



The

COUNTY FOCUS

Three Counties, One People

The Voice of Meru, Isiolo & Tharaka Nithi

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NEWSPAPER

How Meru is crying under Ruto



Mithika Linturi: Former Agriculture CS



CJ Martha Koome: Under siege



Dr. Eng. Charles Mwirigi: Former WEF CEO



George Kinoti: Former DCI Boss



Japhet Koome: Former IG



Eng. Eric Mugaa: Water CS (serving)



President William Ruto and a host of local leaders attending an event in Meru County last year

By Rugendo Antony

In a disheartening turn of events for the once staunch supporters of President

William Ruto, the Meru community has emerged as one of the political regions most

disgruntled with President William Ruto and his Kenya Kwanza administration.

Recent developments reveal a brewing discontent that could threaten the president's political stronghold in the Mt. Kenya East region, prompting a potential reevaluation of alliances ahead of the crucial 2027 elections.

Notably, prominent Meru leaders, including former Cabinet Secretary Mithika Linturi, have lost their positions under Ruto's administration. Linturi was among those affected when the President dissolved the cabinet in response to nationwide protests, which has left many in the community feeling marginalized. Additionally, George Kinoti, the former Director of Criminal Investigations (DCI), who hails from Meru, was fired, contradicting Ruto's earlier

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Leaders accuse Ruto of sidelining Meru County

...from page 1

announcement that Kinoti had resigned voluntarily.

The sense of abandonment deepened with the resignation of police chief Japhet Koome amid violent protests against proposed tax hikes, which resulted in the deaths. Concerns have also been raised about Chief Justice Martha Koome, with allegations from Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua about plans to disband the Supreme Court, which could further unsettle the community's trust in the administration.

Adding to the turmoil, Water Cabinet Secretary Eric Mugaa reportedly faces potential dismissal less than a year into his tenure, leading him to resign himself to the fact that changes may be imminent. In another significant development, Charles Mwirigi, CEO of the Women Enterprise Fund, was initially suspended over graft-related allegations.

Interestingly, in stark contrast, residents of Tharaka Nithi County seem to be reaping benefits from the administration, following the appointment of Kithure Kindiki as the Deputy President.

The regional pointment have accused the national government of deliberately denying the region development projects.

As whispers of discontent echo through Meru's political corridors, key figures-including former Agriculture Cabinet Secretary and Meru Senator Mithika Linturi have openly criticized the government's perceived neglect of the community.

"Our 800,000 votes must count," Linturi stated, expressing frustration over the lack of representation in national leadership roles.

Linturi, who was dismissed from his Cabinet position following the GenZ protests in June, vowed to advocate for the Ameru community's rightful place in national leadership. He emphasized the need for recognition and respect, promising to work tirelessly to restore Meru's influence in national politics.

"We will work day and night to restore the glory of Meru. Even if they despise us, we will stand firm and demand respect," he added.

The unmistakable sentiment among Meru leaders is one of betrayal, as they grapple with what they describe as being sidelined in favor of other regions.

Former Meru Governor Kiraitu Murungi, who once rallied behind Ruto's presidential bid, has taken a firm stance against the alleged ongoing marginalization.

"People are very bitter," he remarked, lamenting the absence of Meru representation in significant government appointments, including the lack of local ambassadors.

The bitter pill of feeling "short-changed" has fostered a growing sense of unity among Meru leaders, as they seek to forge alliances even beyond the traditional Mount Kenya political bloc.

Two years ago, a coalition of 11 Meru MPs, primarily elected under the United Democratic Alliance (UDA), held a meeting with Ukambani



President William Ruto congratulates Kithure Kindiki soon after taking oath of office as Deputy President



Former CS Mithika Linturi, Buuri MP Mugambi Rindikiri, Former Governor Kiraitu Murungi and Igembe South MP John Paul Mwirigi confer as they waited for President William Ruto in Meru recently



President William Ruto and former Meru Governor when they met at State House recently

counterparts in what they termed as exploring of avenues to champion their shared interests.

Tigania East MP Mpuru Aburi aptly summarized the situation, emphasizing, "We have been taken for a ride by President Ruto's government, and in

every aspect, we feel marginalized."

This outreach signified a shifting political landscape, where Meru leaders seemed to align more closely with their neighbors to advocate for equitable development and resource allocation.

The frustrations are not just limited to the lack of political appointments. Leaders from Meru have been expressing a growing concern over development resources being inadequately allocated to their region.

"We feel we are worse off than the Kambas in terms of state appointments and development," noted Aburi, highlighting the urgency of their plight. This sentiment is echoed across the region, with the community increasingly questioning their loyalty to a government they feel has forgotten its pact with them.

"Time has come for us to chart our destiny," said Kiraitu, reflecting a call to action that could reshape the region's political affiliations moving forward. The former governor hinted at upcoming consultative forums in the new year aimed at internally strategizing how to engage with other political cohorts in the face of a perceived systematic neglect.

Mithika Linturi's stark warning that the community is "tired of being treated as second fiddle" underlined a pivotal turning point.

Ruto's backers among them South Imenti MP, Shadrack Mwiti however said it was too early to castigate the president, insisting that Dr Ruto was still keen on transforming Meru region through implementing impactful development programs.

"I request those who supported the president to appreciate that it is just two years since Ruto took over and he has not forgotten the region. I will work with him to be at a position to bring development to you," Mwiti said during Yetu Sacco Annual General Meeting in Nkubu recently.

The Meru Leaders remarks come in the wake of a Cabinet reshuffle by President Ruto, which has been described by State House as part of efforts to optimize government performance under the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA).

The reshuffle saw several notable appointments, including former Health Cabinet Secretary Mutahi Kagwe as the new head of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, replacing Dr. Andrew Karanja, who was nominated as Kenya's Ambassador to Brazil.

Other appointees include former Nakuru Governor Lee Kinyanjui as Cabinet Secretary for Investments, Trade, and Industry, and former Kiambu Governor William Kabogo as Cabinet Secretary for Information, Communications, and the Digital Economy.

State House Chief of Staff Felix Koskei stated that the reshuffle aims to enhance service delivery and align government operations with national priorities such as food security, economic growth, and digital transformation.

However, the recent Head of State meeting with veteran politician Kiraitu Murungi at State House, has been rumoured as part of an ongoing plot to ring-fence Mt Kenya East from inroads by Former Kenyan Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua.

The future of Bishop Mugambi as new co-adjutor Bishop Murugara assumes role at Diocese of Meru



Bishop Mugambi of the Catholic Diocese of Meru welcoming his successor Mons Murugara in Meru

By Rugendo Antony

A recent appointment of Monsignor Jackson Murugara as the Coadjutor Bishop for the Catholic Diocese of Meru by Pope Francis had sparked curiosity about the future of the diocese's current leader, Bishop Salesius Mugambi, particularly for the many young Catholics in their 20s who have grown up knowing Bishop Mugambi as their shepherd since he took over the diocese in 2004.

As Bishop Mugambi prepares for retirement, questions abound regarding what lies ahead for both him and the community he has nurtured for over two decades.

Bishop Salesius Mugambi, the third bishop of Meru Diocese, will be leaving an indelible mark on the diocese since his ordination as a priest on December 10, 1977. Appointed Coadjutor bishop in December 2001 and later ordained bishop on March 19, 2002, he took over the reins of the Diocese of Meru on March 18, 2004.

During his tenure, Bishop Mugambi has been instrumental in shaping the spiritual landscape of the diocese, introducing innovative initiatives that have fostered a deeper sense of community and faith among the faithful.

One of his notable achievements was the creation of the office of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in 2013, with Reverend Fr. Lawrence Murori as the first Diocesan coordinator. This move was aimed at promoting evangelization and pastoral services, and the SCCs have since played a vital role in the diocese.

The bishop's support for the office of SCCs has had a profound impact, including the promotion of lay involvement in parish leadership and organization, in line with the spirit of Vatican II.

Under Bishop Mugambi's leadership, the Diocese of Meru has experienced significant growth, with the number of parishes increasing to 80 as of 2018. The administration of these parishes is overseen by Diocesan and religious priests, ensuring that the faithful receive

adequate pastoral care.

The bishop's emphasis on SCCs has also led to the formation of vibrant communities that have become centers of deepening faith, nurturing missionary disciples, and fostering ecological conversion.

Monsignor Jackson Murugara:

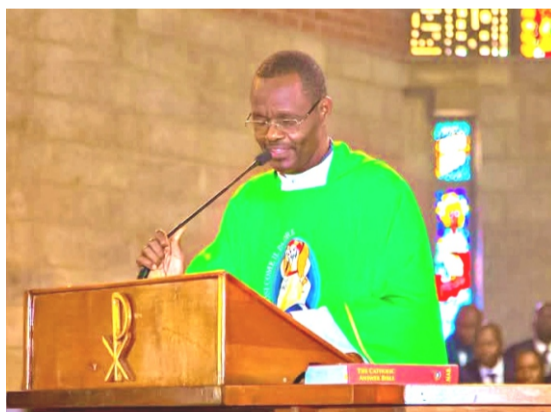
Appointment of Mons Murugara was made public by the Vatican on January 16, 2025, and relayed by the Apostolic Nuncio to Kenya, Archbishop

Bert van Megen, during an official communication with the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB).

Mons Murugara, who has been serving as the Parish Priest and Rector at the Consolata Shrine in Nairobi, will assist 74-year-old Bishop Salesius Mugambi in overseeing the spiritual and administrative affairs of the diocese.

"Monsignor" is a title bestowed on a priest who has distinguished himself by exceptional service to the church. It is a title granted by the pope -typically, upon the recommendation of the priest's diocesan bishop. It is a purely honorary title and has no effect on the priest's duties or ministerial assignment.

Upon Bishop Mugambi's retirement, Mons Murugara will automatically assume the role of the diocese's fourth bishop—a critical moment in



Monsignor Jackson Murugara

the history of a diocese that has been part of the Catholic community since it was officially erected as a Vicariate Apostolic in 1926.

Before revealing what might happen to Bishop Mugambi, let us delve into Monsignor Jackson Murugara's educational history and experience.

Monsignor Murugara was born in Kenya and holds a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy from St. Augustine University of Tanzania. He then pursued a Master's degree in Theology from the Pontifical Urban University in Rome, Italy.

He has served in various capacities within the

Catholic Church in Kenya, including as a parish priest and vicar general of the Diocese of Meru. He has also been involved in various diocesan commissions and committees, demonstrating his commitment to serving the Church.

Mons Murugara brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the table. His appointment as Coadjutor Bishop is a significant development that will likely shape the future of the Diocese of Meru. His relationship with Bishop Mugambi will undoubtedly play a crucial role in determining what lies ahead for both men.

What is the process of appointing a new bishop:

Before the appointment of Monsignor Jackson Murugara as Coadjutor Bishop, the Catholic Church underwent a rigorous process to select a suitable candidate.

According to Catholic Review one of the oldest catholic publications in the world, the journey to appointing a new bishop is intricate and deeply rooted in canon law, designed to ensure thorough consideration of candidates who will guide dioceses effectively.

Following canon law, all bishops are required to submit their resignation at the age of 75, although the Pope may request that they continue serving until a successor is named.

When a diocese requires a new bishop, the process frequently begins with the diocesan bishop or administrator preparing a report to assess the needs of the local church and identifying potential candidates.

This report is then submitted to the Apostolic Nuncio, the Pope's representative in the region, who plays a crucial role in compiling a list of recommended candidates. This list—commonly referred to as a "terna" is then sent to the Vatican's Dicastery for Bishops, where discussions and votes take place among church leaders from around the world.

After vetting candidates, the final choice rests with the Pope, who considers the recommendations and makes his selection known. The entire process, which can take anywhere from six months to a year, underscores the weight of the responsibility placed upon bishops to guide their flock.

What future holds for Bishop Mugambi:

As the diocese prepares for this transition, it is also important to understand what happens to Bishop Mugambi as he approaches retirement. According to Franciscan Media, a catholic publication when a bishop retires, he remains a bishop and could receive some other assignment from the pope. Or the bishop could retire completely because of age, illness or some other serious reason.

A retired bishop chooses where to live. If he resides in the diocese of which he was bishop, his residence is worked out with the diocesan administrator and eventually the new bishop.

This means that after Bishop Mugambi resignation is accepted, he will retain the title of

bishop but will not hold administrative duties within the diocese.

"A Bishop is ordained with a Diocese of his own outside your own and therefore when one retires got the freedom of choice. To stay stay in your own Diocese in particular parish of your choice or outside the country. The choice is entirely own. Only the title changes a bit to Bishop Emeritus," Fr JohnPeter Kinyua, a priest in Meru told The County Focus.

Bishop Mugambi may receive a new assignment or choose to live independently,



Bishop Salesius Mugambi

either remaining in the diocese he shepherded, returning to his roots or choosing anywhere else he may want to live.

Typically, retired bishops receive contributions from their diocese to support their living expenses, demonstrating the church's commitment to valuing their years of service.

"Every diocese is responsible for contributing to the living expenses of its retired bishops, including auxiliary bishops," a priest who preferred anonymity told The County Focus. Moreover, retired bishops remain members of the national bishops' conference and can participate in meetings, although they may no longer vote on certain matters, highlighting the continuity and support within the church's hierarchy.

According to the Franciscan Media retired bishops are encouraged to foster fruitful relationships with their successors, nurturing a spirit of collaboration and fraternity. The bond between the bishop emeritus and the new bishop is pivotal, as it symbolizes the continuity of leadership and the shared mission of the church.

The consecration and installation of the new Meru Coadjutor Bishop, Monsignor Jackson Murugara, is scheduled for March 19, 2025, marking a significant milestone in the spiritual journey of the Diocese of Meru and heralding a new era of leadership for the Catholic community. This ceremony will not only officially welcome Monsignor Murugara into his new role but also symbolize the continuity of faith and commitment to pastoral care that has long characterized the diocese.



CAPITAL SACCO LTD



High riding Capital Sacco members smile all the way to the bank after handsome dividends



Capital Sacco CEO Bishop Stephen Murithi

In an era where countless financial institutions have grappled with economic volatility and changing market dynamics, Capital Sacco stands out as a beacon of resilience and member-driven success.

A mere year after launching an ambitious share drive campaign known as 'Pepea na Capital Sacco', members are reaping considerable rewards, enjoying high dividends, rebates and a wide array of prizes, all testament to the organization's stability and vision.

The fast-growing Sacco has emerged as a frontrunner among Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies (Saccos) in Kenya,

defiantly navigating the turbulence of recent economic challenges while performing beyond expectations.

In an exciting announcement, Capital Sacco has elevated its status from Tier Two to Tier One, as classified by Sasra. This significant achievement follows an impressive growth in the Sacco's asset base, which surged from Sh4.9 billion to Sh5.4 billion, thanks to the successful share drive campaign conducted last year.

"We are happy to note that the Sacco has now moved to tie one from tier two according to Sasra classification," the Sacco Chairman Mr James Mutua announced during the Sacco Annual Delegates Meeting.

This campaign was aimed at increasing the cooperative's capital base and promoting financial inclusion within the community. The results have been striking-members will receive dividends of 15% on their shares this year, a testament to the Sacco's strong financial performance.

Capital Sacco: A leader in Meru County

Capital Sacco has firmly established itself as the top Sacco in Meru County boasting the widest network coverage in the region.

Its reputation as one of the most well-managed Saccos in the area has been fortified by consistent strong performances, attracting

over 80,000 members.

With shares priced at just KSh 100, it has opened doors for many in the community to

members and rewarding existing members who increased their capital share.

The initiative not only mobilized additional



Capital Sacco Board Executive Members

start their financial journeys with a reliable institution.

Last year, the Sacco took a major step forward by officially launching the 'Pepea na Capital Sacco' promotion, aimed at recruiting more

funds but also fostered community engagement through exciting weekly and monthly draws, where participants have the opportunity to win an array of prizes for purchasing shares.

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Well managed Capital Sacco joins top tier category as assets increase



Capital Sacco delegates during the Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The rewards range from shopping vouchers to high-end gifts like mobile phones, fridges, and even a brand-new Toyota Probox as the grand prize.

The campaign has not only encouraged us to save but has also made investing feel rewarding," expressed Irene Mwendu, a member who joined the Sacco during the campaign's inception. "It's not all about the money; it's about community engagement; the drive that makes us feel we're part of something bigger."

Navigating challenges to sail high

Despite the global economic uncertainties

characterized by high inflation rates, costly credit from banks, and a depreciating Kenya Shilling presented significant challenges capital Sacco leadership has remained undeterred. Through prudent investment strategies and superior management practices, Capital Sacco has maintained an exceptional financial trajectory.

For instance, last year, despite the tough economic environment,

Capital Sacco proudly announced a 15% dividend rate alongside a 9% interest on members' deposits.

The operational success of Capital Sacco is underscored by compelling numbers: total un-withdrawable deposits and Share Capital increased sharply by 17.86% in 2024, a reflection of prudent investment strategies and sound management practices.

Capital Sacco's stronger financials also reflect its strategic transition from traditional banking products to more engaging, accessible offerings tailored for its members' needs.

Their stellar financial performance demonstrated not only resilience but a clear commitment to their members. Increased repayments from a growing loan portfolio played a vital role in this success.



Capital Sacco Chairman James Munyua

Economic trends

As borrowing costs surge in the wake of the Central Bank of Kenya's decision to raise the Central Bank rate, many Kenyans are seeking the more favorable terms offered by Saccos like Capital Sacco.

With fixed loan products and lower interest rates compared to commercial banks, Capital Sacco has quickly become a haven for those looking to borrow without the added burden of exorbitant repayment costs.

The shift in borrowing preferences towards Saccos has paved the way for unprecedented growth in Capital Sacco's loan portfolio, which rose by 10.48% during 2024.

The power of member loyalty

The remarkable growth trajectory of Capital Sacco is inextricably tied to its unwavering member loyalty.

A commitment to excellent customer service, transparency, and community involvement has fostered trust among its members.

The Sacco routinely hosts community engagement programs that inform members of savings strategies, lending practices, and the importance of strategic financial planning.

Among its impressive achievements, the Sacco has successfully upgraded its core system to the latest version, ensuring enhanced operational efficiency. Additionally, a strategic plan for the years 2025 to 2029 has been developed, setting the stage for continued growth and innovation. Construction of the Nkubu banking hall is also set for completion in just a few months, further extending the Sacco's footprint in the community.

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|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
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IPOA struggles to deliver justice in the wake of underfunding and understaffing



IPOA board members, led by Chairman Isaac Hassan and CEO Helema Halake, during a visit to Meru office

By Gerald Mukembu

The Independent Police Oversight Authority (IPOA) has convicted 34 rogue police officers and is currently prosecuting 230 cases, despite facing significant challenges in terms of funding and staffing.

This is according to IPOA Chairman Isaac Hassan and CEO Halake who recently met with staff and stakeholders in Meru to discuss the agency's operations and gather feedback.

The meeting highlighted the difficulties IPOA faces in providing effective oversight of the police force, which has a workforce of over 120,000 officers.

According to Hassan, IPOA has been working to provide civilian oversight against the police and ensure that officers work professionally and uphold the rule of law.

However, the agency is severely understaffed, with a shortage of over 500 investigators and other support staff to carry out its mandates effectively.

"We have a deficiency of more than 500 investigating officers alone, and several other support staff," Hassan said, adding that the agency currently has 77 investigators, but needs 600 to effectively conduct investigations across the country.

Hassan noted that IPOA's work is further complicated by the "blue code of silence," where police officers often fail to cooperate with investigations, citing fear of damaging their colleagues' reputations.

He expressed hope that ongoing discussions with the Inspector General of Police will lead to positive changes in this regard.

IPOA has also been facing challenges in investigating cases of police

misconduct, particularly those involving abductions and forced disappearances.

Hassan stated that the agency is working to follow up on leads and gather evidence, but admitted that it can be difficult to track down suspects who use fake number plates and masks.

To address these challenges, IPOA plans to seek intervention from Parliament to secure additional funding and resources. The agency will meet with the Committee on Administration of Justice and National Security to demand more funding to enable effective service delivery.

"IPOA wants investigating staff of 600 to carry our mandates effectively," Hassan said. "We have a scope of work that is enormous and it's hard to carry out investigations across the country with the current staff we have."

CEO Helema Halake echoed Hassan's sentiments, stating that the agency has received over 1,000 complaints of police misconduct, including 1000 in the Meru region alone.

Halake emphasized the importance of holding police to account and ensuring that they work professionally and fairly.

"We want to ensure that there are no extra judicial killings and unfair arrests. Our offices are accessible to the public, and we are committed to delivering justice in the face of these significant challenges," Halake said.

There has been a lot of questions over the effectiveness of the civilian police watchdog Ipoa as reports emerge of Ipoa as reports emerge of alleged sabotage by key players in the security and criminal justice sector.

Meru Sewerage and Water project to be completed by June, says CS Mugaa

By Christine Ngitori

Cabinet Secretary for Water, Engineer Eric Mugaa, has confirmed that the much-anticipated Sewerage and Water project in Meru Municipality is set to be completed by June this year.

During a recent address at Ncabuene in Imenti North, Mugaa revealed that he has engaged with the project's contractor to expedite its completion within the established deadline.

Launched in 2021, the project has faced delays, prompting a need to accelerate progress so that local residents can finally benefit from its implementation.

"I recognize the setbacks in finishing this crucial sewerage and water initiative in Meru Municipality, which serves as our county's headquarters. I have communicated with the contractor, and I assure you that we will be ready for commissioning by June," stated Mugaa.

adequate supplies for both domestic use and irrigation.

Piece 7:

Meru County Commissioner cautions factory directors against coffee theft

Meru County Commissioner Jacob Ouma has issued a warning to directors of coffee factories that they will be held accountable for any coffee thefts occurring within their facilities.

Speaking during a tree-planting event at Ruthumbi Forest in Imenti South, Mr Ouma expressed concerns over the directors' apparent collusion with criminals, suggesting that they may be deceiving farmers while undermining security efforts.

"The directors will be held responsible for any stolen coffee beans from their factories. We have observed that they often know when processed coffee is on-site or being



Cabinet Secretary for Water Engineer Eric Mugaa

The comprehensive project includes the construction of a modern treatment plant along with extensive sewerage infrastructure aimed at servicing both the municipality and surrounding areas.

Mugaa emphasized the importance of improving sanitation facilities in Meru Municipality, reflecting similar initiatives underway across the nation.

Furthermore, acknowledging that trunk sewers may not reach all small-scale landlords, Mugaa announced a government allocation of Sh200,000 to facilitate last-mile connectivity, enabling even rural communities access to the sewer system.

The Cabinet Secretary shared that efforts are also underway to secure funding for other municipalities in the county, including Timau and Nkubu, with plans for similar projects to be launched soon.

"In Maua Municipality, the contractor is already on-site working on last-mile connections for a sewerage system that was established in 2009," he added.

On water resources, Mugaa highlighted the potential of underground water, which remains underutilized across the nation. He revealed plans to harness this vital resource in the semi-arid regions of Igembe Central, Igembe North, and parts of Buuri to ensure

transported, yet they seem to orchestrate thefts, even resorting to violence against factory guards to carry out their plans," stated Mr Ouma.

He instructed the Directorate of Criminal Investigations to take immediate action, advising that directors should be considered primary suspects in any reported thefts.

"In cases of coffee theft, there is no need to investigate far; the directors should be apprehended first," he emphasized.

Ouma urged the directors to comply with directives stating that they should arrange for security whenever processed coffee is at their factories.

He cautioned that attempts to evade responsibility by claiming the coffee was stolen would not absolve them of accountability for any losses incurred by farmers.

Mr Ouma assured that his officers are prepared to tackle the issue of coffee theft with the same resolve they applied to combat cattle rustling in the northern grazing areas.

"We have restored peace in Igembe and Tigania, where cattle rustling and banditry were rampant, and I promise we will implement similar measures to address coffee theft in the county," he added

Wheels of life: The unsung heroes of the streets



Kennedy Mugambi and his fellow handcart porters catch a well-deserved nap opposite Sunbird bus stage, recharging after a day of tireless service on the streets of Meru

By Lotini Kiprop

As dawn breaks over the bustling streets of Meru, a solitary figure emerges from the shadows, wheeling his handcart (Mkokoteni) through the quiet alleys of the town.

This figure, Kennedy Mugambi, is not just a porter; he is a lifeline for many, an unsung hero who carries the weight of his community on his shoulders.

For the past decade, Mugambi has braved the grueling demands of life as a mkokoteni driver—one of the many handcart porters who tirelessly navigate the streets, ensuring that goods are transported safely and efficiently.

The 32-year-old has dedicated himself to this role, driven by the hope of providing a better life and education for his wife and young son, a Grade 2 student.

His family serves as his primary motivation, a

constant reminder of the reason behind his daily toil. "I keep working tirelessly every day for my child because my only hope lies there," Mugambi shares passionately, emphasizing the sacrifices he makes for their future.

Each morning, even before the sun peeks above the horizon, Mugambi rises at 5 a.m., ready to face the day's challenges.

"My first stop is always the market," he shares with a determined smile. "The early bird catches the worm."

With his handcart in tow, he hustles through the market, where the scent of fresh produce mingles with the sounds of bargaining and laughter.

On a good day, Mugambi's earnings can range from Sh300 to Sh500, yet there are days when he returns home empty-handed, faced with the cruel reality of uncertainty.

The life of a handcart porter is no bed of roses. "The money I make is just enough for daily needs; there's never anything left to save," he admits, a hint of resignation in his voice.

The struggles are real; often, potential clients vanish after receiving services, leaving Mugambi with little recourse.

Support from the government is non-existent, and the porters receive no training or assistance from organizations. Despite these hurdles, Mugambi remains steadfast in his commitment to his family.

His resilience was vividly tested when he was struck by a reckless motorbike, fracturing his hand. The injury sidelined him, limiting his ability to carry heavier loads. Yet, when he speaks of the future, there is no bitterness—only a fervent plea for recognition.

"We need the government to recognize and support us, to provide us with insurance and designated resting areas," he urges. "We are hardworking individuals just trying to make a living."

In a world often focused on high ideals and office jobs, Mugambi offers a refreshing perspective. He encourages the youth to take charge, to seize opportunities rather than waiting for conventional jobs.

"Don't be lazy! There's work everywhere if you're willing to put in the effort," he advises, embodying a spirit of entrepreneurship that many aspire to but few actively pursue.

remains hopeful that God will soon open great doors for him and his family, allowing them to break free from their current circumstances and create a better future together.

As the sun rises higher in the sky, casting a warm glow over the streets, Mugambi pushes his handcart onward. Each load he carries is a testament to his dedication, a story of perseverance and hope. Just like many other handcart porters he may not wear a cape, but in the eyes of those who depend on him, he is indeed a hero.

Continued from the backpage...

Job seekers confused as GVN Kawira, CPSB and Assembly disagree

governor of interference in their affairs.

The recruitment exercise at the center of the dispute was intended to fill critical gaps in the county's workforce. The CPSB had advertised for posts in the health department, including nurses, medical officers, and other medical personnel. The board had also advertised for ECDE teachers, agricultural extension officers, and water engineers, among other positions.

However, the governor's decision to cancel the recruitment has left many job seekers in limbo.

The detailed job advertisement was pulled down from the county website, causing confusion among applicants.

"We do not understand why the board advertised without consulting the departments and my office," said Meru County Secretary Kiambi Atheru.

Atheru argued that the recruitment process had not followed the necessary procedures, including an assessment of staffing needs by the County Human Resource Management Advisory Committee (CHRAC).

"The CHRAC includes chief officers of all departments and myself. The departments table their staffing needs, and the finance department confirms availability of funds. This process was not followed. As a result, we have cancelled the advertisement and urge Kenyans not to apply," Atheru said.



Members of the CPSB led by the CEO Virginia Kawira and Governor Kawira's senior staff led by the County Secretary Dr Kiambi Atheru when they clashed recently during a session with the Senate Committee on Cohesion over planned hiring of 500 new employees

The County Assembly has also weighed in on the dispute, with MCAs accusing the governor of interfering with the recruitment exercise.

The assembly had approved a budget of over Sh200 million for the recruitment of staff in the 2024/2025 financial year. However, the governor has argued that the county cannot afford to recruit new staff due to a high wage bill.

The dispute has sparked a heated debate about the role of the CPSB and the executive in the recruitment of staff. While the governor has argued that the board should consult with user departments before recruiting staff, the CPSB has maintained that they have the authority to recruit staff under the County Government Act.

As the dispute continues to unfold, it remains to

be seen how the matter will be resolved. The CPSB has vowed to press on with the recruitment exercise, despite the governor's orders to cancel the process.

The governor, on the other hand, has maintained that the recruitment exercise is illegal and will not be allowed to proceed.

The leadership crisis in Meru County has raised concerns about the ability of the county government to deliver services to citizens. The dispute has also sparked fears about the stability of the county government, with some observers warning that the feud could escalate into a full-blown crisis.

As the Senate's Cohesion Committee continues to investigate the matter, it is clear that the dispute is far from over. The committee has heard

testimonies from both the CPSB and the county executive, and is expected to make a ruling on the matter in the coming days.

In the meantime, the people of Meru County are left to wonder what the future holds for their county government. Will the dispute be resolved amicably, or will it escalate into a full-

blown crisis? Only time will tell.

The Meru County Public Service Board has maintained that they will not be intimidated by the governor's threats and will continue to discharge their duties as mandated by the law.

"We will not allow the executive to interfere with our work. We have a mandate to recruit staff, and we will do so in accordance with the law," said a member of the board.

The board has also argued that the recruitment exercise is necessary to address a shortage of essential staff in the county.

"Meru is an agricultural county, but the shortage of extension officers is biting. This is why the board resolved to act in the best interest of the public service," the board member said.

Former counsellors petition Ruto as they seek Sh2.6 billion in gratuity



Former Counsellors present their written petition to Meru Senator Kathuri Murungi at his office in Meru. Photos/Gerald Mukembu

By Gerald Mukembu

A group of former Counsellors has petitioned President William Ruto to intervene in their quest for Sh2.6 billion in gratuity, which they claim is long overdue following a 2016 agreement with the government.

Led by Stephen Kaberia, the Chair of the Meru Counsellors Forum, the group met with Meru Senator and Senate Deputy Speaker Kathuri Murungi to deliver a petition urging the Treasury to settle the outstanding amount. The Counsellors claim that despite a Task

Force recommendation to pay them, their pleas have fallen on deaf ears.

“We have written a petition to the clerk of the Senate, pleading with the government to immediately pay us our gratuity. Most of us are languishing in poverty, and it's unacceptable that our contributions to the country's development have been overlooked,” Kaberia said.

Senator Kathuri Murungi, who received the petition, urged the Kenya Kwanza administration to recognize the value of the aging Counsellors.

“These leaders have laid the foundation for the current County headquarters and sub-county building offices. They have also established Day Secondary schools and made significant contributions to Kenya's democracy,” she said.

The Counsellors are seeking a total of Sh2.6 billion, which works out to approximately Sh900,000 per individual.

In 2018, the Senate authorized a formula for paying off their gratuity, but the money has never been budgeted, despite recommendations to include it in the 2022/2023 budget.

“Treasury CS John Mbadi must take responsibility for this outstanding debt and provide a clear timeline for payment,” Senator Murungi said. “We need to honor these Counsellors for their service to our country, and their blessings are essential to our growth.”

The former Counsellors have shared their experiences of

being left to fend for themselves despite their significant contributions to the country.

“We have been left to struggle financially, and some of us are even bedridden due to the challenges we're facing,” said John Gikunda, the Secretary General of the former Counsellors.

This petition comes at a time when the government is expected to prioritize the welfare of its retirees and recognize their contributions to the country's development.



Senator Kathuri briefs the Media outside his Meru office at Kithoka

Camel herders in Isiolo demand action against rustling menace

By Lotini Kiprop

Hundreds of camel herders are demanding urgent action from the government over surging cattle rustling in the region.

The angry farmers staged a peaceful demonstration in Isiolo town, urging the government to expedite the arming of Police Reservists who were recently disarmed while awaiting fresh recruitment.

The herders paraded their camels through the town before converging at the County Headquarters to voice their concerns to County Commissioner Geoffry Omoding. Abdinoor Maalim, a representative of the herders, expressed apprehension over potential attacks from rustlers, particularly in the Mlango area where they graze alongside armed individuals.

“The disarmament of local National Police Reservists from the Somali community has heightened tensions in the region,” he stated. When questioned about why they chose to bring their camels to the County Commissioner's office rather than seeking safer grazing grounds, Maalim explained, “The armed criminals are bold and could steal our animals even in broad daylight.”

“We want the authorities to understand that our livelihoods are at risk. We urge them to arm our Police Reservists immediately or deploy police officers to safeguard our livestock, which is our main economic asset,” he added,

Maalim emphasized that disarming should be applied uniformly across all communities, rather than selectively targeting certain groups, leaving them vulnerable to theft from rivals.

He reported that approximately 40 herders had been killed due to rustling incidents in the past two years, with thousands of livestock stolen from innocent residents.

In response, County Commissioner Omoding assured the herders that the firearms for the disarmed National Police Reservists had been returned, and ongoing security operations are in place to ensure all weapons in the area are controlled.

“The National Police Reservists have been disarmed and are awaiting re-evaluation. Given the sensitivity of the situation, we will be increasing security personnel in the area,” the County Commissioner added

The herders called for the transfer of the



Hundreds of camel herders who staged a peaceful protest in Isiolo town

Isiolo Sub County Police Commander, citing inadequate security in Burat Ward, which is prone to banditry and cattle rustling, leading to significant livestock losses.

Omoding confirmed that security forces are

actively pursuing rustlers responsible for the recent theft of goats in the Gotu area.

He urged locals to provide crucial information to facilitate the apprehension of criminals and the recovery of stolen animals.

St Theresa's Foundation leaves lasting impact on thousands



St Theresa foundation Director Ms Celina Kaaka

By Lotini Kipro

In the heart of Kenya's Meru County, a remarkable story of transformation is unfolding through the efforts of a Catholic church-based organization, St Theresa's Foundation.

This remarkable initiative has taken it upon itself to bring communities together, empowering women, and particularly single mothers, through social and economic empowerment.

Since its inception in 2019, the foundation has grown to serve more than 13,000 members from Isiolo, Laikipia, Tharaka Nithi, and

Meru, with a stunning 80 percent of members being women.

At the forefront of this movement is the foundation's Director, Ms Celina Kaaka, who drew inspiration from Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus' profound words, "Doing small things with great love." Ms Kaaka emphasized that the organization is a living embodiment of this spirit, fostering synergy and unity in its work, which has evolved from a mission focused on empowering women economically to a

dynamic movement that benefits both men and women.

The foundation's mission revolves around four core pillars: table banking, providing financial independence to grassroots women; capacity building, helping individuals improve their skills and bridging the knowledge gap; investment opportunities, allowing members to grow their resources and build self-sufficiency; and home visits, connecting people through personal relationships and support.

The organization's significant strides in

delivering financial services to grassroots communities have positively impacted more than 10,000 members.

This is evident in the total revolving fund across all groups, which exceeds Sh130 million, underscoring the scale and effectiveness of their initiatives in fostering community development and financial stability.

St Theresa's Foundation has already achieved remarkable success, with notable milestones including; Training 15 single mothers in business management and providing them with capital to launch income-generating activities.

The Foundation has also aided at least 20 children in accessing quality education by covering school fees and providing essential supplies.

Additionally, the foundation is planning to expand its sponsorship project to support

more underprivileged children lacking access to quality education.

As the foundation grows and looks to the future, they recognize the need to expand their reach and enhance their support infrastructure to effectively serve the

increasing number of women groups in Meru. Two new offices will be opened in Maua and Timau, serving as dedicated centers for their activities.

However, the journey has not been without its challenges, including managing members' expectations and transitioning from table banking to conventional banking when the money flow exceeds borrowing capacity.

Ms Kaaka notes that some clients perceive the support as a handout rather than a step towards self-reliance, highlighting the need for education and awareness about the true value of their programs.

Despite these hurdles, St Theresa's Foundation remains committed to its mission, working tirelessly to empower women, create sustainable opportunities for personal and community development, and inspire a brighter future for all.



Congregation keenly listening during a thanksgiving mass and celebration of wonderful progress made by the Foundation

KEWOPA empowers women to shatter glass ceilings in politics



Meru Woman Rep Karambu Kailemia meets with the KEWOPA leadership

By Harun Mugambi

In a bid to bridge the gap between women in leadership positions, the Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA) has conducted a training session at a local hotel in Meru town, emphasizing the need for women to take charge of their futures.

The event aimed to overcome the numerous challenges hindering women from vying for and clinching political seats.

According to KEWOPA leadership, cultural differences, male chauvinism, lack of economic resources, lack of civil awareness, Gender-Based Violence (GBV), lack of

mentors, family issues, and inadequate support from political parties are just a few obstacles standing in the way of women in politics.

The Meru Woman Representative, Karambu Kailemia, urged men to extend their support to women in leadership.

"We must shatter stereotypes that limit

women's capabilities," she said. Kailemia also expressed her disappointment with the current state of women representation in Meru, citing only one elected woman MCA.

In her address, Ndumba Kajuju from KEWOPA encouraged women to take the leap and vie for any available seat.

"Go for those positions, campaign, and rally men to vote for you," she emphasized. Meanwhile, consultant Purity Mutiku encouraged women to overcome cultural constraints.

"We must champion women's leadership because they are better equipped to solve crises and make laws," she said. Kailemia also criticized the prevalence of femicide and GBV, calling on community members to join the fight against these heinous crimes.

"We must empower fellow



Meru Woman Rep Karambu Kailemia in a group photo after the training



Meru Woman Rep Karambu Kailemia speaks to attendees during the training session

women to take charge of their lives," she said. The Meru representative expressed her optimism, predicting that over a dozen women will win parliamentary seats in Meru in 2027. Currently, women in Kenya hold 7 out of 47 governor positions, 28 out of 290 MP seats, and 115 out of 3,960 MCA seats.

Statistical Breakdown:

- Women in Governor Positions: 7 out of 47
- Women in MP Seats: 28 out of 290
- Women in MCA Seats: 115 out of 3,960



YETU SACCO



Yetu Sacco offers highest dividends and rebates, surpasses competitors in the savings and credit sector



(Left) Cabinet Secretary for Co-operatives and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) Development Wycliffe Oparanya is welcomed by Yetu Sacco Chairman Mark Gitonga during the 33rd AGM. (sitted right) C.E.O Dennis Kirimi, CS Oparanya and PS Patrick Kilemi share a light moment during the Annual event



In a remarkable move that has sent ripples through the savings and credit cooperative sector, Yetu Sacco has announced a groundbreaking level of dividends and rebates for its members for the fiscal year ending 2024. With a declared dividend rate of 19% and an additional rebate of 13%, the cooperative is setting a new benchmark, outpacing its competitors and turning heads among both existing and potential members. The gigantic Yetu Sacco CEO CPA Kirimi has attributed this magnificent and mouthwatering payout to prudent management. "We are thrilled to announce our best-ever dividend payout to our valued members. This achievement is a testament to our prudent management of resources, strong risk

assessment, and our commitment to member-centric services," CPA Kirimi noted. The achievements of Yetu Sacco extend beyond the impressive dividends. According to Yetu Sacco Chairman, Mark Gitonga, the Sacco has achieved a 23% growth in assets, hitting a total asset base of Sh7.8 billion as at the year ended 2024, compared to Sh6.4 billion in 2023. This remarkable growth is a testament to the Sacco's prudent management and regular auditing by the regulator and other arms of government. Mr Gitonga and CPA Kirimi were speaking during the Sacco's 33rd Annual General Meeting (AGM) held at their Yetu Pamoja Park in Nkubu, an event graced by top leaders,

including the Cabinet Secretary (CS) of Cooperatives and MSMEs Development, Wycliffe Oparanya, and Cooperatives Principal Secretary, Kiburi Kilemi, who lauded the Sacco's impressive performance. The Sacco's revenue also surged to a record-breaking Sh1.1 billion in 2024, a significant increase compared to previous years. Perhaps most striking is the growth in membership. The number of members soared by 20,084 to reach 104,159, compared to 84,074 in 2023 while loan advances grew by Sh1.5 billion.

Member deposits have also surged, reaching Sh4.8 billion, an increase of Sh16,070,459. "This growth is a result of the continued trust and support you have shown to us over the years. We value our members and are committed to giving value to your money," Chairman Gitonga expressed his gratitude to the Sacco's loyal members. Notably, Yetu Sacco has paid a total of Sh443 million in dividends and interest to its members, an increase of Sh103 million compared to the previous year. Chairman Mark Gitonga emphasized the

cooperative's performance, stating that "the stellar results are evidence that the Sacco is run prudently and is regularly audited for compliance." The Sacco has also made significant strides in its infrastructure development. After completing the first phase of its six-story building, the Sacco has successfully relocated its operations. The second phase of the project is ongoing and is expected to be complete by May 2025. Commenting on the Sacco's performance, CEO CPA Dennis Kirimi noted that the operating profit grew by 54% to Sh273.3 million, while the net profit increased by 58.5% to Sh238 million. Kirimi attributed the Sacco's success to its member-centric approach, strong risk management, and enhanced use of data intelligence and analytics.



Yetu Sacco Members during the AGM

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YETU SACCO

Coops CS Wycliffe Oparanya leads Yetu DT Sacco during colourful 33rd AGM as jubilant shareholders receive handsome dividends

“We have strengthened our balance sheet, enhanced risk management, and achieved sustainable profitability. We have also launched new products and digitized our services to better serve our members' needs,” said Kirimi. The Sacco CEO, CPA Kirimi, described the year 2024 as one of the most challenging periods in the cooperative's history, yet he proudly acknowledged that they have achieved significant milestones during this time.

“Despite the hurdles, we have made remarkable progress, and our focus for the upcoming year is to reach an ambitious revenue target of SH 1.5 billion,” he stated confidently.

Kirimi also highlighted the impressive performance of the Sacco's branches, noting that even amid a tough economic landscape, the youngest branch-Chuka-has been thriving admirably, alongside several other branches that have demonstrated resilience and profitability.

Looking ahead, Kirimi set an ambitious goal for the Sacco, announcing their aspiration to build an asset base exceeding Sh20 billion within the next five years. “However, for us to turn this vision into a reality, it is crucial that our members actively support the Sacco by honoring their loan repayments,” he emphasized.

CS Oparanya praised Yetu Sacco for its outstanding performance, noting that it sets a shining example for other cooperatives in the country.

“The success of Yetu Sacco is a testament to the power of cooperatives in driving economic growth and improving the lives of members. Other Saccos should imitate Yetu Sacco,” he said.

Oparanya hailed Yetu Sacco management as a game-changer, with PS Kilemi praising the



(from left) CS Wycliffe Oparanya, Chairman Mark Gitonga and C.E.O CPA Dennis Kirimi address attendees at the Yetu Sacco Annual General Meeting held at Yetu Pamoja Investment Park in Nkubu

cooperative's effective operational management and risk assessment.

“Yetu Sacco's financial health and performance are a model for the industry, and their ability to offer such high returns is a demonstration of their operational excellence,” he said.

The CS added that the government is committed to supporting the growth of cooperatives, citing the crucial role they play in promoting financial inclusion and economic development.

Mount Kenya Milk CEO Mr Kenneth Gitonga attributed the surge in membership to the exceptional services provided by Yetu Sacco, emphasizing that this growth reflects the significant strides the cooperative has made in enhancing member experience.

Understanding Yetu Sacco's success Yetu Sacco, which translates to "Our Sacco" in Swahili, focuses on empowering individuals and communities through tailored financial services and education.

Founded over three decades ago, the organization has grown rapidly thanks to its commitment to transparency, member service,

and sustainable investments. Its recent announcement of increased dividends and rebates is a testament to its growth strategy and operational effectiveness.

“It took careful planning to see the growth that the Sacco attained during the past year, and our success comes from the talent and commitment of our staff, trusted partners, and of course the trust our members place in us; for these things, we are grateful,” Mr. Kirimi stated.

Unmatched offers in the Market Former Agriculture CS Mithika Linturi who is

a member of Yetu Sacco noted that the declared dividends are significantly higher than industry averages, noting most savings and credit cooperatives are currently offering returns in the range of 9%.

“The financial health and performance of a Sacco is often pegged on its portfolio management. The ability of Yetu to offer these dividends showcases their effective operational management and risk assessment, which few others in this sector can claim to match,” Linturi remarked

Expansion and community impact Yetu Sacco's recent success has also been complemented by its expansion strategy. The cooperative continues to open new branches, reaching underserved areas that lack access to traditional banking services.

This community-focused expansion model allows them to tap into potential membership pools while catering to diverse financial needs and fostering economic growth through microfinance programs and small business loans.



Members follow proceedings during the colourful and well attended AGM

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Fish farming revival in Meru County ignites economic growth

By Rugendo Antony

Meru County is experiencing a remarkable revival in its fish farming industry, transitioning from the brink of collapse in 2013 to becoming a key player in the blue economy.

This turnaround follows the launch of the Aquaculture Business Development Program (ABDP) in 2019, which has reinvigorated local aquatic farming and brought hope to many farmers.

Under this system, farmers are categorized into three levels: level one which include farmers producing less than 100 kilograms annually, level two for farmers producing between 100 and 500 kilograms and level three which comprise of farmers producing over 500 kilograms.

"This classification allows us to tailor our support and resources to each group effectively," Mr Kimathi explained.

Since its inception, the ABDP has provided

the program

Farmers are now being trained in value addition techniques, including how to create homemade fish feeds, which helps reduce costs and improve productivity.

The initiative extends beyond individual farms, positively impacting local schools such as Makutano in Igembe and Makandune in Imenti Central, where aquaculture field schools contribute to feeding programs for students.

"Creating sustainable markets will motivate farmers and boost their confidence in aquaculture as a reliable livelihood. To tackle the pressing issue of market access, the launch of the Ng'onyi Fresh Fish Market and the Kanyakine Fish Factory is imminent. These facilities are expected to provide farmers with sustainable platforms to sell their produce, both locally and beyond," Dr James Kirimi Gitonga, a Fishery Technician, stated.

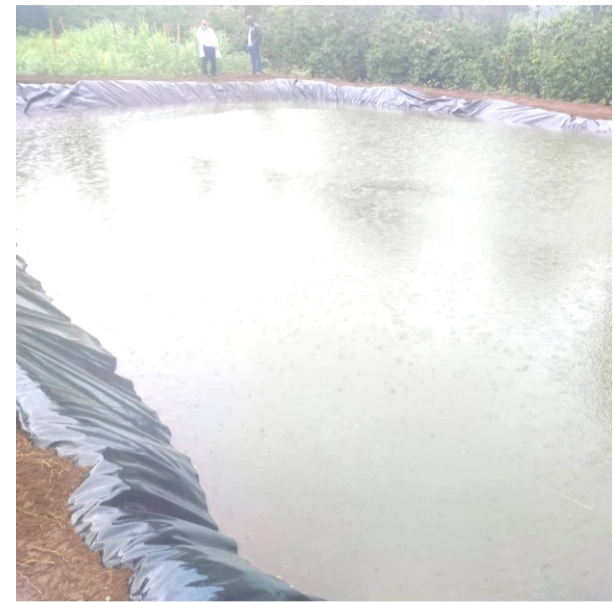
The program has also made strides in enhancing food security and nutrition by restocking local dams with 23,000 fingerlings and promoting the cultivation of diverse fish species such as Nile Tilapia, African Catfish, Trout, and Common Carp.

"This effort is not just about generating income; it's about improving community health and well-being. Fish farming provides a sustainable source of protein and empowers local economies," Dr Kirimi emphasized the broader impact of aquaculture

Despite the program's successes, challenges remain. Staffing is particularly constrained, with only 13 technicians managing operations across eight of the county's nine sub-counties.

Nevertheless, the team is committed to maintaining transparency and delivering results.

"We operate with a monitoring and inspection committee to ensure accountability. Every farmer receives the support they need, and



An aquaculture farm in Nkubu, Imenti South

resources are distributed equitably," assured Mr Kiriinya.

The county government has played a pivotal role in supporting the ABDP, providing essential infrastructure such as refrigerated vans, boats, and harvesting nets to streamline operations.

Once unfamiliar with fish farming, Meru County is witnessing a significant social and behavioral shift as residents embrace aquaculture and its economic and nutritional benefits.

With annual fish production rising to 300 tonnes and innovative initiatives underway, the ABDP stands as a testament to the transformative power of collaboration and strategic planning.

"Aquaculture in Meru is no longer just a livelihood but a revolution. We have turned challenges into opportunities, and we are building a brighter future for our communities," added Mr Kimathi.



Mr Eliud Kiriinya, County Coordinator of the Aquaculture Business Development Program (ABDP)

The aquaculture sector faced a major setback in 2013, with over 1,000 farmers forced to abandon fish farming due to a lack of market access after producing around 300 tonnes of fish annually.

According to Mr Peter Kimathi, the County's Aquaculture Director, the challenges of that period were significant. However, the ABDP introduced a structured approach to farming, establishing a three-tier system to better address farmers' needs based on their production capabilities.

essential resources, distributing 1.6 million fingerlings, fish feeds, predator kits, polylines, and harvesting tools to farmers.

The program has trained over 3,000 farmers and created job opportunities for more than 410 youth through various enterprise initiatives.

"We not only encourage farmers to engage in fish farming, but we also emphasize the importance of value addition to their products," Mr. Eliud Kiriinya, ABDP County Coordinator, highlighted the dual approach of

Murugara files petition to challenge revocation of administrative units in Tharaka Nithi



Tharaka MP Gitonga Murugara and his legal team address the Media outside the Meru Law Courts

By Gerald Mukembu

Tharaka MP Gitonga Murugara, alongside four MCAs and three other residents of Tharaka-Nithi County, have filed an enjoiner petition disputing the revocation of newly established gazetted administrative units that border Meru County. The petitioners have requested the High Court

to recognize them as interested parties in the case, arguing that the revocation would strip them of the benefits associated with the new administrative units.

Local politician Paul Mugambi has also voiced his opposition to the proposed revocation, stating that it threatens the heritage of the Tharaka people.

In December of the previous year, five residents, represented by their advocate Francis Mawira, approached the High Court before Judge Esbon Nyaga.

They requested court orders to halt the implementation of Gazette Notices No. 1766,

dated February 14, 2024, and No. 15341, dated November 22, 2024.

The plaintiffs—Sebastian Kaaria, Jonah Mwenda, Joseph Muriungi, Severino Maitima, and Alex Mugambi—filed their lawsuit against the Attorney General, as well as the Cabinet Secretaries for Interior, Lands, Education, and Health.

The residents are demanding the immediate revocation of the gazette notices pertaining to the formation of sub-locations, locations, and sub-counties.

Additionally, they have named the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) and Nithi Water and

Sanitation Company as respondents in the case.

The Meru residents are seeking to suspend the operationalization of Kibung'a Sub-Location, the Kibung'a headquarters of Tharaka West Subcounty, Kithino Location in Chiakariga Subcounty, as well as Uragate Division and Uragate Sub-Location in Tharaka North Sub-County.

In response to the ongoing legal battle, MP Murugara urged his constituents to remain calm while awaiting the court's decision. He emphasized that the case does not pertain to border disputes between Meru and Tharaka-Nithi or any land-related issues.



(Left)MP Murugara in Meru Court challenging the establishment of new administrative units in Tharaka. (Right) the legislator walks along the corridors of the Meru Law Courts.Murugala applied to be joined as an interested party to the case to present the case for Tharaka and Tharaka Nithi

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Financial giant Solution Sacco pays huge dividends to members Membership soars, assets surge: Solution Sacco sets new financial milestones!

In an inspiring display of community trust and collaboration, Solution Sacco has announced a remarkable increase in membership, reaching an all-time high of 37,054 members this year.

This surge reflects the cooperative's growing reputation and the strong confidence individuals have in its financial offerings.

"In the year ended 2024, Membership rose to 37,054. This growth reflects the trust new members place in our products, and services. We've expanded nationally and, in the Diaspora, making it easier for more people to join. As we enhance our products and services, we are confident in attracting even more new members in the future," Solution Sacco Chairman Francis Rimberia stated during the cooperative's 32nd Annual General Meeting held in Gikumene

Alongside this unprecedented membership growth, Solution Sacco has experienced a significant boost in its financial assets, which now stand at an impressive Kshs 9.96 billion. This robust growth not only enhances the cooperative's stability but also empowers its members to pursue their financial aspirations like never before.

With these significant milestones, Solution



(From left) Solution Sacco Chairman Francis Rimberia (Centre) C.E.O Daniel Marete welcomes PS for State Department of Cooperatives Patrick Kilemi at the Sacco Society's Annual General Meeting



The trio shares a light moment during the AGM proceedings

Sacco is not only redefining the standards of cooperative finance but also empowering its members to achieve their financial dreams like never before!

Building on this success, members of Solution Sacco are now reaping the rewards of their investments, culminating in a substantial dividend and rebates payout of Sh546,568,819. Such remarkable returns are more than just figures; they represent the cooperative's good management and unwavering commitment to

driving financial success for its members and enriching lives one dividend at a time.

"While we continue to make good progress along our transformation journey, we as the Board of Directors, remain ever committed to supporting the management and the Sacco to ensure we succeed in executing our strategic objectives. Our dedication to member-centricity will ensure we meet the evolving needs of our members, while our forward-thinking approach will keep us agile,

competitive and sustainable, delivering long-term value to our members," the Sacco Chairman added

According to Mr Rimberia the Sacco has also made remarkable strides, with loans reaching Sh7.376 billion and deposits climbing to Sh6.67 billion, reflecting the unwavering commitment of members to continue building their wealth.

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Sacco emerges as a game-changer, transforming ordinary savings into extraordinary wealth.

As we delve deeper into the various reasons why Solution Sacco stands out from the rest, one thing becomes clear: this cooperative is dedicated to delivering exceptional value to its members.

“I affirm that Solution SACCO continues to demonstrate strength and stability, with a solid foundation for sustained growth. In light of the economic challenges faced in 2024, we have taken strategic steps to safeguard our financial health. Despite these challenges, we remain resilient and well positioned for long-term success,” Rimberia added

From its inception, Solution Sacco has operated on the principle of mutual support,



Chairman Rimberia presents his report during the AGM

fostering an environment where everyone benefits from its financial offerings.

By pooling savings, providing affordable loans, and offering lucrative shares, Solution Sacco has not only transformed the lives of its members but has also become a beacon of hope for those seeking financial security.

Legacy of trust and innovation

Since its inception, the magnificent Solution Sacco has dedicated itself to serving its members through a community-centric approach to finance.

Unlike conventional banks, the mighty Solution Sacco operates on the principle of

mutual upliftment, ensuring that all members benefit from its impressive financial offerings.

This unique model allows the cooperative to return a substantial portion of its earnings back to its members, creating an environment where wealth flourishes for all.

“While we continue to make good progress along our transformation journey, we as the Board of Directors, remain ever committed to supporting the management

and the SACCO to ensure we succeed in executing our strategic objectives. Our dedication to member-centricity will ensure we meet the evolving needs of our members, while our forward-thinking approach will keep us agile, competitive and sustainable, delivering long-term value to our member,” the Chairman noted.

For those unfamiliar with the cooperative model, a Sacco (Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization) caters to the financial needs of its members.

Members deposit their precious savings, which

are then pooled together to provide loans to others at affordable rates. This not only fosters a spirit of camaraderie among members but also reinforces the cooperative's lofty mission: to uplift its community financially.

Digital transformation

The Sacco has also unveiled an ambitious digital transformation initiative, redefining the cooperative banking experience for its members.

The futuristic move, announced by CEO Daniel Marete, promises to revolutionize the way members access financial services, making banking faster, more secure, and more accessible than ever before.

“While we anticipated a smoother process, the transition took a bit longer than expected. We prioritized caution at every step to avoid



Member follow the proceedings of the 32nd AGM held at Gikumene Primary School Grounds



A member of Solution Sacco goes through the Sacco's financial report

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potential hacking threats and to ensure that we delivered the best solution possible for you, our valued members. I sincerely apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused during this period of transition, particularly in your ability to make transactions seamlessly.

However, today I am proud to announce that we have successfully launched the latest and most commendable core banking system in the market. This system introduces a host of superior features designed specifically with your needs in mind, including the use of paybill, USSD, the Solution Sacco App, and improved ATM services," Mr Marete added.

But that's not all. Solution SACCO has taken it a step further by partnering with RIA Money Transfer to extend its reach to the Diaspora, enabling members abroad to send and receive remittances with ease.

High dividends: A testament to financial growth

One of the standout features of the gigantic Solution Sacco is its commitment to providing high dividends to members. This year alone, the cooperative has announced distribution of a whopping Sh 546, 568, 819 to its members as dividend and rebates.

Such bountiful returns on investment are not just attractive; they symbolize a steadfast commitment to members' financial growth.

What does this mean for you as a member? For



PS Kilemi addresses attendees at Solution Sacco's AGM

every share you own in this magnificent cooperative, Solution Sacco rewards you handsomely, turning your financial participation into real cash returns.

No wonder so many individuals are eager to join and invest in this thriving community—it's an opportunity that's hard to resist.

The power of shares: Investing in your future

Shares in the stellar Solution Sacco are more than just paper assets; they are a promising avenue for investment. As a member, when you purchase shares, you become a vital stakeholder in the cooperative's epic success.

This initial investment unlocks a treasure trove of financial benefits, including those generous

dividends, along with resilience against economic fluctuations thanks to the cooperative's solid financial practices.

Investing in shares is also about community empowerment, as the funds raised are reinvested into uplifting local projects and initiatives, fostering sustainable growth in your community.

Furthermore, with the value of shares soaring year on year now is truly the time to consider becoming a proud shareholder in this remarkable cooperative.

But why invest in Solution Sacco shares?

The answer is straightforward:

Earn attractive annual dividends: Enjoy consistent mouthwatering payouts every year, directly proportional to your investments.

Unlock loan benefits: Higher shares correspond to greater borrowing power. The more you invest, the more financial leverage you accrue.

Own a piece of the Sacco: By investing in shares, you become a part-owner of the Sacco, giving you a voice in key decisions that

affect your financial institution.

Build long-term wealth: The sooner you start investing, the more wealth you accumulate over time. This is the essence of financial foresight.

Savings: The Cornerstone of wealth accumulation

In a world where saving can sometimes feel like a daunting task, the magnificent Solution Sacco breaks that mold.

Members experience not only the joy of saving but the thrill of accumulating wealth through high-interest savings accounts.

By prioritizing savings, this generous cooperative allows its members to watch their money flourish while maintaining control over



Members pay attention as the PS briefs them during the meeting



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Solution Sacco offers members tailored education for financial success

their financial journeys.

Unlike traditional banks where interest rates can be disappointingly low and hidden fees chip away at your hard-earned resources- Solution Sacco champions transparent practices, ensuring that every member's financial path is clear and beneficial.

Financial education: Empowering members

At the heart of the mighty Solution Sacco's mission is a focus on education. The cooperative recognizes that financial literacy is essential for enabling members to make informed decisions about savings, investments, and loans. Classes and workshops are regularly organized, covering a variety of topics from budgeting to investment strategies.



Mr Marete and PS Kilemi engage in a consultation during the AGM

This education empowers individuals, allowing them to take control of their financial



Silas Kithinji Kamui, a member of the Sacco seeks clarity during the AGM

destinies. When members truly understand their options, they are far more likely to make choices that elevate their wealth, leading to a flourishing community and a robust cooperative.

Member testimonials: A community of success

The best stories come from those who have experienced the benefits firsthand. Take, for example, Mary Esther Mwangi, a long-time member of the gigantic Solution Sacco.

Seven years ago, Mary Esther Mwangi was struggling to find her footing in the business



Meru County Director for Cooperatives Mugambi Sandi

world. That is before she met Solution Sacco. She had sweated out to make ends meet, every other day looking bleaker than the previous as her brilliant business ideas quickly melted away in the mists of despair as she could not figure out where she could get capital.

She and her husband Charles Wahome had just started a soda distribution outlet, but were stuck at the same volumes while the desire to expand burned deeply. Not knowing what to do, they trudged on in the daily rhythm of stocks, sales and cash.

Things were not moving as fast as they would have wished. Then one day as fate would have

it, Solution Sacco staff came calling.

"We were working elsewhere before we relocated to Meru town. One day the Solution Sacco field officers visited and convinced us to start buying their products including loans and insurance cover," Mwangi recalls.

They registered, and the rest is history. When the opportunity

presented, their entrepreneurial spirit guided them to take a dive. The only regret now is that they never got the idea earlier.

Stories like Mary's resonate throughout the cooperative, reinforcing the notion that Solution Sacco is transforming lives, one financial triumph at a time. It's not just about money; it's about building a legacy for future generations.

The road ahead: A future of financial security

With its foundation built on high dividends and attractive savings plans, the magnificent Solution Sacco is poised for continued growth.

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Solution Sacco opens door to financial advancement, calls on new members to join the journey to success

The cooperative is perpetually refining its approach, ensuring that it can adapt to economic changes while maintaining its promise of delivering exceptional value to its members.

Moreover, the ever-evolving landscape of finance, driven by technology and innovation, allows Solution Sacco to offer modern solutions that cater to the diverse needs of its members. From mobile banking options to online financial literacy resources, this cooperative is equipped to meet the expectations of today's consumers.

Your financial future awaits

Investing in your financial future has never been easier or more rewarding than with the



PS Kilemi chats with Solution Sacco Chairman Rimberia

opportunities create a trifecta of growth and prosperity that is hard to overlook.

Now is the moment to seize the opportunity, become a member, and witness firsthand the extraordinary power of community-driven finance.

Join the ranks of satisfied members enjoying lucrative returns and a sense of financial security. With the backing of Solution Sacco, the growth of your wealth is

not just a dream; it's a tangible reality waiting for you to embrace.

The magnificent Solution Sacco stands as a paragon of what cooperative finance can achieve. The future looks promising, but it's up to you to take the first step toward unlocking your financial potential.

Are you ready to transform your savings into success? The doors of the gigantic Solution Sacco are wide open, inviting you to join a movement where high dividends, shares, and savings work together for your brighter tomorrow.

gigantic Solution Sacco. High dividends, promising shares, and ample savings



A photo collage of members during the Solution Sacco's 32nd Annual General Meeting



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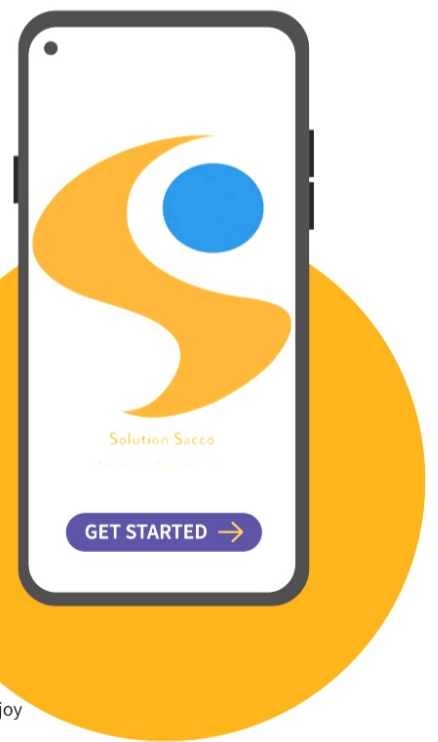


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The relentless pursuit of truth: Inside David Muchui's Media odyssey



Meru Press Club Chairperson David Muchui addresses participants during the Media Mental Health Tournament held at Kaaga Primary school grounds late last year

By Lotini Kiprop

In the heart of Meru County, where the scenic landscapes meet the harsh reality of life, one name stands out among the whispers of the hills—David Muchui.

To the untrained eye, he is just another journalist, but his journey reveals a man forged in the crucible of adversity, passion, and an unrelenting dedication to truth.

Muchui's journey commenced in his childhood home, where he was raised as the second of five siblings—two brothers and three sisters. While his family may not have had a history in journalism, Muchui was destined to carve a unique path. He remains the only member of his family to have pursued a career in this field, breaking the mold and setting a new precedent for future generations.

His secondary school education at Miathene Boys High School (2002-2005) laid the groundwork for his future endeavors. It was here that the seeds of journalism were sown—a path that would prove both fulfilling and challenging.

"I was always fascinated by the power of words," he reflects, his eyes glinting with reminiscence.

Muchui's love for language, nurtured during his schooling days, would eventually propel him towards Journalism and Mass Communication at the Technical University of Mombasa.

His passion for storytelling and communication was a driving force throughout his academic journey.

When asked about his hobbies, Muchui's face lights up as he mentions reading—a sanctuary from the chaos of his work. In an era of constant news cycles and the pressure of meeting deadlines, it is remarkable that he still finds the time to indulge in this peaceful pursuit.

Perhaps it's a testament to his dedication to the craft of journalism, a reminder that there is beauty in the world even amidst the darkness.

After completing his university studies, David Muchui embarked on his first duty as a field journalist in Isiolo, attached to the Kenya News Agency. The year was marked by conflict and loss, with many lives claimed by the war that ravaged the region.

It was in this environment that Muchui had his first taste of tragedy, seeing a dead person for

the first time. His response was a testament to the mettle he was forged in—a mix of resilience and a desire to tell the stories that others shunned.

"It was my first time seeing a dead person," he recalls, the weight of that experience still palpable in his voice.

His love and passion for journalism, however, propelled him forward, allowing him to adapt to the challenging environment, despite the mental scars that lingered.

The camaraderie he found with people in the area who offered counseling and guidance proved instrumental in keeping him grounded.

Returning to Meru, he used his career to tackle pressing issues that plagued the community in his home County.

In 2019, he ventured into Igembe South, a region battling an epidemic of cancer. The feature story "Cancer Village" would become a turning point not just for Muchui but for the entire community.

"This remains one of my greatest achievements," he proudly states, as the county government subsequently organized mass screenings in response to the awareness raised. His journalistic endeavors became a lifeline for many, instigating progress where despair had once settled.

In 2019, Muchui decided to take a significant step forward by forming The Meru Press Club with the aim of fostering unity among journalists and addressing their welfare. The initiative quickly gained traction, attracting a vibrant community of around 80 journalists.

However, with great impact came great challenges. In an era where financial woes cast a shadow over many industries, Muchui faced the daunting task of keeping The Meru Press Club functional and relevant.

Unfortunately, over time, half of the members left due to the inability to pay monthly fees.

"I think most of them left because of the challenging economic environment," Muchui lamented, feeling the weight of responsibility for his peers.

Yet, within sorrow lies hope. He inspired other counties, including Isiolo, Mombasa and Turkana, to establish their own press clubs.

This enabled introduction of initiatives such as football tournaments, aimed at fostering mental health awareness among journalists in various Counties.

"We all struggle, but when we come together, we find strength in our shared experiences," he shares, passion igniting his voice.

In a poignant twist, this message of unity and support resonated deeply, and his latest project—a football tournament to address mental health issues among journalists—has brought a new wave of understanding and



Muchui follows the proceedings of a past Meru Press Club meeting

solidarity to the journalistic community.

At just 28 years of age, Muchui is also a devoted family man, cherishing every moment with his "beautiful wife" and "two amazing daughters." He takes immense pride in his role as a husband and father, often expressing that they are his greatest joy. His favorite delicacy is traditional Meru food known as Mukimo, a dish that holds a special place in his heart and connects him to his roots.

As he now pens stories for the prestigious Daily Nation newspaper, the ghosts of his past loom large. Financial instability, the threats facing journalists, and the fear of exposing truths that others would keep hidden cast long shadows on his huge task as the Club Chairperson. Yet, for Muchui, these challenges only solidify his resolve.

"To all upcoming journalists, be determined and creative. Have courage to face criticism, especially in an age dominated by social media," he advises, his gaze unwavering.

Muchui's journey is a testament to the unwavering spirit of those who dare to brave the challenges of journalism. In a world where truth is often obscured by the chaos of life, he stands as a beacon, illuminating the shadows with stories that demand to be told.

Through his battles, triumphs, and relentless pursuit of justice, he embodies the essence of what it means to be a journalist—courageous, compassionate, and committed to making the world a better place.



(Pictured left) Muchui briefs Journalists at the Meru Press Club offices during a past event. (Right) he leads Meru Journalists in marking the 2022 Media Freedom Day

Gachanka Queens, Al Azizia triumph in thrilling Betika Bingwafest finals



Gachanka Queens FC and Al Azizia FC (right) celebrate their victory in the Betika Bingwafest

Both teams performed impressively in the group stages, but Gachanka Queens emerged dominant in the finals, defeating Blackpanther Queens 2-0 to secure a cash prize of Ksh 1 million. Meanwhile, in an equally exciting match, Ghetto Boys Al Azizia FC triumphed over Mitunguu United with a score of 3-1, showcasing the wealth of untapped talent in grassroots football. Fans erupted in celebration after the final whistle, reveling in Al Azizia's hard-earned victory. In the Rugby Men's category, Meru RFC

claimed victory by defeating MKU Titans 12-0 in the KRU Nationwide Championship, while Muranga Troades were bested by Kinale Forest Community, who took home the Gold medal following a resounding 53-0 victory. In basketball, Twende clinched the title in the Men's category, while Rim Culture emerged as the winner in the Ladies' division. Each winning team received Ksh 1 million, with runners-up receiving Ksh 500,000 and first runners-up taking home Ksh 250,000. Notably, Blackpanther FC, the only club with both male and female teams in the finals, finished with Ksh 500,000 and Ksh 250,000, respectively.

By Gitari Dominik

The Betika Bingwafest Central Region has wrapped up after an action-packed seven days in Meru, showcasing an inspiring community initiative organized by Betika through its Betika na Community program. The tournament featured 16 male and 16 female football teams from Meru County, aiming to nurture local talent while giving back to the community. In a thrilling final showdown at the Cathedral of Soccer, Kinoru

Stadium, Gachanka Queens faced off against the formidable Blackpanther Queens.

hard-earned victory. In the Rugby Men's category, Meru RFC



Gachanka Queens player tussles for the ball against Blankpanthers player



Gachanka Queens player tussles for the ball against Blankpanthers player



Al Azizia FC players pose with the Betika Bingwafest trophy
Photo credit: Empress Damah

Thrilling championship decided by penalties as Sildan Sports Academy emerge victorious

By Gitari Dominik

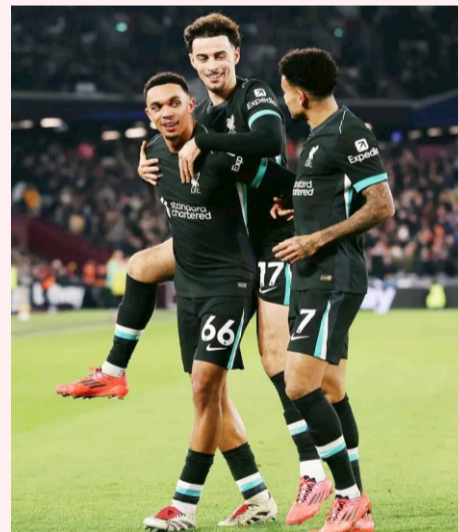
In a fiercely contested match on Sunday, January 26th, at Kathwana Stadium, two top teams clashed for the FKF Tharaka Nithi County League Championship. The game's excitement was palpable, with fans from across the county filling the stands to cheer for their favorite teams. The match began with a bang as Roy Kipchumba netted a stunning goal in the 5th minute, courtesy of an impressive assist from Daniel Waswa, putting the Mungoni Foxes in the lead. However, the drama intensified when Sildan Sports Academy found the net for an equalizer in the 90+1 minute, leaving both teams tied at 1-1 at the end of regular time. With a draw locked in, the game proceeded to penalties, where Sildan Sports Academy sealed their victory, scoring 6 penalties against Mungoni Foxes' 5. Despite the loss, Mungoni Foxes had a remarkable season, remaining unbeaten in all their previous matches before succumbing in the penalty shootout. "It has been a fun season; God has been with us all through. I've had the opportunity to work with an incredible group of players—their dedication, passion, and hunger have been evident in all our matches," said Mungoni Foxes Coach Kim. "I congratulate Sildan Academy for emerging as the winners. We have learned from this and will now shift our focus to preparing for our regional league campaign." Sildan FC Coach Morris added, "We conceded an



Mungoni BlackFoxes football team

early goal, but that didn't deter us. We were determined to clinch the TNC trophy. Our resilience, determination, and teamwork really paid off. I want to thank Mungoni Foxes for their great display of sportsmanship during the finals. We appreciate everyone—from the federation to our players and fans—for making this possible." Both teams, along with runner-up Kathwana FC and Kamwimbi Greenstars, will receive cash awards during the FKF Tharaka Nithi County League Gala Awards on March 9, 2025. Additional accolades to be presented that day include the Most Valuable Player, Golden Boot Award, Golden Gloves, and other individual recognitions. In an exciting development, both Mungoni Foxes and Sildan Sports Academy have been promoted to the Eastern Regional League for the 2024/2025 season.

Liverpool, Arsenal seek glory in Champions league draw



Liverpool's Curtis Jones and teammates celebrate a goal in a Champions League action

By Gitari Dominik

Wednesday, January 29, marked the thrilling conclusion of the UEFA Champions League group stage, with all 18 matches kicking off simultaneously. Despite a defeat to PSV Eindhoven, Liverpool finished at the top of Group A, while Barcelona and Arsenal secured second and third places respectively, ensuring their progression to the knockout stage. The top eight teams automatically qualify for the Round of 16, while teams ranked from 9th to 24th will enter the knockout playoffs. Unfortunately, those finishing in

positions 25 to 36 have been eliminated from the competition. Among the notable teams facing the pressure of the playoffs are European powerhouses Real Madrid, Bayern Munich, and EPL champions Manchester City. Eight clubs from the playoffs will join the eight already in the Round of 16. As the group stage concluded, Robert Lewandowski of Barcelona and Serhou Guirassy from Dortmund led the UCL scoring charts, each with nine goals. Raphinha (Barcelona) follows closely with eight goals, while Vinícius Júnior of Real Madrid has found the net seven times. The draw for the knockout round will take place on Friday, setting the stage for what promises to be an exciting knockout phase as teams vie for European glory.



Champions League format after final league phase round

GVN Kawira, CPSB and County Assembly clash over controversial hiring of 500 new employees

By Rugendo Antony

A bitter leadership dispute has erupted in Meru County, pitting Governor Kawira Mwangaza against the County Public Service Board (CPSB) over a recruitment exercise that has sparked controversy.

The CPSB had advertised for over 500 posts in various departments, including health, education, agriculture, and water, but Governor Mwangaza ordered the cancellation of the recruitment, sparking a heated row between the two parties.

CPSB argued that the recruitment was necessary to address a shortage of essential staff, including ECDE teachers, nurses, medical officers, and agricultural extension officers.

However, Governor Mwangaza claimed that the board had acted unilaterally, failing to involve user departments and citing a ballooning wage bill as a major constraint.

"As the governor of Meru, I am not aware that the county government is recruiting staff. User



Governor Mwangaza flanked by County Government officers during a press conference. On the left is the County Secretary Dr Kiambi Atheru

departments did not make any request for employment. Also, our wage bill is too high to allow for any recruitment," Mwangaza said. The County Public Service Board Secretary, Virginia Kawira, dismissed the governor's claims, stating that they had relied on Section 63 (c) of the County Government Act to justify the recruitment exercise. According to this provision, the board can make appointments "on its own motion on account of the best interests of the county public service and parity of treatment



County Public Service Board Secretary/CEO Virginia Miriti and Board Members addressing journalists

of public officers". "The job advertisement was pulled down from the county website, but the board is working on re-advertising. The board had a subdomain in the Meru County government website, but we are now working on our own domain. We will soon give our position on the process," Kawira said. Rivalry between the executive and the CPSB is far from over, with both sides digging in their heels. While Governor Mwangaza has accused the board of interfering with the recruitment

exercise, the CPSB has vowed to press on with the process, claiming that they have the necessary authority to do so.

The dispute, which has been brewing for months, came to a head recently when the CPSB and the county executive appeared before the Senate's Cohesion Committee to explain the circumstances surrounding the recruitment exercise.

The row has its roots in a long-standing feud between the executive and the CPSB. In 2023, the board recruited health workers, but the executive quashed the process, sparking a controversy that has yet to be resolved.

Feud between the two intensified after Governor Mwangaza attempted to get rid of the board secretary who went to court and was reinstated.

In the impeachment trial, the MCAs accused Governor Mwangaza of illegally kicking out the public service board secretary.

The CPSB has since then been at loggerheads with the executive, with the board accusing the

Continued on page 7...

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