit in respect of any of its functions or powers with the approval of the Minister of Public Works
- (iii) Establishing or expanding or promoting the establishment or expansion of companies, corporations or other bodies to carry on any activities related to construction either under the control or partial control of the Authority or independently
- (iv) Receiving, in consideration of any services that may be rendered by it, such commission or payments as may be agreed upon with any person

Composition

The Authority is to be run by a board comprised of

- (a) Chairperson to be appointed by the Minister from any of the following institutions
 - Architectural Association of Kenya
 - The Institution Engineers of Kenya
 - The Institute of Quantity Surveyors of Kenya
 - Law Society of Kenya
 - The Federation of Master Builders
 - The Kenya Association of Building and Civil Engineering Contractors
 - The Roads and Civil Engineering Contractors Association

Other members are to include

- (b) The Permanent Secretaries in the Ministries of Public Works, Roads, Local Government and



A section of road under construction. A National Construction Authority is to be set up to regulate construction industry.

Priority to rein in corrupt contractors

the Treasury

- (c) Seven members drawn from the Architectural Association of Kenya, the Institution Engineers of Kenya, the Institute of Quantity Surveyors of Kenya, Law Society of Kenya, the Federation of Master Builders, the Keny Association of Building and Civil Engineering Contractors and the Roads and Civil Engineering Contractors Association
 - (d) A representative of groups with special interests
- Registration as a contractor.

All contractors are to be registered by the Board under this Act. To become eligible for registration, contractors must

- (a) Have minimum technical qualifications and skills prescribed by the Board in respect to the contract under which registration is sought
- (b) Have the necessary experience prescribed by the Board in regard to construction, erection, installation, alteration or any other activity in question
- (c) Have professional and general conduct which in the opinion of the Board, makes them suitable to be registered under this Act
- (d) Have the necessary plant and equipment for the category of works for which the registration is sought.

The Board may refuse to register a contractor if:

- (a) The contractor does not meet specified conditions
- (b) Is a member of a consulting firm providing architectural, quantity surveying or engineering services, unless the person is authorized to seek such registration by the respective registration board
- (c) Is a person whose registration as a contractor shall result in conflict of interest with his employer

Further, Section 16 (4) outlines that upon registration, the person is to be issued with a certificate of registration indicating the registration number, the class of works for which registered, the date of registration and duration of registration

Another important feature that relates to registration focuses on the accreditation of firms incorporated outside Kenya. Section 17(1) stipulates that the Board is to allow such companies to carry out construction works in Kenya only



Contractors on the spot over shoddy work.

if the firm:

- (a) Intends to be present in Kenya only for the purpose of carrying out the specified work.
- (b) Has a certificate of compliance from the Registrar of Companies showing that prior to entering Kenya was trading as a contractor in the capacity which satisfies the Board
- (c) Has lodged an affidavit with the Board to the effect that once the contracted works are completed and the period of defects liability or maintenance has elapsed, it shall wind up business and not engage itself in the construction business within Kenya
- (d) Has the necessary plant and equipment for category of works for which the registration is sought

Section 17 (2) directs that the Board may require an applicant under this section to appear before it and produce documentary evidence of its competence in executing construction works prior to its entry in Kenya.

Further, the Act places an obligation on the Registrar who is expected to keep and maintain registers of contractors approved by the Board.

Section 18(2) provides that the

register must indicate, in respect to every person or firm:

- (a) The date of registration
- (b) The Physical and postal address
- (c) The registration number
- (d) The class of works for which the person is registered
- (e) The capital and other financial resources
- (f) Tools, plants and equipment
- (g) The key managerial, professional or technical and other personnel
- (h) Names and qualifications of directors or partners who are technically qualified or experienced in the relevant works as prescribed by the Board
- (i) In the case of an individual, his qualifications or skills and experience
- (j) The annual turnover of construction activities
- (k) The duration of registration
- (l) The type of registration

Inquiry by Board

The Board has powers to institute an inquiry into the conduct of a contractor either out of its own initiative or in pursuit of a written complaint lodged before it alleging professional misconduct

Section 21 (2) provides that the Board notifies the contractor of the complaint against him through his last address acknowl-

edged by the Registrar.

The law requires that the contractor responds to the complaint filed against him through an affidavit within a specified period of time. Section 21 (6) gives unequivocal rights to the contractor to appear before the Board and to be heard either personally or through his advocate.

However, a contractor who defies summons against him commits an offense and is liable upon conviction to a fine not exceeding Kshs10,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year or both.

Upon the completion of inquiry into the alleged misconduct of any contractor, the Board has a leeway to:

- (a) Caution the contractor
- (b) Direct the contractor as it may deem appropriate in the circumstances
- (c) Direct that the registration of the Contractor be suspended as it may specify
- (d) Direct the name of the contractor be removed from the register

Suspension

Section 22(1) empowers the Board to suspend contractors if:

- (a) convicted of an offense under this Act
- (b) found guilty of any act or omission amounting to improper, disgraceful conduct or gross professional misconduct after due inquiry held by

the Board

- (c) Has contravened the regulations or bylaws of the Authority

Appeals Board

Section 25 (1) provides for the establishment of a National Construction Appeals Board. The Board to be appointed by the Minister for Public Works is to comprise of:

- (a) A chairperson who must be an advocate of the High Court
- (b) A person with professional knowledge and experience in architecture, quantity surveying, engineering, building surveying or project management
- (c) A person nominated by the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators

The National Construction Authority Fund

In order to guarantee sustainability, section 32 (1) provides for the establishment of a fund. The fund will draw its revenue from:

- (a) The budgetary provision by the government
- (b) The charges levied on contractors on services given by the Authority
- (c) Such moneys or assets as may accrue to or vest in the Authority in the course of the exercise of its powers or the performance of its functions under this Act
- (d) All proceeds from the levy imposed by the Appeal Board.