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BVR tender fiasco a blot on IEBC image



Staff of Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) during a function to rebrand its logo. Photo/Henry Owino.

By HENRY OWINO

WITH the increasing incidences of false starts by Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), Kenyans are beginning to ask many questions regarding the credibility of the next polls.

This is due to reclusive and hands-off approach the Commissioners seem to be adopting with regards to the management of this key institution whose performance will determine whether the next elections will be peaceful or not. By now, and after the ugly 2007/08 post-election

violence, the commissioners should have known that the institution must be beyond reproach and must be seen by the people to be so for it to earn their trust which is crucial to how they will perceive the outcome of the next elections.

It is now very clear that the Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) has been abandoned by IEBC and has opted to go back to manual voters' registration method. This means the commission will have to hire more clerks for longer time to handle a six-in-one election, three more than it has been in the previous years.

It is going to be tedious and risky manual intervention but Kenyans still would expect no

any or minimal human errors occur during the exercise for clean and credible results. The big question is that will they deliver to Kenyans expectations?

The Court of Appeal ruling on the forth coming General Election to be held on 3rd March, 2013 has been received positively by most Kenyans as opposed to any other dates preferred by some politicians. However, this was simply affirmation of what IEBC had proposed earlier on hence has cleared air on contradictions within the political divide.

Energy supply set to rise

By LARRY KIMORI

KENYA is set to improve its energy supply and reliability thanks to accelerated geothermal development to meet the rising demands.

The Geothermal Development Company Managing Director, Dr. Silas Simiyu, disclosed that the completed surface exploration from Lake Magadi to Lake Turkana revealed the country's enormous potential for geothermal energy, which stands at over 10,000 megawatts.

Dr. Simiyu said that the vast geothermal resources would be exploited to meet the country's energy demands and steer the growth of industries in order to meet Vision 2030 goals.

Speaking during this year's Nakuru ASK Show, the MD noted that Menengai has a potential of 1,200 megawatts, which would go directly to the national grid to ease the country's need for electricity.

Dr. Simiyu noted that the company has drilled six wells in Menengai, adding that four of them have a capacity of 24 Megawatts.

The MD also noted that in order to circumvent the long gestation periods in streaming geothermal electricity to the national grid, GDC will be installing modular power plants before the end of the year.

Dr. Simiyu said that GDC expects two deep drilling rigs this financial year, aimed at reducing drilling costs, which, in turn, would reduce electricity tariffs passed to the consumers.

An additional two rigs would be set up in the Bogoria-Silale Block that has a potential of 3000 megawatts.

GDC is tasked to develop 5000 megawatts by 2030 to drive the country's economic progression and people's quality of life.

Dr. Simiyu exuded confidence in the geothermal sector in developing re-

BVR tender fiasco a blot on IEBC image

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The ruling has seen as a relief to many Kenyans especially eligible voters since the verdict brought to an end the long suspense of actual elections dates. The most important agenda for electorates to IEBC now in Kenya's history, is sustaining advocacy for credible, democratic and secure electoral process that truly meets the will of the people.

This agenda cannot be gainsaid reflecting from the perspective of events culminating with the bungled 2007 general elections. The then electoral body now the defunct Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK), failed in its mandate to provide reliable presidential results. It led to disputes culminating to violence, displacement of people and even deaths.

In a recent Public Forum held in a hotel in Nairobi, organized by International Center for Policy and Conflict (ICPC), the participants were keen to know more on democratic security, ethical leadership and credible elections. The forum brought together participants from civil society, media, academia, development partners, faith based organizations and other like-minded stakeholders.

Also important mentioned by the forum were election-related issues including political tolerance, conflict resolution and electoral offences. Lackluster approach to the issues which collectively contributed to the criminality in elections that has become the one disturbing facet of Kenya's and is now part of most Africa's electoral democracy.

According to Chief Maina Kiai, the conduct and supervision of elections is the prerogative of the IEBC while the Political Parties Registrar, regulates the conduct of political parties. On the other hand, Kiai encouraged the two bodies to work cordially together and with other stakeholders.

Kiai said this way, it will help to monitor the entire process and ensure transparency by providing the enabling environment for a credible, impartial and democratic process. He urged IEBC to abandon the Biometric Voter Registration plan if the commission wanted to retain its integrity.

He however stressed that in that regard, it will be crucial that all stakeholders devise an effective communication, coordination and collaboration mechanisms to be able to anticipate and pre-empt risks and mitigate their impacts.

"We all must be mindful of the relevance and peculiarity of the forthcoming general elections in the sense that it is complex and will be conducted on the same day. This process presents foreseeable and unforeseeable threats or challenges that would emerge as the process progresses to the announcement and receiving of results," cautioned Kiai.

Kiai emphasized that elections are vital to democratic government but they are not sufficient. He clarified that elections are only a significant event in a democratic process but if their integrity is compromised there is no legitimacy of democracy. Elections with integrity matter not just for democracy but also for security, human

rights and developments.

He made it clear that the government has the primary role to create the enabling environment for candidates and voters to exercise their rights to vote democratically and safely.

"When electoral process is poorly managed or manipulated to give undue advantage to some actors, voters lose faith in the integrity of it. The legitimacy of the elected government is therefore degraded, the promise of democracy is deferred and human rights and security are put at risk," lamented Kiai.

The same sentiments were echoed by Ndung'u Wainaina, the Executive Director, International Centre for Policy and Conflict (ICPC) who asked the electoral body to demonstrate consistency in decisions and information concerning the electoral process if they want to be credible, accountable and prove competent to deliver.

While the primary responsibility for upholding the integrity of elec-

tions rests with national leaders, international actors can assist local stakeholders to make leaders accountable, raise the costs of electoral abuse and ensure the credibility of the electoral process.

Because of the potential risks and other security related challenges, there is an overarching need for national security agencies to be professional, independent and impartial to engender public trust and confidence which enhances electoral security and credibility. Of course this will undoubtedly require higher threshold of professionalism and non-partisanship amongst all public officers involved.

Wainaina regretted that despite the Commission of Inquiry into the Post Election Violence (CIPEV otherwise known as Waki Commission) groundbreaking recommendations and later enactment of the Constitution and National Police Service Act 2011, it has never received a commencement date up to now and nothing significant

has changed. He stated further more political neutrality of the civil service remains a major challenge.

The ICPC Executive Director grieved that the challenge is even more daunting because there are 'road blocks' on the way which are deliberately created by politicians who are averse to decent way of conducting public affairs.

He observed it is a challenge Kenyans face both individually and collectively to build a society that can raise its head in the committee of nations that are today dictating the pace in shaping policies for growth and development across the globe.

"The Constitution Implementation Commission had failed to provide the public with these crucial bills for their input. Security sector reforms, especially police reforms, are provided for in Agenda Four of the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation agreement and also in Chapter 14 of the Constitution of Kenya," revealed Wainaina.

The activists also expressed their doubts on the Kenya Defense Force Bill, The National Intelligence Service Bill, National Security Council Bill and Leadership and Integrity Bill which the MPs are in a hurry to pass to beat the August 27 deadline as provided in the constitution.

They are now challenging other Kenyans to increasingly rise to the occasion, speak boldly, and demonstrate goodwill by engaging with issues and demand seamless break from past electoral lawlessness. In place of lawlessness, they must install rule of law while in place of electoral malpractices they must install professionalism and in place of self-centered ethnic mobilization politics, Kenyans must demand accountability.

In many African countries, successful elections have strengthened democratic institutions and practices while enhancing opportunities for economic development. In others, credible elections have paved the way for national reconciliation and democracy. At the same time, flawed elections have sparked violence, further polarizing a divided society and eroding public confidence in political and electoral processes.

Kenyans citizenry must not be left behind in this discourse. They must resist temptation to dismissively lament of the poor state of things and forget so soon thereafter. Accountability democracy is actually sustained by an alert active citizenry. Kenyans must stop rewarding corrupt, thieving and abusive leadership. Corruption and criminal conducts accrue to individuals not ethnic groups.



The ICPC chairman Charles Nyachae, Justice Minister Eugene Wamalwa, IEBC Chairman Issack Hassan (middle row), among others, at a public forum. Photo/Henry Owino

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sources to put power in the grid for the country's economic growth.

Beyond electricity, Geothermal Development Company (GDC) is introducing something fresh to this enterprise – a direct utilization of geothermal resources.

Dr. Simiyu disclosed that the company intends to utilize the direct heat of geothermal fluids to operate grain driers, milk pasteurizers, for the processing of hides and skins and in greenhouse heating.

Dr. Simiyu observed that GDC would also tap on bi-products, like sulfur and carbon dioxide, for industrial use.

Energy supply set to rise

The MD noted that communities stand a great chance to benefit from investment approaches designed for tourist enterprises, such as hot pools and saunas.

He disclosed that the company would drill high-end wells in Lake Bogoria, making use of the geysers in spas as tourist attractions that would, in turn, earn the country foreign exchange.

Dr. Simiyu further noted that since geothermal generates immense water, GDC would provide the same for irrigation schemes in the dry regions where it has opera-

tions.

He revealed that irrigation would boost food security and improve the economic status of people living in those areas.

The MD said that the GDC business development model is to encourage participation by communities into the geothermal economy through groups and cooperatives.

He said that this strategy would hugely tame the runaway rural-urban migration and check poverty and starvation, consequently allowing the rural economy to thrive.

In pastoralist communities, the

MD said that the company would initiate the development of industries that leverage on geothermal development, like meat processing.

Dr. Simiyu noted that the generation of power for captive industries would attract these industries to move to where it has generation points in order to cut transmission costs, which could create several metropolises in those regions.

Commenting on the Vision 2030 flagship project, Lamu Port Southern Sudan Ethiopia Transport Corridor (LAPSSET), Dr.

Simiyu said that GDC would generate power to run the rail line connecting these countries and pump fuel from Southern Sudan to Lamu.

On the other hand, the MD said that the transport sector in the country would see an introduction of electric trains to ease transport and reduce road carnage.

On devolution of counties, Dr. Simiyu said that GDC would leverage carbon credit earnings by registering these projects to benefit communities directly managed by the county assembly.

The MD disclosed that the company would receive \$11 per megawatt of carbon credits, which would go directly into improving the counties that GDC operates in.

Public varsities to be expanded, says Prof. Kamar

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

THE government through the Ministry of Higher Education plans to expand facilities at local universities to accommodate more students every year.

Higher Education minister Margaret Kamar says the move seeks to increase student admissions to public universities by more than 50 per cent by next year.

The minister who was accompanied by Moi University Chancellor Bethwell Allan Ogot was speaking while officially launching the strategic plan and customer service charter at Karatina University College in Nyeri County.

"The government will release funds which will be used to build and expand facilities at the university to accommodate a maximum of 5,000 students on completion," she said.

She pledged Government's support in the on-going four projects which will help increase students enrolment.

"We are inspecting this facility to see how fast it can accommodate students and I'm sure the students who finished last year will be here by September," she added.

Kamar said despite the government efforts to create more universities, the quality of degrees and the standards of education in the institutions will not be compromised and revealed more than 10 universities will be awarded charters by the President Mwai Kibaki before the end of this year.

The university is a constituent

college of Moi University.

Others present during the function were the Moi University Vice chancellor Richard Mibey and principal Mucai Muchiri.

The Minister also revealed that there will be an East African Quality Assurance department to monitor the quality of education offered

by public universities in the region including countries like Rwanda.

She supported the requirement that parliamentarians, senators and governors be holders of university degrees saying the management of the country resources and those of the county governments must be overseen by capable and educated

persons.

She dismissed the possibility of some contestants producing fake degrees saying the Commission for Higher Education will require candidates to show their primary school and secondary school results before being admitted to any university.



Minister for Higher Education Margaret Kamar and Moi University Chancellor Bethwell Allan Ogot at Karatina University College follow keenly the launch of strategic plan and customer service charter.

Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

School boards get rear support

By TITUS MAERO

A SENIOR official with the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) Nancy Macharia says that Board of Governors (BoGs) play a vital role in the success of any institution of learning.

Macharia says that BoGs are mandated by the Ministry of Education to ensure that secondary schools have adequate physical facilities and teaching materials.

She asked BoGs to ensure prudent management of school facilities while at the same time recruit teachers to address shortages in their respective schools.

Speaking at Kakamega High School during the school's academic day, the official urged teachers to act as role models for their students and above all give students hope.

"You can't achieve your goals if you frequently miss your classes. Be conscious of what you want to make out of your students," she advised urging them to concentrate on best practices, values and skills and avoid those that are destructive to fruitful learning.

Macharia, at the same time cautioned students against engaging in vices such as drug abuse which, she said, could ruin their future and undermine their development.

The official said that TSC would soon employ more teachers to help address the prevailing shortages.

She advised schools to be innovative by introducing market oriented subjects that could assist students to secure training and cited Kakamega High School which had introduced aviation courses.

"I sincerely thank parents and other stakeholders of Kakamega High School for introducing marketable subjects such as aviation," he added.

Mt. Kenya University gets more students

By TITUS MAERO

MT KENYA University's Kakamega Campus, which was opened last year, has registered a high student enrolment with current figures standing at 446 students from last year's 120.

The Campus Principal, Dr. Philemon Bureti, said that the institution has 320 school based students and 120 regular students undertaking various programmes.

Bureti also said that since the campus was moved from Kakamega Hill School compound to its new premises at the Mega Mall in the Central Business District (CBD), many other programmes have been introduced.

He pointed out that, currently, the campus is offering Masters Degrees in Education and Psychiatry, eleven Bachelor Degree Programmes, and six diploma programmes and Information Technology (IT) certificate courses.

Speaking to reporters in his office in Kakamega, the official noted that Bachelor Degrees are offered in Education Science, Ed-

ucation Arts, Medical Laboratory, Public Health, Counseling Psychiatry and Special needs education programme, among others.

He said that diploma courses are offered in Education, Community Health, Community Development, Business Management and Information Technology (IT). The certificate courses are offered in Community Development, Community Health, Information Technology (IT) and Business Management.

Bureti added that, apart from the campus permanent lecturers, they are supplemented on a part time basis by lecturers drawn from Universities situated in the western region, such as Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) and Maseno University.

The principal said most programmes charge Ksh 60,000 per semester, which he said, was low compared to what other universities are charging students in the country.

The official said the campus targets to have at least 3,000 full time and part time students in the



Mount Kenya University Chancellor, Prof George Eshiwani (left) hands over the university's performance contracts to the Dean, School of Law Prof Dr Moni Wekesa during the University's one-year charter celebrations at the Main Campus, Thika.

next few years, noting that the institution has received overwhelming applications from people who have left school and are interested in undertaking various programmes.

Commenting on the current physical infrastructure at the newly acquired premises, Bureti said the campus had taken the whole of the second floor at the Mega Mall, which, he said, has adequate

space to accommodate over 3,000 students.

He said that the University decided to set up the campus in Kakamega County following massive applications from people who have left school and who reside in the area, which has few higher institutions of learning.

Bureti said that, apart from providing education, the facility has created employment to the local people. It has over 30 administrative staff, adding that casual employment is also offered whenever need arises.

He, however, said there are challenges facing the institution, which include inadequate rental houses for the staff members and lecturers. The worst part of it is the inadequacy of hostels for students.

He said that Mt. Kenya University is a chartered institution operating as a non profit making institution of learning, noting that the main University is in Thika town while other campuses are situated in Mombasa, Nairobi, Nakuru, Kitale, Eldoret, Meru, Lodwar and in Kigali Rwanda.

Inoorero University introduces ICT based teaching

INOORERO University has introduced the ICT Based Teaching and Information Management programmes.

The university Vice Chancellor Henry Thairu said this is aimed to equip teachers with ICT skills, competencies and digital content literacy.

The Vice Chancellor said the digital teacher can now be able to know how to integrate ICT in education in line with the vision to transform Kenya into digital and knowledge economy by the year 2030 under the ministry of education.

He was speaking during this year's Nyeri South District Education day in Othaya town of Nyeri County.

"This professional course trains teachers on preparation and delivery of content as well as the use of ICT in School Information Management. The syllabus integrates ICT in the teaching curricula at each level

COMMENT

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

of education," he said.

Thairu said the course is meant to assist teachers to embrace technology in their teaching career whereby they will substitute traditional methods of teaching with modern ICT based teaching methods," he added.

He therefore urged the BoGs and School Management committees to encourage as many teachers in primary and teacher training colleges to enrol in the programme.

The university is well equipped with all required facilities for learning to take place especially after it launched its Wireless Local Area Network to provide internet and intranet access to students.

"We now have 25 Wi-Fi ac-

cess points that will enhance the service delivery of the students and faculty. The university also launched e-learning programme to provide an alternative to the regular classroom. It is through this platform that IU delivers all its online programmes," he added.

He added that the E-learning program, also called Virtual Campus, has proved to be a very popular mode of study especially for the working class and people from marginalized areas.

The program has courses ranging from degree, diploma to certificate courses that further push the institution as an Enterprise University.

Meanwhile Karatina University College has launched its five years strategic plan that shall be implemented to help the institution become a fully fledged university by 2014 after being granted the charter.

The plan will guide the insti-

tution as it seeks to increase its academic programmes, expand its infrastructure and undergo an inspection for approval by the commission for higher education before getting the charter.

The plan that has identified academic excellence, research and innovation, community outreach, financial sustainability and institutional capacity as its key result areas has largely been anchored with the country's vision 2030.

Of the keys pillar of vision 2030, the strategic plan will give proper guidance to contribute to the social pillar where education falls by producing highly qualified graduates to the country.

While addressing the gathering during the strategic plan launch, the university Principal Prof. Mucai Muchiri said that the institution will in its school of Agriculture and biotechnology start offering programmes in Tea Management and Tech-

nology.

Mucai said the programme due to be begin next year will respond to the gaping need for the human resource development that does not exist anywhere in Africa.

The university that stands on land bought from Kagochi Tea development authority cites inadequate land for expansion and sections of untarmacked roads in its strategic plan as some of the challenges likely to face the implementation of the plan.

However the institution which is the first initiative in Mathira constituency, to offer quality education has received a lot of support from the local community, a fact noted by its administration.

The college which is a constituent of Moi University started in 2007 with only 49 privately sponsored students and will be having population of over 3,000 students in 2013 academic year.

Angry parents storm Mathira school

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

ANGRY parents stormed Mathaithi Primary School in Mathira district to protest against what they termed as high handedness by the head teacher.

The irked parents demanded that the immediate transfer of the head teacher Lilian Wanjugu who they accused of reintroducing corporal punishment in the school which had been outlawed by the government.

They claimed that the head teacher had established 'The Hague' room in the school where students who fail in the exams or who don't pay tuition fee are

punished by all the teachers.

An angry parent identified as Peris Wairimu claimed that her child has sustained a fracture on the one hand after a teacher beat her senseless for failing one of the subjects.

"Most of the pupils are hardly in class because they are either chased away to fetch tuition fee which is beyond the reach of parents or to buy school uniform including socks. Others are sent home even during the examination days. We need the government to transfer her immediately," said another parent Faith Wairimu.

They said many parents have



The Parents Teachers Association chairman of Mathaithi Primary School in Mathira district Macharia Kimiti speaking to the press. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

moved their children to other schools after the head teacher was posted in the school from Kangocho Primary School two years ago.

When we visited the school,

the head teacher refused to comment on any allegations and referred us to Mathira District Education Officer who was also not in the office.

The schools Parents Teach-

ers Association chairman Macharia Kimiti however denied all the allegations saying the school has instead improved since the headmistress was posted in the school.

UNICEF to rally teachers for peace

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

UNITED Nation's Children Fund (UNICEF) and the Ministry of Education will jointly implement a peace education programme in schools to foster harmonious co-existence in the country.

The national peace campaign mainly targets teachers, learners and members of the community and seek to equip them with knowledge, skills and values ahead of the General Elections.

Senior deputy director of education in the directorate of Policy

Partnership and East Africa Community Margaret Murage notes that education sector was hardest hit during the 2007/8 post-election chaos and the program will go a long way in enhancing their capacity to manage conflicts.

She notes that several public primary and secondary schools were set on fire during the violence disrupting learning programs besides displacement of children and their parents from their homes in various parts of the country.

"It is a high time we bring all education stakeholders together

as we approach the next general elections to avert scenarios which occurred in 2008 where learning was disrupted in majority of public schools due to violent chaos," she said.

The national peace education campaign, she stressed, will entail peace awareness caravans, national peace torch activities and peace education campaign forums in the 47 counties spread across the country.

"We want to create public awareness on peaceful co-existence and give a voice to children

and young people on matters of peace and unity regardless of one ethnic background or political affiliation," stated Murage.

She was speaking in Eldoret during the opening of a sensitization workshop for District Education Officers drawn from several counties on the National Peace Education Campaign.

Murage said that the Ministry of Education has recorded a number of achievements since the start of the peace education campaign.

She stated that some of the

achievements recorded so far include the training of 8,909 field officers and primary school, teachers on peace education between 2008 and 2011.

The ministry, she further revealed, had also sensitized 3,900 principals of public secondary schools and 4,000 Board of Governors members on peace education in 2009 and 2010.

"The ministry has also carried out a peace education monitoring exercise in various parts of the country during 2009 and 2010," she added.

Drink blamed for high school dropout in Embu

By PETER MUTUKU

RESIDENTS of Kangaru village in Embu West District have blamed the poor standards of education in the area to increased consumption of illicit brews in the area.

Led by Transport Permanent Secretary, Dr. Cyrus Njiru, the irked residents say that more students in the area were dropping out of school due to excessive drinking.

"This area has become a haven for criminal activities where illicit liquor is brewed and sold unabated, bang peddling is done in broad daylight and thus the high incidence of rape cases and incest in the region," posed the PS.

Speaking at Kangaru Boys high school in Embu, the Transport PS said that police must crackdown on those behind the vice failure to which education and positive development in the area may not be realised.

"We cannot continue to expect schools to perform better when they are surrounded by chang'aa and bhang dens," he said, adding that it seems as if the provincial administration is unable to deal with the vice at all.

The Kangaru District Education Board (D.E.B) Day Secondary School Head Teacher, Francis Nyaga, said that the slum, which is just next to the school, continues to present a challenge to the learning environment.

"Some of these students live in the slums, and sometimes they fail to attend classes to assist their parents to brew and sell the liquor. Others have dropped out of school as they have been lured into the illicit trade, which is threatening to wipe out the whole young generation," he posed.

Nyaga said that some of the students have difficulties in concentrating with their studies due to hunger because their parents are lost in the brew dens and have no time for their children. The principal said that the school is usually forced to cook excess food during lunch time so that pupils who reside in the slums can eat the remaining food at 4pm before they go home, as majority sleep hungry.

"We all know that there is nothing a student can grasp in class if they are hunger stricken, and with such a poor environment for learning," he said, calling upon the government to intervene and save the students before the situation worsens.

Nyeri schools chopper ride for high performance

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

INITIALLY, the best performing students were awarded bags, umbrellas, utensils, certificates and books, but things have since changed with time. Today, the top student goes home with a laptop, a brief case or trophy.

However, this too is changing with rural schools innovating new ways of motivating and appreciating the students. Students are being offered free chopper rides, where a student is flown high for about ten minutes to inspire them to always aim high.

In rural areas where choppers are only spotted in the air, the students burn midnight oil working hard in order not to miss that rare chance.

The 'flying rides' have motivated the students, who not only enjoy a helicopter landing near them, but also flying for the first time in their lives.

"Although we are happy appearing in the media as top performers, we are happier when we enjoy the ride. We compete a lot in order not to miss the ride," said a student at BIRTHIA Girls Secondary School in Othaya of Nyeri County after a six minute ride in the

air.

A joyful student in Form III who was flown for the first time in her life said, "I want to fly high like that chopper until I reach my destination. I know the journey is long and tough but with God's grace, I know I will achieve it."

A recent prize giving at BIRTHIA Girls Secondary School in Othaya also met top girls enjoying such rides for the first time in the institution, which was the first school to start such an initiative in Othaya.

Three students who excelled in last year's KCSE, the three best improved students and the best three in all classes were flown in a chopper in trips organized by the chairman of the school's Board of Governors, Anthony Maina, as a way of motivating the girls to study hard. The girls were flown across Othaya and the surrounding towns, which was a symbolic representation that they can fly high in their lives and achieve much.

Another best performing girl in last year's exam, Rose Karuri, who joined the school with 317 marks from Giakanja primary and managed to get Grade A, the first to be achieved in that

school, was excited when she enjoyed the ride.

"It was the greatest experience and it encouraged me to work even harder at the University. I believe with determination and hard work one can achieve anything in life, no matter where they come from. I have come from a local school and I am dreaming high," said the 18-year-old who plans to join Kenyatta University to study law.

Another top student, Catherine Kagoko, says, "this is my happiest day in life. I have never had such an experience of being on top of the world. Everything was below me. A big town was just as small as a village. I really enjoyed. I have never been near a helicopter in my life, let alone being flown away."

The BoG chairman said this was the only unique way that the flight was meant to send a message to the other students that every girl can fly high. He said the chopper ride was meant to motivate the pupils to work even harder in order to fly high as the helicopter.

"Every year, we shall be looking for a unique way to motivate the girls,

but this one seems to be the best of all. The girls and parents have really enjoyed the programme," said the chairman. Maina was the first to bring such an initiative in Othaya, and said that he will ensure the programme is held annually.

He noted that children in the area have a lot of potential and they only needed to be motivated for them to perform better. "I was very impressed after the school produced the first A- in the history of this school out of the 90 students who sat for the exams last year. I also promised to surprise the parents, teachers and students. We also have to improve infrastructure of the school," he says.

The chairman says that the board has resolved to reward the best performing students in the school as well as the most improved students in order to motivate the rest to work harder and perform better. "I want to be flying high like I have seen the pilot doing from now onwards. It was a good experience up there and hopes to remain on top of all students all the time," another student adds.

At the neighbouring Mathira district, area MP Ephraim Maina gives free rides to students in his constituency who excel in KCPE every year as a form of appreciation and motivation.

The MP believes that the chopper ride motivates the pupils to work even harder in order to fly high. The chopper flew several rounds in the air where over ten students who excelled in last year's KCPE joined for a free ride. Parents and teachers welcomed the initiative, saying that it is the best option, though expensive.

"I personally I have never boarded a chopper. My daughter who is just 18 years old enjoyed the ride last year. She has since been narrating to colleagues how she enjoyed it. As long as parents will not cough any cent, we have no problem with the rides," says 67-year-old John Maina, who is a Mathira parent.

Several district education officers interviewed say that this is a positive move in motivating students instead of relying on the old ways of giving prizes. This, of course, comes with a prize since one helicopter charges about Ksh 200,000 per hour, and bearing in mind the function will take several hours, this will amount close to Ksh 1 million for that particular day.



Some of the best students in the last year's KCSE of BIRTHIA Girls Secondary School enjoy a chopper ride in Othaya recently. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Retired teacher out to curb exam cheating

By LINK CORRESPONDENT

JOHN Ndungo, a retired teacher, has come up with a new method that seeks to curb cheating during national examinations.

The former teacher at St Agustin in Embu has come up with a computer program that is currently in use by several schools in Kirinyaga County to test its practicability.

He said that he was motivated when he saw a circular from Education Ministry asking teachers familiarize themselves

with computer operations.

Ndungo got a scholarship to study computer science at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT), where he graduated with a degree.

He says that after the four years at JKUAT he went back to his former school, St. Agustin, where he was appointed as the director of studies. With the position, he was able to put his computer skills into practice. A computer class was also started to make sure that teachers streamline their lesson plans through

computer training.

Ndungo says that in 2010 he came up with formulae on learning habits outlined in books that included synergic simulations in schools, simulations in computer method, simulations in synergic thinking, syllabus instructions to computer technology habits that were a culmination of 13 years in research on computer skills in primary and secondary schools in Kenya.

"I also came up with several guide books on computer studies that have proved a success when used on learners," he said.

He says that telling a teacher to be computer literate is not enough because majority will only acquire packages that everybody else has adding that the government needs to come up with clear guidelines on how computer learning can become a success in schools.

He has been able to put up computer centres in Ishiara, Embu, and Kiyanaga where teachers can acquire skills.

He says that teaching is supposed to be taken beyond chalkboard learning and converted to computer technology if vision

2030 is to be realised.

He said that cheating in exams can be a thing of the past if schools adopt his technology.

"I have been able to invent a programme that has been used during mock examinations and we have ascertained that it can help curb cheating as students do not need writing pads," he said.

Ndungo said that students can enroll in the program right from standard one to university level. He has been able to train over 300 teachers and over 100 nurses.

Comic book on epilepsy targets 1m pupils in Kenya

By HENRY OWINO

EPILEPSY is one of the non-communicable diseases but feared by many especially school children. The disease can affect anybody at any stage in life but it is not infectious.

Epilepsy is said to be a brain disorder that causes people to have recurring seizures (convulsions). The seizures happen when clusters of nerve cells, or neurons, in the brain send out the wrong signals. People may have strange sensations and emotions or behave strangely. They may have violent muscle spasms or lose consciousness.

Epilepsy has many possible causes, including illness, brain injury and abnormal brain development. In many cases, the cause is unknown.

Doctors use brain scans and other tests to diagnose epilepsy. It is important to start treatment right away. There is no cure for epilepsy, but medicines can control seizures for most people. When medicines are not working well, surgery or implanted devices such as vagus nerve stimulators may help. It is believed special diets can help some children with epilepsy.

Many epileptics have continued to suffer and others even die due to lack of immediate assistance from people around them. It is for this reason that Sanofi Pharmaceutical Company has taken the initiative to distribute a comic book entitled "We'll Make It". The book is written by Dr. Pierre Genton and Vincent Ringler to school children.

The book is aimed at providing information about epilepsy for the school children, to understand the disease, relate well with those who have it, and assist them during convulsion.

According to World Health Organization, Epilepsy is the most common neurological disorder affecting approximately one per cent of the global population, 50 million people, suffering from it. It can happen in any age, however more than half of the cases start during childhood. On the other hand, 75 per cent of people with epilepsy in developing countries do not receive appropriate treatment.

Addressing media during the launch of the comic book, which also served as the first African Epilepsy Congress held at a hotel in Nairobi, Dr. Pierre Genton said the main aim of the book is to fight misconceptions and stigma about epilepsy.

Dr Genton stated the book will help inform the public and improve access to treatment which is to be distributed in schools in Kenya as part of Sanofi Access to Medicine Public-

Private partnership activities.

He explained the initiative have been made possible through assistance of the Kenya Association for the Welfare of People with Epilepsy (KAWE). "This is part of an ambitious educational campaign which aims to reach more than one million pupils in Kenya, Benin, Cameroon,

help them out in case they convulse and lost balance," he promised.

Dr Osman Miyajji, Neurologist and President of KAWE stated that epilepsy has numerous causes; the most important risk factors include: perinatal complications, head trauma, central nervous system infections and a family history of epilepsy. He al-

cines, Sanofi Pharmaceuticals said in their Corporate Social Responsibility Department(CSR) its mission is to develop sustainable solutions to improve access to care for patients most in-need.

Dr Gerard pointed out eight disease areas: malaria, tuberculosis, sleeping sickness, leishmaniasis, Cha-



The comic book on epilepsy encourages team work in sports without segregating those with the disease.
Photo/Henry Owino

Madagascar and Senegal," said Dr Genton.

Dr Genton, Neurologist and member of the NGO Sante Sud, the author of the comic book regretted that in Africa just like in other places around the world; epilepsy is often seen as a curse or even a sign of evil spirits. He added that others still believe epilepsy is contagious, contributing to the stigma and exclusion of such patients in many groups.

Dr Genton lamented some epileptic children are barred from access to school and some adults patients cannot marry or get a job. He explained the comic book illustrates how people suffering from epilepsy could be accommodated in work places, families, schools among other groups in the society.

"The comic book tells the story of two kids who have epilepsy, and through the theme of football, the book will reach the largest number of people, whatever their age or socio-economic background," explained Dr Genton.

"This book will be made available to schools in Kenya for pupils to read and understand that epilepsy is non-communicable disease, so they need to accommodate their friends and

luded the brain disease can be treated with medications which, in approximately 70 per cent cases, will totally prevent the occurrence of seizures.

Dr Miyajji clarified the disease is characterized by repetitive epileptic seizures which can range from "Grand Mal seizures" where the whole body is affected by convulsions and are easily recognizable to less impressive symptoms such as "absences"(simple blackout), auditory hallucinations or localized muscular contractions.

He cautioned that seizures can lead to a fall and/or a complete blackout which can be responsible of accidents which can result, for instance, in burns or drowning and such like.

"Epilepsy is a disease, that can be treated and according to the WHO, 70 per cent of patients on medication generally no longer have any epileptic seizure. Unfortunately, many beliefs and misconceptions lead to the exclusion of patients with epilepsy; too often, in Africa, epileptic patients and their families are afraid to see a doctor" said Dr Miyajji.

Dr Daniel Gerard, Director Chronic Diseases, Access to Medi-

gas disease, Buruli ulcer, epilepsy and mental disorders. He explained these are done to promote integrated approach to disease management which combines prevention, diagnosis and treatment through; tiered pricing to ensure medicines are affordable, information and education programmes for all actors in the health chain, research and development to meet future needs and partnership for success in the field.

The CSR department Director said Sanofi is a global and diversified healthcare leader that discovers, develops and distributes therapeutic solutions focused on patients' needs.

"We at Sanofi have core strengths in the field of healthcare with seven growth platforms; diabetes solutions, human vaccines, innovative drugs, consumer healthcare, emerging markets, animal health and the new Genzyme. So we are diversified in many areas of health," explained Dr Gerard.

Gerard further said the company is not only in East Africa but also listed in Paris and in New York yet still expanding its branches to other place is the world.

KNUT issues another strike threat

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

THE Kenya National Union of Teachers, Knut has threatened to mobilize teachers to down their tools in September if the government fails to respond to their 300percent pay rise demand.

Addressing teachers and senior union officials drawn from Busia, Siaya, Mombasa and Nairobi during the Busia County KNUT annual general meeting held at Lwanya Primary school recently, Knut secretary general David Okuta Osiany accused the government of failing to respond to the needs of teachers despite the role they play in the society.

"Teachers play a very significant role in the society through education, but it is sad to note that the government has failed to recognize and appreciate teachers," said Osiany, adding that teachers deserve better terms and conditions of service.

The secretary general said teachers have no option but to seek redress by downing their tools to force the government to improve on their remuneration considering that they have been given a raw deal for a long time.

"The planned September strike will paralyze learning in all primary schools. Prepare for the strike to demand better working conditions as the government has turned a deaf ear to your plight," said Osiany, adding that he would rather die fighting for the rights of teachers rather than disappoint them.

"For now we have a very good Education Minister, but they change like chameleon. We want to move together in an effort to achieve our goal," said the secretary general, adding that he will not tolerate lip service in matters relating to the welfare of teachers.

The secretary general was accompanied by members of the National Executive Council and Busia County KNUT leadership who included the executive secretary Mark Oseno, the chairman Nyumba Munsundi and other invited guests.

Bahari bursary committee on the spotlight

By BEKADZO TONDO

Bahari Constituency bursary committee has been accused of falsifying information in order to deprive bright students of bursary allocation.

The chairman of the committee who is also the Bahari Mp Benedict Gunda says the though the committee had given village elders the mandate to provide information on needy and bright students, the elders have been recommending low performing stu-

dents from rich families.

"The committee in charge of bursary funds allocations in Bahari Constituency has developed bursary application forms through which the village elders are required to verify needy cases but they have instead opted to furnish the committee with wrong information, thus denying the needy of funds," adds Gunda.

However, parents with students in secondary schools, colleges and university in the constituency are pointing

fingers at the bursary allocation committee which they say has been favouring lower performing student from rich families in the bursary allocation.

Led by Kasena Yeri, the parents demanded that the bursary allocation process be streamlined as currently students with fee balances that have accumulated to Ksh.30, 000 were being awarded a paltry Ksh. 2,000 which was too little to support their stay in school.

This is unfair and we should push

for allocations that appear to support such cases," said Mr Yeri.

Mr. Yeri further claimed most of the bright students from poor families have been forced to drop out of school due to lack of school fees.

But the MP said that the bursary committee was committed to helping out the needy students and blamed elders who give falsified information for their selfish ends.

The MP at the same time lamented that CDF was restricted as to the

amount each student can receive from the kitty to help accommodate the large numbers of needy students.

He said in the last year financial year, constituency bursary committee received over 7000 applications for bursary but the figure was way beyond its capacity.

The legislator urged the government to consider increasing the allocation of the CDF funds to each constituency so that needy students especially the orphans can be assisted.

Mixed reactions greet oil discovery in Turkana

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

WHEN President Mwai Kibaki broke the news on Kenyan Oil prospects, Turkana County earned the envy of her contemporaries.

Attention shifted to the hitherto 'cursed County'. The residents were particularly elated. With smiling faces and new found agility, prospects of a better future overshadowed the historical hardships they had weathered.

This optimism was further reinforced by additional information that the Ngamia-1 well was only one among many.

With the experts report on the commercial viability of the Kenyan oil nearly consolidated, Turkana residents are feasting on hope.

Amid this excitement, however, sits a deeply rooted fear.

The residents must now grapple with intricate issue of governance. Many politicians have burst into the limelight, salivating for the new status oil confers on the County.

Without an effective and sound multi-tiered governance structure, the residents fear they may not benefit from oil exploration in the County.

According to Derrick Merinyang, a resident of Lokichar, Turkana County has high levels of illiteracy.

"Because of limited education, residents have been manipulated by politicians who are not development minded," says Merinyang.

Poverty has equally contributed to poor leadership and governance in the County. Hard living conditions have encouraged electoral malpractices, like inducements and intimidation.

"Voter bribery and buying have defined past elections in this County," says Jackson Nakusa, who is eying the Turkana County Senate seat.

This, according to Nakusa, has eliminated competent leaders that are financially disadvantaged.

Although it remains the responsibility of Independent Electoral and Boundary Commission (IEBC) to conduct voter education to avert some of the malpractices, the region has no history of effective civic education.

According to Erick Lokai, a local trader at Lokichar, civic education in the County has been affected by poor infrastructure and insecurity.

"IEBC offices are located in Lodwar. With no roads, they cannot ac-

cess the remote areas where most of the Turkana's reside due to their pastoralist lifestyle," says Lokai.

Lokai adds that proliferation of small arms in the region has also negatively affected civic education in Turkana.

"The insecurity has led to selective regional civic education. Access to information through the media is also negligible. Newspapers get here days after publication," notes Lokai, adding that television sets are a luxury in the region, only affordable to a few.

Oil as a resource is believed to be an impetus of the protracted boundaries wars.

Of equal concern is the lack of Identity Cards among youth. This has disenfranchised many residents from participating in the electoral process.

"With a population exceeding 850,000, barely 100,000 residents can vote. This is unfortunate. We are calling on the government to expedite

issuance of ID cards to enable our youth to participate in the forthcoming elections," says Senator Aspirant Nakusa.

Even though the new constitution accord both sexes have equal opportunity in leadership, Turkana County hardly has female leaders. This lopsided representation has been fuelled by patriarchal societal structures.

"Our culture abhors women leaders, but under the new constitutional dispensation we hope things will change. Already we have women administrators, including chiefs," says Lydia Awoi, a Youth Leader in Lokichar.

Without addressing the concerns identified by the residents, the election of credible and competent leaders will remain elusive in the County.

Poor leadership will equally thwart the realisation of the hopes of Turkana residents, despite the oil exploration and extraction tipped to be actualised in the County.

Turkana South District Commissioner, Mr. Joseph Kanyiri, advises the residents to elect people who will champion the development agenda of the region.

"Let the community members pick leaders wisely who can help them reap from this God given resource and you should avoid electing selfish leaders," said the DC.

The DC further urged the residents to embrace modern education in order to capitalise on the oil and auxiliary services which will soon be demanded in the region.

As the next six-pronged General Elections approaches, Kakalel David, a fresh graduate from Nakukulas village, Lokichar, has a word of advice to his fellow Turkana youth:

"Let us be cautious of the shaky leaders who have always taken advantage of us. Under devolved government and emerging oil issue, let us elect the best in order to effectively manage our resources," said David.



Ngamia-1 drill site: Oil discovery in Turkana.

Somali war a waste of resources, says Awori

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

ECONOMIC woes facing Kenyans is now being blamed on the government's failure to get its priorities right. Former Vice-President Moody Awori is categorical that the struggle by Kenyans to get out of poverty is being thwarted by bad government policies and misplaced priorities.

Awori takes a swipe at Kenya's post independent governments saying that they have more often than not misused and continue to misuse the nation's resources. The former VP questions the logic behind the government's move to send the Kenyan soldiers to Somali at the expense of other burning issues that directly affect Kenyans.

"It was quite absurd for the government to use a lot of resources to fight Al-shabaab in Somalia at the expense of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)," he says. He avers that the resettlement of the IDPs was more urgent than deploying the Kenyan military into a war torn Somali to track down the Al-shabaab.

Awori claims that there have been IDPs in Kenya since 1990 and severely reprimands the government for keeping itself aloof from these miserable Kenyans.

"It is now over two decades since the challenge posed by IDPs became an issue of concern but the government has so far done nothing substantial to address the same with similar urgency as when it moved to deal with the Al-shabaab in Somalia. The former VP notes with dismay that 50 years after independence, Kenyans are still suffering due to lack of clear government policies.

Awori is disappointed that even the declarations to fight ignorance, poverty and disease, made by the founding father of the nation at independence, the late Mzee Jomo Kenyatta have not been achieved.

The former VP who has retired from active politics urges Kenyans to elect leaders wisely during the forthcoming general elections.

He points out that Kenyans will have themselves to blame if the leaders they are going to elect will be poor managers of both the national and devolved resources.

Awori was speaking recently in Bumula District of Bungoma County.

Wakoli calls for transparency in CDF

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

RE-ALLOCATION of funds earmarked for approved projects under the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) kitty should all be inclusive.

Lands Assistant Minister Bifwoli Wakoli says emphasis should be put on participation of all stakeholders at all stages of the project implementation and cycle.

Wakoli avers that failure by the CDF committees at all levels to inform other stakeholders about re-allocation of funds to new project causes suspicion and doubt about the use of the monies.

CDF is a participatory fund and for it to succeed and have any impact on citizens' expectations in regard to socio-economic development, members of the public and civil of society Organization (CSOs) must be involved in all its stages.

There are five committees/ bodies created under CDF Act 2003 and the subsequent amendment CDF Act 2007 that carry out specific functions to ensure the smooth running of the fund.

The committees are:

- The board of management of CDF.
- The CDF parliamentary committee

- The Districts Projects committee
- The Constituency Development Fund committee
- Project Management Committee

It is imperative to note that the CDF only funds projects that benefit the community at large.

CDF does not fund private enterprises, merry-go-rounds, religions and political organisations and activities, and recurrent costs.

The projects that are funded by the CDF include: construction of classrooms, health facility buildings, water projects, roads, foot bridges and police posts among others.

After the 2007 amendments, the

Constituency Development Fund Committees (CDFs) can now acquire land and buildings, although the assets remain the property of the CDF board.

The CDF amendment bill, 2007 also empowers the CDFs to re-allocate unspent funds to other projects by listing the expenditure on the appropriate form, which must then be approved by the CDF board.

Failure by the parties concerned to inform other stakeholder about the reallocation of the funds makes the community and other people charged with social auditing responsibility to assume that the money was spent on

ghost projects or misappropriated.

It is in this light that the Bumula MP wants his CDFC to be transparent during the implementation of CDF projects by keeping the community informed.

Wakoli cautions the CDFC's to ensure that the money is spent on intended projects only so as not to cause confusion during inspection of the projects by government officials and non-state actors.

The MP's remarks come at the time after his constituency was ranked as one of the worst performers in terms of implementation of CDF projects by the National Tax Payers Association (NTA).

Wakoli was speaking recently at Lunakwe Centre in his constituency during a public Baraza.

The Link

Enhancing governance for all

IEBC must take its work seriously

IT seems the mandarins at Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) still do not comprehend the sensitivity of their functions and mandate. They have no clue about the gravity of the matter, so to speak. How on earth can they play the dangerous game of Russian roulette with Kenyans' lives after such orgy of bloodletting that followed the bungled results of the presidential elections that was blamed on their predecessor, the infamous Kivuitu-led Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK)?

We at the Link as at a loss how on earth the Hassan-led IEBC could play graft games with something as critical to its image as the acquisition of tamper-proof electronic voting systems. But again, it seems the entire government departments have not learnt their lessons because tendering has remained a source of easy loot for those responsible.

Those in the know say that no tender running into billions can be awarded transparently without kickback. Even so, no can of sane mind expected that such dangerous corruption games could be extended to something as important as the voter registration given that corruption was identified as one of the agenda four items that Kenyans said must be tackled to guarantee free, fair and peaceful elections.

Are some people in government hell-bent on perpetuating chaos in the country so that they can benefit from it politically and economically? If so, and we strongly suspect that is the case, then Kenyans should identify such rotten eggs and throw them out to the hounds come next general elections. We see belated movement within government, from the principals, cabinet to MPs, trying to force the IEBC to ensuring it secures the biometrics registration gadgets.

One wonders what they were waiting for all along when signs were written all over the walls in town for all to see that IEBC was off tangent in terms of securing the gadgets. If the manufacturers of this crucial biometrics voter register (BVR) are well known, why can't the country source it directly at factory price and cut of the lords of corruption and impunity?

Did we have to wait for American Democratic leaders Obama and Hillary to tell us that simple thing? This trend of defrauding Kenya's using every tender opportunity must stop. New ID Cards tender is till embroiled in controversy and the Money printing tender is shrouded in mystery and the list goes on and all of them are multi-billion project. In fact corruption has become so engereed in our social fabric ordinary Kenyans are unfortunately beginning to accept it as normal.

In fact they frown at someone who has stolen less than a million; stone to death one that has picked a pocket and marvel at the one who has stolen billions. Mr. President and Mr. Prime Minister, what kind of legacy are you bequeathing. Ask your selves as you struggle to save face over the IEBC fiasco.



COMMENTARY

Activists urge NCIC to stop ethnic survey in public offices

THE National Cohesion and Integration Commission officials are currently conducting a survey to establish ethnic representation in public institutions.

However, the exercise has attracted uproar with the Executive Director of the Center for Multiparty Democracy (CMD) criticizing the method being used in collecting data to determine ethnic balance in public institutions.

Njeri Kabeberi, the executive director for CMD has condemned the survey by National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) and termed it inappropriate.

"The NCIC's mandate is to bring national cohesion and asking people of their ethnic origin, makes them more ethnically anxious and this is not acceptable," says Kabeberi.

Addressing participants at recent gender forum organized by Heinrich Böll Stiftung Foundation in Nairobi, Kabeberi said asking people their ethnic identity was in a way making Kenyans more tribal than before.

She urged the youth and women to vote in women in various political offices in the next coming general election.

"I was born and bred in Nairobi, the only tribe I know and speak is Kenyan. When you ask me where I come from to determine my ethnicity, it is like forcing me to think like, 'oh!' I am from a particular tribe and not Kenyan anymore," asserted Kabeberi.

Kabeberi said the Ministry of the East Africa Community claims it will achieve political federation in the five countries by 2015 yet Kenya is divided under ethnic groupings.

"The East African Community dream is about to be realized, yet resolving small issues like ethnicity in Kenya is a big problem?" posed Kabeberi.

Kabeberi regretted that the NCIC bid to determine ethnic balance in public institutions, has elicited opposition adding that the exercise will

not help Kenyans move forward.

Echoing the same sentiments, Prof Maria Nzomo revealed that when NCIC's officials went to her office during the ongoing survey to determine ethnic balance in public institutions, she refused to disclose her ethnic group.

"They came to my office, asked for my ethnic origin; I told them I am Kenyan. When they insisted I told them to leave the form blank," explained Prof Nzomo who is the chair of the Institute of Diplomacy and International Relations at the University of Nairobi.

Prof Nzomo adds that Kenyans should learn from Rwanda, which experienced genocide due to the same ethnicity. She suggested that NCIC should find a better method to carry out the survey than bringing in tribes.

She laments that if women were to be viewed first as women, this country could have gone far. Instead she said that identity comes second with ethnic group as number one. Prof Nzomo wondered how the gains in gender equity and equality will be achieved despite the provision in the current dispensation.

The professor called upon women not to be divided along tribal lines instead vote for able women with development agenda and policies which would unite them for a common goal in elective positions.

"We have a role as women and as Kenyans. We should now vote for fellow women and take advantage of the provisions of the current Constitution and have more women in the next government," said the enthusiastic Prof Nzomo.

According to the Constitution, employers should ensure ethnic balance. Having more than two thirds of the same community is against

the law. This will also ensure job opportunities for those who qualify for them rather tribe mate absorption.

Speaking during the plenary session, Professor Karega Munene, an Anthropologist from United States International University (USIU) attributed negative ethnicity to education.

"The more educated we are, the more ethnic we become. I say this because it is the educated people who promote it since they know how to benefit from ethnicity," Prof Karega observed.

Prof Karega asked NCIC to incorporate scholars in the Cohesion process. He complained that scholars have been left out in the cohesion efforts yet their expertise is needed.

"The Cohesion Commission needs to tap the human resource of our Sociologists, Physiologists, Anthropologists, and other scholars to advise it on building nationhood cohesion," advised Prof Karega.

Other concerns that arose from the gender forum were how NCIC will determine the ethnicity of women married to men from different communities yet they use their spouses' surnames.

Also deliberated on were questions like; is Kenya ready for a women president and if yes, will negative ethnicity once again make us choose incompetent, greedy leaders in the next coming general elections? Will women seeking elective position be viewed first as women and then discriminated against from the community they come from?

These concerns are perhaps some of the past trends of voting in men and locking out their female counterparts in competitive elective positions. Another factor brought to the attention of NCIC officials present at the meeting, was how to determine ethnic origin based on shared names among communities.

However, Prof Jacqueline Oduol Secretary for Children Affairs in the Ministry of Gender, Children and So-



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Kenyan teens pitch for peaceful polls

By HENRY OWINO

KENYAN teens launched global peace campaign to forestall ethnic polarization ahead of 2013 polls. The teenagers from Africa Leadership Academy are advocating for peace in the country with or without general elections.

The aim of this campaign is mobilize as many teens as possible in the country to be ambassadors of peace and avoid the recurrence of incidents that characterized the last general elections.

The campaign is set to be officially launched and graced by various Kenyan artists on August 11, 2012 at Uhuru Park, Nairobi. A prior pledge is to be signed by the two Principals President Mwai Kibaki and Prime Minister, Raila Odinga as an agreement to hold peaceful elections and accept the verdict of the elections outcome.

All presidential aspirants are also expected to attend the event and lead their supporters in signing the peace deal that would ensure no violence during and after the polls.

Addressing journalists, Sophie Umazi, aged 18 and the CEO of the Teens Initiative said the programme is set to be rolled out in violence prone regions.

According to Umazi, the unity campaign is dubbed "I am a Kenyan" and seeks to promote peace and patriotism through photography ahead of the general elections set for March next year.

Umazi said the programme is divided into three phases where the first phase involves collection of photographs from people holding a placard saying "I am a Kenyan". The pictures will then be posted on various media platforms including social media, billboards and newspapers.



The Kenyan teens team for Peace Campaign to forestall ethnic polarization ahead of 2013 polls.
Photo/Henry Owino

"We are concerned about our future as young people because of the increasing polarization of our country along tribal line," says Ms Umazi. As young people, we have the right to demand for a peaceful future and that's why we are seeking help from the world to raise awareness and build collective consciousness," she added.

The six youngsters; Brandon Macharia, Musila Munuve, Steve Bob Oluoch, Trevor Mwendwa and Elizabeth aged between 17-19 say they are determined to mobilize people around the world to support peace during the electioneering period.

All the six teens are students studying in various colleges in foreign countries but currently they are in long vacation. They promised to influence other students from local schools and colleges/universities to embrace the initiative and carry it forward after they leave.

They hope that when people take the photographs and see them around the city on a daily basis, it will make them identify themselves as Kenyans before anything else and avoid a repeat of what was witnessed after the 2007 polls.

"The team has so far received pictures through Facebook and the project website from all over the world includ-

ing countries such as Senegal, South Africa, Morocco, Tunisia, USA, England and Singapore. Locally the team has conducted photo shoots in Kariobangi, Mathare North, Huruma and various high schools across the country to bring the total uploaded photos so far to slightly over 3,500," explained Umazi.

The campaign is expected to hit the ground around Nairobi's Central Business District (CBD) with a peaceful match, concert and placards bearing the phrase "I am Kenyan". After the official launch at Uhuru Park, the initiative is expected to roll out to other towns and to the grassroots.

Activists urge NCIC to stop ethnic survey in public offices

From Page 8

cial Development defended NCIC saying Kenyans need to understand why the survey is being carried out instead of sweeping ethnic issues under the carpet.

Prof Oduol who was the guest speaker said there is a need to investigate ethnic tension in the NCIC's survey.

She alludes that the tension may be caused by one community feeling worthy not to be touched or credentials to employments were compromised for certain individuals adding that the other un-

derlying factors may be to protect self interests.

She suggested keen listening instead of engaging in trivial discussions as the solution to a way of averting negative ethnicity in the country.

"Blaming people will not help us move forward," said Prof Oduol. "We should move from leader-centric leadership to collaborative relational process. Blame games are used to buy time and escape responsibility," suggested Prof Oduol.

Other speakers in the meet-

ing also cautioned against voting along tribal lines in the coming general election. They unanimously agreed to vote leaders who have vision for the country and development agenda.

The National Cohesion and Integration Act, bestow the Commission with a duty to facilitate and promote the equality of opportunity, good relations, harmony and peaceful co-existence. These involve persons of the different ethnic and racial communities of Kenya as well as to advise the government on all aspects of co-

existence.

One of NCIC's strategies is to hold national multimedia conversation on race and ethnicity.

In Article 232(i) of the current Kenyan Constitution, equality of men and women is provided for as fundamental human rights.

The Constitution requires adequate and equal opportunities for appointment, training and advancement for women and men at all levels within the Public Service Commission. It further ensures that there is ethnic balance in all public service positions.

By HENRY OWINO

ROAD accidents account for more than 1.3 million deaths every year while an average 50 million people are injured or disabled. It is among the top 10 causes of death accounting for 2.1 per cent of total global mortality.

It is estimated that by 2030 road traffic injuries will have moved from 9th to 5th place among the leading causes of death. Currently approximately 3,500 people die every day globally from road traffic crashes.

In Kenya, the grim statistics have moved Hon Jakoyo Midiwo, Gem Member of Parliament (MP) to come up with traffic amendment Bill to avert the scenario. Experts say this may be just one solution among many that would help reduce road carnage currently being experienced in Kenya's roads.

The Bill introduces stiffer penalties on offenders and recommends for a first offender, the driving license be revoked for a period of two years, a fine of Ksh 100,000 or imprisonment for two years or both. The second time conviction of reckless driving; would lead to a fine of Ksh 300,000 and two years imprisonment or a year of disqualification from driving. Other recommendations include taking refresher driving courses every three years, testing driver's competence with the type vehicle they drive among others.

The proposed Bill suggests that a driver must surrender license plate to traffic police manning road blocks if his or her vehicle has no insurance.

Proposed penalties include hefty fines every month for non-compliance with the law, requires renewal of license every 3 years, substantially increases penalties for drunk-driving, imposes mandatory life sentence for reckless and dangerous driving, increases penalties for repeat of speed offenders, calls for double fines for not wearing helmets on motorcycles, regulate all public service vehicles (PSVs) including bus fare, uniforms, among other competence requirements.

In addition, the proposed traffic bill prohibits drivers from taking short cuts through petrol stations or on sidewalks to evade traffic jams. It also requires Inspector-General of Police to Gazette any road blocks to curb corruption in the sector.

According to the current laws on traffic; drivers are required to have insurance coverage as prerequisite for vehicle registration, driver license renewal is every 12 months or 3 years, prohibits drug and drunk-driving, penalties include fines and imprisonment, prohibits reckless and dangerous driving punishable by imprisonment of up to 10 years, prohibits speeding and imposes penalties for violations, requires helmet-wearing for all on road and all roads engine types.

To make the proposed Bill more effective, Kiragu Wachira, Policy and Legislative Advisor has also proposed

Midiwo bill may help reduce traffic accidents



A vehicle that got involved in a road accident recently. Photo/File

drunken driving needs proper definition.

For the child safety, vehicles that transport children to school must be fitted with safety equipment and spells out punitive measures for those who violate the provision. "If all these measures are put in place, it might help reduce the number of accidents on Kenyans roads especially along Thika and Mombasa roads. On average more than four people die on these two roads in Nairobi every single day," concluded Wachira.

Today Mombasa road has four-lane dual carriageway which starts from Haile Selassie roundabout in the city centre. The road has attracted many investors due to its easy access to the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA).

The 50 kilometers Thika Super Highway runs from Museum Hill in Nairobi to Thika town. It leads to major institutions like KCA University, Kenyatta University, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agri-

culture and Technology, among others business premises.

The road is considered to be the busiest highway in East Africa having eight lanes and able to carry over 70,000 vehicles a day. The road has been constructed by Kenyan and Chinese governments and the African Development Bank funds.

What had been seen as a blessing for motorists, property developers and big business owners is now a harbinger of death and suffering. Statistics from the Traffic Department show that at least 1,600 fatalities have been recorded, 3,736 admitted to various hospitals with serious injuries and 2,336 had minor injuries between January to June 2012.

According to Luka Kimaru, the Deputy Traffic Commandants, the figure is likely to rise unless stringent measures are put in place for both motorists and pedestrians. He attributes the deaths to carelessness among road users and incomple-

tion of the road. Kimaru said there are no road signs to communicate to all road users, no flyovers, bridges, proper crossing sections and pedestrians are ever in a hurry.

"Kenyans see themselves as special human beings and expects that it is the duty of the drivers to not to knock them down. Most pedestrians are ever in a hurry to cross from one side to the other. This attitude has to change or else we shall continue dying," said Kimaru.

Kimaru reprimands those who refuse to use flyovers, underpasses and tunnels and instead chooses to walk across the road. However, he said it is the delay to put up foot bridges and the drainage system that is becoming a nightmare.

The Ministry of Roads has identified crossing points and promised to build about 18 foot bridges for pedestrians crossing the superhighway to reduce the road crashes.

Kilifi residents demand removal of union board

By BEKADZO TONDO

LEADERS in Kilifi County have rejected the newly appointed Kilifi District Cooperative Union board and demanded that the board be reconstituted afresh.

Led by the Kilifi Town council chairlady Esther Kache, the leaders took to task the District cooperative officer Ms Mary Mkare and demanded to know the criteria used to elect the board members.

According to Kache, members of the board were just hand-picked by the official without the involvement of the other stakeholders in the area and demanded that the board be disbanded and reconstituted afresh.

"We were shocked to hear that the board members were elected during a meeting presided over the District Cooperative Officer in the absence of other stakeholders and thus we reject the list," said Kache.

The leaders spoke during the Bahari District Development Committee meeting which was chaired by the Kilifi County Commissioner Mr. Maalim Mohamed held at Kilifi county hall.

However Mkare defended herself, saying the elections were conducted in line with cooperative rules and that all stakeholders were involved.

"As far as I am concerned the law governing the elections of cooperative officials were followed and that all stakeholders were involved and thus insist that the board members were duly elected," said Mkare.

The officer said the elections attracted representatives from cooperative affiliated to the union who unanimously endorsed Mrs. Fatuma Mwakidudu as the chairperson to the board.

The chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Mr Jacob Saleri demanded that the board be dissolved as officials were hand-picked by the cooperative office to safe guard their interests.

Mr. Saleri asked the cooperative officer to explain to the meeting what the board had done to assist farmers since they were elected in office.

The KNCCI official further lamented that most assets belonging to Kilifi farmers cooperative union have been disposed off to private developers and demanded to know whether there were any attempts to recover the assets.

"Kilifi cooperative union has lots of assets that include huge tracts of land and commercial buildings but most of these assets have been secretly disposed to private individuals as farmers wallow in misery," said Mr. Saleri.

The county commissioner had convened the DDC meeting to discuss development programs in the county and address issues that impede smooth implementation of projects.

Uproar over squatter resettlement in Trans Nzoia

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

THE government has been asked to probe irregularities that have characterized the resettlement of landless people at the Chepchoina settlement scheme in Trans Nzoia County.

The programme, unveiled by Land Minister Mr. James Orengo last March, has sparked public uproar following claims of corruption and political influence.

A local politician has been accused of importing people from Kakamega County and influencing their resettlement to the scheme.

Documents available at the local lands office indicate that some of the people earmarked for resettlement include allies and workers of the politician.

The Lands Ministry last year revoked allocations of former and serving government officials by the former KANU regime to facilitate the resettlement of landless people from various communities in the County.

Most of the beneficiaries of the land

at the scheme were former and serving government officials, who were allocated between 10 and 50 acres. Some of the land has, in the past, remained idle after beneficiaries abandoned it due to insecurity.

While unveiling the resettlement exercise, Orengo said that about 1600 landless people were targeted for the allocations.

The beneficiaries are expected to be allocated between two and five acres of land. The allocations have elicited protest from the over 30,000 squatters in the county, with the group claiming that it has been ignored.

The Trans Nzoia Squatters Alliance chairman, Mr. Christopher Mutasia, furiously termed the resettlement exercise a sham and called for its nullification.

"Not even one squatter from my group has benefitted from the land distribution. It has been politically manipulated and we are moving to court to stop the resettlement," vowed Mutasia.

Mutasia regretted that politicians have hijacked the programme to suit



Mr. Orengo

their political interests at the expense of the targeted group.

"It is a sham. It is unfortunate for a politician to import people from his native home and political allies to be allocated land when deserving people reside in squalid along the road reserves," la-

mented Mutasia, urging the Lands Minister to stop the exercise.

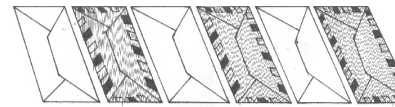
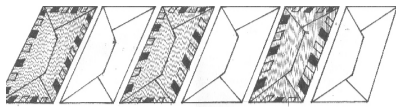
The former Kitale mayor threatened to name the politician behind the anomalies, arguing that it is useless for the government to allocate land to able people while deserving groups are left out.

"It is a big shame for a politician to have his housemaid allocated land when some people are painfully suffering while living on road reserves. We want the whole exercise cancelled," demanded councillor Werunga.

The Kwana District Commissioner, Mr. Gabriel Risie, was reluctant to provide details on the resettlement, but maintained that right procedures have been followed in the whole exercise.

He said that 1,681 people are set to benefit from the resettlement, and 400 people have already been shown their parcels.

"We are appealing to those people with allotment letters to show up and get in touch with district land adjudication officer in order to hasten the exercise," said Risie.



Upgrading of slum projects need revisiting

IT IS quite unfortunate how the country is so caught up in a campaign frenzy that more pressing issues affecting poor Kenyans have been pushed to the periphery. It is appalling that none of the leading presidential aspirants is talking about the deplorable living conditions of slum dwellers who represent a significant chunk of voters. A UN-Habitat report discloses that Nairobi has some of the most dense, unhygienic and insecure slums on earth.

Almost half of Nairobi's population lives in the over 100 slums and squatter settlements within the city with no safe water and sanitation. Little wonder then that the slum areas perpetually hit the headlines for all the wrong reasons.

In November 2000, a meeting by President Moi and the executive director of the UN-Habitat gave birth to the Kenya Slum Upgrading Project (Kensup). Kibera was given priority, which meant the shacks and shanties were to be replaced by decent houses.

The programme is moving at a snail's pace with the first phase marred by controversy. With this programme funded by credible bodies such as Habitat, the World Bank and the government, it raises questions why its wheels are rolling so slowly. The ministries of Roads, Housing, Lands and Local Government are mandated with implementing the project.

Questions have been raised on whether the programme will actually benefit slum dwellers. Beneficiaries often rent out their newly acquired houses and find their way back to the slums. This defeats the whole purpose of the programme.

The government has to ensure the programme is carried out expeditiously to ensure crooks do not fraudulently acquire the houses.

In a recent study on slum residents' priorities, a paltry 15 per cent had considerations for better housing. To this end, the government misses the point if all it sets out to do is put up new houses without vigilance.

Other aspects such as corruption, poor drainage, roads, sanitation, security and better income ought to be factored in. Resident stay in slums because they cannot afford better housing available elsewhere.

The policies being employed in slum up-grading must be revised. The slum dweller should be economically empowered to begin with. When this is achieved, then the upgrading process should be undertaken with streamlined procedures on who owns what.

Antony Luvizu
via e-mail

Corruption is the cause of collapsing buildings in city

THE recent collapse of a building in Mlolongo, where six Kenyans, died was overshadowed by the deaths of Internal Security minister George Saitoti, his assistant Orwa Ojodeh and four police officers in a helicopter crash the following day.

Very touching was the story of a couple who ran a business in the collapsed building and who died together. On the fateful evening, Moses and Diana Ochieng were checking out their restaurant business. They clung to each other when the building collapsed and died huddled together.

A few days ago, John Mwangi wrote in one of the dailies complaining about another building coming up in Mlolongo that has "very thin columns and looks shaky". This is definitely a disaster waiting to happen.

Who will stop this deliberate slaughter of innocent Kenyans by greedy developers?

The buck stops with local authorities. They approve plans for development, carry out inspections on sites and issue occupation certificates to developers.

The architectural Association of Kenya estimates illegal developments at 60 per cent of the total ongoing construction works.

These authorities claim that they lack the capacity to monitor and inspect construction works due to lack of adequate manpower.

This excuse alludes that there could be some developments



Search and rescue efforts at one of the collapsed building site. Cases of poor construction standards should be blamed on corruption in the local authorities.

coming up without the knowledge of the authorities.

That is a big lie. No matter where your plot lies in the city, the moment you show the intention of putting up a structure, some officers will immediately land on your door step asking for "approved plans", their intention being to harass and intimidate

you into parting with a bribe.

With officers who can traverse all concerns of the city collecting bribes, the council evidently has the manpower that can enforce planning guidelines.

Clearly, the problem is corruption, not lack of capacity.

Martin T. Maseghe,
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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By BLESSINGS GRACE

NUMEROUS stories have been written about the traumatic experiences and aftermath of the 2007/8 post-election violence. They continue to state the statistics of people who are reported to have lost their lives or be displaced from their homes.

We have sympathized and empathized with our fellow Kenyans who were victims of the clashes, and countless organizations have sprung up in the regions worst hit to promote peace.

Government commissions have been established in order to seek redress for the injustices and reconcile the communities.

It is logical enough to note the fact that men, women and children died in the most inhuman way. Properties worth millions of shillings faded into ashes while others remain unforgettable spectacles of destruction.

But how many of us have sat down as individuals to meditate on our roles in creating harmony and disharmony in this country?

Even as the National Cohesion and Integration Committee urge each of us to embrace harmonious co-existence amongst ourselves while the Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission seeks justice for the offended in society, how willing are you as an individual to promote peace?

The fallen Internal Security and Provincial Administration Minister, Prof. George Saitoti in his meeting with the Pokot and Turkana in a bid to seal unity between them, emphatically told the representatives: "Peace is the key to development."

Without the realization that peace is a fundamental aspect to growth and development in any state, we as Kenyans are either doomed or lost. Think about Rwanda: where are they now, and where are they headed?

They have taken off the mask of being Hutus or Tutsis. They are now one nation, not tribes pretending to be a nation.

What about us Kenyans? When will we choose to stand as a country and not as an ethnic group or tribe?

Mr. John Busii, a Conflict Resolution expert who has actively been involved in discussions and research aimed at creating Peace Accords between the Kikuyu and Kalenjin as well as the Pokot and Turkana, clearly identifies the issue of ethnicity as a major factor causing division amongst members of Kenyan communities.

"There is a conflict between con-

Need to internalize the peace process

flicts in peacemaking in the country. Unless every member of the community decides to change his perception towards one another, it is difficult to achieve peace. We must all replace the attitude of tribalism or ethnicity from our hearts with culture of respect, brotherhood and sisterhood," Busii strongly notes.

Mr. Busii terms the ideology of superiority and inferiority amongst community members as a "pandemic discrimination," which must be broken down at an individual level.

"It is deeply hurting when I see people from different tribes refuse to greet one another just because they come from across the bridge. What if I you sit down and solve your differences, how much do you stand to lose?" Mr. Busii queries.

Article 27(5), Chap4 of the new constitution sternly warns an individual against discrimination on whatever basis.

It states, "A person shall not discriminate directly or indirectly against any person on any ground,

including: race, sex, pregnancy, marital status, health status, ethnic or social origin, colour, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, dress, language or birth."

As an individual who constitutes a community, how much have you done to shed off stereotypical attitudes towards that person who speaks another language or follows different traditions and religious beliefs in the office, market place, matatu, shop, grazing field or water point?

As a professional in driving a common agenda of unity and sanity in the communities living in the Rift Valley, Mr. Busii prescribes a recipe for everyone: note down the benefits of identifying yourself to a class of superiors, a particular ethnic group and causing chaos against the losses of being a neutral ethnic group member and peace actor.

"While we apply the relevant methodologies to address the causes and symptoms of conflicts to change communities to accept one another and live in harmony, the question is

how many are willing to change and how long will it last?" Mr. Busii notes.

Mr. Koigi wa Wamwere, a renowned speaker against negative ethnicity, says that promoting peace and unity in total disregard of influence and input of every individual is just a futile exercise.

Mr. Wamwere identifies negative ethnicity as a 'monster' that fuels hatred that converts into feelings of elimination, and, therefore, stirs the peace of the people in a region.

"Negative ethnicity is a self seeking feeling, very selfish, that wants to destroy or harm the ethnic other in order to be in control. It is terrible and more than just a cult for blood sucking," Mr. Wamwere quotes.

He explains it as a step-to-step development that merely begins with cheap jokes that generate into stereotypes, and then grows into the 'demonic' feelings of genocide.

"When someone easily refers to another as a chicken eater, then later calls a group of his kind as chicken lovers, then the next time identifies them as snakes, that means he has psychologically prepared to eliminate them; a process of a joke, to a stereotype, into genocide," Mr. Wamwere notes.

He recognizes that every individual is involved in it directly and indirectly, and calls for self-examination to pull away from it.

To fight it, Wamwere says, everybody must be able to accept and acknowledge that it exists within us. That we move from an attitude of survival for the fittest to one of survival for us all in a harmonious environment. That we stand strong to disassociate ourselves from any tribal alliances or use of inflammatory language.

"It is that madness that we must save ourselves from! It begins with an individual. It is a kind of a tsunami euphoria that sweeps us all because we fall into mob mentality," notes Mr. Wamwere.

As we move into the general elections, how much have you done to neutralize that ethnicity or tribalism aspect from your mindset?

Have you in any way changed your discriminatory thoughts of fellow Kenyans?



The late Prof. George Saitoti

Ministry tells private health clinics to fend for themselves

By BEKADZO TONDO

THE ministry of Health and Medical Services has warned that it will not provide medical personnel and drugs to health facilities built by the private sector without consultations.

Kilifi District Medical Officer of health Dr David Mulewa decried the mushrooming of health facilities in the area which he said remained unutilized for many years because they are not registered with the ministry of health.

The MOH raised the concern during the Bahari District Development Committee meeting at Kilifi county hall and chaired by the outgoing Kilifi county commissioner Mr. Maalim Mohamed where he urged all partners in the health sector to involve the line ministries to curb on wastage.

"As Ministry of Health, we are concerned on the mushrooming of health facilities in Bahari, Ganze, Kaloleni and Rabai constituencies mostly built by our private partners but such projects have remained unutilized as they are not registered with the ministry," said Mr. Mulewa.

He was reacting to calls by residents of Chonyi who want the ministry of health to deploy medical personnel and drugs to Mwembekati Health Center which has not been operational for some time due to logistical issues.

Dr. Mulewa said most of the health centers which have not been operational included those built using Constituency Development Funds (CDF) and by the council through the Local Authority Transfer Funds (LATF).

Commissioner Mohamed concurred with the sentiments expressed by the MOH sentiments and urged stakeholders in different development sectors including health to consult the line ministries for technical advice and approval of the projects before injecting public funds.

He said it was wrong for development partners to pump millions of shillings on community projects without consulting line ministries as this translated to wastage of public funds.

"It is a requirement that the private organization or government parastatal must consult the concerned ministries before initiating community projects so that they can be given the relevant technical support and have the projects registered with the government," said Mr. Mohamed.

The administrator at the same time urged leaders at the sub district development committee to conduct feasibility studies before they submit their proposed projects for approval by the district development committees.

"It is sad to find that some projects presented to the development committees for approval lack valuable information which makes it difficult to discuss and approve them," said Mr. Mohamed

The MOH, however, informed the committee that the ministry of health will deploy 10 nurses at the district hospital who will later be deployed to the rural health centers lacking medical personnel.

Dr. Mulewa further said the two ambulances stationed at Kilifi district hospital will be taken to Ganze and Matsangoni health center to assist patients and mostly expectant mothers who get referrals to the district hospital.

Bungoma County's budget estimates

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

BUNGOMA County council has projected to generate a total of Ksh. 444,088,788 in revenue during the 2012/2013 fiscal year.

The council will however, operate on an estimated budget of Ksh. 416,684,021 during the year under review.

Presenting the approved estimates for financial year 2012/2013, the finance, staff establishment and general purposes committee chair cllr. Vincent Sikwata named sources of income as follows:

- Local authority transfer Fund LATF – Ksh. 318,003,079
- Local sources – Ksh. 126,085,709

The finance chair told the audience that the budget was prepared to meet the needs of the residents in order to reduce poverty.

Cllr. Sikwata added that the council's budget has also been prepared in line with the ministerial budget preparation circular No. 212-221.

"This budget was prepared in conformity with the needs of the people identified through local authority service Delivery action Plan (LASDAP) and other stakeholders meetings held

last year," he said.

Consequently, cllr. Sikwata pointed out that the council intends to spend a total of Ksh. 66.5 million on core poverty programmes as follows:

- Health – Ksh. 7,650,000
- Education – Ksh. 26,570,000
- Water – Ksh. 3,650,000
- Roads – Ksh. 23,630,000
- Bursaries – Ksh. 5,000,000
- Total - Ksh. 66,500,000**

The council's total estimated expenditure for 2012/2013 financial year are as follows:

- Personnel – Ksh. 144,857,158

- Operations – Ksh. 91,203,915
- Maintenance – Ksh. 57,222,948
- Capital projects – Ksh. 119,000,000
- Debt resolution – Ksh. 1,400,000
- Total: Ksh. 416,684,021**

He said that the council will enhance its revenue collections so as to serve residents better and for the targets to be fully met.

Cllr. Sikwata appealed to the residents to accord council officers the necessary support in terms of local revenue collections so as to serve them better and for the set targets to be fully met.

NGOs declare war against gender violence

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

WESTERN Education Advocacy and Empowerment Program (WEAWP), a Kakamega based NGO has embarked on an exercise that seeks to sensitize 100 community elders on the dangers of harmful cultural practices that promote gender based violence.

The organization's programme officer, Silira Muganda, says initiative targets elders from Mount Elgon, Kakamega and Busia who will also sensitize other community members.

He explains that about 82 percent of girls in Western Province experience domestic violence and abuse due to patriarchal society and male chauvinism.

He blames this on women's low economic status, low literacy levels, non-enforcement of rights, unfair justice system and lack of support services which he

says had continued to perpetuate the culture of impunity.

"Most girls drop out of primary and secondary schools due to increased cases of early marriages and pregnancies, lack of rights knowledge and confidence, poor school environment and gender insensitive facilities and non-enforcement of readmission policy," says the program officer.

"Currently, our organization is supporting a total of 800 children annually. About 3,400 children have benefited from the organization's services in the last three years.

The organization is also supporting street children and young people to secure education and vocational training, providing rehabilitation to street children, facilitating support, enrolment of orphans, placement and increment of economic activities for affected families, especially

women and building the capacity of local CBOs and government departments to improve on the lives of the disadvantaged children in the society," she says.

The program which is funded by PATH in collaboration with APHIA plus Western Education Advocacy and Empowerment Program will run through 2012 to 2015.

The initiative seeks to promote attitude change in the society to reduce the culture of impunity against women and girls, increase community involvement in the campaign against Gender Based Violence, develop support systems and services that are gender responsive and increase of institutional strengthening capacity on Gender Based Violence operations.

"It is expected that at the end of the project period, men will acknowledge the rights of wom-

en and girls in the society, push for legal redress and justice for survivors of Gender Based Violence and a result based operational coordinating mechanisms set in place.

Mukanda at the same time said that Gender Based Violence was caused by unequal power relations between men and women hence perpetuating and condoning violence within the family, the community and the state.

"The distinction between made between public and private spheres should not serve as an excuse for not addressing domestic violence as a form of Gender Based Violence," said Mukanda, adding that poverty, civil unrest, displacement and harmful cultural or traditional beliefs about women and girls are some of the factors that have contributed significantly to gender based violence against women and girls.

Nyeri local authorities operate in deficit

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

MOST of the local authorities in Nyeri County will operate in deficits in the new financial year.

Out of the four councils, only Karatina Municipal Council will operate under surplus while the rest will operate in deficits.

Nyeri Municipal Council has a deficit of Ksh 55.6 million in the current financial year.

According to Finance chairman Patrick Mwangi Kiago, the council projects to spend Ksh 421.9 million but will only manage to generate Ksh 366.3 million in revenue.

However, Kiago said they will recover the funds from land owners who have not been paying the land rates.

He said the council proposes to finance the deficit by auctioning plots with accumulated land Rates arrears, follow up on un-cleared C.I.L.O.R and Way Leave Fees debts from the Government and implementation of New Valuation Roll.

"The Land Rates Defaulters currently owe the council over Ksh 400 million. The amount could have gone to provision of service for the betterment of welfare of the residents," he adds.

Nyeri County Council will also operate under the Ksh 22.5 million in the financial budget.

The Council Finance Chairman Joel Gichuru Maina said the council expects to get income of Ksh 345.9 million while the expenditure stands at Ksh 368.5 million.

However the council chairman Wachira Maina said the Government owes the council over Ksh 100 million which if paid will help to cover the deficit.

Ken said the council which has been ranked 10th best position among all local authorities has been operating without any debt since last financial budget after the council paid Ksh 40 million owed to former teachers.

In Othaya Town Council, the council's budget faces a deficit of Ksh 6 million.

The town treasurer Washington Magochi who read the budget said the council targets to generate Ksh39 million in revenue against a projected expenditure of Ksh 45 million.

Karatina Municipal Council is the only council in Nyeri County which will operate under Ksh 276,000 surplus.

According to the Finance chairman Jack Kanja, the council's revenue stands at Ksh77.4 million while the expenditure stands at Ksh 77.1 million leaving a deficit of Ksh 276,000.

The council will spend its budget on street lighting and road maintenance among other projects.



Participants in the walk to campaign against gender based violence in high spirits.

Authority to prosecute polluters of water sources

By PETER MUTUKU

THE Water Resource Management Authority (WRMA) has threatened to move to court to prosecute people who contaminate water sources.

The WRMA Tana Athi Regional Manager, Boniface Mwaniki, cites people who engage in car wash business among the highest water polluters.

"The authority will not watch as residents are exposed to risks through water contamination in their commercial ac-

tivities. Such people should stop or else they will face legal action," he said.

Mwaniki said that the effluent from muddy vehicles poses a big health risk to people and marine life, which, if not stopped, can lead to contamination of water and outbreak of water-borne diseases.

He at the same time called on residents to conserve water to avoid shortages in times of drought. He called on residents to boil drinking water as a way of reducing water borne diseases, saying that those who

can afford to can also use chlorine, which, he said, is a cheap method to treat large quantities of drinking water.

Mwaniki further advised residents of the lower parts of Embu County and Tharaka to harvest rain water, to ensure reliable supply during the dry period.

"The rivers are now full and people can fetch water and store it in their containers at homes. They can alternatively dig trenches and let the rain water flow to their farms so that they can use the water

for irrigation during the dry spells," he said.

He, however, cautioned people living near quarries to be careful in their activities so to avoid being buried if quarries collapse, cautioning those involved in the activities of quarrying to go slow and follow the laid down procedures to avoid incidences, as such areas get weak during rainy seasons.

Mwaniki also advised farmers to plant as many trees as possible during this rainy season as part of conserving rainfall.

Uganda faulted for breaching community protocol

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

THE Kenya International Freight Warehousing Association has accused Uganda customs officials of breaching the East African Community partner states protocol by imposing unnecessary trade barriers.

The accusation came as transporters and long distance truck drivers staged a protest march to complain of delays by the Uganda customs officers while clearing them at a weighbridge on the Ugandan side of the border town.

The drivers transporting goods to neighboring countries through Uganda had resolved to go on strike to compel Uganda authorities adopt a gross weight system of weighing as agreed upon by the

three partner states instead of the axle weight which they say has seen them paying hefty fines in Uganda to the tune of Ush3million translating to Ksh100, 000.

The truck drivers demanded immediate removal and relocation of a weighbridge at Uganda custom yard to Busitema situated approximately thirteen kilometers away from the customs in order to ease congestion claiming that Uganda customs officials always take too long to clear their vehicles.

In a protest memo addressed to the Resident District Commissioner and other relevant authorities from the two countries and availed to The Link, the freight and warehousing association chairman Moses Ochieng said that complaints

had previously been raised by the other two partner state members namely Kenya and Tanzania to the effect that Uganda was violating the protocol by delaying the clearance of goods in transit to their countries.

"Efforts are being made by the East African secretariat to ensure immediate removal of trade barriers and weighbridges at the entry points in order to speed up the clearance of trucks hence avoiding delays," said the chairman, adding that unless urgent measures are taken by the partner states to resolve the issue, then the cooperation may as well be doomed as a failure.

The chairman further pointed out that Kenya being a member of the East African partner states

had introduced a Rapid Result Initiative to fast track the speedy clearance and movement of goods to and from the partner states and beyond.

"Kenya as a member of the East African Community has shown its commitment and willingness towards the removal of the trade barriers by implementing Rapid Result Initiative that aims at fast tracking the clearance of goods at the entry and exit points, but unfortunately, Uganda customs officials have been subjecting Kenyan truck drivers to a host of frustrations and harassment," stated the memo.

However, addressing the striking truck drivers at the Busia (Kenya) customs yard recently, Resident District Commissioner, Busia

Uganda Imran Muluga who was accompanied by his Busia Kenya counterpart Mwiandi Gitonga and security officers from both sides appealed to the truck drivers to call off the strike assuring them that they will consult higher authorities from the two governments so that a permanent solution to the problem can be found.

The Uganda resident district commissioner assured the truck drivers that his government plans to suspend the controversial weighbridge at the customs to ease congestion as other options are being sought to pave way for a permanent solution to the problem," said Muluga, adding that the two governments will do everything at their disposal to ensure the issue is addressed.

Media tipped on effective elections reporting

By LINK CORRESPONDENT

JOURNALISTS and media houses have been challenged to be more responsible while executing their duties for nation building and reconciliation in the upcoming electoral process.

The media personalities have been asked to be more aware that, at the stroke of their pen, the country could go up in flames again - even worse than that experienced in 2007/08.

Speaking during a three-day media training workshop at an Eldoret hotel, Steve Youngblood, a communications professor at Park University, USA, challenged media practitioners to reflect on their failures during and after the last general election and draw key lessons that would help forestall a repeat of the last post election violence.

In 2007/08 Kenya went up into flames, with blame being leveled against media for playing some role in exacerbating the inter-tribal violence. The violence claimed more than 1,200 people, over 300,000 people were displaced, and thousands wounded. Property worth millions was destroyed following the acrimonious presidential result.

Prof. Youngblood said that journalists' role, both locally and globally, remains critical and to determining the existence and survival of a peaceful and developed society; one free and fair for all.

The US don reiterated that without checks and balances, their work could erode or undermine peace and reconciliation efforts as the country prepares for another general election slated for March next year.

He urged the media to remain vigilant against hate speech during electoral campaigns in order to ensure those involved in spewing hatred are accountable.

"Kenya's social media usage is rapidly growing. The platform is increasingly the latest catch for politicians to market their issues. Let's not forget, they may try to pass-by you and spread hate words using the social media," Prof. Youngblood reminded, while cautioning journalists to be more aware of the advances by politicians who, during any electoral process, want to become darlings yet have only two agendas: more and



Media houses have been challenged to be more responsible while executing their duties for nation building.

good coverage for themselves, and less and bad coverage for their opponents.

The training was organized by Peace Journalism Foundation, East Africa, and sponsored by Nairobi's U.S. Embassy. It saw reporters gain practical skills on how to package and deliver conflict sensitive stories.

Gloria Laker, PJF director, shared her experiences as a reporter in the once war ravaged Northern Uganda.

Ms. Laker, a former BBC reporter, said that journalists had the power to impact society either positively or negatively.

"As journalist we have the power to reduce violence by attempting possibilities that are beneficial for the aggrieved parties or fuel the conflict to violence. The choice lies in us and our pens," the PJF founder affirmed.

While cognizant of the fact that making a big impact needed more journalists on board, Prof. Youngblood challenged the participants

to spread the gospel of responsible peace and electoral journalism among their colleagues in order to prevent a revisit to violence before and after elections early next year.

"If these new peace journalists can successfully engage their colleagues and their station's management, and if they continue producing peace-themed stories while systematically considering the consequences of what they report and how they report it, I'm optimistic that media induced or exacerbated violence won't reappear next year in Kenya," said the communications professor.

In his finality, Prof. Youngblood, who is also the director of Center for Global Peace Journalism, Park University, appealed to the participants to share with their managers some proactive media house guidelines/policies that were crafted during the training, noting that they reflected the principles of professional Peace Journalism.

The principles that were reflected

in their station policies included: being careful to avoid inflammatory, emotive, and using divisive language; balancing stories by including information from all relevant parties; framing stories in such a way to avoid "pouring petrol on the fire"; and telling stories that give a "voice to the voiceless".

Others guidelines included not letting politicians use media to spread hate speech or propaganda and taking charge of radio callers and in-studio guests so that they are not allowed to incite violence or spread hatred.

He, however, underscored the need for media house management to consider peace journalism, saying: "All the well-intentioned peace journalists in the world can't effectively eschew inflammatory reporting without the support of their editors and managers, who must realize that peace and development are desirable, profitable business models for their media houses."

Lobby steps up efforts to save medicinal tree from extinction

By TITUS MAERO

A KAKAMEGA based Environmental Organization has stepped up efforts to raise more seedlings of a tree species whose bulk is highly sought by pharmaceutical companies and herbalists to treat prostate cancer.

The Kakamega Environmental Education Group (KEEG) Chairman, Benjamin Okalo, says that pharmaceutical companies and herbalists have been using agents to extract the bulk of Red Stink tree, thus posing a big threat to its survival.

Okalo regretted that prostate cancer is increasingly attacking men in their mid forties and above, causing many deaths due to lack of facilities in the country to detect and cure the disease in its early stage.

"Herbalists and pharmaceutical companies have found the Red Stink Wood tree to have a cure for the disease, hence the demand to extract medicine from its bulk," he added, noting that prominent personalities in the country who contract the disease go abroad for treatment.

Speaking at the Kakamega forest offices, he said that it is for this reason that the organization has increased the propagation of its tree seedlings in order to save it from extinction, adding that this year the organization plans to plant 1 million seedlings of the tree to meet the demand.

The official also pointed out that members of the public were being educated to use the leaves of the tree instead of extracting its bulk, as the leaves have similar properties and medicinal value.

He said that the organization has stepped up efforts to raise more seedlings of the tree, known in Luhya language as Mwilita and Mwiri in Kikuyu language, and added that the tree takes 80 years to fully mature.

Women scientist grant lies idle

Even as the government intensifies efforts to incorporate the gender perspective in science technology, women are largely underrepresented with majority opting for supportive roles which are not often recognized by scientists and their institutions

By FAITH MUIRURI

QUESTIONS regarding the full and effective participation of women in decision-making and implementation process related to science and technology continues to spur intense debate in the country with calls to mainstream gender perspectives into the field of research and innovation.

The debate has been characterized by explicit references on the important role that women play as intermediaries of the natural environment and society in respect to agro ecosystems, safe water and food and as producers, users and managers of energy resources.

This has inevitably pushed for the inclusion of women at all levels of decision making and implementation of technology driven projects which mainly seek to alleviate hunger, improve the quality of life by providing clean water and simplifying housework through labour saving devices.

Most recently, the government has launched initiatives that specifically target women scientists to enable them to contribute equally to the development of science, technology and innovation in their respective areas.

In this regard, the government has rolled out, the Women Scientists grant which seeks to promote women empowerment and participation in all scientific, technological and innovation processes in the country.

The grant is currently being administered by the National Council for Science and Technology (NCST).

A total of 73 research projects by women scientists from both public and private institutions have been funded since the inception of the grant three years ago.

Notable projects include technological interventions to reduce incidences of drought related human diseases in Yatta District funded during the 2011/2012 financial year.

Data available at the NCST reveals that the project is ongoing and focuses mainly on the adoption of water harvesting, green house and food drying technologies as remedy to myriad health related challenges such as malnourishment afflicting residents, in addition to introducing income generating projects. The project is slated to benefit 173,943 people on completion.

The project is a joint initiative by Dr Jane Mputhia, Benter Onyango, Eng. Jokatsa Kalungu, Alice Mutungi and Prof Stella Obanyi of Kenya Polytechnic University College. Records indicate that the green house project that has been rolled out at Ngangani area is doing well.

"A water reservoir has been excavated and covered with dam liners and is awaiting roofing while the other one at Kenyatta site is ongoing. The solar food drier has already been constructed awaiting surplus vegetables to dry in order to boost food preservation and conservation," reads the NCST report in part.

Another striking technology funded under the grant includes the regeneration of bamboo to diversify the food base and help stop depletion of forests. The project seeks to introduce the previously neglected bamboo shoots as an alternative source of food and income for majority of vulnerable

communities in Kenya.

According to the lead researcher Dr Margaret Karembu of International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), the potential of bamboo shoots as food source remain largely unexploited in the country, compared to Asian countries where consumption ranges from classy menus to food cottage industries.

The project thus seeks to regenerate and domesticate edible bamboo varieties available in the country thus expanding the food security base

of science and technology.

This can be attested by the fact that only a few women are coming out to exploit the grant that specifically targets deployment of technological efforts informed by local realities.

According to Dr Edwardina Ndhine who is a Senior Science Secretary with NCST, out of the Ksh 500 million that has been allocated to the fund, only Ksh73,894,755 million has been utilised.

She says that in the current financial year, NCST has already invited proposals under the women grant

less women scientists are willing to take up the opportunities at their disposal, they will remain as mere spectators in the wind of change.

"Women researchers must take charge of science driven technologies to help foster and diffuse a greater number of innovations which can play an important role in resolving the numerous problems bedeviling other women at the local level," she adds.

Dr Ndhine says that the country is faced with numerous challenges that range from poverty to hunger and climate change and thus women must



MEPA chairman sign the Sh. 25.4 grant.

Photo/File

while at the same time helping to stem the tide of deforestation in Kenya.

The project has incorporated two bamboo growing farmers in Kakamega and Kiambu districts comprising of 13 and 14 persons respectively. Shoots of the naturally growing and exotic edible bamboo varieties have been harvested in Kakamega and Kamae forests and their nutritional composition determined using standard methods to obtain nutritional composition.

The researcher notes that the government has already intensified efforts towards the domestication of bamboo. "Consumption of bamboo shoots has also been introduced to the communities and there are communities in and around Mt Elgon sun drying or smoking the shoots which are then taken as vegetables," she reveals adding that the nutritional analysis of the varieties indicate a high level of potassium calcium, magnesium, iron, zinc and fibre.

But even as the projects continue to transform communities at the grassroots by focusing more on satisfying their basic needs such as adequate food, shelter, medical care, safety and education, women are yet to tap on the vast potential in the field

with a Ksh 5 million tag on every successful proposal, but the response is quite discouraging.

"Even as the call goes out, we have very few women applicants seeking out funding, which means that women are either ignorant of the fund or our strategy is not working," she explains during the interview.

Projects that qualify for funding under the grant include agricultural, health, basic and applied sciences, engineering, mathematics, technology and social sciences inclined to STI.

Dr Ndhine says that the few women scientists who have benefitted from the funding are not eligible for additional funds under the grant.

She however says women scientists have also failed to submit their proposals for funding in general grants and cites innovations grant where 13 male scientists were recently funded to the tune of Ksh 15 million with no single woman applying for funding.

The official says this is despite the fact that science and technology is the engine that translates to profound social change in the 21st century.

Dr Ndhine who also chairs the committee that seeks to mainstream gender in the council warns that un-

become involved if they are to have an input into the manner in which science and technology are used and if societies are to benefit from their insights and knowledge.

"Women must be able to contribute equally to the development of science and technology and innovation which enhance economic growth, job creation and general society well being and which will ensure that the needs of both women and men are met in new products and applications," she affirms.

She points out that, practical outcomes of science and technology are not value free and the more women participate in science and technology, the more empowered they become to articulate women issues to help reduce existing gender disparities the society.

She says that many more women researchers are needed to help use science and technology in a variety of applications and called for the establishment of support systems to increase the number of women funded scientific projects.

"The numerous challenges that face women at the grassroots can be addressed if more women drive research at the local level," she adds.

Tempers flare over proposed Kwale mining project

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

A MEETING convened by the National Environment Management Authority (Nema) to approve a mining project in Kwale County ended prematurely after residents differed over whether or not to license the project.

Tempers flared at the meeting held at Mrima Youth Polytechnic as residents opposed to the project rejected plans to issue Cortec Mining Kenya Ltd with a mining license.

Critics argued that the project should not take off until residents are adequately sensitized on the project.

However Prof. Juma Makopa, a lecturer of Environmental Chemistry at the University of Nairobi, said it was wrong for lobby groups such as the South Coast Residents Association (SCRA) to push people into rejecting the project citing decimation of wild animals and forests.

"Everybody wants development, our mothers have been forced to walk for long distances before they can access maternity facilities," he said.

He also took issue with councilors who have opposed the project, saying they had their own agenda.

SCRA through its chairperson Luciana Perez said that the project if allowed to proceed would adversely affect the ecosystem and she had fears that the EIA was shoddily done.

The Kwale County Council chairman Paul Kwaka Makiri said the council was yet to take sides.

The company's Managing Director David Anderson said exploration has taken five years while the assessment has run for 18 months.

"We recently concluded survey for 40 hectares of land that consists of niobium while the rest of the hill is 619 hectares, the place of work and roads will only take five hectares.

He added: "Instead of drilling 50 boreholes we will drill five shallow ones to be used by the public too," said Anderson.

Prospection of niobium, which includes zircon, platinum group metals and rare earths have been identified at Kiruku hill, Nguluku and Dzombo, which according to Anderson has also shown existence of gold.

Mr. Dickson Njora, the Nema principal compliance and enforcement officer, representing the director general, assured locals that they would remain non-partisan as they seek more views.

"We will continue with dialogue to seek a way out, we will look at reports from other stakeholders and even the Constitution before we come up with a binding outcome," he said.

The company has an exploration license that has seen it continue with exploration.

Proceedings of debate on amendments

CONTINUED FROM JULY ISSUE

(Question of the amendment proposed)

Mr. Ruto: Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir, this is the strangest of all the amendments. Anyone can see that. It says that in nominating candidates for an election under subsection (1), a political party shall ensure that not more than two-thirds of the nominees are of the same gender. To whom is this amendment addressed? It is the citizens of this country who will vote during the nomination day and they will decide who the nominee will be; a woman or a man that is up to the electorate to decide in an electorate area. You cannot direct.

Therefore, I beg to oppose.

Mr. Kathuri: Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir, I stand to strongly oppose. It is very strange. Embu is not going to know what Nyanza is doing. How do you expect to know whether or not a woman will be nominated in Embu and another one in Kisii. It is not going to work. I oppose.

Dr. Laboso: Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir, I want to support strongly this proposal. I think that if there is one thing we have been grappling with on how to meet the no more than two-thirds rule, it is the constitutionality of it. Again, we have been talking about how constitutional our Parliament is going to be. This is a window of opportunity for us to address that problem. If all political parties bring nominees---

An Hon. Member: On a point of order!

Dr. Laboso: What is your point of order?

(Laughter)

Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir, are you allowing the point of order?

The Temporary Deputy Chairman (Mr. Ethuro): I am definitely not allowing it and I am also not allowing you to continue because you have assumed a role that is not yours for now.

Hon. Jakoyo Midiwo.

Mr. Midiwo: Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir, I rise to support this amendment. In doing so, I want to say that this country is grappling with how to implement the not more than two-thirds rule. I think Parliament could give directions.

Even if it was not this way, we must do something to bring women on board.

I want to support.

Mr. Lagat: Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir, though I respect the one-third rule, I think hon. Karua should, at least, be more creative and bring something that is actually workable. Parliament cannot act in vain; the nomination process is an election process; this is not something where you elect people.

(Question, that the words to be inserted be inserted, put and negated)

(Several Hon. Members stood up in their places)

(Loud consultations)

The Temporary Deputy Chair-

man (Mr. Ethuro): Hon. Members, let us not argue with the Chair. You do not have the numbers. Let us proceed.

Hon. Ruto, you have an amendment.

Mr. Namwamba: On a point of order, Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir. I am concerned and my concern arises right from the clause we have just voted upon.

Indulge me to remind the House that there is, indeed, a Bill on this gender matter before this House. I have just been looking at a ruling which was delivered by the Chair on 30th May, 2012. This ruling is on matters that should constitute, ordinarily, a Statue Law (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill. Please, allow me just to quote a few Sections of this ruling.

The Temporary Deputy Chairman (Mr. Ethuro): Order, hon. Namwamba. We have really passed that stage. Secondly, I thought you were actually in agreement when the Attorney-General pleaded with you that the issues that you may consider unconstitutional could be part of your petition to the House to support your cause. So, let us just proceed.

Mr. Namwamba: Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir, this is a matter of procedure.

The Temporary Deputy Chairman (Mr. Ethuro): And my predecessor had also communicated on that.

Mr. Namwamba: Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir, let me make my point.

Indulge me to put this on record.

The Temporary Deputy Chairman (Mr. Ethuro): No. Hon. Namwamba, I get the case but you are talking to a matter that we had already determined.

Mr. Namwamba: Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir, this is a new one; with your indulgence.

The Temporary Deputy Chair-



Mr. Ethuro

man (Mr. Ethuro): Order! Hon. Namwamba, you run the risk of being disorderly. I do not want to do what you are inviting me to. Take leave. Mr. Ruto!

Section 22 – The Elections Act, 2011

Mr. Ruto: Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, I beg to move:— THAT the Schedule to the Statue Law (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill, 2012 be amended in the amendments proposed to the Elec-

tions Act, 2011 (No. 24 of 2011) by inserting the following immediately after the amendments proposed to section 22 of the Elections Act—

New section 22A

The Elections Act, 2011 is amended by inserting the following new Section immediately after section 22—

Nomination for more than one elective seat.

22A. (1) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act and for the avoidance of doubt, a person who is nominated as a candidate for election as President or Deputy President is nevertheless eligible for nomination and may contest as a candidate for any other elective seat in the same elections.

(2) If a candidate for election as President or Deputy President is elected as such and is also elected for any other elective seat in the same elections, a vacancy shall thereupon be declared for that other elective seat and a by-election to fill such seat shall be held in accordance with this Act.

Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, that is on page 3666. The intention of this amendment is to ensure that democracies are allowed to continue to mature and that succession is allowable. We are all aware that, for example, in America, you can stand for President while you are a Senator. You then quit the office of Senator once elected. If you are not elected you continue as a Senator. I am suggesting here that, for example, the next President and Deputy President be allowed to, for example, also vie for Senate. If they win the presidency then they relinquish the lower seat.

Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir, you have seen what is happening in Uganda. Besigye---

The Temporary Deputy Chairman (Mr. Ethuro): Order! I think you have made your case, Hon. Ruto.

Mr. Ruto: Do not destroy the young cubs just like the lions do. Once they get into a herd they kill all the young cubs. These Presidential aspirants like Ms. Karua are useful.

(Question of the amendment proposed)

Mr. Muthama: Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir, frankly speaking there is no way that someone can stand and have three ballot boxes. You are voted for as President, Senator and Governor. Where are we going? That person vies for three positions and then he or she has to relinquish one of them. It should be one position as per one ballot box.

I oppose.

Ms. Karua: Madam Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir, I stand to oppose the amendment. We agreed in this House that one vote per person and the Commission on Implementation of the Constitution has reminded us that this amendment is actually unconstitutional. So, among the many unconstitutional things we have done this evening,

let us not add another one.

I oppose.

Dr. Nuh: On a point of order, Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir.

The Temporary Deputy Chairman (Mr. Ethuro): What is it, Dr. Nuh?

Dr. Nuh: Mr. Temporary Deputy



Ms. Karua

Chairman, Sir, whereas I do not support the amendment by Hon. Ruto, is hon. Martha Karua in order to always make reference to the CIC? The letter that was written by the CIC Chairman, Mr. Charles Nyachae, says, in the last sentence of the first paragraph:—

“The Commission for the Implementation of the Constitution has reviewed the proposed amendments to the Statute Law (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill that were discussed by the Committee of the whole House on Tuesday, 19th June, 2012.”

Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir, Tuesday, 19th June, 2012 was yesterday.

Hon. Members can recall that no such Statue Law amendments were discussed in this House yesterday. Are we going to make reference to letters written by people who are bound to only make conclusions based on hearsay? If anything, Mr. Charles Nyachae was in the loop and in communication with his other Commissioners. He would have known that no such Statue Law amendments were discussed yesterday.

The Temporary Deputy Chairman (Mr. Ethuro): Order! Order, Dr. Nuh! You have made your point. That is something you should have done when Hon. Namwamba raised the matter.

Proceed, Mr. John Pesa.

Mr. Pesa: Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir, I rise to oppose this amendment.

Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir, we should believe in the principle of one man, one job or one woman, one job for that matter. If we are talking of ourselves, as the Members of this House, to occupy two or three positions, what about the councillor down there? Is he going to be allowed to vie for councillor and Member of Parliament? We will balkanise this country, if we go that way. I would rather we unite this country. Let Kenyans be given a chance to chose who they want, from the few Kenyans that will present themselves for election.

The Temporary Deputy Chairman (Mr. Ethuro): Hon. Members, let me get an opinion that is in support, since I have been told to balance.

Yes, Hon. Moses Lessonet.

Mr. Lessonet: Mr. Temporary Deputy Speaker, Sir, of course, I stand to support the amendment by Hon. Ruto. As Hon. Ruto said, my main reason for supporting the amendment is that we still want the serious Presidential candidates to be with us in this House. For example, in the event that the Prime Minister does not make it to State House, we know that he will still make sense to this House and to this nation.

(Several Hon. Members stood up in their places)

The Temporary Deputy Chairman (Mr. Ethuro): Order! Order, Hon. Members!

Order, Hon. Lessonet!

Mr. Lessonet: I am on the Floor, Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir.

The Temporary Deputy Chairman (Mr. Ethuro): Order! Order! I will, therefore, put the Question.

(Question, that the words to be inserted be inserted, put and negated)

The Temporary Deputy Chairman (Mr. Ethuro): Order, Hon. Members. Let us go to the next amendment. Hon. Affey, you have an amendment. Is Hon. Affey in the House?

An Hon. Member: No!

The Temporary Deputy Chairman (Mr. Ethuro): The amendment is dropped.

(Proposed amendment by Hon. Affey dropped)

The Temporary Deputy Chairman (Mr. Ethuro): Hon. Baiya, you have an amendment to Section 28 of the Elections Act, 2011.

Mr. C. Kilongo: Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir, we need you to assist us. You have said Section 28 of what, where, which page? You can guide us.

The Temporary Deputy Chairman (Mr. Ethuro): Mr. Baiya's amendment is on page 3664 under Section 28 the third paragraph. But he is not here to move it and so the amendment is dropped.

(Proposed amendment by Hon. Baiya dropped)

The Assistant Minister for Industrialization (Mr. Muriithi): Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir, may I seek your guidance? Are the amendments by the Committee or by Mr. Baiya in his individual capacity?

The Temporary Deputy Chairman (Mr. Ethuro): That is a good issue but it is not for the Chair because you would assume if it was for the Committee there would have been another hon. Member. So, since neither the Hon. Member himself nor any other person that he delegated to and he did not mention, the Chair will assume they were just his personal amendments. Even if they were for the Committee and the Committee is not there to prosecute them, we have no choice but to drop them.

Mr. George Nyamweya: Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir, you know this problem arose from earlier rulings when it was said that although the Chairman of the Committee was moving it, when he was withdrawing he was allowed to do it and the Committee had difficulties and so on. So, it is not that there are no hon. Members of that Committee but it is the ruling that we are following.

The Temporary Deputy Chairman

s to political parties and elections laws

(Mr. Ethuro): Order, Mr. Nyamweya! Thank you for that input, but I want to remind you that even an ordinary Member bringing his or her own amendment can in writing ask another hon. Member to propose the same amendment. So, as the chair of the committee, he would easily have given it to a Member of the Committee. So, it is not because of the earlier ruling.

Mr. Baiya: I am Sorry, Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir, I was out. This is on page 3664 of the Order Paper.

The Temporary Deputy Chairman (Mr. Ethuro): Order, Mr. Baiya! The chair had actually dropped your amendment. So, let us make progress.

[The Temporary Deputy Chairman (Mr. Ethuro) left the Chair]

[The Temporary Deputy Chairlady (Dr. Laboso) resumed the Chair]

The Temporary Deputy Chairlady (Dr. Laboso): Mr. Baiya, your amendment has been overtaken by events.

The Assistant Minister for Water and Irrigation (Mr. Waititu): On a point of order, Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady. We have not disposed of that amendment by Mr. Baiya. We were just waiting for it. I came to that Table and the then Chair told me that we are going to S.28, and that is what we are waiting for. So, we have not disposed of that amendment.

Dr. Nuh: On a point of order, Mr. Temporary Deputy Chairman, Sir. I do not know whether rules of the House would apply selectively. The rationale for a Member of Parliament asking another Member to move an amendment on his behalf and giving the notice to the Speaker as an individual Member of Parliament is that---. However, a Committee of the House is an institution. There is a Vice-Chairperson of the Committee, and there are Members who can hold brief for the Committee. This situation should not be equated to one where if the Chair of a Committee went out for a specific reason, then unless he delegates and there is a notice to such effect by the Chair, then no other Member can move an amendment.

I do not see the rationale because a Committee is an institution, and because of collective responsibility, if an issue was discussed as a Committee then any Member of the Committee should be given the leeway to move an amendment in case the Chair is missing. Madam Temporary Deputy Chair, I seek for your guidance.

Madam Temporary Deputy (Dr. Laboso): Hon. Members, I shall be magnanimous and allow the hon. Chairman of the Committee a chance. As the ruling was being made he was entering the Chamber; therefore I will allow him a chance and he should really do it quickly.

Mr. Baiya: I am most obliged by the magnanimity shown by the Chair.

The Temporary Deputy Chair (Dr. Laboso): Order!

Allow us to dispose of the amendment on Mr. Ethuro's Section 27 before we come to the Chairman of the Committee.

Section 27 - The Elections Act, 2011

Mr. Ethuro: Madam Temporary Deputy Chair, I beg to move the following amendment to Section 27 of the Elections Act:-

(a) in the amendment proposed to sec-

tion 27 by deleting the word "three" appearing at the end of the amendment and substituting therefor the word "two"; Those are two months or 60 days. If you look at its relation with the other amendments I am bringing to the other section--- The party has two months to bring the nominations rules before they bring the nominees and candidates. It is only because of this particular transition period.

(Question of the amendment proposed)

The Minister for Medical Services (Prof. Anyang'-Nyong'o): Madam Temporary Deputy Chair, I am not opposing for the sake of it. I just need clarification because changing from three to two also appears in another amendment that I think is proposed to this section. I would like to know the rationale for reducing it from three to two.

One of the reasons why I am saying so is because the original drafters of this Act must have looked at the time frame very carefully with regard to the elections schedules and what the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) ought to do within a certain time period. If we are just amending it in the interest of parties that is a caution that I was putting to the House, that please let us not amend these things in our own interest, but let us look at a wider picture. I just want to see whether this is really in line with the election timetable and consideration; this is the consideration of the job that the IEBC is doing and not just consideration to one party to the elections, which are the political parties and politicians.

Thank you.

The Minister for Transport (Mr. Kimunya): Madam Temporary Deputy Chair, I am looking through the Bill and seeing the sequence of events; you have the election which is preceded by nominations, which are preceded by nomination rules.

Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, I do recall that when we were



Prof. Nyong'o

doing this the last time, the issue of six months was brought to this very House. That you need six months for political parties to give their nomination rules, for the Registrar of Political Parties and the IEBC and for the members themselves to know the rules under which the nominations will be held so that people do not end up with nomina-

tion rules being presented on one day, the nominations are the next day and then people are rigged out through the political parties because of the rules. Six months was very clear for purposes of transparency. The Attorney-General has reduced it to three months. Reducing it any further below three months would compromise the nomination procedure and we will end up with a situation where candidates are all over and nobody would ever know under what rules you would be nominated. So I would rather we stick to the three months and I would like to urge Mr. Ethuro to consider withdrawing his amendment so that we stick with three months then after that we can make progress. Otherwise, we will have very murky nominations.

Mr. Ethuro: Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, I agree with him. I listen and it is only a fool who cannot change his mind. The Deputy Leader of Government Business has convinced me; it is just another one month and I hope he will also listen to my advice in the subsequent amendments of 45 days to the General Election. I withdraw the amendment.

(Proposed amendment by Hon. Ethuro was withdrawn)

Section 28 - The Elections Act, 2011

Mr. Baiya: Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, I beg to move:- THAT, the Act be amended thus - s.28 Delete the words "three months before the nomination of the candidate" and substitute therefor the words "two months before the date of the general elections.

The rationale is, of course, to ensure that the period when this list of party members is forwarded to the Registrar does not become too long before the actual nominations of parties and even the General Elections, because political activities are more heightened around the time of the General Elections and it is not realistic to lock out members from registering when there is more political mobilization. I therefore, seek to move.

(Question of the amendment proposed)

Mrs. Odhiambo-Mabona: Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, I oppose because it has been moved un-procedurally.

The Assistant Minister for Water and Irrigation (Mr. Waititu): Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, I rise to support. History has shown in this country that there is a tendency of rigging candidates during nominations. That is not a secret! We should give the candidates ample time to move to other parties because we know very well that sometimes people even give money to buy the nominations. We lock out candidates who are popular with the people just because somebody used money to buy the nomination. So as far as I am concerned and fairness calls for people to be free to contest if Kenyans want them. Therefore, I support that we have ample time for people who have been rigged out to go to other parties and contest.

Mr. Lessonet: Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, I stand to support that amendment and the main reason is that parties in Kenya are still owned by individuals.

They are still private entities. You will have noticed that the democracy within parties is only at the lower levels; the constituency, district and county levels but at the national lev-



Mr. Namwamba

el, it is until that leader stops contesting for the presidency.

So, we really want to have leverage. We really want to move when we see dictatorship in parties; when we see tendencies that parties are about to rig you out just like hon. Waititu said. So, we support that amendment.

Mr. Mbuvi: Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, as the official leader of all the partyless Members of Parliament, Assistant Ministers and Ministers, I support. That is because all the Members who are going to be rigged out are going to join my party.

(Prof. Anyang'-Nyong'o stood up in his place)

Mr. Ruto: On a point of order, Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady. I rise on a point of order to ask whether it is in order for Hon. Anyang'-Nyong'o, who is one of the owners of political parties, and one who is likely to actually rig us out, to actually be allowed to contribute to this one.

(Laughter)

The Temporary Deputy Chairlady (Dr. Laboso): He is a Member of Parliament. The Member for Kisumu Rural!

The Minister for Medical Services (Prof. Anyang'-Nyong'o): Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, maybe, it is getting rather late in the night and the Hon. Ruto is losing the control of his senses. But that is neither here nor there.

Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, this point is very important. All these reasons that Members have given about owning parties and what not will not even be affected by reducing this thing to two months. All those variables you have mentioned

will stay the same. So, those are not very good reasons to put here about one way or the other. They are not related at all. They are not correlated to anything. But let me make this point. Let us realize that at this particular time, we are nominating

candidates, women representatives, assembly men, senators, Governors and MPs. It is a huge task. If you reduce the length of time that is required for political parties to submit all these things to the relevant authorities and the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission and so on, you risk the fact that people will not even have time to file petitions to challenge political parties about the same things you are talking about. In fact, if you reduce this time, it is not the political parties' bosses you are talking about who will suffer. In fact, you make their work easier because you have no time to petition. So, I think that leaving these things for three months gives you much more room to exercise your rights and to petition than reducing it. In fact, you are arguing against your own interest. You do not understand what your interests are.

Mr. Ruto: On a point of information, Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady?

The Temporary Deputy Chairlady (Dr. Laboso): Who are you informing?

Mr. Ruto: Prof. Anyang'-Nyong'o. **The Minister for Medical Services** (Prof. Anyang'-Nyong'o): I do not need his information because I have finished.

The Minister for Transport (Mr. Kimunya): Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, I just want to let the House know that what Hon. Baiya is attempting to do will actually go against the other provisions already in the Bill. The current Article 28 basically says a political party can nominate a person for any election, not just nominate you to come as a nominated member. It can nominate you for any election. It shall submit

to the Commission a party membership list, at least, three months before the nomination of the candidate.

Now, if you look at Article 29, it says: The person who nominates a presidential, parliamentary, county governor and county assembly candidates shall be registered members of the candidate's political party. Now, for IEBC to confirm that the people who are nominating you are members of your political party, they need to have that list before the nomination takes place. What hon. Baiya is attempting to do is, first of all, to remove that the list will be given before nominations. That is to say the list will be given before the election. Now, two months before the election will be nomination time. At that point, IEBC, by the time they receive the nominations, will have no idea whether you are being nominated by members of a political party. The reason I want to bring this is this: We went through this process last time round and we sat with all the interested parties.

We had the public participation that was required. It became very clear that the Constitution itself says that an independent candidate---

No-

Proceedings of debate on amendments

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body can stand as an independent candidate unless he has not been a member of a political party for three months.

Now, how will the Registrar or the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) know that an independent candidate has not been a member for three months when they have not been having that information? The three months period before nomination was picked from the Constitution. It was brought into the Elections Act to facilitate the IEBC to have a credible election by them comparing that you have been a member or not a member of a political party because they have the register. So, let us not pass this amendment because it will contradict Section 29 of the Constitution. I would really urge hon. Njoroge Baiya being the Chair of the Justice and Legal Affairs Committee to consider withdrawing his



Mr. Kimunya

amendment.

The Assistant Minister for Water and Irrigation (Mr. Waititu): On a point of information, Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady.

The Minister for Transport (Mr. Kimunya): Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, I think I am well informed without that information. Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, I am pleading with this House, especially with the hon. Members of the Justice and Legal Affairs Committee because we had given them this responsibility to ensure that we do not pass contradictory laws. I have just given you an example. If we pass Section 28 without passing Section 29, we will have a contradiction within the same Act. So, I would rather you withdraw it and then we look at it and if need be---

Mr. Baiya: It is not mine; it is the Committee's amendment!

The Minister for Transport (Mr. Kimunya): Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, I agree. If need be, we could always come back and amend this between now and the elections. But for now, let us not get contradictory amendments that will then force us into a situation where we are challenged legally.

Mr. George Nyamweya: On a point of order, Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady. I believe that hon. Kimunya is correct in this respect because the Constitution is quite

clear that a person who wants to be an independent candidate must not be a member of any party for three months before. If we reduce the period, in fact, this particular aspect would be unconstitutional because you will not be able to verify how a candidate can become independent. Since it comes from the Chairman of the Committee, in which I am a Member, I want to take the advice that hon. Kimunya has given us. Perhaps it would be wiser for us to withdraw it and look towards aligning all of these things maybe at a later date.

Mr. Ethuro: Madam Temporary Deputy Chair, I have subsequent amendments further in the line of argument that hon. Kimunya was taking which will negate his argument. But I just want to pick him on one; the one of the independent candidate being required by the Constitution to demonstrate that he was not a member of a party at least three months. Now, if this list was being submitted four months to the general elections, then the IEBC would have difficulty in determining so. We are talking about at least two months; one, parties are not under obligation, they will always bring it in the last minute

like the Government. I am sure that a good party like PNU and URP will do it even six months. But once you get the list of the party membership in two months, you can determine in terms of independent candidates that this fellow was not actually a member of the party. So, it is actually to the contrary of his argument in terms of the independent candidate.

Mr. Ruto: Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, I want to clarify a few things to make it very simple to hon. Kimunya. We are talking about a party list being submitted, at least, 60 days before the elections. Nomination time is 45 days before the general election. There are two weeks for the Registrar of Political Parties to ensure that he has updated the list. These are electronically done even right now. What the Minister is talking about are the independent candidates who should not be members of any party. That is a different matter. We are talking about a political party submitting a list of its members to the Registrar of Political Parties. There is no need for us to submit a list three months before and yet, there are members who are moving to new parties 60 days to the general election. You negate even what we had passed under hon. Musyimi. We have considered this and looked at the mathematics. It does not in any way contradict anything. In fact, it does not touch the Constitution. The Constitution only talks about the independent candidates, but not these Hon. Members who are seated here. They can be in a new party and will be in the list, at least, 60 days before the general election. If you do anything else, then they will not be in the list. You will be a victim like Hon. Mbugua. You will be *Mbuguad* yourselves if you do not pass this law.

The Assistant Minister for Wa-

ter and Irrigation (Mr. Waititu): Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, I want to emphasize that right now we are in the computer age and all the membership is with the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC). So, you just need to click to know where the list is. Even right now, you can just click IEBC/political parties and get where you are. It is simple. It is not a list to be compiled manually. So, the issue of the list should not arise. *(Question, that the words to be left out be left out, put and agreed to)* *(Question, that the words to be inserted in place thereof be inserted, put and agreed to)*

The Temporary Deputy Chairlady (Dr. Laboso): Hon. Members, with the passage of that amendment, it means that Hon. Ethuro's amendment now falls.

Mr. Ethuro: Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, how does it fall from three to 60 and 60 to 45? Anyway, I will do it in my own Motion. I withdraw the amendment. *(The proposed amendment by Hon. Ethuro was withdrawn)*

(Provisions relating to Section 28 of the Elections Act, 2011 as amended agreed to)
Section 29(2) – The Elections Act, 2011

Dr. Nuh: Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, I beg to move:— THAT, Section 29(2) of the Elections Act, 2011 be deleted.

The rationale is that we are talking about independent candidates and how they should be nominated. We were saying that there could be very many political parties that do not have any nominee at a given time and because they are at variance and may not have anybody, they may not be in a position to support another political party because they do

not have that understanding and they would want to support an independent candidate. At least, an independent candidate is a candidate who has no attachment to any political party. So, why deny an independent candidate the right to be nominated by people who be-



Mrs. Laboso

long to parties but who do not have anybody to support at the grassroots level? That is the effect of the amendment.

(Question of the amendment proposed)

Mr. Ruto: On a point of order,

Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady. I think that one is the most unconstitutional because the Constitution is very clear that an independent candidate will be nominated by independent persons. You cannot negotiate or legislate it here. This is the only correct one. The others were not correct.

(Laughter)

Dr. Nuh: Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, I stand guided and they can read the relevant Section of the Constitution to us. Why are they citing things in abeyance? I have no problem withdrawing.

The Minister for Transport (Mr. Kimunya): Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, it is in the Constitution. Besides that, Section 29(1) of the Election Act says very clearly

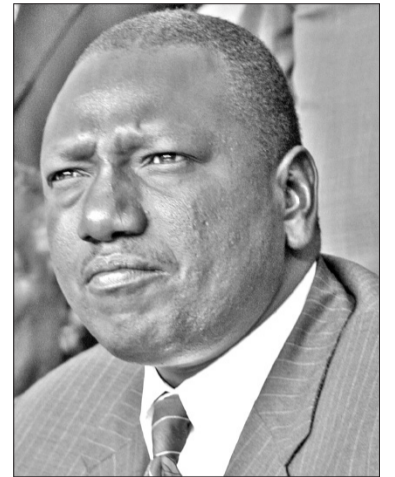
that the persons who nominate a Presidential, Parliamentary, County Governor, County Assembly Candidate shall be registered members of the candidate's political party. An independent candidate does not have a political party. The Constitution says that you cannot stand as an independent candidate as long as you belonged to a political party in the last three months.

Section 29(2) is a natural contrary to 29(1) that for avoidance of doubt--- You can delete 29(2) but 29(1) would still stand. But for avoidance of doubt because 29(1) basically says that whoever nominates you must be a Member of your political party, the contrary to that is that if you do not have a political party, nobody can nominate you. This was put here for avoidance of doubt. It was made very clear by the technical people. It may appear superfluous but we are doing it for avoidance of doubt. I suppose time is not on our side. We only have 15 minutes to midnight and if we could get rid of some of these things before debating them, then we could make progress. Deleting 29(2) will be going contrary to the Constitution and we will not be giving the independent candidates any advantage because they will not be supported by a political party member.

Mr. Ogindo: Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, I think what the Constitution envisaged is a situation where there will be certain members of society who are independent. At nomination level, your constituency is your political party, or lack of it. So, if we delete this, we will be denying members of a political party the right to exercise their mandate within the confines of their constituency. When we leave it open, then that person who is nominated by a combination of members of various political parties is not, indeed, an independent party. Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, I beg to oppose.

The Minister for Medical Services (Prof. Anyang'-Nyong'o): Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, I would like to put this matter to rest and support all those who have opposed it. Let me read Article 85 of the Constitution on eligibility to stand as an independent candidate. It states that any person is eligible to

stand as an independent candidate for election if the person: (a) Is not a member of a registered political party and has not been a member for at least three months immediately before the date of the election; and (b) satisfied the requirements of Article 99 and so on and Article 193



Mr. Ruto

of the

same Constitution. So, it is very clear what those articles are saying. What the Hon. Member is saying is contrary to the Constitution.

Mrs. Odhiambo-Mabona: Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, in opposing, I want to thank hon. Prof. Anyang'-Nyong'o for reading the Constitution and giving the correct position. Indeed, today, I was actually shocked when I heard my very able Chairman whom I deputize, Hon. Abdikadir, indicating that while we are legislating on the Political Parties Act, we are free to do whatever, say, legislate in, out, left, right, centre and so on. We cannot do that! We have to legislate as per the law. I was even shocked to hear Hon. Isaac Ruto suggest that he can be the women's representative. We must regulate as per the Constitution and as per the law. I do not know whether today we are making *githeri* or passing the law, but I am really shocked and astounded about what we are doing here.

I oppose.

Mr. Ethuro: On a point of order, Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady. Let us defeat or support an amendment on its own merit. It is completely misleading for two serious personalities in this House, in fact, three of them whom, naturally, on the face of it, I will take their arguments even without thinking twice. They are the Deputy Leader of Government Business, Hon. Kimunya; Prof. Anyang'-Nyong'o; and my good friend, Hon. Isaac Ruto. There is nothing about constitutionality in any person who may be a member of a party wanting to nominate or vote an independent candidate. For some reason, this fellow has no faith in his or her candidate who belongs to the party. What the candidate of a party is required of is that that candidate can only be nominated by members of the same party. There is no exclusion, lawyers, whether junior or learned friends or otherwise!

Dr. Nuh: Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, at least, I am glad that

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to political parties and elections laws

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Hon. Kimunya has not gone to any law school. Maybe that is the more reason he would want us to believe in his version of the interpretation of the Constitution; that is in his own imagination. I want to read. There are several sections that I have withdrawn because I have seen they are at variance with the Constitution. However, let us not just recap on this issue of "it is unconstitutional" or "it is at variance with the Constitution" when actually you cannot cite the specific provisions of the Constitution that a certain article contradicts. I want to read Article 99 that hon. Prof. Anyang' Nyong'o has alluded to. It says about the qualifications of a Member of Parliament: "He is nominated by a political party or is an independent candidate who is supported by: (a) in the case of elections to the National Assembly by, at least, 1,000 registered voters in the constituency---" I repeat, 1,000 registered voters!

What we mean by registered voters in Section 29(2) because the provisions of 29(1) are such that if you belong to the Party of National Unity (PNU), you can only be nominated by members of that political party because your allegiance is to PNU.

However, if your allegiance is to no party at all and we have several mongrel parties in your constituency or your senate area that do not have a candidate, what would prevent them from endorsing a candidate who has no allegiance to any party because they only think it is fair and it is in the middle?

Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, that is why I am saying we delete

provisions of Section 29(2) and I did not tamper with anything on 29 (1). It does not have as a rider that if we endorse 29(1) then 29(2) has to follow. There is no such precedence and Hon. Kimunya is not a lawyer.

Dr. Eseli: Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, of recent, we have



Mr. Muthama

been registering members into political parties. You will notice that actually the majority of voters in Kenya do not belong to any political party by the numbers that we have registered. Therefore, those ones can be considered as independent. Therefore, if they have a candidate that they want to field, that candidate should be independent and

backed by them. They have enough people to back them. This issue here is the same mutilation that we have been doing but now we have gone further to even mutilate reason. How can you be nominated by partisan people and call yourself independent?

So, I oppose this amendment totally.

(Question, that the words to be left out be left out, put and negated)

PROGRESS REPORTED

THE STATUTE LAW (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENT) BILL

The Minister for Transport (Mr. Kimunya): Madam Temporary Deputy Chairlady, I beg to move that the Committee doth report progress and seek leave to sit again tomorrow. As you note, we only have five minutes to midnight. We cannot sit again past midnight because the day will have ended and the permission we sought earlier from the House will

have expired and we need the five minutes to actually do some reporting to the main House and then to get permission so that we can continue with this tomorrow in the morning. I beg to move.

(Question proposed)

(Question put and agreed to)

(The House resumed)

[The Temporary Deputy Speaker

(Mr. Ethuro) in the Chair]

Dr. Laboso: Mr. Temporary Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to report that a Committee of the whole House has considered the proposals relating to the Statute Law (Miscellaneous Amendment) Bill, Bill No.14 and has instructed me to report progress and seek leave to sit again tomorrow.

Mr. Muthama: Seconded.

The Minister for Transport (Mr. Kimunya): Mr. Temporary Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the House doth agree with the Committee in the said Report.

Mr. Muthama: Seconded.

(Question proposed)

(Question put and agreed to)

Kirinyaga council land sold fraudulently

By PETER MUTUKU

A PUBLIC utility plot earmarked for the construction of a proper sewerage system in Kutus town of Kirinyaga County has been reallocated to a private developer.

Area MP Peter Gitau now wants a former Town Clerk at Kirinyaga County Council to explain how the land in question was transferred to a private developer who has since built residential houses in the area.

The MP called for investigations to ensure that the grabbed land reverts back to the council.

"The former clerk to the council should be compelled to explain how land meant for the construction of a sewerage system in Gathigiriri area was transferred to a private developer who has built residential houses in the disputed plot," adds Gitau.

He at the same says that the area is faced with myriad challenges and residents have to contend with dirty environment as the town does not have a drainage system.

The legislator says that at times he has been forced to hire a lorry and people to clean the town anytime he visits the area.

Gitau accused the council of sleep-

ing on the job and exposing the residents to hazardous environment.

The current clerk to council, Johnston Ariithi, however failed to confirm whether the land meant for the construction of a sewerage system was sold, saying that investigations have been launched.

He said that the council has de-

ployed an Administration officer on the ground to verify the claims adding that the council has been collecting litter.

Ariithi also added that the council has issued notices to rental house owners to comply with a directive on effective waste water disposal within 21 days or face stern action.



Polution: NEMA has failed to enforce environmental regulations.

The clerk blamed the residents on poor state of the town and accused them of failing to comply with the council's notices, adding that the civic body has hired two motorcycles-carts that will be used to empty the bins on a daily basis as they collect litter twice a week.

"We have hired a motorcycle -cart that will be used to ferry the litter on a daily basis to the dumpsite," added Ariithi.

He also pointed out that the town is poorly planned which makes cleaning exercises impossible as the area lacks good roads.

He says that they are going to replan for effective service delivery.

He spoke as Mwea residents accused Kirinyaga County Council of laxity in solid waste management.

The residents complained that the area is littered with waste materials as council workers had abandoned their work to keep the town clean.

A resident, Stephen Maina said that the town stinks with mounds of uncollected garbage which have become an eyesore.

He said that the drainage system is poor and has been clogged up by waste materials that include plastic bags. "Kirinyaga County Council has not been collecting garbage. Plastic

bags are seen all over, even in the water drainage systems which are now blocked," he said.

Maina also added that other problems have resulted from poor management of waste water from rental houses, car wash and hotels, which end up in Thiba river.

He said that he uses the wastewater to plant trees, groceries and sweet potatoes that are for sale, despite the health hazards that the water poses.

"I find it convenient to use the waste water, since the river is very far to provide clean water for my trees and groceries that are for sale, he says adding that he is aware this poses a threat to the consumers.

Samson Mwangangi, a farmer, said that the waste-water is a health hazard. It drains to river Thiba that supplies water to over 20,000 people downstream.

Mwangangi said that while the council is partly to blame for poor waste management, the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) has failed to crack the whip on polluters and the council.

He said that failure by NEMA to enforce environmental regulations had left the residents at the mercy of the council and polluters.

Mwangangi said that NEMA and the public health department must act now to avert any possible outbreak of water borne diseases.

Police urged to save Kilifi lads from prostitution

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

HUMAN rights officials in Kilifi County have called on the government to intervene and save young girls from being lured into prostitution.

The Muslim for Human Rights field officer in Kilifi County, Mr. Eric Karisa Mgoja, said that the number of girls dropping out of school to become commercial sex workers is on the rise in the region.

He cited areas like Malindi and Mtwapa towns, where many young girls engage in prostitution. He urged the police to take stern action against

those involved in the vice.

Mr. Mgoja also asked the Ministry of Education and the Children's Department to also intervene by visiting the towns to apprehend and prosecute men engaging in sex with under aged girls in accordance with the law.

"I am calling on the relevant ministries to come together and find a lasting solution to the vice by prosecuting those involved for the sake of saving the girl child education in the County," he said.

Most of the girls engaged in the vice told the Reject that poverty and hunger had pushed them to prostitution, and asked the government to

come up with new strategies of addressing their problems.

The Reject learnt that most of the girls migrate from rural areas to the urban centres and big towns in the region to look for jobs, but instead opt for prostitution after life becomes unbearable.

Mr.Mgoja further urged parents to provide guidance to their daughters and enroll them in schools as majority had resorted to prostitution that would expose to HIV/Aids.

He said that "many parents have failed to take up their responsibilities and thus the government must crack the whip against parents who aban-

don their children to help eradicate the vice in society."

Elsewhere, the Children's Department in Ganze District is investigating cases where children have dropped out of school and plans to take action against their parents.

The Children's Officer, Mr. Daniel Mbogo, said that the areas affected most in the district include Palakumi, Bamba in Ganze and Bamba Divisions, where the old have married under aged girls.

"We are going to arrest the old men and send the girls back to school. The ravaging poverty has forced some parents to marry off

their daughters to generate cash through dowry payments to them," he said.

Women leaders in Kilifi town, led by the Vice-chairlady of the Maendeleo Ya Wanawake organization, Asha Saidi, said that many girls go to the beaches in search of tourists. She expressed concern that the problem, if not addressed well, will cause the girls to be infected with HIV.

"We should address this problem properly in our communities so that young girls may be rescued from activities that could expose them to sexually transmitted diseases and Aids," she said.

Concerns over high prevalence Aids among the youth

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

LACK of employment, idleness, inadequate knowledge about HIV/AIDS and the availability of too many social amenities have been blamed on high HIV/Aids prevalence rate among the youth in Busia and Nambale districts.

Addressing stakeholders during a one day sensitization forum at the Busia district headquarter's boardroom recently, African Development and Emergency Organization's programme officer Tom Wabwire urged the stakeholders to upscale the sensitization of the youth from their respective areas on the dangers of engaging in unsafe sex which he said has led to high HIV infection rates.

"Majority of the youth in Busia and Nambale districts are infected by HIV/AIDS virus because they are engaging in unprotected sex due to peer influence," said Wabwire, adding that lack of dialogue between parents and children and alcoholism has made the situation even worse.

Other factors cited as causing high rates of HIV/AIDS among the youth included exposure to ICT materials such as computers, the western mode of dressing which provokes their sexual urge hence resulting to HIV/AIDS and the myth that HIV is just an accident. "Outdated cultural practices such as wife inheritance as practiced by majority of communities in the region has also contributed significantly to the high HIV/AIDS prevalence," said the project officer, adding that it is the responsibility of the stakeholders to embark on marathon sensitization forums within their respective areas to discard the vice since it has been overtaken by event.

Wabwire at the same time said stakeholders who included the district health management team, respective district youth officers, social services, religious leaders and education from the two districts should undertake capacity building, economic empowerment of the youth through Youth Enterprise Development Funds and policy formulation and ensure implementation of ten percent government procurement and tenders is availed to the youth. "The stakeholders should ensure that ten percent of government procurement and tenders are availed to the youth as well as the establishment of functional empowerment centres. The youth should also be linked with the relevant agencies," he said.

He said that youth officers from the respective districts should identify opportunities available to the youth especially life skills that will help nurture their individual talents hence engaging in income generating activities.

Kenya and EU in talks over environment

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

THE European Union and the Kenyan Government will soon initiate a new environmental programme at a cost of Ksh2 billion.

European Union Delegation Project Officer (Environment) Thomas Yatich said the project dubbed Water Tower Protection

and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme has been earmarked for implementation by 2015.

"This programme will address the root causes of the declining water flows, such as forest excisions, weak institutional capacities and adverse impacts of climate change," said the officer.

He was speaking during the launch and signing of the Ragati and Chehe Forest Management Plants at Kagochi grounds in Mathira district which is part of the large Mount Kenya forest.

Yatich said that it is critical to rehabilitate and protect country ecosystems taking due consideration of their multiple social,

economic and ecological functions.

He said that their maintenance will read to the reduction of green house gases as well as increasing water in the reservoirs that can be for agricultural farming.

According to the officer, European Union has also made available Ksh 2 billion for the management of 97 projects in the forests across the country which are all community based with around 20 based in Mount Kenya region.

He said the 97 projects were selected from a list of 5,000 proposals that have been submitted by the members of the community following a rigorous process that involved weighing their viability to improve livelihoods.

Help Self Help Centre Director Bernard Muchiri said under the plan, community commit themselves to re-afforest degraded parts of the two forest blocks, while drawing rights to sustainable timber harvesting, fuel wood gathering, grazing and fodder, medicinal herbs and the right to develop eco-tourism products.

They also expect to have rights to water abstraction, honey production, seed collection, fish farming and fruits, berries and vegetables gathering from the forest's resources.

The communities around Chehe and Ragati forests in Mathira East District were urged to continue conserving the forests to improve their livelihoods.



European Union Delegation Project Officer (Environment) Thomas Yatich (right) with Self Help Centre Director Bernard Muchiri at Kagochi in Mathira during the launch and signing of the Ragati and Chehe Forest Management Plants at Kagochi area in Mathira district. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Council receives funding from UN Habitat

By BEKADZO TONDO

KILIFI County council has received Ksh 500 million from the United Nations (UN) habitat program to oversee the slum upgrading project and infrastructure development in Mtwapa town.

The council's finance committee chairman Mr. Anthony Nzaka said the funds will channelled through the Participatory Slum Upgrading program to help improve the general infrastructure of Mtwapa town.

The finance committee chairman who spoke when he read the budget for the council said that the council

has already send one of its senior officers to Accra Ghana to acquire skills on how to effectively implement the project.

"One of our senior officers is attending a regional training workshop in Ghana to acquaint himself with the slum upgrading program and later guide the council on the implementation of the process," said the council's deputy town clerk Mr. Saidi Unda.

The finance chairman at the same time said that the council has also benefited from another Ksh 50 million from the Ministry of Local Government to help construct storm water drains along the major routes of Mtwapa town.

wapa town.

Mr Nzaka said the funds had been channelled to the council through the urban planning development program saying the project is aimed at alleviating the perennial storm water drainage problem in the town.

"The council is going to construct storm water drains along main routes of Mtwapa town at a cost of Ksh 50 million donated by the Ministry of Local Government through the urban planning department which is aimed at alleviating the perennial storm water drainage problem at Mtwapa," he explained.

The chairman said preparation of

tender documents is ongoing at the ministry of local government and very soon a contractor will be awarded the project.

In the new financial year, the finance chairman said the council plans to generate Ksh 347,563,009 million in revenue collection.

Mr. Nzaka said the council plans to raise Ksh 100 million from local sources and another Ksh 5.6 million from the contribution in lieu of rates.

The council also expects to receive Ksh 240 million through the Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF) which is an increase from Ksh 190 million from the previous allocation.

Fresh bid to revise county revenue allocations

By BEKADZO TONDO

THE Commission on Revenue Allocation (CRA) plans to alter its initial proposals on revenue distribution to the counties, to help correct economic imbalances in the country.

This follows rejection of the distribution formulae by a powerful parliamentary committee citing glaring discrepancies which would have seen the five biggest counties receive the largest share of money set aside for devolved governments in the next three years.

The parliamentary budget committee dismissed the formula proposed by the Commission on Revenue Allocation (CRA) saying it would only en-

rich big counties while impoverishing the poor ones.

"The parameters given by the CRA only favour big towns and counties like Nairobi because it is a fact that population only goes to where resources are. You cannot channel more resources to Nairobi which is already developed at the expense of the poor counties like Lamu and Tana River," said Garsen MP Danson Mungatana.

Dujis MP Aden Duale faulted the CRA for placing more weight on population in determining the allocation of the monies, saying it would only lead to the marginalisation of poor counties.

However, Commissioner Rose Osoro reassured Kenyans that proposals

by CRA were being revised to reflect economic imbalances in the country.

She spoke during a meeting convened by the Commission to collect views from leaders and residents of Kilifi County on how best the funds can be shared.

"The Commission on Revenue allocation is currently collecting public views across the country on how best the funds could be shared," said Ms Osoro.

She said that the initial proposals were guided by poverty levels, population size and land coverage but the Commission is willing to incorporate changes suggested by Kenyans.

Kilifi County Commissioner Mr.

Maalim Mohamed said Kenyans have a right to discuss and give their views on the sharing of the national tax payer's funds.

Mr. Mohamed however said that leaders should also identify areas that can generate revenue in their respective counties to help supplement income from the national government.

The Minister for Fisheries Development Mr. Amason Kingi said that regional balancing must be a key factor in revenue distribution to help correct existing disparities.

Ms Osoro at the same time pointed that CRA will closely monitor funds disbursed to the counties to check on abuse adding that counties ranked

highly in the management of the funds will benefit from additional funding.

The Commission on Revenue Allocation was established under Article 215 of the Constitution with the principal mandate of making recommendations concerning the basis for equitable sharing of revenue raised by the national government between the national government and county governments and among county governments.

The Constitution mandates the Senate, and in its absence, the National Assembly to work out the distribution formula. At the moment Parliament is acting as the National Assembly and the Senate under the new Constitution.

Upgrading of Nyeri hospital to start soon, says Ngare

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

MEDICAL Services PS Mary Ngare says that the upgrading of the Nyeri Provincial General Hospital will start any time soon.

Ngare spoke as Special Programmes Minister Esther Murugi complained that Medical Services Minister Anyang Nyong'o is blocking the upgrading of the hospital which has received Ksh 3.5 billion donor funds.

The funds were sourced from the China Government by Murugi but she later complained that Nyong'o is sabotaging the work.

However, the official from the Ministry of Health said a team from the Government has just returned from China and the paper work is still continuing.

"The commercial agreement has been done and approved by the Attorney General. The rest is now between the treasury, the bank and the contractor. The process has commenced," she said.

The PS told Murugi that there are many processes in the Government and she should be patient.

"We don't run our offices in the streets or in the press. The contractor will be on the site soon," she said.

Ngare was speaking in Othaya town during a tour to Othaya level IV hospital with the Parliamentary Accounts Committee.

Ahadi boss calls for benefits for all elderly people

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

HADI KENYA Trust has called on the Government to ensure that all old people in the country are paid their benefits. The trust Chief Executive Stanley Kamau lamented that it was unfortunate that only few aged people get their gratuity.

Speaking during the launch of July Blanket day for the elderly programme in Mweiga town of Nyeri County, Kamau lamented that many old people in the county are languishing in poverty and yet the Government has neglected them.

He noted that many of them are those who fought for the independence of this country and so they de-

serve gratuity and not paying few individuals. The chief executive who spoke after presenting blankets from the trust to the aged noted that many old people in the region require food, shelter, clothing and health care during this dry season.

"Others have been infested with jiggers due to neglect. About 25 per cent of the 2.5 million people infested with jiggers are people in their twilight years. Kenya has really neglected the old people unlike other countries," added the Ahadi Kenya Trust boss.

He urged the aspiring candidates eyeing for the various seats in the counties to come up with initiatives meant to support the aged.

The event was organized by Purity

Foundation.

The foundation chief executive Joyce Kairu lamented that many old people in the country end up committing suicide due to frustrations and neglect by the community. Nyeri County women representative hopeful Priscilla Nyokabi said the Government should provide free water, food, shelter and medical care.

Kieni Parliamentary aspirant Kanini Kega urged family members not to neglect their aged parents adding that regular visits to them will help them to stay longer in this world.

During the day, the aged were given free clothes, food and blankets among other items to help them during this cold season.



Ahadi Kenya Chief Executive Stanley Kamau greets old people at Mweiga town in Nyeri County after presenting blankets to them during the launch of July Blanket day for the elderly programme. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Kibaki urged to sign child protection Bill

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

BUSIA County's Children Coordinator Aston Maungu has appealed to President Mwai Kibaki to assent to the Child Labour Bill, which promises to address the rising cases of child abuse and neglect in Busia and the Country in general.

The Children's Coordinator said if the bill that has been forwarded to the Head of State receives his blessing, it will help eradicate the rising child abuse and neglect cases by over eighty percent within a span of six months.

"The bill is comprehensive, direct and to the point. It contains punitive steps that will ensure that stern legal action is taken against the perpetrators of child abuse and neglect cases, hence eradicating child labour within a span of six months by over 80 percent," said Maungu.

The Children's Coordinator welcomed the Child Labour Bill, saying that the existing statutes that had initially been put in place to address child abuse and neglect cases have not had any impact at all.

"The children's department has exhausted all the available statutes that had been put in place purposely to help address rising cases of child abuse and neglect, but so far nothing meaningful has been achieved. If the child labour bill is enacted into law, it will help deter the perpetrators," said Maungu.

The Children Coordinator at the same time lamented that a majority of child abuse and neglect cases involved professionals that are supposed to protect children.

"It is sad to note that a majority crime relating to child abuse is committed by professionals, such as teachers, who are supposed to be the custodians of the children under their care. In most occasions, teachers have been involved in a sexual relationship with their pupils, a situation that has forced a majority of the victims to drop out of school after becoming pregnant," said Maungu, adding that the culprits end up compromising the parents of the victims to drop the case, hence defeating justice.

"With the passage of the Child Labour Bill into law, parents who accept bribery from the perpetrators of child abuse and neglect will face stiffer sentencing in accordance with the law. Even the perpetrators will not be spared," he said, adding that the major challenge they face in the war against child abuse and neglect is a failure on the part of prosecutors to understand the law in relation to children.

"We feel that the prosecution as part and parcel of the government should help us by convincing the court through concrete evidence that the suspects are guilty in order to curb cases of child abuse," he posed.

The County Children Coordinator cited Butula, Bunyala and Teso South districts among areas with the highest number of child abuse cases.

Speed guns reduce road carnage

By PETER MUTUKU

THE introduction of speed guns along major accident zones in the country has saved millions of lives.

The speed guns were introduced last year after the government acquired 16 gadgets to help detect vehicles which exceed stated limits.

Among the towns that benefited were Naivasha, Nakuru, Thika, Muias and Mlolongo.

Traffic police along the selected routes now have speed guns, which indicate the speed at which a vehicle is moving. The speed gun is handheld and pointed at the approaching vehicle. These cameras can also be mounted beside or over a road or installed in an enforcement vehicle to detect traffic regulation violations, including speeding or vehicles going through a red traffic light. Errant drivers are instantaneously ticketed. Statistics from the police offices in Naivasha indicate a huge decline in the number of road accidents along the Nairobi-Naivasha highway since the guns took effect.

The highway, which had been branded as one of the biggest killers in the country, now records less than

five fatal deaths a month, from an estimated 15 to 20 deaths before the guns were introduced. The traffic base commander, Roy Njeru, says that the speed guns, which were donated in August last year by the World Health Organization, have been a basic tool in cracking down on speeding vehicles.

"The speed guns are used as evidence in the courts and this has seen fatal accidents along the highway drop. We, however, appeal to WHO to facilitate the police with more speed gun equipments as a way of bringing down the number of road accidents," added Njeru.

According to Njeru, more than 80 people are charged before the Naivasha law courts daily after they are captured speeding by the cameras in the gun. They are charged a fine of between Ksh 2000 and a maximum of Ksh 100,000, depending on the vehicle used.

"This has caused caution amongst members of the public plying that route, as they do not over speed as they used to. This has been a major tool in bringing about discipline and restoring sanity in road sector," said Njeru. There is no specific location,

as officers who are deployed every morning shift base. He attributed the lack of accidents in the festive seasons to this simple gadget.

However, drivers have reacted differently to the guns. They are torn between supporting the cause and declaring it as a tool for extortion.

"It's true that I drive more careful now on the roads, as I do not want to waste my money for being booked in courts. One also wastes a lot of time waiting for the hearing of the cases and parting with money in terms of fines is also painful," said Eric Wakori, a driver. He adds that he was once on the other side of the law and was caught speeding. Having wasted a whole morning en-route to Nakuru cost him a function he was to attend.

However, some argue that police use the gun to intimidate them.

"We are threatened that photos of our vehicles would be published before the law courts and we have to part with cash in case we want them to be deleted from the cameras," said Samuel Kinya.

He, however, called on the health body to facilitate the police with more road safety equipment as a way of

bringing down the number of road accidents. The guns are part of a project by WHO which intends to save 5million lives in the next ten years.

WHO director Etienne Krug said that over 1.3million people die annually from road accidents globally, while 50million others sustain serious injuries.

"Only 15 percent of countries in the world had traffic legislations. Yet speeding is one of the major problems that affect the Kenyan motorists. The high number of accidents and injuries are mainly caused by drunk-driving, speeding, failure to fasten safety belts and helmets," added Krug.

"We want to raise the number of countries with these legislations to 25 percent in the next ten years." He praised traffic police in the area for using speed guns donated by WHO to bring down the number of accidents along the Nairobi-Nakuru highway.

According to the website <http://auto.howstuffworks.com>, a normal radar set sends out a radio pulse and waits for the reflection. Speed guns use a more direct method that relies on the reflection time of light. A laser speed gun measures the round-trip time for light to reach a car and reflect back. Light from a laser speed gun moves a lot faster than sound

Busia acquires new fire engine

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

MUNICIPAL Council of Busia has dispatched a team of employees to train on basic fire-fighting skills after they received fire equipment from the Ministry of Local Government.

Speaking to The Link in his office recently, Busia municipal administrative officer Gideon Magak Odieny said the council will train a total of seven employees who will be sent to various local authorities including Kisumu municipal council which he said has advance knowledge on effective fire-fighting skills.

"We intend to train seven employees whom we have already identified. For a start, we are sending three of them to Kisumu municipal council so that they can be trained on basic

fire-fighting skills and how to handle the fire engine," said the administrative officer, adding that the next lot will follow later once the three are through with the training. He said the fire engine which has a capacity of 300 litres of water is fully equipped with 400 metre pipes and a generator and requires people with adequate fire fighting skills that will enable them to handle the machine effectively.

"Simple fires can be put out with water, but some fires caused by electric fault has to be put out using chemical hence the need to equip the fire fighters with the basic fire fighting skills," said odieny, adding that the fighters are required to be "O" level holders.

He said the council will ensure that the fire fighters are housed together so

that they can be reached easily in case of an emergency adding that the department will be manned on a 24 hour basis.

"The fire-fighting department will be manned on a 24hour basis, so the council will do everything at its disposal to ensure the fire fighters are housed within the council premises in case of an emergency fire outbreak," said the administrative officer.

He at the same time urged local traders within the municipality and its environs to acquire and install simple fire fighting gadgets such as fire-extinguishers for emergency fire outbreaks.

Burumba ward civic leader Wilberforce Ochuka on his part lauded the government for providing the local authority with the fire engine saying in the past, the council had been depend-

ing on Butere-Mumias county council and Tororo during emergency fire outbreak.

"The fire engine has come at the right time. We are now safe from accusations from the business community and especially political leaders who have been pointing an accusing finger at us saying we have failed to deliver," said the civic leader.

The civic leader told the business community and any other would-be beneficiary that fire fighting services will be provided free of charge and that no employee from the fire fighting department should ask them to pay money for hire.

"No money will be charged for the service. So beneficiaries should not pay even a single cent for the service because it is meant to serve the public free of charge," said the civic leader, adding that they should report any corruption attempt to the relevant authority for action.

Innovations boost food security in South Rift

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

THE greatest challenge that many Kenyans face today is food security. Food prices keep soaring as effects of climate change continue to bite.

Climatic conditions in many parts of this country appear unpredictable exposing farmers' to massive losses resulting from crop failure. But in a bid to wade off the devastation caused by harsh climatic conditions, some farmers in the dry savannah lowlands of Sigor, Chepalungu, South Rift, have adopted modern techniques of farming to increase their yields.

Among them is Emily Kirui who is currently engaged in the production of fodder grass that suits the dry savannah environment to supplement hay which is produced from dry maize crops.

Along with better farming methods, farmers in the region have ventured in less strenuous activities that bring higher benefits.

Notable activities include dairy goat farming which has increased milk production in the region. "I have always had enough supply of milk for my family. I always get two litres of milk daily from one goat. I like it because it has very high butterfat content," adds Mrs. Kirui. According to Mrs. Kirui, this type of farming has proven productive and less disappointing compared to the growing of cereals that many times fail due to the unpredictable weather conditions.

Farmers have formed Dairy Goat Farmers' cooperative to reap on the economies of scale.

Emily's husband Mr. Linus Kirui who is the assistant chief of Chepkosa Sub location says that the idea to form a cooperative society was mooted after they visited successful dairy goat farmers in Central Province to learn on best farming practices.

Mr. Kirui says the tour was an eye opener for those who took keen interest in learning techniques among them zero grazing.

The chief says that they later mobilised farmers in the sub-location and formed a dairy goats' development self help group known as Kiplabotwo Saramek dairy goats group, to help raise pedigree goats. The group bought their first batch of improved breed of Alpine Goats from Tetu in Nyeri, of Central Province in 2004.

He says each farmer kept a he goat for the first round of fertilization after which they would fertilize the resultant offspring.

This saw their indigenous goats upgraded to pedigree species with capacity to produce up to seven litres of milk per goat per day.

However, the farmers are faced with a myriad of challenges among them diseases and lack of finances.

The farmers were also affected by the 2007/2008 post election violence that strained their relationship with farmers from Central Province. Other challenges include lack of a steady market for their milk produce. "We have not really made any inroads in marketing our goat milk," adds Emily.

This has however been beneficial to them as they can use the goat milk at the household level while selling cow milk to processors, "she explains.

Kibunja advises media on conflict sensitive reporting

By HENRY OWINO

MEDIA is the most trusted and influential source of information to the public, this is according to a public opinion polls conducted by different organizations.

It is for this reasons that Kenya's media has been accused of playing a role in post election violence of 2007/08. The violence was sparked by alleged stolen results of the presidential poll but there were other underlying factors.

Media stations especially Vernacular FM radios have been harshly judged and held responsible for contributing to the turmoil. Studies show that journalists allegedly took sides, misused their powerful radio microphones to misreport issues. This fuelled tension among communities with people living and working in such places forced to vacate or feared being attacked or simply engaged in retaliatory attacks.

This is partly what has been said about Kenya's media and it is hoped that they have learnt from their previous mistakes. It is now high time the media learnt from the mistakes and take centre stage in preaching peace and unity.

Preaching harmony and unity would help media clear its tainted image and regain the public confidence. To ensure this, media must practice peace journalism by adhering to the simple media laws and ethics.

Mzalendo Kibunja, the Chairman, National Cohesion and Integrity Commission (NCIC) says that choice of language to be used on broadcast is not a big deal. But the words used in conveying that information may be an issue because it can translate to an insult to the receiver. Kibunja advises media to find better words that do not provoke, incite or demean other communities for the sake of peaceful elections.

Kibunja cites cases where the certain communities or region have been branded as terrorists while others have been called thieves, witches, cooks, watchmen, proud, quick tempered, backward among indicators that infringed on communities' peace and harmony. "We are going to monitor all media houses especially the vernacular radio stations and even the social media which have become popular of hate speech. So be careful of what



A section of media covering a function in Nairobi recently. Photo/Henry Owino

you post on face book and twitter as it might land you in problems," warned Kibunja.

Media houses need to change this style of broadcasting though, it is a process that would take time. Everything cannot happen in a single day but there are guidelines for every media house which must serve to regulate their content in terms of what to air or publish to the public. It calls for a lot of verification and editing but at the end of it all underscores accuracy and peace.

Although, it is not clear yet as to when the elections are to be held, Ahmed Isaack Hassan the chairman, Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) has announced March 4, 2013 as the tentative date for elections. However, the date has attracted opposition and the High Court is to make a ruling on the same by July 31, this year.

Currently, a number of international organizations have come up to train journalists on responsible and peaceful journalism. The training involves

reporting on electoral process ahead of the Kenya's next general elections under new Constitution and police reforms. United States of America (US) leads in the pack of organizations training Kenyan journalists from various media houses across Africa. This they do since Kenya is the most attractive and central entry to other countries in Africa.

Embassy of US in Kenya has deployed Professor Steve Youngblood, lecturer at Park University, USA to train journalists. He is an experienced journalist who has been in the profession for more than thirty years now.

Prof Youngblood has trained journalists in Uganda and other countries and in Kenya he did it in Eldoret where the events of Post Election Violence were reviewed. Recently, he was training journalists based in Nairobi the capital city where results were announced.

According to the professor's survey, both journalists in the regions admitted that media played a role in propagating the 2007/08 violence that

hit the country apart from other factors which led to the chaos. "The information I get here in Nairobi is similar to the data compiled in Eldoret that media played a role in propagating the 2007/08 post election violence in Kenya," confirmed Prof Youngblood.

It is for this reasons Prof Youngblood is committed to train Kenya's journalists on peaceful reporting ahead of next general elections.

He pointed out that journalist must strive to give well researched, factual information and maintain consistency to guard on credibility. He warned the media against treating the election question as a two horse race as this frames the election as a personality conflict between candidates.

Prof Youngblood encouraged media houses to promote peace journalism, concentrate on issues of importance as identified by the public, the candidates' policies and positions on issues of importance such as development of schools, health centres, roads, security, and employment of youths among others.

Migrant sex workers denied access to Aids care

By FAITH MUIRURI

THE HIV/AIDS prevalence rate among migrant female sex workers in the country still remains high despite the drastic drop registered at the national level.

The prevalence rate stands at 23.1 percent which is three times more, the national predominance rate that has been listed at 6.4 percent with 1.3 million people between the ages of 15 to 64 across the country living with HIV.

A joint study by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the National AIDS and STI Control Programme (NAS COP), National Aids Control Council (NACC), the Joint UN Team on AIDS (JUNTA) and the Kenya AIDS Control Project (KACP) paints a grim picture of the migrant sex workers who have utterly been denied access to basic health and social services.

The study reveals that currently there are no programmes offering a targeted and comprehensive response to this population.

In fact migrant female sex workers and their clients have not been effectively reached with HIV prevention interventions.

And although the country's response program has been directed towards key population groups, migrants who have been ranked among the high risk populations have not been targeted as a distinct category.

This is despite the fact that 14.1 percent of all the new infections in Kenya occur among female sex workers and their clients as outlined by the Kenya Modes of Transmission Study.

According to Kelsi Kriitmaa who is a lead researcher in the *Integrated Biological and Behavioural Surveillance Survey (IBBS)*, the plight of migrant sex workers has been aggravated by their irregular migration status, lower literacy levels, lack of fluency in the local language and cultural barriers.

"Our findings indicate that migrant female sex workers in Kenya portray low levels of HIV competence, are marginalized in terms of access to services, have a young sexual debut and lack social support," she adds during the launch of the report in Nairobi.

Kriitmaa who is also an official

from IOM says that the IBBS survey which is the first ever to target migrant female sex workers covered Nairobi's Eastleigh and Hurlingham areas and sought to establish the HIV and STI prevalence among migrant female sex workers in Nairobi, determine their knowledge, attitudes, risk behaviour, treatment seeking behaviour and preferred sources of HIV/STI information.

"The findings would then help develop interventions targeting the large population of Somali, Sudanese, Ethiopian and other migrant women engaging in transactional sex in Nairobi," she explains.

About 628 migrant sex workers participated in the survey that begun in June 2010. Ethiopia accounted for the highest number of respondents at 31.2 percent, Tanzania and Uganda came second at 27.6 percent while Somali's represented 11 percent of the respondents. Other countries included in the study are Democratic Republic of Congo (1.3 percent), Sudan (1 percent) and Rwanda (0.2 percent).

The report points out that over half (52.2 percent) of migrant female sex workers were aged between 20 and 29 years old, with the average age of the respondents being 31.8 years.

Almost half of the migrants have never attended school (47.4 percent). The majority were single (61.1 percent) and of Muslim faith (58.5 percent), and more than a third (42.7 percent) of them were circumcised.

Majority cited the search for employment, escape from insecurity and war among reasons for leaving their countries. Other reasons included marriage, environmental disaster, school and kidnappings. Curiously 3.8 percent of them had a Kenyan ID card while 30 percent of the respondents had a United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) mandate. Most migrants are supporting other people financially and thus are forced to stay in sex work.

Almost three quarters of the respondents had been in Kenya for more than two years. 42 percent of Somali and 3.9 percent of Ethiopian respondents had lived in refugee camps while Tanzanians and Ugandan's had not.

During the study, Ugandan's and Tanzanian's had the highest HIV



Maureen Achieng, NOPE Associate Programs officer conducting a training session for migrant sex workers at Eastleigh, Nairobi recently.

prevalence with 30 percent and 28.4 percent respectively, followed by Somali's at 14.4 percent and Ethiopians at 13.3 percent.

Already IOM in liaison with the National Organization for Peer Educators (NOPE) and Uma, which is a community based organisation operating in Eastleigh have initiated pilot activities on HIV prevention for migrant sex workers.

Job Akuno who is a technical advisor at NOPE says that about 1,995 female sex workers have been tested for HIV at the service centre in Eastleigh. Another 4,269 migrant sex workers have participated in health and peer education training sessions while 2,393 have been screened for sexually transmitted infections and 762 of them treated.

Akuno says that 135 migrant sex workers have been referred to hospitals for further treatment while 76,793 condoms have been distributed to them.

He says that interventions that target the migrant sex workers must be put in place to increase their knowl-

edge and focus on consistent and correct condom use to help improve on their health seeking behaviour.

He adds that programs targeting the group must incorporate non medical aspects such as psychosocial support, income generating and livelihood activities, language classes and legal support to ensure a comprehensive approach.

The newly developed NAS COP Sex Worker Guidelines provide

guidance on the type of services that should be offered in any programs targeting the sex workers.

The report recommends that stakeholders should lobby the government to provide a legal framework for regulation of sex work which would allow programming for sex work activities to be taken to scale, thereby increasing access to services and providing protection for sex workers that currently does not exist.

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Rights Awareness Training for Migrant Sex Workers.

Farmers urged to grow cassava for food security

By HENRY OWINO

A TRADITIONAL root crop long neglected by modern science could be the best bet for farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa to beat climate change, according to a new study by a team of climate scientists.

The study conducted by scientists from the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) and the CGIAR's Climate Change Agriculture and Food Security Research Program (CCAFS), found that the root crop will outperform potato, maize, bean, banana, millet and sorghum when temperature rises and changes in rainfall patterns are taken into consideration.

Using a combination of 24 climate prediction and crop suitability models, the scientists compared the expected impacts of climate change on the production of cassava and six other key staple crops in sub-Saharan Africa – potato, maize, bean, banana, millet, and sorghum.

They found that by 2030, temperature rises of between 1.2 and 2 degrees Celsius, combined with changes in rainfall patterns, will leave cassava in a class of its own, outperforming the other crops in overall. In East Africa, for example, it supports the trend of declining suitability in all other crops in the study, with a 10 per cent increase.

In West Africa cassava will hold its ground, significantly outperforming the suitability of potato (-15 per cent), bean (-20 per cent) and banana (-13 per cent).

"Cassava is a survivor crop," says Andy Jarvis, the climate change scientist from International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT). "This crop deals with almost anything the climate change throws at it. It thrives in high temperatures and if drought hits, it simply shuts down until the rains come again. There is no other staple crop out there with this level of toughness," he emphasized.

"We have been waiting a long time for some good news about food security and climate change in Sub-Saharan Africa. Finally, I think it has arrived. While the other staples will struggle in the face of climate change, it looks as though cassava is going to thoroughly enjoy it," he posed.

However, Jarvis is advising against relying solely on cassava: "The ideal position is for farmers to have a diversity of crops. This would enhance nutrition and not only reduce climate change risk," Jarvis cautioned.

The report says Cassava, along with banana and maize, will increase by 5 per cent in suitability in Southern Africa, with only Central Africa registering decrease in cassava suitability by negative one per cent (-1 per cent), which is significantly better than the substantial declines expected in potato and beans.

search to be carried out to help make cassava production more resilient to pests and disease outbreaks. Some of such diseases are; whitefly, mealybug, cassava brown-streak disease and cassava mosaic disease. To reduce existing threats and prepare for emerging ones, the study recommends for maximised breeding.

"Tackling cassava's vulnerability to pests and diseases could be the final hurdle to a food secure future for millions of people," said Jarvis. "If we are well prepared for these threats, cassava could be one of the most cli-

He said with climate change, new diseases are likely to affect cassava but KARI is on the watch out.

"There is a need to constantly monitor diseases that affect cassava to cushion farmer from loses," advised Obiero, a research officer at KARI. Obiero added that Cassava Mosaic disease (CMD) and Brown Cassava Steak Virus (CBSB) are still a menace that results in up to 80 per cent of the crop loss.

Obiero reiterated cassava is the only crop that can withstand diseases, pests, severe shortfall in rains, poor

The crop is also rich in carbohydrates and can be used for various purposes such as flour, food, among other uses depending on the countries' demand.

"During our days when we were growing as young boys, cassava was among the staple food in most families but for today's generation maize is the only staple food. I think cassava will take over in what we term as natural selection and even fries will be of cassava," anticipated Obiero.

African Governments must therefore prepare their farmers and citizen on this crop that many people have ignored but coming back with a bang. It is likely to take the place of maize that almost every country in Africa depends on as a staple or cash crops.

Before the introduction of maize in Africa, sorghum, millet, cassava were some of the African foods. Today, Africa food is influenced by rich countries especially European countries, discouraging Africa from embracing modern agricultural science.

In fact, agricultural genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are actually more European than it is African. These genetically engineered crops or seeds that are to produce grain under drought-stress conditions had nothing to compromise safety of the biological environment. Even in the case of drought-tolerant crops, the international community has yet to mobilize adequate resources to make this new technology available to the poor in African farmers.

It is high time that Africa's urban political leadership class who still have an inclination towards Europe (imperialism of rich tastes) stop it and forge ahead. This is because it is not Africa's science-starved farmers that are rejecting biotechnology but the urbanized governing elites that are doing so prompted by their continued deference to urbanized elites in Europe.

Policy elites in Africa are now being prompted not to use these agricultural GMOs through the influence of foreign assistance programs operated by European states, by intergovernmental organizations and international NGOs funded and managed from rich countries.

Africans must now wake up and depend on themselves and only seek advice from scientist experts where necessary.



Cassava plantation at KARI-Thika.

Photo/Henry Owino

According to the study, cassava's potential could be maximised by breeding to improve drought and cold tolerance. This is said would increase the crop production in drier areas of Sub-Saharan Africa and cooler parts of Southern Africa.

The study recommends more re-

mate change-resilient crops an African farmer can plant and depend on," he suggested.

According to Hannington Obiero, a research officer at Kenya Agriculture Research institute (KARI), efforts must be made to deal with any new emerging diseases for cassava.

soil and climate change in any African country and the farmer still harvest. He compared it to other crops which will disappoint the farmer completely in case of attack by any catastrophes.

He therefore urged farmers with large plantations to grow it in plenty as it is the only crop with future benefits.

Clones set to replace old tea bushes, says Kiome

By PETER MUTUKU

PLANS are underway to replace old tea bushes with clones developed by the Tea Research Foundation in a bid to improve the quality of tea in the country.

Agriculture Permanent Secretary, Dr Romano Kiome, says the move is part of ongoing measures to improve on the quality of tea in the country.

He said the Ministry of Finance had introduced a new levy on tea to help farmers upgrade their tea bushes and increase their production.

"The tax introduced should not be seen as money going to waste. The money is going to be used to improve the quality of tea by replacing the old tea bushes with new clones," said Dr Kiome.

He also said that the levy is go-

ing to be used for research, marketing, and value, in addition to upgrading the tea bushes.

Dr Kiome said that the government plans to help over 600,000 small scale tea farmers in the country uproot old tea bushes and replace them with improved varieties.

The PS further said that farmers have to know what the research centre is doing to improve the quality of tea and urged respective tea factories to sensitise farmers on the changes.

He said that the government will set up a fund to mitigate farmers from losses during the exercise, which is expected to take around five years.

Dr. Kiome noted that most of the tea bushes in the country were planted between 1960 and 1970, saying that they were no longer giv-

ing maximum production to farmers.

He was speaking at the Kangaita Tea Research Foundation of Kenya Centre (TRFK), in Kirinyaga County, during the "leveraging innovative technology in Tea Agribusiness for attainment of vision 2030" organized to educate tea farmers on new production techniques that have been developed by TRFK.

The PS said that multinational, large scale farmers have already begun the process of replacing their tea bushes and that the programme will be initiated by the government to support individual farmers, saying that small scale farmers have to get their share of replacing their tea bushes.

He said that, currently, most tea bushes produced an average of two

kilogrammes of leaves, yet there were better varieties that could produce triple production under similar conditions.

Continued subdivision of land, Dr. Kiome noted, has exerted pressure on production and unless farmers plant the high yielding varieties the sector will be hurt by reduced returns.

The tea sector earned the country Ksh107 billion last year, with Kirinyaga County earmarked to receive Ksh 6 billion which is the highest in the country.

Dr. Kiome, however, advised farmers against engaging in politics at the expense of tending their farms, adding that what counts at the end of the day is the income to an individual.

"Tea was the number one foreign exchange earner last year, and



Dr. Kiome

we do not want politics to interfere with the production," said the official.

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.

Embu farmers establish new coffee mill

By PETER MUTUKU

COFFEE farmers in Embu North District can now invest more in production after the Kithunguru Farmers Cooperative Society Limited launched its second coffee milling factory, worth Ksh 12 million.

The society's chairman, Joseph Mwaniki, said that the machines in the new factory are operated under new technology, thus huge volumes of coffee cherries can be produced per day in a way that is also friendly to the ecosystem.

"These machines have the capacity of producing 1,500 kilograms of coffee cherry per hour, thus producing 10,000 kilograms of coffee cherry per day," he said, adding that it will ease the amount of time taken by farmers at the factory.

Speaking during its inauguration, the chairman said that the new factory has reduced the cost incurred by the farmers during production, saying that with the new technology all the cherry comes out clean and taken directly to drying.

"With the new technology, farmers are able to take their coffee cherries to the market as fast as possible, as the drying time for the coffee has been reduced to two weeks," he posed.

Mwaniki said that the machines are designed to use very little water in operations, saying that this will cut on costs incurred while buying and repairing water pumps.

The chairman said that other societies should embrace the new technology so as to minimize pollution and reduce the amount of time farmers can take their cherries to the market.

The Embu North District Commissioner, Joseph Bullut, said that the start of a new coffee factory will boost the local economy as residents depend on coffee as their only source of livelihood.

Bullut said that the farmer's society has gone to great lengths in putting up a coffee factory, saying that most other coffee factories in the country are ancient, and thus do not give farmers the required service.

The administrator pointed out that coffee farmers should be supported to enable them reap highly from their produce, adding that other factories should improve their systems to adapt to the new technology.

The DC said security has been beefed up around the factories to curb coffee theft which, he said had become rampant in Kirinyaga and Nyeri counties.

Climate change threatens maize production in Rift Valley

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

RIFT Valley Province is expected to experience a sharp decline in maize production due to adverse climatic conditions that interrupted the planting programme and inaccessibility of adequate farm inputs.

The Provincial Crops Development Officer Peter Isigi says that production is set to reduce from 21 million to 17 million bags in the current season.

He says that the situation has been compounded by the outbreak of a mysterious disease that has destroyed thousands of acres of maize crop.

Already the government has dispatched a team of agricultural experts in North Rift region to stop the spread of the disease.

The experts mainly drawn from the Ministry of Agriculture have been dispatched to Nandi, Uasin Gishu and Trans-Nzoia counties where farmers have registered massive losses due to the viral attack.

Rift Valley provincial crops development officer Peter Isigi says that maize in the affected areas have started turning yellow.

District agricultural officer Josephat Ling'ang'a said maize plants in some farms at Kiminini, Central division, Waitaluk and Kapkoi had started withering and rotting due to the viral disease attack.

"We have already taken samples to the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service in Nairobi while some have been flown to Britain for further laboratory analysis to ascertain this infection," said Mr. Ling'ang'a.

He says that the area is likely to register massive crop failure owing to the infection and delays in the supply of top dressing fertilizer.

He added: "It can be worse if the disease affects the 'cobbing' (seeding) stage because seeds will be affected in addition to environmental, economic and human health risks."

Experts say that the Lethal Necrosis disease which mainly affects the maize crop is caused by



Climate change affects maize plantation in Rift Valley.

combination of sugarcane mosaic virus and maize chlorotic mottle virus.

Mr. Isigi, however, allays fears of total crop failure saying farmers should wait for the outcome of the experts' analysis.

"The analysis of maize crop samples will help provide details about the spread of the disease to the region," said Mr. Isigi.

Meanwhile, farmers in the affected areas are being advised to plant crops on rotational basis to curb the spread of the disease that has also been reported in Bomet, Nakuru, Naivasha, Kibwezi, Yatta, Kieni in Nyeri and Rumuruti (Laikipia) among other areas.

Mr. Isigi says that the maize colouration has been caused by excessive leaching and iron deficiency

due to heavy rains.

"Deficiency of minerals such as nitrogen and iron due to leaching caused by heavy rains has resulted in change of the crop colour and farmers need to apply the precise micro-nutrients," said Mr. Isigi.

He said the high cost of fertilizer forced most farmers to plant the maize without applying the nutrients contributing to expected low yields.

Of Asembo, Uyoma dams and fraud

RARIEDA constituency lies along Lake Victoria. According to the locals, the water has never benefited the entire community in fact during the seasons of drought herdsmen walk many kilometers to reach the beaches with their herds.

Charles On yore k'oyugi is the village Elder in Nyabeda-Kobong sub-location and that as a result of drought, people here lose large herds. In 2008, the family of Jok Oloo who are my neighbors lost their entire herd (13 goats/15sheep and 11 cows).

According to the Village Elder, some were forced to sell their animals at a throw-away price. Farmers did not make any harvest as their Maize and Millet dried in the farms. These are just a few cases that resulted from extreme drought.

To counter the water challenge, the two communities resorted to the construction of dams in the attempts to bring water close to people and improve food production to address food security.

Julius Nginja is a retired teacher and currently is the chairman community development groups in Rachar, Central Uyoma. "I want to say that we are farmers. Unfortunately water is a great challenge in Uyoma I don't know whether our brothers in Asembo are also feeling the extreme like us. We felt that if our member of parliament could provide us with pipes, the rest of the work I mean laying the pipes across the villages would be left for us"

Statistics from Rarieda CDF committee and Mzalendo, a site that seeks to promote greater public voice and enhance public participation in politics by



Members of Rachar sub location in central Uyoma share with the press at Yao Kogenga. Omolo Wilfred says, "This is what they call a dam. I don't think that I don't know what a dam means. This is just a pond dug by the community."

As a result of poor rains and persisted drought in Rarieda just like many parts of the country, people living in Asembo and Uyoma started CDF supported project dubbed 'Excavation of water pan' that was meant to bring supply residents with water from the lake. According to the National Tax payers Association (NTA), the constituency Ksh 31,893846 during 2007/2008 financial year but unfortunately, an approximately 12 million cannot be unaccounted for. MALACHI MOTANO looks at the dam projects that never existed.

providing relevant information about the National Assembly's activities, MPs, and aspirants ahead of the 2012 elections indicate that in the last financial year, Ksh 20 (18,146,000) million was spent in the construction of Chinga Dam costing Ksh

450,000, Rambu Dam Ksh 420,000, Banda Dam 420,000, Otere Dam 420,000 Kojwaka 420,000, Kametho Ksh 420,000, Ksh 420,000, Okwa Nyoyo Dam Ksh 420,000 and Riwa dam Ksh 420,000.

Eng. Nicholas Gumbo is the

area Member of Parliament. "All the 15 dams are complete and the water problem in Rarieda will soon be a thing of the past. Other water projects that were also completed include South Asembo water project at a tune of Ksh 2,000,000, Ndati Bridge Ksh 876,000 Koloo water dam Ksh 820,000, Kouma Dam Ksh 820,000, Bar Aluru Dam Ksh 800,000 and Kouna Dam Ksh 960,000,

To the contrary, "All the 15dams are not complete, three are ghost projects while the remaining don't reflect on the money that was projected" Davis Dadieno, the national coordinator of NTA

George Ayungo Okelo is a resident of Rachar in central Uyoma. "I agree with NTA. I have lived here for the last 48 years. Like my colleagues here I too don't know how the dam looks like. What I have seen are simply ponds dug by members of the community. The list you have read to us are ghost dams."

So, where is the truth? "We are now calling for a fresh audit to be conducted by an independent body to help recover the lost money for the constituency and the people responsible be arrested and charged in the court of law" Mr. Ayungo.

PBK eyes regional market to boost prices

By LARRY KIMORI

THE Pyrethrum Board of Kenya (PBK) is targeting the regional market to boost prices for the revered quality Kenyan Pyrethrum.

Speaking in Nakuru, Managing Director, Dr. Isaac Mulagoli, said that the board is shifting its attention to the regional market to help reap from the unexploited market. He also said that the board plans to invest in value addition and produce products such as insecticides. The MD disclosed that, as part of attaining Vision 2030, the board has registered six insecticides targeting the animal and crop protection sectors in the country.

He said that investing in insecticides would help the board generate its own income in a bid to become self-reliant rather than seeking financial support from the government.

He revealed that in the next five years the board would add four other insecticides as it prepares to penetrate the international market, which, he observed, could only be sustained through continuous research on the pyrethrum bi-products.

Commenting on liberalization of the industry, Dr. Mulagoli said that PBK is not a public enterprise, adding that farmers own the board, and, therefore, the sector cannot be liberalized to allow other players to join them.

Dr. Mulagoli said that pyrethrum is highly protected because it is poisonous and thus deserves protection, by an Act of parliament. He revealed that PBK is steward for the crop, adding that any other person intending to engage in the trade would be an agent authorized by PBK to transact business on behalf of the board.

The MD revealed that the Kenyan pyrethrum could not be blended with any other similar produce from any part of the world because it is patented. He said that sourcing farm inputs for farmers is a challenge, since most Kenyan companies want to be paid in US dollars. That means they have no confidence in the Kenyan shilling.

The Technical Services General Manager, Mary Ontiri, said that the board has embarked on tissue culture to curb diseases and produce high yields. She also said that the international market consumes 8,000 metric tonnes out of the 21,000 metric tonnes produced annually.

She said that the board is targeting 200,000 farmers in 18 counties to plant the crop, which, in turn, would offer employment to more than 3,000 staff over the next few years.

The general manager observed that the insecticides produced by the board are environmental friendly, terming them nature's herbicides that mitigate crop and animal pests.

On the other hand, the PBK has suspended the tendering process of that would have seen it dispose off some of its non-core assets.

Dr. Mulagoli said that treasury allocated the board Ksh. 300 million this financial year to support the rise in their revenue base and financing their budget. He also said that the revival of the board has seen an increase of tonnage delivered to the factory, from 462 tonnes last year to 518 tonnes this year.

The MD said that the board's decision to pay farmers upon delivery of their produce has triggered farmers back to the industry previously shunned due to mismanagement of resources and bad governance.



From right Coffee Board of Kenya MD Loise Njeru, Central PC Kiplimo Rugut and Central Police boss John

Mt Kenya irrigation projects hit by lack of water

By LINK CORRESPONDENT

MILLIONS of shillings set aside for irrigation purpose in Meru and Embu may revert to treasury due to lack of water. An environment watchdog has warned that the projects might not be viable and could end up wasting public resources, since the rivers around cannot sustain the projects.

The Eastern National Environment Management Authority boss, Stephen Njoka, says the projects could stall if water storage facilities were not constructed first in order to harvest water from other sources.

The project managers had sought environmental impact assessment licenses from Nema in February, but the environmental watchdog directed them to apply for abstraction licenses from the Water Resources Management Authority (Warma).

“They have not come to us again, and it is highly unlikely there will be enough water. They need dams to store water for use during the dry periods, which they did not have in their concepts,” said Mr.Njoka. There are three main irrigation projects being undertaken in the area to provide farmers with irrigation water.

Nema says the projects at Kagaa in Embu County, Maara in Tharaka County and another one in Meru should have been used to store flood waters and for dry periods when the farmers need to irrigate their farms. Mr.Njoka said that the normal river flow cannot sustain the irrigation projects, adding that people living downstream might be denied water.

Nema says it is getting concerned that the projects might end up wasting resources because the people who plan to initiate the projects have not engaged any rele-



Irrigation scheme: Projects could stall if water storage facilities were not constructed.

vant authorities. Water withdrawal from rivers depends on the amount of water available, and Warma determines whether the water will be enough.

“If the water fails to sustain the projects, it will affect the ecosystem and kill the micro-organisms and plants which depend on the water,” said Mr.Njoka.

Environmental officers have raised concern that those behind the project plan to forge ahead even without getting permits.

Mr.Njoka said that some of the projects are too big and the water

may not be enough, adding that irrigation water should be harvested from floods.

He said that farmers use irrigation during the dry seasons and that is the time when the rivers have the smallest volumes, adding that lack of enough water could render the projects unsustainable.

Most of the irrigation water in Embu County is being supported with water from River Thuchi, which drains 311,700 cubic meters of water and has two irrigation projects in Runyenjes and Siakago constituencies.

Rukuriri Tea Factory is constructing a dam for generation of hydroelectric power, and Kyeni Water and Sanitation Company also draws water from the river.

The amount of money spent could not be determined before we went to press because the Eastern PC, Clare Omolo, could not be reached for comment.

During the Madaraka Day celebrations in 2010 she said that the government had started many projects in the province, and that Ksh520 million released in 2010 was used to expand 9 projects.

States rally against over fishing in Victoria

By LINK CORRESPONDENT

A PROJECT to promote aquaculture and reduce pressure of fishing on Lake Victoria has been initiated jointly by the Governments of Germany, Israel and Kenya.

Under the agreement, the three Governments are funding a programme in which fish farmers from the western Kenya region are to be trained on better fishing methods in order to reduce the overdependence on Lake Victoria.

Speaking at Ramogi Institute of Science and Technology (RIAT) in Kisumu County during the official launch the 2nd trilateral Tilapia Value Chain, the German Ambassador to Kenya, Margit Hellwig-Boette, said that a tripartite agreement to this effect is to be made official next month.

She confirmed that 1000 fishermen from the region are to be empowered not only to improve the quality of fish produced, but also to ensure the products meet the international standards.

Margit said that due to fishing pressure on Lake Victoria, stocks of fish was declining - hence the need to look for alternative ways of fish farming. It is necessary to reduce the stress placed upon the lake.

She supposed the initial training will be for trainers of trainers (TOTs), who will eventually roll out the programme to the targeted farmers.

The training is to develop a clear strategy of capacity building along the farmed value chain, and will act as a basis for aquaculture practices in and around Lake Victoria.

The programmes are being facilitated through a tripartite partnership between the Ministries of Fisheries Development, the Foreign Ministry of Germany, and the Centre for International Development of Israel.

State funds rice farmers to boost production

By PETER MUTUKU

THE government has set aside Ksh 7 billion to boost rice production in Kirinyaga County.

Water Permanent Secretary, Dr David Stowa says that the move aims at increasing rice production to meet both the local and national demand for the produce. The PS says that increased production will help alleviate hunger and increase farmers earnings.

The PS says that research shows that Kirinyaga County has enormous potential to feed the entire country due to the favourable climatic conditions and fertile soil.

Dr Stowa explains that part of the funding will be used in introducing new modes of farming from furrow irrigation to piped, drip and sprinkle irrigation.

“Kirinyaga County has the potential to harvest rice in three seasons round the calendar owing to the availability of water. Through the programme we will change the irrigation pattern so that no water will go to waste,” adds the PS.

The PS points out that water management has been a real problem in the area, and urged residents to man-

age the resource in the right way.

“We have received very many complaints on water management and we want to make sure that the issues will be of the past once the programme is rolled out,” added Stowa.

He also said that Kirinyaga will become a tourist attraction site with all the geographical features around it.

Meanwhile The Kirinyaga East District Commissioner has called off a meeting by the troubled Kirinyaga Council of Elders citing security reasons.

The DC, Stephen Makori, said that meeting was illegal and likely to inflame animosity among the warring factions.

He said that the two factions were planning to hold parallel meetings at the same venue, saying this would incite their supporters into violence.

Makori said that the meeting will however proceed after the department of culture confirms the bonafide officials.

“I have to get a detailed report from the culture officers in Nairobi, on who are the genuine officials of Kirinyaga Council of elders since it is not clear who should take up the role as at now,” said Makori.



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Protect water catchment areas from grabbers

By A CORRESPONDENT

THE Water Resource Management Authority (WRMA) in collaboration with the Ministry of Water and National Irrigation Board are working closely to construct dams as well as dykes along the lower regions of River Nzoia basin in order to combat floods and reserve water.

Addressing a stakeholders' forum at the Busia Agricultural Training Centre recently, WRMA regional manager Sabuni Wanyonyi said that the initiative will help to curb flooding.

He said that more dams and dykes will be constructed along the basin of River Nzoia in order to keep reserve water for farming activities," said Wanyonyi, adding that all regional managers will work hard towards the realization of vision 2030.

The official said that the authority will also endeavour to protect water catchment areas from land grabbers posing as private developers.

Wanyonyi lamented that most water catchment areas in the province have been grabbed and converted into residential areas.

The regional manager said 50percent of water in Western province goes to waste despite measures

by the authority to increase supply of clean drinking water for human consumption through the construction of water springs.

"The water resource management authority seeks to provide clean drinking water and sanitation through the construction of more water springs within the region to ensure availability of clean water," said Wanyonyi, adding that the water management authority will also protect water bodies in the region.

The regional technician Joash Orutta said the water authority will sink more boreholes in both rural and urban areas as well as the construction of more dams in the region to help reserve water for farming.

"The water management authority will protect all water catchment areas to ensure free flow of water," said Orutta, adding that members of the water authority should plant trees in all the water catchment areas within their respective areas of jurisdiction hence reducing desertification.

The regional technical manager at the same time said the authority will also provide water tanks to various institutions in the region in order to curb rampant water shortage especially in learning institutions.



Mau Forest: One of the water catchment areas.

Wateng'ula advises colleagues on funeral etiquette

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

TRADITIONAL moral values among the Luhya community are steadily being eroded by some politicians from Western region, a cabinet minister has said.

Trade minister Moses Wetangula has decried lack of etiquette among politicians, saying their conduct and utterances at funerals are an affront to both the deceased and the bereaved families.

Wetangula regretted that some politicians from the Luhya community and even other regions go to funerals not to console the bereaved families but to abuse other leaders.

The trade minister who is also a Sirisia member of parliament (MP) in Bungoma County said that he is normally disturbed to see political leaders behave as if they have no respect for the departed souls at funeral places.

He regretted further that in most cases politicians forget to pay their last respect to the dead persons by viewing the bodies first but instead storm the funeral church service and hijack the programme.

Their aim, Wetangula reiterated that is to abuse other leaders perceived to be opposed to them and not to console families that have lost their loved ones.

"Sometimes these noisy political leaders do not even know who have died when they rise up to address mourners," the minister claimed.

Wetang'ula at the same time also blamed citizens for encouraging abusive politicians by applauding them whenever they hurl insults at other



Mr. Wateng'ula

leaders during funeral functions.

He cautioned the Luhya Community against associating with abusive political leaders saying that their aim is not to unite Kenyans for the sake of peace and development but to destroy this country.

The Sirisia MP challenged political leaders from within and without western region to avoid smear campaign and instead tell Kenyans what they will do if elected.

"These people should tell you their political agenda and that of their preferred presidential candidates and stop being rhetorical at funeral places," he said.

Wetangula was speaking recently at Nakhwana primary school in Bumula Constituency of Bungoma County.

Ignore MRC calls for polls boycott, say Kingi

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

COAST MPs have urged people from the region to ignore calls by the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) to boycott the elections.

Addressing mourners at Chonyi Division in Kilifi County during the burial of the former Supervisor of Elections, the late Joseph Mwangovya, the MPs who included Fisheries Minister Amason Kingi (Magarini), Benedict Fondo Gunda (Bahari) and Francis Baya (Ganze), said that calls by the MRC were unrealistic and should be ignored.

The MPs said that although grievances cited by the group were genuine, they can only be resolved if residents elect good leaders to push for their agenda in the next government.

"Land issues will be addressed properly under the new constitution and we call upon MRC to stop inciting the locals to boycott the elections," Mr. Kingi said.

Mr.Gunda also urged the residents to vote for visionary leaders who will address poverty that is ravaging the region, especially Kilifi County where a majority of people live on less than a dollar a day.

Mr.Kingi asked the government to listen to the grievances raised by the MRC in order to find a lasting solution to the problem.

Kingi, who is also the acting Minister for Industrialisation, urged youths to unite and vote for leaders who will push their agenda in both parliament and the senate. The Minister, who plans to contest for governorship in Kilifi County,

said that Coastal people will not resolve their problems by boycotting the elections.

"Attempts to boycott elections will not address the historical injustices in the region. We should elect the right and able leaders who will bring change in the region," he urged.

Mr.Baya also promised to make sure that unemployment and land problems in the County are addressed in order to avoid conflicts among the local communities and other Kenyans living in the region.

He called on leaders to sensitize the youth on the importance of voting to avoid being misled by the MRC members who are demanding that the Coast region secede from the Republic of Kenya.

At the same function, the Coast Provincial Commissioner, Mr. Earnest Munyi, asked youths who

have no identity cards to apply so that they can be able to acquire voting cards in preparation for the general elections.

He said that people should elect good leaders who will bring change under the devolved governments.

"I am calling on the youths to stand firm and elect the right leaders as this is the only way that their problems can effectively be addressed," he stressed.

The leaders spoke as administration police officers in Kaloleni District arrested eight members of the outlawed MRC who found taking oath.

The Kaloleni DC Fredrick Ayieko, said that the officers were acting on a tip off from the public adding that most of them had come from Mishomoroni in Mombasa County.



Mr. Kingi

Sleazy contractors blamed for poor roads in Bungoma

By **AGGREY BUCHUNJU**

EACH constituency in Bungoma County has been allocated Ksh. 21 million for rural roads repair and maintenance.

The announcement came barely one month after residents demonstrated against the Kenya Rural Roads Authority (KERRA) offices for allegedly awarding tenders to cowboy contractors.

Leading the demonstrations, a human rights defender, Martin

Wanyonyi, blamed the poor state of roads in the region to cowboy contractors and KERRA.

Wanyonyi alleged that KERRA colluded with cowboy contractors to swindle money through shoddy work and exaggerated quotations on cowboy contractors.

Wakoli admitted that sub-standard construction of roads in the region was rampant adding that for a long period time contractors have been paid by KERRA for work not done to specifications.

Disclosing the allocation of the Ksh. 21 million to each one of the six (6) constituencies in Bungoma County, Bumula Member of Parliament (MP) Bifwoli Wakoli also blamed the poor state of roads in the county to contractors who have been doing shoddy work despite being paid.

The MP who also sits on the parliamentary roads committee asked the six (6) constituencies in Bungoma County to form a monitoring and evaluation committee for

checks and balances.

This committee Wakoli said will minimize cases of corruption by ensuring that only contractors who do their work to specifications are paid.

"KERRA will only pay contractors after being told to do so by the monitoring and evaluation committee," he said.

Wakoli, who is also Lands Assistant Minister, was speaking recently at Nakwana Primary school in his constituency.

By **MALACHI MOTANO**

WOMEN farmers in Molo and Kituyi will now maximize their participation in and their benefits from the agricultural markets, thanks to the Japan.

Through the World Bank and the Ministry of Agriculture, the Japanese government will fund a three year program dubbed 'accelerating rural women's access to Agricultural markets and trade' to a tune of three million US dollars.

'Accelerating rural women's access to Agricultural Markets and trade' is a program by 'Groots Kenya (grassroots organizations operating together in sisterhood).

According to Agriculture Assistant Minister during the launch of the program in Molo Hotel, the Agriculture sector ministries have developed the Agricultural sector development strategy (ASDS) with four thematic pillars that include, women leadership and governance, women property right, community resilience to HIV and AIDS and community resilience to disasters and climate change

The project's objective is to empower vulnerable women farmers in Kituyi and Molo economically and socially, improve their livelihoods and strengthen their business skills to allow them maximize their participation in and benefit from agricultural markets and society.

The organization intends to promote dairy production and horticulture, and to increase the farm incomes. They also plan to construct a market in Molo to enhance trade in farm products.

According to the Director of Agriculture Mary Kamau the Ministry has embarked on promoting Agro-industry as the take off point in the transformation of the economy from agrarian to industrial status.

"Because Molo has great potential, to produce Vegetables,

Japan joins Groots in helping women farmers



Philomena Nyokabi, a woman farmer in her farm.

tomatoes, onions, potatoes dairy milk among other farm production, the women farmers even their male counterparts must now form pressure groups that determine prices of their production in the markets to avoid exploitation by the purchase groups," she said.

On his part the District commissioner Molo Julius Kavita said "women form over 50 per cent of the country's population. 85 per cent of successful projects are

by women. I am now challenging women, starting with the ones here in Molo to make sure that all the agricultural products in the Supermarkets in Molo and the neighboring towns like Nakuru Naivasha and even Kericho are their production if possible they start Supermarkets owned by women groups."

According to the World Bank deputy country director, Ms. Rajesh Paralkar, the Bank will continue in its partnership and

mainstreaming Gender programs in the country. Out of the 3 million US dollars, 2.8 million will go to Groots Kenya while the rest will remain with the bank for management programs.

Agriculture remains the cornerstone of the country's economy, contributing directly about 26 per cent of the GDP, 60 per cent of the export earnings and employing 75 per cent of the population. In addition, agriculture provides 75 per cent industrial raw materials.

HIV infection among married couples doubles in Eastern

By **PETER MUTUKU**

MEN in the Upper Eastern region of Kenya have been urged to shun irresponsible behaviour in order to reduce the rising cases of family breakups and the suffering of neglected children.

According to the National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCCK), marital breakups have become very common while child delinquency is on the rise.

The chairman of NCCCK Upper Eastern, Mr. Stephen Kalunyu,

revealed that HIV infections are increasing among married people, which is due to the growing culture of infidelity and sexual irresponsibility.

"As the church, we are working at restarting family education training to empower couples before and during marriage. If men remain irresponsible then the families will continue to suffer break ups irredeemably," said Kalunyu.

Speaking during a regional conference at Gitoro Conference Centre in Meru, the official called

for diversification of economic activities of the people living in the region, where the people rely on subsistence farming, which hampers efforts in eradicating poverty.

He said that there is a need for value addition of produce from the region and a comprehensive marketing and distribution base of products to ensure maximum benefits are realized for the farmers.

"We will continue with efforts to provide financial literacy to the residents of our region, and in this regard invite like minded organiza-

tions to partner with us in this programme. Our goal is to empower the people to join together to form producer associations through which they will maximize production, value addition, marketing and distribution," said Kalunyu.

The council also said that they will preach in pulpits and any other forums against the culture of depending on handouts from politicians, family members, the government or the church, and instead empower the people to work hard to meet their needs.

MPs shun Migori peace meeting

By **LINK CORRESPONDENT**

MPs from Southern Nyanza have come under scathing attack for boycotting a peace workshop in Migori Town, despite being invited.

The leaders kept away from the meeting that brought together leaders from Migori County to discuss ways of fostering co-existence between communities living in the area during and after the general elections.

The one-day workshop, organized by a Non-Governmental Organisation called the African Centre for Volunteers (ACV), explored ways of having a participatory, free and fair general election in the area, which is mapped as one of the violence hotspots in the country.

"We needed all political leaders to be here because they are often the triggers of violence during political competition," said Erastus Omondi Otieno, the executive director of ACV.

"But we will never be held back in our peace initiatives by their absence. We will continue to sensitize the locals to embrace peace and unity and shun leaders who preach violence and divisive politics," he added.

Mr. Otieno said that conflict always characterized Kenya's electioneering periods. "Although the scale varies, the cases of violence have had far reaching effects including deaths, displacements, and destruction of property. This cannot be tolerated," the official noted. The invited MPs' who failed to show up include: Mr. Dalmas Otieno (Rongo), Mr. John Pesa (Migori), Mr. Cyprian Ojwang (Uriri), Mr. Edick Anyanga (Nyatike) and Dr. Wilfred Machage (Kuria).

However, officials of ODM, Kanu and UDF political parties attended the function and signed a peace memorandum binding them to keep peace during the polls.

Former Energy Assistant Minister Shadrack Manga said that peace was paramount for the county to achieve Vision 2030, and asked leaders to avoid causing unnecessary tribal conflicts between Kenyans.

He explained that fears of marginalization by the majorities still existed in some counties, including Migori.

The participants criticized Parliament for the slow passage of bills aimed at effecting the implementation of the new Constitution, and told MPs' to take their work seriously and stop mutilating "the letter and spirit of the new laws."

MRC calls to boycott elections opposed

By BEKADZO TONDO

CALLS by the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) urging Coastal people to boycott the forthcoming General Elections dominated a peace forum convened by a Human Rights lobby group, namely the Ujamaa centre.

Speakers at the forum held at Kilifi County hall sharply differed on whether or not to participate in the forthcoming elections.

A village elder from Mtwapa Mr. Alphonse Chirao supported calls to boycott the election saying that grievances raised by MRC touch on historical injustices meted out on Coastal people by successive regimes and must not be wished away.

"The grievances raised by MRC are pertinent and reflect what people in the region have been subjected to over the years and therefore we highly support their bid to push for our rights," said Mr. Chirao.

However, other speakers differed with the stance taken by MRC with Ms. Nimosi Rashid who is a woman leader from Mikanjuni village in Mtwapa saying that Coastal people must vote and cautioned those who are inciting the people to boycott the national exercise.

"Am appealing to leaders not to incite Coastal people to boycott the national elections as this

would be counterproductive and alienate us from the rest of the country," said Ms Rashid.

Ms. Rashid said coastal people should vote their regional leaders who should then be vested with the mandate to fight for their rights.

"We passed the new constitution during the referendum which now guarantees to address the myriad problems afflicting us

and thus we should not boycott the elections," said Ms. Rashid.

The peace forum is part of a series of sensitization meetings organised by the Ujamaa centre to educate people in Coast Province on the need to uphold peace during the electioneering period. In Kilifi County, the lobby group sensitised local leaders on why they should maintain peace during and after the elections.

An official of Ujamaa Center Mr. Nicholas Mrima said that General Elections are only held once in five years and thus the need to exercise restraint and show tolerance to divergent political views.

Mr. Mrima said similar meetings have been held in Lamu, Tana River, Mombasa and Kwale counties and the campaigns will continue until the election time.



Mombasa Republican Council supporters celebrate outside the Mombasa High Court after judges lifted the ban on the group recently.

Mutula promises free pads to all school girls

By LINK CORRESPONDENT

THE Ministry of Education plans to ensure that all girls get free sanitary towels to avoid missing classes during their menstrual cycle.

Education Minister Mutula Kilonzo has said that the ministry has already been allocated Ksh 2.6 billion for the provision of sanitary towels in girl's schools, saying that he has not yet fully received all the funds.

Speaking in Masinga Girl's Secondary School during the commissioning of various education development projects, Mutula said that the lack of sanitary towels in schools has been a major impediment to the improvement of girl child education.

"Article 53 of the new constitution stipulates that all the children have equal rights and no child should miss education for things that can be provided by the government," he said, adding that once all the funds are released the towels will be disbursed annually.

Mutula pointed out that in the arid and semi arid areas of the country, mostly inhabited by the pastoralist communities, the government has been forced to also distribute panties as most of the people cannot afford them.

"You realize that a girl cannot use a sanitary towel without a panty to support it, and that's the reason we are distributing sanitary towels together with undergarments," he posed.

Mutula also discussed the recent situation concerning a leakage of national exams. He said that his ministry has finalized key bills that will curb leakage of national examinations and ensure that students who are found with the leaked exams are not punished.

The minister pointed out that the National Examination Bill seeks to ensure all loopholes for exam cheating are sealed and only those who leak it are held accountable.

"It is wrong to punish students found with the leaked exams, since they did not have the capacity to access the exams without collusion by the examination council officials," he posed.

"The current crop of candidates should sit their KCSE under the new laws, and I plead with the President and the Prime Minister to enact the law before August," he said, adding that never again should a child be punished for alleged cheating while the culprit who stole the paper walks away free.

The minister pointed out that the new law also seeks to curb the ridiculous mode of education where the children from wealthy people are given priority compared to those from the poor.

"Under the new law all the children are all the same. We will no longer hear of children learning in impoverished sheds in the name of classrooms," he posed, adding that teachers will also be treated with respect.

Evicted squatters die of pneumonia

By LINK CORRESPONDENT

FOUR squatters who were evicted from Government Forest in 2006 in Nandi County have died in the past month due to an outbreak of pneumonia.

The squatters, who live in temporarily in a structure at a road reserve in Tinderet Constituency, succumbed to death. They suffered from coldness after the heavy rains destroyed their structures and makeshifts at one of their camps, Cherobon in Cerengonik Forest in Nandi East District.

The Chairman of the Ogiek squatters, Mr. Paul Tuwei, said that the evictees have to contend with poor and miserable conditions after the government directed that the Ogiek squatters be evicted from public forest in Nandi County.

Mr. Tuwei named the Ogiek squatters who had died in the past one month as Evelyn Chepkosgei aged 65 years, Mary Talkuen aged 28 years, Shadrack Bett aged 56 years and Richard Cheruiyot aged 24 years.

The Ogiek squatters said that most of them felt sick. They suc-

cumbed to death since they were not good treatments at the congested camps where they lived and children had suffered and developed pneumonia.

They appealed to the government to open mobile clinics to offer treatments to the victims when they fall sick and claimed that they normally bury their deaths in government forest since they had no personal land to live in.

They also asked the government and NGOs to supply them with tents, saying that the temporary structures and shanties that they erected at Cerengonik Forest had been destroyed by the rains and had become too old, but they could not replace them due to high poverty.

The officials of the Ogiek, which includes the Secretary Julius Tuwei and the Treasurer Mr. David Sirma, also asked the Red Cross and government to supply them with enough relief maize and open mobile schools to enable their children acquire education.

They also asked the Tindiret CDF Committee to allocate some funds for the children of the Ogiek squatters and asked the area MP, Henry Kosgey, to intervene so that the children who had dropped out of school can get back.

Most of the children had no blankets to cover them at night and their health was threatened due to the conditions in which the evicted families have stayed in ever since

they were flushed out of the public forest in 2005.

More than 3000 squatters of Ogiek origin were forcefully evicted from public forest in Tindiret where they had lived for decades, and the government promised that they would be settled within 2 years (after the government carried out an investigation in order to kick out bogus squatters and settle the genuine ones).

The officials of the squatters said they continued to stay in a road reserve, and questioned how long the government would take to settle them.

The squatters' spokesmen questioned why the government was putting a lot of pressure to settle the squatters from Mau Forest, yet those from Tindiret had not been settled even though they were evicted many years ago.

Mr. Tuwei said that, "we want Ogiek squatters rights to be respected so that they are also given permanent settlement just like their colleagues who had been evicted from Mau forest in Narok County."

They added that the Ogiek are friendly to the forest and were able to feed themselves through farming, but now they had been reduced into beggars. A number of them have died in the since they were evicted from the forest. They currently live in places unfit for human settlement, and are tired of staying in shanties.



A squatter in her shambas.

Busia County tipped on dangers of arms

By LINK CORRESPONDENT

THE Busia County Task Force Committee has been urged to liaise with respective community policing committees to rid the area of small arms.

Addressing stakeholders during the official opening of a forum on illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons organized by the Kenya National Focal Point Secretariat, Busia County Commissioner Joyce Isiakho called for unity, saying no single country can address adequately or handle the issues of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Isolation.

The County Commissioner underscored the importance of the forum, saying that it is part of a wider global campaign against the proliferation of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the attempt to lift humanity out of widespread loss of life, destruction and illegal usage of weapons.

"In this regard we appreciate the International, Regional and Sub-Regional Instruments, such as UN Pro-

toocol, United Nations Programme of Actions (UNPOA), Bamako Declaration, Nairobi Declaration and Nairobi Protocols, together with other initiatives, which provide us with moral and legal direction of action and interaction in the Great Lake Region and Horn of Africa and the continent at large - since no single country can address adequately or handle the issues of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Isolation," said Isiakho.

"We are all witnesses to daily atrocities visited on our people by indiscriminate use of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. Cross border banditry, cattle rustling, armed conflicts amongst communities, car-jacking, increased acts of terrorism and other criminal activities are fuelled by the easy availability of small arms and light weapons," she added.

Isiakho also noted that, under the Office the President, the Ministry of Provincial Administration and Internal Security through the Kenya Na-

tional Focal Point is a model of the struggle against the vice since 2003.

"We must, therefore, acknowledge and applaud the effort of our Government who have ensured the establishment and operationalization of the National Focal Point and have put other measures in place in accordance with the Nairobi Protocol," said the Commissioner.

She said the establishment and operation of both the Provincial and District Task Forces is an important innovation - one that brings together all the members to be empowered with the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them carry out their mandate as per the protocols and other existing policies and legislation.

"It must, however, be acknowledged that, due to limited resources, the pace of the implementation of the Nairobi Protocol has not been carried out as expected and we hope that jump starting the process again will see the implementation being finalized as envisaged," said the Com-

missioner, adding that this calls for a stronger political will and good will from the Government and the members of public respectively.

The commissioner also noted the importance of Gender Mainstreaming in all peace and security processes, including addressing the problems of proliferation of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.

"We should always endeavor to uphold the spirit of our constitution by promoting women participation at all levels," she said, emphasizing that the success of the efforts can only be measured by the levels at which the task-force is able to effect reduction in the evils caused by usage of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, as well as the degree to which the move is able to attain for the country's meaningful peace, stability and development.

Provincial administration, education officers, and local political and religious leaders from the entire Busia County all attended the meeting.

New disease threatens maize production in central

By PETER MUTUKU

MAIZE farmers in Kirinyaga County are counting losses following the outbreak of a strange disease that has caused the crop to wither.

Luke Mwaniki, a farmer, says that the disease has caused leaves of the crop to dry up while still young and green.

Mwaniki says that the strange disease is adversely affecting his maize. He says that he planted during the month of March and that the crop was doing well until the disease struck.

The farmer says that he noticed that the leaves were turning yellow-brown, and as a result drying while still young.

Mwaniki reported the matter to the Kirinyaga East District Agricultural Officer, who visited his farm and took samples of the affected maize plantation.

He says that he has lost approximately 80 percent of the crop adding that he will not harvest anything this season. "This is a great loss since and translates to total crop failure," added Mwaniki.

Mwaniki also said that he applied normal manure after planting and later used fertilizer after being advised by the area Agricultural Officer, saying that he cannot deduce the reason as to why his maize is drying.

He said this is the first time that he has experienced such a blow, 40 years since he started farming as the disease has spread through his 8 acre piece of land.

Area District Agricultural Officer Baru said that they have taken samples in the affected farms to find out the actual cause of the disease.

The DAO also added that they have taken soil samples so as to see whether the drying could have resulted from soil acidity.

"As the ministry of Agriculture, we have taken samples from his farm and KARI has also done that to help us know what is causing the maize to dry up," added Baru.

By BEN ONYANGO

PUPILS and students have been urged to keep off drug abuse to excel in education and in succeed in life.

Speaking in Ongora Primary School in Rongo Constituency, the Kenya Airways CEO, Mr. Titus Naikuni, said that drug abuse remained one of the biggest challenges to the students, as it was impossible for them to be on drugs and concentrate on their education at the same time.

"Students have to learn to make the right choices while still having the chance," he said, adding that it was only when they kept off drugs that they manage to concentrate on their studies and get better results.

At the same time, the KQ boss called for more efforts to be put into combating drug use in schools across the country. He says that drug remained one of the biggest challenges facing Kenyan schools.

"It is time we realize how bad the drugs affect our students," he said, adding that the fight against drugs needed cooperation from

Naikuni cautions pupils against drug abuse

all the parties involved, including: teachers, students, parents and the relevant government agencies. He further decried the increase in drug use among students, especially those in urban areas, noting that it was important that the issue is immediately addressed to stop it from getting worse.

Earlier, Naikuni had opened two new classrooms funded by Kenya Airways (to the tune of over 2 million shillings). He announced that he will construct another classroom within the school to make sure that the pupils had a place to learn. Speaking at the same forum, the area MP, who is also the Public Service Minister, Dalmas Otieno, who had accompanied Naikuni, called upon parents to take an active role in developing schools.



Mr. Naikuni



Mr. Otieno

Food security remains a big challenge to Africa

By LUKE KAPCHANGA

FOOD security in Africa has received exceptional attention in the last five years. In fact the production of food in sufficient quantity and quality has received as much concerted global attention.

However, the agricultural sector which contributes 30 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been neglected in most countries with investments accounting for a mere 4 percent.

This has led to a substantial reduction in financing for agricultural research programmes, extension services and capacity-building programmes in institutions of higher learning.

The consequences have been a dearth of innovation, incubation, and poor dissemination of new technologies.

The situation has been com-

pounded by the fact that only 4 per cent of Africa's agricultural production is under irrigation, thus countries have to rely on rain fed agriculture which curtails their ability to increase agricultural production and productivity without necessarily opening up more land to cultivation.

Tom Owiyo, a Senior specialist in Agriculture and Climate Change at the African Climate Policy Center (ACPC) of the UN Economic Commission for Africa underscores the need to focus on key underlying challenges to production.

He says that only strong institutional framework that enhance integration and coherence of the national action plans can help address food shortages.

Owiyo calls for the adoption of reform initiatives in support of the proposed Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP).

The programme aims at promoting public investments in the agricultural sector to about 10 per cent of national budgetary expenditure.

This translates to support in key aspects of agricultural research and technological development, dissemination through extension services and provision of necessary financial support to producers to adopt transformational production practices.

"African countries must come up with joint initiatives geared towards unpacking some of the Africa's problems, such as the coordination of climate science data, improvements in the analytical capacity and the ready availability of information to promote decision-making on agricultural production," he explains.

The specialist says that the initiatives must be environmentally and economically sustainable and socially inclusive.

"While the large-scale producers

in developed countries pursue programmes that promote mitigation, the smallholders in Africa and other less developed countries need mechanisms that enable them to adapt to the effects of climate change and climate variability," he explains.

He says that this is a reflection of the wide division that exists between the parties on creating a specific work programme for agriculture.

Climate-smart agricultural production systems can optimise the use of inputs and post-harvest management systems.

Access to and affordability of energy is also critical for the agricultural sector, especially for post-harvest processing and to meet the needs of smallholder producers, particularly subsistence farmers, many of whom are poor.

He says the depletion of soil quality and poor nutrient availability remains a key challenge for many

subsistence farmers in Africa.

"Practical approaches however exist for improved soil and nutrient management and include improved seeds, efficient water use, pest and disease control mechanisms, improved livestock and fisheries systems, the use of improved genetic resources and ecosystem management.

African governments must, therefore, support technological options that include soil amendments through mineral and organic fertilisers and access to high-yield certified seeds.

Management of water resources is another critical element of making agricultural production in the continent climate resilient.

With appropriate water resource management and water harvesting techniques, Africa could significantly reduce the dual impact of floods and droughts that are frequent features of the production landscape.

Global access to safe drinking water improves, says UN Report

By HENRY OWINO

A RECENT report reveals that one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of halving the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water has been partly met, well in advance of the MDG 2015 deadline.

According to the report issued by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), over two billion people now have access to improved drinking water sources, such as piped supplies and protected wells.

"At the end of 2010, at least 89 per cent of the world's population equivalent to 6.1 billion people used improved drinking water sources. This is one per cent more than the 88 per cent MDGs target. The report estimates that by 2015, 92 per cent of the global population will have access to improved drinking water," says the report.

According to Anthony Lake, UNICEF Executive Director, the progress on drinking water and sanitation 2012 is being coordinated by the WHO and UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation.

The Executive Director cites water, poverty and slums among MDGs which have been met three years ahead of 2015. He said this year's annual Report on the Millennium Development Goals was launched and released by Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General.

"For children, this is especially good news," said Anthony Lake. "Every day more than 3000 children die from diseases associated to diarrhea. Achieving this goal will go a long way to saving children's lives," he added.

Lake warned that victory could not yet be declared since at least 11 per cent of the world's population



Despite MDGs on water and sanitation partially met, people in informal settlements still struggle to get clean water. Photo/Henry Owino

who account for 783 million people are still without access to safe drinking water and billions without sanitation facilities.

"The numbers are still staggering," he said, "But the progress announced today is proof that MDG targets can be met with the will, the effort and the funds," Lake explains.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in his speech during the 2012 World Water Day said: "Today we recognize a great achievement for the people of the world. This is one of the first MDG targets to be met. The successful efforts to provide greater access to drinking water are a testament for all to see that the MDGs are not a dream, but a vital tool for improving

the lives of millions of the poorest people."

Ban reiterated that guaranteeing sustainable food and water security for all will require the full engagement of all sectors and actors. He however, said it will entail transferring appropriate water technologies, empowering small food producers and conserving essential ecosystem services.

Ban added it would also require policies that promote water rights for all, stronger regulatory capacity and gender equality. He suggested investments in water infrastructure, rural development and water resource management will be essential.

"We have reached an important

target, but we cannot stop here," the Secretary-General said. "Our next step must be to target the most difficult to reach, the poorest and the most disadvantaged people across the world. The United Nations General Assembly has recognized drinking water and sanitation as human rights. That means we must ensure that every person has access," emphasized Ban Ki-moon.

The report however, highlighted that the world is still far from meeting the MDGs target for sanitation, and is unlikely to do so by 2015. It reveals that only 63 per cent of the world now has improved sanitation access, a figure projected to increase only to 67 percent by 2015 which is well below the 75 per cent aim in

the MDGs.

According to Dr. Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General, currently 2.5 billion people still lack improved sanitation. She affirmed that UNICEF and WHO also cautions that significant work must be done to ensure that improved sources of water are made available and remain safe.

"Providing sustainable access to improved drinking water sources is one of the most important things we can do to reduce disease," said WHO Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan. "But this achievement today is only the beginning. We must continue to ensure this access remains safe. Otherwise our gains will be in vain," she declared.

The report highlights the massive disparities in access to drinking water between regions and countries, and within countries themselves.

The report confirms that only 61 per cent of the people in sub-Saharan Africa have access to improved water supply sources compared with 90 per cent in Latin America, the Caribbean, Northern Africa, and large parts of Asia. Again over 40 per cent of all people globally who lack access to drinking water live in sub-Saharan Africa.

The report therefore, suggests the need for greater attention both to water and sanitation in rural areas in developing countries. It indicates at least 97 out of every 100 people do not have piped water and 14 per cent of the population drinks surface water – for example water from rivers, ponds, or lakes.

According to the report, approximately 1.1 billion people still practice open defecation with the vast majority (949 million) in rural areas. This affects even regions with high levels of improved water access. For instance, 17 per cent of rural dwellers in Latin America and the Caribbean and 9 per cent in Northern Africa still resort to open defecation.

Today even the so-called BRIC countries, with rapidly growing economies, have large numbers of people who practice open defecation: 626 million in India, 14 million in China, and 7.2 million in Brazil just mention but a few.

The fight to have clean and accessible piped water and sanitation are human rights and should not be a mere MDGs 2015 target alone but lifelong existence.

Finally the MDG report warns that the 2015 deadline is fast approaching and in order to achieve outstanding goals, Governments, the international community, civil society and the private sector need to intensify their contributions.

MATESO joins UN in marking torture week

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

A HUMAN rights lobby group based in Bungoma town commemorated this year's United Nations week against torture and other victims of conflict in style.

Mwatikho Torture Survivors Organisation (MATESO) celebrated the June 26th UN day by planting trees and lighting candles in remembrance of those who perished or suffered as a result of conflict.

Over 1,000 trees were planted

at a public park in Chwele by Mateso officials, Bungoma County Council officials, victims of post-election violence, torture survivors from Sabaot Land defence force (SLDF) atrocities and refugees.

The five (5) acre piece of land on which the trees were planted was allocated to the Human Rights Organization by Bungoma County council for the purpose.

Speaking during the tree planting activity and lighting of the candles at the park, Mateso executive Director

Taiga Wanyanja thanked the Council for providing the space for tree planting.

Wanyanja described the park as a symbol that will make people think, reflect and ensure that there is no recurrence of torture, extra-judicial killings and other inhuman treatment.

He claimed that SLDF killed over 700 people in Mt. Elgon and caused the disappearance of over 150 other people.

Chwele location senior chief Henry Munyole said tree planting is

one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adding that he will ensure that the planted trees are not disturbed by the community around.

Bungoma County council Environment Officer Tom Opunga appealed to the community around not to allow the animals into the park.

Opunga added that the council will soon fence off the park to ensure that the planted trees are not ruined by domestic animals.