

Local News October 4th 2010

Kenya moves to mitigate hunger

Prime Minister Raila Odinga on Monday convened the National Drought Committee to evaluate and come up with mitigating measures on the looming food crisis in the country caused by the La Nina climatic phenomenon. The three hour meeting held at the PM's Office deliberated on intervention measures required to cushion the nation from the impending ravages of drought. The meeting attended by top officials from key government ministries involved in drought mitigation programmes also reviewed the latest findings amid reports that the situation was grave in Northern Kenya.

Participants included participants from the ministries of internal security, special programmes, water, agriculture, livestock, education, transport, forestry and wildlife. The crisis meeting comes amid fears that the effects of the La Nina related phenomena were gradually creeping in the Eastern side of the continent.

Wetangula now says ICC will get support

The government has defended itself against accusations of derailing the work of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the country and said it was still committed to pursue the masterminds of the 2008 post election violence. Foreign Affairs Minister Moses Wetangula said on Monday that it was the right of any potential suspect to involve their lawyers when recording statements to protect their fundamental rights, which was acceptable under the Constitution.

The government has been accused reluctance to cooperate because of negative statements from officials and refusal to hand over sensitive documents to ICC investigators. This week, public servants who are likely to give evidence to the court hired lawyers whom they expect to advise them as they give statements.

Parties slow in publishing finances

Only five registered political parties have complied with the regulations of the Political Parties Act that require them to publish their source of funding before the end of October. Article 33 of the Political Parties Act says that all registered parties shall publish their statements within three years of each government financial year, which begins in July. In the past week alone, the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), KANU, NARC-Kenya, the Democratic Party (DP) and Ford-Kenya have published their financial statements in the major daily newspapers for their members and supporters to know how their money in the last financial year was used. ODM registered the highest total income at Sh14.1 million this year; up from Sh1 million reported last year. Out of the five parties to publish their accounts, only ODM seems to have alternative sources, where it reported receiving Sh3.6 million from donors last year.

Kenya marks world animal day

Kenya on Monday marked the World Animal Day by staging a caged demonstration involving human beings, who were locked up in small cages for five hours. The event which was observed

in the country for the first time also featured a photo exhibition and a public sensitization campaign at Central Park in Nairobi to demonstrate the suffering animals experience in kennels, zoos or on leashes. The Executive Director of the African Network for Animals Welfare (ANAW) Josphat Ngonyo said Kenyans should take full responsibility for the suffering that animals go through in order to improve the situation.

He also asked the government to upscale its efforts in protecting animals regardless of their economic value claiming that the State was not keen on looking after the needs and rights of domestic animals as they were low on the priority scale. This year's event was organized by ANAW, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PeTA) and the Animal Welfare Action Kenya (AWAKE).

Kosgey throws back KEBS saga to board

Industrialisation Minister Henry Kosgey was on Monday at pains to explain why the government had not appointed a Managing Director at the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS), a year after the former boss was sacked. Kosgey said he had not been given any feedback by the KEBS board – the National Standards Council - about the recruitment exercise which ended on September 16. Media reports however point to the existence of a row pitting the Minister and his Permanent Secretary Eng Karanja Kibicho over a list of three short-listed candidates.

The PS who sat in the interviewing panel is said to have submitted the list to the Minister who reportedly rejected it saying the recruitment process had been manipulated. Kosgey however strongly denied receiving the names adding that the board had not even met to deliberate the issue. The operations of the Bureau he said had not been hampered by the lack of someone to head it adding that the acting MD Eng Joel Kioko was competent.

Gvt to fund science institutions

The government is being urged to do more to fund science and technology institutes in the country. Jomo Kenyatta University of Science and Technology (JKUAT) Vice Chancellor Professor Mabel Imbuga said innovations in science and technology would contribute a great deal to the attainment of Vision 2030. She said that a significant amount of funds should be put aside to fund science and technology.

Currently all courses are funded on an equal basis yet some, like medicine and architecture, cost more. The policy shift means that students could soon find themselves footing the entire tuition fee for courses that are downgraded in the new priority list. Less than half of Kenya's 100,000 plus students in public universities are enrolled in science and technology-related courses, according to government statistics. This means the shift could face stiff opposition from educationists and students alike. Proposals that public universities should increase emphasis on courses such as engineering, medicine, architecture and physical planning have been made in the

past, with policy-makers citing the need to boost technical skills in the economy.

The proposal on review of courses comes at a time when Kenyan universities are reeling from a quality crisis - they are weighed down by overflowing classes, strained facilities and a shortage of lecturers - watering down the quality of learning.

Kenya slips in continental rating

Kenya has slipped four positions to number 27 out of 53 African countries in the latest continental governance ratings released by the Mo Ibrahim Foundation. In the evaluation conducted between 2005 and 2009, the country continued its poor performance on insecurity, infrastructure, personal safety, corruption, a facilitative business environment and the performance of the Judiciary. In 2005 the country had been ranked 23rd on the continent. Overall, Kenya scored 50 points out of 100, slightly above the continental average of 49 and the east African score of 45. The country scored poorly in the area of infrastructure and personal safety and was ranked 42nd in Africa on both categories. Kenya was however recognized for improvements on gender issues scoring 10th in the continent and citizen participation ranking 18th. The country came fifth regionally out of the 12 nations categorised as East African countries.

Kenyan government swings to action following cassava deaths

Officers from the ministry of agriculture have moved to Kisii County to sensitize farmers on how to distinguish between poisonous and edible cassava roots. The move follows the death of two children in Kegati Division in Kisii Central District on Sunday after consuming poisonous cassava. Area District Agriculture Officer John Katimbwa said features of the two breeds were easy to distinguish and these were what the officers would be educating the residents on to avert any more deaths.

The edible tubers are said to be small in size, greener with small leaves and stems, while the poisonous breed has very large leaves and stems and is more reddish than green in color. Katimbwa however, denied that the tubers said to have caused the deaths had been issued to farmers by the ministry of agriculture as had been claimed saying the cassava seeds from the government were safe for consumption. He said the Kenya Agriculture Research Institute had confirmed from a sample they had picked from the family that the cassava root was not had not originated from the ministry of agriculture. Two children aged 6 and 9 died at Kisii Level Five Hospital after the family had a meal of cassava.

North rift PSV operators urged to take licenses

The Kenya License and Transport Board is calling upon North rift public service vehicle operators and owners to obtain licenses for their vehicles before the registration time elapses. Speaking Monday in Eldoret, Transport and License Board acting Chairman John Ayunda said they aim to reduce road accidents through licensing of qualified road operators and training them

on road safety precautions. Ayunda also urged tertiary institutions to ensure that their vehicles are compliance with the traffic act by installing speed governors and safety belts.

He is now calling on the traffic police and municipalities to cooperate and ensure arrests of operators who will not adhere to safety rules. Meanwhile, Ayunda disclosed that they have began educating and sensitizing the public service vehicle operators on the importance of having road licenses for their vehicles, in a move aimed at curbing road fatalities.

End...John Chikamai

Eight in court over Kenyan heist

Eight people were Monday morning charged in connection with Friday's theft of 80 million shillings from the Co-operative Bank. The suspects included five Co-operative Bank employees, a former CID officer, a G4S Security Group employee and an officer from Wells Fargo security firm. Kibera chief magistrate Cecilia Githua however denied the accused bail after the prosecution argued they were likely to interfere with investigations.

The prosecution intimated that they recovered 1.25 million shillings from the former CID officer, Collins Okoth. In a daring heist, officers purporting to be from the security firm presented themselves at the Co-Operative Bank headquarters in Nairobi's Moi Avenue and calmly walked into the bank before walking out with the loot. The van bearing the name of the G4S security firm was later found abandoned and upon inspection it was discovered that it had just been painted with the colors and logo of the firm while it was registered to someone else.

13 jailbirds stage prison escape in Busia

Police have launched a manhunt for 13 prisoners who broke out of the Busia GK Prison early Monday morning. Prisons boss Isaiah Osugo described the prisoners as dangerous criminals serving sentences for murder and robbery with violence. Capital sentences vary from life imprisonment to the death penalty. Osugo says one of the suspects was arrested at about 6 am at a nearby forest but the rest were still at large.

He says the warders who were on duty at the time of the jail break are being questioned to establish if they aided the escape. A contingent of police and prison officers has been combing the nearby forests in search of the suspects.

Donation of wheelchairs for the disabled

The Wareng county council Monday issued the physically challenged from Soy ward with wheel chairs to cater for their day –to-day needs. The process which started last week Monday in Kapseret, Tapsagoi, Kamagut, Sergoit and Timboroa wards was begun by the council in collaboration with the Association of Physically Disabled in Kenya (A.P.D.K). Community Development Officer Wareng' county council, Isaac Kibet Kosgei said the event has been going on for the past 4 years and acts as a link between the council and the local community. Kibet

says that although the event is running smoothly, there are also cost challenges and they request donors to give a helping hand.

End... Wilfred Kipkoeh

Regional News October 4, 2010

Henry Okah charged in South Africa over Nigeria bombs

Oil militant Henry Okah has been charged in South Africa in connection with Friday's bomb attack in Nigeria's capital, Abuja. Okah, who was arrested in Johannesburg on Saturday, has denied links to the blasts. At least 12 people were killed in the car bombings which came as Nigeria marked 50 years of independence. Okah is believed to lead a militant faction opposed to a government amnesty for the oil-producing Niger Delta. Speaking Friday, he said that his group was not responsible for the car bombings. He was charged with engaging in terrorist activity and delivering or detonating explosives.

Prosecutors described him as the mastermind of the Abuja bombings. On Sunday, Nigerian police named two Nigerian men - Chima Orlu and Ben Jessy - as suspects in the case but gave no further details about them.

Iran and Egypt to resume flights

Egypt and Iran have agreed to resume direct flights between their capitals for the first time in three decades. Following talks in Egypt, officials said 28 weekly flights would resume between Cairo and Tehran, but did not specify when they would begin. Ties broke down in 1980 in the wake of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and Egypt's recognition of Israel. Ties remain strained, but Iranian media said the move could be a prelude to the resumption of formal ties. The agreement was signed by Egyptian and Iranian civil aviation authorities, but as yet, no explanation has been given of what led to their deal.

Rousseff falls short of outright win in Brazil election

Brazil's presidential election will go to a second round after Dilma Rousseff failed to gain the 50% of votes needed for an outright victory. With 98% of votes counted, President Lula's former cabinet chief has 47% with Jose Serra trailing on 33%. The two will contest a run-off vote in four weeks' time. A strong showing by the Green Party candidate, Marina Silva, who polled 19%, may have cost Ms Rousseff a first-round win. Workers Party candidate Dilma Rousseff is the favoured successor to President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who has completed two terms, and cannot run for a third.

Militants attack Nato tanker convoy in Pakistan

Militants have attacked a depot in Pakistan, destroying 27 tankers which were carrying fuel for Nato troops in Afghanistan. The Taliban in Pakistan said it was behind the assault on the depot near Islamabad in which three people died. Pakistan has stopped Nato convoys crossing the

Khyber Pass in response to a Nato air strike last week in which three Pakistani soldiers were killed. Nato said on Monday it regretted the deaths.

Japan joins UK and USA in Europe al-Qaeda terror alert

The Japanese government has issued a terror alert to its citizens in Europe, following similar warnings from the UK and USA. The foreign ministry in Tokyo urged people to exercise caution when using public transport or visiting tourist sites. Security sources warned last week of potential plots on the scale of the Mumbai attacks in 2008.

US authorities have cited France, Germany and the UK as possible targets.

Sports News

Nigerian lifter wins opening gold

Teenage Nigerian weightlifter Augustina Nkem Nwaokolo has won the first gold medal of the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi in the women's 48kg division. The 17-year-old set a new Games record of 175kg after lifting 77kg in the snatch and 98kg in the clean and jerk to upset home favourite Soniya Chanu. The Indian twice failed to lift the 103kg she needed to take gold and had to settle for silver with 167kg. Fellow Indian Sandhya Rani finished third with an aggregate of 165kg. India also took silver and bronze in the men's 56kg category with Sukhen Dey and Srinivasa Rao finishing behind Malaysia's Amirul Hamizan Ibrahim.

Capello calls up striker Davies

England boss Fabio Capello has called up uncapped Bolton striker Kevin Davies for his Euro 2012 squad to face Montenegro at Wembley on 12 October. Davies, 33, is joined by Wayne Rooney, who has recovered from his ankle injury, with Darren Bent and Peter Crouch the other forwards.

Also included by Capello are John Terry, Rio Ferdinand, Joe Cole, Aaron Lennon and goalkeeper Rob Green. Arsenal's Jack Wilshere has been named in both the under-21 and senior squads. England have made a perfect start to their Euro 2012 qualifying campaign with victories over Bulgaria and Switzerland.

Fifa owes 2,000 fans for tickets

More than 2,000 people are still owed money by Fifa because of a problem issuing refunds for World Cup tickets resold through its website. Unwanted tickets could be returned to Fifa who, in return for a fee, would attempt to find a new buyer. Organisers had promised to transfer refunds to those using the service within four weeks of the 11 July final. More than a quarter of transactions failed when Fifa first attempted to pass money back to 21,500 customers. Match, Fifa's ticketing company, has suggested that most of the aborted transactions have been caused by changes to customers' credit card details, with many fans likely to have changed cards since

tickets first went on sale in February 2009.

Six thousand fans were left out of pocket after Fifa's initial attempts to pass on proceeds in August failed. Over half of those cases have since been solved, but a substantial number are still outstanding.

Hard part still to come - Alonso

Fernando Alonso, winner of the last two grands prix, says the remainder of the season will be his toughest test. Ferrari's Alonso won in Italy and Singapore to close to within 11 points of Red Bull's championship leader Mark Webber with four races remaining. In one of the most exciting ever finishes to a Formula 1 season, five drivers are still in the hunt for the title. The McLaren duo of Lewis Hamilton and Jenson Button and Red Bull's Sebastian Vettel are also within 25 points of Webber.

But two-time world champion Alonso's performances in the past two races appear to have given him the momentum going into Sunday's Japanese Grand Prix and the final three races, in South Korea, Brazil and Abu Dhabi.

Business News

Kenya cracks whip on counterfeits

The government has moved to strengthen the Anti Counterfeit Agency as a pointer that it is determined to decisively deal with illicit trade in the country in coming months. Industrialization Minister Henry Kosgey said they have set aside some Sh202 million in this financial year's budgetary allocations to hire staff and beef up the agency that will be in charge of combating counterfeits.

The board was inaugurated in December last year but has not been fully effective, a situation that the Minister blamed on limited funding. However, he said they would use what they have in the meantime and pledged that the agency, which will be housed at Teleposta Towers, would undertake more activities and be more visible in this financial year. Counterfeiting costs the country billions of shillings in unpaid taxes and renders many firms uncompetitive, with the latest being Eveready East Africa that has been forced to lay off more staff. This is the third time in less than five years that the battery manufacturer has been forced to send home its workers as the market continues to be flooded with substandard cells.

Kenya airways strike looms

The reality of an aviation union strike in the country looms as Kenya Airways management and the union continue to trade accusations. Monday, the union lashed out at KQ CEO Titus Naikuni for allegedly compromising union officials and alluding to a return to work formula that has expired. On Sunday the airline in a paid up newspaper advertisement blamed the slow implementation of the return to work formula on wrangles in the union.

While issuing the strike notice last week, the union had demanded that for a round table negotiations with the management to end the stalemate. However since Friday the airline has continued to engage the union through press releases saying it has abided by the return to work

formula that was signed in 2008. An industrial action by the workers in 2008 cost the airline over 0.5 billion shillings.

AccessKenya launches traffic cameras

The AccessKenya Group has launched a free online traffic camera service onto their home portal www.home.co.ke. The update service consists of Internet Protocol (IP) cameras that will capture traffic movement and transmit visuals of the same via the AccessKenya portal, live and in real time. The Group has so far put up 27 such cameras within the Nairobi's Central Business District and its environs as well as two cameras in Mombasa.

The traffic camera visuals are easily accessible on the portal; giving one a clear view of the state of traffic along their preferred route at the click of a button. This can be done from one's computer and it has also been developed for mobile phone access, ensuring accessibility of traffic updates even while on the move.

UAE BlackBerry users eye alternatives as deadline looms

With a week to go before a United Arab Emirates ban on key BlackBerry services is due come into effect, many users of the smartphone here are eyeing alternatives but still hoping for a reprieve. The UAE said in August that from October 11 it will block BlackBerry messenger, web browsing and email services because they "allow individuals to commit violations" that cannot be monitored. BlackBerry has faced similar snags in Saudi Arabia and India, where the authorities fear heavy encryption makes BlackBerry convenient for terrorists to use without being detected.

An official of the UAE's Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) stressed that the "decision to suspend certain BlackBerry services from October 11th is final."

Global steel demand at all time highs

Global steel demand is expected to hit all-time highs next year, rising above levels last seen before the global economic crisis, a trade body has said. The World Steel Association predicts world demand will rise 5.3% in 2011 to reach 1.34 billion tonnes, the highest amount since the first half of 2008. It said continuing steel demand was being led by China, but that Europe was also consuming high volumes of steel.

Yet it added that the end of government stimulus measures may hit steel demand. The World Steel Association also said that global exchange rate fluctuations could be another factor that clouded its steel output prediction. For 2010, it says steel demand is likely to rise by 13.1% to 1.27 billion tonnes. It added that China's demand for steel next year will be 42% higher than in 2007.