The Chronicle

WEEKLY

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A Nation in mourning, a State in denial: Kenya's femicide crisis

HUNDREDS OF WOMEN MARCHED THROUGH NAIROBI ON MADARAKA DAY, DEMANDING THE GOVERNMENT CALLS THIS WHAT IT IS: A NATIONAL EMERGENCY. THE DATA SAYS THEY ARE RIGHT.

69
WOMEN KILLED JAN–MAY 2026

129
WOMEN KILLED IN 2025

529
WOMEN KILLED IN 2024

2024 WAS THE WORST YEAR IN RECORD: AN AVERAGE OF **14 WOMEN** KILLED EVERY MONTH

AUTHORITIES SAY THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN HAVE BEEN REUNITED WITH THEIR FAMILIES, BUT **MORE THAN 2,300** REMAIN UNACCOUNTED FOR.

10,581
MISSING CHILDREN OVER THE PAST 16 MONTHS

1,952
CHILDREN ABDUCTIONS REPORTED

173
CHILDREN TRAFFICKING CASES

Budget: Winners, losers, and what the numbers don't say

SH4.8 TRILLION: THE QUESTION IS NOT WHAT WAS ALLOCATED, IT IS WHAT WAS PROMISED, AND TO WHOM.

Microsoft picked Kenya; then the lights flickered

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Court ruling has settled one question, opened several

DP Gachagua chapter, in one sense, is closed, but the constitutional questions it opened are not.

PERSPECTIVE

Budget: Winners, losers, and what the numbers don't say

Kenya got a Sh4.8 trillion budget. The question is not what was allocated, it is what was promised, and to whom.

DATA STORY

A snapshot of the 2026/27 Budget Kenya got

The biggest budget item is not education, health or infrastructure. It is the cost of yesterday's borrowing.

BUSINESS

Microsoft picked Kenya; then the lights flickered

Kenya was chosen for the largest private digital investment in East Africa. Then President Ruto did the maths, and said the quiet part out loud.

LIFE & CULTURE

TikTokers speak out on realities of working in Kuwait amid job bans

African TikTokers are taking to social media to shed light on daily life in Kuwait after the Gulf nation banned workers from 24 African countries.

SPORTS

The long build: Inside Harambee Stars' quiet reinvention

A guaranteed seat at AFCON 2027 means nothing if Harambee Stars show up unready.

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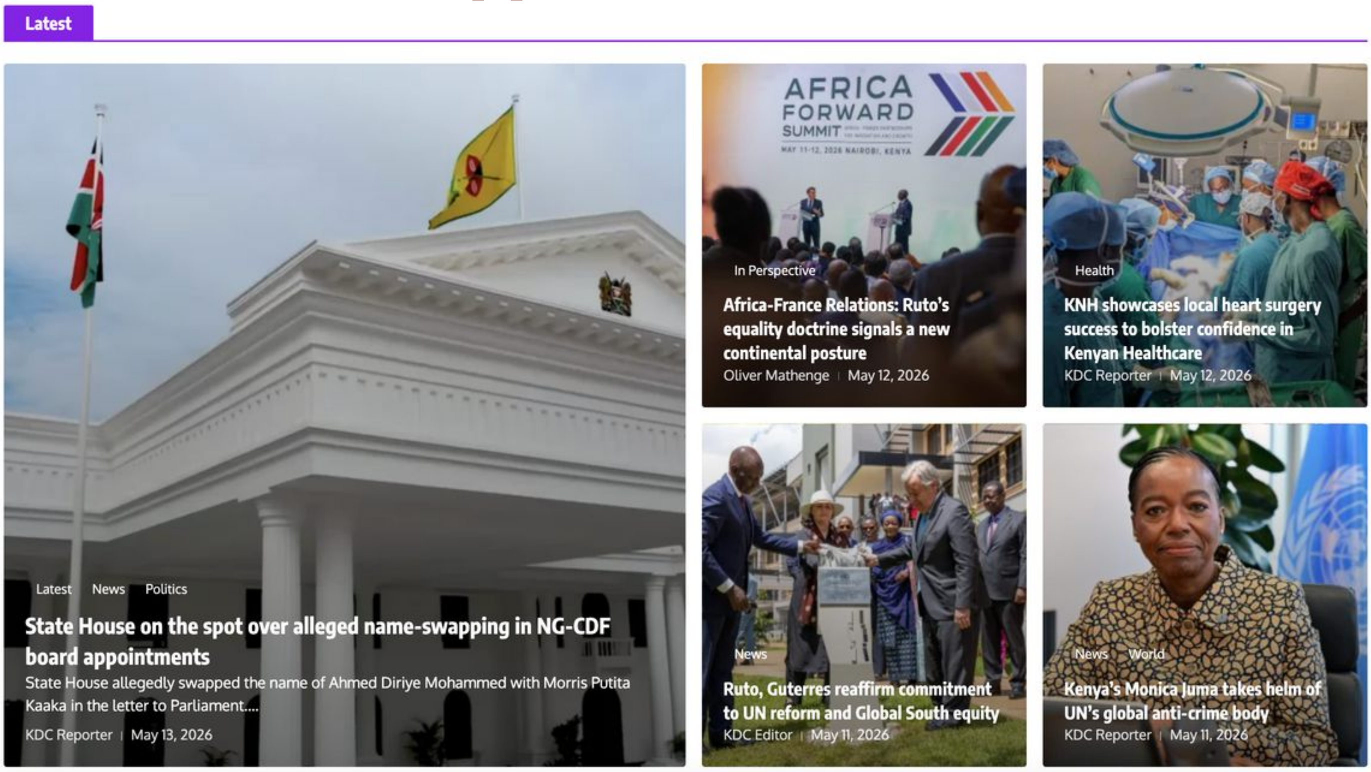

The Chronicle Weekly is the flagship publication of the Kenya Daily Chronicle, Kenya's trusted digital news platform committed to "Kenyan News That Matters To You."

While the Kenya Daily Chronicle delivers a mix of breaking news and real-time updates across politics, business, health, sports, and lifestyle, the Weekly is its considered, curated counterpart; a deeper read for audiences who want more than headlines.

Published every Monday, The Chronicle Weekly distils the most important stories of the preceding week into a single, authoritative edition. It brings together the Kenya Daily Chronicle's signature editorial strengths: rigorous political reporting, sharp business analysis, contextual perspectives, and vibrant community coverage, in a format designed to be read, saved, and shared.

The Chronicle Weekly occupies a distinct space in Kenya's media landscape: it is neither a wire-driven news feed nor a long-form magazine, but a weekly newspaper of record; structured, comprehensive, and grounded in the journalistic values that define the Kenya Daily Chronicle. Every edition is built around the belief that informed Kenyans make better decisions, stronger communities, and a more accountable nation.

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Editorial Note

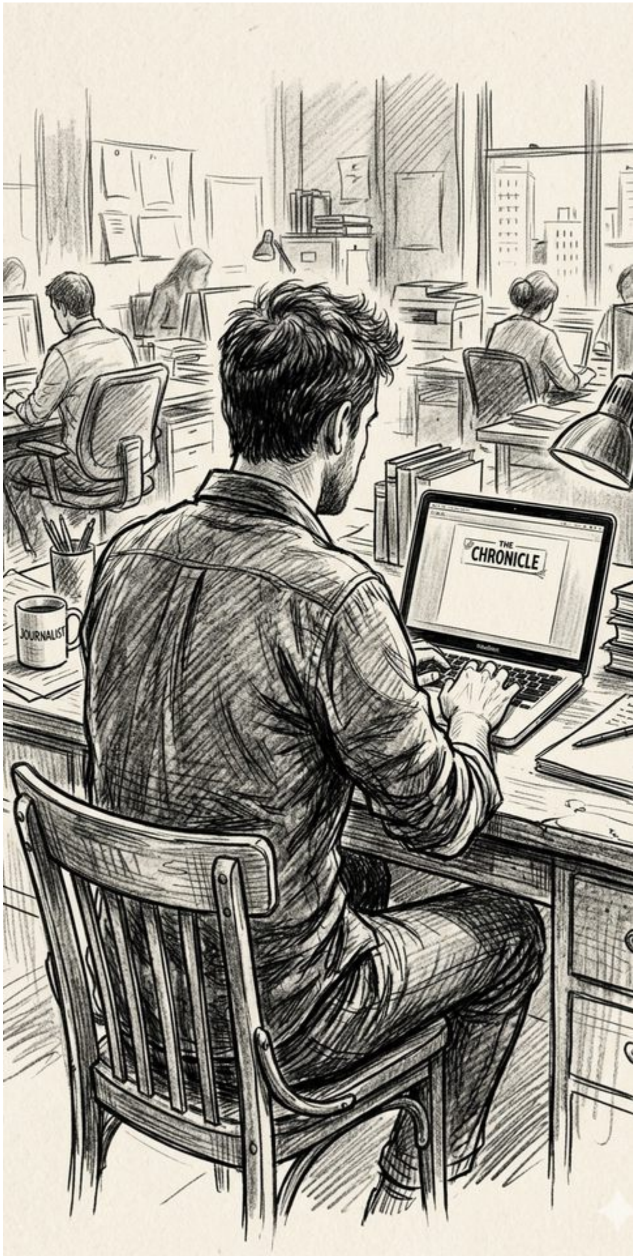
A week ago, we set out our intentions for this publication and asked for your trust.

The response, in messages, shares, and the occasional correction, has told us that trust is something readers are willing to extend, but not indefinitely, and not without reason. We take that seriously.

This week's edition reflects what we said we would do: take the stories that dominated the preceding seven days and ask what they actually mean, beyond the headline.

A High Court ruling on the Gachagua impeachment offered a verdict on one man's case and a warning to every Parliament that follows.

A Sh4.85 trillion budget was read into the record, and the real story is not what was allocated, but what cannot be, once debt is paid.



Hundreds of women marched through Nairobi carrying the names of the dead, asking a government that has the data to give the crisis a name.

And a flagship technology deal, announced with fanfare two years ago, ran into a wall of megawatts that no press conference could talk around.

None of these stories is finished.

The impeachment ruling has opened constitutional questions Parliament must now answer.

The budget's arithmetic depends on a Finance Bill still before the House.

The marchers are waiting for a response that has not arrived.

And Kenya's data centre ambitions remain exactly that: ambitions, until the grid says otherwise.

We will be following all of them.

That is, after all, what a weekly newspaper of record is for.

Thank you for reading.

Kenya Daily Chronicle Team

A nation in mourning, a government in denial: Kenya's femicide reckoning

Hundreds of women marched through Nairobi on Madaraka Day, demanding the government call this what it is: a national emergency.

The data says they are right.

On May 16, 2026, gospel singer Rachel Wandeto was walking home in Nairobi when three men doused her in petrol and set her alight. She did not survive.

On Madaraka Day, the holiday on which Kenya celebrates its self-rule, her name became one of more than 500 written on a single banner, carried through the streets of the capital by a crowd dressed in white, red and black.

As President William Ruto led Madaraka Day celebrations in Wajir, hundreds of kilometres from the capital, women, mothers of missing and murdered children, and human rights activists took to the streets of Nairobi CBD in protest over rising cases of violence against women and children.

The demonstrators walked from Jevanjee Gardens to the Kimathi Street and Kenyatta Avenue intersection, where they sat for a moment protesting the rising cases of killings of children and women and government inaction.

The choice of date was not incidental. The protesters said Madaraka Day, meant to celebrate Kenya's self-rule, had instead exposed the painful contradiction where women and children continue to live in fear with little protection from the state. Independence, the marchers were saying, means little if half the population cannot walk home safely.

The Numbers That Demand a Name

At least 69 women have been killed in Kenya since January 2026, according to data compiled by data firm Odipo Dev and media outlet Africa Uncensored.

By comparison, 129 women were killed between January and March 2025 alone, and in 2024, the worst year on record, 529 women were killed, an average of 14 every month.

The crisis extends beyond femicide into a parallel emergency involving children. The Kenyan government has recorded 10,581 missing children over the past 16 months, including 1,952 abductions and 173 trafficking cases.

THE NUMBERS THAT DEMAND A NAME

WOMEN ARE BEING KILLED. SYSTEMATICALLY.

69
WOMEN KILLED JAN–MAY 2026

129
WOMEN KILLED IN 2025

529
WOMEN KILLED IN 2024

2024 WAS THE WORST YEAR IN RECORD:
AN AVERAGE OF **14 WOMEN** KILLED EVERY MONTH

CHILDREN ARE DISAPPEARING. A PARALLEL CRISIS.

10,581
MISSING CHILDREN OVER THE PAST 16 MONTHS

1,952
ABDUCTIONS

173
TRAFFICKING CASES

10,500+
CHILD PROTECTION CASES JAN 2025 – MAR 2026

6,820
CASES OF ABANDONMENT

2,328
CHILDREN REMAIN UNACCOUNTED FOR

AUTHORITIES SAY THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN HAVE BEEN REUNITED WITH THEIR FAMILIES, BUT **MORE THAN 2,300** REMAIN UNACCOUNTED FOR.

If you or someone you know is experiencing gender-based violence, the Federation of Women Lawyers Kenya (FIDA Kenya) operates support services across Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kisumu.

More than 10,500 child protection cases were recorded between January 2025 and March 2026 in total, including 1,952 abductions and 6,820 cases of abandonment, according to data released by Children Services Principal Secretary Carren Ageng'o. Nearly 2,328 children remain unaccounted for.

Activists are urging Kenya to recognise femicide as a distinct crime and prioritise survivor-centred support services. Amnesty reports that in 2026, at least eight cases of femicide were reported weekly, and 23 children disappeared daily.

These are not abstractions. The ultimatum to the government demanding action, issued on 21 May, came as the Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya reports receiving roughly 70 gender-based violence cases every week across its three offices in Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kisumu.

Seventy cases a week, in three cities, is not a series of isolated tragedies. It is a pattern with a shape, and patterns, unlike individual tragedies, can be addressed by policy. The question the marchers were asking is why that policy has not arrived.

Crisis the State Already Studied, and Shelved

What separates this protest from a generalised cry of anguish is its specificity about what the government has and has not done.

The demonstrators particularly faulted the government for the failure to implement recommendations from a presidential task force on Gender-Based Violence, including femicide, whose report was submitted months ago.

President Ruto set up a taskforce on the issue last year, but activists say there has been no action. This is the crux of the accountability gap. Kenya does not lack a diagnosis.

That taskforce report contains recommendations. Those recommendations sit, unimplemented, while the death toll the taskforce was created to address continues to climb.

There is some institutional movement to acknowledge. In May, police said they had formed a specialised investigative unit, bringing together criminal intelligence analysts, forensic experts, homicide investigators and other specialists.

This is a genuine, concrete step, but coming eight days before the protest, it may have been an attempt to pre-empt the criticism the march would bring.

Whether a new investigative unit can meaningfully change outcomes for women already navigating a justice system that, by the Federation of Women Lawyers' own account, is overwhelmed with 70 new cases a week per office, remains to be seen.

A unit that investigates more cases is valuable. A unit that investigates more cases within a system that does not prosecute, convict, or protect is a more efficient way of documenting failure.

Naming the Problem Correctly

The demonstration underscored a harrowing reality: women and children in Kenya are facing an unprecedented crisis of violence, predominantly at the hands of men. The marchers carried a "Wall of Shame": a physical registry bearing the names of the women and children whose lives have been brutally cut short.

Part of the activists' argument is linguistic, and it is not a small point. "Femicide is not homicide," activists argue. "What is not named is ignored."

The lack of recognition of femicide as a distinct category of crime, with distinct patterns, distinct perpetrators, and distinct warning signs, has consequences for how cases are investigated, how resources are allocated, and how the public understands the scale of what is happening.

A homicide is a single event. A femicide crisis is a pattern that implicates social attitudes, law enforcement priorities, judicial outcomes, and state capacity all at once.

Treating each killing as an isolated homicide, prosecuted or not on its individual merits, obscures the structural nature of what advocates say is happening: that being a woman in Kenya in 2026 carries a measurable, rising, and largely unaddressed risk of violent death.

Advocates at the march stressed that because men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of this violence, men must be the ones to step up and dismantle it; true allyship cannot be passive; it requires men to show up physically to support these movements.

"Men are our brothers, fathers, and sons, and they need to stand up for us. We call upon men to join us in the anti-femicide movement," one speaker told the crowd.

What "National Emergency" Would Mean

Kenyans describe the trend as a "national security crisis," saying "every delayed response costs lives."

This framing matters because it locates femicide not in the domain of social policy or gender affairs, where it can be perpetually deprioritised against budget pressures, infrastructure projects, and electoral politics, but in the domain of security, where the state has historically found resources, urgency, and institutional machinery when it chooses to.

A national emergency declaration is not merely rhetorical. It typically triggers dedicated budget lines, inter-agency coordination structures, reporting requirements, and, critically, a political cost to inaction that currently does not exist.

At present, a presidential taskforce report can be received, filed, and quietly set aside without any institutional consequence. A national emergency framework makes that kind of quiet shelving harder.

A Test the Government Cannot Outwait

Kenya has, in recent years, demonstrated that sustained public pressure can shift government behaviour, sometimes dramatically, sometimes only after the cost of inaction became politically unbearable.

The question this protest poses is whether the femicide crisis will require that same trajectory: months or years of escalating mobilisation before the state responds with anything more than a new investigative unit and a taskforce report gathering dust.

The marchers carried flowers, candles, and an empty coffin. That is not the language of people demanding incremental administrative reform.

It is the language of people who believe, with data behind them, that the failure to act is itself a form of violence, compounding the violence they are marching against.

The taskforce report exists. The recommendations exist. What does not yet exist is the political decision to treat them as urgent. Sixty-nine women have been killed this year, while that decision has been deferred.

The marchers who walked from Jevanjee Gardens to Kenyatta Avenue on Madaraka Day were, in the simplest terms, asking how many more will be killed before it is made.

The Week in Numbers

Sh1.5 trillion

DEBT SERVICING

The share of the Sh4.85 trillion budget consumed by interest payments, pensions, and net lending.

Sh50 milllion

GACHAGUA'S PAY

The High Court's compensation for the Senate's violation of his fair-trial rights during impeachment.

Sh10

FUEL PRICE

The amount by which EPRA reduced the price of diesel in the latest review. Diesel is now retailing at Sh222.86 in Nairobi.

7

WORLD CUP

Number of goals Germany nette past Curacao in their opening match at the ongoing 2026 World Cup.

Quote of the Week

Don't talk of debt. Let's not spend more than we raise. One way to save money for projects and services to the people, stop unnecessary foreign and local travel. I would cut that by 60%.

KDC Explainer: What is a conservatory order, and how does it work?

A conservatory order is a temporary court instruction that freezes a situation or stops a particular action from proceeding, while a case is still being argued and decided.

Think of it as a pause button that a court presses when it believes that allowing something to continue unchecked could cause harm that is difficult or impossible to undo, even if the full case eventually goes the other way.

In Kenya, conservatory orders in constitutional matters are anchored in Article 23 of the Constitution. It empowers the High Court to grant appropriate relief for the enforcement of the Bill of Rights.

How is it different from an injunction?

An injunction is a broader judicial order; it can be temporary or permanent, and it directs a party to do or not do something. A conservatory order is a constitutional law tool, used in cases involving rights or constitutional questions where the stakes of getting it wrong are particularly high.

In practice, when Kenyans hear about courts "stopping" the government from doing something such as building a facility, enforcing a law, or implementing a decision, that stopping mechanism is usually either a conservatory order or an injunction, or both applied together.

What does a court look for before granting one?

Courts in Kenya apply a three-part test before granting a conservatory order.

First, is there a serious issue to be tried, meaning the case is not frivolous and raises genuine legal questions? Second, would the applicant suffer harm that money cannot adequately compensate, if the order is not granted? Third, where does the balance of convenience lie; in other words, which outcome causes less damage: granting the order or refusing it?

This is why conservatory orders are not automatic. A petitioner must demonstrate to the court's satisfaction that the case is real, the risk is real, and the cost of not pausing the situation outweighs the cost of pausing it.

The one thing to remember

A conservatory order is not a verdict. It is a pause. It says the question is important enough to deserve a proper answer, and that while we wait for that answer, nobody should be allowed to act in ways that cannot be undone.

In a constitutional democracy, that pause is itself a form of protection. It is the court telling power: not yet, not without scrutiny, not without the law.

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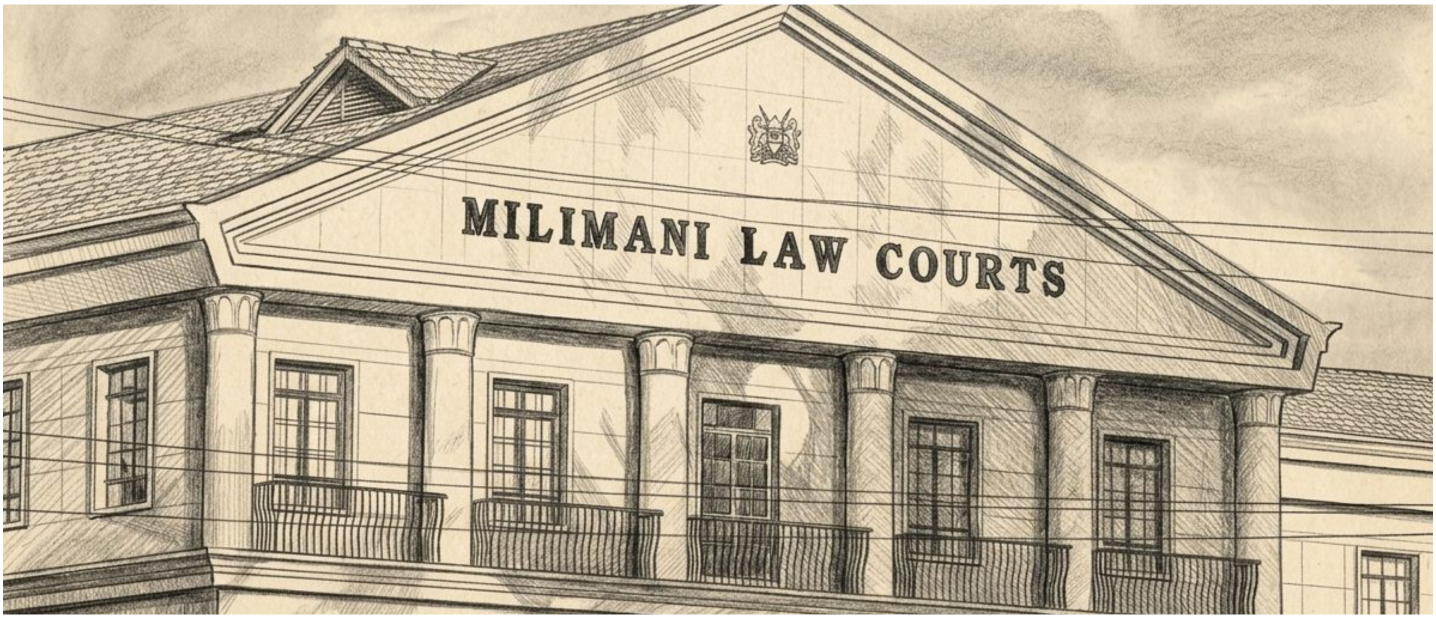
Gachagua's impeachment ruling settled one question, opened several



On the morning of June 7, three judges of Kenya's High Court walked into a courtroom in Nairobi carrying the weight of a question no Kenyan court had ever been asked to answer in quite this way: can the Judiciary review the impeachment of a Deputy President, and if so, what happens when it finds that rights were violated but the outcome cannot be reversed?

Judges Eric Ogola, Anthony Mrima and Freda Mugambi took nearly eighteen consolidated petitions, filed by 58 petitioners ranging from Rigathi Gachagua himself to civil society organisations and ordinary citizens, and delivered a judgment that is at once a vindication of the rule of law, a rebuke of the Senate, a frustration for Gachagua's political allies, and a constitutional landmark that will shape Kenyan governance for years to come.

The bottom line, stripped of legal language, is this: the impeachment stands, but it was conducted wrongly; Gachagua cannot be reinstated, but the Senate must pay him Sh50 million; and Parliament must now enact a law it should have written years ago.

What the Court Found

The bench began with jurisdiction: the question of whether courts have any business reviewing a parliamentary impeachment at all.

The respondents had argued strenuously that impeachment is a political process, final upon the Senate's vote, and beyond judicial reach.

The Court rejected that argument entirely.

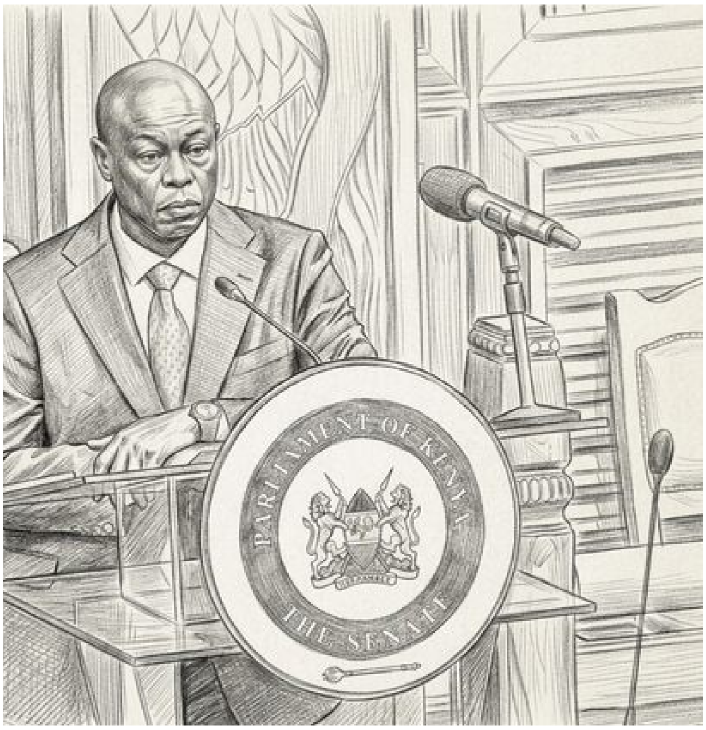
The judges held that the impeachment proceedings are justiciable, and that the High Court possesses jurisdiction to determine whether Parliament acted within constitutional bounds, complied with constitutional procedures, respected constitutional rights, and remained faithful to the constitutional safeguards governing the impeachment.

That finding alone is consequential. It means that no future Parliament can conduct an impeachment behind a wall of legislative immunity.

The Judiciary has now formally asserted supervisory authority, and future parliaments have been warned.

On the specific charges, the court found that the allegations of bias, predetermination, and conflict of interest levelled against the Speakers, Members of Parliament, and Senators were unsubstantiated; resting on political inference and suspicion rather than objective evidence.

The impeachment motion and the parliamentary procedures that followed it were not, in the court's view, unconstitutional in their structure.



On public participation, the bench found that the National Assembly's process met the constitutional threshold and that the Senate was not required to conduct its own independent public participation exercise in addition.

The court further held that the Standing Orders of both Houses were not unconstitutional, and that the failure to involve the IEBC in the appointment of Deputy President Kindiki was constitutionally immaterial.

Where the Senate Went Wrong

The most notable finding against the respondents pertained to the right to a fair trial.

The court determined that Gachagua's rights under Articles 47 and 50 of the Constitution were violated when the Senate refused to grant an adjournment during his impeachment trial, as he was absent due to hospitalisation.

The bench was clear: this constituted a constitutional breach. However, the judgment takes a complex and constitutionally innovative turn here.

After identifying the violation, the court ruled that it could not annul the Senate's resolution, reinstate Gachagua, or overturn the outcome.

The court characterised the impeachment provision in the Constitution as embodying what it referred to as “constitutional finality.”

This implies a self-executing, irreversible outcome that does not allow for reinstatement, whether judicial or otherwise.

While the violation of Gachagua's right to a fair trial does not lead to reinstatement, it does result in something more limited yet historically significant: declaratory relief and monetary compensation. The court awarded Sh50 million in constitutional damages payable by the Senate.

This amount is not intended to compensate for the loss of office but rather to uphold the Constitution, restore Gachagua’s dignity, and deter similar violations in future impeachment proceedings.

Legislative Gap Exposed

Beyond the specific findings on Gachagua, the judgment contains a directive that may prove to be its most durable legacy.

The bench found that Parliament ought urgently to enact a dedicated statutory framework for the removal of the Deputy President under Article 150.

The Constitution's instruction that the presidential impeachment process apply to the Deputy President "with the necessary modifications" is, the court held, a substantive constitutional directive; not a vague suggestion.

The absence of dedicated legislation does not retrospectively invalidate the Gachagua impeachment, but it cannot continue indefinitely. Parliament has been put on formal notice.

This matters because the ambiguity created by that legislative gap was at the heart of much of the litigation.

The eleven grounds cited in the impeachment motion, the Senate committee process, the adjournment question, all of these disputes were made harder to resolve cleanly because there is no dedicated statute prescribing exactly how a Deputy President's impeachment must be conducted.

The court has now made the enactment of that statute a constitutional obligation, enforceable in law.

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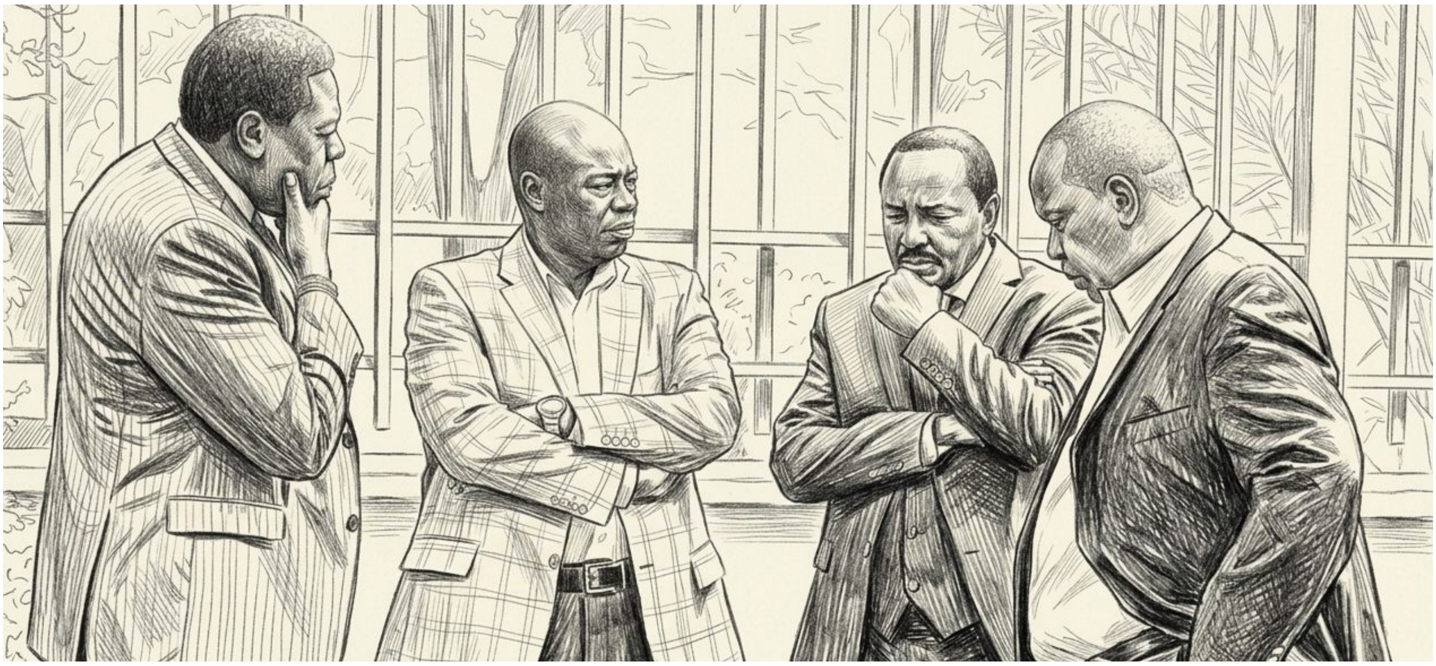


Gachagua and the Politics of 2027

For Gachagua personally, the judgment delivers something and withholds something larger. He receives formal judicial vindication that his constitutional rights were violated, and compensation, payable by an institution his allies have long depicted as having acted in bad faith.

In Kenyan political culture, a court's declaration of rights violation carries moral and rhetorical weight that will be deployed in every speech and every interview between now and the 2027 election.

After the ruling, Gachagua announced that he would be taking a break from political mobilisation to what he termed a strategic retreat for consultations on a single opposition candidate to face Ruto in 2027.

It has already dawned on Gachagua that the court upholding his impeachment dims hopes of him being on the ballot in 2027. It is, therefore, only strategic for him to accelerate efforts to have a united opposition candidate against Ruto.

“Having a single candidate against President William Ruto is not negotiable and is the only way to liberate this country,” Gachagua said a day after the court ruling.

Gachagua is now moving from positioning himself as a frontrunner for President to becoming the Kingmaker, banking on the rich-vote Mt. Kenya region rallying behind him.

Constitutional Landscape After Verdict

Read carefully, the judgment does something that transcends the Gachagua case.

It establishes, for the first time in Kenya's constitutional jurisprudence, that impeachment is justiciable; that the Judiciary can and will review parliamentary conduct for constitutional compliance; that constitutional finality on the outcome does not mean constitutional immunity for the process; and that rights violations in the course of impeachment proceedings attract real remedies, even when reinstatement is impossible.

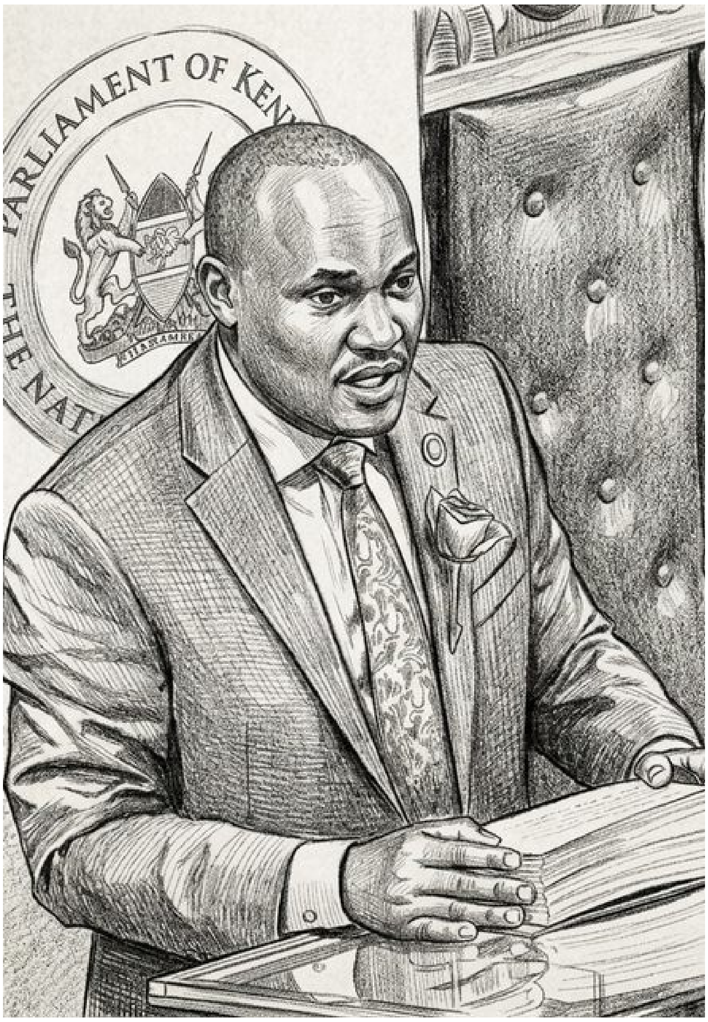
The court also noted, in a passage that reads almost as an invitation, that the tension between constitutional finality and the vindication of rights is a recurring problem in comparative jurisprudence, and that a constitutional amendment clarifying the scope of impeachment finality and the role of judicial review may be warranted.

That is a court telling the political class that the current constitutional design is imperfect and that the question will return. It will.

The next time a Deputy President faces impeachment, whenever that may be, the legislature will face a judiciary that has now established what it is watching for and what it will do when it sees it.

The Gachagua chapter, in one sense, is closed. The constitutional questions it opened are not.

The Budget Kenya got: Winners, losers, and what the numbers don't say



Just after 2pm on June 11, Treasury Cabinet Secretary John Mbadi walked into the National Assembly chamber carrying the same battered black briefcase that has become a fixture of Budget Day theatre, flanked by security details thicker than usual.

Outside, the streets around Parliament Buildings had been cordoned off for hours, a precaution Treasury insiders attributed less to any specific threat than to institutional memory.

Two years earlier, a Finance Bill had triggered the kind of unrest that ended with the Treasury's neighbouring building scorched and an entire piece of legislation withdrawn under pressure.

Framed under the theme "Sustaining the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA) for Resilient and Inclusive Growth amid Global Uncertainty," the state's narrative focuses heavily on cushioning the mwananchi, funding universal healthcare, and boosting agricultural production.

However, an analysis of the data reveals a deeper fiscal reality. When the massive numbers are stripped down, the true priorities of a debt-reconciling state emerge, laying bare a stark contrast between political rhetoric and actual accounting.

Debt servicing is larger than the entire education allocation, Kenya's biggest single sectoral spend at Sh784.5 billion. It is larger than health, agriculture, social protection and the Digital Superhighway combined, several times over.

To understand where Kenya's money actually goes, one must look past ministerial public relations. Out of the Sh4.82 trillion total budget, a massive Sh1.50 trillion will not go to a single school, hospital, road, or security operation. Instead, it is swallowed entirely by Interest Payments, Pensions, and Net Lending.

This means that nearly 31.2 per cent of the entire national budget is consumed by past obligations and debt service before the government can buy a single desk or bottle of medicine.

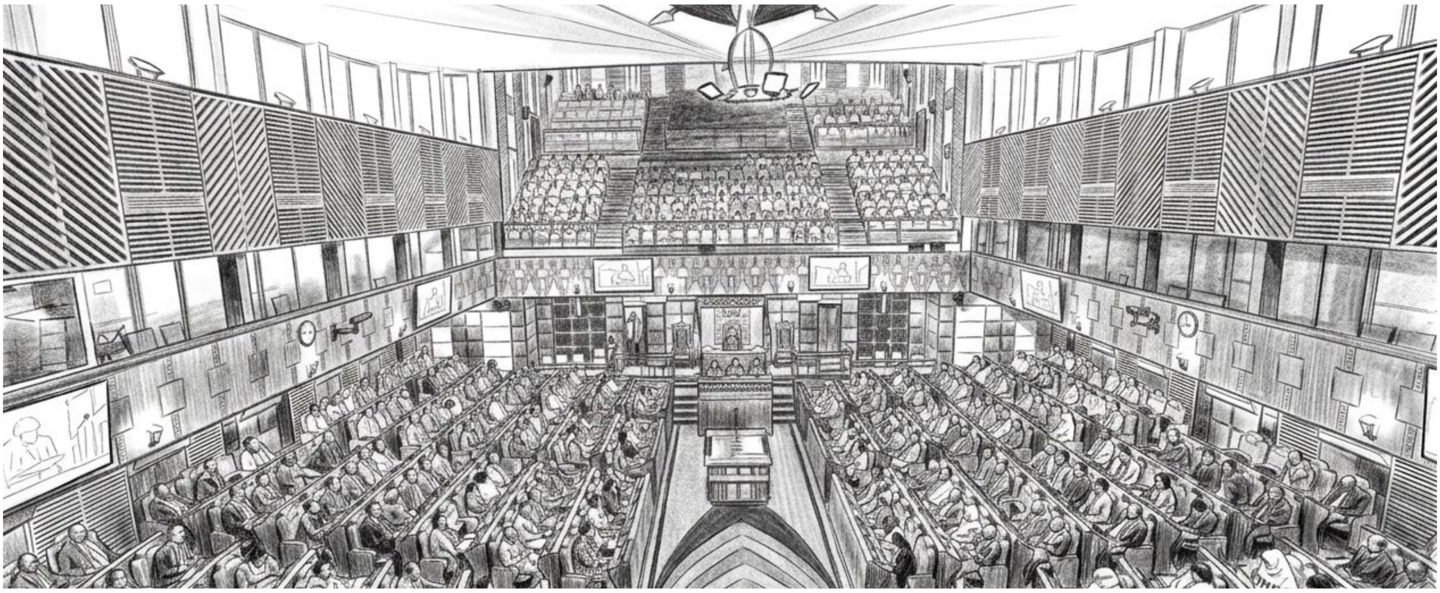
For context, the entire ministerial development budget, which is the actual money allocated for building roads, water dams, and electricity grids, stands at just Sh 809.0 billion. Kenya is spending nearly double its development budget just to keep up with interest payments and pensions.

This is the arithmetic that budget speeches rarely dwell on: the government's room to manoeuvre is shrinking even as the headline figure grows.

The Winners

Maintaining its position as the largest ministerial block, Education walked away with Sh784.5 billion (26.8 per cent of national government ministerial allocations).

Digging into the line items, the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) accounts for the lion's share at Sh408.5 billion. Higher education loans (HELB) and scholarships received Sh 96.4 billion, while Junior Secondary School (JSS) capitation was handed Sh30.9 billion. Notably, Sh4.9 billion was explicitly set aside for the conversion of 20,000 intern teachers to permanent and pensionable terms starting January 2027.



Comprising the physical scaffolding of the economy, Energy, Infrastructure, and ICT secured Sh531.3 billion (18.2 per cent of allocations). Within this, road construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance command Sh220.4 billion, while railway transport and infrastructure received Sh38.1 billion.

The guns and boots remain heavily funded. National Security was allocated Sh316.2 billion ministerially, though total security operations tracking (including defence and intelligence) reflects an aggregate footprint of Sh557.0 billion across agencies.

This includes Sh13.0 billion for police vehicle lease financing and Sh7.0 billion for police modernisation.

A major political pillar under BETA, Housing and Settlement, received direct financial backing, with Sh50.6 billion allocated for the construction of affordable units and Sh20.9 billion for social housing units.

The Quiet Losers: The Rhetoric-vs-Reality Gap

While the Kenya Kwanza administration champions “Agricultural Transformation” and “Affordable Healthcare” as core pillars of the BETA plan, the macro-allocations tell a more conservative story.

Despite being the backbone of the economy and employment, the entire Agriculture, Rural, and Urban Development sector received just Sh111.7 billion, a minor 3.8 per cent of ministerial allocations. While the Sh18.0 billion fertiliser subsidy programme is highly publicised, the broader sector remains remarkably lean relative to its mandate.

The Health sector received Sh177.2 billion (6.1 per cent of ministerial allocations). Although the government highlighted KSh 19.1 billion for the Primary Healthcare Fund and Sh 18.5 billion for the Global Fund, an aggregate allocation of 6.1 per cent means Kenya is still missing the 15 per cent target set by the historic Abuja Declaration.

County governments were allocated Sh502 billion. However, their actual Equitable Share of revenue raised nationally stands at Sh428 billion. The Treasury points out that this represents 21 per cent of the revenues raised nationally for the FY 2022/23 baseline. But against the current Sh4.82 trillion reality, counties are left managing expanding local mandates under severe financial strain.

The borrowing mix tells its own story

Here is where the "fiscal consolidation" narrative runs into trouble. The deficit for FY2026/27 stands at Sh1,146.2 billion, or 5.5 per cent of GDP, Treasury's own projections show this declining to 3.3 per cent by FY2028/29, but for now it represents a deficit larger, both in absolute terms and as a share of GDP, than the previous year's.

More striking is how it will be financed: net domestic borrowing jumps to roughly Sh1.03 trillion, while net external financing falls sharply to Sh116.2 billion. A year ago, the split between domestic and external borrowing was far more even.

Treasury is leaning almost entirely on domestic markets, a choice that avoids the currency-risk exposure of dollar-denominated debt, but one that risks crowding out private-sector credit just as lending rates have started to ease and businesses are beginning to borrow again.

Local banks will naturally favour risk-free government paper over lending to small businesses, threatening the very MSME recovery the budget claims to support.

Where the Finance Bill comes in

The entire structure rests on an assumption: that the Finance Bill 2026 delivers an additional Sh120 billion in revenue on top of the roughly Sh3 trillion the Kenya Revenue Authority is expected to collect through existing tax structures.

Income Tax is expected to supply 38.1 perf cent of revenue, followed by Value Added Tax (VAT) at 22.8 per cent, and Excise Duty at 10.5 per cent.

Unlike its predecessor, which proposed outright rate increases and was withdrawn after nationwide protests, this year's Bill is built around base-broadening and compliance; digital tax enforcement, a restructured mobile phone excise charged at activation rather than import, and a tax amnesty designed to bring defaulters back into the net without raising headline rates.

Mbadi has spent weeks personally touring electronics shops in Nairobi's CBD to make this case directly to traders, an unusual level of retail political effort for a Treasury chief.

The risk is straightforward. If Parliament amends the Bill substantially, and early debate over the mobile phone levy and rental income provisions for non-resident landlords suggests it might, that Sh120 billion gap does not disappear.

With international markets expensive, the government would be forced to borrow even more aggressively from the domestic market, driving up local interest rates and placing the economy on an unsustainable fiscal trajectory.

The alternative would be to force in-year cuts to programmes that, on June 11, were presented to Parliament as settled and funded.

Which brings the story back to where it started: a briefcase, a chamber full of MPs, and a Sh4.8 trillion figure that sounded, for one afternoon, like a settled fact. It was approved.

What it actually buys, and for whom, depends on numbers that won't be tested until the Finance Bill clears, the borrowing markets respond, and the first quarter's revenue collections come in against a target that history suggests is optimistic.

Beyond the Numbers

Viewed purely through expenditure tables, the 2026/27 budget appears balanced and politically careful. Education is protected. Health gains funding. Counties receive more money. Social protection survives. Flagship government projects remain intact.

But the deeper story is about fiscal space, or the lack of it. Kenya is attempting to fund growth, maintain social spending, service debt and reduce deficits simultaneously. That balancing act explains many of the budget's contradictions.

The winners are visible in the allocations. The losers are harder to spot. They include future development projects delayed by debt obligations, businesses competing with the government for domestic credit, and taxpayers expected to generate ambitious revenue targets without triggering another political backlash.

Chronicle WEEKLY

THE BUDGET KENYA GOT

Winners, Losers, and What the Numbers Don't Say

The biggest budget item is not education, health or infrastructure. It is the cost of yesterday's borrowing.

TOTAL BUDGET
Sh4.85 TRILLION

FISCAL DEFICIT
Sh1.146 TRILLION
(5.5% OF GDP)

PROJECTED GDP GROWTH
5.0%

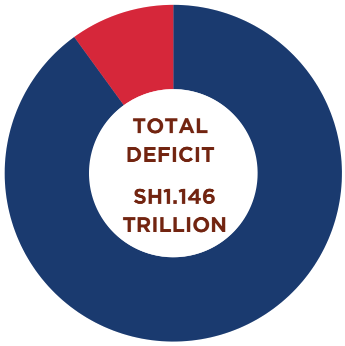
WHERE THE MONEY GOES

Allocation by Thematic Area (Sh billion)

Education	784.5
Energy, Infrastructure & ICT	531.3
Public Administration & International Relations	373.7
Governance, Justice & Law Order (GLO)	363.9
National Security	316.2
Health	177.2
Environment Protection, Water & Natural Resources	121.2
Agriculture, Rural & Urban Development	111.7
Social Protection, Culture & Recreation	94.3
General Economic & Commercial Affairs	49.8

Other allocations include: Parliament (Sh50.9bn) and Equalisation Fund (Sh10.3bn)

HOW THE DEFICIT WILL BE FINANCED



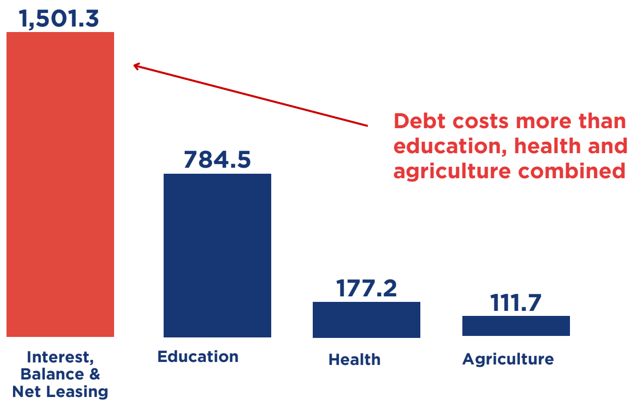
Domestic Borrowing
SH1.03 TRILLION

External Borrowing
SH116 BILLION

The government will raise the bulk of the deficit from domestic markets, reducing exposure to foreign currency risk but potentially crowding out private sector credit.

THE DEBT BURDEN VS KEY SECTORS

(Sh billion)



BOTTOM-UP ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION AGENDA

(Sh billion)

Agricultural Transformation	149.6 (38.7%)
Transforming MSME Economy	12.7 (3.3%)
Housing & Settlement	110.4 (28.6%)
Affordable Healthcare	105.3 (27.2%)
Digital & Creative Economy	8.6 (2.2%)

THE FINANCE BILL CONNECTION

Revenue Target
Sh3.63 TRILLION
(17.4% of GDP)

What If The Finance Bill is Substantially Amended?

- Lower revenue collection vs target
- Higher borrowing needs during the year
- Possible cuts to spending during the year
- Need for supplementary financing

The budget's promises depend on the Finance Bill Changes to tax measures could widen the gap.

Source: Budget Speech 2026

Chronicle WEEKLY

Microsoft picked Kenya. Then the lights flickered.

When President William Ruto stood next to American officials in Washington in May 2024 and announced a $1 billion data centre partnership with Microsoft and Abu Dhabi's G42, the deal carried the polish of a turning-point moment.

The facility, planned for Olkaria in Naivasha, was meant to run on Kenyan geothermal energy, host Microsoft's first East African Azure cloud region, and confirm Kenya's status as the continent's serious destination for AI infrastructure. The press conference framed it as the largest single private-sector digital investment in Kenya's history.

The project has stalled after the Kenyan government failed to meet Microsoft's demand for guaranteed annual capacity payments. And when Ruto eventually addressed the matter publicly, his explanation was stark enough to travel around the world.

"To switch on that one data centre, we would need to shut off power for half the country. That's when I knew there was a problem," Ruto said.

It is a sentence that says everything about the gap between Kenya's digital ambitions and the physical infrastructure required to realise them.

The Numbers Behind the Admission

Kenya's grid-connected installed capacity stands at 3,192 MW, with peak demand reaching a record 2,444 MW in January 2026.

The Microsoft–G42 facility was designed to scale to a final capacity of 1 gigawatt (1,000 MW). Phase one alone was planned at 100 MW.

Even at phase one, the facility would have consumed roughly 4 per cent of national peak demand.

At full build-out, it would have demanded more electricity than half the country uses at its busiest moment; close to the combined peak consumption of Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu, and most of urban Kenya.

The Olkaria geothermal fields were the project's core selling point. G42 CEO Peng Xiao said at the announcement that the full project would ultimately require as much as one gigawatt of electricity, and Olkaria, with its clean, 24-hour baseload power, was supposed to supply it.

The problem is that Olkaria's geothermal complex generates roughly 950 MW today.

Even tapping every single available megawatt would not be enough to supply the full data centre while continuing to serve the households and industries already drawing from that source.

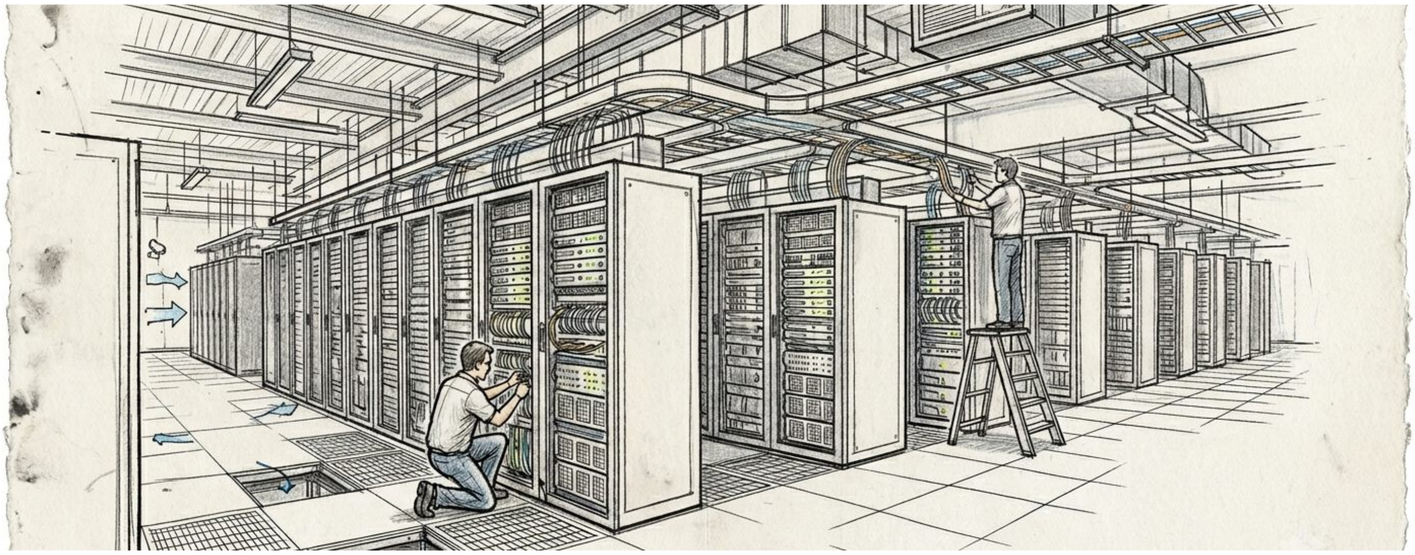
The geothermal story has a second layer.

Kenya lacks not just generation capacity but transmission capacity.

A 100 MW data centre at Olkaria would need dedicated, high-capacity transmission lines before a single server could run, and that infrastructure gap is real and current.

How a Flagship Deal Was Quietly Derailed

During a meeting between Kenyan government officials and Microsoft executives in August 2025, it became clear the data centre would not be online by its original target of May 2026. By that point, the project had already encountered a second, less-publicised obstacle.



A concept note prepared by Kenya's Ministry of ICT was submitted to the National Treasury for funding clearance, and the approval never came.

Negotiations faced complications over annual payment guarantees sought by the investors, and the government was unable to agree on the level of financial commitment requested to underwrite cloud demand.

Two blockers, then, not one: a grid that cannot supply the load, and a Treasury that would not guarantee the revenue. Together, they were enough to pause what had been presented as a done deal.

ICT Principal Secretary John Tanui has insisted that the project is "not failed or withdrawn," noting that "the scale of the data centre they wanted to do still requires some structuring."

That framing reflects a government trying to manage the reputational damage of a high-profile stall without conceding that the original announcement outran the available infrastructure by several years.

Lessons From South Africa

Microsoft has not pulled back from Africa. In April, the company announced a $329 million investment in South Africa focused on cloud and AI infrastructure, and critically, included upgrades to power and water readiness as part of the plan. South Africa has more grid capacity and, apparently, a more complete feasibility assessment.

The implication is uncomfortable: Microsoft evaluated both markets and found one of them investment-ready. It was not Kenya. Africa currently hosts roughly 1 per cent of the world's data centre capacity, and the continent's investor appetite for digital infrastructure is growing, but the foundational systems of power, water, and connectivity remain the bottleneck everywhere, Kenya included.

This is not a uniquely Kenyan problem. Nearly half of the planned US data centre builds in 2026 have been delayed or cancelled due to shortages of electrical infrastructure.

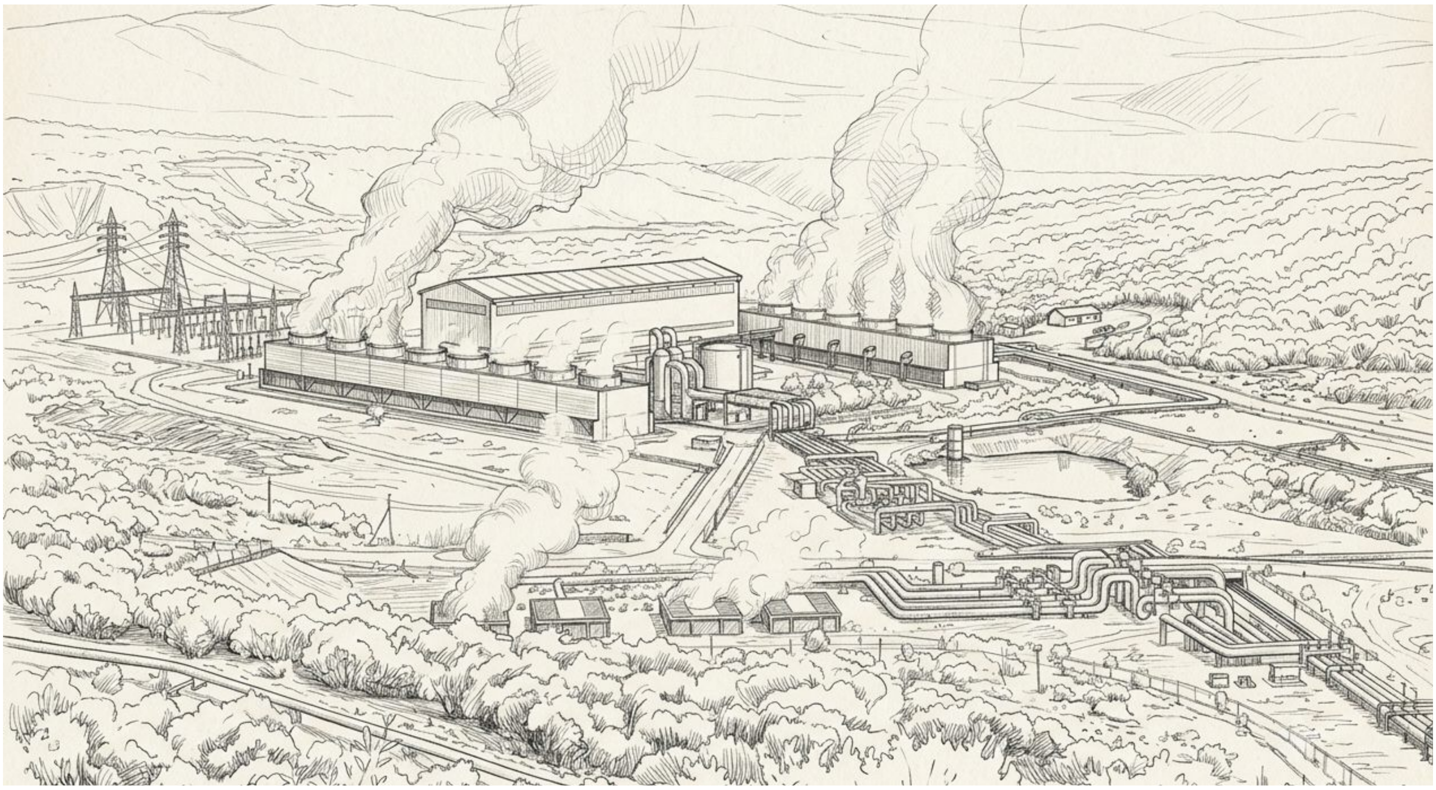
Microsoft is spending $190 billion on capital expenditure this year globally, adding approximately one gigawatt of data centre capacity every three months, but power constraints are proving a universal bottleneck.

What is uniquely Kenyan is that the power shortfall was apparently not identified and resolved before the presidential announcement was made. The ceremony came first. The feasibility study, it seems, came later.

What Kenya Actually Has, and What It Needs

The unfair reading of this story is that Kenya cannot handle big digital infrastructure. The accurate reading is more specific: Kenya cannot currently handle a data centre this large, on this timeline, without prior grid investment.

Kenya generates approximately 46 per cent of its electricity from geothermal sources, one of the highest ratios in the world, with Olkaria's baseload steam operating at a 95 per cent availability rate.



The cost of geothermal energy in Kenya is approximately $0.07 per kilowatt-hour, significantly lower than the $0.18 per kilowatt-hour of thermal plants.

KenGen recently onboarded a fourth investor to its Green Energy Park in Olkaria: an industrial hub that allows companies to bypass traditional grid costs by setting up operations directly adjacent to the power source. That model may be the more realistic path for energy-intensive industries in the medium term.

Meanwhile, expansion is underway. KenGen received Cabinet approval for Olkaria VII, which will expand the complex's installed capacity by 80.3 MW. Olkaria I is undergoing rehabilitation to increase its output from 45 MW to 61 MW by the end of 2026.

The Bigger Question

The Microsoft-G42 stall is not a technology or energy story. It is a governance story.

It asks why a deal of this scale, one requiring grid infrastructure, transmission investment, Treasury guarantees, and a two-year construction programme, was announced at a presidential press conference before any of those foundations were in place.

Kenya's situation feels less like an isolated problem and more like a preview of what the global AI race will start looking like everywhere: AI data centres are becoming so power-hungry that entire countries are beginning to rethink whether their grids can realistically support these projects without affecting ordinary citizens.

The difference is that most countries will reach that conclusion through quiet planning processes. Kenya reached it via a presidential admission at a state event, broadcast to the world.

The deal is not dead. Microsoft has not left.

Kenya's geothermal potential is estimated at 10,000 MW, a figure that, if developed, would make it one of the most attractive locations on the continent for energy-intensive industry.

But potential and readiness are different things, and the distance between them is measured not in megawatts but in years of grid investment, transmission upgrades, and Treasury planning that should have preceded, not followed, the announcement.

Kenya was chosen. The question now is whether it will be ready when it gets a second chance to be chosen again.

Chronicle WEEKLY

TikTokers speak out on realities of working in Kuwait amid sweeping job bans

African TikTokers are taking to social media to shed light on daily life in Kuwait, capturing widespread attention at a time when the Gulf nation has banned citizens from Kenya, Nigeria, and 25 other countries from seeking domestic labour jobs there.

According to local media reports, Kuwait's Interior Ministry issued these restrictions as part of updated regulations governing the domestic labour sector.

Under the new rules that took effect on June 7, domestic workers can now only be recruited from South Africa, Benin, Eritrea, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, India, Vietnam, and Nepal. Senegal remains on the approved list, but recruitment is strictly limited to male workers.

All hiring procedures must now be processed through the country's governorates, which are Kuwait's localised administrative counties.

Beyond country-specific bans, Kuwait has also overhauled its strict sponsorship (kafala) system to clamp down on the sector.

The revised rules impose strict limits on the number of workers that an expatriate or citizen can sponsor, based on family size and gender.

These rigid new caps will drastically reduce employment opportunities for Africans who have traditionally sought work in the Gulf.

Under the previous system, fewer restrictions meant that households would often employ several domestic staff.

Kafala System

Single women: Eligible to sponsor one domestic worker only; drivers are not permitted.

Married, divorced or widowed women with children: Allowed to sponsor one domestic worker and one driver.

Married, divorced or widowed men with families: Can sponsor up to three domestic workers and one driver to accommodate larger households.

Single men: Eligible to sponsor one driver only; domestic workers are strictly prohibited.

The new caps, coupled with the outright ban on Kenyan recruitment, have in effect frozen a vital economic pipeline.

On TikTok, migrant content creators are sounding the alarm and urgently warning job seekers back home not to pay rogue recruitment agents who make false promises about Kuwaiti visas.

However, for the thousands of Kenyans already working in Kuwait, particularly as drivers, the focus has shifted towards demystifying life in the Gulf state.

One Kenyan TikToker, marvelling at the region's incredibly low fuel prices, shared an amusing cultural aspect of working as a driver.

“The good thing about Kuwait," he said, "Is that their cars are never turned off. You just park the car and leave it running. Whether people go for two, three, four or five hours, it doesn't matter."

Another creator, this time American, took his audience on a journey to fill his car with 20 Dinar (about $64), which shocked him as he got a full tank of fuel.

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Another Kenyan creator published a viral video in Swahili sharing what he wished he had known before arriving. He swiftly dispelled common misconceptions about basic living conditions and social constraints.

"Firstly, the water is extremely clean," he noted.

"Secondly, partying isn't illegal, and there is no strict policing on that. There are no rigid rules restricting you socially."

However, he pointed out a societal contradiction: while premarital relationships are legally and socially frowned upon, contraceptives are openly sold in pharmacies, a situation he humorously described as a 'set-up'.

He also highlighted the region's undeniable financial allure, driven by strong currency, balanced against a high cost of living.

"Thirdly, the Kuwaiti currency (the dinar) is the strongest in the world. If you convert it to Kenyan shillings, 1 dinar is equivalent to Sh418," he said.

'But number four, the cost of living is very high. A simple single room can cost around Sh24,000 (approximately 50–60 dinar) per month."

Regarding labour, he did not sugarcoat the gruelling realities facing migrant workers: 'You can easily lose yourself. You work 13-hour days, six days a week. You only have one day to rest. And on that day, you have other personal chores to take care of.' However, he ended his video on a positive note, saying, "Anything is possible."

'But number four, the cost of living is very high. A simple single room can cost around Sh24,000 (approximately 50–60 dinar) per month."

Other banned nationalities echo this mixture of caution and optimism. Nigerian TikTok user offered her compatriots some sobering advice online.

“If you’re thinking about visiting Kuwait, this video is tailored for you. There are three crucial things you need to keep in mind,” she cautioned. “Be prepared to respect the country's laws and customs. Remember, you're here to work, and the shifts can be long and demanding. Patience is a necessity in this country, not just a choice.”

Despite the challenges, she emphasised the transformative potential of working in the Gulf.

“Kuwait will reward your efforts, and it will positively change your life story.”

While social media platforms provide essential guidance for workers adjusting to the new normal, formal diplomatic channels remain silent. The fate of thousands of nationals from banned countries who currently hold valid contracts in Kuwait is uncertain, as their home governments have yet to provide official responses or directives for their citizens abroad.

The Kenyan Embassy in Kuwait clarified that recent regulatory updates are not new restrictions against Kenya.

Kenya voluntarily suspended domestic worker deployment a decade ago, a stance that remains unchanged.

Current Kuwaiti communications simply reflect existing regulations for the domestic labour sector rather than new policy shifts.

Active consultations are underway to establish a bilateral framework with safety safeguards for future domestic labour agreements.

The Embassy stressed that restrictions apply only to domestic workers; all other Kenyan professionals remain eligible for employment in Kuwait under applicable laws.

Chronicle WEEKLY

The long build: Inside Harambee Stars' quiet reinvention

Two friendlies against Lesotho will not decide whether Kenya is ready to host a continental tournament.

But for Benni McCarthy and the players assembled in Pretoria this month, they were the closest thing available to a dress rehearsal, and what they revealed says as much about Harambee Stars' direction as any scoreline could.

The numbers themselves were modest. A 1-1 draw on June 4 gave way to a 4-0 win three days later, against a side ranked some 30 places below Kenya.

McCarthy was characteristically unimpressed by the gap between the two results, telling reporters after the first leg that his side had let slip a string of chances it should have taken.

That mix of progress and self-criticism has become something of a signature for the South African tactician since he took over the national team, and it is, in its own way, the story.

What makes this window different from the routine churn of friendlies Kenya has played for years is the company the Harambee Stars now keep on paper.

As co-hosts of AFCON 2027 alongside Tanzania and Uganda, Kenya has already secured its place at the tournament regardless of results.

Yet McCarthy's side is still competing in qualifying, drawn into a group alongside South Africa, Guinea and Ethiopia, three teams with considerably more continental pedigree than Lesotho.

The logic is straightforward: a guaranteed seat at the table is worth little if the team arrives there without having tested itself against the calibre of opposition it will actually face.

The Lesotho fixtures, in that sense, were less an end in themselves than an audition, both for McCarthy's evolving system and for a new generation of players hoping to be part of it.

New faces in Pretoria

That generation was on full display in Pretoria. Five players were handed their senior international debuts during the window: Wealdstone duo Deon Woodman and Micah Obiero, Stoke City's Sydney Agina, ADO Den Haag goalkeeper Caleb Kramer, and Hull City winger Sammy Hena-Kamau.

For McCarthy, the inclusion of lower-league and academy-level diaspora talent is not incidental; it reflects a wider recruitment strategy that has seen the technical bench cast its net well beyond the usual pool of established Kenya Premier League and well-known European-based names.

Whether that strategy produces players capable of contributing in a qualifying campaign against the continent's heavyweights, rather than simply padding out a squad list, is the question McCarthy's side now has roughly three months to begin answering before qualifiers resume in September.

This widening of the net sits alongside a domestic football economy that is itself showing modest signs of life.

Gor Mahia's ticket revenues from the 2025/26 season were reported to run into the tens of millions of shillings, a reminder that the national team's fortunes do not exist in isolation from the health of the league that still produces the bulk of its core.

If McCarthy's diaspora-heavy approach pays off on the pitch, the harder question for the federation will be whether that momentum can be channelled back into the domestic game, rather than simply becoming another reason for talented young Kenyans to look abroad first.

The home advantage question

There is also a less tangible factor at play, one that assistant coach Vasili Masounakis has been keen to talk up: the atmosphere Kenyan fans are expected to generate when the tournament arrives on home soil.

Drawing comparisons to the raucous backing the team received during the 2024 African Nations Championship, co-hosted by Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, where Harambee Stars exited at the quarter-final stage on penalties, Masounakis has framed home advantage as something close to a tactical asset.

It is an understandable pitch, and not an unreasonable one; crowd support has tangible effects on performance, and Kenyan venues are rarely short of noise.

But it is also worth treating with some caution. CHAN 2024 showed that passionate support alone does not close a quality gap when it matters, and AFCON 2027 will arrive with considerably higher stakes and sharper opposition than a regional tournament did.

Eighteen months to go

What McCarthy's project ultimately amounts to, eighteen months out from kickoff, is an attempt to convert a guaranteed tournament slot into a genuinely competitive one.

The debutants from Pretoria may not all make the final squad. The qualifying results against South Africa and Guinea may not flatter Kenya's ranking.

But the broader test, whether this team can arrive at its own tournament able to compete rather than simply participate, is the one that will define how this period of Harambee Stars history is remembered.

September's qualifiers will offer the first real evidence either way.

Here is what we expect to make news this week

June 15-17: President Ruto at the G7 Leaders’ Summit in France

President William Ruto is expected to attend the G7 Leaders' Summit in Évian, France. He is expected to continue with his push for more equitable international financial institutions and fair, long-term concessional financing to ease sovereign debt burdens.

June 15: Court to rule on detention of Marianne Kilonzi’s killer

A Magistrates Court at Milimani is expected to rule on an application by the Director of Public Prosecutions seeking to detain Brian Kiprop who is suspected of killing Citibank executive Marianne Kilonzi in the UK. Kiprop was arrested on June 10 at the Namanga Border Post. The DPP says the UK has requested assistance on his extradition over the murder.

June 16-18: Mombasa hosts Our Ocean Conference (OOC11)

Kenya will host the 11th Our Ocean Conference (OOC11), bringing together leaders from government, science, civil society, youth, and the private sector to accelerate ocean action and turn collective ambition into meaningful progress. OOC will be held on African soil for the first time, spotlighting Africa’s ocean leadership, coastal cultures, and the strategic importance of the Western Indian Ocean.

June 16: MPs to recieve the report on the Finance Bill 2026

Budget and Finance Committee’s report will be tabled in the National Assembly. MPs are under pressure to amend the Bill but the government needs to raise more revenue to deal with a Sh1.1 trillion deficit in the 2026/27 budget.

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A requiem service for the students who died in the Utumishi Girls Academy fire was held on Friday, June 12 in Nakuru County.

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