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The 2027 political tsunami

Top political parties at play



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Hon. Mithika Linturi- Former CS for Agriculture



Hon. Kawira Mwangaza- Ousted 3rd Governor



Hon. Kathuri Murungi-Senator Meru County



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Hon. Susan Mwindu- Women Rep Tharaka Nithi County



Hon Gitonga Murugara- Mp Tharaka Constituency



Prof. Erustus Njoka- Governorial Aspirant Tharaka Nithi County

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Meru, Tharaka Nithi bracing for 2027 political storm

By Nancy Kinoti

Meru politics are never dull, and the 2027 governor's election is quickly becoming one of the most violent in Kenya. A county that has seen impeachments, party chaos, and defections now sets the stage for a five-way battle.

The incumbent: Isaac Mutuma M'Ethingia



Governor Mutuma and president Ruto during the presidents tour in Meru earlier this year

Sworn in after the impeachment of Kawira Mwangaza in 2025, Governor Mutuma has pacified a wrangle-torn county. A UDA diehard and Ruto government sympathizer, he must prove himself beyond a caretaker as



Hon. Kawira Mwangaza - Ousted 3rd Meru Governor

The Defiant Challenger: Kawira Mwangaza

Impeached but unbowed, Kawira has launched UMP and vows a comeback, relying on her grassroots philanthropy. Unless courts overturn her impeachment, however, IEBC may lock her out.

The Wildcard: Senator Kathuri Murungi

Deputy Speaker of the Senate and a loyal UDA ally, Kathuri has not declared but looms large. His entry could split Imenti's swing vote and complicate UDA's arithmetic.



Hon Kathuri Murungi

Alliances brewing

Speculation is rife of a Munya-Kawira pact, which could redraw Tigania and Buuri politics. At the same time, a recent picture of Kathuri and Linturi together has fueled talk of a possible UDA-DCP alliance — one that could combine Imenti's swing power with Igembe's miraa vote.

The bottom Line

With Mutuma, Munya, Linturi, Kawira, and perhaps Kathuri in the mix — as well as rumors of other combinations — Meru is holding its breath for nothing less than a political tsunami.

Maara, Chuka, and Tharaka weigh merit against regional justice in 2027

With Governor Muthomi Njuki completing his second and final term, Tharaka Nithi County is set for one of the fiercest gubernatorial contests in its history. The stage

is already occupied by seasoned politicians and newcomers — all vying for the top seat in the county.

The contenders

Hon. Gitonga Murugara — The forthright MP and seasoned lawyer has made himself known both at home and abroad as a champion of his people. Having good



Hon Gitonga Murugara

grassroots connections, he is one of the early favorites for the race.

Hon. Susan Ngugi Mwindi — The sitting



Hon Susan Mwindi

Woman Representative, Susan, has built a strong profile based on her countywide mandate. Having specialized in women and



Hon Kareke Mbiuki

youth empowerment, she is likely to get significant support from youthful voters as well as grassroots networks.

Hon. Kareke Mbiuki — Experienced politician with strong roots and long survival in national politics. Kareke is banking on his long exposure and network to position



Prof Erastus Njoka

himself as the steady hand Tharaka Nithi needs.

Prof. Erastus Njoka — Respected scholar turned former university administrator, Njoka brings a technocratic and reformist gloss. His professionalized governance vision will resonate with elites as well as reform-minded voters.

Regional balancing act

It's not personalities — it's regional balance. Historically, leadership in the county has tilted toward Chuka/Igamba Ng'ombe and Maara, with Tharaka being the only region that has never held a governor.

Maara: The current governor's birthplace.

Chuka/Igamba Ng'ombe: The economic powerhouse that boasts the most voters.

Tharaka: The region making the strident case, "it's our turn."

It makes 2027 both a succession war and an argument of regional equity.

The big question

Will Tharaka Nithi electors vote along regional equilibrium, giving Tharaka its first governor? Or will they vote along political experience and networking, giving the sitting Maara and Chuka/Igamba Ng'ombe veterans?

Either way, with Murugara, Susan, Kareke, and Prof. Njoka all in the race, the 2027 governor's election is going to be nothing short of a political earthquake.



Hon Mithika Linturi during the DCP party tour in Meru

The remarkable journey of Dr. Julius Mbijiwe

A legacy of good leadership, service and vision

By Nancy Kinoti

Dr. Julius Mbijiwe is a name that resonates with service, leadership, and transformative impact in Meru County and beyond. From his early years as a passionate educator to his rise in political leadership and civic advocacy, Dr. Mbijiwe's journey is one of resilience, purpose, and people-centered change.

A Foundation in Education



Dr. Julius Mbijiwe

Born and raised with an unwavering passion for education, Dr. Mbijiwe trained as a teacher of Mathematics and Physics, beginning his teaching career in 1996. For over 14 years, he served diligently in Kenya's education sector, earning a reputation for both academic excellence and community engagement.

He held various leadership roles early on, including Games Master, Science Club Leader, and Secretary for Sports in Tharaka. His strong voice for educators saw him rise through the ranks of the Kenya Union of Post Primary Education Teachers (KUPPET)—from a local representative to Executive Secretary for Meru County, and eventually to the National Executive Council, where he consistently championed teachers' rights and welfare.

From MCA to County Leadership

In 2013, Dr. Mbijiwe made a transition into politics, vying for the position of Member of County Assembly (MCA) for Mwangathia

Ward. He won the seat against seven other contestants and quickly established himself as a competent and visionary leader in the Meru County Assembly.

Throughout his tenure, he served in several influential roles including:

- Chair, Land and Planning Committee
- Chair, Budget Committee
- Chair, Public Accounts and investment Committee

He sponsored five petitions and 25 motions, among them the Ward Development Fund Bill, which became a cornerstone for equitable resource allocation at the grassroots level. His bold legislative actions and commitment to good governance earned him re-election in 2017, followed by the prestigious Best MCA Award in Meru County during a ceremony at Kempinski Hotel.

The New Dawn Movement: Championing Accountability and Change in Meru

Recognizing the need for change, Dr. Mbijiwe helped form The New Dawn Movement—a civic initiative aimed at sensitizing the people of Meru through positive and constructive criticism of the former regime. The movement

empowered ordinary citizens to speak out against poor governance and demand accountability.



Dr. Mbijiwe [holding the mic] with Governor Mutuma and other county leaders during the flagging-off ceremony of medical supplies for Meru County

Its impact was undeniable. The sustained pressure and grassroots mobilization played a pivotal role in ushering in a new era of leadership, culminating in the removal of the former governor and the election of Governor Mutuma M'ethingia.

In appreciation of Dr. Mbijiwe's steadfast leadership and service to the people, Governor Mutuma appointed him as Chief of Staff in the Meru County Government. Dr. Mbijiwe has expressed deep gratitude for this opportunity and has since pledged his full commitment to supporting the governor's vision and delivering effective services to the people of Meru.

Political Party Involvement and Strategic Leadership

Beyond legislative leadership, Dr. Mbijiwe has played a crucial role in party politics. He served as the Secretary General of the New Dawn

Movement and was later appointed to chair the Nopeu Party in Meru County under the leadership of Hon. Mporu Aburi.

His ability to connect the grassroots with broader policy frameworks has helped shape strong political networks and contributed to the success of the current administration.

A Vision for Meru's Future

As Chief of Staff, Dr. Mbijiwe has focused his leadership on:

- Enhancing working conditions for county staff
- Promoting intergovernmental coordination between county and national levels
- Strengthening partnerships with development agencies
- Upholding transparency and effective staff representation

He is also a firm believer in inclusive governance, advocating for greater youth and women participation in leadership and creating platforms for under-represented voices to be

heard.

- His vision for Meru includes:
- Efficient and transparent service delivery
- Staff empowerment and mentorship
- Sustainable and equitable development
- Unity, integrity, and transformation for all residents

“Let's build Meru together — a promise to deliver.”

— Dr. Julius Mbijiwe

As he continues to rise, Dr. Julius Mbijiwe is not just leading—he is transforming. His story is a testament to what is possible when service, vision, and community come together. Through education, political dedication, and unwavering commitment to progress, he continues to shape a brighter, more accountable future for Meru County.



Dr. Mbijiwe with Hon. Mporu Aburi-MP Tigania East and Frankline Karuti at a past event

DCP keen to establish itself as the dominant party in Central, Mt. Kenya East

By Gerald Mukembu

The Democratic Change Party (DCP) has reaffirmed its rising influence in Mt. Kenya East, with leaders in Meru, Tharaka Nithi, and Embu counties assuring residents that the party is firmly positioned as the people's choice ahead of the next General Election.

Speaking during a grassroots mobilization drive in Meru town, Meru County DCP Coordinator Patrick Muriungi emphasized that the party is ready to provide a strong and united platform for the region.

"DCP is the way to go. We are not just a party; we are a movement that believes in giving every Kenyan, especially here in Mt. Kenya East, a voice and a chance to prosper," said Muriungi.

will be free, fair, and transparent. According to Muriungi, DCP is committed to nurturing leaders who reflect the values of integrity, service, and accountability.

Residents across the three counties were also urged to take part in the ongoing party membership and voter registration exercise, with the assurance that their participation will play a decisive role in shaping the region's political future. "Our strength lies in our people."

By registering as DCP members and voters, you are securing not just the party's future but also the prosperity of Mt. Kenya East," Muriungi added.

Early Pioneers Speak Out

Early pioneers of the DCP in the region expressed confidence in protecting the party's growth and vision. They urged residents to rally behind leaders who have shown consistency and commitment from the beginning rather than those who jump in at the last minute when campaign season is in full swing. "This time round, the people have wisened up."

We can tell a true leader through their presence and actions, not empty promises," said one of the pioneers.

They stressed that voters in Mt. Kenya East would no longer be swayed by money or handouts but by service delivery and tangible leadership. According to them, the electorate has matured and is determined to back leaders



DCP officials welcoming the National Secretary General, Mr Hezron Obaga at Meru DCP headquarters

who put the people first.

With an energized support base and growing visibility across Meru, Tharaka Nithi, and Embu, DCP officials expressed confidence that the party will be a dominant force in Mt. Kenya East's political landscape in the coming polls.

The DCP party has continued to entrench itself in Mt. Kenya East politics, positioning itself as the voice of the people by taking a firm stand against the proposed construction of a State Lounge in Meru.

Party officials dismissed the government-backed project as a misplaced priority, arguing that residents of Meru and surrounding counties

are in dire need of essential services rather than luxury facilities for dignitaries.

DCP leaders insisted that the billions earmarked for the lounge should instead be redirected to agriculture, youth empowerment, healthcare, and road infrastructure — sectors they say would have a direct and lasting impact on people's lives.

"Our people need water, jobs, and functioning hospitals, not a lavish State Lounge. DCP will not allow resources to be wasted while farmers, traders, and youth in Mt. Kenya East continue to struggle," said one of the party officials.



DCP Chairman meru County James Mithika Ntongai and the party coordinator Mr. Patrick Muriungi

He further called on aspiring candidates seeking elective seats through DCP to fully register with the party, stressing that the nomination process

Ura Gate cultural festival: celebrating heritage and unity in Tharaka Nithi

By Christine Ngironi

For the people of Tharaka Nithi and neighboring communities, the Ura Gate Cultural Festival is no mere annual gathering.

It is a revival of heritage, a bridge between the past and present, and an economic

shorten travel distances — it opened up opportunities for cultural exchange and economic growth.

Held in the dry months of August-September, the festival arrives when harvests are done, skies are clearer, and

Conservation stands at the heart. The communities around Meru National Park — including Tharaka people and riparian groups living near the gate — use the festival to highlight the importance of wildlife protection, awareness against poaching, and fighting human-wildlife conflicts. Game drives are part of the programme, giving both locals and visitors tangible encounters with nature. Kenya Wildlife Service and others often partner in these efforts.

Tourism is taking note.

Once ranked among Kenya's top cultural festivals, Ura Gate pulls in visitors who are keen to experience culture, scenery, nature, and community all in one place. Local hotels, home stays, restaurants, and craftspeople see increases in business, and regional recognition grows.

Yet, for all its vibrance, the festival's future depends on more than enthusiasm. Stable funding, institutional backing, legal anchoring, and protection from political whim are crucial if the heritage is to be preserved. Local groups have highlighted that in years when the festival is delayed or less funded, much of the momentum — especially among youth, dancers, artisans — is lost.

But the mood among communities is hopeful. With each edition, Ura Gate grows in scale and reach. It is a symbol of identity, unity, and potential — not just of Tharaka Nithi, but of how culture can drive conservation, tourism, economic empowerment, and national cohesion.



Tharaka Nithi Governor Muthomi Njuki attending the Ura gate Festivals

lifeline for thousands.

First launched in 2015 after years of the Ura Gate's closure, the festival was born out of a shared aspiration: reconnect communities to their land, conserve wildlife and nature, showcase indigenous culture, and offer a tourism gateway into Meru National Park.

The re-opening of the gate did more than

communities can fully participate. Traditional foods are prepared, drinks brewed, and neighbors visited.

Dances and music echo through the grounds, artisans display their crafts, and elders tell stories. Such customs remind the youth of the values, beliefs, and artistry of their ancestors.



Thousands of locals and visitors present during this year's festivals



HARMONY THERAPY CENTRE



Six years of healing, hope, and empowerment

Secreted from the peaceful Kithunguri village near the Chief's Camp is Harmony Therapy Centre, which for the past six years has been rewriting the script of recovery for hundreds of individuals grappling with substance abuse and mental illness. From a modest rehabilitation center, it has evolved to be a beacon of hope for families in Meru and far beyond, with the motto: Regain, Rebuild, Empower

A Community in Need



Mureti Ken - facility manager

Abuse of alcohol and substances remains one of the largest public health issues in Meru County. Lives are ruined, the future of the youth is lost, and society is burdened with reduced productivity and rising health complications. In addition to addiction, untreated and undiagnosed mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder continue to claim lives in secrecy and silence.

"Most people are not going to come for assistance for fear of stigma or cost of treatment," according to one of the Centre's therapists. "Harmony was created to end that cycle—to give individuals access to care that is professional yet compassionate."

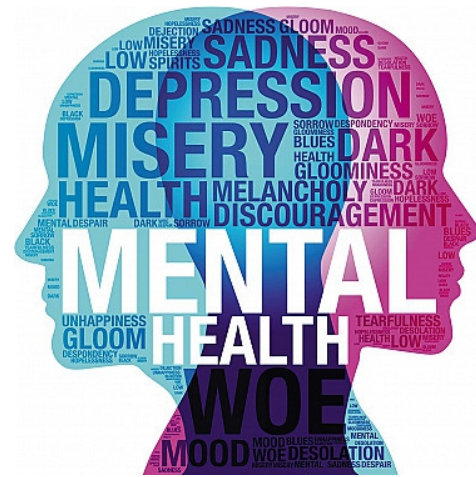
Services That Go Beyond Treatment



Mental Health Nurse Right with Harmony Therapy centre consultant psychiatric Doctor Andrea Mwikamba

Gk kinoti(center) on his visit as a guest speaker

Over the years, the Centre has extended its services to meet the advanced needs of clients.



From toxicology testing and medical detoxification to psychiatric disorder stabilization over the long term, the center leaves no one behind.

Therapy is the foundation of the Centre's work. Counselling is conducted on a one-to-one basis with the individual, peer support and group healing through group meetings, and couples and family inclusion where they are taught how to rebuild trust and relationally strained relationships due to addiction or mental health problems.

Shattering Financial Barriers

The greatest asset of Harmony Therapy Centre is that it is within reach. With a partnership with SHA Insurance, clients can now receive good rehabilitation and mental health care without excessive financial burden. This has motivated many to arrive early—before sickness or addiction makes them relapse, end up in the hospital, or worse.

Looking to the Future

The Centre is not relying on rehabilitation alone. Already, plans are underway to build an expansive hospital facility offering inpatient and outpatient services. This expansion will combine curative medical care with therapy and rehabilitation in one roof—confronting clients with comprehensive healthcare treating both body and mind.

"This is going to change the game for Meru County," suggests the management team at the Centre. "We envision a center where patients detox, receive therapy, and have access to medical services without having to move from one center to another."



Changing Perceptions Through Advocacy

Beyond its doors, Harmony Therapy Centre has been actively engaged in community outreach initiatives to reduce stigma against addiction and mental illness. The Centre emphasizes that addiction is an illness—not a sin—and that people can recover fully and regain their dignity with proper care.

Six Years of Impact

Since the day it opened its doors, Harmony Therapy Centre has:

Rendered lifesaving interventions to hundreds of individuals.

Lightened the family load of untreated addiction and mental illness.

Restored dignity and productivity to recovering clients.

Assisted in promoting community development by addressing one of Meru's most serious social problems.

To many in Nkubu and nearby districts, the Centre has become a haven of second chances rather than merely an institution.

As the Centre aims to grow, it calls upon the public, government, and stakeholders to join it in its mission. "Recovery is not an individual process," the team notes. "It requires the support of the community, mercy, and team work. We can together establish a healthier and stronger community."



Harmony Therapy Centre Team



Harmony Therapy Centre Therapeutic environment

Over the years, Harmony Therapy Centre has expanded its scope of services to address the complex and diverse needs of clients.

These include:

1. Assessment and Evaluation – Comprehensive clinical assessments to identify the extent of substance use or mental health conditions, ensuring accurate diagnosis and individualized treatment plans.

2. Medical Detoxification – Safe and supervised detox programs to help individuals withdraw from drugs or alcohol while managing withdrawal symptoms effectively.

3. Addiction and Mental Health Management – Long-term care plans for individuals struggling with drug addiction, depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and other psychiatric conditions.

4. Toxicology Testing – Laboratory tests to confirm substance use and guide treatment decisions.

5. Therapeutic Interventions – Tailored counseling and therapy programs including:

- **Individual Therapy** – One-on-one sessions focusing on personal healing and growth.

- **Group Therapy** – Peer-supported discussions that foster accountability and shared recovery experiences.

- **Family Therapy** – Helping families understand addiction and mental illness while restoring healthy relationships.

- **Couple Therapy** – Strengthening partnerships affected by substance use or mental health challenges.



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Location: Nkubu, Kithunguri near Chief's Camp, Meru County





Building Meru Together

Committed to Development and Excellent, Inclusive Leadership



Preparations in top gear for Governor Tush Cup

Preparations are in high gear for the highly anticipated Governor's Cup, now officially branded the Governor Tush Cup, a flagship project of H.E. Governor Mutuma M'Ethingia designed to promote sports, nurture young talent, and tackle pressing social issues across the county.

In a stakeholders' meeting, CECM for Youth, Sports & Gender, Hon. Elias Murega, outlined the administration's vision for the tournament, whose slogan "More Than a Game" captures its dual purpose: sporting excellence and social transformation.

"The Governor Tush Cup is not just about football and athletics. It is about giving our young people a premier platform to showcase their talent, while also sensitizing communities on gender-based violence, drug abuse, and the importance of unity," said Murega.

The tournament will feature football and athletics competitions from ward to county levels, with cash prizes for winning teams and athletes.

Beyond the trophies, the event will serve as a springboard for the county's wider sports development strategy, including referee and



coach training, partnerships with the Football Kenya Federation (FKF), and plans for constituency-based sports academies to nurture talent from an early age.

Hon. Julius Kaimbo, Mikinduri Ward MCA and Chair of the Youth, Sports & Gender Committee, pledged his committee's full support to ensure the tournament's success, noting that the project has already energized communities across Meru.

The Governor Tush Cup builds on the legacy of earlier editions of the Governor's Cup,

which under previous leadership brought together hundreds of teams across all wards, culminating in the formation of a county-wide representative team.

This year's revival promises an even greater scale, with stakeholders optimistic that the tournament will restore Meru's status as a hub of sports talent.

Crucially, early pioneers and supporters of the Democratic Change Party (DCP) in Meru—closely aligned with the Governor's youth agenda—have urged residents to take ownership of the project.

They warned that last-minute opportunists who only appear during campaign season should not expect to win people's trust, stressing that communities are now wiser and will judge leaders by their presence and service delivery rather than handouts.

Governor M'Ethingia, speaking at a recent sports day in Njia, reiterated that the county's priority is to engage youth productively: "Sports has the power to unite our people, keep our youth away from drugs, and open doors for careers in athletics and football."



The Governor Tush Cup is proof that Meru is serious about investing in its future."With growing support from political leaders, sports officials, and the community, the Governor Tush Cup is set to become more than just a

Meru County hosts 6th CASA games: showcasing sports, culture and devolution

The County Government of Meru, under the leadership of Hon. Rev. Mutuma M'Ethingia, is honored to host the 6th County Assemblies Sports Association (CASA) Games, scheduled for October 24th to 31st, 2025.

With the theme "Celebrating and Strengthening Devolution in Kenya through Sports and Culture," the games will bring together thousands of athletes and leaders from across the nation.

More than 15,000 visitors are expected to flock into Meru, creating unmatched opportunities for the hospitality sector, local businesses, and sports professionals.

This major win for Meru comes hot on the heels of another landmark event—the National Music Festivals, held in the county



Governor Mutuma lifting a trophy as he welcomes the CASA games in Meru

just last month. Hosting two national events back-to-back not only cements Meru's reputation as a destination of choice but also signals its rise as a national hub for sports and cultural tourism.

According to organizers, the CASA Games will showcase a variety of disciplines including football, athletics, volleyball, basketball, and indoor games, alongside rich displays of cultural heritage.

The events will inject vibrancy into the county while offering a platform to nurture and celebrate talent.

Observers note that the successful bids are a direct result of unity between the Executive and County Assembly, whose collaboration has elevated Meru to national prominence.

Meru's strategic location, modern infrastructure, and legendary hospitality make it an ideal host.

With the government investing heavily in sports facilities, cultural programs, and event organization, the county is steadily positioning itself to rival traditional event destinations such as Nairobi, Kisumu, and Mombasa.

As Meru prepares to roll out its renowned hospitality, cultural richness, and organizational excellence, the CASA Games promise not just competition, but a celebration of devolution, unity, and community spirit.

Meru is rising—and with it, the future of sports and culture in Kenya.

Empowering Women and Combating GBV

In a historical step towards the advancement of women's rights, CECM Murega hosted the Women Human Rights Defenders Hub (WHRD-Hub) to the county offices.

The delegation provided an overview of their impactful program of integrated

protection of women, livelihoods support for sustainable livelihoods, and a mentorship program appropriately termed Femtorship.

The delegation also reported, Turning Barriers into Bridges: Access to Service Delivery for GBV Survivors, that underscored the need for powerful support systems for survivors of gender-based



CECM Elias Murega with the WHRD-hub officials

violence.

Director of Social and Gender Development Hellen Kaberia was present at the meeting as a sign of the readiness of the county to step up partnerships in dealing with GBV.



A performance at the Meru TTC during the recent National Music Festivals



Building Meru Together

Committed to Development and Excellent, Inclusive Leadership



Meru County launches climate resilience programme to support vulnerable households

As part of an effort to scale up climate resilience for its most susceptible populations, Governor Isaac Mutuma M'Ethigia launched a new phase of support under the Financing Locally Led Climate Action (FLLoCA) programme. The distribution includes thousands of material items intended to help households withstand environmental shocks and improve food security.

The county will also provide 8,125 water tanks for rainwater harvesting, 364 dairy goats to enhance nutrition and incomes, 1,000 LPG cylinders for clean cooking, and 1,000 kitchen garden kits to allow households to produce food locally.

Governor Mutuma explained that the program rides on the understanding that environment, water, and agriculture go hand in hand—when one sector is ailing, the others also suffer. "These are not handouts, but strategic investments in our people's dignity, health, and long-term sustainability," he said at the launch.

They are part of Meru's broader Climate Change Action Plan 2023-2027, a plan developed through wide input from the county's 45 wards to identify climate risks and reactions. The plan guides efforts such as FLLoCA and seeks to strengthen community resilience in environmental, agricultural, and water spheres.

At a recent Africa Climate Summit in Addis

Ababa, Governor Mutuma lifted Meru's story of local climate action, calling for collaboration to scale up county-led solutions in adaptation and mitigation.



Water tanks and gas cylinders issued at Kinoru Stadium under the FLLoCA programme

The launch was attended by a cross-section of stakeholders, including the members of the Meru County Executive Committee, the County Attorney, and elected Members of the County Assembly led by Hon. Caleb Mutethia

(Meru Municipality). This show of support reflects how Meru leadership is placing climate resilience at the center of its development agenda.

Ever since Governor Mutuma assumed office in March 2025, following the impeachment of his predecessor, the county's trajectory has shifted towards consolidating public service, unity, and tackling environmental challenges head-on.



Governor Mutuma giving out dairy goats to the people at Kinoru Stadium



Governor Mutuma handing out gas cylinders to the people at Kinoru Stadium

Meru County tightens crackdown on alcohol abuse near schools and villages

Meru County has intensified its battle against illegal alcohol enterprises and harmful drinking culture, using blanket tactics to protect schoolchildren and make communities safe from the devastating effects of alcohol abuse. Underlying this campaign is a firm mandate: no bar, liquor store, or alcohol advertisement shall be permitted within a 300-meter radius of any place of learning. This rule, in line with a national order, is now being enforced across the entire Meru with renewed vigor, reshaping the social fabric of the county.

Protecting Children Against Early Exposures

Meru County Alcoholic Drinks Control Board Chief Executive Officer Dr. Mbaabu Muguna has been leading on-the-ground inspections. His inspectors, who carry tape measures, have been moving around neighborhoods to verify whether the billboards and outlets are in the requisite distance from schools. Any display, poster, or advert that is placed in close proximity to a school is immediately taken down.

"Let our children grow up without knowing about alcohol," Dr. Muguna said while out on one of the patrols. "Protecting them from early exposure is protecting their future."



Meru alcohol board CEO Mbaabu Muguna leads the destruction of illegal alcohol in Meru

Booze marketing has been glorifying boozing even among kids over the decades by setting up boards and posters intentionally visible near school entrances. By forbidding such practices, Meru seeks to safeguard its students from the lure of alcohol as well as from its self-destructive tendencies.

Rogue Bars Shutdown

Enforcement has crossed the advertisements. Since January 2025, Meru County shut down nearly 200 bars that had been running either illegally without a license, selling illicit brews, or breaking safety and hygiene regulations for the last eight months.

Civilian residents have been central to this crackdown, grumbling against illegal dens that have encouraged alcoholism, destroyed families, and increased insecurity. Consequently, the Alcoholic Drinks Control Board worked in cooperation with police and community leaders to raid, examine, and revoke licenses of unruly establishments.

"Alcoholism is not a health problem alone; it

is a social catastrophe," stated a local elder in Igembe, whose neighborhoods experienced a number of dens recently demolished. "Families are disintegrating, young men are idle, and children are withdrawing from school. We welcome the County's firm stance."

Aligning With National Priorities

The ban of alcohol outlets near schools by the county aligns with a 2024 Ministry of Interior directive banning licensing of bars within 300 meters of schools. Meru is one of the leading counties in enforcing this directive to the letter and at all of its

branches, proving that county leadership can catalyze national ambitions for health and safety at a faster pace.

Community-Centered Approach

Apart from dens closing, Meru County is also encouraging rehabilitation and responsible action. Owners of pubs are requested to send alcoholics to rehab centers instead of exploiting their condition.

Campaigns of public education are also underway, reminding citizens of the health and economic dangers of alcoholism. Statistics indicate 23% of job losses in the county are due to alcoholism, and 4% of alcohol-caused deaths. Such harrowing statistics are the reason that Meru's anti-alcohol campaign is half as much about saving livelihoods as lives.

Results Already Visible

The campaign has already had ripple effects. There is less truancy due to alcohol in schools, and parents say that they feel reassured by the fact that their children are no longer walking past alcohol-selling establishments on the way to school.

Communities have also seen improved security as illegal dens have been shut down.

The Road Ahead

While Meru has registered progress, the County Government concedes that the war is not yet won. More patrols are in the offing, closer collaboration with national security agencies is being driven, and communities are being empowered to be vigilant.

"Our goal is not just to regulate, but to transform lives," Dr. Muguna emphasized. "We are determined to ensure Meru becomes a county where children can learn in peace, families can thrive, and communities are free from the chains of alcohol abuse."

A Model for Kenya

Meru's multi-pronged strategy—combining strict enforcement, community engagement, public awareness, and national alignment—offers a blueprint for other counties grappling with the scourge of illicit alcohol.

While the crackdown takes place, one thing is certain: Meru County is not merely shutting down bars and taking down posters. It is building a future where kids are free to dream beyond the shadow of alcohol, and where people regain their dignity, health, and productivity.



Alcohol board officials measuring the distance from schools to the nearby bars



CEO Meru alcohol board- Dr. Mbaabu Muguna



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Raising the bar in healthcare Meru leads the way in innovation and access

Meru County is fast emerging as a national model for people-centered, high-tech, and inclusive healthcare, with groundbreaking investments and reforms

The new machine, upgradable to 128 slices, uses advanced AI technology for sharper, more precise diagnoses—from trauma cases and vascular imaging to cancer follow-ups.

For decades, preventable blindness from cataracts, trachoma, and glaucoma left thousands in Meru unable to work, learn, or live independently. Specialized treatment was often out of reach.

hospital to serve as a regional center of excellence in advanced care, training, and research.

Mashinani Free Medical Camps & Expanded Specialist Services



The new CT Scan machine at the Meru General Teaching and referral hospital

reshaping access to services across the region. From cutting-edge diagnostic tools to sight-restoring programs and community-driven free medical camps, the County Government under Governor Rev. Mutuma M'Ethingia is delivering on its promise of a healthier, stronger Meru.

Game-Changer at MeTRH: The New 64-Slice CT Scan

At the heart of Meru's medical transformation is the commissioning of a state-of-the-art 64-slice CT Scan machine at the Meru Teaching and Referral Hospital (MeTRH). For two years, the hospital operated without this essential diagnostic tool. Today, residents can access faster, more accurate, and affordable imaging services than ever before.



Dr. Dennis Mugambi-CECM health Meru County

Equipped with a dual contrast injector, printer, UPS, and backed by highly trained radiographers and biomedical engineers, the CT Scan has elevated MeTRH as the only



Pediatric eye surgical exercise at the MeTRH

facility in Upper Eastern with this capacity.

"This is not just a replacement—it is a monumental leap forward," Governor Mutuma said. "We are cutting patient costs by up to 50 percent, and through SHA, no one will be left behind."

Restoring Vision, Restoring Dignity: Meru's Eye Health Revolution

By Rosaline Gakii, Dr. Titus Muchoka, and Mercy Gatabi



Eye screening exercise in Meru county

Today, Meru stands out as Kenya's pioneer in county-led universal eye care, thanks to deliberate investment, partnerships, and strong political leadership.

Since 2021, Meru has invested over KSh 60 million in diagnostic and surgical equipment—technology such as OCT, Fundus Cameras, and YAG Lasers, not found even in some national hospitals.

With KSh 50 million channeled into workforce development, the county now boasts the largest county-level eye health workforce in Kenya, supported by CBM, Fred Hollows Foundation, and the Ministry of Health.

The results are remarkable:

-940,418 residents screened in one of Kenya's largest eye health campaigns.

-3,978 cataract surgeries performed between 2022–2025

-229,962 people diagnosed with eye conditions, with 136,482 treated locally.

-3,427 children and adults fitted with corrective lenses, restoring their learning and livelihoods.

Trachoma eliminated as a public health problem in Igembe North, with 91% coverage.

By integrating services into the Social Health Authority (SHA) scheme, cataract surgery—previously out of reach for ordinary families—is now accessible at zero financial strain.

Meru's next goal is to establish a specialist eye

Alongside high-tech interventions, Meru has launched the Mashinani Free Medical Camps Initiative to take healthcare directly to the people.

Through partnerships with the Ameru Foundation, Faraja Diagnostics, LifeCare Hospital, Nairobi Women's Hospital, and MeTRH, thousands of residents are receiving free screening for lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, and cardiovascular conditions.

The program also targets early cancer detection (breast, cervical, and prostate cancers), as well as eye and dental check-ups, family planning, and SHA enrollment.

The first camp at Gitimbine was a success, with the next stop set for Chabuene, Nyaki West. Meru also made history by hosting its first-ever World Clubfoot Day, raising awareness on a congenital condition affecting 1 in 1,000 births.

MeTRH has already treated over 500 children, ensuring they can walk and live disability-free. "Clubfoot is not a curse but a treatable condition," MeTRH CEO Dr. Bernard Murithi emphasized. Towards a Healthier Future From sight-restoring eye care, to cutting-edge diagnostic imaging, to grassroots medical camps, Meru's healthcare agenda is bold and inclusive.

With a vision to elevate MeTRH to Level VI status and plans for a specialist eye hospital, the county is cementing itself as a healthcare hub for Upper Eastern Kenya and beyond. "Health continues to be at the heart of our government," Governor Mutuma declared. "By collective action with our stakeholders, we are not leaving a single resident behind in the quest for a healthier Meru."



Experts attending to locals during a recent medical camp



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Meru County powers development with road upgrade and energy revolution

Meru County, led by Governor Mutuma M'Ethgingia, is launching a roads and energy revolution agenda to increase connectivity, trade, and clean energy production. From rural link roads to Africa's first hybrid energy park, the county is setting new standards for infrastructure development.

Meru currently boasts a road network of about 1,260 kilometers, much of which still needs regular upgrading. The new program puts emphasis on grading, gravelling, and maintenance of feeder roads connecting the rural areas to major towns and markets.

Lighting Up Meru: Security and Growth

Besides roads, the county is investing in street and security lights to promote safety and stimulate business. The Roads and Energy docket has been busy with rapid repair of vandalized high-mast floodlights and installing new ones in busy towns and trading centers.

"These lights are beyond visibility," Baariu said. "They offer security, extend the hours of doing business, and grant residents a perception of safety. It is about keeping our towns vibrant even at night."

The lighting project has already transformed several wards, enabling night economic activities and reducing crime rates. Traders at the local markets report more lit-up places have boosted customers' confidence, with some businesses remaining open later.



Road construction works in progress across the County

Meru County Energy Park: A Continental Game-Changer

Taking a longer-term view, Meru is set to position itself as a renewable energy hub. In partnership with Hewani Energy, the county

will be home to the Meru County Energy Park, a 220MW utility-scale hybrid power plant comprising 200MW of wind and 20MW of solar.

It is expected that the construction will commence in early 2026, which will be the first of its kind in Africa. Once completed, the park will not only generate clean energy, but also

jobs, investments, and a reliable supply of power to households and industries within the county and beyond.

According to the county investment promotion agency, the project aligns with Kenya's vision of 100% clean energy and positions Meru as a leader in the green energy revolution.

Accountability Through Stakeholder Forums

To ensure transparency and efficiency, the county government has been holding regular stakeholder forums, recently at Kamunde Hall in Meru Town. The forums, which bring together county officials, technical teams, and members of the community, discuss progress and provide feedback on the provision of infrastructure.

Success of these projects depends on public

participation," Baariu clarified. "We want citizens of Meru to know what is being done, contribute, and hold us accountable."

A County on the Move

Meru's simultaneous investment in roads, security lights, and renewable energy is laying the groundwork for inclusive growth. Farmers will enjoy greater access to markets, students safer walks to school, and businesses stable energy to expand operations.

As one local entrepreneur in Maua put it: "When the roads improve and the lights are on, we feel it right away. Now, with the Energy Park coming, Meru will not just feed the nation but power it as well."

At a Glance – Meru's Roads & Energy Push

Roads: Grading all county link roads to gravel standards; inspections ongoing in Nyaki West and other wards.

Lighting: Countywide security light expansion with expedited repair of high-mast floodlights.

Energy: 220MW Meru County Energy Park – Africa's first hybrid wind-solar park, set to break ground in 2026.

Governance: Regular stakeholder forums for transparency and citizen engagement.

As roads bridge people, floodlights illuminate towns, and renewable energy projects power the future, Meru County is positioning itself as a model for integrated infrastructure development in Kenya.



David Baariu- CECM Department of Roads, Transport, and Energy

County Link Roads Upgrade Gathers Speed

The Department of Roads, Transport, and Energy has embarked on a grand program of grading all link roads under the management of the counties to gravel levels. According to the CEC Member David Baariu, the program is intended to enhance accessibility, reduce travel time, and enable farmers, traders, and school-going children to travel safely even during rainy seasons.

"We are resolved to unlock every corner of Meru," Baariu said during an inspection tour of development projects in Nyaki West Ward. "Roads are the lifeline of our economy, and once we improve connectivity, everything else – trade, education, health – follows."



Energy department officers undertaking the security lights repairs



Officials from the roads department inspecting road construction works in Nyaki west accompanied by the area MCA Jacob Mwirigi



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Journey to elevate Meru Town to City status begins

Meru County is set to undergo a historic transformation. Led by Governor Rev. Mutuma M'Ethgingia, the county is undertaking sweeping reforms in urban administration, business, transportation, and security—with a bold promise to turn Meru into not only a regional economic powerhouse but also Kenya's next city.

Three New Municipalities: Laare, Mikinduri, and Nkubu

In a landmark statement, Governor M'Ethgingia announced that Laare, Mikinduri, and Nkubu will officially be launched as municipalities by the end of the year.

This milestone is aimed at decentralizing services, strengthening local leadership, and unlocking new economic corridors in the northern, eastern, and southern regions of the county.

"These municipalities are not just administrative units—they are growth engines that will bring services to the people and spur business opportunities," the Governor said during a municipal board

embarked on field visits, engaging local leaders, traders, and residents to understand



GVN Mutuma inspecting the ongoing construction of the ward block at Miathene Level IV Hospital.

challenges and opportunities. Their mandate covers transport regulation, market organization, environmental planning, and tourism promotion—all crucial to shaping a stronger urban future.

transport in development: "If trade is the motor of development, then transport is the

Lodge.

Following consultations, county and national officials conducted site visits to assess appropriate locations for these strategic projects. Governor Mutuma explained the broader vision:

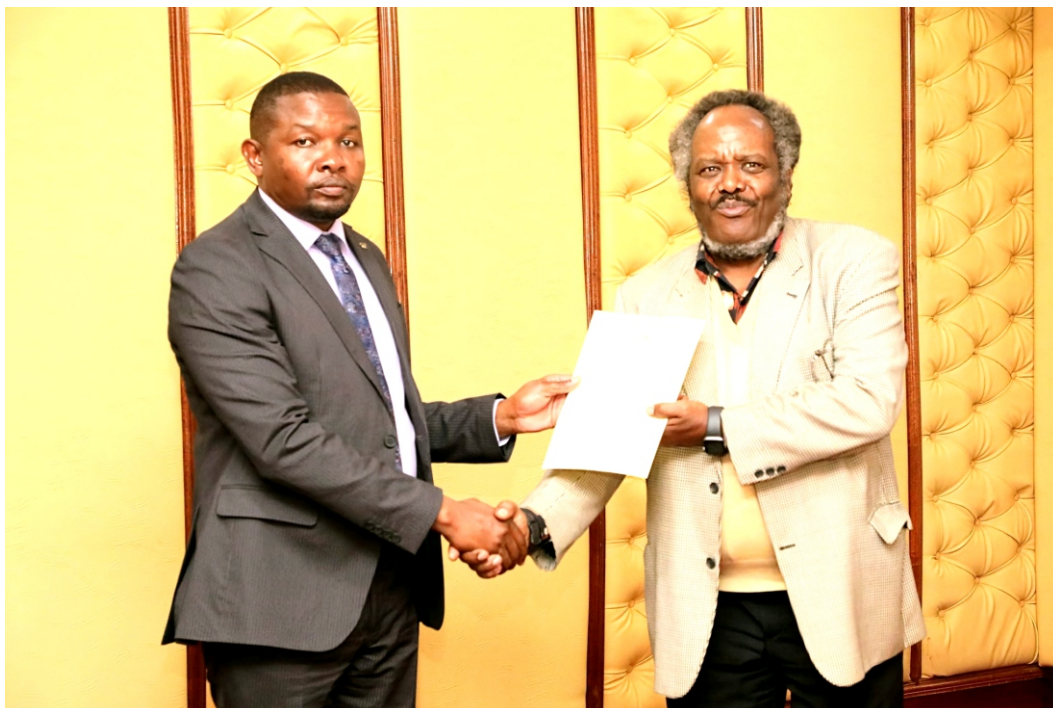
"By aligning infrastructure and harmonizing development plans, we aim to create a conducive environment for growth that benefits generations, while preserving our natural heritage."

The city status agenda is not just about prestige—it will attract new investments, access larger infrastructure grants, create jobs, and cement Meru's role as the commercial hub of Eastern Kenya.

Trade and Tourism: Riding on Meru's Strengths

Meru is already known for its agriculture, diverse culture, and proximity to Mount Kenya National Park. The county is now working to integrate trade and tourism, positioning local markets, cultural festivals, and agri-tourism activities as key attractions for both local and international visitors.

Governor Mutuma hinted at upcoming tourism campaigns: "Meru has to be



Governor Mutuma with the Meru revenue board chairman Bishop Mburia

familiarization tour.

The new municipal boards have already



Transport and Enforcement: Order for Growth

One of the cornerstones of Meru's urban renewal is transport reform. The county has intensified enforcement of traffic laws, targeting unlicensed operators who disrupt order and safety.

Plans are underway to decongest Meru Town, streamline commuter services, and improve road safety.

Governor Mutuma emphasized the role of

fuel that makes it run. We cannot afford chaos." Security

Lighting: Restoring Safety and Confidence Safety remains at the heart of urban growth. Through a comprehensive security lighting program, Meru's towns and estates are now well-lit, with a rapid response system ensuring faulty lights are repaired swiftly.

This initiative has reduced crime hotspots, extended trading hours, and boosted public confidence in county leadership. Residents have already begun to enjoy safer evening travel, better working conditions for traders, and vibrant nightlife in urban centers.

Meru Town's Journey to City Status

At the center of this transformation is the ambitious dream of upgrading Meru Town to city status. Governor Mutuma has engaged with national leaders, including PS Gitonga Mugambi of the State Department of Forestry, to align on key requirements such as the development of an airstrip, a golf course, and allocation of land for a State



Ms Joy Karwitha-CECM Lands, Physical planning and urban development

renowned for more than miraa and milk—it must be known for its culture, scenery, and people."

A County on the Move

With three new municipalities, strengthened urban management systems, modern transport enforcement, expanded security lighting, and the city dream in motion, Meru is writing a new chapter in its development journey. What once seemed like a fantasy is rapidly becoming reality—and if the current momentum is sustained, Meru could soon rival Kenya's largest cities as a model of modern urban revitalization.



Rev. Carol Kaberia-CECM Trade, Tourism, and Cooperatives

Running for change: Meru Press Club Champions fight against SGBV and mental health stigma

By Gerald Mukembu

The chilly September morning at Meru University of Science and Technology was alive with energy. Hundreds of runners, dressed in colorful jerseys, gathered at the starting line—not just to race, but to raise their voices against two silent crises: Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and mental health stigma.

This was no ordinary marathon. Organized by the Meru Press Club (MPC), the Anti-SGBV and Mental Health Awareness Run

of the organizers. “We are part of the community, and it’s our duty to highlight issues that break families and weigh heavily on society.”

The event brought together an unlikely but powerful mix—journalists, county leaders, NGOs, students, religious groups, community elders, and everyday citizens.

All united under one message: breaking silence saves lives.

For 23-year-old Caroline, a participant who



Participants at the Meru Anti-SGBV and Mental Health Awareness Run hold placards calling for an end to gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy, and femicide, while promoting mental wellness and action for change

symbolized a community’s determination to confront long-ignored struggles.

“Journalists are not just storytellers,” said one

survived an abusive relationship, the run was personal. “I once felt alone, ashamed, and unheard,” she shared, tears welling in her



Local leaders present during the run led by the Deputy Governor Meru County Linda Kiome Gitonga

eyes. “Today, I see I’m not alone. This run is proof that we can speak out and heal together.” Statistics paint a grim picture. Meru County continues to grapple with rising cases of teenage pregnancies, intimate partner violence, and mental health struggles—especially among young people and journalists dealing with trauma on the job. Events like this one aim not just to highlight the problems but to inspire practical solutions.

County officials pledged greater collaboration with media and civil society groups to combat these challenges. Calls for more safe spaces

for survivors, accessible counseling, and policy enforcement rang out through speeches and banners.

As the runners crossed the finish line, sweaty but smiling, the message was clear: this was more than a race. It was a step toward healing, justice, and a stronger, safer Meru.

The Meru Press Club hopes this run will become an annual tradition, reminding everyone that awareness is the first step to action—and action is the only way to lasting change.

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From drought to dignity: Isiolo communities celebrate new era of clean water access

By Nancy Kinoti

After decades of walking long distances in search of unsafe water, residents of Isiolo's arid villages can finally celebrate. From Gafarsa and Iresa Boru in Garba Tulla Ward to Modogashe in Sericho Ward, clean, piped water is now a reality thanks to bold investments by the Isiolo County Government.

For over 60 years since independence, families in these communities depended on seasonal streams, shallow wells, and water pans that were often contaminated and unreliable. Now, new water infrastructure has turned desperation into relief, marking what many describe as a transformative milestone in Isiolo's history.

The Gafarsa & Iresa Boru Breakthrough

The commissioning of the Gafarsa-Iresa Boru water project gave villagers access to clean water for the first time ever. Women and children, once burdened with walking over 10 kilometers daily for unsafe water, now fetch it within steps of their homes.

Residents hailed the development as life-changing, with experts noting its potential to strengthen health, education, and pastoral livelihoods while also easing community conflicts often fueled by water scarcity.

The Modogashe Water Revolution In Modogashe, Governor Abdi Ibrahim Hassan Guyo fulfilled a key campaign pledge, delivering clean water to over 90% of households. The project features a 100,000-



The newly opened water kiosk in Modogashe Isiolo County

cubic-meter steel water tank, solarization, and a standby generator, ensuring uninterrupted supply even during dry seasons.

Key institutions including Sericho Secondary School, Omara Primary School, the local mosque, and a Technical and Vocational Training institute are already benefitting. Two main water kiosks have been set up, and piping to households is ongoing, with the water department promising access at nearly every doorstep.

The fully county-funded project involved drilling a new borehole and rehabilitating an existing one. Using modern technology, the

county ensured water depth, quality, and quantity were accurately assessed before drilling. The Modogashe water office also received a facelift with new infrastructure including a pump house, solar stand, reinforced walls, and gabions for flood protection.

Broader Countywide Water Agenda

The Modogashe success story is part of a wider county initiative to tackle water scarcity. Similar projects are underway in Akadeli, Daaba Juu, and Kakili, while the Dadach Bassa water project nears completion, with

seven kilometers of pipeline already laid. Collectively, these projects signal a countywide shift toward sustainable water management — a cornerstone for improving health, education, and economic growth in arid regions.

A New Chapter for Isiolo

Development experts argue that these projects will not only reduce waterborne diseases but also free up time for children to attend school and women to engage in economic activities. Access to water also promises to reduce conflicts between pastoralist communities and wildlife over scarce resources.

As taps flow in places where thirst once ruled, Isiolo County is steadily moving toward a future where no community is left behind in the quest for clean, reliable water. "This is more than just a development project.

It is the restoration of dignity, the opening of opportunity, and the beginning of a new chapter for our people," said Governor Guyo during one of the commissioning ceremonies.



Tharaka Nithi youth urged to create jobs and shun drugs

By Christine Ngitori

Young people must seize opportunities, innovate, and uphold discipline if they are to shape a better future for themselves and the nation," AscentChange International Co-founder Deborah Kangai said.

Speaking during a well-attended empowerment seminar at PCEA Ibiriga Youth Fellowship in Tharaka Nithi County, Ms. Kangai told the more than 300 youth present that Kenya's social and economic progress depends on a generation that is self-driven, creative, and solution-oriented.

"The government alone cannot create enough jobs for all. We need young people who can think beyond employment and become job creators. Innovation, discipline, and service to the community are the building blocks of success," she added.

The seminar, organized by AscentChange International in collaboration with Ibiriga Parish Youth Fellowship, brought together youth leaders, clergy, experts, and community members to address key issues affecting young people, including unemployment, drug abuse, and unhealthy relationships.

Drug and substance abuse prevention expert Kelvin Wafula cautioned that addiction often begins subtly through peer pressure, poor parental guidance, and the influence of unregulated social media platforms. He stressed the importance of early intervention.

"When we start talking to children in primary and secondary schools about the dangers of drugs, we save future generations from a lifetime of struggle. Combating this problem requires a united front — government, parents, churches, and community groups must work together," Wafula said.

Reverend Patrick Kirimi urged the youth to uphold moral values and guard their personal relationships, noting that distractions and unhealthy engagements can derail their education and career ambitions.

The forum was praised for complementing government youth empowerment programs such as the Ajira Digital Program and the Kenya Youth Empowerment Project, which aim to equip young people with digital skills and entrepreneurial knowledge.

Local leaders noted that such grassroots

initiatives play a critical role in bridging the gap between policy and practice, ensuring that young people in rural areas are not left behind in national development plans.

Organizers pledged to hold similar events in other parts of the county, with plans to

include mentorship programs, business incubation training, and networking opportunities with potential investors.



Deborah Kangai, co-founder of AscentChange International (in pink blazer) with a section of participants and stakeholders in the youth empowerment forum at PCEA Ibiriga Church grounds.

Tensions boil over as youths torch Njuri Ncheke shrine in Igembe Central

By Gerald Mukembu

A traditional Njuri Ncheke shrine in Baibariu, Igembe Central, has been reduced to ashes after a group of angry youths from Kiutine and Baibariu villages stormed the site and set it ablaze.

The young men, carrying branches and chanting slogans, accused the council of elders of widespread misconduct, including physical assault, forceful initiation of unwilling youth into the Njuri Ncheke ranks, and even cases of sexual assault against women. These accusations, which have circulated in whispers for months, exploded into the open with the dramatic act of arson.

The destruction of the shrine, considered sacred by Njuri Ncheke, has triggered shockwaves across Meru. Njuri Ncheke is one of the most powerful traditional councils in Kenya, known for arbitrating disputes, safeguarding culture, and enforcing discipline within the Ameru community.

Elders Deny Wrongdoing

In response, the Njuri Ncheke elders have strongly denied the allegations leveled against them. They described the arson as a "heinous and shameful act" that disrespects the traditions and heritage of the Ameru people. "The shrine is not just a building—it is a symbol of our unity and culture. Burning it down is a direct attack on the community," one elder lamented.

The elders, however, shifted the blame to the



The burnt down Baibariu Njuri Ncheke shrine in Igembe Central

national chair, Linus Kathera, claiming that he orchestrated the incident to weaken their authority and sow division among the ranks of Njuri Ncheke. The accusation has added another layer to the already complex web of local politics surrounding traditional institutions.

Rising Tensions Between Youths and Elders

This is not the first time tensions have flared between Njuri Ncheke and sections of the younger generation. In recent years, some youths have accused the council of being out of touch with modern realities and using

traditions as a cover for exploitation and abuse.

Analysts point out that such confrontations are a symptom of deeper cultural shifts: the struggle between maintaining tradition and adapting to contemporary values of human rights, gender equality, and freedom of choice.

Echoes of Earlier Incidents

The Baibariu shrine burning is not an isolated event. Similar incidents have been reported in Tigania region, where locals expressed anger at the elders over alleged coercive practices.

Earlier this year in Nyaki East Ward, North

Imenti, a church congregation burnt down a Njuri Ncheke shrine, claiming young people in the area were being forced to join the council against their will. The incident highlighted how cultural, religious, and generational tensions continue to shape the debate around the relevance of Njuri Ncheke in modern society. These repeated incidents underscore a growing pattern of discontent, suggesting that the friction between tradition and modern values is no longer confined to one corner of Meru.

What Next for Njuri Ncheke?

The incident has sparked debates within Meru about the future of Njuri Ncheke. Some community members argue that the council must reform, address the allegations transparently, and open itself up to scrutiny. Others fear that the destruction of shrines and attacks on elders could erode the cultural backbone of the Ameru people.

Local authorities are now under pressure to investigate both the allegations of abuse and the violent retaliation that led to the burning of the shrine. Police presence in the area has reportedly been increased to prevent further unrest.

As the dust settles in Baibariu, one thing is clear: the uneasy relationship between tradition, youth, and modern society in Meru has reached a boiling point, and how the community navigates this crisis could define the role of Njuri Ncheke for generations to come.

Dual TVET training to bridge skills gap and combat food insecurity

The new dual Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) model is being hailed as a transformative solution to Kenya's persistent skills gap and growing food insecurity.



TVET's national chair Dr David Mwangi (left) and Muhammed Hassan addressing the Media in Meru

The dual training model, which integrates 50% classroom instruction with 50% hands-on industrial training, is being rolled out across TVET institutions in Mt. Kenya East and West. Stakeholders say the Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET) system aims to produce work-ready graduates and improve agricultural productivity.

Dr. David Mwangi, National Chair of the

Kenya National Training Institution and Chief Principal of Nyeri National Polytechnic, said the dual TVET system ensures students receive industry-relevant skills by learning directly from companies.

Speaking during a sensitization forum to over 20 institutions in Meru town, he said industries will place students for the practical phase of training starting January.

He said TVET PS Dr Esther Muoria and Education CS have been on the forefront advocating for the implementation of the model. "Kenya cannot develop without relevant skills. This model ensures quality and relevance, equipping graduates to fit into the labour market," said Dr. Mwangi.

He also praised the government for reducing assessment fees for certification of skilled individuals from KSh 30,000 to just KSh 1,500–3,000. National government's Meru and Isiolo County Director, Muhammed Hassan, emphasized the model's potential to rebrand agriculture among the youth by



Some of the stakeholders during the Dual TVET training sensitization forum at a hotel in Meru

offering hands-on exposure to modern farming technologies. "Farming used to be for the elderly. This model will make youth passionate about agriculture, improving food security," he said.

Industry representatives have also welcomed

the initiative. Njoki from Mt Kenya Dairy noted that companies are already hiring top-performing trainees. "Universities should borrow from this model to merge theory with field experience," she suggested.

Jane Ngunjiri, representing the coffee sector, added that the training builds practical skills, knowledge, and positive attitudes, allowing learners to later train others in the community.

David Ralama, from an agricultural dairy farm,

noted that the industry is evolving with new technologies like centre pivot irrigation systems and automated dairy machines. "These are the gaps we must bridge through proper training," he said.



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Meru County improves access and quality of education

Meru County, under the guidance of H.E. Governor Mutuma M'Ethigia, is expanding its investment in education to ensure every child has access to quality learning. From enhancing school infrastructure to supporting deserving students through bursaries, the County Government is setting a strong foundation for the future.

Improving Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE)



CECM Esther Rukunga's visit at the Meru Muslim Primary school to assess the state of ECDE facilities and classroom infrastructure.



First Lady Miriam Mutuma warmly puts on sweaters for ECDE learners in Igembe South

The County has given Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) a top priority as the foundation of lifelong learning. Dozens of new ECDE classrooms have been launched across wards, with more under construction, all designed with child-centered learning spaces and modern teaching aids.

Most recently, Meru County unveiled new ECDE classrooms in Athiru Ruujine and Naathu, strengthening early learning infrastructure in Igembe South. Alongside these efforts, Meru First Lady H.E. Miriam Cherotich Mutuma, accompanied by Education, Science, Culture, and Arts CECM Dr. Esther Rukunga, issued sweaters to ECDE pupils at Thiira Primary School under the "Warming Our Dreams" program.

Dr. Rukunga also announced the rollout of a countywide feeding program for ECDE learners to enhance retention and performance. Incomplete classrooms are also set to be finalized to ensure a conducive environment for young learners. Governor Mutuma emphasized:

"When we invest in our youngest learners, we are investing in the future of Meru. Each child deserves a safe and supportive learning environment."

Increased Access Through Scholarships and Bursaries

To cushion vibrant but struggling students, the County Government has disbursed millions of shillings in bursaries and scholarships across all wards. Thousands of secondary and post-secondary students have benefited, ensuring that financial challenges no longer bar young people from pursuing education.

Parents and students have described the initiative as a revolution, with many first-generation learners now able to continue their studies.

Empowering Youth Through TVETs

Meru County continues to invest in Technical and Vocational Training (TVETs)



CECM Dr. Esther Rukunga during an inspection at Thitha Vocational Training Centre (VTC) in Athiru Ruujine ward

to equip the youth with hands-on skills for employment and entrepreneurship. During a recent tour, CECM Dr. Esther Rukunga inspected the newly completed classroom and dormitory at Thitha Vocational Training Centre (VTC) in Athiru Ruujine ward, Igembe South. Thitha VTC offers practical training in hairdressing, tailoring, and masonry, empowering learners to achieve economic independence. This milestone reflects Governor Mutuma's vision to expand access to industry-linked

skills such as agribusiness, ICT, mechanics, and construction—placing education as a tool for wealth creation and tackling unemployment.

Inclusive and Special Needs Education

Inclusivity remains central to Meru's education agenda. Earlier this year, the County hosted the Special Needs Education (SNE) Ball Games at Kaaga Primary School, bringing together teams from eight sub-counties. The event celebrated the talents of learners with disabilities while raising awareness of inclusivity.

In addition, the Meru Teaching and Referral

program countywide, preparing children with the skills needed in a technology-driven world.

Community and Parental Involvement

At recent education events, County Director of Gender Hellen Kaberia and Kanuni Assistant County Commissioner Brian Kaitei urged parents to strengthen their role in children's education. They emphasized the need for family guidance in light of rising cases of teenage pregnancies and SGBV, and encouraged parents to ensure all children are enrolled in school.

The First Lady echoed this message, urging



Happy learners after receiving new textbooks to improve their learning from the County Government of Meru

Hospital (MeTRH) continues to offer disability assessments and support services, helping integrate learners with special needs into the education system.

Digital Learning and Future-Ready Skills

Meru is also embracing ICT in schools. Digital learning programs have been piloted in select institutions, introducing learners to e-learning interfaces, coding, and computer literacy. Partnerships with Meru University of Science and Technology (MUST) and other institutions aim to scale up this

parents to support Governor Mutuma's leadership and the County's education initiatives:

"Our children's future is brighter when parents, teachers, and leaders unite. Governor Mutuma has great plans for Meru, and we must walk this journey together."

A Brighter Tomorrow

Education remains the central pillar of Governor Mutuma's development agenda. With investments in ECDE, bursaries, vocational training, special needs support, digital learning, and parental involvement, the County is building a solid future.

Governor Mutuma reaffirmed:

"Our vision is clear—to give every child, regardless of background, an equal chance to excel. Education is the great equalizer, and Meru is leading the way."

Through these visionary efforts, Meru County is not just educating children—it is shaping tomorrow's professionals, innovators, and leaders.



A newly completed ECDE classroom



Education, Science, Culture, and Arts CECM Dr. Esther Rukunga during an impromptu visit to Kaaga School for the Deaf in Imenti North Constituency



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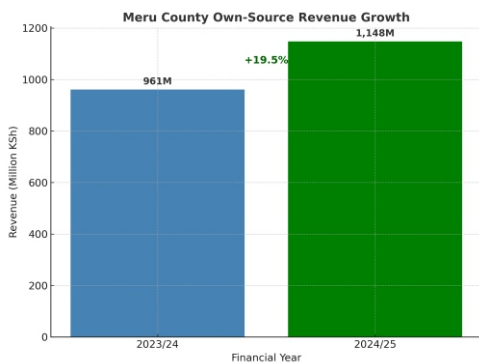
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Meru County sets all-time revenue collection record as Gvn Mutuma rolls out ambitious 2025/26 development plan

Meru County has recorded a record revenue collection in history, making it one of Kenya's fastest-rising devolved states in development planning and financial management.

The county had registered KSh 1.148 billion in own-source revenue for the 2024/25 financial year, according to official data, up from KSh 961 million in 2023/24. The KSh 187 million rise, or nearly 20% year-on-year increase, is



the largest revenue raised in Meru's history.

Digital Transformation and Enforcement Drive Success

The increase has been attributed to deliberate reforms under Governor Mutuma M'Ethingia's administration, including the adoption of digital and cashless payment systems that closed loopholes for revenue leakages, enhanced accountability, and made service delivery easier for citizens.

Finance Executive Board Member Monica Kathono added that 32.6% of the income was gained in one quarter alone, a clear sign of growing efficiency and confidence in the system on the part of the public. She also pointed to higher staff morale, enhanced enforcement, and increased community awareness as being essential to the record results.

This is a win for both the county



**MERU COUNTY
REVENUE BOARD**

Finance Bill

In his remarks after signing the Finance Bill 2025/26 into law, Governor Mutuma pointed out that the county is entering a new era where record revenues shall be followed by record

With this bill, every shilling collected will be accounted for and recycled into projects that directly impact the lives of our people," Governor Mutuma stated.

Priority Areas for 2025/26

According to the newly passed Bill, the county government will prioritize:

Agriculture and Food Security: Expanding irrigation projects, equipping farmers with new inputs, and promoting value addition on bananas, coffee, and macadamia.

Water and Climate Resilience: Expanding boreholes, water storage tanks, and adopting climate-smart projects under the FLLoCA program to shield communities against erratic weather conditions.

Healthcare Expansion: Equipping county hospitals, improving maternal and child care services, and increasing specialized care



Francis Mungai- Director Meru Revenue Board

anticipated upgrade to city status.

A People-Centered Development Vision

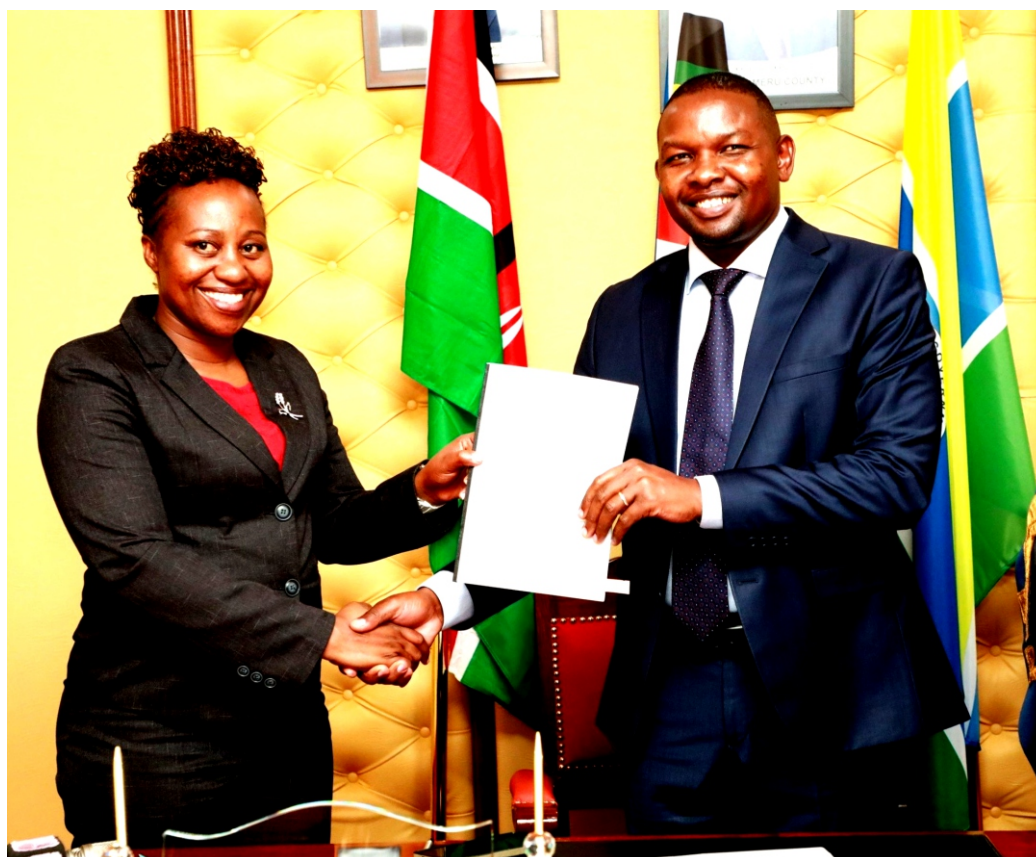
Governor Mutuma asserted that the benefits from revenue expansion will not be swallowed by bureaucracy but directed into tangible, people-focused projects. He said the government's priority continues to lie with transparency, accountability, and inclusive development.

It is not just about numbers. It is about impact—clean water in rural villages, better hospitals, productive agriculture, empowered youth, and roads facilitating commerce. We are building a Meru where all enjoy the fruits of prosperity," he said.

A New Chapter for Meru

With unprecedented revenues and bold financial strategy, Meru County is poised to achieve revolutionary growth during the 2025/26 financial year.

The public anticipates that Governor Mutuma's steadfast leadership, backed by prudent financial reforms, will position Meru as a model county in the devolution story of Kenya.



Governor Mutuma M'Ethingia and Finance CECM Monica Kathono after the signing of the 2025/26 finance bill

development expenditure.

The Governor assured the people that the new policy is not only intended to spur growth but also to be people-friendly, striking a balance between resource mobilization and affordability.

"Even with the impressive developments in all departments of agriculture, water, health, education, sports, and infrastructure, sustainable collection of revenue is the pillar of development.

centers.

Youth, Sports, and Social Empowerment: Promoting sporting talent, empowering youth and women through targeted programs, and reinforcing safety nets for the vulnerable.

Urban and Rural Infrastructure: Improvement of feeder roads, construction of bridges, town lighting, and preparing Meru Town for its



Monica Kathono- CEC Finance Meru County

administration and citizens of Meru. When systems are transparent and citizens trust government processes, revenue collection works," Kathono added.

Governor Mutuma Signs 2025/26





Building Meru Together

Committed to Development and Excellent, Inclusive Leadership



Agriculture: the backbone of Meru County's transformation

Agriculture: The Backbone of Meru County's Transformation

Meru County agriculture is not just about filling the stomach anymore—it has become a driving force for economic transformation, job creation, and poverty eradication. From the fertile Mount Kenya slopes to the thriving market stalls of Maua, agriculture has not only fed households but also fueled enterprise, innovation, and hardiness.

A Thriving Agricultural Foundation

Meru is one of the most crop-diverse counties in Kenya. The farmers in Meru produce a range of crops—bananas, Irish potatoes, maize, beans, sweet potatoes, and yams for local consumption, besides cash crops such as avocado, coffee, tea, miraa, and macadamia for generating revenue. Other crops such as millet, green grams, sorghum, rice, and pyrethrum further contribute power to the agricultural basket of the county.

Livestock production is also robust. Meru is among Kenya's top milk-producing regions, and dairy farming leads the livestock sector. Farmers own cattle, goats, sheep, pigs, and rabbits, and poultry production—from chickens to turkeys—is also continuing to increase. Fish farming has gained momentum, and tilapia and catfish are being bred in fishponds, and better beekeeping is turning honey production into a true agribusiness.

Partnerships Driving Growth

For this transformation to happen. Determined individuals, county leadership with vision, and intentional government intervention have been key drivers. The County Government has joined hands with farmers through Common Interest Groups (CIGs) and SACCOs, promoting public-private collaborations and policies that focus on food security and sustainable development.



Deputy Governor Linda Kiome Gitonga addressing a delegation from the state of Nebraska, USA, together with Meru county officials on Strategic Trade and Agricultural Partnerships

Strategic collaborations have also driven the industry. The Meru County One Health Unit (COHU) is working to improve the health of humans, animals, and the environment through multisectoral interventions. Partnerships with institutions such as Meru University of Science and Technology (MUST), seed traders, and KEPHIS have exposed farmers to climate-smart agriculture



Meru Deputy Governor Linda Kiome Gitonga with Agriculture CECM Janaro Gatangugi during an agricultural exhibition in Meru

and new technologies.

Other notable initiatives are:

KOPIA Kenya Program scaling up Irish potato and indigenous chicken production.

OCP Group financing soil testing for improved fertilizer use.

State Department of Livestock (SDL) establishing feedlots for improved livestock management.

National Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (NAVCDP) improving avocado, banana, coffee, dairy, and potato value chains.

ABDP (Aquaculture Business Development Programme) training fish farmers on climate-resilient production methods.

Safeguarding Livestock: Mass Vaccination Rollout

In a step of bravery to guarantee animal health and boost farmer trust, the Meru County has launched a countywide program of immunization of over 268,000 cattle.

The exercise, which is spearheaded by the County Executive Committee (CEC) for Livestock and Agriculture, Janaro Gatangugi, is the largest in the area. It aims at safeguarding farmers' livestock against deadly livestock ailments that threaten food security and economic stability.

Speaking to the roll-out, CEC Gatangugi highlighted the importance of the campaign:

"This mass vaccination campaign isn't just about protecting cattle—it's about protecting livelihoods. With over 268,000 cattle vaccinated, we are ensuring milk production, maintaining household incomes, and solidifying Meru as a livestock hub."



Agricultural officer during a mass livestock vaccination drive in Meru County

Animal health officers have been stationed across all sub-counties to ensure maximum coverage, with particular focus on reaching farmers in remote and arid areas of Meru.

Unlocking Value Through Bananas and Miraa

Concurrently, Meru County is pioneering value addition on its signature crops—bananas and miraa. Trade, Tourism, and Cooperatives CECM Rev. Carol Kaberia and Agriculture, Livestock, and Fisheries CECM Jenaro Gatangugi, and Director of Industries Joseph Mbeva, finally toured banana and miraa farms at Laare (Igembe North) and Mitunguu (Imenti South).

Farmers espoused new uses for their produce from miraa juice, chewing gum, and fibre products to food extracts from banana stalks. The county authorities were emphasizing the formation of cooperatives to access markets,

obtain better prices, and eliminate brokers' exploitation. Farmers can raise incomes and create more employment through value addition and organized marketing.

The tour also showcased the nearly completed County Aggregation and Industrial Park (CAIP) at Ruiri/Rwareera ward, 97%. Equipped with cold storage facilities, CAIP will find aggregation of miraa and banana, empower value chains, and minimize middlemen. The leaders echoed Governor Mutuma M'Ethangia's commitment to empowering farmers and challenged residents to invest in CAIPs once up and running.

Meru Seeks Global Partnerships

Meru's agricultural ambition is also attracting international attention. The County recently hosted a Nebraska, USA delegation to talk about strategic partnerships in agriculture and trade.

The discussions focused on investment in agribusiness, market connectivity for Meru's key exports such as coffee, avocado, and macadamia, and knowledge exchange. County government officials emphasized that these partnerships will open doors to new opportunities for farmers, improve value chains, and position Meru as a viable player in global markets.

The Nebraska delegation applauded Meru's progress toward modernizing agriculture and pledged to explore prospects for collaboration in technology, training, and commodity trade.

A County Harvesting the Gains

The fruits of Meru's agricultural labor are already visible. Farmers are yielding more, managing post-harvest better, and enjoying better market access. Value addition—processing of milk, bananas, miraa, and macadamia nuts—is earning more income and employment in the county.

Maybe more than anything, these interventions are equipping Meru farmers with climate resilience, so that agriculture will remain sustainable in the years to come.



CECM for Agriculture Mr. Jenaro Guantai addressing the public during a farmers and soil testing exercise in partnership with OCP Africa in Njounje village



Building Meru Together

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Meru County expands climate-resilient water and energy initiatives under Governor Mutuma's vision

Meru County, under visionary Governor Mutuma M'Ethgingia, is rapidly scaling up climate-smart initiatives that transform rural livelihoods, improve access to water, and promote green energy. Under the Financing Locally Led Climate Action (FLLoCA) program, the county not only alleviates water shortages but also improves climate resilience and powers sustainable development.

Boreholes Powering Residents Across Meru



Ready equipped borehole at Machaka Kibirichia

The Ministry of Water, Irrigation, Environment, and Natural Resources, in its Climate Change Unit (CCU), is monitoring the implementation of a series of borehole projects to provide safe and clean water to tens of thousands of households.

Pipeline extension works continue in Muutiokiamia borehole in Akachiu ward, Antuambui borehole in Kanuni ward, Kiraone Market borehole in Athiru Gaiti ward, and Mikinduri Market borehole in Mikinduri ward. Other works include masonry water storage tank construction and plumbing system construction in Thangatha ward, as well as a new irrigation water storage tank for the Michimikuru Irrigation Project in Kiguchwa ward.

"These projects are all about building resilience. They give people water, farmers irrigation for their crops, and communities protection against the uncertainty of climate change," said CECM for Water and



Hybrid Solar installation for dairy farmers in Abogeta East Ward

Environment Baptista Muriki.

Hybrid Solar Energy for Dairy Farmers

In Abogeta East ward, the county government is leading in clean energy adoption. The Climate Change Unit officially handed over the land for the placement of a hybrid solar system at Baranga Dairy Farmers Cooperative Society.

The cooperative, which has a membership of more than 600 members, will use the solar-powered system to manufacture animal feeds. The project, funded under the Climate Change Resilient Investment project under the FLLoCA program, will minimize the energy cost, decrease the greenhouse gases emissions, and promote green energy usage in the agricultural sector.

"This demonstrates our commitment to climate-smart interventions that have a direct effect on our farmers," said Governor Mutuma.

Bridges for Safety and Connectivity



Water CECM Baptista during site handover for bridge construction works

The county is also banking on climate-resilient rural infrastructure. Kangeta ward residents cheered the transfer of the Rikiau-Laikumukumu bridge area, a vital project that will avert flooding while enhancing accessibility.

CEC Baptista Muriki, with MCA Hon. Steven Mbijiwe and Ward Administrator Kageni Muthuri, assured residents that the bridge would transform movement and business in the area.

Meanwhile, the Climate Change Unit has also made site visits to other key development projects, including the planned Kaai bridge in Njia ward and the Likiau-Laikumukumu bridge in Kangeta ward.

Governor Mutuma's Climate-Smart Vision

The residents across the county are crediting Governor Mutuma for his vision in championing climate-resilient investments. From irrigation and water facilities to solar cooperatives and disaster-resilience bridges, the projects are turning Meru into a leader in climate-smart governance.

"Each borehole, each tank, each solar installation is not just an investment in infrastructure—it is a promise kept," Governor Mutuma said recently. "We are building a strong, inclusive, and sustainable Meru for now and for the future."

Increasing Partnerships and Community Ownership

Besides infrastructure and water, county authorities have been undergoing training on community mobilization and establishing Irrigation Water Users Associations (IWUAs) to strengthen governance and prevent unequal distribution of water under the Irrigation Act 2019.

By empowering the communities to own water and irrigation projects, Meru is ensuring that climate-smart investments are long term for generations.

From Meru to the World: Ethiopia, Nebraska, and Africa Climate Summit

Mutuma's leadership on climate change has also extended beyond county borders. He recently represented the county at the 13th Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa (CCDA XIII) held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, alongside leaders and representatives from across the globe.

Under the theme "Empowering Africa's Climate Action with Science, Finance and Justice," the conference gave Governor Mutuma a platform to market FLLoCA and showcase Meru's progress in water harvesting, sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, and community empowerment.

"As we bargain on climate adaptation and finance, I have the Meru people's vision with me. Our cooperatives, our mothers, our youth, and our farmers are proving that with adequate support, vulnerability can be turned into resilience," Governor Mutuma said.

Before the Ethiopia trip, Meru also hosted a high-powered delegation from the State of Nebraska, USA, led by Secretary of State Bob Evnen. Discussions ranged from agribusiness partnerships in beef production, dairy

efficiency, feed milling, and leather value addition, to the establishment of a Beef Breeding and Disease Control Institute in Meru. Joint cancer research initiatives were also proposed, linking food security and health.

And just recently, Governor Mutuma took part in the Africa Climate Summit 2, where he

AFRICA CLIMATE SUMMIT 2 15-17 SEPTEMBER, 2025 | ADDIS ABABA



Governor Mutuma (3rd from right) during the Africa climate summit in Addis Ababa Ethiopia

positioned Meru as a hub for green investment and innovation. On the sidelines, he held talks with top climate and finance leaders, including World Bank and KCB representatives, to pitch Meru as Kenya's next business and climate-smart frontier.

"Meru County is rich in resources, secured by stability, and guided by forward-thinking leadership. We are ready to be a model for inclusive green development," he told delegates.

The summit reaffirmed Meru's alignment with Africa's green agenda—linking climate-smart agriculture, renewable energy, industrial innovation, and sustainable finance to the county's own ongoing projects.

From our bountiful farms to our colorfully vibrant cooperatives, from our hardworking people to the coexistence that defines us, Meru is ready to show Kenya, Africa, and the world that our future is bright, our will unbreakable, and our fate irreversible," Governor Mutuma affirmed.



Governor Mutuma Leading a water pipes issuance to farmers in the community

Deputy Governor appointed roads CECM in GVN Njuki's controversial changes

From back page...

The reshuffle has seen Deputy Governor Nyaga Muisirali take on an additional role, doubling up as the County Executive Committee Member (CECM) for Roads, Transport, Infrastructure, Public Works, Housing, Urban Development and ICT.

His new assignment is part of Governor Muthomi Njuki's broader reorganization of the county cabinet to strengthen efficiency and accountability in service delivery.

Chief Officers' Changes

The governor also announced several new appointments and transfers among chief officers:



Hon. Nyaga Muisirali- Deputy Governor Tharaka Nithi County, given key department

Mr. Alex Kinyua was named Chief Officer for Youth, Sports and Tourism.

Ms. Winnie Mukiri was appointed Chief Officer for Gender and Social Services.

Ms. Rose Micheni was transferred from Public Health to Medical Services, replacing Mr. Karani Riungu, who moved to Revenue and Resource Mobilisation.

Mr. Benson Kimathi Njeru shifted to Public Health from Trade and Investment, which has now been assigned to Mr. Mugambi Kigwari.

Mr. Gikundi Kiruya took over Public Administration, Intergovernmental Coordination and Devolution Affairs.

Other changes included:

Ms. Irene Nkirote (Energy and Industry)

Mr. Peter Kimathi Njeru (Agriculture and Livestock)

Mr. Gibson Gikundi (Fisheries)

Mr. Peterson Kathenya (Environment and Climate Change)

Ms. Loise Wanja (Water and Irrigation, retained)

Mr. Mbae Karuku (Lands and Physical Planning, retained)

Governor Njuki emphasized that the changes are intended to boost performance within departments and ensure efficient service delivery to residents of Tharaka-Nithi County.



Tharaka Nithi County Assembly Speaker Hon. John Mbabu (front) leads County Assembly Clerk Mr. Paul Thirika and other assembly officials into the chambers

Kithinji elected Tharaka Nithi Assembly Majority leader in chaotic leadership changes

Tharaka Nithi County Assembly welcomed a new era in leadership with Hon. Justine Kithinji being officially appointed the new Majority Leader. He will be deputized by nominated MCA Hon. Lucy Muthoni Ndiga.

The two were announced in the Assembly by a notification from Chief Whip Hon. Jones Kinegeni read by Speaker Hon. John Mbabu. The two assumed office immediately, succeeding Hon. Luke Nyaga Marengo and his deputy Hon. Joseph Kinyua.

With decorous transfer, outgoing Majority Leader Hon. Marengo expressed gratitude to members for the opportunity to serve, arguing that leadership should not be described as a struggle for power but rather a calling to serve.

"Leadership is not war but a calling," he made resolute, extending olive branch to the new team and indicating his availability to help ensure seamless transition.



The new Majority leader Hon Justine Kithinji and his deputy Hon Lucy Muthoni Ndiga.

Aside from the alteration at the leadership, other key leadership positions in the Assembly remain in the same individuals. Hon. Leonard Gitonga Jackson continues to sit as Deputy Speaker, Hon. Jones Kinegeni as Majority Whip, and Hon. Wanja Karuku as Deputy Minority Whip.

Additionally, The County Assembly of Tharaka Nithi has approved six nominees to serve on the County Public Service Board in a sitting that also saw the passage of two crucial pieces of



Hon. John Mbabu- Speaker County Assembly of Tharaka Nithi

legislation — the County Finance Bill, 2025, and the Agroecology Bill, 2025.

The newly approved board members are:

Sylvia Kaari – Chairperson
Jeremy Muchoka Njeru – Member
Kelvin Kiruki Njeru – Member
Miriam Kathure Mitambo – Member
Albert Kinyua – Member
Anderson Kaimenyi – Member

Governor Muthomi Njuki has forwarded three fresh nominees for executive positions to the Assembly for vetting.

They include:

Ms. Kelly Karimi Rwigi, nominated as CECM for Gender and Social Services
Ms. Winnie Mukiri Kirimi, nominated as Chief Officer in the Department of Gender and Social Services.
Mr. Alex Kinyua Mutegi, nominated as Chief Officer in the Department of Youth, Sports, and Tourism.

Speaker Hon. John Mbabu referred the names to the relevant committees of the Assembly for vetting, which will determine their suitability for appointment.

With the approval of the Public Service Board and the passage of these landmark bills, the Assembly has taken significant steps toward strengthening governance, boosting county revenues, and supporting sustainable agriculture.

Hospitals threaten to suspend SHA services as RUPHA decries state neglect

By Nancy Kinoti

The Rural and Urban Private Hospitals Association of Kenya (RUPHA) has sounded the alarm over what it calls the government's systemic financial neglect, warning that Kenya's healthcare system is at risk of grinding to a halt due to massive unpaid bills under the Social Health Authority (SHA). At a joint press briefing in Meru, RUPHA leaders representing more than 700 private and faith-based hospitals accused SHA of failing to reimburse facilities, leaving hospitals drowning in debt and unable to sustain operations. RUPHA Chairperson Dr. Brian Lishenga revealed that since SHA's inception in October 2024, hospitals have submitted claims worth KES 93 billion, but only KES 50 billion has

been reimbursed.

This leaves KES 43 billion in unpaid SHA liabilities, on top of KES 33 billion inherited from the defunct NHIF — a total of KES 76 billion in pending bills. "Despite a ministerial directive that reimbursements be made on the 14th of every month, this has not been honoured. Hospitals are owed KES 43 billion in unpaid SHA liabilities, and the sector is on the verge of collapse," said Dr. Lishenga.

Hospitals Issue Ultimatum

As the crisis deepens, private hospitals have now issued an ultimatum to the government: they will suspend services to SHA patients starting Monday, September 22, 2025, unless the arrears are cleared.

This drastic move could leave millions of Kenyans unable to access treatment, given that private and mission hospitals account for nearly half of all healthcare services in the country.

Mismanagement and Discrimination Alleged

RUPHA further accused SHA of publishing

misleading information on its public portal and unfairly downgrading facilities and bed capacities, despite hospitals holding valid licenses from the Kenya Medical Practitioners and Dentists Council (KMPDC).

In counties like Mombasa, Kirinyaga, Embu, and Nandi — which are key pilots for the government's Digital Super Highway initiative — primary healthcare reimbursements have stalled, leaving hospitals under-resourced and patients underserved.

RUPHA Vice Chair Rev. Joseph Kariuki accused the Ministry of Health of weaponizing fraud controls instead of addressing deeper issues such as the flawed proxy means testing model and unaffordable annual premiums that weigh heavily on Kenyans. "Hospitals are facing insolvency while the government delays action.

Patients are being denied care, healthcare workers are going unpaid, and some hospitals are sacking staff. If nothing is done, UHC will remain just a political slogan," said Kariuki.

Growing Crisis

With hospitals struggling to pay salaries and suppliers, RUPHA warned that continued neglect will cripple Kenya's healthcare delivery. The association urged President William Ruto's administration to fast-track payment of all pending NHIF and SHA bills to restore confidence and safeguard universal healthcare.

As the September 22 deadline looms, the stand-off between private hospitals and the government threatens to plunge millions of Kenyans into a healthcare access crisis.



RUPHA Chairperson Dr. Brian Lishenga speaking at the front

Bold plans to transform sports in the grassroots

By Gitary Dominik

Deputy President Kithure Kindiki has unveiled an ambitious plan to transform grassroots sports in Kenya, pledging increased investment in infrastructure, talent development, and the professionalisation of all sporting disciplines.

Speaking at his home in Irunduni, Kindiki met over 5,000 grassroots sports officials and sports club representatives drawn from Embu, Meru and Tharaka Nithi counties. The delegation represented a wide spectrum of disciplines, including football, volleyball, basketball, netball, athletics, darts, rugby, swimming and sitting volleyball for persons with disabilities.

The Deputy President assured the gathering that the Government is working with the sports fraternity to ensure motivation, development and inclusion of sportsmen and

They are a source of income, national pride and a tool for social transformation. We are determined to make sports in Kenya lucrative and highly beneficial to all,” Prof. Kindiki said.

Sports Academies in Every Constituency

Kindiki announced that the Government will establish a Sports Academy in every constituency, aimed at identifying and nurturing young talent from an early age. He said the academies will work hand in hand with schools and local clubs to create professional pathways for athletes. The initiative is expected to level the playing field for youth in rural counties such as Meru, Isiolo and Tharaka Nithi, who often lack access to modern training facilities.

Infrastructure and Policy Support



Deputy President Kindiki's meeting with sports persons from Meru, Embu and Tharaka Nithi

women in national development. He said this would mark the end of an era when talent was left to waste due to lack of facilities and opportunities. “Sports are not just a pastime.

The Deputy President further revealed that the Government is scaling up the completion of stalled stadiums and construction of new



Al-Azizia FC Bus delivered as promised by DP Prof. Kithure Kindiki

facilities. Projects such as the Isiolo Stadium, which had stalled for years, are now under direct government supervision to ensure timely completion. Additionally, education and policy reforms are being aligned to recognize sports and creative arts as viable careers, complementing academics in nurturing all-rounded citizens.

Call for Positive Values

Beyond infrastructure, Kindiki urged sports officials to use their influence to promote positive social values among young people. He warned against vices such as violence, alcoholism and drug abuse, urging athletes to be role models in their communities.

Fulfilling His Promise to Al Zizia FC

In a move that drew applause from football enthusiasts, the Deputy President also fulfilled his promise to Al Zizia Football Club

by donating a team bus. The gesture, he said, was part of empowering local clubs to participate competitively in regional and national tournaments without logistical challenges. “We must give our clubs the tools they need to succeed. When our teams travel with dignity, they play with pride and confidence,” Kindiki noted.

Meru is already set to host the County Assemblies Sports Association (CASA) Games 2025 in October next year, a move expected to inject millions into the local economy through sports tourism.

Prof. Kindiki assured athletes that these interventions are part of a long-term blueprint to position Kenya as a continental leader in sports, while ensuring that grassroots talent receives the same attention as elite athletes. “Our youth must know that success is not only found in classrooms and offices. With the right support, sports can change lives, build communities and unite the

Black Panther Queens: the pride of Meru County

Meru County is celebrating its very own Black Panther Queens, a women's football team that has rewritten the script of grassroots sports in Mt. Kenya East. Wrapping up the 2024/2025 season with only two losses all year, the Queens have proved that talent, discipline, and community spirit can build champions.

Humble Beginnings

The Black Panther Queens were founded just a few years ago by passionate football enthusiasts in Meru who wanted to create a platform for young women to showcase their talent. Starting with little more than borrowed jerseys and a handful of footballs, the team initially trained on rough pitches, often walking long distances to play friendly matches.

Despite limited resources, their determination stood out. Most of the players were students or young professionals who balanced academics, jobs, and family responsibilities with their commitment to the game.

Their resilience quickly attracted attention, and soon they began competing in local tournaments, making a name for themselves as

fearless competitors.

The Rise to GloryFast forward to the 2024/2025 season, and the Queens have enjoyed a spectacular run:

Champions – Betika Meru Football Challenge

Champions – Tujiamini Na SportPesa grassroots tournament

Runners-Up – FKF Women's County League Mini-League (after topping their pool)

Runners-Up – Bingwa Fest Tournament

These victories are not just trophies on a shelf — they symbolize the journey from underdogs to champions.

Overcoming Challenges

Like many grassroots teams, the Black Panther Queens have battled significant challenges: lack of proper training facilities, limited funding, and inadequate exposure. Travel costs to tournaments were often covered through small fundraisers or personal sacrifices from the players and their supporters.

Yet, instead of giving up, these obstacles became stepping stones. The Queens embraced

every challenge as a chance to prove their worth, turning setbacks into fuel for their drive.

Community Spirit and Inspiration

The Queens' success has had a ripple effect across Meru. Parents now see football as more than just a pastime for girls, and schools are beginning to encourage young female players. The team's journey has become a beacon of

hope for girls in rural areas, showing that with determination and teamwork, dreams are valid. “Every match we play is for Meru. We carry the pride of our people, and our success belongs to them as much as it does to us,” said the team captain after their latest victory.

The Road Ahead

Looking into the future, the Black Panther Queens are setting their sights on national leagues and even international representation. They are appealing for more structured support from both the county and private sponsors to help them train better, travel further, and inspire more young women.



A picture of enthusiastic Black Panther Women FC

Njuki reshuffles cabinet, appoints Muisiraeli as roads CECM

By Gerald Mukembu

Governor Muthomi Njuki has announced a sweeping reorganization of the county executive and chief officers, in a move aimed at enhancing efficiency, accountability, and service delivery across government departments.



The governor, who made the announcement on Monday, directed all affected officers to complete handover processes by Friday. "I want to assure the people of Tharaka-Nithi that I will

continue to serve diligently until I hand over the instruments of power to the next governor," said Njuki.

The shake-up comes barely a week after similar changes were made in the administration and health departments.

Key Appointments and Promotions

Among the major changes,

Ms. Kelly Karimi Rwiggi was elevated from Chief Officer for Gender and Children to County Executive Committee Member (CECM) for Gender and Social Services.

Deputy Governor Nyaga Muisiraeli was transferred from the Revenue and Trade docket to head the Roads, Transport, Infrastructure, Public Works, Housing, Urban Development, and ICT department.

He swapped positions with Mr. Giti Kijiru, who now takes charge of Revenue and Resource Mobilisation.

Several executives retained their positions, including:

Ms. Moreen Nyambura (Youth, Sports and



Tharaka Nithi Governor Muthomi Njuki [Center] and his deputy Nyaga Muisiraeli [in Blue]

Tourism)

Mr. Lawrence Ileri (Finance and Economic Planning) Ms.

Dorothy Naivasha (Education, Vocational Training and Culture)

Dr. Gichuyia Nthuraku (Public Health and Medical Services)

Mr. Muthini Karangi (Administration, Intergovernmental Coordination and Devolution Affairs)

Mr. Njagi Njue (Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, Environment, Mining and Industry)

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