

Local News 24th July 2010

Kenya endorses agricultural development strategy

Efforts to prioritize agricultural development by African governments will be realized with Kenya's endorsement of the Agricultural Sector Development Strategy (ASDS).

President Kibaki today signed the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) - Compact at the KICC to facilitate its implementation.

This follows the resolution of the 2003 Maputo Heads of Government Summit, that agreed to put agriculture as the main driver of development on the African continent.

The launch of the Agricultural Sector Development Strategy also coincides with another CAADP Compact meeting taking place in Ouagadougou, in Burkina Faso. Kenya becomes the 23rd country on the continent to sign the CAADP Compact program.

Following the signing of CAADP by minister for finance Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta on behalf of the government, Kenya can now access major funding from the World Bank for agricultural development in the country.

Students asked to explore entrepreneurship

Young people have been encouraged to explore entrepreneurial skills and opportunities in the ever increasing competitive labour market rather than depending on the scarce employment opportunities. Speaking at the tenth graduation ceremony of the Kenya Methodist University in Meru today Ambassador Francis Muthaura said entrepreneurship opens more employment thus creating avenues a move that will help Kenya attain vision 2030.

He also encouraged Higher Education institutions to explore diversity in their endeavours saying that this would help solve tribal conflicts in the country and foster peace building.

Ambassador Muthaura also urged institutions not only to focus on Education but inculcate positive values in their students to help the government in dealing with social crimes rampant among the youth. He also urged citizens to read the proposed draft constitution and make informed decision during the 4th August referendum at the same time maintaining peace for a better tomorrow.

Ends... Wesonga Job

Youth Group promotes peace in the North Rift

A youth group in the North Rift region is optimistic that peace will prevail in the region contrary to the claims that there could be instability after the 4th August referendum especially with the recent allegations of leaflets distribution.

Some youth in the region has formed an initiative to inform the Kenyan youth not to be misled by politicians into engaging in violence. A group of youth dubbed the North Rift Theatre Ambassadors has been visiting the presumed volatile areas of the region telling Kenyans to choose peace and shun hatred by strongly campaigning against negative

ethnicity.

Through their representatives James Kemboi and Ken Rutoh the group says they use songs, drama and door to door campaigns to urge the residents to maintain peaceful coexistence before and after the referendum. The group hopes it will cover the whole North Rift region with the peace message by 31st July this year.

End...Carolyn koech

Experts fault Vienna conference

The week-long International Aids Conference in Vienna came to an end on Friday, but a global movement has described it as a disappointment. Oxfam GB said although there was good news on successful clinical trials of vaccines and microbicides to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, the conference failed to make any real commitments to ensure universal access to prevention, treatment and care. Oxfam GB Senior Health and HIV Policy Advisor Dr Mohga Kamal-Yanni says that the conference gave little hope that the \$20 billion replenishment of the fund would be fully achieved in October. She said there would be a Millennium Development Goals summit in September where world leaders are expected to address progress towards achieving MDGs which includes universal access to prevention, treatment and care to HIV, TB and Malaria.

Dr Kamal-Yanni said if the donors did not pledge enough in October, the Global Fund would have to work on a shoe string budget and this would mean that there would be no rolling out of new programmes.

Kenyans complying with SIM listing

The country's four mobile phone operators say there is substantial compliance with the ongoing SIM registration exercise, with only seven days to the expiry of the deadline. Safaricom has so far registered 11.1 million subscribers while Zain Kenya is reporting 60 percent compliance. Telkom Kenya and Yu said they had registered about 40 percent of their subscribers.

The major challenge for operators has been the one-month deadline issued by the government which has indicated it will not extend the exercise beyond July 30.

Safaricom Chief Executive Officer Michael Joseph said it remains to be seen whether the government would issue an extension, but urged subscribers to comply with the set date. During the ongoing exercise, subscribers are required to furnish operators with their postal and physical addresses, date of birth and alternative telephone numbers, as well as their identity card numbers. The decision to have mobile phone users registered came after a directive issued by president Mwai Kibaki at the height of mobile phone related crimes.

Kenyan bank closes rights issue

The Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB) Group's Sh15 billion rights issue has closed. Job Kihumba the Executive Director of Standard Investment Bank which is the lead sponsoring stockbroker told the press they had seen a significant increase in the number of applications as many investors rushed to take up the offer between Thursday and Friday.

Although the rights issue is the largest in Kenya and the region, he expressed confidence that the transaction will be successful. The bank had offered 887.1 million new shares from July 1 to eligible shareholders at the ratio of two new shares for every five ordinary shares at a discounted price of Sh17. Last Friday, Standard Investment Bank announced that 120 million government rights had been taken up at the Nairobi Stock Exchange, a move that the bank said was an indication that there was investor confidence in the issue and their strategy.

Kenya brokers optimistic of market performance

Stockbrokers and Investment Banks in Kenya are confident that the forthcoming referendum will not affect the performance of the market. Kenya Association of Stockbrokers and Investment Banks (KASIB) Chairman Micheal Gichohi says the Nairobi Stock Exchange fundamentals are strong to hold the market and maintain its good run after the August 4th referendum.

With two weeks to the referendum, KASIB chairman says stock prices are fairly stable with some counters registering strong gains in a positive indication of the market's resilience to politicking activity ahead of the vote. Gichohi said the referendum is a show of the opening up of democratic space and this makes the country a conducive avenue to invest by foreign investors in the competitive global setting. The NSE 20 Share index, the key barometer for measuring market activity, has already gone up by almost 40 per cent from 3,200 points in January to 4,345 points.

Africa: Bullish About the Agricultural Future

After 20 years of relative neglect, African agriculture is a hot topic, with a substantial growth in production and a new interest among major donors in funding the sector. That is the message emerging from a series of seminars now taking place in London looking at the constraints and opportunities facing Africa's farmers. The figures being presented are impressive and - according to Steve Wiggins, who leads the agriculture programme at Britain's Overseas Development Institute - confound the pessimists who assume the situation to be much worse than it is.

In particular, he said, two regions - West Africa and North Africa - were surging ahead, although there were signs that production in East Africa too might now be beginning to accelerate. The African Seminar Series is organized by the Future Agricultures Consortium and the Overseas Development Institute. Further sessions on markets, land issues and agriculture-led development in an urbanizing world will take place between now and the beginning of September.

Africa: Hunting for a 'Cure' for HIV

A successful microbicide trial and the promise of HIV treatment as prevention dominated the scientific breakthroughs making headlines at the International AIDS Conference in Vienna. However scientists working on a cure for HIV say they are making slow but significant headway in finding a permanent solution to the epidemic.

The main focus of current research is how to find and tackle "reservoirs" - cells, organs or tissue in the body where the virus could remain latent - and eventually become active again. Current research is seeking a "functional cure", which would not eliminate the virus from the body but would allow a patient's immune system to control the virus without the need for lifelong medicine by using antiretroviral (ARV) drugs and medications for a limited period to target these reservoirs. At least two clinical trials are underway in France to test such products.

Regional News

Guinea to join AU peacekeeping force in Somalia

Guinea will send troops to join a peacekeeping force in Somalia, the African Union has said. AU Commission chief Jean Ping said Guinea was preparing "a battalion to be sent... immediately". Ping was speaking in Uganda, where African foreign ministers are to discuss how to tackle al-Shabab insurgents in Somalia. So far only Uganda and Burundi have contributed soldiers to the AU force, which currently has some 6,000 troops. Other countries have failed to deliver on promises to send troops to the AU force (Amisom) to Somalia. Somalia has been in a state of anarchy for two decades.

Global News

North Korea warns of nuclear 'sacred war'

North Korea says it will use its "nuclear deterrent" in response to joint US-South Korean military exercises this weekend. Pyongyang was ready to launch a "retaliatory sacred war" at any time, the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said. Washington and Seoul say the war games are to deter North Korean aggression. Tensions between the two Koreas have been high since the sinking of a South Korean warship in March. An international investigation said the ship was sunk by a North Korean torpedo, a claim strongly denied by Pyongyang.

Mass grave in northern Mexico contains 38 bodies

Soldiers in Mexico have uncovered a mass grave with at least 38 bodies in the northern state of Nuevo Leon. Security forces said an anonymous tip-off led them to the site almost the size of a football pitch. Investigators believe drug gangs used the remote spot to torture and execute their victims.

In the past weeks, two more such graves have been discovered in Nuevo Leon, which is

at the centre of a violent battle between rival drug gangs. The bodies were found in a pit, east of the city of Monterrey, measuring 70 metres by 40 metres. They were too badly decomposed for immediate identification.

Rallies for Iranian woman sentenced to death

Rallies are being held around the world to highlight the continued imprisonment of an Iranian woman sentenced to death for adultery. Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani was originally told she would be killed by stoning but the sentence was put on hold following an international outcry. However, her death sentence remains in place. She has already received 99 lashes for what Iranian officials called an illicit relationship outside marriage. Then, following the trial of a man charged with murdering her husband, the 43-year-old mother of two was found guilty of adultery - a crime punishable by death.

Earlier this month, officials in East Azerbaijan province said the execution would be "temporarily halted" pending a decision by Iran's judiciary chief, Sadeq Larijani. It was announced that the method of execution would not be stoning, but she remains under sentence of death with her case due to be reviewed within a fortnight. Rights groups have warned she could still be hanged.

US military curbs 'reduce' Afghan attacks in some areas

Attempts to reduce civilian casualties caused by US-led forces in Afghanistan have led to a decline in insurgent attacks in some areas, a report says. The document by America's National Bureau for Economic Research analyzed incidents involving more than 4,000 civilian casualties in Afghanistan. The curbs on aerial bombing and mortar fire were introduced last year by the recently sacked Gen Stanley McChrystal.

The general ended his army career at a ceremony in Washington on Friday. Meanwhile, military officials confirmed today that four US personnel were killed in southern Afghanistan - continuing a recent upsurge in violence there. Gen McChrystal was fired from his job as commander of multinational forces in Afghanistan by US President Barack Obama last month over a magazine interview in which he made disparaging remarks about the president and senior colleagues.

Pakistan drone attack 'kills 16 militants'

Missiles fired by a US drone aircraft have killed at least 16 militants in north-west Pakistan, officials say. At least five missiles hit a compound used by insurgents in South Waziristan near the Afghan border, the Pakistani security officials said. Pakistani media said scores of others were injured in the attack and the death toll was expected to rise.

South Waziristan is a sanctuary for al-Qaeda and Taliban militants blamed for attacks in Afghanistan. The area, along with neighbouring North Waziristan, has been the target of frequent attacks by the unmanned US aircraft.