

Local News 10th August 2010

Lethal brew kills four in Kenyan town

In yet another sad case of Kenyans losing lives to illicit brews, four people died on Monday night in Laikipia Central district after drinking alcohol suspected to contain toxic substances. The district police boss, Senior Superintendent James Muoki Kithuka said a fifth person is admitted to hospital in critical condition after taking the same liquor going by the name of Country Walker. Ibrahim Maina (40) who became blind after consuming the liquor was at first admitted to Nanyuki district hospital but was on Tuesday morning taken to Nyeri Provincial General Hospital where he is admitted.

Kithuka said two other people have become partially blind after consuming the brew at Karai shopping centre in Lamuria division. The owner of the bar where the victims partook of the lethal brew, Margaret Ngonyo has disappeared but his daughter who also owns a bar at the same shopping centre Esther Wangari has been arrested. Police also confiscated bottles of the brew from the two drinking places and are now asking bar owners who might have stocked the brand at their bars not to sell it to patrons.

Finance minister grilled over Japanese embassy deal

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Uhuru Kenyatta has dismissed claims of financial irregularities in the acquisition of a piece of land for the Kenyan embassy in Tokyo Japan. Kenyatta and ministry of finance officials who appeared before the Parliamentary Committee on foreign affairs and defense defended his ministry's action in releasing funds to purchase the chancery. Kenyatta made it clear to the committee that it had summoned the wrong ministry to appear before it, over the controversial purchase of a 1.5 billion shillings plot in Tokyo, Japan saying any questions arising from the purchase of the plot in Tokyo ought to be directed to the ministry of foreign affairs and the tendering committee which oversaw the deal. Ndaragua MP, Jeremiah Kioni, however, questioned how a transaction between two governments had been entered into without the knowledge of the Ministry of Finance which had released the money for the purchase of the piece of land. The committee further questioned why the Treasury did not ask for a valuation report or a technical feasibility study on the suitability of the plot before the deal was sealed. The Internal Auditor General at Treasury Philip Ndung'u, maintained the deal was clean and above board.

Kenya identifies TB zones

The Ministry of Public Health has classified Rift Valley and Nyanza provinces as the two regions with the highest burden of Tuberculosis in the country. The Head of TB Dr Joseph Sitienei says the two regions accounted for 40 percent of the TB prevalence in the country. Sitienei says the Ministry now aims to have a two percent reduction of the disease in the two regions annually. He notes that Nairobi had made tremendous progress in reducing cases

of TB because of interventions like community participation and decentralization of services.

Public Health Minister Beth Mugo say there was need for individual and collective effort to eliminate TB. Kenya remains among the 22 high TB burden countries of the world with an estimated 200 people dying of the disease every day. The two were speaking at the launch of the national Stop TB partnership which is a voluntary alliance of organisations drawn from the public, civil society, academia and private sector with an aim to eliminate TB. The partnership will mainly focus on raising awareness about TB and advocating for greater political commitment and funding for TB prevention, care, treatment and research.

Kenya urged to market tourism online

Tourism stakeholders are coming under pressure to diversify their marketing strategies as source markets demand more information and accessibility from travel destinations. Calls are now streaming in for the industry to capitalise on the online platform in an effort of drawing more tourists to the country. E-Tourism Frontiers Chief Executive Officer Damian Cook says the lack of presence on online platforms is hurting the country's chances of marketing itself as an ideal travel destination with the emergence of a new breed of travelers.

The country's tourism marketing efforts have been heavily reliant on both print and broadcast media, a point Cook said needed to change if it is to attract and maintain a steady stream of tourists. The country's traditional markets include the United Kingdom, America, Germany, Italy and France, which account for 50 percent of the international arrivals. Cook highlighted that all these markets had high Internet usage, which tourism stakeholders need to capitalise on.

US government to support Kenya's war on graft

The United States government has announced the resumption of financial support to the Kenya Anti Corruption Commission (KACC) following the appointment of new director PLO Lumumba. US Ambassador to Kenya Michael Rannerberger said the decision to resume aid was as a result of demonstrated commitment by the Kenyan government to stamp out graft and the adoption of the new constitution which has renewed the hope of eradicating the culture of impunity.

Rannerberger was the first foreign envoy to pay a courtesy call on the newly appointed KACC director at his Integrity Centre office. The resumption of financial and technical support may well be an indicator of affirmation given the strained circumstances in which the former KACC director Justice Aaron Ringera left office. But with goodwill having been displayed from the government, the US says funding to the institution would resume to help in investigative techniques, outreach efforts and capacity building to help fight corruption. The aid to the anti graft body had been frozen on claims of poor leadership and lack of government commitment to reforms.

Eldoret leaders request for new constituency

Leaders from Eldoret town led by councilors Peter Chomba and Muya Mwangi are calling on the Andrew Ligale led boundary review commission to consider giving Eldoret town a constituency of its own considering its metropolitan nature. Addressing the press, the leaders also praised the work done by the IIEC and called for its confirmation so they can conduct the 2012 general election saying the IIEC showed great capacity and transparency in the recent referendum exercise. They further recommended the same security methods that were used during the referendum exercise to be used in the future elections. The leaders however called on the residents to maintain peace and unity so as to attract new investors in the region.

Ends.....Caro Koech

Kenya's interim commissions winding up

The mandates of most Agenda 4 commissions are set to come to an end after the promulgation of the new Constitution. First to go will be the Committee of Experts, which is set to be disbanded 45 days after the new Constitution becomes effective. The chairman of the CoE Nzamba Kitonga says they were now in the process of handing over to the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs. The Interim Independent Electoral Commission (IIEC) and Interim Independent Boundaries Review Commission (IIBRC) will also be dissolved and a joint Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission formed.

The Interim Independent Boundaries Review Commission on its part termed the successful passage of the new Constitution during the referendum as a milestone in Kenya's history. The National Integration and Cohesion Commission on the other hand said it would be looking at ensuring that ethnic balance is maintained in all areas following the coming into effect of the new Constitution.

Summit to discuss hydropower energy generation in Africa

Some of the world's top hydropower experts will be converging in South Africa next week to discuss the future of hydropower electricity generation in Africa. The focus of the conference is mainly on funding and financing projects as well as hearing updates on some of the most exciting hydro developments on the continent, including DRC's Inga and Ingula in KwaZulu-Natal. The third annual Hydropower African conference and exhibition will be opened by South African energy minister Elizabeth Dipuo Peters.

Dipuo Peters will give a keynote address on "working together to unlock Africa's hydropower potential to promote sustainable development, regional integration, water and energy security, and poverty eradication in Africa." During a visit to Korea recently, Dipuo Peters said South Africa can produce more than 43,000 megawatts of electricity but wants to increase this by using renewable energy sources like wind, solar and hydropower.

Kenyan officials begin crucial tasks

Senior officials at the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs have retreated to Naivasha to work out a programme for legislations needed for the implementation of the new Constitution. Minister Mutula Kilonzo said the meeting, which started on Monday evening, is meant to advise the government on the prioritization of the legislations to support the new law.

Kilonzo says the team is joined by members of the of various reform institutions including the Law Reform Commission which will be key in formulating dozens of the legislations. The government is required to table at least 48 legislations within the next five years for the implementation of the new law for debate and adoption. Key legislations that are almost immediate include the Bill to reconstitute the Judicial Service Commission, the Elections Bill, the Police Service Bill and the Supreme Court Bill.

Ministers should not be sacked for rejecting law

Ministers who were opposed to the new constitution still play an important role in the government and they should not be sacked from the cabinet. The chairman Centre for Human Rights and Governance, Richard Maiyo criticized some activists for calling on the ministers' sacking saying no one should be frustrated for exercising democracy. Maiyo disclosed that peace building efforts in the country should be intensified with the efforts of all. At the same time, he said that the leaders should get united signifying co-existence to the diverse ethnic groups in the country. He also made it clear that those who were against the document should not be seen as anti-reformists.

END...Stanley Magut.

Israel Houghton for free Kenyan concerts

Contemporary gospel singer Israel Houghton will be in Kenya for a two day concert in August organized by Moja-Voyce. The American star who is know for his many skills some of which include composer, multi-instrumentalist, producer and worship leader, has created a canon of songs that have become standards in houses of faith around the globe. He has accomplished this largely as the leader of Israel and New Breed, a Grammy, Stellar and Dove Award-winning musical ensemble and ministry organization that has amassed gold-selling albums and critical plaitudes reserved for the best of the best. He will perform in a concert dubbed One Cry August 14 at a yet to be announced venue and August 15 at Uhuru Park.

Regional News

SA seeks origins of Campbell diamonds

Police in South Africa today sought to establish the origin of diamonds at the heart of Naomi Campbell's testimony at the war crimes trial of former Liberian leader Charles Taylor. Campbell testified on Thursday that she had received "dirty-looking stones" after a dinner she attended in

Pretoria in September 1997 that was hosted by then president Nelson Mandela, with Taylor among the other guests.

Assuming they were from Taylor, she gave the stones to Jeremy Ratcliffe, then director of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, who held onto them until last week when he turned over the three small uncut diamonds to police. Investigators have confirmed they are diamonds, but their origins remain a mystery.

Prosecutors at the Special Court for Sierra Leone want to prove that Taylor, 62, dealt in so-called blood diamonds to buy weapons for rebels who murdered, raped and maimed civilians during Sierra Leone's 1991-2001 civil war. Taylor denies the allegations.

Cameroon cholera outbreak kills 155

More than 150 people have died since May in the worst cholera outbreak in northern Cameroon in the last 10 years, the public health ministry has said. The latest figures mark a sharp jump from the previous toll released in late July, which listed 94 deaths among around 1,300 cases.

According to Ondobo, 94 of the deaths had been "in the community", rather than in hospital. Cases had been recorded in 17 out of the Extreme North's 28 districts. Seven deaths had been reported in the North region, and no cases have been reported further to the south. The first case was detected on May 6, the ministry said. Cholera outbreaks are common in northern Cameroon, especially during the rainy season, but this year's is the worst in 10 years. Last year, 51 people died from the disease.

Global News

China landslide: More than 700 people confirmed dead

More than 700 people are now known to have died in a massive landslide in north-west China - making it one of the deadliest incidents so far in the country's worst flooding in a decade. A frantic search is continuing for the more than 1,000 people still missing. A 52-year-old man was pulled alive from the rubble more than 50 hours after the disaster, and other rescue teams say they have heard "very faint" signs of life elsewhere.

Chinese premier Wen Jiabao has urged rescuers to keep looking until they find every last survivor. But as the hours pass, hopes of finding survivors diminish. The weather forecast for the coming days is for heavy rain, which could hamper humanitarian work, and there is also the possibility of further landslides.

Afghan civilian toll rises due to insurgent attacks: UN

The number of civilians killed or injured in Afghanistan has jumped 31%, despite a fall in the number of casualties caused by Nato-led forces. More than 1,250 civilians were killed in the first six months of 2010 and another 1,997 civilians were injured, the latest UN six-monthly report shows. The Taliban and other insurgents were responsible for 76% of the casualties, up

from 53% last year. These are the worst civilian figures in the past nine years of the conflict. According to the UN report, 176 children were killed and 389 injured in the first six months of 2010, up 55% compared with the same period last year.

Canadian's 'confessions' allowed at Guantanamo trial

Alleged confessions of the last Westerner being held at Guantanamo Bay can be heard at his trial, a US military judge has ruled. Lawyers for Canadian Omar Khadr had argued that the statements had been extracted under duress. Khadr, who was 15 when he was captured by US troops in Afghanistan, is accused of killing a US soldier in 2002, which he denies. His trial is due to begin before a jury of military officers at the US base. It is the first contested trial to take place at Guantanamo Bay under President Barack Obama - who had pledged to close the detention camp by January this year.

Kabul suicide raid targets hostel

Two suicide bombers have targeted a guesthouse in the Afghan capital, Kabul, killing two staff members, say police and interior ministry officials. A firefought broke out when guards challenged the attackers as they tried to enter the hostel, in the central Taimani area, say police. One attacker blew himself up and the other was shot dead. Two drivers employed by the guesthouse also died. Despite its ring of steel, Kabul has been attacked several times this year.

Sport News

Stars take on Taifa counterparts

Harambee Stars face their first serious test ahead of the Africa Cup of Nations qualifiers when they take on Tanzania on Wednesday in Dar es Salaam. Stars who departed on Monday evening after just one training session will be hoping for not only a positive result but an encouraging performance after a string of poor returns. Kenya face Guinea Bissau on September 3 as the march towards 2012 begins in earnest.

Twahir Muhiddin's side have been boosted by the inclusion of Auxerre striker Dennis Oliech and Inter Milan midfielder McDonald Mariga who are scheduled to link up with the squad from their European bases. Muhiddin has pinned his hopes on an experienced squad, a key indicator of how seriously he's taking this hurriedly arranged encounter after Tanzania's initial opponents Egypt pulled out.

Ajulu-Bushell misses Euro final

Achieng Ajulu-Bushell was at a loss to explain her early exit from the 100m breaststroke on her debut for Great Britain at the European Championships. Ajulu-Bushell, just 16, is considered a hot prospect for British swimming having transferred her allegiance from Kenya, who she represented last year. But she came last in her heat and failed to reach Tuesday's semi-finals. Ajulu-Bushell must now wait until Saturday's 50m breaststroke heats to see if she can have some

impact in Budapest, having arrived in Hungary as one of Britain's most promising breaststroke swimmers in years.

Many British swimmers have already warned that performances at the Europeans may not be up to their usual standard - most have opted not to prepare fully for this competition, focusing instead on October's Commonwealth Games.

I would boo England, says Gerrard

Steven Gerrard has admitted he would probably boo England in Wednesday's friendly with Hungary if he was a fan. The England captain said he was expecting a "mixed reaction" at Wembley following the disappointing World Cup campaign in South Africa. England suffered a humiliating 4-1 defeat by Germany at the second round stage of the World Cup and won only one of the four games they played in South Africa, scoring three goals in total. The Liverpool midfielder insisted all the England players had faith in manager Fabio Capello and would work with him to put their mistakes right.

England striker Darren Bent has withdrawn from the game with Hungary

because of a back injury, the Football Association has confirmed. The Sunderland player, 26, was given an assessment of the problem at England's Watford base on Tuesday morning. He was sent back to his club and is a doubt for Sunderland's Premier League opener with Birmingham on Saturday. Fabio Capello's squad is now down to 20 players, following the retirements of Paul Robinson and Wes Brown.

Injured Bolt misses rest of 2010

Sprint superstar Usain Bolt has ruled out competing for the rest of 2010 after suffering a back injury. The 23-year-old suffered his first 100m final defeat in two years when he was easily beaten by Tyson Gay on 6 August at Stockholm's Diamond League meeting. Bolt will miss the remaining Diamond League meetings in Zurich and Brussels. Bolt was examined on Monday by a Munich doctor who found a problem with the 100m and 200m world record holder's lower back. But Bolt's agent Ricky Simms said his client was taking a long-term view on the injury. He had been scheduled to face Tyson Gay and Asafa Powell – bringing together the three fastest 100m runners in history - at this year's final Diamond League meeting in Brussels on 27 August.

Business News

Kenya Commercial Bank raises 12b

The Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB) Group has announced that it managed to raise Sh12.45 billion in its recently concluded rights issue, which represents a success rate of 83 percent. Although the figure is Sh2.5 billion short of what the bank sought to raise from its shareholders, the board has expressed satisfaction with the results which are above the targeted success rate

that was pegged at 50 percent and which also surpasses the minimum level of success sanctioned by the Capital Markets Authority.

While releasing the allocation results, Chairman Peter Muthoka said they received 55,996 applications from shareholders for a total of 637,284,167 rights provisionally allotted to them. Since there was no over subscription in this issue which is the third in six years, all applicants will get a 100 percent of the shares applied for. Untaken rights which amount to 154,719,744 will now form part of the bank's authorised capital for future issuance. The authorised capital for the bank is 3.5 billion shares.

New approach to streamline Kenyan pension schemes

Stakeholders have lauded the risk based approach adopted by the Retirement Benefits Authority that will see pension schemes receive more supervision. The approach works by forcing schemes to disclose their management structures rather than relying on submitted returns alone thus exposing them to disclose their financial stability. Last month the Retirement Benefits Authority announced a change in the supervision of pension schemes from the compliance based approach to the risk based approach.

This involves supervision of the schemes by checking not merely their compliance requirements as set out by law but by also reviewing the internal processes and risk management. This will enable the regulator and management identify potential risks and assess the mitigating factors. Based on the rating that ranges from 0-4 the regulator can choose to increase supervision, take control or give the organization a clean bill of health.