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Plans hatched to hike school fees



Education Minister Prof Sam Ongeru releases last year's KCPE results.

By JOEL JUMA

PARENTS may soon be forced to dig deeper into their pockets if the government implements a raft of proposals contained in a report compiled by a task force set up to align the cost of education with the ever-increasing cost of living.

Proposals for the new fee guidelines are

currently awaiting Cabinet approval before being tabled in Parliament for adoption.

Education Secretary George Godia says the government will adapt the proposals once Parliament approves the report.

Prof Godia, however, says the fee guidelines formulated in 2008 will remain in force until the new structure is officially unveiled.

“We know that cost of goods has gone up and management of schools is difficult but principals should not impose unnecessary levies on parents using unfair procedures,”

says Godia.

He says the ministry of Education has already held a meeting with the Parliamentary Committee on Education during which fees matters were discussed.

The Education Secretary was speaking at Kakamega High School during the commissioning of the Kshs31 million Economic Stimulus Programme.

Kakamega Central District Education

Report confirms runaway graft in Kenya

By PETER MUTUKU

KENYA was last year placed at position 154 out of 182 in Corruption Perception Index (CPI) launched in Berlin.

According to the report, Kenya is among the 27 lowest-scoring countries in the company of countries widely perceived as endemically corrupt or failed.

Kenya continues to perform poorly despite the new Constitution. The country registered negligible improvement from a score of 2.1 in 2010 to 2.2 in the 2011 index.

Although, the ongoing Judicial and intended Police reforms hold the possibility for progress, comprehensive reforms in the public sector are needed, especially the legal services sector. The lack of progress in tackling graft can still be attributed to lack of political will and the slow pace of reforms in critical sectors.

Lack of political will and leadership is largely responsible for failure to effectively tackle corruption, despite the rhetoric and political bickering over corruption. There have not been sufficient answers provided for scandals that have continued to emerge.

“At the moment, in Kenya as in many countries in Africa, the political leadership remains the greatest obstacle to effective anti-corruption initiatives,” says Samuel Kimeu, the Executive Director of Transparency International Kenya.

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Plans hatched to hike school fees

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Officer Isaac Indiatsti and his Hamisi counterpart Joshua Otieno also addressed the meeting.

The Kenya Secondary Schools Head Teachers Association Western branch Chairman Kahi Indimuli and the Kenya Union of Post Primary Education of Teachers national chairman Milemba Imboko had challenged Godia to explain when the new fee guidelines will become operational.

Indimuli and Imboko explained that principals were straining because the cost of goods has doubled but the Government is yet to review funding to schools.

"We started the programme when the cost of sugar per a bag was Kshs3,000 but now we are buying the same quantity at Kshs9,000. We need changes in fee structures to avoid straining," said Indimuli.

Indimuli said most schools were operating with huge deficits and urged the government to release free education funds without delays.

But even as they spoke, it emerged that some schools have been forced to convene Annual General Meetings (AGM) s which have approved fee increments by between 50 and 70 per cent.

The Kenya National Union of Post- Primary Teachers (Kuppet) secretary general, Akello Misori, maintained that principals had no alternative but to find an immediate financial remedy, especially in the rural areas.

"Pressure on students to be fed on a balanced diet and workers to be paid promptly have pushed most schools into the red, forcing them to explore alternative ways to financing their budget deficits," explained Misori.

He explained that the high cost of food and other basic commodi-

ties had forced head teachers to borrow heavily from banks to run the schools because financial subsidies from the State were paltry.

Kuppet questioned the competence of top Ministry of Education officials as they have failed to ensure that the recurring woes afflicting the education sub-sector are resolved

According to the free secondary and primary education programmes, students in secondary schools are supposed to be paid for Sh10, 126 per head by State. In Primary, each child is to receive Sh1,020.

These funds are meant to buy instruction materials as well as pay workers' wages aside and settling some bills.

The only money, which the various district education boards are allowed to charge, is development levy of Sh2, 000.

But due to the heavy cost of living, several district education boards have imposed extra levies to avoid schools closing down due to lack of money.

A number of head teachers, have in the past intimated that it takes months before the money is sent to schools and yet each month they have bills to settle.

For instance, some students only received Sh3, 300 or Sh4, 000, leaving balances, which took long time to be disbursed.

Assistant Minister for Education, Ayiecho Olweny, however, says the government plans to double the allocation to cater for the surging cost of basic food commodities.

"The concerns are true and we are trying to do all we can to end the woes," he said.

Prof Ayiecho spoke as the Kenya National Association of Parents

(Knap) asked the State to be more practical if goals of free primary and secondary education are to be attained.

Nyanza Knap branch Chairman, Ogweno Jackson, said they would not carry the burden of extra levies imposed by schools yet they know this was one of the reasons the State introduced free education.

But even as the parents decry high levies, school administrators are defending the extra payments, arguing it is meant to keep them afloat to avoid plunging into financial difficulties due to the knock on effects of inflation.

Even though free primary and secondary education was meant to cushion the effects of poverty, majority of parents interviewed are now wondering whether education is really free as the State would like you have it.



Students: The government has been challenged to explain when the new fee guidelines will become operational.

Vote wisely: Bungoma residents told

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

BUNGOMA residents have been asked to vote wisely in the forthcoming General Elections.

Speakers at a forum organized by media focus on Africa said that since the advent of political pluralism in the country, voting in the area has all along been patterned by euphoria.

Participants at the forum appealed to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and other interested groups to launch civic education in the area before electioneering period.

"Only civic education can protect area residents from political manipulations spread through propaganda, promotion of negative ethnicity and sectoral interests," said Mr. Job Bwonya who is the executive director of Western Kenya Human Rights Watch.

The participants said that area residents must be equipped with information on how to engage meaningfully during the elections.

They appealed to the moderators of the discussion, Mr. Kennedy Amatete, and Mr. Albinus Muga to jump-start the process by liaising with willing CSOs.

The executive director of Western Kenya Human Rights Watch told the forum that vigorous civic education will expose individuals unfit for leadership and ensure that only strong aspirants survive the contest.

He said that once people get to know the role of a particular office and the qualities of its occupant, they will not be swayed to vote along ethnicity, party, and sectoral lines.

The forum was shocked to learn that some greedy politicians from the county had held meetings in Nairobi and shared out elective seats.

Mr. Lumumba Wekesa alleged that the politicians had shared out the positions without regard to respective individual's capability to manage county resources.

He told residents to reject candidates backed by the current crop of politicians as they had equated county leadership to pieces of meat shared out to appease dead people, a ritual that is commonly practiced by the Luhya community.

He said that meat from such rituals is shared among the clansmen and depending on how they are related during a ceremony.

He urged residents to be wary of political machinations that are likely to render them captives of poor leadership in the new dispensation.

Mr. Richard Wekesa challenged residents to shun leaders advancing negative ethnicity as this was likely to derail gains made in promoting peaceful co-existence.

The moderator of the discussion, Amatete, challenged the participants to set the agenda ahead of the elections.

Report confirms runaway graft in Kenya

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Most grand corruption cases have not been concluded including recent cases such as the one implicating Nairobi City Council officials over the Kshs 283 million cemetery scandals, free primary education and a few individuals mentioned in the Ministry of water scandals

Politics took centre stage

in the Kazi kwa Vijana initiative and it is not certain if the investigations are underway. Calls for speedy investigation into the matter and money lost recovered have been ignored. Corruption remains the greatest threat to stability and prosperity of a nation. Unless the leadership addresses corruption decisively, all other development initiatives may come to naught.

"The frequency with which

resources for projects aimed at lifting the majority of Kenyans from poverty are being misused or stolen casts doubt on the ability of the state to protect the public interest and achieve its economic development plans" adds Kimeu.

The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) is a complex index; it draws data from 17 sources provided by 13 reputable institutions. The survey measure

the overall extent of corruption (frequency and/or size of bribes) in the public and political sectors, and all sources provide a ranking of countries, i.e. include an assessment of multiple countries. Sources survey for CPI 2011 was conducted between December 2009 and September 2011.

The CPI 2011 surveyed 182 countries compared to 178 in the 2010.

PS calls for hiring of more teachers to ease burden

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

PUBLIC Works PS John Lonyangapuo has decried an acute shortage of teachers in the country.

The situation, he says, has led to high pupil-teacher ratio particularly in urban and informal settlements and relatively low teacher-pupil ratio in certain rural areas.

The PS lamented that lack of enough teachers has often created an imbalance and increased teacher workload with the Free Primary education worsening the problem.

Speaking when he presided over the graduation ceremony at Kagumo Teachers College, the PS expressed confidence that the graduands have been provided with life skills and equipped with modern teaching methods which will have no doubt be beneficial to all students that will be taught by them.

Others present were Tetu MP Francis Nyamwo, BoG chairman Macharia Kiruhi and college Principal J.M. Ngaroga. Over 260 teachers who included 143 men and 122 women were awarded with diplomas.

"The diploma course we offer prepares a well-balanced teacher who is not only well equipped to face the challenges of the dynamic secondary school curriculum but also of the contemporary society," said the principal.

The college started 75 years ago as a primary school. It later attracted a secondary school wing and in 1944, a teacher training college was established.

Between 1949 and 1960, the primary and secondary school wings were replaced by the teacher's col-

lege.

In the year between 1944 and 1982, the college had trained 6,661 primary school teachers.

Since 1982, the college has undertaken its current role of training diploma teachers for secondary schools in the country. The total number of those who have graduated to date is 8,921 diploma teachers.

The diploma course takes three years to complete, which amounts to

a total of nine terms, seven of which involve residential training and students undertake their practicals in the remaining two terms.

The course offers training in Sciences, Humanities and languages.

The college is collaborating with FUSION International for their various versions of programmed instructions in ICT.

"We are also seeking further collaboration with universities such as

Inoorero and Kenyatta Universities. We also collaborate with Automobile Association of Kenya to offer driving courses to staff and students who are interested during their free time," concluded the principal Ngaroga.

The college is currently in their fourth year of Implementation of the Performance Contract Policy and they have completed three cycles and have been evaluated with results indicating a good composite score.



Some of the tutors during the 27th graduation ceremony at Kagumo Teachers College in Nyeri County recently.
Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

ACK asks for say in transfer of teachers

By JOEL JUMA

ANGLICAN Church of Kenya (ACK) has urged the ministry of Education to consult with stakeholders before carrying out a reshuffle in the teaching fraternity.

The church said it will not allow transfer and promotions to be effected without its input, as the move would cause disharmony among the teachers.

"The transfers and promotions should be carried out in a manner that is acceptable by the majority," said Mumias ACK Diocese Bishop Ben Salala. The Government is set to move its operations to County level from next year.

Appointment of County Directors of Education is set to be finalised. Applicants for the positions have up to this month to apply for the positions to the ministry of Education.

The same postings by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) are also underway. Qualified applicants have been asked to submit their documents for consideration.

Salala and his Maseno North Diocese Bishop Simon Oketch said churches as sponsors of education matters in the Country should be consulted to avoid confrontation.

Salala made the remarks during ordination of priests at Mumias ACK Diocese. The function was presided over by the former head of the Anglican Church Arc Bishop Benjamin Nzimbi.

Panic has gripped many head teachers after it emerged that non-performing heads will be demoted. Those who failed to account for the Free Secondary Schools will also be affected.

The Kenya Union of Post Primary Education of Teachers (Kuppet) Kakamega County chairman Johnstone Wabuti said anxiety had gripped a number of head teachers in the area.

Western Provincial Director of Education Kenneth Miso confirmed that a reshuffle of the head teachers was underway.

"We have made changes and those affected should not run to politicians for assistance," said Miso.

Meanwhile, Salala and Nzimbi also said the church was opposed to changes in the Constitution ahead of next year's General Elections.

They said it will be unfair for the legislators to start mutilating the law before being implemented.

They said the post of Senator should not be scrapped as proposed by the Cabinet. Assistant minister for Information George Khaniri has also vowed to oppose scrapping of the post.

Khaniri has already declared his interest for the post in Vihiga County along side Masinde Muliro University lecturer Henry Embeywa. IKolomani MP Bonny Khalwale has on his side declare to contest for the same seat in Kakamega County.

Ojaamong advises leaders on education

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

LABOUR Assistant Minister Sospeter Ojaamong, who is also Amagoro Member of Parliament, has urged the residents of Busia County and especially the local leaders to actively participate in education projects so as to improve the region's academic performance.

Addressing stakeholders during a funds drive that was held at Mabale Primary school within Busia municipality to aid in the construction of Mabale Secondary school, the minister who was the chief guest said that the only reasonable and viable gift a parent can give to his/her child is none other than quality education which he said was the gateway to success in life.

"Education is the only key to quality life. Therefore invest in the education of your children as the future leaders of this nation and also ensure you give them quality education," the minister said.

The minister who has also declared interest in the governor seat come 2012 said that he will avail resources at his disposal to fund education projects to ensure that there are adequate secondary schools that will accommodate high secondary school enrollment.



Mr. Ojaamong

"I will avail resources at my disposal to fund the construction of more secondary schools in the region in order to accommodate the high enrollment rates witnessed following the

introduction of free secondary education," said Ojaamong.

However, Ojaamong appealed to leaders from Busia County to preach peace and unite the people irrespective

of their ethnic tribe saying that Busia County is a cosmopolitan region and therefore the issue of ethnicity should be discouraged.

"As leaders we have a duty to preach peace in order to ensure there is peaceful co-existence within our respective areas considering that Busia County is a cosmopolitan region," said Ojaamong.

On 2012 election, the MP urged Kenyans to take their time and vet carefully those who have declared interest in various political seats in order to ensure they elected only those who would deliver the goods.

"Exercise great care while electing your representatives in 2012. You must thoroughly vet and screen leaders you intend to vote for during the next year's general elections so as to ensure you have elected responsible leaders who will champion your interests effectively," he said.

Busia town has only four public secondary schools that can hardly accommodate the high enrollment rates following the introduction of subsidized free secondary education hence the need for the construction of more secondary schools.

The minister helped raise a total of Kshs200,000 with a personal donation of sh35,000.

KNCHR on how to implement new law

THE Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) has made a raft of proposals to steer the constitution implementation process.

The proposals crafted in joint consultation with the public seek to ensure that the implementation process upholds the letter and spirit of law, particularly the bill of rights, so that Kenyans can realize the change they voted for.

Speaking during the launch of the report at a hotel in Nairobi, the chairperson of KNCHR, Florence Jaoko said the report was compiled following a study of the conceptual and practical uses of Bills of Rights around the world.

The Chairperson of KNCHR stated that the Commission seeks to provide policy makers and implementers with practical ideas on how to actualize the Bill of Rights while undertaking their executive, legislative or judicial functions under the Constitution.

“Specific themes in Kenya’s Bill of Rights have been reviewed alongside comparable experiences from other jurisdictions. This will help give a practical perspective on how the bill of rights can be implemented to suit citizen’s expectations,” she explains.

Commissioner Lawrence Mute said the report will make the bill of rights operational; put policy, legal and administrative priorities into considerations and is the first in a series that will look at the application of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution.

Mute said: “The preparation of this report was coordinated by the Commission’s Research and Compliance Department which among other functions undertakes research on diverse issues and makes recommendations on human rights concerns”.

Other senior commissioners from KNCHR present at the function were; Abdulkadir Noor Mohamed, Hassan Omar Hassan, Rose Kimotho, Lucy Minayo, among other invited guests

COMMENT

By HENRY OWINO

like Pheroze Nowrjee, Dr. Celestine Nyamu from University of Nairobi, Faculty of Law.

Abdulkadir said the implementation of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 sets the stage for change that Kenyans voted for.

He however said that real and meaningful change will only happen when enabling legislations aligned to the supreme law are enacted.

“In addition to the new law, the state must also put in place policies and programmes that actualize the constitution,” reiterated Abdulkadir.

He however observed that the implementation process should not be confined to the State adding that other actors including businessmen and civil society and individuals must also understand their obligations and live up to them.

“For this document to become a reality, all groups including the poor, rich and everybody as expected must champion for its implementation. Be it private, opinion leaders, business people, human activists, civil society and individuals must join hands to push the government for its realization,” stated Abdulkadir.

According to the KNCHR commissioners, Chapter one of the constitution examines the conceptual and the normative value of the Bill of Rights and more specifically what it means for Kenyans. Having an expanded Bill of Rights is an important step towards creating a culture of constitutionalism in the country.

Chapter two examines the implications of Article 2 (5) and 2 (6) of the constitution which move Kenya from a dualist to a monolithic State. The chapter finds that Article 2 (5) and

6 seek to ensure that Kenyans enjoy greater protection of the international treaties and conventions ratified by the State.

It proposes the mode of ratifying the conventions and proposes legislations which Parliament must enact to actualize the provisions in constitution. Further, it proposes approaches which the Judiciary should take on pertinent issues.

Chapter three unveils the enforcement mechanisms and options outlined in Article 23 which individuals can invoke if they wish to seek remedies for alleged violation under the Bill of Rights. Among other things, the chapter recommends that the Chief Justice should hasten to make the rules to enable individuals to seek these judicial remedies effectively.

Chapter four provides a context for understanding the limitations clause in the Bill of Rights. The rights guaranteed under the Bill of Rights are absolute only in a few specified instances; but even rights which are limited are protected from abuse by a careful network of provisions. The chapter also addresses the more controversial limitations established in the Bill of Rights covering persons who profess the Muslim faith and members of the Defense Forces.

Chapter five offers guidance on how to effect the principle of progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights provided under Article 43 and other related provisions of the constitution. The State should convert these constitutional principles to manageable circumstances.

“Specific policies and the courts have to decide their approach in interpretation of economic, social and cultural rights, while being circumspect not to overly interfere with the Executive and Legislature’s implementation and policy-making functions,” reads the report.

Chapter six discusses safe abortion

and the right to reproductive health in the context of implementing Articles 26 (4) on legal termination of pregnancy and Article 43 (1) on the right to reproductive health. There is need for urgent legal and policy guidelines to regulate the conduct of safe abortion in the country.

Chapter seven and eight focus on Article 54 on the rights of persons with disabilities, and Article 55 on the rights of the youth, respectively. The rights of persons with disabilities should be mainstreamed into the overall framework for protecting and promoting the rights of all Kenyans. For the youth, Article 55 offers an important basis for ensuring sustainable programming for the youth of Kenya.

Chapter nine shows how Article 20 of the constitution has expanded the responsibility of human rights to business enterprises. The chapter relates to the Bill of Rights with the United Nations Work on business and human rights, specifically the ‘protect, respect and remedy’ framework that has been put forth by the Special Representative on Business and Human Rights.

It recommends the enactment of legislation on companies which will enhance accountability for human rights by companies and for the formulation of a human rights policy for all businesses no matter their complexity or size.

The report concludes with recommendations that the constitution 2010 offers a stronger framework for the protection of human rights than the former constitution. One of the biggest milestones of the 2010 constitution is the recognition and inclusion of economic, social and cultural rights.

The protection of human rights in Kenya is further broadened by the introduction, within the realm of national law, of international human rights treaties and conventions ratified by Kenya. The incorporation of

these conventions and treaties will ensure the adoption of international best standards as Kenya move to the implementation phase. In addition to the work of the international treaty body mechanisms and the jurisprudence of the various complaints mechanisms will be useful in the interpretation of the protected rights.

The substantial expansion of human rights will however result in meaningful gains if the relevant provisions are fully implemented. The KNCHR in this report has sought to show how the government should implement the provisions of the Bill of Rights in order to make rights a lived reality for over 40 million of Kenyans.

The report concludes that while there exists a basic legislative framework to support the protection of human rights, it needs to be urgently reviewed to include the broadened framework of the 2010 constitution. This should take the form of review of legislation as well as establishment of relevant institutional structures for promotion and protection of these rights.

Certain basic rights such as the right to equality and non-discrimination will have to be constantly monitored in every sphere of life, hence the need for a strong institutional monitoring mechanism.

The report also underscores the importance of accessible redress mechanisms as it is through this that people whose rights have been violated can obtain remedies.

Ultimately, the judiciary will play a very big role in advancing rights protection in the constitution through interpretation and, in instances of violation, provision of appropriate remedies.

The Judiciary though is not the sole custodian of these rights, it should be the very last resort and therefore it is the duty of all Kenyans to respect and protect these rights.

Police killing on the rise — report

By LUKE KAPCHANGA

IBRAHIM Odengo died in a hail of bullets after police mistook him for an armed gangster recently. In his company was his 14 year old son Joseph Nyaberi who was not spared either and died alongside the father, in the cold blood shooting.

The killings amplified the figures of those executed by police in cold blood to 50 within the past year, according to statistics given by human rights defenders.

Although the figure may not be an actual reflection of the situation, the fact remains that killings by trigger happy police officers are on the rise.

The National Torture prevalence survey report of 2011 by the Independent Medico-Legal unit attributes the rise in extrajudicial killings to extreme cruelty by police.

“Police find extra-judicial killings a much easier way of eliminating the suspects instead of following the extraneous judicial process,” says the report. The report notes that cases of enforced disappearances and killings have gone up, as most suspects are acquitted for lack of evidence when taken to courts.

In 2009, a report on extra-judicial killings by a special rapporteur Prof.

Philip Alston exposed a systematic, widespread and well planned strategy to execute individuals.

He added “Kenyan police are a law unto themselves, killing often with impunity”.

The revelations came as the minister for Justice, National Cohesion and Constitutional Affairs, Mutula Kilonzo told the Universal Periodic Review meeting of the Human rights council in Geneva last year that the government had appointed a National Task Force on police reforms, whose implementation was in progress.

While presenting the National report to the human rights council as head of delegation, Kilonzo noted that improved police accountability required urgent attention.

The report revealed that accountability was to be through the establishment of an independent policing oversight Authority which was to ensure professional and independent investigations into complaints against the police.

The proposal in the report was to have an overhaul of police training curriculum in line with democratic policing that puts emphasis on human rights protection.

But the proposal remains on paper as nothing much has been realized to



Police brutality on the rise according to the report.

date. These has widely been viewed as a gimmick to hoodwink the International community as well as donors that the reforms to improve National security, promotion and protection of human rights are on course.

The report singled out the witness protection programme, as one achievement which placed the country highly among the best practices in the

African continent.

Kenya domesticated articles 24 and 26 of the United Nations Conventions against organized crime with the enactment of the Witness Protection Act 2006.

The operationalisation of the programme, according to the report was at an advanced stage then, as it had a fully-fledged secretariat, and guaran-

teed “effective and efficient protection of witnesses for successful prosecution of cases”.

The Torture prevalence survey report titled: Up scaling Torture prevention and response in Kenya, contains police responses to accusations of torture, cruelty and extra-judicial killings.

The statement attributed to police spokesman, denies most of the accusations insisting that torture cases have reduced as the force does not accept or tolerate torture.

“We must however consider the circumstances under which torture happens, the police are highly demoralized, they live in poor conditions, in crowded small rooms”, it says.

The statement adds that the police are now aware of the consequences of torture and several cases are in court seeking individual accountability.

Further, the constitution sets the pace for reforms by outlawing torture and provides space for a fresh start.

It sets standards by making torture an illegal and outlaws the use of force for any reason.

In a country where best practices, policies and laws are tucked away on paper, it remains to be seen whether the spirit of constitutionalism will be upheld.

Head teachers shuffled in Murang'a

By MORRIS GITHENYA

SECONDARY school head teachers in Murang'a County have been transferred in a major shakeup geared towards addressing the declining standards of education in the area.

Among those affected include the long serving Principal of the troubled Kahuhia Girls Josephine Mwangi who has been moved to Thogoto Teachers Training College as a tutor.

Mwangi who has served the school from the year 2000 has been replaced by Ms Florence Ngarari from Kamahuha Girls Secondary School in Murang'a South district.

Gaichanjiru Boys High School Principal Peter Muroki has been transferred to Mugoiri secondary school taking over from Mr F.J Maina who has been moved to Kagio Secondary School.

Former Principal at Broadway Secondary School in Thika James Mbothu takes over as the Principal of Gaichanjiru Boys.

The Deputy Principal of Mary Hill Girls High School Ms Catherine Wandeto has been promoted to head Kinyoho Secondary School in Kandara district.

Kiangochi Secondary School Principal Ms R.W Chege has been moved to Kamune Secondary with Patrick Kaara from Observation Hill Mixed Secondary School taking over from her.

Kanderendu Secondary School Principal Mathenge Mirugi has been moved to Kutus Secondary school.

Others schools in Kigumo district affected by the transfers are Mununga and Kigumo Bendera.

Also affected by the transfer are Principals of Garbatulla High School in Isiolo who moves to Broadways Secondary School in Thika and deputy Principal of Nairobi School who has been promoted to head Garbatulla High School.

District education officers Kaugi Micheni (Murang'a East) Mark Alulu (Kahuro) and Charles Man- yara (Kandara) confirmed changes.

Don donates computers to Gucha schools

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

TEN secondary schools in Gucha district have benefitted from a donation of 80 computers.

The computers donated by Organisation Information Technology Awareness (OITA) will go a long way in equipping schools in Western and Nyanza provinces with computers for learning.

The programme was initiated by Prof. Kennedy Nyabuto, a scholar from Bobasi constituency

as he studied in Germany for his PhD programme. Prof. Nyabuto, a lecturer at Masinde Muliro University, says the programme will help empower the youth in ICT before they complete their fourth year in secondary school.

The don spoke at Riobara Secondary School where 10 schools received computers valued at Kshs 700,000 at an event attended by other stakeholders.

Prof. Nyabuto said plans are underway to replicate the pro-

gramme to Primary schools to ensure that youth acquire computer skills at an early stage.

Prof. Nyabuto said ICT is key to development and cited sectors, including banking, transportation, communication and medical services which had embraced technology.

He said the National Council for Science and Technology initiative on computer use in Kenya classrooms is still in its earlier phases, and concluded that the

perception and experience play an important role in the use of computers in Kenyan classrooms.

The Gucha Kenya Secondary School Heads Association chairman, Mr. David Ogega, said Gucha faces numerous challenges in ICT education caused by the lack of financial resources. He claimed the Government has not been able to employ enough ICT teachers, and provide resources to keep up with the demand.



New technology has simplified the operation system.

New national schools set for intakes

By TITUS MAERO

THE government has earmarked Kshs 25 million during this financial year to assist in the upgrading of 30 provincial schools into national status.

Education Secretary Professor George Godia says that already Kshs 12.5 million has been disbursed to each school in readiness for the first national intake at the beginning of this year.

He says that selected schools will serve as avenues of promoting national cohesion and unity through admission of students from diverse backgrounds.

Godia says that a total of 87 provincial secondary schools are

slated for upgrading to national status under the Economic Stimulus Programme (ESP) to address shortages that block the large number of students willing to join the schools.

The official further points out that during the 2009 / 2010 financial year, the government allocated Kshs 6.3 billion for the development of selected secondary schools into centres of excellence under the ESP.

He says that under the programme, a total of 355 secondary schools were identified country wide by their respective District Education Boards (DEBs) and each constituency was allocated Kshs 30 million to jumpstart the process.

This he says was followed with the training of members of school management including Principals, Board of Governors (BOGs), Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs) as well as the District Infrastructural Coordinating Teams (DICTs) to aid in the implementation of the programme.

He further says the Economic Stimulus Programme (ESP) in education seeks to enhance national cohesion and integration, increase access and equitable distribution of national resources.

Speaking in Kakamega, the official at the same time advised parents to take advantage of the increased educational opportunities in the country to enroll their children to school.

The official says the country has experienced massive growth in enrolment rates at primary school level since the inception of the Free Primary Education Programme (FPE) noting that enrolment grew from 5.9 million in 2003 to 8.5 million in 2011.

At the Secondary school level, the educationist reveals that the enrolment figures had risen from 700,000 to 1.7 million following the introduction of Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) in 2008.

He says that in spite of the growth registered in the education sector, transition rates were still low due to limited opportunities both at the Secondary and University level.

The official cites the increased demand for places in the only 18 national secondary schools in the country.

He at the same time reveals that the Ministry of Education has launched a tree planting initiative in schools in a bid to increase the forest cover.

The exercise is being implemented with support from the Ministry of Environment to mitigate on adverse climatic conditions.

He says the venture will help address challenges posed by global warming which is to blame for the prolonged period of drought and floods that were experienced in some parts of the country last year.

Akaranga underscores benefits of early education

By TITUS MAERO

THE government recognizes Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) as one of the most important levers for accelerating the attainment of Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Chairman of the National Humanitarian Board (NHB) Moses Akaranga says that one of the EFA goals obligates the government to expand and enhance comprehensive ECDE programmes that are essential for basic education.

He, however, says that with the low enrolment rates at ECD centres, many children between ages of 4-5 years end up directly in primary schools without relevant education background thus

negatively affecting retention and quality.

Speaking during the ninth Graduation Ceremony at the Kaimosi ECDE Training College in Hamisi District in Vihiga County, Akaranga said there has been significant increase in Primary School enrolment following the introduction of Free Primary School Education (FPE) in 2003.

He pointed out that, this has however, exerted pressure on existing physical facilities that has led to an acute shortage of classrooms particularly in poor communities.

The official said the existing infrastructure is generally in poor condition due to lack of investment capital and inadequate maintenance of the facilities.

Akaranga noted that the results



Mr. Akaranga

of the sharp rise in enrolment numbers include poor learning condi-

tions and overcrowding in schools.

He said the graduation ceremony epitomizes the passion and determination of Kaimosi ECDE in its pursuit to realize its vision to produce teachers who can attract Regional, National and International standards of teaching.

Akaranga said the graduation ceremony is a demonstration of the institution's mission in which the college intends to respond to societal and individual needs of pupils by developing pragmatic educational ECDE programmes to promote quality and strong foundation in the education system.

He urged the graduates to demonstrate professionalism, commitment and above all to be patient and endeavour to remain relevant and competitive.

Varsity expands to absorb more students

By TITUS MAERO

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) is grappling with an upsurge of student enrolment at the institution.

Chairman of the University Council Mr. Allan Simu says the situation has been compounded by the double intake programme which has overstretched the boarding and learning facilities at the institution.

He notes that despite the limitations, the university has been able to undertake an expansion programme and cited the establishment of constituent colleges such as the Kibabii University College in Bungoma which would go a long way in providing opportunities for higher education to students in the area.

He says that the University still continues to focus more on its core areas of research and outreach programmes in order to remain relevant both at the national, regional and at the international level.

"The university has created a niche in practical science, relevant technology, productive education and innovation for sustainable development," he adds.

The official says the unique scenario, however, comes with both opportunities and challenges. The official notes that the main challenge is meeting the operational cost of running science oriented courses which in most cases require practical approach hence the need to buy equipment which are very expensive.

He, however, says the university is still in dire need of more support from the government so that it can be able to exploit available opportunities and contribute more effectively towards development.

Varsity students in big-hearted poverty campaign

By BOB OMBATI

TWO university students from Gusii region have launched a One Hen Campaign Project in Nyamira and Kisii counties in an effort to reduce poverty among the youth and women.

James Makini and Moseri Samwel who are working under the Innovative Empowerment Project (IEP), plan to distribute about 1,000 hens free of charge, to women and youth in Kitutu Masaba (Nyamira County) and parts of Nyaribari Masaba (Kisii County) to help them become self-reliant.

Makini says that they are working with registered women and youth groups in the project where they give one hen to each registered member who in return surrenders two chicks after six months to others.

"We have already given 180 hens and 180 cages to three women and two youth groups at Mochenwa in Kitutu Masaba constituency in Nyamira County since the project started eight months ago," reveals Makini.

The two students say the project is being supported by the Cereals Growers Association (CGA) adding that they have also distributed 300 hens to groups at Kiamokama in Kisii county.

Makini says the project entails buying hens from farmers and dis-

bursing it to members, adding that their objective is to empower youths and women to generate wealth to spur the country's social economic development. He urges the youth to shun

drug abuse and other acts of lawlessness and direct their energies to productive activities that can help transform their lives.

The students advise the youth to

form groups to access the Youth Enterprise Fund (YEF) channeled to their respective constituencies and venture into small businesses to alleviate poverty.



Kisii University students planting.

Kibos Centre of Excellence ready for learning

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

THE Kibos Centre of Excellence, which is also a secondary school, in Kisumu County is almost complete and will soon open its doors to interested learners.

Kisumu East District Education Officer (DEO), Ms. Jane Mtange, has announced that the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) had appointed a school head in preparation for its open-

ing this year. Ms. Mtange said plans to launch the school's board are in place.

Kisumu Town East Member of Parliament, Mr. Sharkil Shabiir, told a District Development Committee meeting the board will hire people to offer services and not to politicize operations.

Some of the challenges facing the school include lack of furniture, equipment and a security fence.

Mr. Shabiir pledged to ensure sanitation services are adequate by supplying water.

He said specific criteria should be put in place to filter those who will join the centre of excellence.

The Kisumu Town East Constituency Development Fund (CDF), Fund Manager, Mr. Kipng'etich Lang'at, said the school was allocated Kshs.30 million under the Economic Stimulus Package of the Ministry

of Education. The DEO said the school's location was identified after consultations between the District Education Board, the MP and other leaders.

She said a directive from the Ministry of Education was to have a centre of excellence in each district across the country.

The directive said there would be two primary schools, one of which must be rural and the other urban as well as a secondary

school.

The identification was to be done after consultations and a needs assessment by local leaders to identify the academic needs of a district.

Meanwhile, nine primary and nine secondary school teachers will be recruited in Kisumu East District along with 10 Early Childhood Development (ECD) teachers at the municipality level, Ms. Mtange said.

Mui residents reject Kitonga committee

By KAVYU-KURA

A MAJOR showdown looms between the residents of the Coal rich Mui basin in Kitui County and a 10-man committee elected in October last year to represent interests of the people within the coal belt.

The residents led by nearly 200 leaders from the Mui area that lies squarely on Block C, have rejected the committee chaired by former Mutitu MP Muthusi Kitonga.

The residents claimed that the Kitonga committee had been infiltrated by outsiders who were unlikely to undermine their local interests. The residents went ahead and replaced the committee with new officials exclusively comprising of local leaders.

The nine-member committee that now comprises of the area Member of Parliament David Musila and the Mui civic leader Stanislaus Mulongo will negotiate terms to ensure the residents reaped optimum benefits from the coal.

During a meeting held at the Mathuki AIC church recently and chaired by cllr Mulongo, the residents resolved that the names of the newly installed committee members be presented to Energy Minister Kiraitu Murungi for gazettelement.

A resident of the Block C area, Dr. Wathe Nzau said it would be foolhardy for locals to allow leaders from outside the area to represent their interests in the mining process.

Further, the meeting resolved that the locals will not move from their ancestral land even with the commencement of the coal mining unless they are fully compensated.

The residents also demanded that the government releases the names of areas to be affected by the mining process so that they can prepare for the changes.

The residents threatened to derail

the mining process if the government does not act on their resolutions.

But in an interview with The Link, Kitonga reacted angrily to the decision by Mui people to reject his committee. He insisted that his committee was the only one officially mandated to champion interests of the residents of the coal rich Mui basin in Kitui County.

Kitonga said that his committee was the only outfit mandated to negotiate with the government to ensure that all residents within coal blocks A,

B, C and D who will be affected by the coal exploration are adequately compensated.

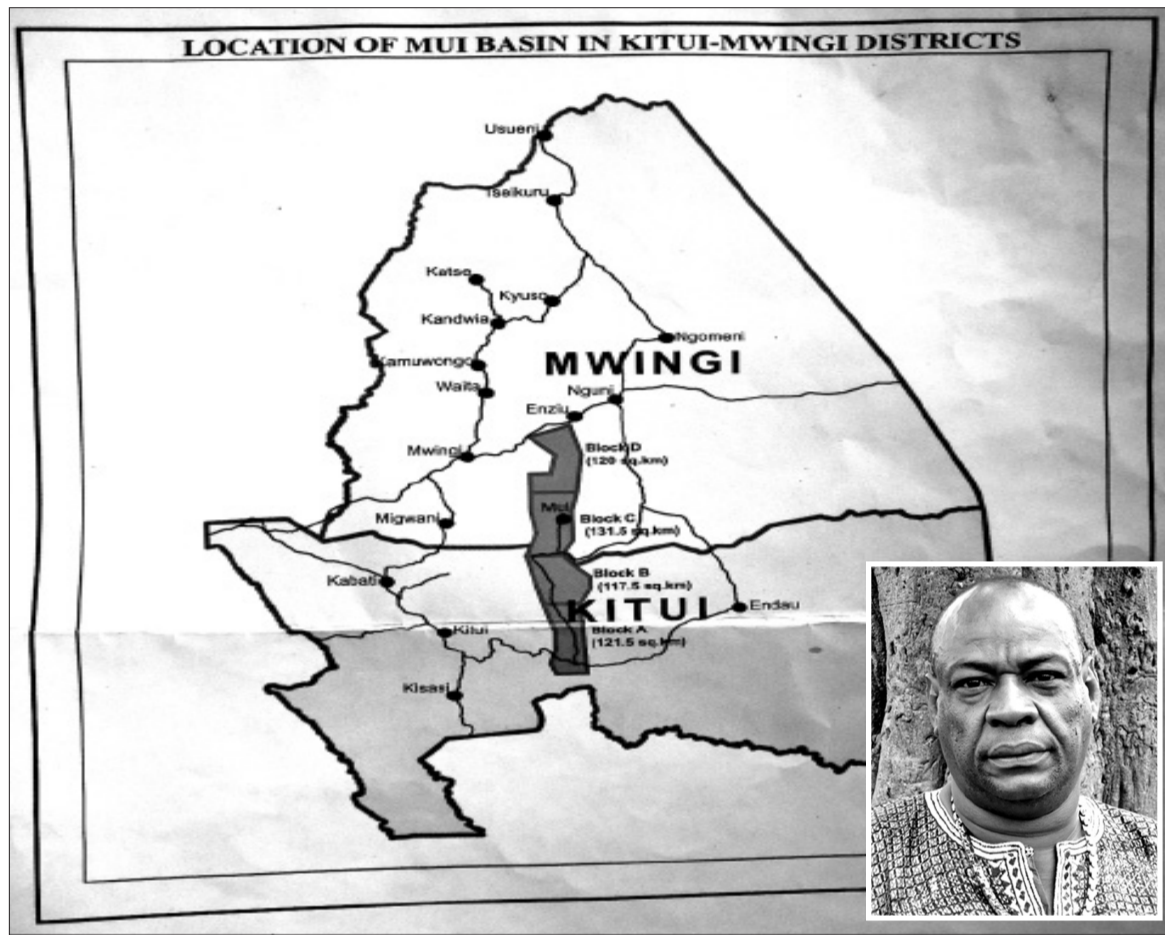
He added it was absurd for any group of people to denounce his team since it has representatives from all the coal blocks stretching from Isekele Mui division of Mwingi East district to Kabati in Sombe area of Mutitu district.

“It is absurd for a few people to allege that we are foreigners and outsiders when we were democratically

elected by all people living within the 500 Kilometers square area covering all the coal blocks within the Mui coal basin namely blocks A,B, C and D,” he said.

The row on representation erupted as the Chinese Fenxi Mining Industry Company won a contract to begin coal extraction.

According to studies, block C has the highest quantity of the 4000 million tons of coal deposits in the Mui coal basin.



A Map showing the various coal blocks with the 500 kilometers square Mui coal basin in Kitui County. Inset: Muthusi Kitonga the head of the rejected Committee. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

Clergyman asks state to fund churches

By AGGREY BUCHUN-

THE government has been asked to fund churches like other countries in the Middle East and developed countries such as Britain's and America.

Bishop Edwin Wanyonje of Mission Link Missionary of Kenya says church activities such as construction of worship centres require substantive amounts of money which can be complemented with government funding.

Bishop Wanyonje says this will help reverse the burden borne by Christians who contribute immensely towards construction of churches in the country.

Bishop Wanyonje notes that most churches in the country require a face lift which can only be actuated if the government agrees to fund them.

“Most church buildings across the country are in deplorable condition due to the government's failure to recognize and appreciate the role the church ministry plays,” he notes when he spoke at Nabichakha Church of Christ in Africa [C.C.A] in Bungoma County.

Bishop Wanyonje asserts that God's ministry plays a vital role in the country's social, economic and political development and therefore cannot be ignored.

The prelate observes that since 80 percent of Kenyans are Christians, then the church must be listed among the beneficiaries of devolved funds.

Kenya's devolved funds that include the Constituency Development Funds (CDF) and Local Authority transfer funds (LATF) do not have a provision that allows churches to benefit from the funding.

Legislation governing the two funds and other devolved funds restrict usage of the monies only on public institutions such as schools, health facilities and provision of water among other community projects.

The church in Kenya is treated as a private entity hence cannot access funding from the exchequer for whatever purpose.

Study unearths rot in water sector

By PETER MUTUKU

EQUITABLE access to clean water in the country continues to be compromised by lack of integrity and ineffective regulation of water utilities and informal service providers despite key water sector reforms initiated in 2002.

The lower income groups bear the greatest burden under the prevailing circumstances. These were the key findings highlighted by the National Water Supply Integrity Study (NWSIS) launched by Transparency International-Kenya last December.

The report provides an overview of the Kenyan water supply sector in terms of integrity and performance and is based on discussions with water sector actors and case studies.

It targets water sector specialists and key stakeholders involved in policy-making, regulation, water service development and provision in Kenya. The study was undertaken through the Transparency and Integrity in Service Delivery in Africa (TISDA) project between February 2009 and June 2011.

Areas covered under the study include Kangemi (Nairobi), Migosi (Kisumu), and Old Town (Mombasa) while the rural and small town locations were Kamukunji (Eldoret),

Mutego and Kanyoni (Nanyuki).

According to the study, existing legislations such as the Water Act 2002 initiated an important reform process that has considerably developed the water sector but more remains to be done. Key outstanding aspects of the Water Act that are yet to be concluded include transfer of assets from the municipalities to the Water Boards. The Water Services Regulatory Board (WASREB) lacks sufficient independence and resources to play its crucial role as an independent monitor.

“An even bigger challenge exists in the form of many users (on average 56 percent in urban areas) relying on informal water providers including water kiosks, local boreholes, well owners and water vendors. These crucial services are neither regulated nor controlled further alienating lower income segments in the water supply chain,” notes the report.

And although the Constitution of Kenya 2010 and the United Nations General Assembly Declaration of July 2010 state that clean water and sanitation are a human right, 41 percent of Kenyans lack access to reliable water supply. The situation has been compounded by unaffordable charges which further push the commodity out of reach for the common citizens.

The report however notes that more resources are becoming available for the improvement and expansion of water systems. “But still there is limited access to information on cost and technological improvements to enhance efficiency in sector investments,” adds the report.

In the formal water supply systems, transparency has increased as the Water Act 2002 clarifies the relationship between different actors although, in some cases, more openness on contracts and decision-making is still required.

The report points out that recent reported cases of corruption in some water sector institutions have highlighted the need for greater focus on good governance which must be strengthened at all levels, if the full benefits of sector reforms are to be achieved.

Participation, largely determined by access to information by third parties with the option for redress where there are complaints, is relatively limited. Involvement of the civil society in various processes in the sector is improving but is still quite restricted.

The report recommends that Water Service Providers adopt an improved pro-poor approach in service provision to overcome the high level of

inequity in water services which compromises water access, affordability and quality.

“There is need for elaborate regulation and improved capacity to cover the informal sector to curb, for instance, unlicensed/illegal water vending and consumer exploitation,” reads the report.

Further, communication to stakeholders and public consultation as well as access to information particularly for the users should be enhanced. Information on user rights and obligations should be broadly disseminated, for instance, through Water Action Groups which have already been established in some major towns.

The report proposes greater transparency in the development of new water supply services. Publishing quality data on the cost of different projects and systems is a feasible first step.

Corporate governance in Water Service Providers should be strengthened and their interaction with Water Service Boards and the Water Service Regulatory Board (WASREB) improved.

Oversight in the sector needs strengthening while procurement processes, anti-corruption legislation and sanctions should be strictly adhered to.

The Link

Enhancing governance for all

For Kenya 2012 is a make or break year

WELCOME to 2012, the year of another General Elections. The experience of the 2007 General Elections, especially the infamous Post-Election Violence (PEV) as a result of the disputed presidential election results certainly qualifies 2012 to be a year of mixed fortunes for the country. It is the year we make or break Kenya as we know it.

But it will all depend on how our politicians behave themselves before, during and after the elections. The 2012 elections promise to be a very important one for the country.

President Kibaki is exiting the scene. This means a new person will ascend to the throne. The new power baron will be expected to fully implement the new constitution without wavering. The country will also be experimenting with the Senate.

The Senators will be elected alongside others. Then there are the new power centres called Counties (47 of them in total) to be governed by elected Governors. As if that is not enough, the people will this year also be expected to elect County Assembly senators.

Of course there are also the usual MPs to be elected to an expanded Lower House. One can therefore imagine the level of responsibility bestowed on the newly formed Independent Elections and Boundaries Commission (IEBC).

How they manage the process, not just the event, will determine whether Kenya remains peaceful or go to the dogs. It is therefore worrying that at this late juncture, we are not even sure of the elections date. Will they be held in August as enshrined in the Constitution or will they be conducted in December as proposed by the Executive.

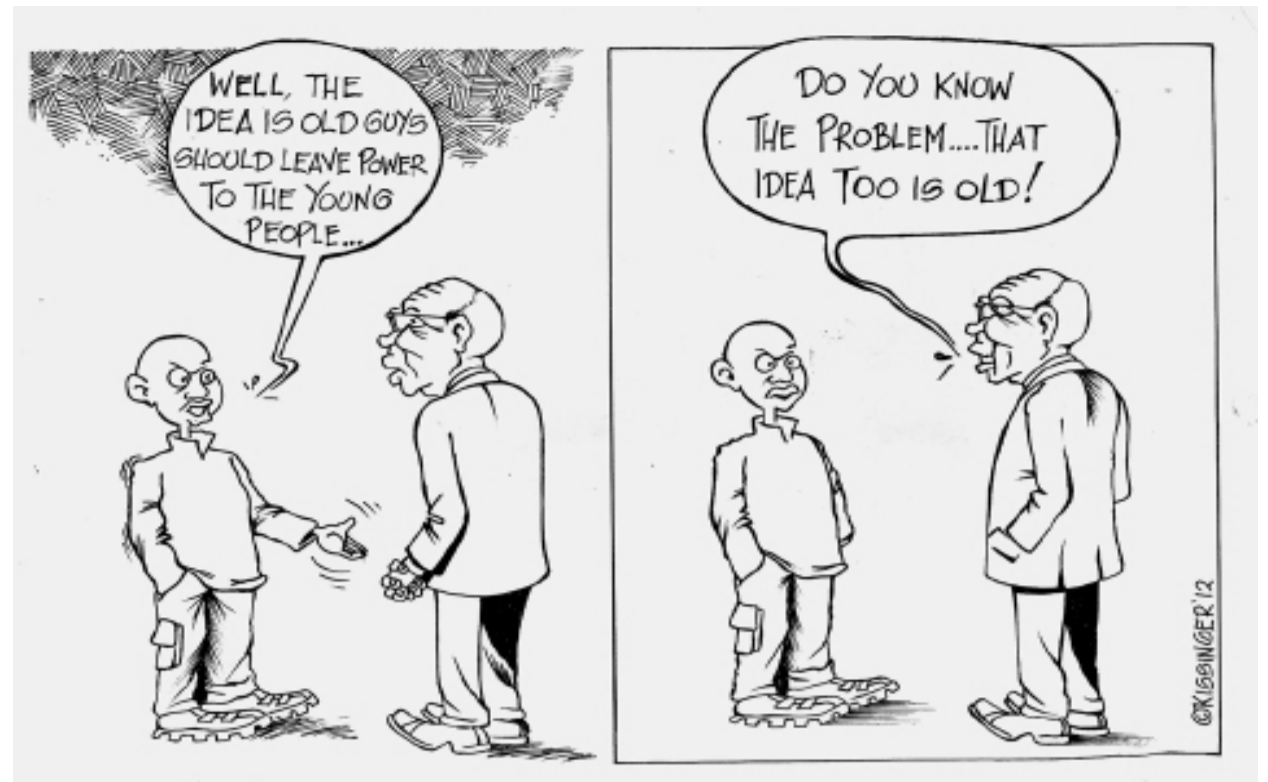
Only time will tell. But one thing we are sure of is that the country can't afford to wait a month longer before a concrete decision is made on this crucial matter. The politicians are already behaving very badly by playing the tribal card in their quest for the Presidency.

This will only succeed in heightening the already high tension in the country. There is also the ICC case hanging over the country's future as an albatross. The decision on the court expected anytime this month will have far-reaching impacts on the political direction this country takes. But that is not all. The more worrying trend is the skyrocketing cost of living in Kenya.

This is very bad for an election year. For in a country like ours, the irony is that the very leaders, whose poor economic policies and thieving tendencies are responsible for the rising poverty, are the very ones who use their illegal wealth to spur the venerable youth to extreme violence against their opponents.

Let's also not forget that our soldiers are deeply entrenched into the dangerous Al-Shabaab-infested Somali villages fighting to dislodge the murderous Islamic Militias from power in order to restore security of the whole Horn of Africa in general and Kenya in particular.

Even so, our involvement in war means the country is very vulnerable to terrorist attacks. And in such a situation, it would be disastrous for us to fight over election results, for a divided house cannot stand against any determined external aggressor. The long and short of this is that 2012 is very special one for Kenya, and how it ends will depend on how Kibaki and Raila will handle the delicate matters above, including their transition.



COMMENTARY

Analysis of new Anti-Corruption Commission

THE Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) Bill was passed into law on 27th August 2011. It took effect on 5th September 2011 following the assent by President Mwai Kibaki. The Act fundamentally alters the legal institutional framework of anti-corruption efforts. The Act was developed in pursuance of the constitutional provisions of Article 79 of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 which directs Parliament to enact legislation to facilitate the establishment of an independent Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission.

Composition

Section 4 of the Act provides that the commission shall consist of a chairperson and two other members, who will serve on a full term basis for a single term of six years. Section 6 highlights the selection process of these three officials to the commission. The selection panel will be constituted of nominated individuals from the cited state agencies, private sector, civil society and religious groups. The law emphasises that the selection panel must advertise the positions and invite members of the public to submit their applications. The law requires that once a shortlist is made it should be forwarded to the President to nominate a chairperson and two other individuals to serve in the commission. The presidential nominees are thereafter subjected to a parliamentary vetting process before they can be formally appointed by the President.

Members of the public who wish to engage in the appointment process can make submissions to the selection panel on the suitability of the applicants and forward the same to the National Assembly committee considering the names proposed for appointment.

Administration

The Act provides for the establishment of a professional secretariat to the EACC to be headed by a secretary who shall be the chief executive officer and accounting officer of the Commission. The administration of the EACC in

COMMENT

By WILLIS OTIENO

terms of division of the roles between the commissioners and the secretariat is a first in all the enacted pieces of legislation establishing the constitutional commissions. The Act provides that the commissioners shall be responsible for policy formulation, strategic direction and linkages with the commission, and oversight to the secretariat.

The Act further requires the commission to be guided by the principles of accommodation of diversity of the people of Kenya, gender equity, impartiality and the rules of natural justice.

Functions

The Act enumerates certain functions, in addition to the roles that the Constitution has already accorded the commission. A notable function under the Constitution is the power to oversee the implementation process and compliance with the provisions of chapter six of the Constitution on leadership and integrity. The general functions of constitutional commissions as set out in the Constitution are also applicable to EACC.

Additional functions of the commission under the Act are:

- (a) In relation to State officers:
- (i) Develop and promote standards and best practices in integrity and anti-corruption;
- (ii) Develop a code of ethics;
- (b) Work with other state and public offices in the development and promotion of standards and best practices in integrity and anti-corruption;
- (c) Receive complaints on a breach of the code of ethics by public officers;
- (d) Investigate and recommend to the Director of Public Prosecutions the prosecution of any acts of corruption or violation of codes of ethics or other matters prescribed under the Act or any other law enacted pursuant to chapter six of the Constitution;
- (e) Recommend appropriate action

against state officers or public officers alleged to have engaged in unethical conduct;

(f) Oversee the enforcement of codes of ethics prescribed for public officers;

(h) Advise, on its own initiative, any person on any matter within its functions;

(i) Raise public awareness on ethical issues and educate the public on the dangers of corruption, and enlist and foster public support in combating corruption but with due regard to the requirements of the Anti-Corruption and Economic Crimes Act, 2003 on confidentiality;

(j) Subject to Article 31 of the Constitution, monitor the practices and procedures of public bodies to detect corrupt practices and secure the revision of methods of work or procedures that may be conducive to corrupt practices; and

(k) Institute and conduct proceedings in court for purposes of recovering or protecting public property, or freezing or confiscating proceeds of corruption or those related to corruption, or the payment of compensation, or other punitive and disciplinary measures.

Access to information

The Act attempts to address the realisation of the right to access to information held by the commission as stipulated by Article 35 of the Constitution. It seeks to actualise this right and places reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right as envisaged by Article 24 of the Constitution.

For one to enjoy the right to access information (s)he must follow the following steps under the Act:

- (a) Make a formal request to the secretary of the commission
- (b) Pay any reasonable fee that the commission may impose for processing the information
- (c) The information may only be requested by a citizen.

The commission is not under obligation to disclose information in all instances where a request has been made. The Act has given exceptions where the



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Mwingi residents chide KIMWASCO

By KAVYU-KURA

THE manager of the Kiambere-Mwingi Water and Sanitation Company (KIMWASCO) has been taken to task over poor water supply in Mwingi town and its environs.

Residents attending a stakeholders meeting at the Mwingi catholic hall accused the KIMWASCO Managing Director Paul Kinuba of failing in his mandate to ensure steady water supply to Mwingi town residents.

Kinuba was hard pressed to explain the reasons behind the frequent water shortages, pipeline breakdowns and inflated water bills. KIMWASCO runs the Kiambere Mwingi Supply pipeline project.

The meeting coincided with serious water shortages in the town that prompted vendors to sell a jerrican of contaminated water drawn from the seasonal Tyaa River at Kshs 50 up from the normal Kshs10.

Kinuba however defended the company saying the shortage had been caused by the flooding of Kamuwongo seasonal river which destroyed the pipeline serving the town.

But the residents rejected the explanation and sought to know why they had to pay for inflated water bills while the water problem had persisted from May

Dorris Musyoka from Ithumbi said that despite the fact that Mwingi has been faced with serious water shortage over the last eight months, KIMWASCO had sent out a notice to increase the flat monthly rate on meter charges from the current Kshs 265 to Kshs530



Mwingi residents demonstrating in the town over water shortage and inflated bills. Inset: The KIMWASCO MD, Paul Kinuba, whose firm is accused of underperformance. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

with effect from this month.

She noted that the increment was uncalled for and exploitative considering that no water has been flowing from the taps. She urged the KIMWASCO boss to review the decision as it would be a serious burden to water consumers.

The chairman of the Mwingi water stakeholders, Paul Ngolanya, said some corrupt KIMWASCO staff were to blame for the firm's poor rating. He charged that the wayward

staff have vandalised the steel water pipes and sold them to scrap metal dealers in Mwingi town.

Richard Tuta, a programme officer with the Centre for Human Rights and Civic Education Non-Governmental Organisation which had convened the meeting, called on KIMWASCO management to review their water bills downward as they were highly exploitive.

Joseph Mailu, the chairman of the Kyanika pipeline project

that draws water from the main Kiambere-Mwingi pipeline lamented that pipes destroyed during the current tarmacking of Mwingi-Kandwia-Tseikuru road had not been replaced.

On his part Kinuba said he had taken note of the grievances raised and promised to take action. "I have heard your comments and will communicate to the company board so that we can arrive at a solution where feasible," pledged the KIMWASCO boss.

Analysis of new Anti-Corruption Commission

From Page 8

commission can withhold or refuse to give information upon a request of the same. These are in instances where:

- (a) The request for information is unreasonable;
- (b) The information requested is confidential;
- (c) The information requested is still at a deliberative stage;
- (d) The applicant has failed to pay the requisite fees;
- (e) The applicant has failed to satisfy the confidentiality requirements by the commission.

Savings and transitions

The Act transits the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission (KACC) secretariat to the new Ethics and An-

ti-Corruption Commission (EACC). The transition from the KACC to the EACC encompasses the following:

- (a) Orders or notices made or issued by the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission that are deemed to have been made or issued under the new Act;
- (b) Any function, transaction, investigation, prosecution carried out by or on behalf of the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission, civil proceedings or any other legal or other process in respect of any matter carried out under the Anti-Corruption and Economic Crimes Act, 2003 (No. 3 of 2003) or any other law, before the commencement of this Act, to be deemed to have been carried out under the new law;
- (c) The Advisory Board of the KACC has also been retained for a

period of 90 days from the date of commencement or until the commissioners are appointed, whichever comes first.

The transition also provides for the retirement of the director and deputy directors of the KACC who were in office as at the commencement date of the Act. This explains the exit of the director and his deputies in September 2011.

Vetting of staff

The Act also requires the commission to conduct a vetting exercise for all serving officers of KACC being transited to the new EACC. The commission will develop a vetting tool to guide the process. The vetting process is aimed at giving the commission an opportunity to weed out staff that are proved to have engaged

in improprieties.

Conclusion

The Act in itself is not an end in the fight against corruption. There is the pending leadership and integrity legislation that must be enacted within two years of the effective date of the Constitution i.e by August 27th 2012. The EACC Act requires the development of further regulations to operationalise all its provisions. Kenyans should now give all the support the Commission needs to succeed in its mandate, including demanding strict adherence to its mandate and the law.

The writer is a Programme Officer in the Governance and Policy Programme, Transparency International - Kenya

Charcoal ban prompts reclamation initiative

By KAVYU-KURA

THREE months after the Kyuso DC Peter Maina banned charcoal production in Mitamisyi location due to indiscriminate felling of trees, an initiative to restore forest cover has been launched.

Apparently taking advantage of the heavy rains last November, Mwingi Farah Charcoal transporters Association supplied 6,000 tree seedlings to charcoal producer groups in Mitamisyi in a bid to reclaim the depleted forest cover in the area.

Speaking after distributing the seedlings, the charcoal transporters group chairman, Joseph Kimwele, told the media in Mwingi town that the tree planting exercise will not be restricted to the area under charcoal ban.

"We are planting trees in all corners of Mwingi region and expect to plant over 25,000 seedlings by the time the rains subside," said Kimwele.

He was, however, quick to note that special attention was given to Mitamisyi because with the ban in force, there was need to replenish the forest cover through the planting of more trees in the wasted area.

The Chairman noted that all rainy seasons are considered tree planting seasons. Thus, he added, 26 charcoal producing groups spread across the entire Mwingi area were currently involved in tree planting.

"This is something that has been in our budget. We allocated over Kshs. 0.5 million to buy seedlings in order to replenish wasted forests and make charcoal burning more sustainable. Since the activity is legal, we have to sustain it by planting trees for raw materials in charcoal production," said Kimwele.

When DC Maina visited Mitamisyi in Ngomeni division last September, he was shocked at the environmental damage caused by charcoal



Mwingi OCPD Kenneth Kimani plants a tree within the Mwingi police station at the start of the tree planting season. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

burning. He noted that charcoal burning aggravated during the prolonged period of drought and famine.

Maina lamented that although trees help attract rain, they have been

felled indiscriminately by money hungry charcoal burners leaving the land bare hence encouraging soil erosion, drought and encroachment of the desert.

In order to reverse the situation, he asked the residents to embark on massive tree planting in a bid to save the area from further environmental degradation.

Foreigners warned against mistreating workers

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

A NON-Governmental Organization (NGO) is now asking foreign investors in Bungoma County to respect the constitution.

The executive director of the Kenya workers Right and Harmonization Programme Mr. Taiga Wanyanja has expressed dismay at the manner in which foreign investors handle their workers.

Wanyanja alleges that foreigners who have invested in Bungoma County do not treat their workers in a humane manner leave alone allowing them to join trade unions.

He appeals to the investors to awaken to provisions outlined in Article 41 (2) of the constitution which allows workers to join trade unions to avoid contravening the law.

Wanyanja particularly scoffs at the proprietor of Sharrif's supermarket saying that procedures followed in shutting down the business premises were inhuman and degrading.

"Labour laws stipulate that if one wants to shut down their business, he/she should prepare workers psychologically by issuing a three months notice," he adds.

Wanyanja notes with dismay that the proprietors of sharrif's supermarket did not have the courtesy to inform their workers about the plan to shut down the business.

He claims that the proprietors' three premises, one in Muias town and two in Bungoma town were shut down abruptly, leaving over 500 workers in an awkward situation.

However, Bungoma District Labour Officer Mr. George Tsumuli absolves Sharrif's from any wrong doing saying that the investor acted within the law.

Tsumuli argues that there was no need for Sharrif's to issue notice to workers since the buyer of the business empire had indicated willingness to take over all the workers.

He however, points out that the former employer is supposed to pay workers their benefits.

"I have already written a letter to Sharrif's on the same and I am yet to get a feed back," he discloses.

Sharrif's Business Empire was owned by an Asian family.

Wrangles between two brothers are said to have forced the family to dispose of the property.

Operations at the supermarket stopped on November, 18, 2011, a move that consigned about 500 workers to state of uncertainty.

By the time of going to press the buyer of the premises Khetia's Supermarket was busy renovating the buildings to suit his business operations.

Grabbers pounce on disabled land in Kilifi

By BEKADZO TONDO

PEOPLE with physical disabilities in Kilifi are up in arms over the alleged grabbing of a plot allocated to them 10 years ago.

According to a former secretary with the Kenya Society for the physically challenged persons in Kilifi Mr. Harrison Mwambegu, the government allocated them the 1.5 acres of land near the Cereal Board offices but the land was later grabbed by private developers.

Mr Mwambegu said that the plot was meant to help them construct a vocational training center for the disabled people.

He said a donor who had earlier volunteered to assist them develop the plot had to pulled out following revelations that the plot had been allocated to private developers.

The official said that the disabled community now wants the government to intervene to help salvage the plot and pave way for the construction of a centre where they can acquire

skills to become self reliant.

"Disabled people have failed to get jobs or start their own income generating projects like carpentry, tailoring and leather work because they do not have a center where they can acquire requisite skills and we appeal to the government to intervene to help us get back our land," said Mr. Mwambegu.

Speaking during a ceremony to mark the international day for people with disabilities in Kilifi, the District Deputy social services development officer Ms Beatrice Zighe urged the totally disabled persons to register with the office to enable them benefit from the cash transfer program for the disabled persons.

She said although the government had introduced the program to support disabled persons with a monthly subsistence allowance of Kshs 2000, very few people with disabilities have been able to access the funding and urged families with such people to come out.

She urged chiefs to assist her office by availing details of disabled people in their respective areas of operation



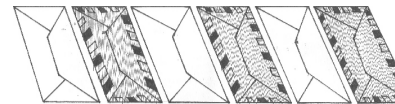
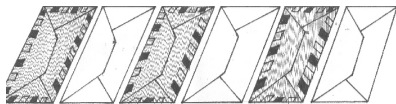
Persons with Disability: The land they were allocated by the Government 10 years ago was later grabbed by private developers. Photo/File

so that they can get the assistance.

"The government recently introduced a cash transfer program for the severe physically challenged persons where they are supposed to get a subsistence monthly allowance of Kshs 2000 but the biggest challenge

is where to get the targeted group of people," said Ms Zighe

The officer further challenged the disabled people to form groups and apply for loans from their office to help them start income generating projects.



Profiteers made cost of living more worse

A RECENT World Bank report restated what is already common knowledge — global food insecurity and escalating poverty. With widespread degradation of the environment and the negative impact of climate change, recent announcement of world population hitting the seventh billion mark is bound to add to uncertainty over food security and general poverty.

Amid the apprehension, the gulf between the rich and the poor is widening. The message by anti-capitalist protestors occupying St. Paul's Cathedral in London, New York's Wall Street and Oakley in the US in recent weeks is that something is not right and the state of affairs needs to be re-evaluated. What the world is witnessing cannot be explained away as mere expressions of neo-socialism fervour. Truth is, the power of capital has been degrading the safeguards put in place by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the trade union movement and consumer rights lobbies.

The rising cost of food and consumer goods is not restricted to Kenya. A number of European countries are edging towards the economic turmoil that has engulfed America for well over a year now. Nobody can claim that there are any quick fix solutions so we should not expect the government to perform any miracles. However, the government must be on the lookout for profiteers and cartels who exacerbate Kenyans' pain.

We do not believe on command economy where prices are arbitrarily fixed and market dynamics interfered with. However, there must be sensitivity on the part of oil merchants, landlords, PSV operators, manufacturers down to the retail chain.

This is not to say that firms should sell fuel at a loss, that PSV crew and operators should be denied profit but to appeal to them to accept the guidelines rolled out by the regulatory mechanism and even market realities so that they pass on the benefits to consumers.

They must remember that increase in fuel cost drives up the cost of everything else disproportionately. For example, why not give Kenyans a break when crude prices fall at the international market? In any case market forces work best where competition is fair with reasonable latitude in supply options.

This country cannot afford to be complacent and assume that social upheavals only occur in other places. In part due to historical reasons founded on colonial practices, inequality is rife in our country.

This together with migratory patterns from rural to urban to seek relief, poverty is getting dredged. To their credit, these people have devised ingenious ways of surviving but let's not push our luck too far.

Okello K'Ajoji,
via e-mail

Miserably, it's no longer a crime to insult the modesty of a woman in Kenya

UP to about five years ago, it was a crime to insult the modesty of any woman under the Penal Code introduced in 1930, and even under the Indian Penal Code which it replaced.

The crime, punishable by a year in jail, was supplanted by the Sexual Offences Act in 2006, leaving a regrettable void.

The Act repealed section 144(3) of the Penal Code which made it a misdemeanour "to insult the modesty of any woman or girl". It was based on the morality of Victorian England but it served Kenyan women well.

Section 144(3) criminalised sexually insulting, harassing or tormenting a woman. For example, you could not call a woman a prostitute or loose or make obscene gestures and catcalls, or pester her for sex, without legal consequences. It would have been a misdemeanour, a crime that is legally less serious than a felony such as murder and arson.

All the same, for the women victims, psychologically and emotionally, the sexual insults were, and still are, no "less serious" than a felony as they touch on their very dignity and violate their rights.

The Sexual Offences Act falls short of the provisions of section 144(3). It leaves women helpless in a patriarchal culture which holds that the body of a woman belongs to man.

The Act, modern as it is, only criminalises sexual harassment by a person "in a position of authority or holding public office", and then only if that person makes the sexual advances or requests "persistently", and if he knows, or has reasonable grounds to know, the advances or requests are unwelcome.

The Act also criminalises "indecent act", defined as "an unlawful intentional act which causes any contact between any part of the body of a person with the genital organs, breasts or buttocks of another, or exposure or display of any pornographic material



Law Court: The Sexual Offences Act sometimes hinders courts from punishing sex pests despite their obnoxious behaviour.

to any person against his or her will."

It is punishable by imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years or a fine not exceeding Kshs.50,000, or both, if committed with an adult.

Though section 144(3) did not define what it means to "insult the modesty of any woman", courts punished such acts as obscene catcalls, calling a woman a harlot, exposing one's genitals to a woman, writing letters making indecent overtures and displaying pornographic material to a woman.

Today, courts can only take on such acts if they amount to a breach of public peace, or if they are said to defame the woman, as in the case of Anisia Kagwiria Mungania vs Lucy Gakanyi Kirema.

Ms. Mungania claimed Ms. Kirema called her, in Kimeru, a prostitute and uncircumcised. The words, she said, were uttered in the presence of other people, including children, and her reputation was injured and, as a result, children disrespected her. Tigania district magistrate D.J. Nyaga awarded Ms. Mungania Kshs.10,000 in general damages. However, Ms. Kirema appealed to the High Court in Meru and Justice Mary Kasango

quashed the award and conviction on May 7, 2010.

Many people are now unhappy that anybody can sexually pester, harass, bait, torment, tease, taunt and bug women, without legal consequences. One of them is chief magistrate Kiarie Waweru Kiarie. In an article, "The Sexual Offences Act: Omissions and Ambiguities", in the current issue of the *Kenya Law Review Journal*, he says section 144(3) played "a very central role" in checking conduct that is not covered in the definition of "indecent act" in the sexual Offences Act.

He says he recently tried a case where a man harassed a 12-year-old by pestering her to have sex with him until she ran away from home. Since the Sexual Offences Act does not cater for such acts, he says he had no option but to acquit the man "in spite of his obnoxious conduct," Mr. Kiarie concludes, rightly, that the Sexual Offences Act should be amended to incorporate the provisions of the revoked Section 144(3) of the Penal Code.

Peter Mwaura,
via e-mail

Sudan should be given chance to defend itself

I REFER the article by Mr. Mutuma Mathiu regarding the case against Sudan in the US. I followed the case in which Sudan was asked to pay Nairobi bomb blast victims.

This is the second time the Sudanese Government is on trial. It comes after the case of the American warship, the *USS Cole*.

I wonder how Mr. Mathiu judges a case without giving the accused a chance to defend himself. It seems funny the prosecutor recited his allegations against an innocent state that does not even know what the American court was talking about.

I am sure there are many people playing this game and fabricated these allegations against Iran and Sudan.

They want to find a scapegoat to appease their voters before the presidential election in 2012.

You remember the case of the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and many other similar cases raised by the Western media. They had no ground to be based on let alone to be believed. They are politically motivated agenda.

The Security Council adopted a resolution against Iraq but ultimately the truth prevailed. All these allegations were false and fabricated by the CIA. Fortunately Sudan has no assets in USA to be blocked to compensate those US victims.

As a Sudanese, I denounce terrorism and consider peace and good neighbourliness with our friends in Kenya as essential. Let us spread these values among our people.

Hassan Ali Osman,
Sudan Embassy,
Via e-mail.



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.

Write to:

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State promises stern action against poachers

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

ASSISTANT Minister for Forestry and Wildlife Josphat Nanok has warned that the government will deal ruthlessly with poachers.

"The Government will make anti-poaching laws more stringent to ensure harsh penalties are imposed on poachers in the country," he said.

Nanok while speaking at Mt Kenya National Park in Nyeri County said parliament would also enact the Wildlife Bill soon to ensure wildlife in parks and private conservancies are protected.

The assistant minister was speaking when the Park was branded as a world class animal sanctuary which he said would boost the revenue earned from local and international tourism due to increased number of tourists.

"This is the 22nd park we are upgrading since year 2005. It is a great milestone to upgrade this park which also serves as one of the water catchments areas in the country," he said.

Nanok who was accompanied by KWS Director Julius Kipng'etich and the chairman board of trustees KWS David Mwiraria urged communities living near national parks to exploit the potential of economic activities that would come with increased number of tourists.

He noted among others the rich cultural backgrounds in some communities which he said would also attract more visitors while also improving their economic lives.

The assistant minister stressed that the government was committed to working together with the communities to ensure forests and wildlife are conserved.

"We also understand parks cannot rely wholly on the entry fee they collect and we shall lobby the government to channel more funds to improve the facilities in the parks.

The assistant minister noted the branding of the parks which is ongoing in the whole country was in line with the government's Vision 2030.

He disclosed the Laikipia National Park would be commissioned early next year adding it would serve as a migration corridor for elephants from Mt Kenya forest.

Mwiraria said they would focus on conservation and protection of the endangered species.

He said KWS as part of its corporate social responsibility had funded four projects in the area to benefit the local community.

"We have commissioned a maternity unit and classrooms in this area as an indication that we are concerned about the livelihoods of the communities living around forests," he said.

The chairman said the government would improve the welfare of KWS staff by providing better housing and favorable terms of service.

Mwiraria however admitted human/wildlife conflict was still a challenge which needs to be addressed.

Kipng'etich said the park which currently receives 30, 000 visitors every year was targeting more than 150, 000 visitors by the year 2015.

The director urged communities living near the park to take advantage of business opportunities that would arise once more tourists flock the area.

"I am urging private investors to put up more hotels in this area to accommodate the tourists who will be visiting this area. We currently have few hotels which are very expensive for visitors," said Kipng'etich.

He said KWS was working with the ministry of roads to tarmac more

than 20 kilometres of a road from Naromoru town to the park which he said was posing challenges during rainy seasons.

Meanwhile a group of women from Kieni East district have embarked on a tree planting project which is meant to reclaim the lost Ngondo Kabaru forest.

Thirigitu Mt Kenya Conservation group has planted over 25,000 indigenous tree seedlings since last month which are meant to reclaim the forest which was destroyed during the past years.

Area DC Daniel Odambu who joined the women in the tree planting project said over 200,000 seedlings within the district will be planted and some in the schools.

"This is one of the successful projects we have initiated in the area. We don't want to engage in distribution of relief food any more. We want more rain to be able to farm and produce our own food," said the DC.

The project was launched last month and the members are now encouraging farmers to plant more trees as part of the environmental conservation.

Others areas where trees are being planted include lower parts of Mt Kenya and Kahurura areas.

Other group's members are planting the trees at Gakawa, Kiamathaga and Kimahuri areas.

The chair lady of the group Anastasia Wanjiru who was accompanied by Ewaso Nyiro National Development Authority regional coordinator Esther Riberia said they will ensure that more trees are planted in the forest as part of the re-afforestation programme.

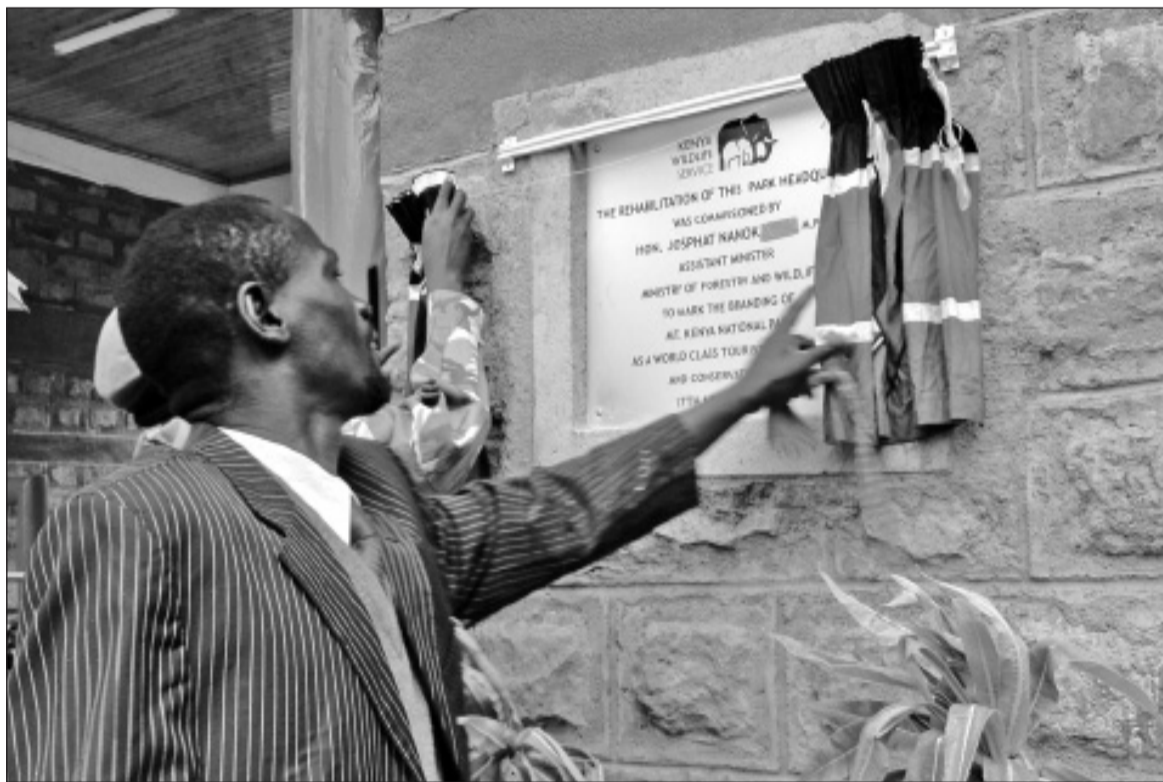
Riberia said the project will help the community to increase the forest cover as well as earn a livelihood by conservation of the environment.

The group is working together with the Kenya Forest Service.

"We want to make the area very green so that the trees can attract more rains. We are optimistic that during this rainy season, 80 per cent of the trees planted will survive," she said.

The chairlady said they will continue planting exotic and indigenous trees to ensure the country's forest cover reaches 10 per cent.

The group is also engaging itself in bee keeping and making of bricks projects among other projects.



Assistant Minister for Forestry and Wildlife Josphat Nanok while commissioning the branding of Mt. Kenya National Park recently. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Kilifi squatters too scared to talk freely to TJRC

By BEKADZO TONDO

RESIDENTS of Kilifi who were forcibly ejected from their ancestral land by influential people are unwilling to divulge the names of people behind the scam to Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC), in fear of reprisals.

The landless people said they could only volunteer the information to the commission if they were assured of their security as the grabbers could later target them for elimination.

Led by Mrs. Getrude Mbeyu, the residents claimed that past historical injustices had reduced them to squatters in their own land.

"It is very painful that majority of people in coast region are today living as squatters, yet they had their own land. Former regimes were reluctant in issuing them with titles deeds in order to cover up for the misdeeds committed by prominent people in the government," said Mbeyu.

The residents made the remarks at MTG hall in Kilifi when TJRC commissioners visited the area to prepare them for a special forum where they will be required to volunteer information to the commission concerning all injustices committed against them including unfair land allocations.

A director of civic education and outreach program from the TJRC Mr. Elijah Letangule admitted that land was a thorny issue in the coastal region and requires sobriety when addressing it.

Mr. Letangule said historical injustices on land allocation was to blame for the large number of people living as squatters in Coast Province and urged area residents to come out and give their views on how they want the problem addressed.

"Land issue is very sensitive in Coast province and requires sobriety in order to find a lasting solution to the problem," said Mr. Letangule.

The director concurred with the residents that some of the people involved in land grabbing were prominent people in the former and present governments but said it was the duty of the residents to expose individuals who benefitted from the irregular allocations.

"I concur with the residents that most of the people involved in land grabbing are prominent personalities but the affected people must volunteer information detailing sections of grabbed land and the people allocated the same," said Mr. Letangule.

He spoke as the director of Ujamaa center in Mombasa Mr. Patrick Ochieng revealed that over 2 million people in coast region were living as squatters.

According to Mr Ochieng the figure was obtained from a survey carried out last year by Elimu Sheria which is a Non Governmental organization fighting for human rights in the country.

Coast water body ups staff pecks

By BEKADZO TONDO

KILIFI-Mariakani Water and Sewerage Company has increased its workers' salaries by between 25 and 30 percent.

The new salaries will be backdated to July last year following a successful negotiation process between the management of the water board and the Kenya Union of Commercial Food and Allied Workers Kilifi branch.

The increment is outlined in an agreement signed between the union

and the Kimwasco Managing Director engineer Mwamuye Makupe at the company conference hall.

The union's Coast organizing secretary Mr. Wario Mainde said 200 workers at the water body are expected to get their new salaries immediately with the workers at the lower cadre receiving a 30 percent increment in their basic salaries.

Mr. Mainde who was accompanied by the union secretary Kilifi branch Mr. Milton Mboga said workers earning above Kshs 15,000 have been awarded

25 percent increment in their basic salaries.

He said the agreement will cover a whole year after which the union can negotiate for other terms.

The MD thanked the Union officials for their patience and cooperation while negotiating workers salaries and other working terms.

He said the water company recognizes the existence of the workers union and promised to cooperate with them when discussing issues concerning workers salaries and welfare.

"The water company fully recognizes the existence of the workers union and we promise to cooperate with their representatives especially when discussing issues concerning their salaries and welfare including house allowance among other issues," said Eng. Makupe.

The MD who was accompanied by the human resource cum administrative manager Mr. Jilani Chando, appealed to the workers to show commitment in their work by providing quality services to the public.

Nyeri integrated IDPs picket over neglect

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

OVER 300 integrated IDPs who have been living with relatives and friends in Central region have protested at the Central Provincial Headquarters in Nyeri town accusing the government of being insensitive to their plight.

The IDPs who have been living with friends and relatives asked the government to resettle them in alternative land.

Their chairman Charles Mwangi said they have nowhere to go as they lost all their property during the 2007-2008 post-election violence with some of them or their family members being killed or injured.

"We have gone through untold suffering in the various parts of Central Province where we sought refuge, with no permanent place to settle or food. We have been to hell and back," said Mwangi.

The IDPs said they have no access to medical services and cannot even afford the cost-sharing fee charged in public health centers leading to the deaths.

"We are calling upon the Government to resettle us or give each of us the Kshs 500,000 the Ministry for Special Programmes had promised," they said.

The internal refugees also want the government to assist in paying school fees for their secondary school going children as some have dropped out while others have been unable to sit for their exams and provide food and

other personal effects for every family.

Their coordinator Peter Gitahi said the over 10,000 IDPs in various parts of the region and who possess requisite documents like voting cards, Red Cross letters and a letter from the assist-

ant chief of the settlement location have so far only received only Kshs 10,000 which is hardly enough to cater for all their needs.

While asking the Government to fast track their resettlement, Gitahi said they also need counseling to enable them cope

with the harsh economic times as some are contemplating suicide due to the suffering.

Nyeri Central District DC Chege Mwangi upon receiving their memorandum said he was going to follow up the matter with the relevant authorities.



Some of the integrated IDPs who protested at Central Provincial headquarters recently where they vowed to camp until they are settled. Photo/ Joseph Mukubwa

Karega says Kilifi Council is clean

By BEKADZO TONDO

KILIFI county council has received a clean bill of health from the Ministry of Local Government for prudent utilization of Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF) in project implementation.

The Permanent Secretary Prof Karega Mutahi who inspected projects that have been funded through LATF over the past two financial years, lauded the council for the good management of the funds.

"I have inspected projects initiated through LATF funds and I am impressed by the high level of transparency and accountability maintained at the implementation phase," said professor Mutahi.

The PS spoke barely a month after the Parliamentary Committee on local authorities and funds led by Ainamoi MP Ben-

jamin Langat cleared the council of any audit queries.

Prof Mutahi was impressed with the electric fence erected around Arabuko Sokeke forest using funds sourced from both Bahari CDF and LATF saying the project had registered positive impact with the reduced human-wildlife conflicts within the community.

"The electric fence around the Arabuko Sokoke forest reserve has seen cases of elephants straying into people farms to destroy crops go down and I commend the council for supporting the project," said Prof Mutahi.

The PS who was accompanied by the council clerk Mr. Leboo Ole Morintat and other civic leaders led by Chairman Mr. Anthony Kingi also inspected the street lighting project in Mtwapa town and a maternity wing at Mtwapa health center.



Prof. Karega Mutahi

The PS urged the ministry of health to deploy staff to the newly constructed maternity wing to enable mothers access the facility.

"Local Government Ministry has helped to build a mater-

nity wing in this dispensary and therefore the Ministry of Health must deploy staff at the facility to make it operational," said proffers Mutahi

He said it will be waste of public funds to initiate projects that become dormant on completion due to lack of personnel.

The PS called for cooperation between different government ministries and departments when undertaking community projects to ensure they offer better services to the people on completion.

On the street light project, the PS said it was a success adding that it will enable local traders to conduct their business until late in the night.

He further said the lights will reduce cases of crime saying a dark town is prone to insecurity and appealed to the area people to protect the lights from vandalism.

Majority of coastals lack land titles

By BEKADZO TONDO

NEARLY two million people in Coast region have no title deeds for their land.

A research by Elimu Sheria which is a Non-governmental organization in the area reveals that the figure translates to 65 percent of the total population in Coast province which according to the latest census report stands at 3,325,307 people.

Addressing stakeholders during a meeting to discuss land issues at Kilifi county hall, the director of Ujamaa center Mr. Patrick Ochieng notes that the survey had established that only 11 percent of the residents have letters of allotment for their land.

But still the 11 percent is at a risk of losing their land as they have not paid the fee required to process their title deeds.

"Even the 11 percent of the people who have letters of offer for their pieces of land, most of them have not paid the required fee to facilitate the processing of their title deeds and likely to lose their land to private developers," he adds.

He notes that most residents keep allotment letters for many years not knowing that if they fail to pay for them within a certain period, then such land can be allocated to other people.

Mr. Ochieng laments that only 29 percent of the total population have title deeds for their land.

"The survey carried out last year by Elimu Sheria organization shows that majority of the residents are squatters and lack title deeds," said Mr. Ochieng.

He says the trend had created room for grabbers to dispossess residents of their land with the aid of unscrupulous land officers from the district and the national level.

He further says historical injustices should be addressed to enable the large number of people living as squatters in their own land to take ownership.

The director says government's failure to educate the people on the importance of land had resulted in grabbing of land especially along the beach by private developers.

Participants in the meeting accused the provincial administrators and the politicians in Coast province of playing a leading role in aiding land grabbing in the region.

Mr Mohamed Shariff from Takungu claimed that chiefs and District Officers in Kilifi have been escorting land grabbers to identify land that is illegally allocated to them from Nairobi and later evict innocent residents.

"It is really shocking when you see a chief or a D.O providing security to land grabbers from upcountry to occupy land illegally allocated to them from Nairobi," said Mr Shariff.

However the chiefs and civic leaders who attended the meeting defended themselves against the allegations that they were corrupt.

Mtepeni ward councilors Boniface Mwingo said they inherited the land grabbing problem from the past leaders and what they were trying to do now was to correct the situation and make the people get their land back.

AIPCA wants back its schools

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

AFRICAN Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa (AIPCA) church has renewed its calls to reclaim the over 430 schools lost to other churches during the colonial era.

The archbishop Evanson Ndung'u wants the Government to revert the management of the 436 secondary and primary schools to the church.

The archbishop said that the Government took the schools and then turned them to District Education Board schools but time has come for the church to become the official sponsors.

The church claimed that the move by the colonialists was to punish the church for its involvement in independence struggle.

He said the church suffered and was sidelined by the colonial government because it was at the forefront in the war for liberation.

He was speaking at Approved School grounds in Othaya during the official launch of the new Mukaro South diocese.

"We want to take pastoral cares unto the schools and also be the main sponsors," said the archbishop.

The schools are mostly found in Central Kenya.

"Our schools which we are

the sponsors are performing very well like Mahiga Girls, Kenyatta Mahiga Boys and Gathunguru Girls," said the archbishop.

Meanwhile The African Independent Pentecostal Church of Kenya (AIPCK) head John Mugecha has appealed to Kenyans to exercise restraint as presidential candidate's traverse the country ahead of next year's General Elections.

Mugecha who spoke in Tetu district recently, said it was a shame that after the post-election violence, some Kenyans are still attacking politicians on campaign trail and appealed unto them to practice political maturity.

Federation of Evangelical and Indigenous Christian Churches of Kenya (FEICCK) Chairman "Let all Kenyans embrace peace and tolerate politicians who campaign in their regions. We must stay in peace whether there is elections or not," said Mugecha.

Mugecha said the role of the church is to preach against all evils in the society including the need for the faithful to embrace unity and shun violence.

Bishop John Methu at the same time said the recent attack on Tuju and his convoy shows that Kenyans have learnt from the skirmishes that followed the 2007 General Elections.

By KAVYU KURA

MWINGI DC Peter Kinuthia has urged merchants in Mwingi town to prepare for an economic boom once coal mining kicks off in the area.

The DC said that local traders must take advantage of the mining business to invest in facilities that will attract both local and international investors.

"Traders in Mwingi should now move towards setting up decent residential houses and business facilities in Mwingi town in anticipation of investors who will flock the area in plenty," said DC Kinuthia.

The DC said he was optimistic that Mwingi will be one of the richest regions not only in the country but also south of Sahara as many investors would move to the area once coal extraction and processing commences.

"It is time local businessmen started investing in good residential and business facilities that would accommodate the envisaged high numbers of workers who will soon start moving into Mwingi," said Kinuthia.

The DC made the remarks when he presided over the official opening of a new Pinnacle Guest House in Mwingi town. The facility belongs to a local entrepreneur Stanley Wanjohi.

He pointed that the economic potential of Mwingi had also caught the eyes of Chinese businessmen, who have already moved in and are setting up a clay and ceramic processing factory.

"You should expect many factories associated to the coal to mushroom once the mining and processing of the industrial mineral starts. Mwingi is also endowed with

Mwingi DC predicts economic boom



The Mwingi DC Peter Kinuthia unveils the plague to officially open the Mwingi Pinnacle Guest House assisted by Rev. Moses Ndichu of PCEA church in Mwingi. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

natural gas that will also attract more investors keen to process it," said the DC.

Kinuthia however noted that with the onslaught on the Al Shabaab terror group in Somalia by the Kenya Defence Forces, his biggest concern was how to mount adequate security in Mwingi

town that could fall prey to the militia's evil machinations.

He urged guest house and lodging owners in the town to meticulously screen all their clients and keep an updated register to ensure that they do not host people likely to cause mayhem in exchange

for a negligible amount of money.

"There is need to keep proper record of all visitors to your premises to make sure that you do not host criminal who would destroy your investment worth millions of shillings for a few pieces of silver," cautioned the DC.

Group opposes destruction of Nyari

By BEKADZO TONDO

RESIDENTS of Sokoke in Ganze are opposed to the exploration and mining of suspected titanium mineral deposits from a historical Nyari depression.

The residents through a community based organization called Nyari Depression Center (NDC) claimed some private mineral miners have been visiting the area with an aim of persuading the locals to allow them to explore and later mine the mineral deposits.

Led by the chairman of NDC Mr Raphael Katana, the residents said the community through other eco-tourism related organizations wants to use the site for tourist attraction instead of having the suspected titanium mineral deposits mined. "As a community of Sokoke location in Ganze we are opposed to the planned exploration and mining of titanium mineral deposits at the Nyari depression," said Mr Katana.

The community made the remarks at the site during a meeting which was coordinated by the Beginning of Awareness and Social Indigenous varieties of Cultural and educational Promotions in Africa (BASIVA) organization based in Kilifi.

BASIVA director Mr. Peter Kithunga said Nyari depression site has a lot of historical features which need to be conserved.

Mr. Kithunga said his organization is planning to develop the area and promote it as an eco-tourism center where locals could benefit from the business.

"BASIVA has a long term development plan to develop Nyari depression site to an eco-tourism business center and we feel that allowing the planned mining of the titanium deposits said to have been discovered at the site would derail our conservation efforts," said Mr. Kithunga. The residents urged the management of BASIVA to help them fight and block the planned mining of the titanium mineral deposit at the site.

Mr Katana said different private mineral miners have been visiting the area to assess the titanium mineral deposits said to be lying beneath the Nyari depression site before the actual mining takes off but he argued that the mining will interfere with the depression and the historical features of the site.

NDC secretary Mr. Cornelius Maitha said the depression of Nyari has both geophysical and the locals history and urged the ministry of national heritage to help in conducting a research at the site.

Mr. Maitha said locals claim the land in question sub merged many years ago and buried the people who lived there alive after its loose soils collapsed.

"History we are getting from our elders indicates that the Nyari depression was a village for some people many years ago but it mysteriously collapsed and buried the villagers alive," said Mr. Maitha.

Raging floods displace thousands in Budalangi

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

A TOTAL of forty thousand people have been displaced by the raging floods in Budalangi following heavy rains registered in the area.

Several homes have been marooned in the floods that have raised the level of River Nzoia to an alarming level.

Among the establishment destroyed by the floods include the Magombe rice scheme where sacks of rice that had been harvested and awaiting transportation to the market have completely been submerged in the floods.

Cases of cholera have also been reported as two children who had been camping at Ruambwa primary school with a population of eight hundred people developed severe vomiting and diarrhea which the doctors at Port Victoria district hospital diagnosed as cholera.

The district disaster management committee established a total of eight evacuation centres namely Ruambwa primary school, Namalo, St Jude Budalangi primary school and Goro primary school in Busia and Siaya counties.

The Bunyala district disaster management committee has relocated some of the flood victims to Namalo Primary School to ease overcrowding at Ruambwa evacuation centre and curb further cholera outbreak due to congestion.

The biggest challenge in the evacuation camp has been lack of adequate toilet facilities as a result of the influx of the flood victims evacuated from various areas affected by the floods in Magombe East sub-location.

However, the Ministry of Special Programmes has acquired and brought three water tanks at the Ruambwa evacuation centre to ensure there was adequate water for use by

the flood victims.

The ministry of special programmes as well donated 200 bags of beans and 500 bags of rice to the flood victims with the Kenya Red Cross Society providing the flood victims with 500 blankets, tarpaulins, 100 cartons of cooking oil, 100 bars of soap, salt and 500 treated mosquito nets among others.

The Permanent Secretary [PS] in charge of special programmes Andrew Mondoh on his part assured the

flood victims that the government will employ every means at its disposal to ensure that those families whose homes are marooned by the floods are moved to safer ground.

"We don't want the flood victims to lose their lives as a result of the raging floods. The government is already doing the best it can to ensure that those families who are still trapped in the floods are evacuated to a safer place," the PS assured them.

He instructed Bunyala District

Commissioner Abdi Khalif to ensure that a committee has been set up to oversee effective distribution of the relief supplies to the flood victims.

"I want you to ensure that a committee has been formed to oversee equitable and fair distribution of the relief supplies to the flood victims and also ensure that the relief food does not fall into the wrong hands," said the PS, adding that stern legal action would be taken against anybody found diverting the items elsewhere.



Flood affected area in Budalangi.

Photo/File

Bahai in land ownership row with state

By JOEL JUMA

A CHURCH has petitioned the Government to stop the ongoing construction of Kakamega North District provincial administration offices in a disputed piece of plot.

Bahai Faith Church Ministries has written to the area District Commissioner Gideon Ombongi demanding the offices be re-located to an alternative land to avoid controversies over the matter.

The church, which claims ownership of the land, says it was unable to undertake any expansion work because the provincial administration had occupied its land.

Ombongi confirmed that he had received the letter from the church administration. He said an alternative site was being sought to avoid disputes between the church and the Government officers.

"We are not the only offices faced with lack of land. Even Malava girls was put up on land belonging to the forest and the school may have to relocate elsewhere," said the DC.

The DC made the remarks at Samitsi secondary school in Malava constituency during inspection of projects by the officials of the National Constituency Development Fund led by the board's Public Relations Manager George Muruli.

Housing minister Soita Shitanda said that cases of land disputes should be addressed by the stakeholders before the County Governments become operational.

Shitanda who is the area MP further explained that failure by local schools to obtain land title deeds on time was contributing to land disputes.

The minister revealed that the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) has so far spend over Kshs7 million to purchase a piece of land for the construction of a youth entrepreneurship centre.

He said that the centre will be equipped with Information Technolo-

gy (ICT) facilities to enable the youth scout for employment opportunities in various parts of the country.

The Kakamega County Council Chairman John Shimaka said that lack of employment among the youths was to blame for the increased wave of crime in the County.

He said that despite efforts being made to have the youths engage in income generating activities, which include motorcycle transport industry, they lacked capital to expand into other sectors of investment.

Shimaka said the Kazi kwa Vijana programme should be made permanent instead of being implemented on temporary basis.

Ragut roots for proper child protection

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

THE Government has urged childcare networks in the country to guard against drug abuse amongst children.

Central PC Japther Rugut urged the groups involved in child protection to ensure that they do all that is possible to safeguard the rights of children.

"Drugs take away the dream from every child's heart and replace it with a nightmare. Each of us has to put our principles and consciences on the line, to set forth solid standards and serve as role models," said the PC.

Rugut made the remarks in a speech read on his behalf by his deputy Francis Sila during the official opening of a three days seminar targeting organizations working with children networks from Central, Eastern and Nairobi regions at Westwood hotel in Nyeri town.

The training sought to empower children networks working in the three regions so that they may fully participate in drug abuse prevention and management.

The participants were equipped with knowledge and skills so that they enhance the capacity of children's network and caregivers on alcohol and drug abuse prevention, management and treatment.

"The objective of this seminar is to develop a network of children's organization, towards a more comprehensive and inclusive campaign against alcohol and drug abuse in Kenya," said the PC.

However, he said the Government has a challenging task because drug criminals are ingenious as they work every day to plot new and better ways to promote drugs and so the organizations fighting drugs must be smarter and tougher than the criminals.

"Drug menace knows no borders, respects no age, and no jurisdictions. We are all partners in this war and must continue in order to save our future generations," added the PC.

The participants were urged to play their role in assisting the society to shield the children from drugs and substance abuse.

Murang'a leaders against abolition of senate

By MORRIS GITHENYA

TWO legislators from Murang'a County have faulted politicians pushing for the scrapping of senate.

The two, Muturi Mwangi (Ki-

haru) and his Mathioya counterpart Clement Wambugu say any attempts to scrap the senate would amount to undermining the authority of Kenyans who overwhelmingly endorsed the constitution.

Speaking at Ichagaki Catholic

Church in Maragua constituency, former Cabinet Joseph Kamotho urged parliament to reject the motion by Ndaragwa MP Jeremiah Kioni, as the move would dismantle devolution which safeguards the rights of women, youth and

marginalized groups.

"Kenyans should be wary of politicians who want to derail the new constitution even before it is implemented," he said.

Separately the two MPs vowed to lobby the house to reject the

bill which they said was driven by malice and did not commit to the aspirations of Kenyans.

Speaking at Rurii stadium in Mathioya, the two legislators said that they will defend the constitution that Kenyans passed.

Understanding the Salaries

COMPOSITION

THE Commission draws its mandate from the Salaries and Remuneration Act and seeks to standardize the salary scales for the all public officials devoid of glaring gaps and ensure that future salary increments reflect and are in tandem with inflationary trends.

The Commission comprises of the following persons

- (a) Chairperson
- (b) One person each nominated by the following bodies
 - (i) The parliamentary service commission
 - (ii) The public service commission
 - (iii) The judicial service commission
 - (iv) The teachers service commission
 - (v) The national police service commission
 - (vi) The Defense council
 - (vii) The senate on behalf of the county governments
- (c) One person each nominated by
 - (i) An umbrella body representing trade unions
 - (ii) An umbrella body representing employees
 - (iii) A joint forum of professional bodies
- (d) One person each nominated by
 - (i) The Cabinet Secretary responsible for Finance
 - (ii) The Attorney General
- (e) One person who has experience in the management of human resources in the public service, nominated by cabinet secretary

responsible for public service

Appointment

To chair the Commission, the Act requires that the applicant possess the following qualification

- (a) hold a degree from a university recognized in Kenya;
- (b) Knowledge and at least ten years' experience in matters relating to either –
 - (i) public management;
 - (ii) finance and administration;
 - (iii) human resource management;
 - (iv) economics; or
 - (v) labour laws.
- (c) Knowledge of labour market trends in Kenya as relates to income in the public and private sector;
- (d) has had a distinguished career in their respective fields.

Further one qualifies to be a member of the commission, if she/ he

- (a) holds a degree from a university recognized in Kenya;
- (b) has knowledge and at least ten years' experience in either –
 - (i) finance and administration;
 - (ii) public management;
 - (iii) economics;
 - (iv) human resource management; or
 - (v) labour laws.
- (c) meets the requirements on accountability and integrity as outlined in the Constitution;
- (d) has had a distinguished career in their respective fields.

However, an applicant is to



Attempts by the government to harmonize remuneration including the setting up of a permanent public Review Board and developing a pay policy for the public service have remained elusive over the years. Glaring disparities in pay, discontent and entrenched inequalities among the public service have become a major issue. However, the establishment of a commission to harmonise salaries in the public service comes as a relief. In this report, our Sub-Editor FAITH MUIRURI discusses the composition and mandates of the long-awaited

be disqualified for appointment if the person -

- (a) is a member of Parliament or County Assembly;
- (b) is a member of a governing body of a political party;

law.

Nomination of members

The Act directs that different nominating bodies advertise the positions and invite members of

also to serve in the commission. The nominees are thereafter subjected to a parliamentary vetting process before they can be formally appointed by the President.

However, where the National As-



Parliament Buildings where the Bills are passed.

“The Commission comprises one person who has experience in the management of human resources in the public service, nominated by cabinet secretary responsible for public service”

- (c) is a member of a local authority;
- (d) has been declared bankrupt; or
- (e) has been removed from office for contravening the provisions of the Constitution or any other

the public to submit their applications. The law requires that once a shortlist is made it should be forwarded to the President who until the next General elections must consult the Prime Minister while nominating the chairperson and twelve other individu-

assembly rejects any nomination, the Speaker notifies the President who must submit fresh nominations.

The Act requires that in appointing members of the commission, the President must uphold the principle of gender equity, regional and ethnic balance and equal opportunities for

Salaries and Remuneration Act

tion in the public service Remuneration and benefits of all other public officers. Additional functions of the commission under the Act are:

the sector has created various cadres in the mission to regulate and bring big relief in the sector, workers demanding better RI takes a keen look at Commission.

persons with disabilities and ensure that at least one-third of the members are of either gender.

Functions of the Commission

The Act enumerates certain func-

governments on the remuneration and benefits of all other public officers.

Additional functions of the commission under the Act are:

- (a) inquire into and advise on the salaries and remuneration to be paid out of public funds;
- (b) advise the national and county governments on the harmonization, equity and fairness of remuneration for the attraction and retention of requisite skills in the public sector;
- (c) conduct comparative surveys on the labour markets and trends in remuneration to determine the monetary worth of the jobs of public offices;

“The Act determine the cycle of salaries and remuneration review upon which Parliament may allocate adequate funds for implementation.”

payable to holders of public offices; and The law requires the Commission to take into account recommendations made by previous commissions established to inquire into the matter of remuneration in the public service.

Powers of the Commission

The Act also provides that in the performance of its functions, the Commission -

- (a) may inform itself in such manner as it thinks fit;
- (b) may receive written or oral statements from any person, governmental or non-governmental agency; and
- (c) is not to be bound by the strict rules of evidence.

Administration

The Act provides for the establishment of a professional secretariat to the Salary and remuneration Commission to be headed by a secretary who shall be the chief executive officer and accounting officer of the Commission.

The administration of the commission in terms of division of the roles between the commissioners and the secretariat is a first in all the enacted pieces of legislations establishing the constitutional commissions. The Act provides that a person qualifies for the position of a secretary if he/ she

- (a) is Kenyan citizen ;
- (b) holds a degree from a university recognized in Kenya;
- (c) has at least ten years' experience in human resource management, financial management or public management; and
- (d) meets the requirements of leadership and integrity outlined in the Constitution.

The Constitution further requires the commission to be guided by

the following principles

- (i) the need to ensure that the total public compensation bill is fiscally sustainable
- (ii) the need to ensure that the public services are able to attract and retain the skills required to execute their functions
- (iii) the need to recognize productivity and performance
- (iv) transparency and fairness

In addition, the Act requires the commission to uphold the principle of equal remuneration to persons for work of equal value.

Removal from Office

The Act provides that the secretary may be removed from office by the Commission, if he /she

- (a) is unable to perform the functions of the office arising out of physical or mental incapacity;
- (b) engages in gross misconduct or misbehaviour;
- (c) incompetence or negligence of duty.

Offences

A person who -

- (a) without justification, obstructs or hinders, or assaults or threatens a member or staff of the Commission acting under this Act;
- (b) submits false or misleading information; or
- (c) misrepresents or knowingly misleads a member or staff of the Commission acting under this Act, commits an offence and is liable to a fine not exceeding Kshs3 million, or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years, or to both.

Transition

The transition clause provides that employees who served in the former Permanent Public Service Remuneration Review Board, upon the commencement of the Act, have an option to serve in the Commission and if not appointed by the Commission, be redeployed in the Public Service.

“The Commission may receive written or oral statements from any person, governmental or non-governmental agency and is not bound by the strict rules of evidence.”

tions, in addition to the roles that the Constitution has already accorded the commission. Notable functions under the Constitution include:

- (a) set and regularly review the remuneration and benefits of all state officers
- (b) advise the national and county

- (d) determine the cycle of salaries and remuneration review upon which Parliament may allocate adequate funds for implementation;
- (e) make recommendations on the review of pensions



Nyamira IDPs appeal for help to recover money

By BOB OMBATI

OVER 200 integrated IDPs from Manga District, Nyamira County, want the government to help them recover Kshs. 1.4 million allegedly stolen by their officials.

The IDPs say that the money was meant to buy them land where they could settle but that was just a dream as the officials vanished with the cash exposing them to uncertainty.

The Group's chairman, George Arita, says that members were only able to recover Kshs 100,000 from the former chairman, Evans Momanyi. However other officials who include Peter Motuka (Treasurer) and Moses Nyakango (Secretary) are still in hiding.

The chairman told The Link that the group had raised the money from the sale of bricks and members contributions but their investment went to drain after the officials defrauded them.

Area District Commissioner, Onesmus Kyatha says the former officials were imposters who had relocated to Nairobi and Machakos after the scam.

Kyatha further confirms that 725 IDPs from the area have received the initial Kshs. 10,000 each as compensation from the government and that he is still waiting for more funds to disburse to IDPs who have returned to their former homes in various parts of the country to build houses and settle.

The DC asked IDPs who had not received the second compensation package of Kshs. 25000 to verify details of their names with his office so that they can get their payments.

The IDPS faulted Special Programmes Minister, Esther Murugi for giving priority to IDPs in the camps and ignoring those integrated in the communities saying that they were also suffering and needed help.

"We are all IDPS regardless of whether we are in the camps or not," said Arita at the Brick making site, near their dismantled IDP Camp at Riatengeya chiefs camp.

Arita said the victims, some aged and sickly were suffering and putting up with their relatives while others were staying in small rented houses in villages and relied on menial jobs for their survival.

They spoke as another group of over 300 IDPs from the larger Gucha District marched to the area District Commissioner's office demanding to be resettled.

Bomachoge Member of Parliament, Simon Ogari who addressed them called for patience adding that the government plans to resettle them before next year's general elections.

Meanwhile, the head of the Cath-

olic Church, Cardinal John Njue has urged Kenyans to embrace peace and unity as the country heads for the General Elections.

He says that Kenyans must coexist peacefully and shun violence during the electioneering period.

Cardinal Njue also challenged politicians to respect the constitution and enact strong legislations that will not only benefit all citizens but also uphold the spirit of constitutionalism.

The Cardinal spoke in Gucha District after he presided over the Commissioning of St. Ann's Ogembo Catholic church town parish.

"We want leaders to be guided by transparency and the rule of law as outlined in the Constitution. That is the only way others can respect and adhere to the Supreme law," stated Njue.

Njue urged Christians to elect visionary leaders and reject self seekers who were mainly driven by greed but lacked the commitment required to spearhead change and initiate meaningful development in their respective areas.

Njue, who was accompanied by Kisii diocese bishop Joseph Mairura and Vicar general Joseph Obanyi asked Kenyans to pray for the soldiers who have been deployed to Somali to fight the Al Shabaab terror group.

The prelate at the same time urged Christians to support church initiatives as donors are no longer funding the church.

"The donors are pulling away. Their support to the African church is minimal and the church now depends on the congregation," said Cardinal Njue.



IDPs in one of the camps. Photo/File

Bungoma elites put contractor on notice

By LINK CORRESPONDENT

PROFESSIONALS from Bungoma County have petitioned the Government to take action against a contractor who built the Sikata-Kimilili road.

They said the road is already in bad state one year after completion.

Reginald Wanyonyi, a lecturer at Moi University alleged that most of the contractors in the county have done shoddy work especially in the road sector which is to blame for the poor road network in the county.

"The Sikata-Kimilili road that

was allocated huge amounts of money by the Government is already worn out due to shoddy work by the contractor. The common mwanachi bears the brunt because they are heavily taxed," said Dr Wanyonyi.

She called upon the Government to take measures that will ensure taxpayers money is accounted for especially on grassroots projects.

She censured the contractor who was awarded the tender and appealed to Kenya Roads Authority (KRA) to inspect the road afresh and penalise the contractor.

"We have lost faith in all contrac-

tors including the new contractor who is working on the Kimilili-Misikhu road. We hope the contractor will not repeat similar mistakes as the Sikata-Kimilili contractor," she explained.

Job Chelongo, an officer from the ministry of Public works took issue with leaders from Bungoma County for the pathetic work done by contractors in the region.

"I urge all professionals from this county to participate in all committees awarding tenders especially for major roads or any other infrastructure in the county," he said.

He also reiterated that between

2003 and 2007 the same contractor was awarded a tender to tarmac the Webuye Medical Training College road and sewage system in the town, which is now in a pathetic state.

"Right now Webuye town has no sewerage system as the one constructed has ended up being filled up with dirt and mud," Chelongo said.

He said the professionals should in future participate in the award of such tenders.

Chelongo however said he was not in a position to say whether action would be taken against the contractor.

Busia youth told to beware of tricky politicians

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

THE National Youth Sector Alliance has embarked on an extensive civic education programme that targets youth groups in Busia County to sensitize them on the need to uphold peaceful co-existence ahead of the 2012 general elections.

Addressing the members of the youth groups at a Busia hotel recently, the convener of National Youth Sector Alliance Emmanuel Dennis Ngogo appealed to the youth to dissociate themselves from politicians who may be tempted to use them for their own political mileage come 2012.

Ngogo asked the youth to be extra cautious with politicians saying that during the post-election violence the youth both within formal and non-formal groupings have been on the receiving end being accused as the main perpetrators of violence.

"Kenya has had experiences of violence and ethnic clashes that have been largely associated with elections and political activities. The post-election violence of 2007 brought to the fore the deep rooted historical divides in the country which has never been resolved," he said, adding that the youth have been on the receiving end being accused as the main perpetrators of violence.

Ngogo said that according to a recent research study undertaken by the National Youth Sector Alliance, 59percent of the respondents had confirmed that there are youth formations towards the next general elections, with the study further revealing that some of the groups are in conduits for funding.

"This revelation is an affirmation that there are clandestine youth formations for political reasons with 67percent believing that the formations are organized by the youth," he explains.

The Focused Group Discussions revealed that majority of the formations are strategically placed for political mobilization as an organized grouping so that they are not manipulated by politicians.

He at the same time said that a large number of youth believe that the next election will be peaceful and this is attributed to lessons from the 2008 post-election violence.

However, the study revealed that the youth phenomenally have faith in the new constitution which is believed to be a deterrent towards ill-motivated occurrences like election violence.

"26 percent of the respondents believe there will be change where majority of the current members of parliament will not be re-elected," he said, adding that the new constitution provides more avenues for engagement with the government.

The convener said the National Youth Sector Alliance is a conglomeration of various youth sector actors, NGOs, societies, faith based organizations, community based organizations, youth groups among others in the country coming together for the purposes of ensuring coherent engagement with the government and other relevant stakeholders.

By JOEL JUMA

Ministry warns Kakamega Coop parties

THE Government has demanded its inclusion in talks aimed at resolving the dispute surrounding non-remittance of over Kshs80 million by Kakamega Municipal Council to a local cooperative society.

The ministry of Cooperatives said the council should ensure its officers are involved in the talks failure to which the deal will be nullified.

"We must be involved if the matter has to be settled," said the Western Provincial Cooperative Officer Nathan Mukhweso.

Mukhweso said chief officers and councillors should not convene

a meeting to discuss the whereabouts of the money in question with officials of Kakamega Municipal Savings and Credit Cooperative Society alone.

He explained that the Cooperative Act does not provide for exclusion of the ministry during resolving of such disputes.

Mukhweso was reacting to media reports indicating that the Council Mayor Mathias Sichere wants a meeting convened to resolve the dispute.

The mayor said the council was ready to start remitting the money even if this is done through installments.

He said council was ready to ensure that the workers dues are remitted to various bodies without delays.

Mukhweso explained that the Government wants to ensure that members of societies get loans from their cooperatives without difficulties.

He noted that local authorities which include Kakamega and Vihiga Municipal Council and Butere/Mumias County Council owe societies a lot of money.

He further noted that Mumias Municipal Council is being pursued by the ministry of Cooperatives over non re-

mittance of over Kshs6 million.

Kenya Union of Savings and Credit Cooperatives (Kuscco) Chief Executive Officer George Ototo and Kakamega Municipal Council Savings and Credit Cooperative Society Chairperson Iris Masambaga said there was need for societies to computerise their services.

They said that some of the societies have failed to meet the requirements of the Sacco Society Regulatory Authority (Sasra) Act due to poor Information Technology (IT) services for their members.

Ministry embarks on auditing of LATF projects

By BEKADZO TONDO

THE Ministry of Local Government has embarked on a comprehensive auditing of all projects initiated under the Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF) in all the 175 local authorities in the country.

The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government, Prof

Karega Mutahi says monitoring and evaluation teams have been dispatched to all civic bodies to audit projects implemented in the past two financial years.

The PS who was briefing the press after inspecting projects in Taita Taveta, Kwale Mombasa and Kilifi councils, said chief officers and civic leaders will be held accountable for any

losses of LATF funds incurred during their term in office

“Let me make it very clear that the government will deal firmly with any staff or civic leader who will be found culpable in the ongoing audit process,” warned Prof Mutahi.

He said the constitution is very clear on issues of corruption and said that those who defraud the govern-

ment will be prosecuted for their misdeeds.

The PS said days when people used to mobilize ethnic support to shield them from prosecution are long gone and said suspected criminals will have to carry their own cross.

“Do not steal from the government and expect to get support from your tribal chieftains as things have

changed and you will have to face the law,” he stressed.

The PS said some councils had been implementing the projects on paper as there are no projects to show on the ground.

He said Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Local Government Musalia Mudavadi is also on the ground to inspect the projects.

Taita youth groups given business skills

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

MORE than 30 youth groups in Taita Taveta County have been trained by the Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs (MOYAS) on prudent management of business enterprises.

The training held at Wundanyi County Council Hall focused on capital dynamics, book keeping, business planning and revenue projection to ensure success of the projects.

Most group members admitted they had had limited knowledge on business and project management and termed the training as a gift. Mr. Jacob Mwambela, the secretary of Mwanda Youth Bunge, said he was confident he would manage his business better as the training opened eyes to opportunities he had been missing.

“It was a momentous event for me as I have realized what it means to run a business. I will implement the lessons and hope to start seeing the outcome soon,” he said.

Mwatate District Youth Officer, Mr. Alex Ojango, urged the groups to put into practice skills they had acquired at the workshop.

“The knowledge that has been passed will be the best tool to empower you. Put it into application and spread it to the others to benefit more youth in this county,” he said.

Officials from the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) appealed to the groups to apply for loans from the funds and initiate projects for their self betterment.

Youth groups from the area have been criticized for not being proactive in soliciting for loans.

A trainer, Mr. Julius Mwangi, urged the groups to aspire for innovation and creativity.

“Be aggressive and pursue the goals you have set out with determination. This training has been about equipping you with what you need to become better people,” he said.

Meanwhile, fishermen in Lamu are poised to triple their production

from the current 2,500 to over 8,000 metric tonnes annually once the Government completes the construction of Kshs 14 million cold storage plant at Faza in Lamu East.

Fish farmers are optimistic that the completion of the Faza Fish Processing Plant will boost their earnings from Kshs 8 million to Kshs 40 million per annum.

The plant has capacity to process 8 tonnes of fish daily once it becomes operational besides increasing the fishermen’s bargaining power by cooling their products thus increasing the shelf life and value of the catch.

Lamu County Fisheries Officer, Mr. Simon Komu says that fishermen in the area will reap highly as the plant has been equipped with storage facilities and farmers will no longer be forced to sell their produce at throw away prices to agents who have been exploiting them.

He says that the completion of the

facility will ensure ice preservation leading to improved prices that are expected to improve fortunes for the fishermen, majority of whom have suffered high poverty levels.

Faza Fish plant will produce both flake and block ice which will enable fishermen to preserve thousands of kilogrammes of fish for value addition,” he said.

The two types of ice are sourced from Mombasa which is hundreds of kilometers away hindering many fishermen from actively engaging in activities due to prohibitive costs.

The fisheries officer said the new contractor has been installing ice processing machines to replace faulty ones that were installed by another contractor during the 2008/2009 financial year when construction work started.

The Faza Fishermen Cooperative society which will manage the plant will put in place an organized

marketing structure for the catch and improve fishermen’s way of life through value addition.

Elsewhere Tana River County Drought Management Officer, Mr. Omar Morowa, wants residents living in flood-prone areas along river Tana to move to the highland areas to avoid being swept by flooding waters.

Speaking at Hola DC’s office recently during the District Environment Committee meeting, Mr. Morowa said he had received emergency calls from the KENGEN Communication Officer indicating that the power generating company will open gates for Masinga and Kiambere dams due to over-accumulation of the dams following the heavy rains that have pounded the Country.

He appealed to chiefs, assistant chiefs and village elders to ensure all residents immediately move to safer areas.

Kisii council ready for devolution

By BOB OMBATI

KISII Municipal Council (KMC) has put measures in place to offer effective services as it gears towards embracing the new devolved system of government enshrined in the constitution.

Council Town Clerk, William Chepkwony says that a raft of measures such as relocation of public service vehicles (PSVs), hawkers and boda boda operators from the Central Business District (CBD), are underway to bring order in the rapidly growing Kisii town.

Chepkwony says that Kisii town is the business hub of Western Kenya with the second largest Daraja Mbili open air market and therefore requires sanity to restore investor confidence.

The town clerk now wants politicians, council workers, residents and PSV operators to support the initiative as the council transits to the competitive county government.

He says the civic authority plans to strengthen its revenue base and streamline its services in order to effectively deliver its services to the public.

Chepkwony told The Link in his office that the council will soon move to court to compel rate defaulters to pay their debts.

He said the council’s monthly revenue had dropped from Kshs. 7.6 million to Kshs 6.4

million, adding that defaulters owed the civic authority Kshs. 2 million in arrears thus hampering smooth operations.

He said the council missed out on this year’s Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF) allocation due its inability to clear an outstanding debt of over Kshs 200 million it owes to statutory bodies.

The officer said the council has been unable to repair tractors that collect garbage within the town as they require Kshs 0.4 million on a monthly basis for repairs, and this overstretched the council’s string budget.

Chepkwony at the same time urged public service vehicles to operate within the designated areas adding that the council has enacted new by-laws and those who flout them will be prosecuted.



Youths during training session. Photo/File

PS Lusaka speaks on agenda setting

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

LIVESTOCK Permanent Secretary Kenneth Lusaka has challenged the media to set a constructive agenda for the society.

Speaking to Bungoma press club members recently in Webuye town, Lusaka said democracy depends on citizens having reliable and accurate facts put in a meaningful context.

Lusaka reminded journalists that people in society have divergent interests on different issues at any given time and urged them to always guide people towards moderate debate.

“Everyone else in society has his/her own interests in any issue at any given time and it is only the members of the fourth estate who can remain impartial and guide people accordingly,” he said.

The PS asked the media to maintain allegiance to the public interest which overrides any parochial inclinations by providing information without fear or favour.

“I know you answer to many constituencies; advertisers, shareholders, and the industry but reporting without fear or favor is the basis of your credibility and an implied covenant”, Lu-

saka told the journalists.

He reiterated that journalism’s first obligation is to the truth and further asked the media to pursue the truth in a practical sense.

“You must pursue the truth and tell us things as they are, not as we want them to be-if the emperor is naked say so” he said.

A truly free press, Lusaka pointed out can be used to assist in social, economic and political development.

The PS. was categorical that the media are better placed to outline the country’s process of change and its implication to the citizens.

He challenged the media to tell the citizen what devolution truly means in terms of social, economic and political development and shortfalls.

Journalism, Lusaka added has the capacity to serve as a watchdog over those in power.

“You are the only ones who can talk about anyone and get away with it. Use this to guide readers on the right path by providing just criticism,” the PS told journalists.

Lusaka asked the media to serve as an independent monitor of power by creating a system of checks and balances.

Butali sugarcoats payments to entice more farmers

By JOEL JUMA

THE weekly payment by Butali Sugar Mill in Kakamega County to farmers has doubled.

The firm's General Manager Sohil Patel said they have been paying farmers Kshs25 million every week but the amount doubled from December last year.

"The amount is set to go up even higher due to the expanded cane coverage," he said.

Patel said the crushing capacity has also increased from the initial 500 tonnes per day to 1, 200 tonnes.

Patel said farmers delivering their crop to the company will continue carrying home one free Kilogramme of sugar in addition to receiving payments.

Patel said the move was initiated to ensure farmer's get a taste of their crop.

"A part from paying the farmers for cane delivered, they must get a free kilogramme of sugar for them to taste their product," said Patel.

He announced that farmers delivering their cane to Butali are also set to benefit from a free medical camp.

Patel was speaking at the firm when over 400 farmers got their payments for cane deliveries.

Speaking separately, Kenya Sugar Board (KSB) Directors Billy Wanjala and Mohammed Mukhwana said Parliament should review the Sugar Act and scrap zones.

Wanjala and Mukhwana noted that the delays in reviewing the Act have resulted in endless conflicts between sugar millers.

Mumias MP Ben Washali and his Matungu David Were said they have talked to Agriculture minister Sally Kosgey to speed up reviewing of the Act.

Washali and Were said the Act should be reviewed to cushion farmers from exploitation by millers.

Migwani set to plant a million trees

By KAVYU-KURA

MIGWANI district has launched a multi-million shillings tree-planting project aimed at restoring badly decimated forests areas.

The project through which one million trees are due to be planted in the deforested areas of the district, aims at reclaiming the diminishing water sources and springs besides working towards

achieving the international accepted 10 percent forest cover.

Recently, the Community Development Trust Fund (CDTF) Non-governmental organization donated a grant of Kshs 25.4 million to the Muivvu Education and Poverty Alleviation (MEPA) Community group of Kea location in Migwani towards the environmental project.

Launching the project, CDTF of-

ficer Pauline Ikumi who is in charge of the Community Environment Facility (CEF) department said the local community's contribution to the project, both in kind and in material, was expected to raise Kshs. 5.8 million thus bringing the total cost to Kshs. 31.2 million.

Ms Ikumi noted that the project was expected to boost environmental conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. Besides, she added, it would

also serve to improve the livelihoods of the locals and in effect help alleviate poverty.

The official cautioned that CDTF would closely monitor every stage of the implementation process to ensure prudent use of funds and resources.

"The project must transform the area into a better and hospitable environment as well as improve livelihood at the end on the initial three-year phase of funding," she said.

She advised the local community to ensure effective implementation and sustainability of the environmental project which she noted would go a long way in mitigating the effects of climate change that had seen many areas suffer adverse weather conditions leading to food and water shortages.

The MEPA chairman John Kang'ui who led the project implementation committee said that with such massive funding, trees will be planted and nurtured to maturity in most parts on Migwani district. He said it was hoped that in the next three years 500,000 trees will have been planted but the ultimate goal was to plant a million trees in five years.

He lamented that water sources had continued to dry up while the rain patterns had become absolutely erratic due to poor farming methods that had resulted in the clearing of acres of forests. "We are seeking to restore the fauna and flora that used to exist before the destructive ways of man crept in," said Kang'ui.

The chairman pointed that the tree planting activities would not be solely restricted to the 400 registered members of MEPA, but would be a partnership with all community members keen at conserving the environment. He said water harvesting structure would be provided in areas where the trees will be planted.



The chairman, John Kang'ui, signs the Kshs. 25 million grant c at Kae on behalf of MEPA. Other members look on. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

US to help youths establish assemblies

By TITUS MAERO

PLANS are underway to establish county youth assemblies in different parts of the country ahead of the elections.

The United States of America (USA) Embassy Charge d'Affairs Mr Lee Brudrig says that the youth assemblies will be structured in a way that enables youths at the village level to mobilize and share their aspirations, concerns and seek solutions to problems afflicting them.

He explains that the youth assemblies plan to give young people an opportunity to choose their leaders from the grassroots level to the national level

besides providing avenues through which they can discuss social and economic matters affecting them.

The official was speaking at the Bukhungu stadium in Kakamega during the launch of the Yes Youth We Can programme which is facilitated by Winrock International with funding from the American people through the United States Agency for Development (USAID). Youth allied to the Kakamega County Youth Network attended the forum.

He says the Yes Youth We Can programme is backed by a constitution that enables youths to be recognized and registered with the Department of Gender and Social Development.

He observed that the launching of Yes Youth We Can forum in Kakamega County is a milestone both in the USA and Kenya towards efforts to engage, encourage and empower young people in the country.

The official said the past four years have seen much progress with the enactment of the national Youth Policy (2006), the establishment of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, the Youth Enterprise Development Fund and the National Youth Council Act 2007.

He at the same time, said the implementation of the new constitution established a framework to end the culture of impunity and mitigate

against negative ethnicity that had widened the gap of inequality in the society.

Brudrig said the Yes Youth We Can fund will support the youth to tackle their economic and social challenges in ways that promote ownership to programs and create employment and strengthen their livelihoods. He said empowering youth economically is critical in maintaining stability in the country and the region as well.

The official noted that for the country to realize any meaningful growth, the disenfranchised youth, women and the rural poor must be given opportunities, resources and benefits that empower them.

Project targets communities in water conservation

By MORRIS GITHENYA

THE Water Resource Management Authority (WARMA) with support from the World Bank is implementing a programme that seeks to incorporate communities in the conservation of water towers.

Chief Executive Officer Mr Philip Olum says the initiative will be implemented on a pilot basis before being rolled out to other parts of the country as way of mitigating climate change.

The MD says the authority was working in partnership with Kenya Forest Service, National Irrigation

Board and the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) to hasten the implementation process.

The official reveals that under the programme, the World Bank will facilitate communities to participate in the protection of the environment in a bid to ensure the safety of water catchment areas.

"We have established that we can only be able to safeguard water catchment areas if we involve communities around the ecosystems in conservation efforts," adds the CEO.

Speaking at Gatura primary school in Gatanga district, where he disbursed Kshs 22 million to 69

community groups from Nyandarua, Murang'a and Kiambu counties, the MD noted that encroachment within water catchment areas in Mt Kenya region remains a major challenge to the ongoing conservation efforts.

He however says that the authority is exploring strategies that can help resolve the issue of encroachment within Mt Kenya water tower.

He nevertheless points out that encroachment within Aberdare Ranges had greatly reduced due to community participation.

Meanwhile Public health officials in Murang'a South district have destroyed 77 bales of contaminated

maize flour that were seized last year and held at Saba Saba police station.

Murang'a South Public Health Officer Fredrick Shiguri said destruction of the flour follows an order obtained from Kigumo law courts in September after a successful application by the department.

Tonnes of maize flour packed in Bakari Millers packets were destroyed within the precincts of Maragua district hospital under tight security.

"Samples taken to the government chemist for analysis indicated that the flour was unfit for human consumption and thus must be destroyed" said

Shiguri.

Shuguri said the flour was intercepted by health officials following a tip off by a trader who had bought bales of the flour from a wholesaler at Mukuyu market in Murang'a East district.

Speaking to the press after the destruction of the flour valued at thousands of shillings, Shiguri called on the public to be on high alert when they are purchasing food stuff.

"It is high time members of the public exercised vigilance to avoid consuming contaminated products which are harmful to their health," he said.

State to improve water supply in ASALs

By PETER MUTUKU

THE government has rolled out an ambitious plan that seeks to initiate water projects in six counties in the Arid and Semi-arid Lands (ASALs) in the country.

The projects are to be implemented in Wajir, Marsabit, Tana River, Garissa, Isiolo and Lamu counties from the beginning of February this year and will cover a period of two years in readiness for the integration of a planned multi-donor long term joint arid lands programmes.

The projects whose estimate costs stand at Kshs 1.119 billion are to be implemented jointly by the Ministry for Development of Northern Kenya and Arid Lands Water Services Trust Fund (WSTF) and Water Resource Management Authority.

According to a Memorandum of Understanding signed recently in Nairobi, WSTF will receive Kshs537.3 million to undertake 360 small scale investments in water covering 18 supply systems, while WRMA will receive Kshs113 million for the development and implementation of 18 water resource associations.

Speaking after the signing of the MOU, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Development of Northern Kenya and Arid Lands Mr Lawrence Lenayapa said the programme will help alleviate food shortages besides empowering and enhancing resilience among citizens in ASALs.

"While the support areas are inert related and mutually supportive, climate change adaptation measures, gender balance, good governance and human rights issues are to be mainstreamed into the activities," said the PS.

Under the projects, emphasis is to be placed on direct water investments for production, county level planning and devolution for natural resources and economic development, facilitation of private sector development and investments and provision of knowledge on management of natural resource and economic development opportunities.

"These MOUs will provide the framework for basic elements of the activities and fund flows, arrangements on how to transfer and utilize the money are underway, we expect that activities in Isiolo, Lamu, Garisa to commence in February this year," he said

Prof Lenayapa says that over 14 million Kenyans living in the areas have to contend with acute water shortages due to erratic rainfall patterns and prolonged periods of drought.

"ASAL thus remains the last frontiers of development but has the potential to turn the fortunes of this counties but only if the available natural resources are exploited in a sustainable manner," he said.

To expedite the implementation of the programmes within the stipulated time, the PS said the partners will outsource key services to allow the incorporation of individuals willing to invest in the sector.

The WSTF Chief Executive Officer, Jacqueline Musyoki said the projects will be ideal in providing essential water services to the residents of the ASAL areas as a long term solution to their water problems.

She said the plan will be interrelated and mutually supportive and give opportunity to work with local communities to ensure sustainable development.

"These projects will empower the communities and we want to ensure that our services have impact in sustaining livelihoods," she added.

The funding of development partners will provide technical assistance, Mr Musyoki said and expressed optimism that the projects will go along way in the providing long term water solution in ASALs.

Ahadi to sponsor jigger infested students

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

AHADI Kenya Trust which is anti jigger organization has promised to fully sponsor victims of jigger infestation through their secondary education if they excel in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exams.

The Chief Executive Stanely Kamau said the organization plans to sponsor the first batch of the candidates who had earlier been infested with jiggers prior to sitting for their KCPE exams.

Kamau said over 4,000 candidates who sat last year's KCPE had been infested with jiggers but have fully recovered.

"This group will fully be spon-

sored. We shall buy them school uniforms, books, stationeries needed and pay school fees," said Kamau.

He was speaking at Kaheti Catholic Church in Mukurwe-ini district recently during the anti jigger campaign camp where over 200 people were treated.

The camp was sponsored by the business community from the area including Nairobi businessman Peter Waita.

Former area MP Mutahi Kagwe and former Makandara MP Dick Wathika sent Kshs 10,000 each.

Students from three locals secondary schools who are volunteers helped to wash jigger infested victims.

At the same time, Kamau said they will soon launch a campaign to fight jiggers in all slums in the country starting with the sprawling Kibera slums.

He said over 300 people have so died due to jigger infested related issues in the country and over 2,000 are fully healed.

The chief executive urged the Government to introduce a policy which will help to fight the jiggers menace.

"We want the Government to introduce a policy which helps fight the menace just as the policy on cancer disease," he added.

So far Murang'a, Kakamega and Malindi are the worst hit counties.



A student who is a volunteer at a secondary school in Mukurwe-ini district treat a jigger infested victim at Kaheti Catholic Church in Mukurwe-ini district recently. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Kakamega market stalls coming soon

By JOEL JUMA

THE construction of new market stalls worth Kshs153 million by Kakamega Municipal Council will be completed this year.

The new market stalls are set to accommodate over 500 traders who were re-located to various places within the town after the ministry of Local Government disbursed funds to improve the facility.

An assistant minister Manyala Keya who had petitioned the contractor to speed up the construction work said that he was now happy that the project was set to be completed soon.

Keya and the town Mayor Mathias Sichere reassured traders of transparency in the allocation of stalls saying that the council will ensure that they are given back their places once the project is completed.

Keya and Sichere explained that the council was concerned that the heavy rains were causing

interruption of business among the traders operating in the open-air markets.

Keya of Gender and Children Affairs ministry made the remarks when he toured the site. The Director of Channa Construction Limited Company M. S Channa was optimistic that he will meet the set deadline.

Sichere said that a parking bay will be established at the facility.

"We are going to transform the market into a regional business hub as the town has also been earmarked for the establishment of other facilities under the Kenya Municipal Programme," said Sichere.

He however decried the poor state of the road network within the town and challenged the minister for Roads Franklin Bett to dispatch a team of auditors to ascertain how funds meant for rehabilitation of road were being spent.

"I am concerned that the Kenya Urban Roads Authority is not

doing anything on roads within the town centres," said Keya who is also Lurambi MP.

He said that he plans to forward complaints to the Parliamentary Committee on roads for investigation as the residents were suffering.

Officials from the urban roads board however said they were waiting for funds to be released to finance the construction process.

However, Keya said it was unfair for the residents to blame him whereas the funds were being given to the urban roads authority.

The Kakamega County Council Chairman John Shimaka said that roads in rural areas were better than those in towns because the council was utilising cess funds from sugar factories to maintain them.

Shimaka explained that cess funds from Mumias Sugar Company and West Kenya Sugar companies have played a key role in improving road network in the region.

KMTC launches club to curb drug abuse

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

AS campaigns against drug and substance abuse intensify, the Kenya Medical Training College, Homa Bay campus, has launched anti-narcotic club to curb drug abuse.

The Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention (ADAP) club will organize a series of meetings in schools and the entire district to create more awareness among the students about drugs and substance abuse and provide correct information about drugs abused.

Speaking at the launch of the club recently, the Principal, Mrs. Karen Oyugi, said the club will empower students to make right decisions to help eradicate the menace which continues to pose a grave threat to the society.

She urged the students body to enroll in the club and keep off drugs since they are on the verge of being addicted to the substances.

Mrs. Oyugi said the club will liaise with the community to discard practices that encourage irresponsible drinking among the youth. "Drug and substance abuse is a national issue not a community affair and everyone has an equal share in the war to achieve our vision. We need support to make our dream a reality," she said.

The Principal said they expect to incorporate students from other colleges in future as well as from the community.

Meanwhile, the Programme Manager Plan International, Mr. Phitalis Were, has asked the National Campaign Against Drug Abuse Authority to draw up more programmes in order to step up the war on drugs.

Mr. Were says if the youth are left at the mercy of drugs, the country's future will be compromised and called for urgent action to avert the situation.

"We leave drugs and substance abuse to spoil our young generation; we shall have nothing to smile about as leaders. A nation without youth has no future and is like a river without its source," says Were.

He urged NACADA to initiate more programmes to ensure the youth are captured in their endeavors. "This is a symptom of a deep-seated menace in our society that we have failed to scrap out," he said.

He urged the youth to engage their minds in meaningful activities, including theatre groups as a way of reaching out to their colleagues.

He also appealed to the clergy to stop regarding drug addicts as sinners but consider them as people in need of assistance.

Wenje division to host farmer training centre

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

THE government plans to put up a farmers training centre at Boji area in Wenje division of Tana River District at a cost of Kshs10.6 million.

The facility targets crop and livestock farmers who will be equipped with relevant skills to enhance their capacity to improve agriculture and livestock production.

Galole MP, who is also an Assistant Minister for Information and Communications, Major (rtd) Dhado Godana says that the area is endowed with good soils for crop and livestock production and thus the need for residents to exploit the underlying potential in agriculture.

The MP says Tana River has the potential of being the bread basket for the Coast region due to the presence of Hola and Bura irrigation schemes.

He notes that recent developments at the schemes were turning the area into a major food production area.

“Tana has remained a pasto-

ral district for long but due to irrigation projects, the area is being transformed to also accommodate crop farming,” he adds.

Meanwhile, Public health officials in Taita District have embarked on a rigorous campaign to debunk myths associated with HIV/Aids which have been cited as a major obstacle to winning the war against the scourge in the area.

Taita district Public Health Officer (PHO), Mr. Christopher Senge, says AIDS patients in the District were still being stigmatized owing to the inability by the residents to debunk myths linked to HIV/AIDS.

This, he says had negatively affected efforts to encourage people to know their status as majority fear they will be ostracized in the community if they turn positive.

The Public health official says that majority of the residents suffer most from an acute dread of discovering their status and preferred to live in ignorance.

He said the onslaught against Aids would not be won unless residents change attitude towards Voluntary Counseling and Testing

(VCT) and urged residents to go to take the test.

“The first major step in wiping this scourge from our community is to learn your status. Without the knowledge of one’s status, we can never effectively fight this disease,” he said.

He advocated for incorporation of lessons on Aids to students and pupils in schools to help provide facts about transmission, effects and how the disease/virus can be controlled.

“To dispel the fear, people will require lessons in schools so that as children grow up, they will be given the factual information about AIDS. That will give rise to an informed society with no delusions about the disease,” said Mr. Senge.

The County Aids Control Committee (CACC) Coordinator of Wundanyi Constituency, Mr. Abdalla Mwachama, urged men to attend the testing session to learn their status.

He said preliminary data on the number of people taking tests revealed more women than men were attending their centres, a

trend, he said, had become a major cause for concern.

“Men are not going for testing and that places their wives in peril. Husbands must come forward and lead the way,” said Mr. Abdalla.

He said the level of stigma in the district was gradually dropping as people living with HIV/Aids were no longer being viewed as evil. The gradual change of perspective has been caused by a decision by some of the affected people to go public about their status and demystify the disease.

“Aids is not different from other ailments but out of ignorance, people thought and some still do AIDS is the worst form of disease to get. But the public awareness campaign and civic education on AIDS is bearing fruits,” said the official.

Taita District Officer (DO), Mr. David Boen, urged residents to go for testing, saying the move would foster positive living. The DO said learning of one’s status was a sign of heightened awareness on the disease and the impact it had in society.

Ngilu promises new large hi-tech dams

By PETER MUTUKU

THE government plans to build 30 large dams to harness rainy water in areas affected by both floods and drought.

Water and Irrigation Minister Charity Ngilu says the plan entails use of modern technology to exploit the enormous water resources in the country to help forestall the devastation caused by drought and flooding. The Minister regretted that many Kenyans usually find themselves on the receiving end in situations of both plenty of rain and drought yet there is plenty of technology on sustainable use of water resources.

She says that already the government is looking for over \$1 billion over the next decade to build over 30 dams as part of a marshal plan to develop water storage facilities that will provide water security for Kenyans in effects of drought caused by the effects of Climate change,” said Ngilu

Speaking at the opening ceremony of an international conference on future management and development of the water sector in Kenya, Ngilu said that climate change is a reality that Kenyans cannot afford to ignore, pointing out that it is responsible for the erratic weather patterns that result in drought and flooding.

The conference brought together over 100 stakeholders in the water sector to among other things, discuss strategies to assist Kenya develop laws and policies on sustainable use of water resources in line with provisions of the new constitution. Kenya hopes to learn from the experiences of South Africa and Brazil, which have successfully devolved water delivery services to the grassroots.

Ms Ngilu said water storage programme will aim at raising Kenya’s water availability from the current 600 cubic meters per capita to over 1,000 before the year 2030, adding that the government hopes to avoid the scenes that were witnessed during this year’s drought where water had to be delivered via trucks to semi and arid areas.

“The dams will be strategically placed throughout the country in order to eliminate the need for short term emergency interventions to fight drought which are very costly,” she said.

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Water David Stower said the government plans to scale up investment in water storage in order to address the recurrent water scarcity caused by climate change.

Said he “Changing weather patterns have made a significant portion of the country to experience drought, so we hope to build reservoirs to make water available throughout the year,” said Mr Stower. In the current financial year, the government has earmarked Kshs 8.3 billion for the expansion of land under irrigation at the rate of 40,000 hectares per year.

In early 2011, Kenya experienced devastating drought that exposed over 3.5 million people to starvation, forcing the government to divert over Kshs10 billion of development resources to famine relief responses.

Equity equips traders with financial skills

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

OVER 1,800 people, including youth and women from Othaya, have graduated after undergoing training in financial literacy.

The graduates who included police officers have successfully completed a Financial Literacy Programme dubbed Financial Knowledge for Africa (FiKa) which was sponsored by Equity Group Foundation, Equity Bank and their partner the MasterCard Foundation.

The programme seeks to empower youth, women and small enterprises with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that they require to adopt good management practices that will transform their lives and livelihoods.

The programme is targeting to train one million people by 2013 and so far only 170,000 people have been trained countrywide.

The bank is also offering other programmes on education, health, agriculture, environment and innovation.

President Kibaki’s son Jimmy was the chief guest during the graduation ceremony held at Approved school grounds in Othaya yesterday.

Jimmy said the bank had capitalized on taking its services closer to the people by opening agent banking shops in the rural areas.

“I think Equity bank has a special attachment to farmers in this area and has been having a good working relationship with them,” he stated. He said the training was important to the graduates as the bank had demonstrated knowledge in banking.

The Equity Bank director Gerald Warui who was accompanied by Othaya branch manager Andrew Nyaga said the graduates were trained on financial management for 12 weeks



Jimmy Kibaki (second right) unveils one of the Equity Bank agents in Othaya town recently. On the left bank director Gerald Warui and on the right is Equity bank Othaya branch manager Andrew Nyaga
Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

whereby they underwent 12 sessions. He said the bank was focusing on improving the standards of education in the society while also working to boost agriculture as a business venture. Jimmy commended Equity Bank and the Group foundation for bringing progress to the people by training them on financial management and

entrepreneurship.

The bank also unveiled over 31 bank agents who are operational in Othaya area. “I wish to commend Equity Bank for expanding the financial services to the village level. This will no doubt bring out prosperity to this region, because financial access is a key factor in development,” said Jimmy.

The MasterCard Foundation and with the support from UK Aid and other partners also sponsored 14 bright children from the Othaya this year who got full scholarship that fully pays for their secondary school education, uniforms, pocket money and shopping under the Wings to Fly programme.

Drive towards green economy lauded

By **BRIGHTON KAZUNGU**

DESPITE facing many challenges, Kenya's remarkable progress in certain socio-economic areas has been recognized in the Human Development Report 2011.

The report published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) lauds the country's efforts towards promoting a green economy and its continuous improvement in education and health sectors.

The report whose theme is, "Sustainability and Equity: A better future for all" appreciates the country's new Constitution as one that recognizes equal rights to a healthy environment and promote equity.

"Kenya's new Constitution grants the right to a clean environment and requires the government to maintain its natural resources," the report reads in part.

It continues: "The Ministry of En-

ergy adopted a feed-in tariff in 2008 to supply and diversity electricity generation sources, generate income and employment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The tariff covers biomass, geothermal, small hydroelectric, solar and wind power."

According to the findings of the report presented by UNDP Resident Representative Mr. Ainea Chuma, extreme poverty has also declined in both Kenya and Nigeria and these advances are attributable, in part, to improvements in water, sanitation, health and other living standards.

Kenya which was ranked 143 out of the 187 countries in the study is the highest ranked in East Africa followed by Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi at positions (152, 161, 166 and 185) respectively.

Libya was the highest ranked country in Africa at position 64 in the world, followed by Tunisia at position 94 which feature in the cat-

egory of High Human Development countries while Algeria (96), Gabon (106), Egypt (113), Botswana (118), Namibia (120), South Africa (123), Morocco (130), Cape Verde (133), Ghana (135), Equatorial Guinea (136) and Swaziland (140) featured among the Medium Human Development countries.

Speaking during the launch of the report, the Assistant Minister for Planning, National Development and Vision 2030, Mr. Peter Kenneth, said although Kenya's performance is still low, the country has made robust efforts to improve the lives of its people and is ahead of all her East Africa neighbours.

"We should not compare ourselves to other East African countries and feel that we are achieving something. The challenge for us is to compare ourselves with Norway and find out what is it they have done to be number one in the world and what Gabon has

done to be number one in Sub-Saharan Africa," said the minister.

For the country to realize her development goals, Mr. Kenneth said, the focus must be on fewer projects and priorities that have lasting impact on the people rather than having many projects that have no benefit to Kenyans.

"Kenya is not short of good plans. What we seriously lack is alignment of funds for what Kenyans have planned and unless funds are availed, our good plans like the Kenya Vision 2030 will just remain a vision," the minister added.

The country's human development challenges, the minister pointed out, go beyond simply increasing economic growth to addressing the existing social and economic inequalities.

"Development is a complex and difficult process. It is, therefore, necessary to prioritise national issues according to their urgency, impact and implement ability."

He said the Government has identified various ways of eradicating challenges associated with sustainability and equity through the new constitution and other policy documents such as the Kenya Vision 2030 and its Medium Term Plan.

These measures include provision of an enabling environment to facilitate the participation of all sections of the population in the production process through access to productive resources and opportunities, expansion of human capabilities by improving access to basic education, health, housing, water and sanitation, increase access to employment opportu-

nities for the rapidly expanding labour force and increasing people's capacity to assert their rights.

The other strategies are; redefining the value of life in Kenya to increase respect for life and self-esteem in society, addressing the different forms of inequalities existing between regions and also addressing the problem of insecurity to enable increased investment and participation by a wider section of the society.

Overall, the 2011 Human Development Report notes that steady advances in human development in sub-Saharan Africa could stall and even reverse unless bold steps are taken to reduce environmental risks and inequalities in the region and around the world. The report indicates that following current trends, inequality and deteriorating environmental conditions will together pose obstacles to progress in Africa across the globe.

By 2050, projecting recent positive regional human development trends forward, sub-Saharan Africa's average Human Development Index (HDI) rating – the Report's composite measure of income, health and education would raise by an estimated 44 per cent.

This would be the biggest increase in any region of the world and one which would propel much of the continent into what are now classified as medium or high levels of human development achievement.

According to the UNDP's definition, development is the expansion of people's freedoms and capabilities to lead lives that they value and have reason to value.



Menengai Geothermal Project under construction to enhance power production in the country. Photo/File

Bunyore resident ready to quench their thirst

By **JOHN NYAMBUNE**

THE completion of the South West Bunyore community water project comes as a big relief to the residents who can now access clean water in their homesteads.

The project which is a joint initiative by Finland, Water Service Trust Fund and the Lake Victoria North Water Service Board, will serve residents of Emasaba and Mukhalakhala locations in Luanda Division of Emuhaya District, Western Kenya.

The chairman of South West Community Water User's Association Joash Oniango says the project entailed training of members in various aspect of water and sanitation management.

He says under the project 15 VIP latrines in 10 primary and 5 secondary schools have been constructed within the targeted areas while the Nang'oli water springs has been restored.

The project also entailed the construction of a 50 metre cube masonry tank, a 100 metre cubic storage tank

and water kiosks.

The chairman spoke during the official commissioning of the project by the Finland Ambassador Ms. Sofie From Emmersberger after she toured projects funded by her country in the western region. These include VIP latrines in 15 schools and water kiosks at Mukhalakhala market.

The chairman cites the rise in the prices of materials, transportation costs, slow pace of community contribution due to poverty and change in the project design as some of the challenges experienced at the implementation phase.

The Director of Water Trust Service Fund, Kennedy Ochuka, thanked all those who contributed towards making the project a success.

Ochuka says the trust fund will continue to harmonize and streamline the management of water resources and sanitation services.

"The trust fund will continue to finance the water sector and provide financial support for improved access to water and sanitation in areas with-

out adequate services," said Ochuka.

Ochuka says the trust will only support demand driven projects initiated by the community or non-governmental organizations and managed by the communities themselves," said Ochuka.

Ochuka however says users should meet the costs of survey, design, operation and maintenance of the project upon completion.

Ochuka urged several groups to submit their proposal adhering to the above named criteria for consideration. Finland Ambassador to Kenya, Ms. Sofie Emmersberger, said the completion of project will ensure that the community had adequate supply of water.

Among the guests present was the director of Lake Victoria Water Services Board, Harry Namubeyi and the DC Emuhaya Muthama Wambua who conveyed there thanks to the Finland Government for the support to the community to establish several project and the major one being the water project.

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Impunity undermining cohesion, says report

By LUKE KAPCHANGA

WHITE collar crimes which remain unpunished have entrenched impunity in the country, the draft policy on National Cohesion and Integration says.

The rampart culture of impunity at the highest levels of government sets the stage for widespread impunity across lower echelons of society, the policy notes.

The draft policy was validated by delegates attending a National stakeholders forum at Bomas of Kenya in December 2011.

The forum brought together county representatives from NGOs, civil society, faith based organizations and government ministries, departments and agencies.

The Ministry of Justice, National Cohesion and Constitutional Affairs and the National Cohesion and Integration Commission in collaboration with the Kenya Institute of Public Policy Research and Analysis spearheaded the process of developing the policy draft.

The forum was facilitated by the European Union sponsored Partnership for Peace project and the German development cooperation to reach a wide audience and enable participants attend.

To address the challenges of impunity, the government has to strengthen the capacity of relevant institutions to implement the constitution which provides for the rule of law, security and order.

The state must also sensitize the public on law and order, provide training opportunities for law enforcers and pursue effective reforms.

Further, the government must undertake to create awareness on the importance of values especially those related to negative vices which encourage crime.

The provision of entrepreneurial

infrastructure to support business start-ups for the youth, should be given prominence and measures enhanced to clear judicial backlogs.

The high rate of unemployment among the youths is said to be a major obstacle to national cohesion and integration, a form of social exclusion and a driver of conflict.

The country's integration process is adversely affected when the unemployed youths use hate speech and negative media influences.

The draft policy proposes the acceleration and sustaining of high rates of economic growth, by keeping politics and macro-economic risks at a low level in order to increase opportunities for employment.

Positive values are said to be important as they exert influence on the way people relate, serve and engage with members of other communities.

The policy notes that values determine behavior, attitudes, positive influence on work ethic, leadership and governance and promotes cohesion and integration.

To achieve the positive values, it calls for development and promotion of the adoption of a national value system. This could be through media to instill feelings of national belonging to identify with national songs and emblems displayed at family and social gatherings.

Challenges of cohesion are traced back to colonial days which created

disparities in political, social and economic lives of Kenyans

Land which happens to be an emotive issue carries the underlying conflicts traced back to 1914, when expropriation was done, through laws, ordinances and promulgations.

The colonialists are accused of having perpetuated their rule by restricting Africans in the native reserves, which resulted in communities mobilizing across different ethnic groups. The structure of administration, having the country divided into provinces and districts, based on ethnic groups – undermined cohesion from the word go.

The provincial administrative boundaries gave each community a

feeling of being different from the others, entrenching ethnic identities.

This draft policy was developed after a consultative process which involved a team of experts and representatives drawn from relevant government agencies and sector stakeholders.

Inputs and formal submissions from a wide range of stakeholders were sought and received from individual meetings, regional workshops and written submissions.

The draft identifies its major threats as political elites, widening socio-economic gaps and public mistrust of political and governance institutions.

Feelings of marginalization and exclusion, impunity and lack of accountability, high unemployment rates and rising cost of living are also major threats to cohesion and integration.

The strength lies in the new constitution which, however depends on its implementation.

While the opportunities are cited to be decentralization of county governments, geopolitical advantages and support from development partners.

The national cohesion and integration is a process which constructs and integrates citizens into having a sense of belonging amongst members of different groups across regions.

This is expected to be achieved through regulations and reconciliation of differences as well as of competing interests and demands.

The ultimate goal is to create a national community which renders irrelevant or secondary any loyalty to identities such as ethnicity, race, region, class and religion.

Thus, it goes beyond concepts of peace building, peace keeping and conflict resolution and management, which essentially deals with security assurance and transformation of conflict.



The National Cohesion and Integration Commission chairman Mzalendo Kibunjia (left) and one of the commissioners at a national function. Photo/File

Timely action that saved Bungoma Hospital

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

ABOUT seven years ago Mr. Johnson Wangamati, a businessman in Bungoma Town, rushed his relative to Bungoma District Hospital for treatment after he was assaulted.

Wangamati arrived at the hospital at around 10pm with the hope of finding a doctor to save his kin who had lost a lot of blood from the stabs inflicted on him during the scuffle.

But to his amazement, it took the medical staff on duty almost eight hours to attend to the patient.

The staff on duty appeared unperturbed by the deteriorating condition of the patient.

"Besides delays in attending to critical conditions, I saw patients being hurled with insults by the medics and some sent away by the staff before treatment," Wangamati recalls.

This prompted him to seek the attention of the District Hospital Administrator Mr. Caleb Khasiani.

"I was not interested in having workers on duty punished but wanted to find out ways through which we can help in motivating workers at the facility," he says.

Wangamati says that the administrator was impressed with the idea and presented it to the medical superintendent Dr. Mulianga Ekesa. The three held a meeting which became a turning point for workers at the hospi-

tal. They resolved to set up an award scheme targeting nurses at the hospital.

Wangamati offered to sponsor the scheme by donating Kshs. 50,000 for the first Awards Scheme Day which was held on December 2, 2004.

The hospital management established a Nurse of the Hospital Awards Committee (NOHAC) which helped to identify and reward outstanding performance among the nurses.

In 2005, the awards scheme was expanded to include other cadres and departments and as a result NOHAC was replaced by Hospital Awards Committee (HAC) but with same functions, sourcing for funds among other things.

To supplement HAC efforts, one of the Hospital management board members, Rev. Canon Walter Wamalwa mobilized people from Bungoma town who were committed to changing things at the hospital and formed a Community Based Organization (CBO), League of Friends for Bungoma District Hospital.

Today, the awards are classified in three (3) categories namely departmental, individual according to cadres and other wards.

Staffs selected for awards are given trophies, cash and certificates in recognition of their exemplary performance during the scheme assessment period.

Departments are continuously assessed on quarterly basis throughout the year culminating into an awards day.

The area of assessment covers cleanliness, infection prevention control, house-keeping, public relations, use of identification tags and punctuality.

Khasiani says that initially the scheme was relying on contributions from Hospital Awards committee/ League of Friends (HAC/LOF), Nzoia sugar, local banks, supermarkets and other well-wishers.

However, the hospital management committee that took over the scheme from 2009 has taken charge of everything.

Khasiani points out that although the hospital management now caters for everything it still receives other gifts from friends and well-wishers who want to contribute towards changing the attitudes of health workers towards patients and clients.

The district hospital administrator notes with pride that the hospital has witnessed tremendous transformation associated to the scheme.

"Although there are still few members of staff who are non-performers, the scheme has helped transform the facility," says Khasiani.

Presently, Khasiani says that the hospital receives an average of 650 patients at the outpatient department

and 50 admissions on a daily basis.

Before the establishment of the awards scheme, the hospital used to receive 240 patients with about 20 admissions per day," he adds.

The administrator adds that the hospital has been able to raise its revenue base from Kshs 900,000 in 2004 to Kshs. 4.5 million per month through the cost sharing programme.

"The hospital has also achieved high standards of cleanliness and was ranked number four in 2010 among the cleanest hospitals in the country," the administrator states with pride.

In October, 2011, Khasiani states further with pride that the hospital received an award from Belgium through National Nurses Association of Kenya in recognition of its outstanding performance in hygiene and patient care.

The hospital buildings although very old are clean, neat, and there are all kinds of flowers with well mown grass around the compound.

Cost sharing funds have enabled the hospital management board to do the following:-

- To install an oxygen generator and three (3) oxygen concentrators at a cost of Kshs 3,235,900.
- Commenced construction of medical training college
- Equipped and furnished the private wing
- Acquisition of the borehole from

Nzoia water Services Company

● Reduced pending bills from Kshs. 6 million to Kshs. 2 million.

● Bungoma district hospital was established in 1952 as an African Native Health Centre.

The facility has over the last years expanded and acquired its present status as a District Hospital.

It has an authorized bed capacity of 216 with percentage occupancy of between 120 percent and 150 percent.

This puts pressure on the available resources hence the need for more funds to be released for expansion and more staff to cope with the workload.

The hospital has a total of 304 staff (all cadres) and 33 casual workers.

According to the hospital superintendent Dr. Mulianga Ekesa, there is a deficit of 425 staff and 5 casual workers respectively.

Although the hospital serves an estimated 1.6 million people, it has only 2 surgeons; 1 Gynecologist; 1 ophthalmologist; 1 pediatrician, 1 dentist and 1 physician.

Despite the shortage of staff, Ekesa says that the hospital has continued to offer preventive, promotive, curative and rehabilitative health services to area residents.

He, however, appeals to donors, the Government and other well-wishers to assist the hospital finalize its master plan in order to achieve level five status.

Rampant coffee thefts spark off protests

By MORRIS GITHENYA

COFFEE farmers in Murang'a are now guarding factories at night to curb increased coffee thefts which have sparked off a wave of protests in the Central region.

Armed with machetes, the farmers are working in shifts following heavy losses incurred after armed gangsters raided their factories and stole parchment coffee worth millions of shillings.

But the move has not deterred the gangsters as recently they staged a daring robbery at Karichiungu factory in Kahuro District and stole 74 bags of parchment coffee valued at Kshs5.5 million.

The theft occurred moments after Deputy Prime Minister Uhuru Kenyatta cautioned management committees against working with cartels engineering the theft.

The Deputy Prime Minister

further announced a debt waiver of Kshs 1.2 billion that had burdened farmers over the past two decades.

Most factories in the region have fallen prey to widespread theft of coffee that has threatened the lucrative industry, with factories in Kigumo and Kandara divisions bearing the brunt.

Thugs in pick-ups have been traversing the region monitoring dates when the parchment coffee would be transported to millers.

Investigations by The Link established that in most of the broken factories, gangs find parchment coffee already packed in gunny bags.

At Karichiungu factory, the gang stole 74 bags that had been packed in gunny bags waiting to be ferried to the miller the following day.

Coffee Board of Kenya (CBK) had just issued transportation license to the management moments

before the gang struck.

The lorry was however impounded by police after it stalled on the way.

Murang'a East DC George Ntembeya now says that the government has beefed up security around coffee factories and will also monitor transportation of the cash crop which must be done during the day.

"I am directing that all factories be fenced and guarded. The guards must also be vetted to rid the sector of criminal elements," said the DC.

The bitter administrator at the same time said most of thefts had been instigated by the workers or management officials since most of the robberies take place after issuance of transportation licenses by the CBK.

The farmers led by Thanga ini Cooperative Society Chairman Hiram Mwaniki accused CBK of

licensing millers with less than five acres under coffee production.

"We blame the Board for having failed to involve farmers in decision making processes. The Board must now be reconstituted to allow farmers to pick their representatives as the current officials were not sensitive to the plight of farmers," said Mwaniki.

At the same time, members of parliament have joined farmers in calling for the dissolution Coffee Board of Kenya.

They said the board had lost focus by allowing cartels and illegal traders to infiltrate the sector.

Assistant Minister Kabando Kabando led MPs who included Elias Mbau (Maragua) Muturi Mwangi (Kiharu) Clement Muchiri (Mathioya) and Maina Kamau (Kandara) in calling for the immediate disbandment of CBK for failing to take measures to streamline the industry.

They asked Cooperative Development Minister Joseph Nyaga to crack the whip as CBK had failed in its mandate to vet private millers to curb increased theft in various parts of the country.

Splitting of NOCO not honest, critics say

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

THE recent split of Nzoia Out growers Company (NOCO) is being viewed by critics as a ploy by Nzoia Sugar Company to weaken cane farmers' bargaining power.

NOCO is a body that purports to fight for the interests of cane farmers contracted by Nzoia Sugar Company through regional directors elected directly by the farmers themselves.

The out growers company and Kenya Sugar Board (KSB) are both supposed to promote the sugar industry through incentives to farmers and friendly regulations.

Recently, NOCO was split into two, with each faction having their chair, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), and three directors.

The old NOCO has former We-buye MP Joash Wamang'oli as chair and Mr. Humphrey Mukania as CEO while the splinter group is chaired by Mr. Richman Mulama and Mr. Kingsley Mutali is the CEO.

Nzoia area KSB director Mr. Saulo Busolo is said to have a soft spot for the new establishment while Nzoia Sugar Company is reportedly supporting old NOCO.

However, Nzoia Sugar Company Board of directors chair Mr. Lawrence Sifuna recently declined to tell farmers which faction of NOCO the Sugar firm recognizes.

Speaking at Mwiwale market in Kanduyi Constituency during cane farmers' public meeting convened by Nzoia Sugar, Sifuna carefully evaded the debate surrounding the two warring factions of NOCO.

Sifuna instead told the meeting that Nzoia Sugar management Board under his chairmanship had resolved to give farmers first priority when it comes to payments.

The meeting was purposely convened by Nzoia Sugar management to convince farmers to allow the company to harvest their cane.

Nzoia zone KSB director Mr. Saulo Busolo had earlier held meeting in the area urging farmers not to allow the company harvest their canes.

Busolo asked the farmers to let the company harvest their crop only if price is increased from Kshs. 3,800 to Kshs. 7,000 per tonne.

Led by Miendo Ward Civic leader Ben Wambalaba and Mwikhupo assistant chief Charles Mabele, the farmers said cane price was the major issue disturbing them.

On NOCO issue Wambalaba said that Nzoia Sugar Company should stop forth-with the remission of farmers capital levy to either of the two factions until the mess within the out growers company is sorted out.

Cane farmers are deducted 1 percent of their gross pay as NOCO capital levy.

By KAVYU-KURA

THE invasions by pests and heavy rains have shattered hopes for a bumper harvest in the larger Mwingi region.

Agricultural officials have estimated the damage at about 20 percent and warned that the invasion may complicate food security situation in the area that is smarting from a long period of famine.

There is a widespread hue and cry among farmers who have already lost acres of their crops to the insects. They are looking upon the government to move with speed and salvage their remaining crop through spraying.

Among the affected areas include Tseikuru districts, Ukasi and Nuu areas of Mwingi east district where the maturing millet, cowpeas and green gram crops have been damaged by both worms and aphids.

The other areas that have been hit hard by the pests' invasion include Mboru in Mwingi central district and Nguutani in Migwani district. Maize and cowpeas in the areas have been attacked by both aphids and the worms.

A farmer from Ukasi, Beatrice Mwendwa regretted that nearly all her millet crop has been decimated completely by the destructive insects and did not thus expect any considerable harvest. "After the long and debilitating famine, I put extra efforts to plant and tend for my crops only for everything to be destroyed by these insects," she rued.

A senior village elder at Mboru village in the outskirts on Mwingi town, Munyoki Maimbu said a good chunk of his maize crop has been damaged by the worms. He said many farms in his neighbourhood had equally been affected.

And Mutuku wa Mathoka who works at the County Council of Mwingi said that in his home in Nuu area, cowpeas and green gram crops have been extensively damaged. He said hopes for a good harvest had thus been thwarted.

In a recent tour to Ukasi region to assess the damage, Nguni agricultural officer Monicah Marundu estimated the damaged crops at 20 percent.

Marundu was accompanied by the officer coordinating the food for assets programme in the larger Mwingi area, Jacobus Kiilu. She promised farmers that a report would be compiled to

Pests, rains dim hopes for bumper harvest



A Mwingi farmer Rachael Mwiendi points to her promising maize crop in Mwingi area. An invasion of worms has spelled doom to good harvest. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

see whether the government may avail emergency assistance to affected areas.

She asked farmers to employ tradi-

tional methods to ward off the ravenous pests as she told the well endowed to buy pesticides and spray their farms.

She said if the situation persists it would have catastrophic impact on food security.

Early maturing cane varieties released

By JOEL JUMA

A GOVERNMENT research body has released two fast maturing cane varieties in a move to reduce cases of cane poaching in Western Province.

The D84-84 matures within 14 months while Kenya 83-737 matures at 16 months.

The move will also guard against cases of sugar companies harvesting immature cane due to the shortage of the crop.

Kenya Sugar Research Foundation (KESREF) said the two varieties are resistant to cane smut disease that has contributed to poor yields of cane in the region.

Most factories in the region have been harvesting immature cane due to a shortage of the crop.

Factories such as Mumias Sugar Company, West Kenya Sugar Company are harvesting cane aged between 12 and 16 months instead of the normal 18 and 24 months.

A senior researcher with KESREF Raphael Shiundu said farmers in Western and Nyanza provinces should plant the new varieties to avoid incurring losses associated with delivering premature cane to the mills.

Shiundu said cases of farmers getting low payments due to low tonnage will reduce if farmers adopt the new varieties.

He noted that old varieties such as SCO 421, SCO 945 are prone to cane smut disease.

"Smut is the killer disease for cane the same way malaria is for human beings," said Shiundu who was speaking during a tour of KESREF demonstration plots in Mumias and Kakamega regions.

At the same time, cane farmers delivering their crop to Butali Sugar Mills in Kakamega County will carry home one free Kilogramme of sugar upon receiving payments from the firm. The company said the move was initiated to ensure farmers get a taste of their crop.

No sugar mill in West Province in-

cluding the giant Mumias Sugar Company offers free sugar to farmers upon delivering their cane.

The company's General Manager Sohil Patel said the firm now pays over Kshs50 million to farmers every two weeks after the crushing capacity went up from the initial 500 tonnes to over 1,200 tonnes per day.

Patel said the crop coverage was expanding to parts of Rift Valley a matter he noted makes the crushing capacity to go up.

He said mature cane is available in the parts of Nandi and Trans-Nzoia Counties adding that the cases of harvesting immature cane are no longer there.

Marauding monkeys destroy farms in Bunyala

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

THE residents of Budalangi constituency in Bunyala district have appealed to the Kenya Wildlife Services [KWS] to move with speed and save their farm produce from being destroyed by marauding monkeys.

The irate residents led by the Vice-chairman of Budalangi Development Network, Mr. Mbagala Mukoya, said the area had registered low crop yield due to harsh climatic conditions and cannot stand additional losses.

"Majority of farmers in Budalangi have ended up harvesting peanuts from their farms as a result of severe drought witnessed in recent months," said the residents, adding that the most affected crops are millet, maize and beans among others.

However, the residents have expressed hope for the better saying that the crops are likely to do well this season with the short rains the region is experiencing at the moment.

Mukoya however said that farmers are likely to suffer more losses unless the Kenya Wildlife Service personnel took urgent action to tame the monkeys which have been destroying crops for the last two good years.

"Farmers in Budalangi have incurred huge losses every harvesting season due to the destruction of their farm produce by the marauding monkeys. Despite our persistent call to the Kenya Wildlife Service over the issue, no help has been forthcoming," they said adding that they will be forced to kill the marauding monkeys.

"While the law forbids the killing of wildlife, we have no alternative but to resort to killing the monkeys because the damage, if not halted, will most likely subject us to a lot of suffering," they said, vowing that they will not sit back and watch their crops being destroyed.

The farmers at the same time said that a few months ago, Forestry and Wildlife minister Noah Wekesa visited the scene to assess the magnitude of the damage caused by the monkeys but surprisingly enough several weeks have elapsed without action being taken by those concerned despite assurances by the minister that urgent action will be taken to save the situation before it gets out of hand.

"We just cannot tell why the Kenya Wildlife Service personnel have failed to take prompt action to tame the monkey and stop further destruction of crops which is our only source of livelihood," said the farmers, adding that they have also incurred huge losses due to flood that has destroyed their rice plantation at Magombe.

Movement of coffee without permit outlawed

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

THE Government has moved swiftly to curb illegal coffee dealings in central region.

Central PC Kiplimo Rugut recently held a crisis meeting with provincial security committee, coffee board of Kenya, cooperative officials and coffee cooperative leaders to explore ways through which to end coffee hawking, coffee theft and unusual trading of coffee in the region.

The team resolved that the farmers who will be found transporting and selling of coffee beans without permit will face the full force of law.

Noting that theft has become so rampant in Nyeri, Kirinyaga and Murang'a counties due to illegal coffee deals, the PC said to prevent, security apparatus in all coffee areas will support the cooperative societies regularly in the coffee growing areas.

He banned any movement of coffee other than to the registered cooperatives societies.

The notorious millers who have been implicated in the illegal dealings were also warned that their days are numbered and their licences will be cancelled.

"All officers are under instructions to monitor sale, purchase and movement of coffee to eliminate such illegal deals. The police will patrol regularly the areas of coffee growing," he said.



From right Coffee Board of Kenya MD Loise Njeru, Central PC Kiplimo Rugut and Central Police boss John Mbiyiwe at a meeting with district security and intelligence committees over coffee hawking in Central region. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Coffee Board of Kenya Managing Director Loise Njeru warned self help groups that had resolved to market coffee on their own that they had no legal mandate to do so as it was the preserve of the cooperatives societies.

She explained that the farms with the Management Agency certificates

were still not allowed to move coffee without permits, though she admitted that the system was being abused by unscrupulous agents.

The farmers will also be educated on the negative effects of hawking of coffee in the region as cooperatives might collapse.

As the meeting was going on,

another pick up was impounded in Chinga in Othaya with eleven bags of coffee cherry on the way to hawking.

Three people were arrested.

CBK inspector Enosh Ongosi Akuma said the farmers were transporting the beans to Mukurwe-ini district.

Cane farmers call for repair of roads

By JOEL JUMA

CANE farmers delivering their crop to Butali Sugar Company in Kakamega County want the Government to rehabilitate roads in their sugar belt.

The farmers said they were remitting over Kshs15 million monthly to the Kenya Sugar Board (KSB) as roads levy and thus roads in the area must receive the necessary attention.

They said that roads in their sugar zone were in pathetic state following heavy rains pounding the region.

Led by Butali Out Growers Company Chairman William Kopi, the

farmers petitioned Cabinet minister Soita Shitanda to pursue the matter with his counterparts in Agriculture and Roads to ensure the funds are utilised effectively.

"We are being taxed. Roads in our sugar belt have been ignored by the Kenya Sugar Board," said Kopi.

He said that the board has received over Kshs100 million as taxes from farmers in the area and wondered why roads in the zone had remained in bad shape.

Kopi and the firm's General Manager Sohil Patel said the crop coverage has been expanding to parts of

Rift Valley adding that this will increase the crushing capacity.

He said mature cane is available in parts of Nandi and Trans-Nzoia Counties adding that cases of harvesting immature cane are no longer there.

Patel was addressing farmers during distribution of incentives to outstanding farmers, which include oxploughs and fertilisers among others.

KSB Directors Ewing Mwombe and Billy Wanjala said they will address the road matter at the board.

They noted that Western region has received over Kshs400 million

for construction of bridges but the roads sector has not been funded by the body.

The two said the board is not carrying out its functions effectively as its operations have been affected by a court case.

They urged Chief Justice Willy Mutunga to order for speedy conclusion of the case for board members to be gazetted.

The gazetting of the board directors was stopped after a farmer went to court to block the process on grounds that no female candidate was elected to the board.

Lamu fishers upbeat about better times

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

LAMU fish production set to increase from 2,500 to over 8,000 metric tonnes annually once construction of a new cold storage plant is completed.

Officers in Lamu County are also upbeat that the completion of the Faza Fish Processing Plant will also enhance earnings from Kshs.8 million to Kshs.40 million per annum.

Lamu County Fisheries Officer, Mr. Simon Komu, told *The Link* fishermen in the entire archipelago will eliminate rudimentary gear and agents who have been exploiting them once the plant is complete.

Mr. Komu said due to lack of cold storage facilities, fishermen at the archipelago have been held hostage for years by unscrupulous middlemen.

He said the completion of the facility will also ensure ice preservation leading to improved prices that are expected to improve fortunes for the fishermen, majority of whom have suffered high poverty levels.

"Faza Fish Plant will produce both flake and block ice which will enable fishermen to preserve thousands of kilogrammes of fish for value addition," he said. The two types of ice are sourced from Mombasa which is hundreds of kilometers away hindering many fishermen from actively engaging in activities due to prohibitive costs.

The officer said the new plant is expected to process 8 tonnes daily once it becomes operational besides increasing the fishermen's bargaining power by cooling their products, thus increasing the shelf life and value of

the catch.

He said a new contractor has been installing ice processing machines to replace faulty ones that were installed by a contractor over the 2008/9 financial year when construction works started.

The Faza Fishermen Cooperative Society which will manage the plant will put in place an organized marketing structure for the catch and improve the fishermen's way of life through value addition, he said.

Meanwhile, farmers are set to benefit from a training centre to be

set up at Boji area, in Wenje division, Tana River District, at a cost of Kshs.10.6 million.

The facility will provide crop and livestock farmers with relevant skills in order to improve agriculture and livestock production.

Galole MP, who is also an Assistant Minister for Information and Communications, Major (rtd) Dhado Godana, said recently while inspecting the site that land in Tana River the region has high potential for crop and livestock farming and urged farmers

to form co-operative societies for the Government to offer them loans.

The MP said Tana River has the potential of being the bread basket for the Coast region due to the presences of Hola and Bura irrigation schemes.

He said recent developments at the schemes were turning the area into a major food production area.

He said: "Tana River had remained a pastoral district for long but due to irrigation projects, the area is being transformed to also accommodate crop farming."



Coffee farmers in Othaya prepare coffee for sale. Othaya Farmers Coffee Society has since raised red flag over illegal dealings of coffee in the area. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Fish farmers smile all the way to the bank

By JOEL JUMA

FISH farmers in Kakamega County have realised over Kshs250 million from their harvest this year.

Information at the fisheries department indicate that about 2,000 fish ponds initiated under the first phase of the Economic Stimulus Project (ESP) produced over 125,000 kilogrammes of fish.

Kakamega County Fisheries Officer James Mahaja and his Deputy Jonathan Masaba said Government injected over Kshs 65 million in fish farming.

The officers were speaking during the first fish trade fair held at Lutonyi Fish Farm in Kakamega town.

They noted that the ministry of Fisheries is working with the Export Processing Zone to get markets abroad.

"We are training farmers on marketing. We do not want them to be exploited by traders out to buy their fish cheaply," said Mahaja.

Masaba said the Government is now implementing the Phase Three where farmers who invested in the sector are given 30 per cent of funding for maintenance of their ponds.

He said the ministry will carry out re-stocking for farmers, who will inturn undertake 70 per cent of the work.

"We are handing over management of the fish farms to farmers slowly so that they can undertake the farming on their own," said Mahaja.

Masaba urged residents to consume fish more as its better compared to chicken nutritionally. He further said the cost of fish was low compared to chicken.

Director of Fisheries Godfrey Munor recently conducted a groundbreaking ceremony for a fish factory in Kakamega town.

He said the Government is rolling out other processing factories in Rongo, Meru and Nyeri.

Munor said each of the three processing firms has been allocated over Kshs60 million construction work, at the initial phase.

FAO joins war against hunger in Kenya

By KAVYU-KURA

THE UN Food and Agriculture Organisation has launched an innovative five million euro (Kshs 601 million) programme to alleviate hunger in Kenya's drought-prone arid and semi-arid areas.

The four year programme is entirely funded by the European Union.

Entitled "Improved Community Drought Response and Resilience (ICDRR)," the programme involves scaling up previous successful interventions, improving coordination in the sector in terms of economic development and early response at community and national levels.

"In the past, emergency assistance targeted immediate needs without addressing the core problem. Poor people in drought prone areas are living just too precariously so that when disaster hits, they are unable to protect themselves," says the FAO Representative to Kenya Dan Rugabira.

"The message to the government and donors following the recent drought is clear - we need to concentrate on longer-term interventions that engage with communities to help build sustainable, resilient livelihoods," he adds.

The FAO-coordinated programme is part of the EU's Kenya Rural Development Programme (KRDP), the EU contribution to

the Government's agricultural strategy.

Climate change and a growing population in Kenya mean that although a handful of herders have become richer, majority are faced with hunger, destitution, and conflict.

The FAO/EU project will study which drought interventions are working and scale-up those that seek to increase the incomes and food security of poor pastoralists. Examples are increasing the practice of irrigated fodder production, including increasing the availability of fodder seeds, and introducing an element of planning to pasture growth and consumption.

Strong emphasis is also placed on training. This includes an interactive radio course for pastoralists on milk marketing and hygienic production methods. The programme will also increase the number of master trainers for Pastoral Field Schools and expand the use of state-of-the-art drought and disease warning technologies such as the satellite monitoring of waterholes and water pans.

The project is a direct continuation of the four million Euro FAO/Kenya EU Food Facility project, which started in 2009 and ended early this year. This is a good example of continuity in development programme so that knowledge and capacity are recy-

cled and expanded.

"Our objective is to develop a coordination structure for the KRDP which will ensure that individual projects are able to draw on the experiences of others and that each project contributes to

the achievement of the overall goal of the KRDP. It is also to establish systems where key partners and information is shared between implementing bodies," said the EU Delegation Head of Rural Development, Peter Sturesson.



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Sally set to slice bodies under her ministry

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

THE Ministry of Agriculture is planning to reduce the number of parastatals under its wings from the current number 36 to 31 due to the current crisis of inflation, Agriculture Minister Dr. Sally Kosgei has said.

“By reducing the number of parastatals, it will help the government cut on costs that have affected our economy to an alarming level,” the minister said.

Addressing a meeting at the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Services (KEPHIS) in Nairobi, Dr. Kosgei said there was need to analyse the performance of all parastatals with a view to rationalizing the functions.

“All the parastatals should pay attention to what the ministry, the public and the media is saying,” said Kosgei. “We need to be more cost-effective in our operations.”

She said that due to the current shortage of sugar, the Sugar Board of Kenya needs to explore ways to boost the production of sugar in the country.

The minister also urged all agricultural corporations to review their strategic plans and have a clear implementation framework indicating

activities and timelines for ease of monitoring and evaluation.

During the function, the Coffee Board of Kenya was applauded for its swift move in curbing coffee berry theft problems in Central Kenya.

Other parastatals were also awarded for various efforts, with the Tea Research Foundation being awarded for their asset management while the Coffee Research Foundation was awarded for their responsiveness among others.

On its part, the ministry resolved to enhance competency in all the parastatals and enhance employee satisfaction at all levels, a move that the minister said would yield maximum benefits from all agricultural sectors.

Meanwhile, most parts along the coastline are suitable for floriculture but lack of knowledge by residents remains an impediment for those willing to venture into the profitable activity.

A one time Kilifi Town Council chairman, Mr. Premji Hirani, who has been growing Athurium flowers at Mtwapa in Kilifi County, says he has practiced floriculture for over 30 years.

Mr. Hirani says for the 10 acres he has planted anthurium flowers, he has been harvesting 5,000 stems per

week. This does not meet local demand as global demand stands at two million stems per week.

Mr. Hirani, who spoke at his farm, asked the Government to give him 50 acres at Ganze District for cultivation and production of anthuriums, orchids that fetch good prices at the global market.

Mr. Hirani says soils in the region were suitable for floriculture with coco peat that is the main requirement for maintenance of moisture readily available.

He urged the Kenya Airports Authority to invest in cold storage facilities at Malindi International Airport for the benefit of farmers interested in floriculture and horticulture production.

Mr. Hirani said the high cost involved in transporting produce from Kilifi to Nairobi and the stringent phytosanitary requirements were a hindrance to many farmers.

He says using courier services for transportation had forced many florists in the East Africa region to receive anthurium flowers from the two largest anthurium growers based in Kilifi, Mr. Hirani and Kenthurium Kenya Limited.



Dr. Sally Kosgei, Agriculture Minister

Bukura introduces irrigation engineering course

By TITUS MAERO

BUKURA Agricultural College has introduced a Diploma course in Agricultural Irrigation and Drainage Engineering to bridge the market demand created by the mushrooming of sugar milling factories in Western Region.

Dr Gaudencia Okumbe who chairs the board at the college notes that sugar factories require substantive manpower in engineering to adapt to the changing mode of sugar cane farming from the over reliance on rain water to irrigation farming.

“The College has introduced a diploma programme in Agricultural Irrigation and Drainage Engineering after we realized that the government and the private sector plans to support ir-

rigation initiatives in the area to boost production and guarantee sustainable growth of the sector,” she added.

The official pointed out that a few institutions in the region offer the Diploma course noting that sugarcane farming was shifting to irrigation method of farming as opposed to relying on rain fed sugarcane farming.

The official who spoke at the College cited Mumias Sugar Company, West Kenya Sugar, Butali Sugar Company, Sony, Muhoroni, Kibos, Nzoia and Chemelil as some of the companies who have expressed their willingness to shift to the new mode of farming.

Okumbe explained that sugarcane grown under irrigation matured early adding that the

Kenya Sugar Research Institute (KEFRI) already has cane varieties suitable for irrigation farming.

She said the adoption of irrigation in sugarcane farming would help alleviate sugar shortages experienced in the country and increase the capacity for self reliance in the market.

The official asked students who graduate at the College not to aspire for formal employment but to use the skills acquired in various courses to exploit opportunities in the market.

She said the college had registered growth in student population from 74 at the inception in 1974 as an Institute of Agriculture to the over 700 students pursuing various agriculture related courses at the institution.

Okumbe, however, said the col-

lege is faced with challenges that include inadequate learning and boarding facilities, staff houses and limited funding by the government.

Meanwhile, The government has spent Kshs 26 million to put up an Ultra Modern Library at the Bukura Agricultural Training College (BATI) in Kakamega Central District.

According to the Permanent Secretary (PS) in the Ministry of Agriculture Romano Kiome, another Kshs 86 million had been used to construct a hostel with 75 self contained rooms at the facility. The PS further says the ongoing construction of an educational complex at the institution will cost Kshs189 million.

The PS notes that the facilities will provide space for long and short term courses offered at the facility and urged the management of the college to make full use of the facilities in order to achieve the intended purpose.

He challenges the managers to embrace a system of agricultural human resource training and development that responds to the ever changing needs of the sector.

Speaking during the 16th Graduation Ceremony at the Institution, the official observed that the graduands, who were conferred with diplomas and certificates, would provide manpower for the agricultural sector in the country.

He said Agriculture remains the mainstay of the country's economy adding that currently it provides employment to over 80 per cent of the country's population and about 65 per cent of the country's revenue collection.

Kiome also said the sector has been identified as a key driver of the country's national economy under vision 2030 noting that the government is committed to transforming Agriculture to a socially competitive and agribusiness oriented enterprise.

Then PS noted with appreciation that the development of new programmes that cover irrigation and drainage systems would help respond to the current emphasis on irrigated agriculture for increased agricultural productivity.

He said the importance of the college in manpower development cannot be over emphasized saying that currently the institute has secured a grant from the Dutch Government to implement a four year project on capacity building for improving Dairy and Horticulture programmes to meet the market demands and contribute to food security.

The official at the same time asked the Board of Governor (BOG) to ensure prudent utilization of the funds and invited other development partners to support the college to realize its dream.

He further told the management and the BOG to diversify their revenue generation activities and avoid over dependence on the exchequer as their main source of funding.

Kiome was elated that the project would put up an agro processing plant and modern green house for teaching purposes which, he said, are in line with the government's emphasize of embracing modern technologies and value addition.

The PS said meaningful and relevant teaching should be supported by research that addresses the concern of clients. He said such an institution should undertake research that should generate technologies and innovations for the development of the agricultural sector.

He said that research should not only focus on production but cover the entire value chain and challenged the management of the institution to collaborate with other relevant institutions to engage in research work in addition to teaching.



Sugar factories require substantive manpower in engineering to adapt to the changing mode of sugarcane farming.

Bilali proves Nyanza can be the hort basket

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

MOST farmers in Nyanza region usually pay no heed to horticultural farming but for Mr. Cassim Bilali of Siaya County, the story has been different: he can generate income and lead a decent life.

Cassim, 41, a horticultural farmer, in Rarieda District, Siaya County, wishes he could have ventured into horticultural farming much earlier after enjoying the sweet fruits since venturing into the farming.

He says horticultural production, especially pawpaw and passion fruits, have made himself reliant and provided a reliable income to his family. "Horticultural farming can give you everything that you ever dream to have in your life. I can now provide to my family with a very decent lifestyle," says Mr. Bilali.

The farmer ventured into horticultural farming in 2003 by use of modern technology that most producers are reluctant to embrace.

"I use fertility trenched system to preserve water," he says. He digs terraces in between pawpaw trees, puts manure and covers with dry grass to act as mulch and reduce the rate of evaporation.

Siaya County has favourable climatic conditions for horticultural production that farmers must exploit ahead of the official opening of the Kisumu International Airport.

Mr. Bilali says he has over 80 pawpaw trees in his 1.5 acre farm and a pawpaw fruit sells at between Kshs.30 to Kshs.50 depending on the size.

A bag of pawpaw sells at Kshs9,500 while the produce from one tree fetches him not less than Kshs12,000 that collectively generate at least Kshs.900,000 after every two months.

Pawpaw is a perennial crop that one is able to harvest for 3 to 4 years before it stops bearing fruits.



Pawpaw farming: Dig terraces in between pawpaw trees, puts manure and covers with dry grass to act as mulch and reduce the rate of evaporation.

Pawpaw takes about 6 months to mature, while it takes a shorter time depending on climatic conditions of a given area and how you take care of the plants.

Mr. Bilali has challenged farmers in Siaya County and other parts of Nyanza region to diversify their production and not focus on the traditional maize, sorghum, beans, and peas. He says farmers should embrace horticultural production using modern methods.

He conducts training on horticultural farming for those who have shown interest with the hope of generating income to ensure a change in lifestyle.

"We should focus on farming activities that can generate income to

change our lifestyle rather than sit back to wait for famine relief. Farmers need to embark on serious farming activities using modern farming methods such as irrigation system," Mr. Bilali says.

He says farmers should take advantage of the lake and river waters to irrigate farms, especially during the short rainy season to improve on food production and as source of income.

The programme has also enhanced his income. He charges Kshs.10,000 for training that lasts at least three months.

Bilali has so far trained over 80 farmers who have later joined horticultural farmers associations, including Care for the Earth Environmental Resources Centre which he is the Founder and Director.

Mr. Bilali says horticultural production (pawpaw) is cost-effective and requires simple inputs. One only requires a piece of land to dig a borehole, manure site (cow dung) to take care of a tree until harvesting time.

Horticultural production can ensure maximum profit when combined with cattle and goats rearing.

Ms. Rosemary Okello, another farmer says she quit her job as a cleaner to venture into farming and grows water melon and pawpaw. She has 20 trees of pawpaw and 0.5 acres of water melon that generates income to her family.

Mr. Bilali says horticultural production may cost a farmer more than Kshs.50,000.

Market for pawpaw fruits is available and during harvesting time, vendors and companies that manufacture soft drinks compete for his produce for its high quality of production.

He says Government efforts to reduce poverty especially in rural areas could get a major boost if horticultural farming is adequately promoted and funded.

Many youth in Nyanza region are facing a major challenge of unem-

ployment yet they inherited land that lies idle. If you are empowered with skills and funded on horticultural production, unemployment related challenges such as the high rate of crime can be reduced significantly," he says.

Horticultural production is the best investment as one only requires a small piece of land to grow compared to the huge amounts of capital needed to venture into coffee and tea farming.

Bilali has urged the youth to acquire technical and vocational skills instead of staying idle which leaves them vulnerable to misuse by politicians to fight their wars.

Mr. Bilali aims at providing employment opportunities to youth in his County and expects to plant more pawpaw, vegetables, passion fruits and water melon in a 2.5 acre piece of land.

Nyanza Provincial Director of Agriculture, Mr. Joash Owiro, says his office would give necessary support and was encouraging farmers to venture into horticultural production. Going by last years' census results, the population numbers are a threat to dairy, maize, beans, groundnuts and sorghum farming.

The major concern of Bilali and Owiro is the low uptake of horticultural farming but is optimistic farmers will steadily take up production.

The County may be far in working out a solution to food shortage and improve economic activities in Nyanza region.

Mr. Owiro says farmers should seek assistance from the Government for funding of their activities so as to exploit the advantages of the international airport that has worked to reduce unemployment rate in the region.

"Why don't we give horticultural farming a trial and see the benefits it has as this would help to improve on the socio-economic development that will culminate the food shortage in the County?" says Mr. Bilali.

MPs oppose sugar importation proposal

By JOEL JUMA

MEMBERS of Parliament (MPs) have been petitioned to reject a Parliamentary report that recommends that millers should be allowed to import sugar in the next four months.

Cane farmers and trade unionists from sugar zones in Kakamega County said the report should not be adopted. The farmers drawn from Mumias, West Kenya and Busia said adoption of the report will result into flooding of cheap sugar in the country.

The cane growers urged MPs from the sugar zones to be at the forefront of rejecting the report once it is tabled in Parliament by Naivasha MP John Mututho.

Led by the Kenya Sugar Board Director Billy Wanjala and the Kenya Sugar Cane plantation Workers Union Secretary General Francis Wangara, the farmers said allowing importation could see untaxed sugar finding its way in the country.

The Parliamentary Committee chaired by Mututho has recommended that milling companies be allowed to import sugar based on their capacities. The report has since angered farmers who fear millers will exploit them.

"We have lot of cane that has matured. Importation of sugar will make millers not harvest our crop on time," said Wanjala who represents farmers in Mumias and Busia zones. Wanjala called for the dissolution of the Mututho committee arguing that it is chaired by legislators who do not understand sugarcane matters.

"It is sad that despite collecting views from farmers, the committee has given a report that will not assist growers," said Wanjala who was speaking in Mumias town

Wanjala and Wangara proposed that an MP from sugar cane growing zone be appointed to chair the Committee on Agriculture. Wangara said his union is comfortable with the proposal to have a kilogramme of sugar cost Kshs130.

He said there is no proper reason for the cost of sugar to range between Kshs190 and Kshs220.

Mumias MP Ben Washiali who is a member of the committee said he was shocked that the clause that allows importation of sugar found itself in the report. "I was not aware of such proposal," said Washiali. He explained that the report had indicated that weighing of cane would be done in farms and not at the factories as it is the case.

He said MPs had also suggested that the Sugar Act be reviewed to have sugar zones scrapped and allow farmers sell their cane to factories of their choice.

Speaking in Mumias town, the area DC Francis Komen said he was disturbed that private farmers were being forced to obtain a permit from Mumias Sugar Company before harvesting their cane in order to deliver to either Butali or West Kenya Sugar companies.



Pawpaw: Horticultural farming can give you everything that you ever dream to have in your life.

Mbondoni bikers appeal for training

By KAVYU-KURA

BODA boda operators in Mbondoni market along the Thika-Garissa highway are seeking support to be trained on the highway traffic regulations to avert accidents.

The group spokesman Daniel Muthui Kiteme says accidents will effectively be curtailed if boda boda motorcyclists are trained on traffic rules.

"We in the boda boda industry want to eke out honest living and are appealing to well wishers to come out and help us get trained to be versed with traffic rules to reduce accidents. A good number should also be assisted get riding licenses," said Kiteme at Mbondoni in the outskirts of Mwingi

town.

He noted that most of the boda-boda men had acquired their skills through the "jua kali" way and therefore lacked licences which limited their area of operation to Mbondoni area.

He thanked an accountant with the Kenya National Union of Teachers

(Knut) Benard Kitungi who donated 200 reflective jackets to the raiders.

Kitungi said it was unfortunate that most riders were exposed to risks as they rode in the night without putting on reflective jackets.

He demanded that the government erects bumps at the market centre to stem unwarranted deaths caused by

speeding motorists.

"Up to eight people have in the recent past been knocked down and killed by vehicles here. We cannot bear these senseless deaths any more. The government should move with speed to build bumps lest I will mobilize hundreds of resident to block the road for days," he said.



Benard Kitungi passes by the Boda boda men soon after issuing them with reflective jackets.

Photo/Kavyu-Kura

Mwatata urges youth to go for loans

By BEKADZO TONDO

THE government has harmonized loan application procedures to enable more youth to apply and access loans from the Youth Enterprise Fund (YEF).

The chief executive officer of the fund Mr. Mwangala Mwatata says that most youth have been reluctant to apply for the loans citing prohibitive requirements imposed by the government.

"However, procedures for loan application under the youth fund have been harmonized and the youth can now access their loans in a period not exceeding 30 days," adds Mr Mwatata.

The CEO made the remarks at Karisa Maitha grounds in Kilifi when he addressed youth drawn from Bahari, Ganze, Kaloleni, Malindi and Magarini constituencies in Kilifi County.

Mr. Mwatata laments that Kilifi had the lowest number of youth seeking loans from the funds compared to youth in other parts of the country.

"Youth in Kilifi have only managed to obtain Kshs 100 million since the inception of the fund five years compared to their colleagues in some parts of the country who have acquired over a half billion shillings out of the Kshs 5.2 billion disbursed by the government through the fund.

The CEO notes that about Kshs 18 million sent to Kilifi County under the fund remains uncollected in the bank.

Mr. Mwatata however says that poverty among youth in the County remains high and wondered why youth in the area have refused to utilize the fund to initiate incoming generating projects.

He says his ministry has hired 2000 interns to assist youth officers in the districts to sensitize the Youth on the need to apply for loans from the fund. "The government is committed to ensuring that the youth get accurate information about the fund to ensure more youth benefit from the loans," he adds.

The officer further says the ministry of youth and sports affairs has purchased motorbikes and sent them to the districts to enable the youth officers and the interns to move around and reach more youth at the village levels.

He says that Kilifi Teachers Savings and Credit Society has been approved by the government as a financial intermediary to channel the funds to the youth in the area.

Ollum entices communities with goodies to conserve water

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

THE government has launched the second phase of the natural resources management programme in the Upper Tana catchment area aimed at restoring water sources and the environment.

During the launch, 68 community-based organizations (CBOs) from Nyandarua, Murang'a and Kiambu counties received Kshs.22 million to promote income generating activities among members at a fete held in Gatura Primary School in Gatanga constituency.

Water resources management authority (WARMA) chief executive officer Eng. Philip Ollum said the programme was meant to support residents living in the catchment areas to start money-making activities like dairy and poultry farming, bee keeping, food processing and rabbit rearing.

Eng. Ollum said the programme, funded by the World Bank and which in the first phase rolled out another Kshs.22 million, is to provide the communities who have been targeting trees for survival through commercial charcoal burning and sale of timber with an alternative source of livelihood.

The CEO said the project being

coordinated in conjunction with the National Irrigation Board and the Kenya Forest Service will enable the communities to generate money through alternative sources of energy like gas and solar which are environmentally friendly.

The communities that border forests were encouraged against encroachment and farming along river lines in order to check on soil erosion which has been a major hindrance to fish farming activities owing to pollution.

Eng. Ollum said the grants ranging from Kshs.50,000 to Kshs.500,000 are monitored and evaluated by both the implementing agencies and the donor to ensure compliance with members of the benefiting CBO contributes 30 per cent of the amount sought.

Stating that the protection of water catchment areas was a core function of WARMA, Eng. Ollum decried the wanton destruction of water sources which he linked to poverty as people cut trees in an effort to survive.

The authority selected the region for the 12-month pilot project because it was experiencing excessive soil erosion. It was extended after the donor gave Phase one, a clean bill of health.

The approach which also sets to mitigate climate change has worked

well in countries like China, Nigeria and South Africa. The government is working out modalities of extending it to other parts of the country.

Eng. Ollum observed that the introduction of the programme had seen the rate of encroachment into the Aberdare catchment area decline but expressed concern that the trend was worrying within Mt. Kenya catchment region.

According to the project manager Mr. Mutavuta Kinyua, other agencies involved in livelihoods improvement for the communities like the Department of Agriculture and that of livestock have been brought on board to check on duplication and misallocation of resources.

Mr. Kinyua said the communities were being urged to plant and care for trees with the aim of increasing the much needed forest cover in the country as spelt out in the Vision 2030.

He asked farmers to get rid of eucalyptus trees popularly known as blue gum that are planted near water sources. The official said that the programme had been received with a lot of enthusiasm by the residents from the region after they realized it was aimed at assisting them transform their own lives, and not impose solutions from outside.

By KAVYU-KURA

THE newly elected Chairman of the Mwingi traders Sacco Julius Muinde Mutukaa has allayed fears that the Sacco will auction property of members who are unable to repay their loans.

Mutukaa said all loans to members will be fully insured to avoid harassment of dependants in the event that a member dies before clearing any loan advanced to them. He said members' non withdrawal share will be used as collateral to se-

Sacco selves auctioning plans

cure insurance for all members.

"You should not shy away from applying for loans on the basis that your families will be auctioned in case you die before fully repaying your loans. Once you die the Sacco will write off the loan as the insurance will pay any loan balances," assured the Sacco chairman.

Mutukaa was recently chairing his first members meeting since he was elected at the Mwingi Msafiri.

He announced that the Sacco will have an office and staff to run its affairs from the beginning of this year.

"Not only will we have an office and staff to attend to members from a central place but we will start extending loans to members come January. So it is up to you to improve your shareholding so that you can benefit from considerable amounts as loans," said Mutukaa.

He pointed that members would

Mijikenda to vet political aspirants

By BEKADZO TONDO

LEADERS in Kilifi County have endorsed the recently formed inter-community committee comprising all the seven sub tribes of the larger Mijikenda community whose mandate includes vetting and clearing candidates seeking elective posts at the County during the forthcoming General Elections.

Members of the inter community committee are drawn from the Giriama, Chonyi, Kauma, Rabai, Jibana, Kambe and Ribe sub tribes living in Kilifi county

The leaders further mandated civil society organizations in the area to monitor the performance of elected leaders to ensure that they uphold transparency and good governance in the management of county affairs.

The leaders made the unanimous resolution during a workshop that brought together aspirants, religious leaders, members of the inter community committee and civil society organizations in Kilifi County.

The meeting which was held at a Kilifi hotel was coordinated by Community Aid international (CAI).

Dr. Owen Baya and Dr Suleiman Shauri from Pwani University who were key speakers at the workshop dwelt on virtues of good governance and took the participants through good leadership model that is expected to shape up the leadership of Kilifi County.

"This forum was specifically meant to discuss good governance and good leadership model that is expected to shape the leadership of Kilifi County before the county assembly becomes operational," said the CAI's coast regional director Mr. Kashero Chinyaka.

Mr. Chinyaka said the inter community forum led by Mr. Boniface Mwamuye and the civil society organizations headed by Mr. Peter Thoya have a mandate to organize civic education to sensitize local people on the best way to identify good leaders.

"For a long time people in Kilifi County and Coast region in general have been electing wrong leaders because they lack the capacity to identify good leaders and thus the need to conduct civic education to equip them with the vital information," said Mr. Chinyaka.

Dr Shauri said Kilifi County was endowed with a vast of natural resources that range from land to the Indian Ocean and minerals but the area still lags behind in development due to bad leadership.

He said the local people also lacked the capacity to exploit their land and had sold their resource to rich private developers at throw away prices.

"Land is a source of wealth generation and general development everywhere but that cannot be realized if the locals do not know the real value of their land," said Dr Shauri.

start receiving business as well as developmental loans but the amounts to be loaned would depend on individual members share capital that would be doubled three fold.

The Sacco chairman who was flanked by the new secretary Peter Mutemi and treasurer Dr. Wathe Nzau noted that members were at liberty to invest their money in both savings and non-withdrawal shares. He pointed that not a single penny would be lost on withdrawal of membership.

Youth leader's advice to Boda-boda operators

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

BUSIA County youth development officer Patrick Wanyama has appealed to the boda-boda operators in the County to engage in other income generating activities especially agriculture alongside transporting passengers.

The youth officer expressed concern saying the boda-boda operators have failed to invest their resources in various income generating activities such as agriculture but instead spend their hard earned resources in leisure at the expense of development that will improve on their standards of living.

"Invest your hard earned resources in viable income generating activities such as agriculture so that you can be able to put poverty behind your back and become self-reliant," said the youth development officer.

The youth development officer made the remarks at the close of a two day sensitization workshop for the boda-boda operators in the region that was held at the Busia district headquarters boardroom.

The workshop objective was to sensitize and empower the stakeholders on how to improve on their standards of living rather than depending on handouts from politicians especially during the campaigns.

Wanyama challenged the youth to engage in poultry keeping project which he said was profitable considering that apart from home consumption, majority of hotels and restaurants in the region depended a great deal on local chicken that most clients prefer.

At the same time, the youth development officer appealed to the youth to access loan facilities from various financial institutions for investment in viable income generating activities.

"You cannot develop without taking loans from the various financial institutions around here. Therefore take bold steps and apply for loans to enable you invest in the income generating activities of your choice for self-reliance," said the youth development officer.

On the other hand, the boda-boda chairman Wilberforce Omule revealed that the boda-boda operators in the region had lagged behind in development as compared to their counterparts from other regions.

However, the boda-boda operators unanimously resolved to follow the advice to the letter which they said will help uplift their standards of living.

Busia County Cooperative Officer Mr Jairus Njoga on the other hand expressed concern over poor record keeping systems most cooperative society members in the county employ.

The cooperative officer at the same time expressed concern saying that most cooperative societies in the county have ceased to exist as a result of bad governance, lack of transparency and accountability.

He added that most cooperative societies in the county do not have accounting records to show how finances in their respective cooperative societies have been utilized and for purposes of transparency and accountability.

Scores of Nyeri boys brave the knife

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

OVER 380 boys have graduated in Nyeri Central district after undergoing circumcision.

The boys were awarded certificates after a one week programme.

The whole programme cost of Kshs 2.5 million with Special Programmes Minister Esther Murugi who initiated the project contributing Kshs 0.5 million. A team of over 40 doctors from Kenya National Aids and STI Control Programme (Nascop) operated the boys during the event.

The graduation which was dubbed 'Rika Ria County' was held during a colourful ceremony at Muthua-ini Secondary school. The boys most of who concluded their primary education 'faced the knife' and now have been trained on drugs/substance

abuse, sexual life, peer pressure, stress management and time management.

Other subjects included unemployment, vision and dreams, nutrition and sports, role of the church, beliefs and practices, HIV/Aids and stress management among others.

Murugi who was accompanied by area DC Chege Mwangi, Nyeri Mayor Edward Muteru and his deputy Grace Wanyeki said "parents gave us boys, we have now given you men. We don't want the graduands to be drunkards but to be good role models in the society."

She advised the parents to guide and counsel their sons even after graduation. "You are now going to the world and it is upon you not to be influenced by peer pressure. Be obedient and avoid drugs," said the mayor.

The same group will return to the

school in August next year for another follow up training.

The graduands were promised that if they will have problems in paying of school fees, they will benefit from the local CDF kitty. Meanwhile, Nyeri business people recently held a conference in town where they were trained on the use of technology.

The over 200 business men and women held a one day conference at a Nyeri hotel where the conference was also trained on e-commerce, internet services and financial services.

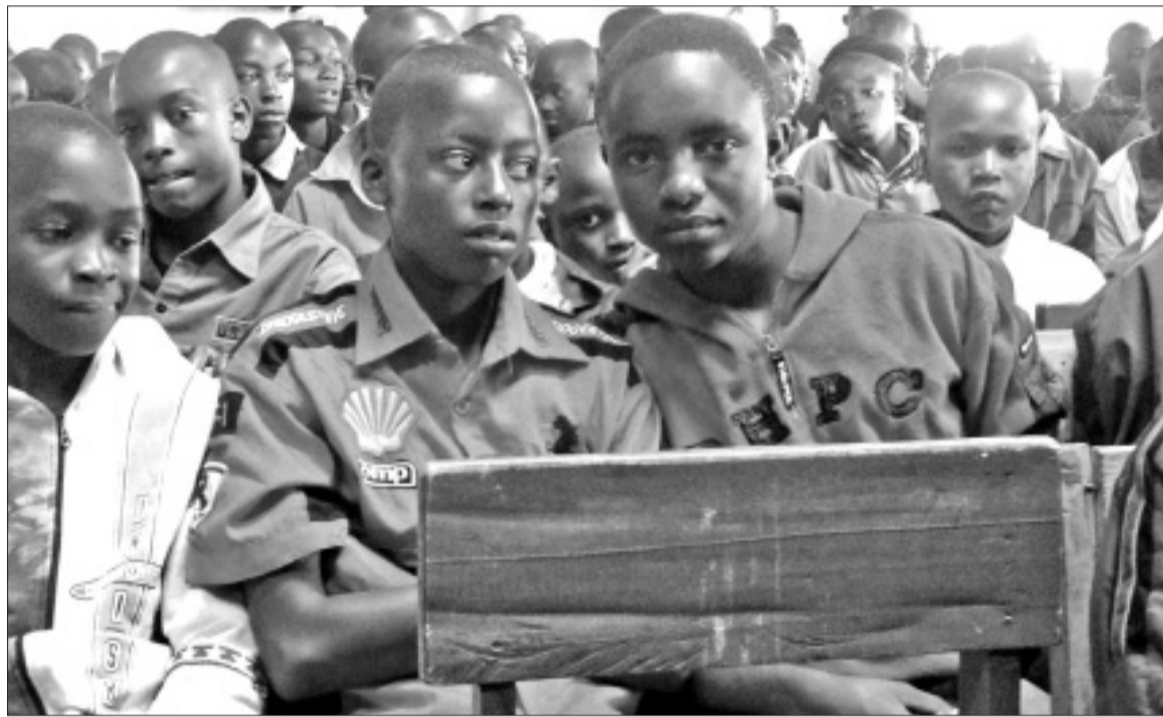
"They have also been trained on business associations, business and Government and also technology," said the Mocality.com Country manager Joshua Mwaniki. Similar conferences were held in Nairobi and will now head to Nakuru, Mombasa, Eldoret and Kisumu towns. The theme

of these conferences is 'Growing your business in the Digital Era.'

Mocality is Kenya's leading online business directory with over 160,000 businesses listed on the site country-wide. It has been operational in Kenya since May 2009. "Over and above listing businesses, Mocality provides business tools to business owners listed on the site including free SMS, online storage tools and free websites," said the manager.

He continued, "Mocality holds businesses owners conferences countrywide with the aim of educating the businesses on Mocality business tools and how to take advantage of the internet to enhance their business. The conference area also aimed at passing on other useful information and tools that will take the business to the next level."

The conferences encourage interaction between business owners/managers and leading product/service providers as well as other business owners.



Some of the 380 initiates who were graduated recently. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Western dons to support their own for governor

By JOEL JUMA

PROFESSIONALS from Vihiga County have resolved to back the candidature of a university don at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (Mmust) for the post of Senator.

The professionals led by Moi University lecturer Musalia Edebe said they will support Henry Embeywa for the post. Prof Embeywa will face assistant minister George Khaniri, who has also declared interest in the seat.

The academicians said they want the residents to be led by leaders who will develop the region and ensure education standards are improved in all the four constituencies of the County.

Embeywa and Edebe said Khaniri who is an assistant minister for Information and Communication should forget the seat as he will lose during the next elections.

The two, who claimed they were rigged out of ODM elections at the Sabatia sub-branch, said they will continue to fight for the democratic rights of locals. "It is sad that we were rigged out at the branch level after having been elected at the grassroots stages," said Embeywa.

Embeywa was speaking at Chavakali market where he addressed a rally. Professionals from the county convened the meeting.

Embeywa said it was unfair for the Deputy Prime minister Musalia Mudavadi to keep off the polls yet he is one of the good leaders in the county who should have a slot in the county office. The dons told Planning minister Wycliffe Oparanya, who lost in the ODM elections, to forget the Governor's seat.

They said it is regrettable that the minister has gone ahead to declare his interest for the Governor's post in Kakamega County when he is not able to pull crowds in his constituency.

Oparanya lost the Butere ODM elections to former cabinet minister Amukowa Anangwe.

Embeywa explained that democracy should prevail in the party by ensuring national elections are not delayed. "Lets have the national elections this year," said Embeywa.

Plans underway replicate food security projects

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

PLANS are underway to roll out a project that seeks to spur food security, job opportunities, income generation and business opportunities in selected areas in the country.

The project that was initially started on a pilot basis in Siaya in 2008 will soon be replicated in Yatta, Murang'a and Bungoma Districts in Eastern, Central and Western provinces with specific areas being Matuu, Gatanga and Kanduyi respectively.

Already the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of agriculture Dr Romano Kiome has officially launched the Programme in Eastern Province.

Speaking at Wikwatyo Youth Group farm in Matuu, Yatta District, the PS said similar launches will be carried out in Central and Western Provinces.

Dubbed Imarisha Kenya, the project seeks to develop micro enterprises and irrigation agriculture and is currently being supported by a conglomeration of 22 local and international companies operating under the Business Alliance Against Hunger (BAACH).

BAACH was mooted at the World Economic Forum in 2006 during a conference held in Davos, Switzerland, with partners bestowed with the responsibility of defining and implementing commercially viable and sustainable business solutions to fight hunger and poverty.

It is jointly sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), USAID, Rockefeller Foundation, Bill Gates Foundation, Sealed

Air, Monsanto, Nike, General Mills, Kraft, TNT, Techno-serve and MDG centre/ millennium village project. Local organizations include Amiran Kenya Limited, agriculture, Finance and trade ministries, Kenya Commercial Bank, National Oil Refineries, Equity Bank, Eye Kenya, Maseno University among others.

Kenya was picked as a pilot country with the purpose of using key experiences as benchmarks for launching similar programmes in Africa.

The government has already incorporated the initiative into the agricultural sector development plan for vision 2030. Ten more constituencies have been earmarked for the activities.

Piloting activities in Siaya, Nyanza Province, included rice retailing, honey production and irrigation farming.

For Kithendu, iria-Kiriga Irrigation scheme in Gatanga and Kanduyi projects, BAACH plans to work with 22 Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to ensure increased agri business development solutions for increased impact on food security and growth.

Under the initiative, 2,000units of irrigation schemes will be introduced, including drip, green housing, improved seed, fertilizer and disease control application as well as post harvest handling, quality management.

Other objectives include promotion of water harvesting, prudent water usage and management discipline, facilitate route to markets, market links among farming communities in the target areas and improved marketing and

value addition of farm produce as well as equipping entrepreneurs with skills to run and grow businesses.

A report compiled by BAACH reveals that 7,200 jobs have been created through micro small enterprise agribusiness, micro small enterprise development and expansion of retail and services, thus ensuring consumers access better and affordable goods and services.

It says BAACH was working with 18 partnerships and community based organizations that are being facilitated to increase capacities at constituencies to realize the targets.

To oversee the expanded Programme, BAACH entered into public private partnership with the Government through the Ministry of Agriculture and other private sector players in October 2010 which later transformed into Kenya National Public Private Partnership (PPP) in 2009.

The activities in Siaya were centred on increasing food production, giving access to affordable products and services as well as sustainable income generation through engagement of entrepreneurs, says the bulletin.

It says 20 traders engaged in rice retailing in partnership with Dominion Farms generated a net income of Kshs 15 million, with the price of commodities reducing by 33 percent due to the retailing transactions.

Revenue generation per each of the 300 households involved in bee keeping in collaboration with Honey Care Africa, Equity Bank and Millennium Village was Kshs 15,000.

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

WB funds water conservation efforts

A TOTAL of 195 Water Resource Associations in Mt Kenya region have benefited from a Kshs 85 million grant from The World Bank.

The World Bank project which is being implemented in partnership with Water Resources Management Authority will help the associations to conserve water catchment areas including rivers and ecosystems in the region including the Aberdare and Mt Kenya forests.

The community has also contributed towards the project which seeks to boost other income generating enterprises such as dairy farming, tree growing, rabbit keeping and fish rearing.

The cheques were handed over to the groups at Kiriti stadium in Mukurwe-ini district recently by the Water Resources Management Authority CEO John Phillip Olum who said this was a wider programme to protect the water catchments areas.

The groups will also ensure that there is less erosion of soil to the dams. Out of the Kshs 85 million, some Kshs22 million has been channeled towards supporting similar projects in Kiamwangi in Mathira district.

The authority will later move to Murang'a and Kirinyaga counties.

"I urge the group from Murang'a, Nyeri and Kirinyaga counties to utilize the funds properly so that the catchments areas can be protected. The groups have been very helpful in taking care of the rivers," said the Chief Executive.

Olum was accompanied by Head of Central Highlands Con-



Karundu Welfare Association receives a cheque of Kshs 445,700 from the Water Resources Management Authority CEO John Phillip Olum (right) at Kiriti stadium in Mukurwe-ini district recently.
Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

servancy John Gachihi and area DC Isaac Masinde.

Gachihi said over 1,200 groups had applied for the funds but after screening, only 195 groups qualified.

"These micro projects will help to create wealth for their lives. If

the groups can be able to protect soil erosion, they will be able to plant more trees," said Gachihi.

He said the government has been able to reforest Aberdare and Mt Kenya forests and 4,500 hectares of land have been planted indigenous trees.

The DC said the provincial administration will fully support the projects as they are fully beneficial to the community.

He however urged the groups to utilize the funds for the intended purpose and avoid diverting the funds to other projects.

USAID empowers coast youth

By BEKADZO TONDO

THE United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has unveiled a two year program in Coast Province that seeks to empower the youth economically.

About 200,000 youth in the region will benefit from the program dubbed *Yes Youth Can*.

The Coast Province program director Ms Joyce Wafula says that the initiative is funded to the tune of Kshs 250 million and is geared towards supporting youth activities. Ms Wafula spoke during a meeting convened to elect youth delegates from the five constituencies in Kilifi County held at Mnarani sports ground.

She says the program targets about 118,000 male and 100,000 female youth mostly in Lamu, Kilifi and Kwale districts where youth have been disfranchised due to lack of opportunities for advancement. She urges the respective county elected delegates to remain focused to the objectives of the program and guide their colleagues towards the realization of the set goals to help transform them to better youth.

"USAID/KENYA yes youth can initiative, has rolled out a two years youth program in the region to empower the youth with leadership and good governance skills to enable them participate fully in community affairs," adds Ms Wafula. The director says the organization aims at ensuring that the youth are able to manage their affairs without interference from politicians who are only keen on misusing them.

"For a long time now youth have been misused by politicians to cause chaos during the electioneering period mainly because they are idle and lack employment but with the initiative, the problem is set to end," affirms Ms Wafula.

She says that under the program, the youth will benefit from loans to fund approved project proposals designed to empower them economically.

"The program has incorporated a unit for advancing loans to the youth to enable them to start small income generating activities and become self reliant," says Ms Wafula. She says the loans will be disbursed through a revolving fund and challenged beneficiaries to use the funds wisely to help alleviate poverty.

Ms Wafula said special programs targeting young women in the county have been developed to enhance their literacy levels and encourage them to start small businesses.

Kisii, Kalenjin leaders in peace bid

By BOB OMBATI

FORMER cabinet minister, Simeon Nyachae, has challenged council of elders to reconcile and promote peaceful co-existence among communities affected during the 2007 post-election violence.

Nyachae urged elders from Kisii and Kalenjin communities to organize a reconciliation meeting at Kisii-Borabu border and share common meals to hasten reconciliation, peace and unity.

The former Nyaribari Chache Member of Parliament advised the Gusii community to forgive their Kipsigis neighbours as they coexisted peacefully prior to the skirmishes.

He noted that any attempts to reject the ongoing efforts to reconcile them would leave room for possible flare-ups during the forthcoming General elections.

"We want members of the two communities to meet at the common border, slaughter two bulls and eat

them to signify reconciliation," said Nyachae, adding that the youth from the warring communities should be involved.

The former lawmaker was addressing members of the public at Gusii stadium during the installation of James Araka Matundura as chairman of the Abagusii cultural and development council.

During the ceremony, Matundura was given a shield, a traditional walking stick and a hat as a symbol of power to spearhead peace talks with the neighboring communities and promote peace.

Nyachae told the council of elders from various communities not to allow politicians to use them to mobilize ethnic voting blocs but instead focus on fostering peace, development and unity among the communities.

"Do not allow yourselves to be misused by politicians who are driven by greed for power. The unity of Kenyans overrides attempts by individuals to promote parochial interests. But

the moment you start dancing to the whims of politicians, you lose direction and face in your respective communities," said Nyachae.

He urged them to strive to reunite communities divided after the disputed 2007 presidential poll which left 1,133 people dead and over 600,000 displaced.

Nyachae at the same time asked parents to instill in their children cultural values and traditions to help them appreciate and support the cultural and moral values.

He blamed indiscipline among the youth to moral decay due to lack of parental guidance and counseling to mould them into responsible and accountable citizens.

"We want children to learn local languages besides the foreign dialects introduced in schools. That is the only way we can maintain our identity and cultural values," stated Nyachae.

Kipsigis council of elders chairman, Josiah Arap sang and his Luyha counterpart Patrick Wangamati who

led delegations from their communities to the installation ceremony said the elders will unite their communities to promote peace and development ahead of the General Elections.

Sang said the Kipsigis and Kisii council of elders and leaders were holding regular peace meetings to reunite the communities and urged Kenyans to support the peace talks to enhance unity among communities.

Kisii leaders, Reuben Oyondi, Samson Okioma, Omweri Kebwage, Dr Hezron Manduku and Kisii university College Principal, John Akama lauded Matundura for the installation and asked him to spearhead peace and reconciliation among Kisii and Kalenjin communities ahead of the polls.

Matundura said the council was gathering abagusii cultural artifacts and folk tales to promote and preserve the community's cultural values and traditions.

He said the council has over 4000 members and appealed to community members to support it.