KENYA: SH 400 | TANZANIA: SH 9000 | UGANDA: SH 14000 | RWANDA:RWF 4000 | ETHIOPIA: BIRR 140 | OTHERS: 4 USD

The East African
Business Mirror
REFLECTING YOUR GOALS

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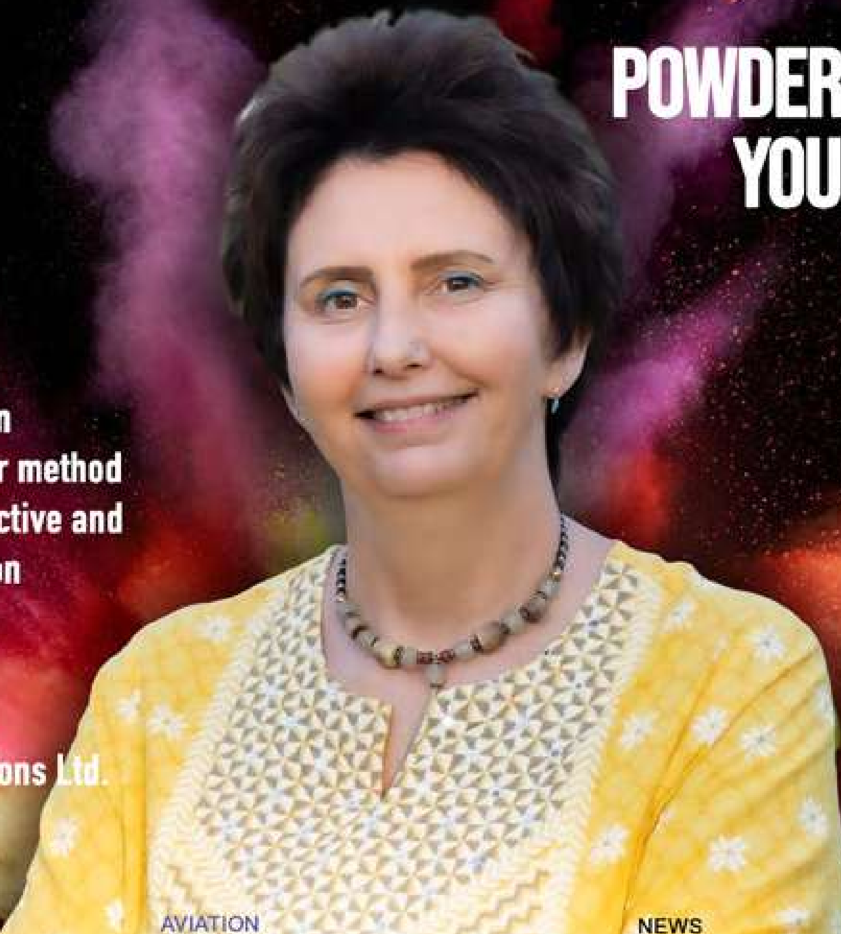

POWDER COATING YOUR WORLD

"Powder coating is an increasingly popular method of providing a protective and decorative coating on metallic objects".
Gillian Bailey,
Managing Director,
Aeromotive Innovations Ltd.

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Equity launches Sh678bn EAC economic stimulus plan

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African airlines dust off Covid slump to resume business at full throttle

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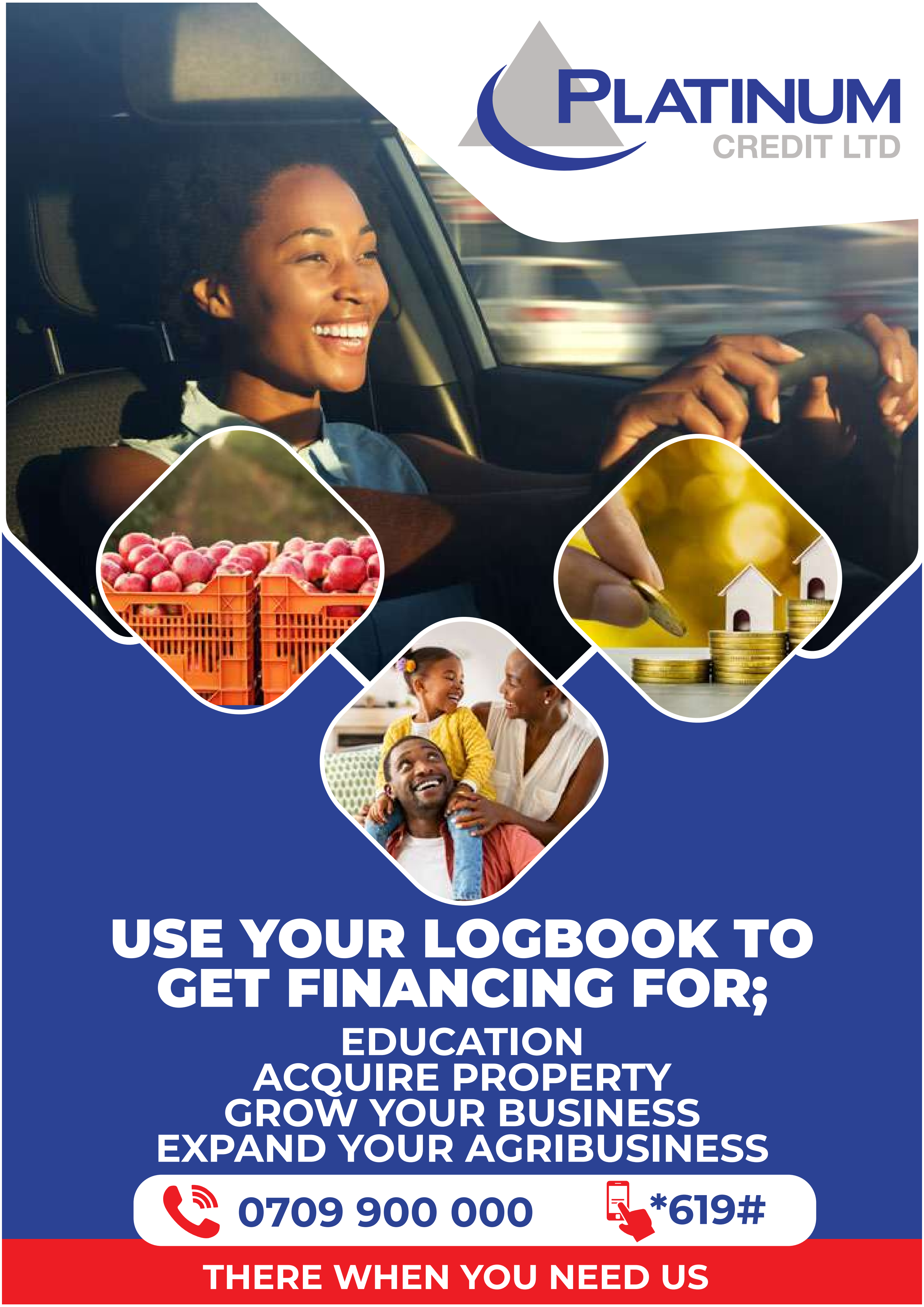
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The East African ***Business Mirror*** is a regular magazine that highlights business activities and prospects in the region.

All editorial and business correspondance should be address to the publisher. All letters should be bear the name and contact details of the author and may be edited subject to availability of space.

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Distribute fertilisers fairly

Farmers have been protesting the high cost of fertilizer for months now. Finally, the government has heeded their calls and the prices have dropped to Sh2,800 for a 50-kilogram bag from Sh6,400. This is a good move because Kenya's agriculture depends on heavy subsidies for fertilizer and other inputs. Hopefully, the lower prices will encourage more farmers to increase production levels, translating into a reduction in the cost of food in the coming months. The Ministry of Agriculture has limited the distribution to 20 bags per grower. To ensure that every farmer gets the fertilizer which will support the cultivation of 1.13 million acres and the product is not hoarded or resold at higher prices, the sale and distribution should be transparent. Kenya is hovering on the brink of famine and without ensuring the fertilizer reaches the right people at the subsidized prices, many will be unable to plant this season. Corruption in the fertilizer subsidy programme will only see Kenya keep extending the begging bowl to the world.

Amend insolvency law for fast revamp of the sugar sector

The sugar sub-sector is a key factor in Kenya's economy. Apart from providing food security, the sector employs millions that rely on it directly or indirectly through sugarcane farming, distribution, retail services and other upstream and downstream supply chain activities. The genesis of poor performance of State-owned sugar millers began when the State took over the running of these companies from among others Mehta Group, Booker Tate, Magahbhai D. Hindocha, Devjibhai K. Hindocha and George Russell Mayers and other expatriates. Political appointees ruined their management. Muhoroni Sugar Company has been under receivership for more than 20 years and many creditors are yet to be paid. Efforts to revive these companies have proven futile with endless court battles intrigued by behind-the-scenes political machinations. The primary legislation governing insolvency in Kenya is the Insolvency Act of 2015. Insolvency comes about when a business cannot raise enough funds to meet its obligations as they fall due. Prior to the enactment of the Insolvency Act on September 11, 2015, liquidation was often the creditor's only recovery option.

Address inclusivity in planned launch of digital currency

Early this year, the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) announced its intention to introduce a digital currency. It has invited public comments to evaluate the role and applicability of a potential Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC). According to the regulator, CBDC is intended to serve as a legal tender similar to the usual notes and coins but transacted in electronic form. As a legal tender, it must have money features of acceptability, durability, portability, divisibility, uniformity and limited supply. Various economic analysis extrapolates the digital economy to be worth $23 trillion by 2025 and returns on ICT Investment will be 6.7 times higher than other sectors. Kenya boasts a widespread digital infrastructure estimated to be worth $5.48 billion, contributing seven percent to the country's gross domestic product (GDP). According to the Organization of Economic Corporation and Development (OECD), digital inclusion is key to economic empowerment of the marginalized groups and can contribute to greater gender equality.

Africa must transit to clean energy urgently

The need for renewable energy and energy transition in Africa is urgent, considering more than 600 million people on the continent have no access to electricity and 900 million have no access to clean cooking fuel.

Forecasts by the International Renewable Energy Agency indicate that with the right policies, regulation, governance and access to financial markets, sub-Saharan Africa could meet up to 67 percent of its energy needs by 2030.

According to the International Renewable Energy Agency, countries like Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco and South Africa have shown firm commitment towards accelerated use of modern renewable energy.

Kenya is a pioneer in geothermal energy in Africa, and, holds fifth position globally. The country's geothermal potential is 10,000+ megawatts; however, the amount currently tapped is under 10 percent.

The world is going through profound change in energy, and renewable energy has moved to the centre-stage of the global energy landscape.

There is a need to strengthen policy commitment. Policy and regulatory stability, transparency and predictability are fundamental to attracting investments and driving cost reduction. And there is need to support innovation, not only in technologies, but also in policy, business models and market design.

The IEA's 2019 Africa Energy Outlook showed how existing policy and investment plans in many African countries fell short of meeting their growing energy needs. The crosscutting effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have now made the situation even more concerning, with energy investment in Africa expected to fall by 32 percent in 2020.

These developments highlight the importance of strengthening the environment for investment in infrastructure and all relevant technologies, and continuing to prioritise attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Peter Kuria

Steam pipes at the geothermal wells in Olkaria KENGEN power stations, Naivasha, Nakuru County on June 2020.

Action is essential in Africa at this moment when the world collectively faces urgent and shared challenges to build back economies, create jobs and accelerate clean energy transitions.

Significant new investment is now critically needed to accelerate the growth of renewable energy in Africa so as to ensure sufficient, affordable, reliable energy for all citizens and drive inclusive, just and sustainable energy transitions.

Governments can play an enabling role by promoting and implementing policy interventions to enable this acceleration. These could be linked to related actions to strengthen energy security, scale up infrastructure investment, and promote the growth of the green economy.

Most important, governments need to collaborate more with the private sector to invest in sustainable energy that has proved to be both effective and profitable.

Peter Kuria is the Business Director at Impact Communications Group.

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KISUMU

Seafarers without permits to be poured out of Kenyan waters

All seafarers seeking to venture into deep sea on Kenya's territorial waters will be required to be certified by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO)and the Kenya Maritime Authority (KMA).

The government says untrained persons will not be allowed to work onboard ships plying deep seas without certification.

Currently, Kenya has over 2,000 seafarers who are licensed to operate in the deep seas. The government, however, says the number is low considering the potential the deep seas can offer in terms of employment.

The government noted that henceforth it will not allow non-licensed workers to offer services for vessels in the deep seas.

"Only IMO and KMA licensed operators will be allowed in the deep sea vessels," said Stephen Buluma, the principal of Kenya Railways Marine School.

His sentiments were echoed by government spokesperson Cyrus Oguna who said it is important for seafarers to be licensed as this assures of their safety when they are in water.

"The need for training and certification is to ensure that they are well equipped in terms of safety and they can handle their work with a lot of professionalism," said Mr Oguna.

To train more seafarers, the government said it will increase intake at the Bandari and the Kisumu marine schools, the only institutions in the country that offer certification.

Norwegian flagged chemical/oil carrier, Bow Optima is guided by the Kenya Ports Authority tugboat as it docks at the Port of Mombasa

Kenya last year secured the welfare of seafarers by gazetting the Maritime Wage Council aimed at resolving the current disparity in wages between Kenyan seafarers and those from other countries which have an established wage standard.

The move was aimed at ensuring locals receive fair pay for equal work onboard ships.

The standard wage will enable Kenya to meet its obligations under the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 of minimum working and living standards for all seafarers and will set a level-playing field for ship owners.

Uganda fertile land can feed 200m says FAO

Uganda's fertile land can feed about 200 million people, according to a new report by International Trade Administration to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation.

The report says 80 percent of Uganda's land is arable but only 35 percent is being cultivated. In the fiscal year 2020-2021, agriculture accounted for about 23.7 percent of Gross Domestic Product, and 31 percent of export earnings.

Uganda Bureau of Statistics data shows that about 70 percent of Uganda's working population is employed in agriculture.

Uganda produces a wide range of agricultural products including coffee, tea, sugar, livestock, fish, edible oils, cotton, tobacco, plantains, corn, beans, cassava, sweet potatoes, cassava, millet, sorghum, and groundnuts.

Investors consider Uganda's agricultural potential to be among the best in Africa, with low temperature variability, fertile soils, and two rainy seasons in the country - leading to multiple crop harvests per year," the report shows.

According to the report, commercialisation of the sector is impeded by farmers' limited use of fertiliser and quality seeds, and a lack of irrigation infrastructure – rendering production vulnerable to climatic extremes and pest infestations.

Sector growth is also impaired by the lack of quality packaging capabilities, insufficient storage facilities, poor post-harvest handling practices, shortage of agricultural credit and high freight costs.

Tanzania, Kenya resolve 10 more trade hindrances

Bilateral trade between Tanzania and Kenya rose to $905.5 million in the first eleven months of last year as the two countries enjoyed improved trade relations

Tanzania and Kenya have resolved ten more trade barriers in effort to grow the trade between the two member states of the East African Community (EAC).

President Samia Suluhu Hassan visited Kenya last May and met her counterpart Uhuru Kenyatta to mend the then deteriorating bilateral ties.

The two leaders ordered ministers and other officials to meet and discuss the issues.

Through the follow-up meetings, some 56 issues were reported to have been resolved in 2021, prompting the growth of trade between the two countries by 38 percent to $765 million in the same year, according to a communique of the latest meeting.

Last week, the ministers and other government officials met for the follow-up meeting where 10 more issues were resolved while 14 outstanding issues are expected to be resolved by June this year, according to the communique of the meeting held from March 9 -12.

"The meeting commended the ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) for their outstanding work in supporting this bilateral trade meeting. Further, the meeting called upon the MDAs to remain engaged in supporting the implementation of the commitments made in resolving trade-related issues," the communique stated.

During the last week meeting, 30 issues were put forward for discussion and 10 of them were resolved – including six presented by Tanzania and four presented by Kenya.

The resolved issues presented by Tanzania include delay of clearance of goods due to scanning procedure; delays in issuance of import permits for dairy products; cumbersome procedures by the Kenya Revenue Authority; difficulties experienced by Taifa Gas Ltd in investing in Kenya; challenges in obtaining work for Tanzania professionals; and requirement of Covid-19 vaccination certificates for citizens of Tanzania to travel to Kenya by air.

The four issues presented by Kenya that were resolved include delayed response of codeshare by the Tanzania aeronautical authorities; denial of designation for Kenya's Jambojet to operate passenger air services to Tanzania; restriction of free movement of engineers to Tanzania; and tour vans dropping tourists on the Tanzanian side of Namanga one-stop border post charged Sh5,000.

Kenya's imports from Tanzania exceeded exports by nearly a third in nine months through September 2021, official statistics from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics shown, signaling thawing trade ties.

Nairobi posted a goods trade deficit of 29.97 percent, with Dar es Salaam — the first over the review period going by publicly available data— after traders doubled orders from the south-neighbouring country.

Kenyan traders and factories largely source cereals, wood, edible vegetables, animal fodder, paper and paperboard from Tanzania.

In March last year, the Kenya Revenue Authority suspended maize imports from Tanzania for allegedly having toxic elements, a move that sparked debate on social media. During that period Kenya also banned Ugandan maize.

The incident dropped 73 percent of the country's maize exports, according to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Peter Manya, as hundreds of traders faced a shortage of foreign markets.

The director of policy, research and advocacy of the Tanzania Private Sector Foundation (TPSF), Anderw Mahiga, said the meetings were aimed at eliminating the inconveniences faced by traders in the country.

"We have received the resolutions well and in these meetings, we are fully involved in the search for solutions. These issues are normally reported by our membersand we see a positive trend in addressing them," said Mr Mahiga.

Abbas Mwalimu, a diplomatic analyst said the move will enable the rapid opening of business interactions while boosting the economic situation of the citizens.

Mr Mwalimu advised the two governments to continue using the Joint Permanent Commission (JPC) to address the new challenges.

Cooking oil, fertiliser prices to further go up

Expect prices of cooking oil, fertilizer and wheat flour to further go up, manufacturers have said, as global trade factors hit Kenya. This is mainly driven by the Russia-Ukraine war which has disrupted the global supply chain of raw materials and shipping, rising oil prices and inflation adjustments which have impacted on the Kenyan shilling. While some commodities had already seen price reviews, households should expect prices of cooking oil, wheat and maize flour, petroleum products, steel and fertilizer to rise further. Golden Africa, dealers in cooking oil with brands such as Avena and Pika, on Thursday said a shortage in the supply of sunflower has forced manufacturers to solely rely on crude palm oil for production of cooking oil and fats, of which Indonesia and Malaysia combined produce more than 90 percent of global supplies.

Ukraine is the largest exporter of sunflower oil globally, responsible for up to 46 percent of sunflower-seed and safflower oil production. The second-largest producer is Russia, which exports about 23 percent of the world's supply.

An alternative Soybean oil supplies were also affected by the two-year drought in Argentina and Brazil due to La Nina; while Sunflower oil supplies have come to a sharp slump after the art of the Ukrainian crisis.

Malaysia posted weak production over the last six months, with December last year being one of the biggest month-on-month tumbles in a year thanks to the heavy precipitation and flooding as well as labour shortages.

This has left the world dependent almost exclusively on Indonesian palm oil which has also enforced a 20 percent retention of all planned oil exports to be sold domestically.

Crude Palm Oil prices had risen to $1,980 (Sh225,878) per metric tonne in the first week of March, from $1,400 tonnes (Sh159,712) before the war. They were at a low of $700 (Sh79,856) per tonne pre-Covid.

"Locally, despite the fact that Covid related factors had already caused a jump in the price of a 20 litre jerry can from Sh2,200 to Sh4,500 in under 2 years; after the invasion, the price shot up to Sh5,100 in under a week," Golden Africa general manager Abdulghani Al-Wojih said.

Basic food items on display at a supermarket in Kenya.

Elgon Kenya Limited which deals in agri-inputs ranging from agriculture chemicals, fertilisers, seeds and irrigation equipment has also warned of a major shortage and price jump in the next two months if sanctions and global supply disruption continues.

According to managing director Bimal Kantari, fertiliser prices could go above Sh7,000 for a 50-kilo bag.

This is on increased costs and a shortage of nitrogen (gas) a component in fertiliser making.

Global DAP fertiliser prices on Monday increased by 25 per cent with the impact expected to be felt in Kenya in the next one month. It is currently going for Sh5,600 per bag up from Sh2,500 a year a go.

Freight costs have also increased as a result of disruption in the supply chain.

For example, importing a container to Kenya now costs an average $10,000 (Sh1.1 million) from $1,500 (Sh171, 120).

"Currently have enough but we are going to have a big shock in the next three to four months," said Mr. Kantari who also chaired the agriculture sub-committee at KEPSA and KAM.

Last week, Agriculture CS Peter Munya told MPs that the Russian war with Ukraine would raise the cost of the farm inputs unless it was subsidised for farmers, noting the country gets most of its fertiliser from China.

Meanwhile, global wheat prices have already increased by more than 33 percent, which is expected to increase wheat flour prices and products such as bread.

A tonne shot up from $345 (about Sh39, 295) to $460 (Sh52,394) last week.

Consequently, a 90 kg bag of wheat is now approximately Sh5,650, with a two kilo packet projected to retail at between Sh180 and Sh200.

The price of a 400-grams loaf of bread is expected increase to between Sh60 and 67, from an average Sh55.

Depending on the availability of wheat, prices are projected to cross $500 per tonne, which would translate to $550 (Sh62, 727per tonne) upon landing in Nairobi, affecting all products made from wheat flour.

A 90 kg bag of wheat is projected to cost approximately Sh5,650, translating to between Sh180 and Sh200 for a 2kg, according to the Cereal Millers Association (CMA)chief executive Paloma Fernandes.

A week shilling against the dollar, which hit a new low of 114.01 against the dollar yesterday, has also seen local industries spend more on importing raw material.

Kenya Association of Manufacturers Phyllis Wakiaga said: "Undeniably, the Russia-Ukraine conflict shall affect the cost of production in Kenya, and further increase the cost of living in the country."

StanChart, Family, ABC banks voted best mobile banking

Standard Chartered bank is Kenyans' most preferred mobile banking under tier one according to Kenya Bankers Association (KBA) poll.

In the poll released on Thursday, Family bank was named the best under tier two while the African Banking Corporation (ABC) Bank was named the best under tier three.

Most Kenyans turned to mobile banking during the Covid-19 pandemic instead of the Automated Teller Machine (ATM).

In a survey carried out by the Kenya Bankers Association 78.8 percent of Kenyans still prefer using mobile banking as of March 11.

KBA asked all the banks in the country to send questionnaires to their customers and most responses came from people who live in Nairobi.

"The geographical distribution of respondents in the survey appears notably skewed in favor of Nairobi. This was unsurprisingly expected, given the concentration of economic activity and financial institutions in the country's commercial and political capital," KBA said.

At least 29,791 people responded to the questionnaire with 835 of the responses coming from Persons Living with Disability (PwDs).

The survey was part of KBA strategy to enhance customer experience in the banking industry.

ABC Bank Group Managing Director Shamaz Savani said the bank is looking forward to improving it's digital platform.

He said that the bank had improved it's position in the category significantly.

According to him, the bank had seen an upsurge in the number of people who prefer to use mobile banking since the Covid-19 pandemic kicked off.

"It is a great honor that the bank has also been recognized in the category of Champions of Governance Awards, Digital Banking Kenya and Think Business Banking Awards," he said.

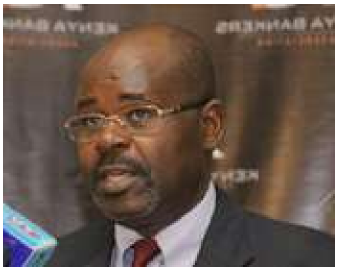
He also said that he will ensure that the bank validates it's commitment to provide a world class customer experience for all of it's customer.

In December 2021, ABC bank was amongst the first bank to partner with Saccos in the issuing of cheques to various members.

Peter Kinyanjui who is the bank's General Manager said that the financial organisation had entered a partnership with Bandari Sacco where the members will be using cheques to make payments and also settle financial issues.

Through the cheques, the money will directly be wired to the account expected to receive the payments.

"It will also assist members to make deposits drawn on any commercial bank in Kenya directly into their Bandari Sacco accounts. This cheque, clearing solution opens doors to other financial and business opportunities to Bandari Sacco members," Kinyanjui said in the statement.


KBA chief executive Habil Olaka

On December 3, ABC Bank and Bandari Sacco made a decision to work together with members agreeing that the deal to pay through cheques was better compared to the hustle of having to queue up when making withdrawals.

Local raw material sourcing spares EABL from shock of Russia - Ukraine war aftermath

The strategic shift to local sourcing of raw materials has spared East African Breweries Plc (EABL) from supply chain disruptions following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The geopolitical event has led to soaring commodity prices including those of wheat and barley which are key brewing ingredients for the alcoholic beverages produced by EABL.

"A few years ago we declared an intent to have 80 percent of all our input sourced locally and that kind of shields us from the heavy shocks from global impacts such as what is going on in Ukraine," said EABL chief executive Jane Karuku.

Russia and Ukraine, for instance, account for about 30 percent of the world's barley supply and the conflict has caused a major disruption in the supply of the commodity.

Ukraine recently banned the export of barley, among other commodities as it hunkers down in the face of the conflict.

Imports from Russia on the other hand have been made difficult because of sanctions imposed by other world powers on Moscow including its ban from SWIFT which is the platform most commonly used by banks to verify international financial transactions.

Logistics firms have also boycotted Russia to protest the Ukraine invasion, further adding to the difficulty of doing business with Moscow.

Shipping lines Maersk, MSC and CMA CGM recently suspended most deliveries to and from Russia.

EABL has been developing its regional network of farmers to secure raw materials for its various products including beer.

More than 60,000 farmers from the East African region supply the brewer with barley and sorghum. In Kenya, it has contracted 47,000 barley and sorghum farmers.

In the year ended June, the brewer purchased approximately 45,000 tonnes of barley and 32,000 tonnes of sorghum from farmers in the East Africa region.

The company's Senator Keg, produced at its Kisumu plant, is among the products made from sorghum sourced from western Kenya.

Farming, textiles hold key to Kenya's exports

Agriculture, textiles and minerals could spur Kenya's export output in the next decade, Standard Chartered Bank says.

In a report titled Future of Trade 2030: Trends and Markets to Watch, the bank identifies major corridors and five trends shaping the future of global trade. Kenya is the only East African country in the top 13 countries that will experience major export growth in the next 10 years.

The research also found that 10 percent of global companies currently are or plan to manufacture in Kenya within the next five to 10 years.

Kenya is projected to grow its exports annually at more than seven percent to cross $10.2 billion by 2030, with Pakistan, Uganda and the US the fastest growing export corridors for Nairobi.

Kenya's business with Pakistan, one of its main tea markets, is set to grow to 10.7 percent of total exports by 2030, followed by Uganda at 11 percent and the US accounting for 9 percent of exports.

Textiles growth

During the past 24 years, Kenya's exports to Uganda have increased at an average annual rate of 4.85 percent, with data indicating that the country exported goods valued at more than $635 million to Uganda in 2021. The main products were palm oil ($63.8 million), coated flat-rolled iron ($42.2 million) and refined petroleum valued at $36.1 million.

The US is the largest export destination of Kenya's apparel, accounting for over 90 percent of garment exports every year. Of the total $667 million US imports from Kenya, nearly 70 percent ($453 million) was apparel, making the sector the single largest stakeholder in the proposed Free Trade Agreement.

The US is the largest export destination of Kenya's apparel, accounting for over 90 percent of garment exports every year.

With ongoing developments in production, government support and newly signed trade deals, Kenya's textile and apparel industry is expected to continue its growth in the global market.

Standard Chartered Head Transaction Banking Makabelo Malumane said the predicted doubling of global trade offers strong evidence that globalisation is still working despite recent dislocation. In addition to the growth of intra-regional trade pathways, the corridors of the future will still cut across continents.

The report, commissioned by Standard Chartered and prepared by PwC, is based on an analysis of historical trade data and projections until 2030.

"Global trade will be reshaped by different key trends based on the wider adoption of sustainable and fair-trade practices, a push for more inclusive participation and greater risk diversification," reads the report.

Countries that adopt digitisation and rebalancing towards high-growth emerging markets are expected to increase their export growth.

Africities summit to focus on investment, digital transformation

The Pan African leadership caucus known as the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG-Africa) has asked African countries to use the 9th Africities Summit to attract more investment opportunities into the continent.

The summit, which is scheduled for May this year in Kisumu City, Western Kenya, will also provide an opportunity for discussion on how to prepare for the forthcoming Climate change conference (Cop 27) to be held in Egypt in November this year.

The UCLG-Africa leadership also wants to use the summit to prepare governments on challenges facing urbanisation in the continent and its impact on environmental conservation.

"Kenya has four Cities: Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu and Nakuru. Nairobi is the Capital City, while the three are intermediary Cities. Kisumu will be hosting the 9th Afri Cities Summit. Just like Kenya, I believe most of our cities are intermediary ones," said Eugene Wamalwa, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Defence.

"There is thus a need for the Summit to deliberate on the financing of urban areas to enable them to effectively deliver services to the urban population, including those who live in informal sectors. As well as attract investors," he added.

"More than ever, the subnational governments need to speak with a united voice at the global level and collaborate in mobilising resources for combating impacts of climate change and pandemics," said Prof Anyang Nyong'o, Governor of Kisumu County.

The 9th Africities summit comes at a time the UCLG-Africa has launched a financial institution to help fund African urban infrastructures and services in preparation for a ballooning urban population in the continent.

An aerialview of Kigali city, Rwanda at night. The Kenya Airports Authority (KAA) has kicked off the expansion of the Kisumu International Airport in readiness for the May 2022 Africities Conference.

With an average annual population growth of 2.4 per cent, which is the highest in the world, it is estimated that the African population increased two-fold during the past 30 years, compared to other regions.

"I am encouraged by some of the measures that UCLG-Africa is implementing to ensure that Africa's local governments stand on their feet economically. One such strategy is the [signing of] Africa Territorial Agency Agreement," said Prof Nyong'o.

"Through this agreement, we have the vehicle that will give us direct access to international financial markets to help finance critical development agenda and the much needed devolved services such as health, water and agriculture," he added.

The Africa territorial Agency (ATA) will avail funds to African nations for infrastructure development in cities.

The ATA is operated as a cooperative institution intended to disburse seed capital of about 100,000 Euros to cities.

During the meeting, the UCLG-A Secretary General Mr Pierre Jean Elong Mbassi urged African countries to send expressions of interest for the fund.

"Please apply for these funds as all Capital Cities of the African Countries qualified for the funding," said Elong Mbassi.

"It will be a reflective event for local governments in Africa and will help us find and fix the missing link between our communities and the African Union," added Mr Mbassi.

On digital front, Mr Mbassi said "We will discuss the digital Transformation in Africa and what the future holds for us. We will work with partners to produce 5 million digital literate people if we have to achieve the digital transformation. We want Africa to take its rightful position and re-invent the world."

During the May event, a dozen former African Presidents whose names have not been officially released and a number of scholars and civil rights activists will be honoured.

Sh32 billion second Mombasa terminal to be launched

President Uhuru Kenyatta is expected to launch the Sh32 billion second container terminal at Mombasa later this month, cementing Kenya's position as the regional hub.

The terminal, to start operations in the coming weeks will accommodate an additional 450 twenty-foot containers and increase the handling capacity to 1.7 million from the current 1.42 million.

It is part of the Mombasa Port Development Programme designed to accommodate larger vessels, giving it a competitive edge over Dar es Salaam and Djibouti ports.

Mombasa Port is the gateway for landlocked countries including Uganda, South Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

"It will have three berths with lengths of 230,320 and 350 metres. The larger berths will handle Panamax container ships of 20,000 deadweight tonnage and post Panamax vessels of 60,000," said acting Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) managing director John Mwangemi.

The official said the installed capacity at the port keeps up with the constantly growing volumes and the associated demand for services.

By 2023, the Port of Mombasa is expected to handle approximately 1.7 million containers up from the current 1.4 million.

Already KPA has procured multipurpose salvage tugboats and three ship-to-shore gantry cranes at $28.9 million for use at the new terminal to boost efficiency and bulk handling activities.

The project was undertaken by Japan's Toyo Construction Company commenced in September 2018, and with its

Mombasa port.

completion, it will open up debate on the management of the facility to pay the loan.

One of the conditions for funding the terminal by the Japanese government was that it would be operated privately.

Mombasa Port remains a key facility for the country's international trade and serves landlocked countries of Uganda, South Sudan, Eastern DRC, Burundi and Rwanda.

JKIA, Moi airport ranked best in Africa on customer service

Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) and Moi International Airport (MIA) have been ranked the best in Africa for the second year running by the Airports Council International (ACI).

JKIA in Nairobi and MIA in Mombasa emerged top in the 2021 Best Airport by Size and Region in the 5-15 million passengers per year and under 2 million passengers per year categories respectively.

ACI's Airport Service Quality (ASQ) survey is considered the aviation industry's most comprehensive passenger service-benchmarking programme and captures passengers' experience in more than 300 airports worldwide.

ACI World director-general Luis Felipe de Oliveira congratulated Kenya Airports Authority (KAA) for its efforts in improving the passenger experience.

"Your customers have spoken and recognised the successful efforts of your team in providing a superior customer experience during these difficult times," Mr Oliveira said.

"As the industry recovers, continuing to listen and adapt to travellers will be absolutely crucial to strengthening airports' competitive advantage, non-aeronautical revenue, and ensuring the sustained recovery of the entire aviation ecosystem."

KAA managing director Alex Gitari noted that the Authority is leveraging on industry best practices as it seeks to provide a

JKIA

seamless passenger experience at its airports.

"We are truly delighted that for the second year running, our two main airports have been awarded by ACI for the efforts made in delivering improved customer experience in a safe and secure environment," Mr Gitari said.

The award came as the Authority prepares to host the 67th edition of the ACI-Africa Regional Conference in Mombasa from March 12 to March 18.

Tanzania Distilleries Limited to buy 1500 tonnes of grapes

Tanzania Distilleries Limited (TDL), a subsidiary of Tanzania Breweries Limited (TBL), plans to reach 300 grape farmers and purchase 1,500 tonnes of their produce this year.

The company will reach the farmers through an agricultural support programme that is undertaken by TBL's parent firm, AB InBev.

AB InBev's agricultural support programmes directly target women, with between 30 to 40 percent of the 300 grape farmers to benefit from the project expected to be women.

During the pilot project, which kicked off last year, TDL, the largest consumer of grapes and the largest wine producer in the country disbursed Sh350 million to procure 233 tonnes of grapes from its contracted grape farmers at a price of Sh1,500 per kilogramme.

"TDL has been pioneering the development of the Tanzanian wine industry, a commitment which includes the support of local grape farmers," TBL managing director Jose Moran said in a statement availed to The Citizen yesterday.

Currently, Mr Moran said, the spirit business has relationships with over 700 farmers who produce the grapes that are processed into its range of wines. With this programme, detailed Mr Moran, TBL aims towards development of grape farming in Tanzania targeting to empower more women.

One of the women grape farmers in Dodoma who benefit from the programme, Irene Mlola, said they have been receiving regular visits from TDL experts who support them with oversight of crop, consultation on pesticides and fertilizers, support during harvesting and pruning. "This program has been a key pillar in our expansion plan," she said. Furthermore, in partnership with TDL, she said they were conducting various experiments at their farm to test different methods of increasing productivity as well as managing damaged soil patches.

For its production and brewing activities, AB InBev depends on high-quality agricultural crops from thriving communities and healthy ecosystems.

Taking a farmer-centric approach in its commitment to supporting sustainable agriculture supply chains, AB Inbev, through its agronomists and researchers, pursues its goal that 100 percent of direct farmers are skilled, connected and financially empowered by 202

Korean training deal to benefit 5,000 Kenyan youth

About 5,000 young people will benefit from employment opportunities after Kenya signed an Sh800 million deal with the Korean government to support vocational training.

The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and the Ministry of Industrialisation, Trade and Enterprise Development signed a Record of Discussion – an agreement between the partners, to work closely with the private sector to empower youth with technical skills.

"The experience and expertise in quality, precision and speed of growth in manufacturing from these two countries will bring about transformative industrialization in Kenya, delivering a better quality of life," said PS for Industrialization Kirimi Kaberia.

KOICA will provide Sh832 million ($7.3million) to improve the quality of TVET in Kenya.

The Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET) provides both classroom training and practical exposure in the industry, training on relevant life skills, IT, technical and entrepreneurship skills in TVET partner institutions.

The German Development Cooperation will implement the partnership through Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) employment and skills development for Africa (E4D) program, which will partner with vocational institutes 12 counties.

"This collaboration will make a significant difference in expanding the footprint of the industry

Public Service Youth and Gender Affairs CS Margaret Kobia receives Korean Prime Minister Lee Nak-yon during the Korean International Corporation Agency (KOICA) Alumni Reception at safari park hotel Nairobi.

and the capacity for production in the country," added Bodo Immink, GIZ Country Director.

"The youth will therefore be trained using updated quality machines for the various courses," said Mr Jang Hee Im, Country Director of KOICA in Kenya.

Tougher times for consumers as high transport costs costs take effect in Kenya

Transport trucks parked by the roadside in Kikopey, Gilgil.

Kenyans are staring at tougher times as truckers announce a 5 percent increase in transport costs in the wake of a rise in fuel prices announced on Monday.

The Kenya Transporters Association (KTA) announced immediate increase in transport charges starting Tuesday after the Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority (EPRA) announced a 10-year high fuel price in its latest monthly review.

KTA chairperson Newton Wang'oo said fuel contributes up to 35 percent of total direct transport costs and indirectly affects other costs such as for tyres and spare parts since they are all imported.

Mr Wang'oo said transport charges have remained constant from the period when the diesel pump prices in Mombasa were between Sh75 and Sh80 per litre compared to the current Sh108-110 per litre.

"Transporters' margins can no longer sustain any increase in costs and regrettably have to pass on the increase to the cargo owner for road transport sector to survive," Mr Wang'oo said.

"KTA wishes to advise transporters country-wide to increase their transport rates by a minimum of 5 percent to sustain their businesses under current circumstances and to circumvent a total collapse of their businesses."

Abdul Mahamud, a Mombasa transporter who owns 11 trucks operating across East African countries, said he is now forced to fuel in the neighbouring countries where prices are comparatively lower.

"I ferry goods to Tanzania and Uganda. I have no otherwise but to fuel my trucks in such countries to ensure the fuel is enough to makes round trip so as to mimimise transportation cost," said Mr Mahamud.

"As much as the government thinks it will collect adequate tax (by increasing fuel cost), it will only work for those in local logistic sector who are not heavy fuel consumers. But for us who do cross border trade, we will be hit hard."

On Monday, EPRA increased fuel prices with a litre of petrol going up by 4 percent to Sh134.72 in Nairobi, while diesel prices jumped 4.5 percent to Sh115.60 per litre from while prices of kerosene remained unchanged.

The prices are inclusive of the eight percent value-added tax (VAT) in line with the provisions of the Finance Act, 2018, the Tax Laws (Amendment) Act, 2020, and the revised rates for excise duty adjusted for inflation as per Legal Notice No. 194 of 2020.

The higher fuel prices are expected to inflate costs of food, transport, electricity generation and manufacturing.

Increase of fuel prices will also affect manufacturers who use diesel to run their factories. The manufacturers will in turn pass operational expenses to consumers.

High prices last year forced the state to introduce a subsidy scheme in October to diffuse public outrage over the high cost of living.

The fuel subsidy scheme which is supported by billions of shillings raised from consumers through the Petroleum Development Levy had kept pump prices unchanged for five months.

The regulator had maintained fuel prices unchanged since October at Sh129.72 and Sh110.60 a litre for petrol and diesel respectively on fears an upward review could fuel public anger.

Equity launches Sh678bn EAC economic stimulus plan

The plan was announced on Monday by Equity Group Managing Director James Mwangi.

It focusses on revival of primary sectors of food and agriculture, manufacturing and logistics, trade, Micro Small and Medium Enterprises as well as social impact and environmental investments.

"A total of Sh678 billion (USD 6 billion) will be available to five million MSMEs and 25 million individual borrowers for the next five years," Mwangi said.

He said the plan conceives that the five million businesses largely comprising MSMEs will create 50 million jobs, 25 million jobs directly and an equal number of jobs indirectly.

Small and Medium Enterprises in Kenya continue to struggle from the Covid-19 impact. With little or no financial support, most have closed shop while others are struggling to break even.

Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) data shows that about 400,000 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have been dying within the first year of inception, in the last five years, raising concern over sustainability of this critical sector.

Over 80 per cent of annual jobs created come from MSMEs sector which also contributes up to 33.3 per cent of GDP.

According to Mwangi, Equity's Eastern and Central Africa recovery and resilience plan is envisaged to provide financing of up-to two per cent of the combined GDP of the six economies, in which the Group operates.

It is projected to provide blended financing of short-term overdrafts, medium term loans and credit facilities which require long-term project and development financing in the private sector.

Equity Group MD James Mwangi (centre), Equity Group Director Strategy, Strategic Partnerships and Investor Relations, Brent Malahay (left) and Equity Group Chief Commercial Officer, Polycarp Igathe (right) during the launch of the Sh678 billion Africa recovery and resilience Plan aimed at accelerating the economic recovery and resilience of the Eastern and Central Africa region.
Equity Group has set up a Sh678 stimulus package to help firms and individual borrowers in East and Central Africa recover from the Covid-19 pandemic impact.

"The recovery plan will have special focus on youth and women, supporting them to be the primary drivers of creating and expanding opportunities in the real economy," Mwangi said.

Under food and agriculture, Equity says it will focus on unlocking productivity gains and value addition ecosystems to achieve food security for the region while increasing value creation.

The recovery and resilience plan also seeks to leverage on productive capacities and comparative advantages to transform the region into a manufacturing hub.

The plan covers value addition for primary products including retaining value in mineral processing to export semi-finished and finished products.

The plan targets financing of in-country manufacturing and regional supply chains to replace broken global supply chains following COVID-19 disruptions.

On trade and investments the Group's plans to focus on the expansion of markets for the primary sectors of food and agriculture and the manufactured products, along with the realisation of investments to support growth of the two sectors.

To enhance the success rate among MSMEs and young people, Equity Group's plan involves credit risk sharing mechanisms and capacity building through financial literacy and entrepreneurship training.

"The Group has pilot tested lending to young people under the Young Africa Works in partnership with Mastercard Foundation with a resounding success rate of 436,000 MSMEs trained and funded to the tune of Sh136 billion, and 1.2 million jobs created by the enterprises as they expand and grow on access of financing," Mwangi said.

Equity Group has partnered with the United Nations Resident Coordinators in the six countries for collaboration effort to champion the socio-economic transformation of Africa.

From painting to powder coating your world

Gillian Bailey, Managing Director, Aeromomotive Innovations Limited

After years 26 years of specializing in the supply of quality automotive and aerospace paints, Dreamcoat Automotive Refinishing Products Limited now has another kid off the blocks!

Through a sister company, Aeromomotive Innovations Limited, the enterprising organization has now introduced powder coatings into their most sought-after products and services. Aeromotive is known for its expertise in Aircraft paints.

Talking to The East African Business Mirror recently, Gillian Bailey, the Managing Director says that through a business partnership with AkzoNobel, they will be importing and distributing Interpon Powder Coatings in Kenya and the East African region. This follows their appointment after Akzo announced that for strategic reasons, they would be stopping local operations and passing them onto Aeromotive Innovations Ltd with effect from April 1, 2022.

Aeromotive Innovations is headed by Gillian who has been the AkzoNobel Automotive paint importer of Sikkens and Dynacoat in Kenya for over 26 years under the name Dreamcoat Automotive Refinishing Products Ltd.

"As an AkzoNobel, Automotive Coatings distributor for many years and with extensive experience in the country, we at Akzo truly believe that there are synergies in the product offerings and in the high level of service required of the customer'', said Mr. William Waller, the Sales Manager in South Africa of the powder coating manufacturing company in reference to the new appointment of Aeromotive Innovations Ltd.

What is powder coating?

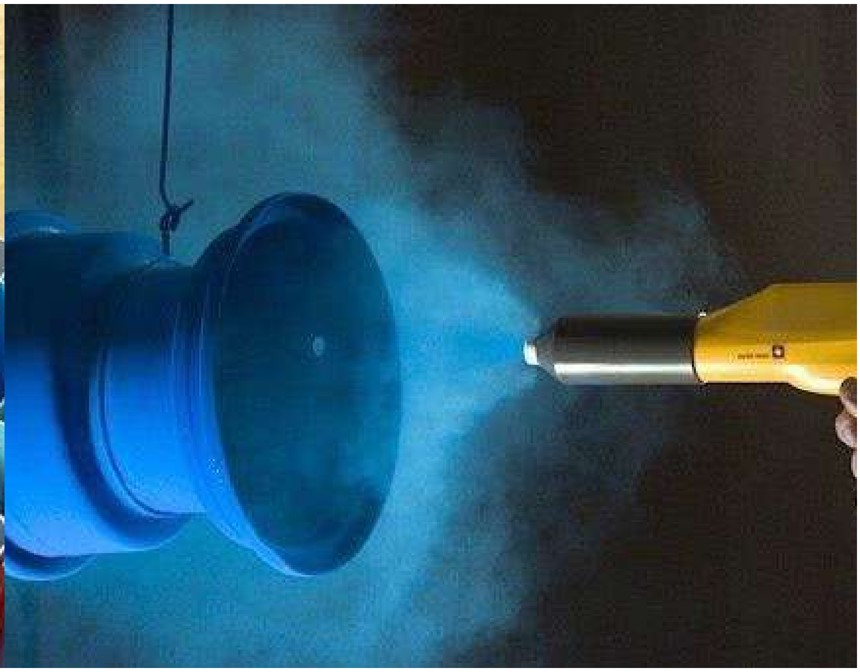
Powder coating is an increasingly popular method of providing a protective and decorative coating on metallic objects. Unlike liquid paints, a powder coat is a dry material that will not drip or run upon application. Powder coating is most commonly used on aluminum and steel.

About powder coating

Can be used on everything from automotive parts and household appliances to architectural, agricultural, electrical and construction equipment as well as IT, furniture and general industry.

Interpon Powder coatings are:

- Safe, clean, economical and eco-friendly
- Solvent-free

Powdrecoated products including steel frames and rim.

- Reduced risk of fire
- Lead-free
- Ease of waste disposal
- No hazardous materials used during clean up
- No Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC)
- Contain no toxic heavy metals such as lead or chromium (VI)
- High application efficiency; recyclable, up to 99% usage, overspray can be reused
- Improved productivity
- One coat system, simple process
- Can build high film thicknesses easily, up to 150 microns with one coat
- No costly removal and reprocessing of solvents
- Highly durable
- Low carbon footprint

In conclusion, our Powder Coatings:

- Give excellent performance
- Meet the wide range of global coatings standards
- Can offer significant cost benefits compared to liquid paints
- Are safe and sustainable

Advantage of powder coating

The powder coating process is extremely efficient. Most jobs require only one coat, which helps to minimize project costs. Powder coating is cheaper than wet paint and results in less product wastage and excellent durability. It is also easy to adapt the coating thickness to meet the protective requirements of the project.

Powder coating is an excellent choice for applications where aesthetic appeal is important. Coatings are available in a wide variety of colours and speciality effects to produce the desired appearance of the work piece. Powder coating also exhibits fewer differences between horizontally and vertically coated surfaces, which ensures a more consistent appearance throughout the product.

In an era where compliance with environmental regulations is essential for companies in all industries, the powder coating process offers an eco friendly alternative to liquid painting and other commonly applied metal finishing techniques. Most powder coated products are free from potentially harmful chemical solvents and release few or no volatile organic compounds (VOC) into the atmosphere.

What you can expect from Aeromotive Innovations Ltd

Quality products, competitive pricing and excellent customer service with a smile.

To color coat your imagination, visit Aeromotive Innovations at their new location behind Vision Plaza off Mombasa Road, Nairobi.

For inquiries call or email us on 0722519944, 0721489753
info@aeromotiveinnovations.com
www. aeromotiveinnovations.com

Gillian Bailey Pictorial

Gillian Bailey started her working life as a Caterpillar Diesel mechanic in 1987 in the UK as shown above. She has aways been a passionate animal lover. Pictured above (right) is Gillian during the KSPCA Shaggy Dog show which she organised for the Animal Welfare Society where she is the Vice Chaimam on the Executive Committee.

Gillian has been a Concourse de Elegance judge for many years. Pictured above with one of the entrants from Uganda in a past event.

Gillian was Auto X, 2WD non-turbo champion in Kenya in 2017. Her son, Ryan Bailey won the Junior Championship. It was the first and only case of mother and son winning their respective championships in Kenya in the same year.

In the 2016 Sodi Go-Karting championship Gillian came 2nd overall. In above photo, Gillian appears in one of the races at the event.

Gillian Bailey is an enthusiastic Managing Director, Team Leader and worker within her successful ventures. She enjoys having a sizeable and cheerful workforce at both Dreamcoat Automotive Refinishing Products Limited and Aeromotive Innovations Ltd. Above is a photo of a cross-section of their members of staff.

Gillian the newsmaker. Here she poses during an interview at one of Kenya's renowned TV stations after a successful motor race

Amica Sacco bets on new mobile app to hit Sh1.2bn in 2022

Amica Savings and Credit is banking on its new mobile application to hit its annual revenue targets amid an improving business environment in the country.

Sacco's chief executive James Mbui said that the mobile App – Amicash, will initially target the SME market segment for swift access to a variety of banking, money transfer and payment services from the comfort of their mobile phones.

The company is aiming to hit in excess of Sh1.2 billion in total annual revenue by the end of 2022 – as it seeks to surpass the Sh978 million it posted for the year ended December 2021.

"It is an innovative product that offers seamless transactions tailored to suit the needs of our SME market which is an important segment of our business and such innovations will be very critical if we are to achieve our set targets for the year," commented Mbui in an interview.

Since the pandemic hit more than two years ago, small businesses were presented with unprecedented challenges including lockdowns, containment measures, with demand shifts in response to Covid-19 pushing many MSMEs to the brink.

During the pandemic period, a growing number of businesses including public offices turned to digital payments as a way to avoid direct contact with cash to avoid the virus' spread.

Indeed, increasing the availability and usage of digital merchant payments has been a key driver in Kenya's journey towards becoming a cash-lite economy.

Data from Safaricom's Results Booklet shows that between March 2020 and March 2021 there was a 43 per cent increase in the number of active Lipa na M-PESA agents and a 75 per cent increase in the number of merchant tills.

Access to affordable funding became more limited to such businesses after the pandemic, and while Mbui admits that the firm extended loan term reliefs and moratoriums, the majority of SMEs were forced to trim their workforce to remain afloat, while others were pushed out of business completely.

Amica Sacco CEO James Mbui and chairperson Nelson Muchiri address the media recently. Amicash is an innovative product that offers seamless transactions tailored to suit the needs of their SME market which is an important segment of their business.

Kwale charcoal producers trained on improved technology to conserve environment

Hundreds of Kwale county charcoal producers will benefit from the environmental conservation training aimed at improving livelihoods and uplifting the standards of living of the local communities.

The training programme was rolled out by World Wide Fund for Nature, Kenya in partnership with the ministry of Energy, Kenya Forestry Research Institute and Kenya Forest Service.

The project is part of the efforts to combat the effects of global warming and help the government achieve the 10 per cent forest cover.

The training is taking place in Kilifi county Energy center involving the forest-dependent communities who solely rely on charcoal burning activities for livelihood.

Charcoal creation undertakings are highly known for forest degradation and environmental pollution.

WWF officer Neema Suya said the locals are trained on improved methods of charcoal production and cooking to reduce the pressure on natural forests and conserve the environment.

"We are empowering the communities to seek alternative sources of energy for cooking and adopt new technology of efficient charcoal creation to lessen over-reliance on trees," she said.

The locals receive the training under the umbrella of the Charcoal Producers Associations. They comprise of 12 groups that are expected to pass the knowledge to the rest of the communities.

The groups originate from Kinango, Samburu and Lunga Lunga.

This is because the three subcounties are the hardest hit by the charcoal burning vice in the coast region since most residents depend on it for livelihoods.

Some years back, the national government banned charcoal burning and illegal logging to prevent forest destruction, but locals devised new ways to harvest tree forests despite the ban.

The obliteration of the forests has led to the massive loss of indigenous trees endangering the ecosystem.

Kwale charcoal producers display charcoal produced by improved technology after holding trials in Kilifi county

Currently, majority of the coastal parts are affected by severe drought, deforestation being the key reason for the disaster.

Suya said the programme will see residents minimise tree felling for charcoal burning and use effective techniques that are environment-friendly.

The long-lasting goal is to make the locals use less wood resources for high quality and quantity charcoal production.

She said the forest communities are advised to adopt pruning old branches rather than cutting the whole tree whose consequences are devastating.

They are also taught how to make charcoal briquettes, biogas and take advantage of advanced skills in sustainable charcoal fabrication.

The charcoal blocks can be made using various waste resources without necessarily going for trees.

KEFRI research scientist Emily Kitheka said they have researched various improved kiln technologies for charcoal making that champion environmental management.

She said they are preparing the forest communities and enabling them to move from inefficient kilns to better ones that have a higher rate of charcoal production with minimal effects.

"If we look at the traditional earth kilns, they consume a lot of firewood and produce small amounts of charcoal and are of poor quality," she said.

Kitheka said the modified kilns can produce 25-35 kilos of charcoal bags from one tone of wood, unlike the traditional earth mound kilns that give approximately 10-15 kilos.

Some of the newly invented Kilns are the improved traditional earth mound, Adams retort and Portable metallic kiln.

According to her, the portable kiln is the most effective, it has a high charcoal recovery rate and takes about 48 hours to be ready. The others take days or weeks for charcoal to be harvested.

The kilns are affordable and can be made locally in the market.

Kitheka said the locals are also coached on sustainable tree harvesting for charcoal burning whereby they are encouraged to establish tree nurseries for both exotic and indigenous trees.

The idea is to empower locals to embrace the system of tree replacement after cutting the old ones for regeneration purposes.

Kilifi KEFRI research officer Timothy Namaswa said the adoption of advanced technologies and sustainable production will narrow down the health and climatic dangers brought by poor human livelihood activities.

"We are not promoting charcoal burning but we want to reduce it in the most effective ways possible because improved methods mean fewer trees and pollution," he said.

Kwale KFS officer Maghanga Blessington said the forest cover in the region was at 5.2 per cent terming it very low.

Blessington blamed the illegal tree cutting and charcoal burning for the decrease in forests in Kwale.

He said sustainable charcoal harvesting will spearhead the protection for natural regeneration.

Kwale CPA chairperson Chakaya Mtunda said the training programme comes at a time when they need it most, saying the ban on charcoal negatively affected their lives.

He said they will consider alternative ways of making charcoal and income without tampering with nature.

"The training will play a huge part in our lives because we have learnt how to source for biogas using livestock waste, creating charcoal briquettes and relying on suitable technology for charcoal production," he said.

KCB to lend Sh5bn in first big green loan financing

KCB Bank will extend Sh5 billion loan facility to an infrastructural sector firm in the country, being the first company to receive the green funds.

In 2020, the lender received accreditation from the United Nations Green Climate Fund (GCF) for on-lending to investments and projects with a positive impact on the environment such as reduced carbon emissions.

The bank listed on the Nairobi Securities Exchange said most of the applications so far are from infrastructure, agriculture and, building and construction sectors, however failed to disclose the company's name.

"The accreditation process is very long and rigorous. We are working with a number of clients going through the process. At the moment only one of whom has completed the technical assessment and we are looking to disburse this year," said Rosalind Gichuru, KCB Group Director marketing and corporate affairs.

She spoke during the bell ringing for gender equality event by NSE and UN on the theme in fighting climate change. She did not divulge details of the company and the project.

KCB Bank was the first lender in the country to receive the accreditation, supporting growth for its loan portfolio under green space lending space.

The bank was accredited

Kenya Commercial Bank branch in Gikomba Market in Nairobi. The bank has been aggressive in the green funding space and support lending to firms that want to support combat climate change.

under the medium to large private sector category, allowing it to front projects of between Sh5 billion and Sh25 billion, meaning a focus on corporate entities.

SMEs can put an application as one entity.

The National Treasury is the national designated authority (NDA) for accrediting entities who apply for funding through GCF in Kenya.

The disclosure comes more than a year after the accreditation of the bank and the slow transition of the country to a low carbon economy through green finance and bonds.

There are concerns of default risk for investors and assurance of proceeds from green finance to be used in sustainability projects.

This has seen the Treasury place stringent requirements such as documents showing policies and practices meeting environment and sustainability matters such as anti-money laundering, gender equality and whistleblowing.

The bank has been aggressive in the green funding space and support lending to firms that want to support combat climate change.

Last year, KCB had announced plans to issue a green bond this year.

It is also working with development finance institutions such as International Finance Corporation and the African Development Bank to lend to small and medium enterprises.

The threat of climate change is seeing posing a high risk to businesses.

As a result, investors and policymakers are requesting information from public and private companies on climate action and sustainability to assess risks and to price them in the market.

Rich Lamu oil prospects fuel Kenya's economic plans

Kenya is just weeks away from announcing the discovery of new oil resources in the Lamu basin, bigger than what was found a decade ago in Turkana, in what could be a turning point for the country's dreams of reaping petrodollars.

Italian oil exploration company Eni — in partnership with France-based oil and gas company TotalEnergies and Qatar's state-owned oil and gas firm Qatar Energy — is racing to conclude a five-kilometre exploratory drilling deep water well that will establish the potential oil resources in the Lamu basin.

The oil resources that can be recovered from the Block L11B are estimated at about 700 million barrels according to early conservative estimates, more than a fifth of Turkana's commercially extractable volume of 585 million barrels.

The large fiscal windfall associated with new oil resource revenue could help Kenya boost development and improve the standards of living for citizens through access to key services and amenities such as roads, health, food security and education.

The well is located approximately 170km from the coast, underneath the Indian Ocean seabed where Eni has been prospecting and drilling for oil.

Eni's drillship SAIPEM 12000 has been on location within Block L11B since late December 2021, when it started drilling, and is expected to complete operations this month.

The drilling was expected to start earlier in the month but was delayed due to a number of factors including meeting requirements to comply with Ministry of Health protocols to mitigate the Covid-19 pandemic.

Potential

Seismic surveys revealed that the area has the potential for oil resources estimated at four billion to 4.8 billion barrels. Oil and gas explorers use seismic surveys to produce detailed images of the various rock types and the location beneath the earth's surface and to determine the location and size of potential oil and gas reservoirs.

Eni expects to release deposits its results of its drilling campaign in the block that would determine whether there is commercial viability.

Eni Kenya BV managing director Tavolini Enrico remained tight-lipped on Eni's prospects in Lamu promising additional information later.

"We shall give you an update in the next two weeks," Mr Tavolini said in response to queries.

Once a discovery is made, confirmation through appraisal wells would be needed. This would mean Eni and it's partners would dig additional wells to confirm whether any discovery would be big enough for the oil firms to develop Kenya's first deep water field.

Early data however indicates the existence of oil resources, what is technically referred to as an active petroleum system in the area.

The well in the Lamu Basin offers Kenya another chance to become an oil producing country. It would come a decade after British exploration firm Tullow Oil made Kenya's first oil find in Turkana County's South Lokichar sub basin.

Kenya first announced the discovery of oil in Block 10BB and 13T in Turkana in March 2012.

The country is however yet to fully commercialise the crude oil.

There is great potential for oil in Kenya's Lamu Basin.

"Data from this well and other exploration activities show that the Mlima 1 prospect could have a much more considerable accumulation than the discoveries in the South Lokichar basin," said Rita Maina, a senior energy transition advisor at the Kenya Civil Society Platform on Oil and Gas.

"If the drilling is successful, there is a high probability that the South Lokichar basin discoveries will take a back seat because the Mlima 1 prospect will have a more significant economic benefit to the country and will be easier to develop," she added.

Mlima-1 is tipped to be the first commercial oil discovery in a region where exploration activities to date have almost exclusively resulted in gas discoveries.

An oil discovery in the Lamu basin would push Kenya to guard it's maritime borders in the area amid a border row with Somalia. The basin lies within the disputed territory with Somalia.

Last year, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta said the country will not cede even an inch of the disputed area.

Turkana oil wells

Tullow has been under pressure from Kenya to develop the Turkana oil wells that it expects to produce up to 120,000 barrels per day once production starts.

Tullow and its partners in the project, Africa Oil and Total, had initially planned to reach a final investment decision in 2019 and production of the first oil between this year and next year.

In October last year, Tullow presented a revised Field Development Plan for oil in the Turkana oil fields to the government of Kenya just in time to beat the set deadline of December 2021.

Had the plan not been submitted in time, then they would have risked losing concession on their exploration block as stipulated in the production sharing contract.

The British firm expects to recover 585 million barrels of oil from the project over the full life of the field.

The commercially extractable volume for the Turkana South Lokichar basin rose to 585 million barrels from the previous estimate of 433 million barrels, according to British petroleum consulting firm Gaffney Cline Associates.

Kenya, Ethiopia in talks over electricity imports

Kenya and Ethiopia started talks on Nairobi's plans to buy electricity from the $ 4.5 billion Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) that began generating power last month. This is according to Ethiopia's ambassador to Kenya, Meles Alem.

Meles wrote on his Facebook page that power exports to Kenya are part of Ethiopia's "Economic diplomacy which is at the centre of the country's foreign policy".

The Nairobi meeting came a day after the Horn of Africa nation announced that its controversial dam on the Blue Nile river had begun generating electricity.

Earlier this month, Kenya reached a new agreement with Ethiopia to import hydro-processed cheap power.

The arrangement was reached after an Ethiopian delegation, led by Ethiopia's state minister for finance, Eyob Tekalign, visited Nairobi on February 2-4.

The neighbours had deliberated on previously signed power trade agreements and deals on the interconnection of power systems in light of progress made on each side.

A statement from Ethiopia's ministry of foreign affairs said the new deal made in Nairobi intends to "realise the aspirations of both countries' respective people for regional economic integration and sustainable development".

During a February 4 meeting with Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Dr Monica Juma, Eyob said the close relationship between Kenya and Ethiopia would help spur economic growth.

He said the two countries were nearing the conclusion of the interconnector, and they needed to review the status of the project.

"It was necessary to ensure that Ethiopia and Kenya do everything humanly possible to fulfill the dreams and aspirations of both countries to see the entire region connected," he said.

In her remarks during the meeting, Dr Juma said "the value of the interconnection of our power systems is key to powering our aspiration for fast growth".

Both ministers reiterated that the benefits of the interconnection project would go beyond Ethiopia and Kenya by creating a pathway and model for sister nations across the continent. Both parties said they were committed to the project.

The GERD project, in the western Benishangul-Gumuz region, began in 2011. It is 30km from the Sudanese border and has long been a source of contention between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan.

Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on Sunday officially inaugurated electricity production from the massive power plant.

Sudan and Egypt see the dam as a threat to their water security due to their high dependence on the resources of the Nile river.

The two downstream countries fear that GERD, what would be

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam in Guba, Ethiopia. Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on February 20, 2022 inaugurated electricity production from the mega-dam on the Blue Nile.

Africa's largest dam, could eventually reduce their water share from the river.

But Ethiopia insists that the dam is key to its development and electrification, to light up the homes of 60 per cent of its people who lack access to electricity.

At the inauguration ceremony, PM Abiy assured downstream countries that Ethiopia never intended to harm their interests.

"Ethiopia's main interest is to bring light to 60 percent of the population who (are) suffering in darkness, to save the labour of our mothers who (carry) wood on their backs in order to get energy," he said.

"As you can see, this water will generate energy while flowing as it previously flowed to Sudan and Egypt, unlike the rumours that say the Ethiopian people and government are damming the water to starve Egypt and Sudan."

The 145-metre-high dam started generating 375 megawatts of electricity from one of its turbines earlier this month.

Upon completion, GERD is expected to produce more than 5,000 megawatts of electricity, more than doubling the country's power output.

Ethiopia, Africa's second most populous nation, intends to generate about $1 billion in annual revenue from electricity exports to neighbouring countries and beyond.

African airlines dust off Covid slump to resume business at full throttle

African airlines are dusting off plans for operations in a post-pandemic market even as the continent faces mixed prospects in global air traffic recovery. IATA, the International Air Transport Association, predicts a firm path to resumption of global air travel, with passenger numbers expected to surpass the 2019 peak in 2024.

The bullish outlook is informed by the easing of travel restrictions in key markets as Covid-19 vaccinations reach optimal levels and infection rates recede.

Across the globe, airlines posted strong performance in January 2022, with Europe leading the pack and Africa also looking up. Improvements in the major North Atlantic and intra-European markets, are the backbone for recovery with Asia-Pacific's recovery expected to continue to lag because China, the region's largest market, continues to cling to restrictive border controls.

Meanwhile, a sudden spike in fuel prices means airlines will lose more than the $11 billion that IATA had predicted for 2022.

Planning operations

Airlines are either buying aircraft, hiring new personnel or adjusting schedules to shift capacity to markets that are opening up faster and cutting back or putting on hold planned route launches to restricted destinations.

For instance, this week, Ethiopian, Africa's largest airline, placed an order for five brand-new Boeing 777-8 dedicated freighters, becoming the type's launch customer on the continent.

IATA sees passenger traffic bouncing past pre-pandemic levels.

After several episodes of start and stop, Nigeria says it will finally relaunch its revamped flag carrier next year.

According to the African Airlines Association (AFRAA), four airlines continued with their route development plans during 2021 while another 11 either reopened existing routes or launched new ones. At the end of January 2022, airlines in the region had reinstated 78.7 percent of their pre-Covid capacity.

Uganda Airlines which last year launched new services to Johannesburg and Dubai, is hiring staff for its London office ahead of a much-anticipated commencement of services to the UK. Kenya Airways this week announced a network review that will see its London service revert to daily while Yaoundé will cease operating at the end of May.

Kenya Airways has also indefinitely postponed the launch of a planned service to Milan, citing weak market conditions in the Italian market. Further south, South African Airways is spooling up for a return to the market after coming out of restructuring.

IATA sees passenger traffic bouncing past pre-pandemic levels, to reach four million travellers in 2024 – three percent higher than the last peak achieved in 2019. But it will not be until 2025 that African airlines hit a similar milestone.

Key drivers that would have supported Africa's recovery are missing. Although 34 countries, who between them account for 80 percent of African traffic, have signed up to the Single African Air Transport Market SAATM, the initiative has not gotten off the ground.

Receding infection rates

The airline lobby's optimism is shared by Airbus and Boeing, the world's major commercial aircraft manufacturers, who are also sticking to their planned production rate increases.

According to, intra-African demand remained weak at just 31.3 percent while Intercontinental travel was struggling at 23.5 percent.

Despite some easing, governments largely maintained coronavirus controls. For instance, while Uganda removed the requirement for its controversial test on arrival, travellers are required to present a negative Covid certificate taken 72 hours prior to departure, on both the outbound and inbound legs.

While vaccinated passengers can travel to Mauritius without being subjected to a pre-departure test, they are required to take one on arrival and a second one on day five of their stay.

Subject to fewer restrictions, the domestic sector is expected to lead the recovery with regions that have a significant domestic sector benefitting more.

In its latest update, IATA says the pace of recovery slowed in both the domestic and international segments during January 2022 relative to December 2021 as governments tightened travel restrictions in response to the emergence of the Omicron variant last

November.

But Willie Walsh, IATA's Director-General says government have picked lessons from this episode and are now more open to easing restrictions.

"The recovery in air travel continued in January, despite hitting a speed bump called Omicron. Strengthened border controls did not stop the spread of the variant. But where population immunity was strong, the public health systems were not overwhelmed. Many governments are now adjusting Covid-19 polices to align with those for other endemic viruses. This includes lifting travel restrictions that have had such a devastating impact on lives, economies and the freedom to travel," Walsh says.

Overall, demand for air travel was up 82.3 percent compared to January 2021 although that number was 4.9 percent below December 2021 on a seasonally adjusted basis.

On the opposite end, African airline' traffic rose just 17.9 percent year on year during the reference period, which was lower than the 26.3 percent annual increase recorded in December 2021. The region's airlines boosted capacity by 6.3 percent over the period while the load factor improved by 6 percent reach to 60.5 percent.

Cautious optimism

IATA cautions that while January 2022 saw strong growth in traffic compared to the preceding year, passenger demand was far below pre-Covid-19 levels. Total RPKs in January were at 49.6 percent of January 2019 levels with international traffic down 62.4percent and domestic traffic off the mark by 26.5 percent.

The Middle East, a key connector for Africa saw demand rise 145.percent year on year in January compared with January 2021, although that was still below 178.2 percent witnessed in December 2021, compared with the same period in 2020. January capacity rose 71.7 relative to the comparable period for 2021 with load factor inching up 17.5 percentage points to reach 58.6perecent.

The figures for January do not cover any impacts from the Russia-Ukraine conflict because it began at the end of February. According to IATA, the Ukraine market accounted for 3.3 percent of European passenger traffic and 0.8 percent of global traffic in 2021 while Russia's international market represented 5.7 percent of European traffic excluding the Russia domestic market and 1.3 percent of global traffic.

Operational cost factor

However, the resulting sanctions and airspace closures are expected to affect travel, especially among countries neighbouring Russia and Ukraine. The airspace closures have forced the rerouting or cancellations of flights on some routes, mostly in the Europe-Asia and the Asia-North America market.

The airline lobby, however, observes that in addition to disruptions caused by the Ukraine conflict, the resulting spike in fuel prices is adding pressure on airline costs and will negatively impact the loss position. The airline industry was expected to accumulate a loss of $201 billion between 2020 and 2022.

"When we made our most recent industry financial forecast last autumn, we expected the airline industry to lose $11.6 billion in 2022 with jet fuel at $78/barrel and fuel accounting for 20 percent of costs. As of March 4, jet fuel is trading at over $140/barrel. Absorbing such a massive hit on costs just as the industry is struggling to cut losses as it emerges from the two-year Covid-19 crisis is a huge challenge. If jet fuel prices stay that high, then over time, it is reasonable to expect that it will be reflected in airline yields," said Walsh.

Supply chain restoration

On the upside, many governments are removing or relaxing their Covid-19 travel protocols as a growing body of evidence suggests that airline passenger do not pose a greater than average risk of transmitting the disease. For instance, Singapore has introduced vaccinated lanes at its airports allowing vaccinated travellers to transit faster.

"The past few weeks have seen a dramatic shift by many governments around the world to ease or remove Covid-19-related travel restrictions and requirements as the disease enters its endemic phase. It is vital that this process continue and even accelerate, to more quickly restore damaged global supply chains and enable people to resume their lives," says Walsh.

Walsh adds that one step that could speed up a return to normalcy would be to remove mask mandates for air travel.

"It makes no sense to continue to require masks on airplanes when they are no longer being required in shopping malls, theatres or offices. Aircraft are equipped with highly sophisticated hospital quality filtration systems and have much higher air flow and air exchange rates than most other indoor environments where mask mandates already have been removed," said Walsh.

Year-on-year, domestic air travel was up 41.5 percent during the month but down 7.2 percent compared with December 2021 on a seasonally adjusted basis. International revenue passenger kilometres (RPKs) rose 165.6 percent compared to January 2021 but slipped by 2.2 percent between December 2021 and January 2022.

European airlines saw the most growth during January, with international traffic increasing by 225.1 percent over the comparable period for 2021. That growth was achieved on a 129.9 percent increase in capacity while the load factor climbed 19.4 percentage points to 66.4 percent.

The bullish outlook is informed by the easing of travel restrictions in key markets as Covid-19 vaccinations reach optimal levels and infection rates recede. But the gains will not be evenly distributed with the business expected to recover at a slower pace in Africa, which has vaccinated fewer people against Covid.

Despite the global easing, African operators face mixed prospects, boxed in by low Covid-19 vaccination rates and a smaller domestic market. That is likely to limit the number of people who can travel within the region and beyond.

Kenya Power eyes electric vehicles market to grow sales

The company plans to supply power to charging stations for electric vehicles in parking lots, key roads, and shopping malls in major towns, being developed by private investors. It recently also hinted of putting up its own charging stations in future. According management, the e-mobility evolution provides the company with an opportunity to grow its sales, as it continues with its turnaround plans after years of losses. The country has witnessed continued growth in the adoption of electric vehicles with recent investments being in PSV buses.

There are units in the taxi industry and three wheelers, with Nairobi having majority of the EVs. Nopea Ride is a leader in Kenya's electric taxi service. In January, the Finnish electric cab firm had announced it planned to triple its fleet in Nairobi, helping reduce emissions from the populous city's notorious traffic. EkoRent, the parent company of Nopea, had planned to have about 1,500 EVs in its ecosystem by the end of last year. The electric fleet is giving Nopea a competitive edge over the gasoline vehicles that dominate the market. The International Energy Agency projects that 60 per cent of global car sales will be electric by 2030. The gradual tightening of fuel economy and tailpipe Carbon dioxide standards has augmented the role of electric vehicles to meet new standards, the agency notes. "To support the growth of electrified motorisation in the country, Kenya Power has established a liaison office, which will act as our one-stop shop to champion the e-mobility business," acting managing director Rosemary Oduor said yesterday.

She spoke during the flagging off of the first electric PVS bus by e-mobility start-up, BasiGo, in Nairobi. This came after Swedish-Kenyan startup, Opibus, introduced an all-electric bus in the Kenyan market. Matatu Owners Association chairman Simon Kimutai yesterday said the industry is warming up to e-mobility in the PSV sector. However, the industry is keen on the advantages and disadvantages of electric motor vehicles, mainly cost implications that come with their operation. "If it is cutting our operating costs mainly on fuel, why not?," he posed.

Passenger electric vehicles registered in Kenya remain low and are estimated to be less than 500 units, compared to over 3.5 million internal combustion units. Globally, there are about 10 million EVs on the roads. Of these, about 1,600 are in South Africa. Kenya Power notes it has enough electricity to charge 50,000 buses and two million motorcycles during off-peak hours. An average minibus, operating within Nairobi covers approximately 200 kilometers per day and consumes 120 KWh/units at a cost of Sh2,400. "A thousand mini buses, operating within the city, would therefore consume approximately 120 MWh per day, presenting us with a viable business case to promote the e-mobility agenda," Oduor said.

E-mobility, which is driving the green agenda, dovetails with the country's energy mix which currently comprises over 92 per cent of renewable power, with a target of going fully green by 2030. Kenya presently has an installed capacity of 2991 MW, and an off-peak load of 1200 MW.

Electric Vehicles fuelling costs are 50 per cent to 75 per cent lower than for ICE Internal Combustion Engine vehicles, contributing to a very attractive Total Cost of Ownership.
Kenya Power is in talks with at least five e-mobility firms as it readies to tap the electric vehicle market to grow sales, management has said.

"This means that there is enough power to support the entire e-mobility ecosystem, including powering charging stations for domestic and business use," Oduor said. The company, she said, will work with other stakeholders to support the development of the e-mobility eco-system, which will include the identification of sites for potential charging stations, as well as requisite geo-mapping software to enable users locate the nearest charging station.

The firm which returned to profitability last year is keen to increase sales and cut power losses. Revenue from electricity sales increased by Sh9.8 billion in the financial year ended June 2021, to Sh125.9 billion, an increase of 8.4 per cent. The increase is mainly attributable to a growth in unit sales by 400 GWh from 8,171 GWh the previous year to 8,571 GWh. During the period under review, the company connected a total of 716,206 new customers compared to 500,397 connected the previous year. This increased the total number of customers to 8.2 million.

Consumption by the new customers contributed an additional 122 GWh to electricity sales, translating to Sh2.6 billion in revenues.

The revenues from the new customers comprised 37 per cent from commercial and industrial customers, 34 per cent ordinary lifeline customers (consuming less than 100 monthly units),16 per cent from ordinary customers (consuming more than 100 monthly units), 11 per cent from small commercial customers, and two per cent from street-lighting.

Mobile lenders to reveal hidden fees from September

Mobile phone lenders will from September be required to disclose the total charges for their loans, including interest rates, late payment and rollover fees, before disbursing credit to customers.

The requirement to disclose hidden charges is part of the conditions for fresh licensing of the digital mobile lenders by the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK).

"We have been having issues with mobile lenders and I would like to announce that the law is there and it will streamline the industry. Arising issues of overpricing, misuse of customers' data will be taken care of in the new law with which they have to comply by August 2022," CBK Governor Patrick Njoroge said on Tuesday.

"In this new law, consumers will benefit and it will bring sanity. We are sure CBK will set minimum charges which will lower interests of the credit service offered."

Most Kenyans are not aware of their rights and do not read the terms of the loans when signing up for credit.

This leaves them vulnerable to being saddled with costly interest rates that rise up to 520 percent when annualised, triggering mounting defaults.

President Uhuru Kenyatta in December signed into law the Central Bank Bill, 2021, bringing digital lenders under the watch of the banking regulator for the first time.

The CBK Act, 2021 will see the lenders seek approval of the central bank for the pricing of their loans and products, subjecting them to the same rules as commercial banks.

The new law also grants the banking regulator powers to revoke the permits of digital lenders who breach the confidentiality of personal information while pursuing defaulting borrowers.

It aims to stop a trend where some lenders resort to "debt shaming" tactics to recover loans.

There have been reports of debt collection agents pursuing borrowers by informing their friends and family using contact information scraped from their phones or by threatening to tell their employers.

The law requires the digital lenders to comply with its rules within six months of CBK publishing regulations to guide its implementation.

The CBK is yet to gazette the regulations.

Failure to reveal interest charges, late payment and rollover fees has been cited as a major problem bedevilling customers who turn to digital loans due to their ease of access given that they do not require collateral.

"An applicant shall provide the terms and conditions applicable to the digital credit and which must be accepted by the borrower before activation of a mobile loan account," says the new law.

The CBK will also have powers to revoke or suspend the licences of digital lenders who do not disclose full information on loan facilities to borrowers in line with the consumer protection law.

The Consumer Protection Act requires sellers to disclose to consumers all relevant information tied to the purchase of a good or service.

The law also comes amid growing concerns over predatory lending by the mobile loan providers, with borrowers not getting full access to information on pricing,

Mobile phone lenders will from September be required to disclose the total charges for their loans. The CBK Act, 2021 will see the lenders seek approval of the central bank for the pricing of their loans and products, subjecting them to the same rules as commercial banks.

punishment for defaults and recovery of unpaid loans.

Digital lenders will now set interest rates for their loans within parameters approved by the CBK in an effort to protect borrowers against predatory lending that has driven many into the debt trap.

The firms have in recent years flooded the local market, attracted by demand for quick credit that does not require collateral. Borrowers get loans within minutes via their mobile phones, making digital loans a quick fix for daily bills.

The CBK says that borrowers tapping the digital loans from the unregulated lenders grew to more than two million two years ago from an estimated 200,000 in 2016, highlighting their popularity.

The Data Protection Act bars sharing of data with third parties without consent and gives individuals the right to be told when their data is being shared and for what purpose.

Borrowers share personal information, including their professions and monthly earnings, when registering with digital lenders.

But besides the pursuit of unpaid loans, digital lenders share personal information with data analysing firms and for marketing.

The CBK has previously raised concerns about the abuse of the personal data of borrowers and called on lawmakers to fast-track legislation to provide for the regulation of digital lenders.

The Data Protection Act further compels firms to disclose to individuals and customers the reasons for collecting their data and ensure that the confidential information is safe from infringement by unauthorised parties.

Uganda warms up to Naivasha dry port, SGR

The Ugandan government has started warming up to the Standard Gauge Railway following the exposure of how it works.

On Saturday, the Kenya Railways MD Philip Mainga led a Ugandan Finance, Planning and Economic Development Parliamentary Committee on a fact-finding tour of the Naivasha Inland Container Depot.

Minister of State General Duties, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Uganda, Henry Musasizi led the delegation.

The nine-member and three support staff delegations started a seven-day fact-finding mission in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania before making their way to Mombasa Port and finally Naivasha Inland Container Terminal.

The Chair of the Committee Keefa Kiwanuka and deputy chairperson Avur Jane Pacuto were present.

At the Naivasha ICD, the delegation was keen to learn how goods were being moved seamlessly from SGR to MGR for onward transmission to Malaba then Uganda.

"We decided to do a visit to Kenya particularly to appreciate how the movement of our goods along the Northern Corridor is. We did our visit in Mombasa at the Kenya Ports Authority and now we are here," Musasizi said.

Kenya and Uganda in May last year joined forces to rehabilitate the old meter-gauge railway as a means of enhancing the seamless movement of goods.

The Kenyan government has since revamped its metre gauge line from Naivasha to Malaba, a move that was followed by the launch of passenger service in December.

Kenya Railways managing director Philip Mainga accompanied by Uganda government officials lead by minister of state for finance Henry Musasizi during a tour of the Naivasha ICD where they witnessed transhipment of cargo from SGR line to MGR line for onward transportation to Uganda through Malaba

RELUCTANT

Uganda has been reluctant to use the Naivasha Inland Container Depot as its key transit cargo handling facility despite Kenya's push to relocate operations from Mombasa and Nairobi.

The Naivasha facility comprises over 1,000 acres of space with a marshalling area able to hold 700 trucks at any given time.

The neighbouring country has preferred to continue picking their cargo from Mombasa.

Currently, it costs an average of $2,100 (about Sh225, 120) to move a 20-foot container from Mombasa to Kampala.

SGR takes 10 hours from Mombasa to Naivasha saving clients 18 hours.

Uganda accounts for 83.2 per cent of transit cargo through the port of Mombasa.

South Sudan takes up 9.9 per cent while DR Congo, Tanzania and Rwanda account for 7.2 per cent, 3.2 per cent and 2.4 per cent respectively.

Musasizi said the Ugandan government is looking at a collaborative mechanism among the EAC partner states on how to facilitate trade.

"Kenya has aggressive efforts to develop infrastructure along the Northern Corridor from Mombasa up to Malaba. As a partner in the EAC, we need to collaborate on how this can also be improved on the Ugandan side so that we are able to facilitate trade better," he said.

Musasizi said they have had long term challenges in terms of the cost of doing business with the major driver being the cost of transport.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

The Ugandan Minister said they believe that there is a need for massive infrastructure development in railway, road, air and water to bring the cost of doing business down.

He said they appreciate the Kenyan government for the decisive efforts it has taken so far noting that some progress has been made on the Ugandan side.

"We are currently involved in the rehabilitation of our meter gauge railway and in the medium term, we also intend to do the Standard Gauge Railway. All these are efforts which are aimed at facilitating business," he said.

Musasizi said what Uganda needs at the moment is the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the Meter Gauge Railway but added that resources for SGR have also been provided for.

He said rehabilitation works on the 260-km Malaba-Kampala metre gauge line will go on.

Musasizi however failed to disclose how much has been set aside for SGR only saying that it is planned for the medium-term.

"We think it should not take a long time but I cannot tell you it is tomorrow or any other day," Musasizi said.

At Naivasha, the delegation witnessed transhipment of cargo from SGR line to MGR line for onward transportation to Uganda through Malaba.

Mainga said a new crane has been acquired and is set to hasten the process of loading and offloading of goods.

The MD said moving goods through SGR and MGR has helped reduce the turnaround time, a move that has reduced the cost of doing business.

Kiwanuka said: "It has been an overwhelming experience to see what our sister countries are doing, the nature of the infrastructure that they have developed in order to enable the facilitation of trade."

He said the committee will the Ministry of Finance and other stakeholders, including transport, and see how they can fast track infrastructure development in Uganda, to enhance cargo movement and trade in the region.

Kenya Railways gets Sh300m to complete Kisumu-Butere line

Parliament has allocated Kenya Railways Corporation (KRC) Sh300 million to complete rehabilitation works on the Kisumu-Butere line.

The Finance and National Planning Committee reallocated the Treasury's vote as contained in the Supplementary Budget to secure the money for the completion of works on the metre-gauge railway line (MGR).

"The committee recommends the following reallocations - National Treasury: rehabilitation of the Kisumu-Butere rail: addition of Sh300 million," the committee said in a report on the scrutiny of the Supplementary Budget I for the financial year 2021/22.

The committee chaired by Homa Bay Women Representative Gladys Wanga has also allocated an additional Sh200 million for the construction of Naivasha Inland Container Depot (ICD).

The corporation early this month announced that rehabilitation works that began in September 2021 are 90 percent complete. KRC plans to have the first train carrying both passengers and cargo on the line in June.

The Kisumu-Butere railway line is an extension of the MGR that was revamped from Nakuru to Kisumu.

The line snakes through Kisian, Lela, Maseno, Luanda, Yala, and Namasoli trading centres.

The Nakuru-Kisumu line was refurbished to ensure seamless cargo and passenger transport from the Mombasa-Nairobi-Naivasha standard gauge railway (SGR).

The refurbished line once complete is expected to ease the movement of passengers and cargo from Mombasa to Butere.

The MGR provides an interconnection between SGR and MGR at Naivasha. This allows seamless movement of cargo from Mombasa to the East African region without having to transport it on road.

Early last month, Kenya Railways revealed that it has bought seven passenger locomotives from China to be used between Nairobi and Kisumu and extend commuter services to Butere.

The locomotives will come as a boost to the recently rehabilitated metre gauge railway that has seen Kenya Railways introduce train to Kisumu once weekly.

Kenya railways regional manager for Kisumu Michael Disi announced that there has been an increase in demand by passengers on the route, hence the need to increase the frequencies.

The train has so far ferried over 2,000 passengers since it started operations last year in December.

Passengers alight at Kisumu Railways Station. The MGR provides an interconnection between SGR and MGR at Naivasha. This allows seamless movement of cargo from Mombasa to the East African region without having to transport it on road.

Why DRC is fertile hunting ground for Kenyan firms

Kenyan firms are planning to expand into the populous Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) that is about to join regional trading bloc after making formal application in June 2019.

The admission of DRC into six-nation East African Community (EAC), expected to be concluded this year, is projected to strengthen trade ties, expanding market for goods and services.

The mineral-rich country already has established trade ties with most of the EAC member states through bilateral deals and at multilateral level through Southern African Development Community (SADC) where Tanzania is a member.

A view of the main highway in the City center of DR Congo Capital City of Kinshasa. With a population of over 90 million, DRC offers Kenyan manufacturers a larger market for their products.

"With a population of over 90 million, DRC offers Kenyan manufacturers a larger market for their products," Mr Mucai Kunyiha, the chairman of the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM)

"Its rich appetite for agricultural produce shall enable local manufacturers expand their volume of exports."

With a surface area equivalent to that of western Europe, the DRC is the largest country in sub-Saharan Africa, only is dwarfed by Algeria in the continent.

Analysts say it offers huge untapped opportunity for access to one of the world's last economic frontier markets.

The central African country, 11th largest in the world by area, is endowed with exceptional natural resources, including minerals such as cobalt and copper, hydropower potential, significant arable land, immense biodiversity and the world's second-largest rainforest.

"We are at advanced stage (of admitting DRC into EAC). We are in the last step to present findings to the (EAC Heads of State) Summit. It will certainly make a difference to the smallest person all the way to multinationals," EAC Affairs Principal Secretary Kevit Dasai said recently.

"The importance of the private sector leadership need to be stressed because while the government is rolling out structures and fabrics, it's up to them (business leaders) to promote leadership."

DRC is already a key African market for Kenyan firms with latest official annual data showing exports earnings from the country amounted to Sh14.3 billion in 2020 — only dwarfed by Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Egypt and South Sudan.

Some of the key exports to DRC are animal and vegetable fats and oils, pharmaceutical products, tobacco, iron and steel, leather and footwear, vegetables, fruits, nuts, plastics as well as paper and paperboard.

"With enhanced access to the DRC market, the volume of these exports is expected to rise in the near term, and pave way for more products," Mr Kunyiha said.

Dominic Kahozi, a director at DRC's National Agency for the Promotion of Investments (ANAPI), has singled out agribusiness as the low-lying fruit for Kenyan firms, citing expansive arable land suitable for crop and livestock farming.

Other sectors ripe for investment include fishing, hydro-electric generation, mining, healthcare, hospitality and insurance sectors.

low-cost labour force

"We … have a low-cost labour force, favourable investment environment and an increasingly attractive and competitive business environment,"Mr Kahozi told a recent online forum of Kenyan firms angling for opportunities in the DRC.

"People have been talking about a market of about 100 million people, but when you look at it on great scheme of things with nine neighbouring countries, we are looking at a potential market of 250 million people for any investment."

Kenya has been keen to deepen trade especially with Eastern DRC, and the looming entry into the EAC bloc has made it a fertile hunting ground for growth-hungry firms in Nairobi.

President Uhuru Kenyatta, for instance, had in April 2021 signed bilateral deals on transport, security and trade with his counterpart, Felix Tshisekedi, in a bid to deepen trade between the two countries.

Despite the country relying on eastern Africa sea ports for imports, Mombasa handles less than 15 percent of the share of goods sent to DRC, with Dar es Salaam in Tanzania and Beira in Mozambique getting the bulk of the deals.

"I believe that our commonality gives us a very good opportunity for us to deepen our relations further as we work together to achieve these objectives for the people of our respective countries,"Mr Kenyatta said during his three-day State visit to Kinshasa last year. "One thing I'd like our two [technical] teams to work on is to ensure that we ease the problem of our people being able to travel between our two countries."

With endorsement from the World Bank Group and the African Development Bank as the next frontier for growth on the continent, Kenyan firms are making a beeline for opportunities in that country whose population remain amongst world's poorest despite enormous mineral wealth.

For instance, a two-week trade mission late last year to key DRC's key towns of Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, Goma and Mbuji Mayi, sponsored by Equity Group — Kenya's largest lender by deposit accounts — attracted nearly 170 Kenyan firms.

170 prospecting firms

Equity has established operations in the DRC through acquisitions and sees the country as strategically important for future growth of its subsidiary business—investments outside Kenya.

KCB Group, Kenya's largest lender by market share, has indicated that it is on tail-end of its plan to enter DRC, with an announcement expected in coming months.

Another notable blue-chip company which has firmed up strategy to set shop in the expansive market is Jubilee Holdings which has applied for a licence to set up a composite underwriting business.

Equity Group chief executive James Mwangi has compared DRC's level of economic development to that of Kenya's in the 1980s.

"For me, the biggest opportunity, given that Kenya has an advantage of being a service-oriented economy, is to service the mining industry. We can populate ourselves to the entire value chain of all the commodities that DRC produce," Mr Mwangi said in an interview with Citizen TV. "We should be the ones doing boreholes for water for them, hospitality (and) spare parts using the logistics base of the Mombasa port and even energy requirements."

For manufacturers, DRC's minerals such as copper, cobalt and coltan offer opportunity for raw materials for industries in Kenya, while the mining industry provides market for electrical and electronic products.

"Demand for electric car batteries and electronics has been on the increase. This has led to an increased demand for raw materials such as cobalt and coltan," Mr Kunyiha said. "By joining the region, Kenyan manufacturers will have enhanced access to these raw materials, largely produced in DRC."

A report by African Development Bank has noted that normalisation of political situation and a new determination to reform and fight corruption in the populous DRC has instilled a climate of confidence, promoting new private investment in sectors that drive the economy forward.

The Kenyan manufacturing sector lobby, however, cites unpredictable taxation regime, a "rigid and inconsistent" justice system as well as a "tedious and lengthy" customs clearance process as some of the risks to investors.

"Exporters are required to make local arrangements for customs agents, which translates to extra costs," Mr Kunyiha said.

"As it joins the EAC, DRC should work towards creating a conducive business environment that promotes long-term foreign investment and sustainable economic growth."

While no latest credible data on returns is publicly available for potential investors, a 2014 DRC Country Mining Guide by global consultancy firm, KPMG, suggested DRC's mining sector presents a "high-risk high-return opportunity".

Besides SADC, DRC is also a member of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (Comesa), Economic Community of Central African States (Ecowas), Organisation for the Harmonisation of African Business Law and the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries.

"By virtue of being a member state of these trade blocs, DRC adheres to the existing trade guidelines, regulations, and agreements. As such, partner states are bound to enjoy the incentives provided for within each trading bloc,"Mr Kunyiha added.

Security and the economy to top Nigeria's 2023 election

Civic agitators: Protesters at the Gani Fahweyinmi Park, Ojota district of Lagos, Nigeria, venue of the June 12 protest, on 12 June 2021. June 12 is 'Democracy Day', which marks Nigeria's move to civilian rule more than 20 years ago.

Nigeria will be holding a General Election on February 25, 2023, one week later than scheduled, against a backdrop of runaway insecurity which now seems to have morphed into banditry, presenting a litmus test for the new president.

This will be the seventh General Election since Nigeria returned to civilian democratic rule in 1999. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) says it has registered more than six million new voters, adding to a national register of 60 million voters.

Voters will also be choosing new state governors and members of parliament.

Beyond insecurity, Nigeria is bogged down by high unemployment, poverty and a surging population. Concerned opinion leaders like Ogbonnaya Emmanuel, the president of the National Association of Nigeria Comrades, a civic lobby, said the country needs a leader with a vision of revamping every sector of the economy, irrespective of his political affiliations.

"We need a candidate that is ready to grow the economy. We need a new Nigeria. We need a candidate that is credible, reliable and nationalistic in administration," he told The EastAfrican.

The National Co-ordinator of Advancement for Democracy, Prof Sam Smah, said Nigerians are expecting a president who would harness the ethnic and religious diversities to the advantage of the nation.

But it is insecurity that could define President Muhammadu Buhari's tenure, and also that of the incoming one.

First, insecurity could interfere in the holding of elections, especially in the northeast, northwest, northcentral, and southeastern regions of the country.

An insurgency, separately fronted by fighters of Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), has been a heavy burden on the northeast where more than 109,000 people have been killed since 2009, according to official government figures. Banditry, on the other hand, reigns in the northentral and northwest regions and has claimed the lives of at least 9,300 people since January 2020.

This year, bandits have been striking almost with impunity, with cases reported every day of the week, targeting not just civilians but security agents and government officials too.

Even the peaceful south and southwestern states face a different security problem. They are threatened by a militia group linked to the separatist Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).

The militia, Eastern Security Network (ESN), an offshoot of IPOB, have taken up arms against the state, killing people and destroying government infrastructure, including offices of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to prevent elections from being holding in the five southeast states. Some of their leaders are now in detention, facing trial.

But from happenings in Abuja, the election is unstoppable. A fortnight ago President Buhari assented to the Amended Electoral Act arguing that it will simplify the conducting of elections and the transition. It spells out the modalities for holding primaries by political parties as well as the introduction of electronic transmission of results.

On March 8, President Buhari wrote to the National Assembly seeking further amendment to Section 84 (12). The Speaker of the House of Representatives Femi Gbajabiamila told lawmakers that the president was seeking to get rid of some unconstitutional provisions in the Act, such as Section 84 (12) which marginalises serving political office holders from voting or being voted for at conventions or congresses of any political party.

No favoured successor

At least 18 political parties will be fielding candidates from the presidency and all other elective posts. Two major parties, the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and the opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP), are the presidential race front runners at least going by past performance.

In a recent interview on a national TV station, President Buhari has said he has no favourite candidate and promised to go by the wishes of his ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) party, in deciding on his successor.

"No, I wouldn't name a favourite,

because he may be eliminated if I mention. I better keep it secret," he said.

Buhari, 79, will be completing his eight -year tenure in May 2023. He has been a military president before and later ran for the presidency as civilian several times before winning in 2015, defeating Goodluck Jonathan. Jonathan succeeded Umar Yar'Adua who died in office in 2010.

His ruling party is currently preparing for the national convention on March 26, and planning the zoning of various party offices in readiness for the primaries to determine candidates for all elective positions.

Other political parties have also fixed dates for their national conventions as well as for party primaries which are supposed to be conducted before end of April 2022.

All party election preparations are done one year ahead of the election.

Despite the fear of insecurity there are chances this may be a safe election after all. The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) released in the first week of March showed that Boko Haram and other militant groups were now committing fewer attacks than, say, three years ago.

The GTI, published by the think tank, the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP), shows that total deaths from terrorism in Nigeria fell to its lowest level since 2011.

It reported that terror-related casualties dropped by almost half compared with the previous year and that there has been a dip in violence.

So far, no clear information is coming out on who is running for the presidency but popular figures are emerging ahead of their party primaries.

They include the current vice president, Prof Yemi Osinbajo; the national leader of APC, Bola Tinubu; Yahaya Bello, Kogi State governor; Orji Uzor Kalu, the chief whip in the Senate. Anyim Pius Anyim, former senate president 2000 to 2003; Kingsley Moghalu, a former deputy governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria are in the race.

Popular figures

The other aspirants are Dele Momodu, the chief executive officer of Ovation Magazine; Dave Umahi, the Governor of Ebonyi State; Rivers state Governor Nyesom Wike; Rotimi Amaechi, current Transport minister; and Bukola Saraki, ex-Governor of Kwara State (two terms), and former Senate president.

Also in the running is former vice President Atiku Abubakar, 75, and Aminu Tambuwal, the current Governor of Sokoto State.

The chairman the INEC, Prof Mahmood Yakubu, has released the election timetable for the 2023 General Election showing that party primaries, including the resolution of disputes arising from them, should be done between April 4, 2022 and Friday June 3, 2022.

Submission of nomination forms to INEC via the online portal for presidential and National Assembly election takes place from June 10 2022 to June 17, 2022.

Submission of nomination for Governorship and State Assembly elections is from July 1, 2022 to July 15, 2022.

There is clear system on how this election will be conducted, but Nigerians and the rest of Africa will have to wait and see.

Kenya, Zimbabwe ink seven pacts to boost investments

President Uhuru Kenyatta with his visiting Republic of Zimbabwe counterpart, Emmerson Mnangagwa during a press briefing at State House in March this year. President Kenyatta urged Western countries to scrap the restrictions on Wednesday during a joint press briefing with visiting Zimbabwean leader as the two countries renew their bid to deepen trade and investment.

Kenya has signed seven bilateral agreements with Zimbabwe even as President Uhuru Kenyatta joined the push for the removal of Western sanctions sapping the economy of the Southern African nation.

During the talks held at State House in Nairobi, Kenya and Zimbabwe signed the bilateral agreements, all memoranda of understanding (MOU) on political and diplomatic consultations, tourism and wildlife conservation, and civil aircraft accidents and serious incidents investigations.

Others were on women empowerment and community development, youth affairs, cooperatives and sports and recreation activities.

"We affirmed the need for cooperation with bilateral commitment at global levels to deal with pandemics of this nature now and in the future. Both Zimbabwe and Kenya are committed to enhancing cooperation towards mitigating the adverse effects of climate change and other environmental issues," Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa.

President Kenyatta urged Western countries to scrap the restrictions on Wednesday during a joint press briefing with visiting Zimbabwean leader as the two countries renew their bid to deepen trade and investment.

The European Union (EU) last month renewed its two-decades-old sanctions against Zimbabwe, citing "continued human rights violations and closure of the democratic space."

Besides the EU, the United States and the United Kingdom have maintained targeted sanctions against Zimbabwe.

"And this we consider to be unfair for these hardships were artificially created and we continue to call on the international community to remove these illegal sanctions," President Kenyatta said as he attributed Zimbabwe's long-running economic crisis to the sanctions by Western countries, a position amplified by Harare.

Zimbabwe has been under EU targeted sanctions since 2002 after the late Robert Mugabe won a controversial presidential election.

After Mugabe was toppled in a military coup in 2017, his successor President Emmerson Mnangagwa pushed for the normalisation of ties with the bloc, but this is yet to bear fruit.

Last year the US extended the sanction by one-year sanctions against 141 entities and individuals in Zimbabwe, including Mnangagwa.

The EU argues the situation in Zimbabwe has not changed under President Mnangagwa, hence the move to extend the embargo.

The EU however decided to lift suspended travel bans and asset freezes against Zimbabwe's Vice President Constantino Chiwenga, army chief Phillip Valerio Sibanda and former first lady Grace Mugabe.

Harare says the US sanctions have been the most devastating. These bar US officials at the International Monetary Fund and World Bank from voting for debt relief or fresh lending for Zimbabwe.

The Zimbabwean leader is leading a delegation for bilateral talks in Kenya.

The African Union and Southern African Development Community have clamoured for the removal of the curbs without success.

SafariDigest

Inspiring African Adventure

Saving mountain bongo from extinction

Saving mountain bongo from extinction

On March 9, a team of veterinary officers made their way to Mount Kenya in Nanyuki, Laikipia county.

A sub-adult female mountain bongo known as Danni was at ease. She thought the vets were on their regular mission of health checks.

Danni was wrong. She had been earmarked with four other bongos and was set to be moved to the wild, a process called rewilding.

After noticing movements in their breeding place, Danni tilted her chin up, causing her horns to lie flat against their back in order to swiftly manoeuvre through the forest vegetation. Despite her efforts to manoeuvre through the forest vegetation, Danni was swiftly immobilised via a dart.

This was no ordinary day. Danni was among five mountain bongos that were moved to the Mawingu Mountain Bongo Sanctuary, the first-ever mountain bongo sanctuary in Africa and the world.

The other four were Karama (adult male), Hillary (sub-adult male), Owingo (sub-adult male) and Kavu (sub-adult female).

The animals are used to seeing rangers in khaki green or brown. Yellow, white or red clothing scares the bongos. Any form of noise or unnecessary movements was also not allowed.

The transfer marked a historic milestone in the fight for the animal's survival, with less than 100 individuals left in the wild.

"The real work begins now," said Dr Robert Aruho, head of veterinary services at the Mount Kenya Wildlife Conservancy.

"We must ensure that the animals released today can thrive and survive in the sanctuary and, eventually, the wild."

Aruho said the transfer was the culmination of dedicated conservation work that has spanned almost two decades.

Critically endangered

The critically endangered mountain bongo is one of the largest forest antelopes and is endemic to the equatorial forests of Kenya (Mount Kenya Forest, Eburu, Mau and Aberdares).

Mountain bongos are shy and skittish. They are found in thick forests, thus difficult to be easily sighted and counted.

Most of the sightings are opportunistic and use indirect methods, such as dung.

Camera trap images for individual ID are used to estimate the wild populations in Masai Mau, South West Mau, Eburru, Aberdare NP and Ragati in Mount Kenya NP.

For the captive population in Mount Kenya Wildlife Conservancy (MKWC), physical sighting and individual ID is used.

In Kenya, bongos are accorded full protection under the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act, 2013.

This subspecies once roamed in large numbers but has suffered unprecedented population decline since the 1950s due to poaching, live trade, predation and disease, particularly the rinderpest outbreak in the 1980s.

However, it has not yet received the same level of international attention as the 'Big 5' safari animals, which in part contributed to the recovery of their numbers.

The Mount Kenya Wildlife Conservancy is a non-profit trust dedicated to preserving the environment and the wildlife within. It is home to 28 different animal species, a population of roughly 1,200 animals.

The conservancy's three main programmes include a rehabilitation project for the mountain bongo antelope, an animal orphanage and a conservation education programme.

The conservancy took on the daunting challenge of reversing this inevitable extinction of the mountain bongo in 2004 and started the breeding and rewilding programme of the antelope in Kenya.

Every subsequent year, an additional 10 mountain bongos will be translocated into the sanctuary in groups of five every six months.

Individual mountain bongos to join the sanctuary will be selected from the breeding herds and allowed to roam and mate randomly in the sanctuary.

Bright future

It is estimated that by 2025, the sanctuary will have 50-70 fully rewilded mountain bongos.

Aruho oversaw the process alongside Isaac Lekolool, senior veterinary officer, Kenya Wildlife Service.

Aruho says the five mountain bongos (three male, two female) were carefully chosen for release into the wild.

"They (bongos) should be capable of browsing for food without the need for humans or other bongos in a herd," Aruho says.

He says the bongo must be healthy and robust, genetically

Tourism CS Najib Balala poses with the Bongo Mascot during the launch of Mawingu Mountain Sanctuary at the Mt Kenya Safari Club on March 9 diverse, not too old nor too young, and socially compatible.

Aruho, who has been with the bongos for a long time, led the team in moving Danni, a mating female that is elusive and shy, to the wild.

Kavu, a striking female renowned for her horns and beautiful stripes, and also an effective browser, was also moved to the wild.

Karama, an alpha male without being overly dominant and an eligible bachelor ready to sire, was also moved into the wild.

A sub-adult male called Harare, who holds a close bond with the two other male bongos critical for all the males' survival, was also moved to the wild. Likewise, another bongo called Owingu was also moved into the wild.

Aruho says capturing animals and raising them in captivity will help save the antelope species from the edge.

Vets prepares one of the five mountain bongos before their release into the Mawingu Mountain Bongo Sanctuary at Mt.Kenya Safari Club. Five bongos (three male and two female) were released into the sanctuary

He says the safety of the animals and the people involved in the exercise are of paramount importance.

Before they were moved, the five had to be tranquillised in order to immobilise them.

Moving bongos is a delicate process and how to safely catch and handle them is important.

The five bongos were then loaded into pickups with turquoise in their faces. Vets accompanied them.

Upon arrival at the Mountain Bongo Sanctuary, they were given another jab that awakens them.

All this other time, Danni was trembling, just like her other candidates.

Some minutes after another injection was given, Danni was helped to stand.

She looked around before dashing into the bush, her legs wobbling.

Importance of rewilding

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) says rewilding aims to restore healthy ecosystems by creating wild, biodiverse spaces.

It rebuilds ecosystems that have previously been modified by human disturbance, using the plant and animal life that would have been present had the disturbance never occurred.

Rewilding restores the natural processes that provide humanity with clean air, water, food, shelter and medicine.

This idea of reversing biodiversity loss and creating wild landscapes by allowing nature to reclaim areas no longer under human management has gained much attention as an optimistic approach to conservation.

Aruho says it is challenging to increase declining populations quickly as reversing extinction is hard, and costly, especially when a species is only available from zoos.

"We look forward to continuing our partnership with the government of Kenya, KWS and KFS. Our shared commitment means that for the mountain bongo, a bright future awaits," he said.

In the 1950s, the population of the mountain bongo in Kenya began to decline primarily due to unrestricted hunting, poaching and predation.

Between 1966 and 1975, 36 wild mountain bongos were captured from Aberdares, Kenya, and exported to US zoological institutions, becoming the founding animals for the North American captive bongo population.

The move left a small number of bongos remaining at Mount Kenya Game Ranch under human care.

By December 2001, the population in North American zoos totalled 323 individuals, comprising 130 males, 190 females and three unknowns at 66 institutions.

The population represented the most robust captive group anywhere.

Breeding programme

In 2004, 18 bongos were repatriated to join the existing captive herd of about 18 bongos that were at the Mount Kenya Game Ranch, offspring of the cohort that was shipped to the US.

These bongos were fully habituated, 100 per cent dependent on humans for food.

The bongos were repatriated and allowed to acclimatise in small non-forested paddocks for ease of monitoring at Mount Kenya Game Ranch.

Tick-borne diseases, however, led to the mortality of some of the imported animals within three weeks following importation.

The remaining animals acclimatised and adapted to the local environment and have been gradually developing resistance to tick-borne diseases and intestinal parasites.

With improvement in husbandry and veterinary care, the mountain bongo population rebounded to 64 individuals as of February 28, 2022.

Mount Kenya Game Ranch will retain the breeding herds for the purposes of getting more individual mountain bongos that will be recruited into the rewilding programme.

In May 2020, the herds were gradually moved into virgin forest paddocks to begin the rewilding process to prime them to survive in the wild.

To date, six herds exist, of which four are breeding herds composed of females, one breeding bull and young bongos born in that particular herd.

There are two bachelor herds composed of males of various ages.

Two mountain bongos after they were released into the Mawingu Mountain Bongo Sanctuary

Tourism CS Najib Balala says the mountain bongo is one of Kenya's most important iconic animals.

"It is a critically endangered subspecies and can only be found here in Kenya," Balala says.

"That is why in July 2019, we launched the National Mountain Bongo Recovery and Action Plan 2019-2023, in partnership with the Mount Kenya Wildlife Conservancy, Kenya Wildlife Service and Kenya Forest Service."

The CS says the opening of the Mawingu Sanctuary is another critical step forward to achieving these aims.

With the sanctuary now operational, MKWC, KWS and KFS will have facilities to complete mountain bongo reintroduction end-to-end.

Under the project, three paddocks are going to be opened gradually until there is full rewilding of the animal.

Those being released to 100 acres of land are monitored and given supplements until they get used to the environment and they are going to be opened to another 400 acres and eventually the entire 776 acres.

The long-term vision of the action plan is to achieve a population of 750 individuals in Kenya by 2050.

The opening of the sanctuary represents a significant step towards achieving this aim.

Breaking human dependence

The aim of the mountain bongo breeding and rewilding programme is to have individuals that are fully rewilded and therefore competent to survive in the sanctuary and eventually the wild.

Total weaning from human dependence is a gradual process requiring technical skill, patience and commitment to allow the animals to adapt independently.

This requires spaces with every vital component for their survival: an appropriate habitat, foliage and enough space to exhibit normal behaviour and fully accommodate natural selection.

The long-term success of today's release and eventual survival in the wild depends on the communities' support in surrounding areas.

Most of the threats that caused the mountain bongo population decline were primarily human-driven.

The MKWC has set up community conservation, education and empowerment programmes to create awareness to address these threats.

Annually, MKWC hosts more than 20,000 students on school trips and supports more than 30 students on six-month internships.

Local communities are also provided with the opportunity for hands-on training on ecosystem restoration.

The conservancy works with the communities to restore degraded areas within Mount Kenya forest through its forest restoration and reforestation programme.

Under this partnership, MKWC has involved 3,000 community members in planting more than 35,000 indigenous tree species in Mount Kenya Forest.

In 2022, MKWC is planning to plant another 5,000 trees with the support of the communities.

KFS Chief Conservator Julius Kamau says collaboration is important for the successful protection of any endangered species.

"And without working closely with the KWS, the Ministry for Tourism and Mount Kenya Wildlife Conservancy, we could not have arrived at this important moment in time to save the mountain bongo," he says.

Kamau says KFS stands ready and willing to nurture these vital partnerships to achieve their shared goal of rewilding the mountain bongo, an animal that holds great national significance in Kenya.

Humphrey Kariuki, the patron of Janus Continental Group, says the release is a milestone moment and a great step towards saving this critically endangered species.

Some Sh110 million has been put into the project and each year it has a recurrent expenditure of Sh62 million.

Kenya tourism stakeholders partner to improve business after Covid-19 devastation

Key stakeholders in the Kenyan tourism and travel sectors have agreed to collaborate in efforts to revive business in the industries, which are still struggling to recover from the adverse effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a consultative forum convened Monday morning by the African Travel and Tourism Association (ATTA), the stakeholders including the Kenya Tourism Board (KTB), Kenya Airways (KQ), Kenya Civil Aviation Authority (KCAA), and the Kenya Tourism Federation (KTF) pledged to enhance cooperation between the government and private players in the sectors, to promote tourism and travel in the country and beyond.

The tourism and travel sectors slumped in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, with over 81 percent of firms in the industries laying off most of their employees and 31 percent implementing more than 70 percent pay cut, the ministry of tourism and wildlife reported in June 2020.

Kenya recorded a 72 percent drop in tourism arrivals in 2020, compared to 2019, with international receipts falling from $1.9 billion to $531 million, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC).

"We cannot emphasize the role of synergies and partnerships enough as we work towards re-starting of tourism. We must continue to take advantage of the new opportunities in

travel, and also look out for the emerging trends," said Dr. Betty Radier, KTB CEO.

In a bid to rejuvenate the sector, KTB had partnered with Kenya Airways in November 2021 to promote local and international touring of Kenya by branding KQ planes with popular tourist destinations in the country. Consequently, tourist arrivals rose by 34 percent in 2021 but are yet to reach the numbers recorded in 2019.

This new partnership, however, comes at a time when local and regional tourism is reported to have been improving following campaigns by the government to focus more on domestic and regional visitors after international arrivals flopped.

As part of the government's strategy to help the travel and tourism sectors recover from the hitch, the ministry of tourism listed the promotion of domestic and regional tourism, alongside product development and diversification, and digitizing tourism in the country in June 2020.

The partnership between KTB and KQ's low-cost carrier subsidiary, Jambo Jet was instrumental in improving domestic and regional tourism, the stakeholders said in a statement.

ATTA, the forum's convener, which is an intermediary between buyers and providers of travel and tourism services across Africa, has membership across 21 African countries including Uganda, Tanzania, and Rwanda, with Kenya contributing 90 members.

Its operations were almost totally paralyzed due to the pandemic, with several countries closing their borders and imposing restrictions on international travel.

The organisation has resumed operations after 16 countries in Africa, including Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Rwanda, received the global safety stamp by the

Elephants walk in front of a tour van at the Masai Mara National Reserve. Key stakeholders in the Kenyan tourism and travel sectors have agreed to collaborate in efforts to revive business in the industries, which are still struggling to recover from the adverse effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

World Travel and Tourism Council, in recognition of safe travels protocols.

"Tourism and Aviation are sectors that are symbiotic and need each other to fully thrive. We have met to ensure that we come up with solutions and a standard way of operating in terms of the safety protocols and also come up with ideas that can propel travel to Kenya," said Nigel Vere Nicoll, ATTA president.

ATTA has not been involved in any similar interventions in Uganda, Tanzania, or Rwanda, in which it also has massive membership, although their travel and tourism sectors were heavily hit by the pandemic as well.

Uganda's travel and tourism sector is still struggling to recover from the pandemic downhill, which saw tourism arrivals fall to about 473,000 in 2020 from 1.5 million, the all-time highest, in 2019, according to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics.

Apart from the government's strategy which is almost similar to Kenya's, the only intervention was by the Uganda Tourism Association, which partnered with the Mastercard Foundation and the Private Sector Foundation of Uganda to fund entities in the industry to recover from the pandemic's impact.

Tanzania also registered a small rise in tourism arrivals to 712,900 in 2021, after falling to 620,900 in 2020, from 1.5 million in 2019, based on Tanzania National Bureau of Statistics' records.

The most significant intervention to help the sector recover so far is the $39 million granted to the ministry of natural resources and tourism in October 2021, which was from the $565 million IMF emergency financial assistance loan to Tanzania last year.

Uganda opens Railway Museum

In the shadow of rehabilitation and revival of its century old rail network — and in the case of Kenya, having built a new standard gauge line and Tanzania currently building the same — Uganda has unveiled a railways museum.

Officially known as the Uganda Railway Museum, it is historically correct located at the country's oldest railway station in Jinja on the Jinja-Iganga highway. It celebrates Uganda's history as captured in the book titled Our Railways, Our History, published last year to recognise and celebrate the story of Uganda's railways, explore its role in the lives of those who lived and worked along them, and their place in the country's economic and political development.

Developed as a tourist attraction, the museum's programme offers heritage theme nights, a permanent photography and artefacts exhibition, exploring walking tour on an old locomotive and passenger coach, screening of railways film recollections and stories and guided tours of the museum and station.

The museum, which was opened to the public on March 16, has a shop and cafeteria, and will be open to visitors from Tuesdays to Sundays, 11am-6pm. Ugandan citizens will pay Ush5,000 ($1.3) and children Ush2,000 ($0.5) as entrance fee. Non-citizens will pay $5 for adults and $3 for children. Part of the museum has been designed with young people in mind to support their learning and appreciation of Uganda's history.

The project is a partnership between the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda and the Uganda Railways Corporation, with support from the European Union.

The newly opened Uganda Railway Museum in Jinja.

CCFU's executive director, Barbra Babweteera Mutambi said the museum demonstrates the foundation's commitment to safeguarding historical buildings, sites and monuments.

Daudi Migereko the chairperson of Uganda Tourism Board said opening of the museum in Jinja has added to the tourism circuit of Jinja.

KWS seeks Sh3bn French funding for parks upgrade

The Kenya Wildlife Service is seeking €25 million (Sh3.1 billion) from French fund Agence Française de Développement (AFD) for the improvement of five national parks.

The disclosure was made through recently published tender documents where the KWS is seeking to hire consultants to do a feasibility study on the parks.

The parks targeted under the project are Nairobi, Lake Nakuru, Mt Kenya, Meru and Watamu Marine National Park.

"KWS seeks funding support of 25 million euros from the French development agency," the document reads in part.

"The National Treasury and Planning of Kenya has requested a financing of the feasibility study from AFD on behalf of KWS and intends to use part of the funds thereof for payment of the feasibility study for the Kenya Parks Project."

The feasibility study is estimated to cost €200,000 (Sh24.8 million) and interested consultants are to submit their applications by April 5.

KWS plans to undertake distinctive branding of its parks, infrastructure upgrade for rangers and tourists, biodiversity conservation, and strengthening the law enforcement capacity of the agency.

KWS is keen to stabilize and grow wildlife population and ecosystems including inside the parks, wildlife corridors, and community conservancies to boost tourism.

Kenya's tourism has been ravaged by the Covid-19 pandemic that triggered a slump in global travel, slashing KWS earnings from park entry fees.


An elephant at the Tsavo East National Park. The National Treasury and Planning of Kenya has requested a financing of the feasibility study from AFD on behalf of KWS and intends to use part of the funds thereof for payment of the feasibility study for the Kenya Parks Project.

The country largely depends on summer travelers from Europe and America between June and September with the wildebeest migration between August and October being a major attraction.

Earnings from tourism dropped by Sh71 billion in 2020 as the suspension of international and domestic flights to curb the spread of the coronavirus locked out holidaymakers from visiting Kenya.

Data from the Economic Survey 2021 shows that Kenya earned Sh91.7 billion in the review period from Sh163.6 billion in 2019 as the coronavirus pandemic hit one of the country's biggest foreign exchange-earners.

The year 2020's earnings were the first fall in four years for a sector that has since 2016 been on an upward trajectory in revenues.

Express Travel Group re-brands to Hemingways Travel

Sixty-Five-year-old travel management company, Express Travel Group (ETG) has rebranded to Hemingways Travel.

Hemingways Group CEO Ross Evans says the rebrand and related investment is in response to emerging opportunities for growth and the need to enhance the travelers experience, at a time when travel is experiencing unprecedented disruption and changes in needs.

To drive the new strategy, former Hemingways Group finance director, Joseph Kithitu, has been appointed the new managing director of Hemingways Travel.

Latest statistics from the Ministry of Tourism indicate that the tourism industry has registered growth and contributed to a GDP) of 10.4 percent, and employed 990,000 people.

Despite being one of the hardest-hit industries in the wake of Covid-19, Kenya's tourism earnings grew by 65.4 per cent to Sh146.51 billion in 2021, up from Sh88.56 billion in 2020.

This has been credited to the implementation of various interventions by the government to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on the sector, including a focus on domestic tourism.

This reflects the increasing prevalence and investment in domestic tourism in Kenya.

According to Statista, the travel and tourism market is forecast to grow at an annual growth rate of 10.47 per cent up to 2026.

Speaking during the rebrand announcement, Evans said as part of the process, Hemingways Travel would expand its offering to the leisure market, to the level it has become renowned for in the corporate travel market, as well as leveraging its operations as a premium inbound destination management company.

"We remain very focused on delivering for our corporate travel clients and are now expanding our proposition to leisure travelers by offering a full suite of premium travel services, and the valuable benefits of using an experienced travel agent, something that, we believe, has become more important as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic," he said.

Hemingways Travel MD Joseph Kithitu , Tourism CS Najib Balala and Hemingways Group CEO Ross Evans during the rebranding of Express Travel Group (ETG) to Hemingways Travel

He noted that Hemingways Travel clients can now adapt to the changing demands of travel by taking advantage of new technologies that will enhance the traveler experience, and offer complete peace of mind.

Tourism and Wildlife Cabinet Secretary Najib Balala lauded the move noting that technology, innovation, and collaboration, did enable the tourism sector to ride the difficult Covid period.

"Innovation, digitization and expansion to leisure travel is a sure win for Hemingways Travel and any other sector players looking to thrive in the tourism and travel sector, as the industry continues to recover from the pandemic," said CS Balala.

According to the Annual Tourism Sector Performance Report 2021, new vision strategies such as digitisation have supported sector recovery, and Hemingways Travel has made significant enhancements to its platform to meet changing industry needs.

"Hemingways Travel is using technology to drive our new strategy and our new online booking tool is one example. The booking platform integrates third-party tools to bring unrivalled flight and hotel content to customers, and a smooth and convenient booking experience all supported by an experienced team of qualified travel consultants", said Kithitu.

Hemingways Travel is one of East Africa's premier travel management companies and a member of Hemingways Hospitality Group of companies.

Established in 1955, it offers both corporate travel management services and leisure travel services.

HEMINGWAYS
TRAVEL

Kenya House: a virtual tour of the country's art and culture in its diversity

Digital technology adoption has been accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

As society is forced to adjust to a world where most physical interaction is impossible or limited, virtual engagement is becoming increasingly popular.

The Ministry of Sports, Culture, and Heritage took on the mantle to develop a virtual portal where people could learn about Kenya's sports, tourism, culture, and trade.

This innovative virtual hub is known as Kenya House. With this, anyone in any part of the world will be able to easily access reliable information about the country.

Once you get to the Kenya House virtual portal, you will observe that the concept is inspired by the architecture of the Elmolo community.

El Molo is the smallest ethnic group living on the southeast shore of Lake Turkana, in Kenya. Since living in an extremely windy region, the woven rim around the top of the house helps stabilise the thatch.

Kenya House embodies both the past and future. It honours a Nation rich in cultural heritage, forward-looking and very modern. It represents warmth, resilience, ingenuity, and the ability to adapt quickly to adversity.

There are four main pillars in this virtual portal: Sports, Culture, Tourism, and Trade.

The cultural pillar will teach you about Kenyan culture, including Turkana boy, Kenya's star fossil, interesting facts about Lake Turkana and Lake Turkana National Park, and why Kenya is called the cradle of mankind.

Kenya house features a wide array of sports heroes, such as soccer, volleyball, safari rally, and boxing. Moreover, it provides useful information on a number of major sporting events, as well as interesting facts about the sports stars who have made Kenya famous.

You can virtually explore Kenya's beautiful scenery and landmarks through the tourism pillar. From the peaks of Kenya's tallest mountain, Mount Kenya, to the Maasai Mara, home to the eighth wonder of the world and a place where you can see the big five and other wildlife.

During the tour, you will also get a chance to explore the coastal area and learn where to stay and what fun activities are waiting for you along the coast.

The trade pillar covers some of the fastest-growing categories within the multi-sector industry. Kenya House trade exhibition consists of five distinct categories: Curio crafts, Jua Kali products, Leatherworks, Textiles, and Value-Added Food products.

Kenya House aims to connect local companies with investors and customers.

Located centrally, Kenya is also east Africa's largest economy and a regional financial and transportation hub.

At the virtual house, you will be able to explore energy, manufacturing, transport, health, and ICT investment opportunities in the country.

Google art & culture

Last year, Fast Company, Google Arts & Culture teamed up with over 2500 museums and galleries around the world to bring anyone and everyone virtual tours and online exhibits of some of the most famous museums around the world.

Some of the most famous museums found in the Google Arts & Culture collection include the British Museum in London, the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, the Guggenheim in New York City, and literally hundreds of more places where you can gain knowledge about art, history, and science.

Although it took shape during the Covid-19 crisis, Google Arts & Culture initiative which first launched in 2011 has recorded success in several countries across the globe.

For instance, the Musée du Louvre in Paris has reported a tenfold increase in web traffic, from 40,000 to 400,000 visitors per day.

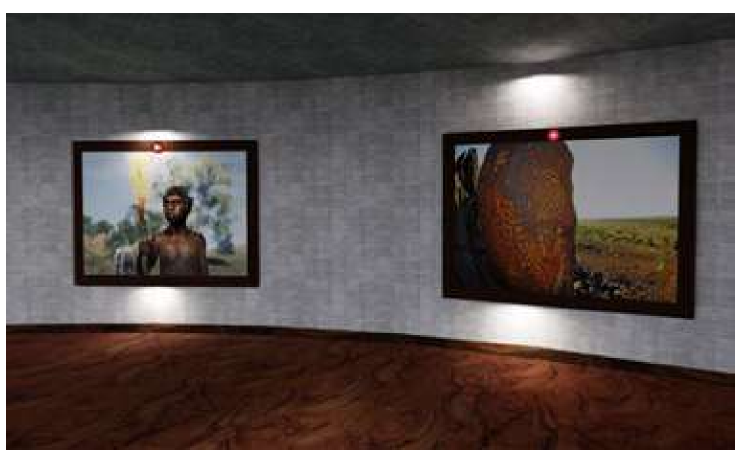
Visits to the websites of the National Gallery of Art in Washington and the Courtauld Institute of Art in London are also up by huge multiples.

Audiences are seeking out arts material for children — the Metropolitan Museum of Art reports an elevenfold uptick to MetKids, its youth education initiative.

While this is picked, quality is still a concern, with visitors challenging museums to replicate online the exact experience of visiting in person.

Challenges

Even though thy have been trying for two decades, and the pictures have certainly gotten crisper, in too many cases, virtual museum walk-throughs remain unwieldy, with herky-jerky navigation and information is often out of date.



Help us to help animals in Kenya!

People are at the heart of what we do. Communities rely on their animals for their incomes, security, and sense of wellbeing. Poor animal welfare can mean a risk of human diseases, injury, and loss of livelihoods. Everyone is better off when humans and animals can live together comfortably.

Your support helps us to continue our vital work, improving our shelters and vet clinics, expanding our community outreach programmes, and securing the health and well-being of thousands more domestic animals in Kenya.

Your support is needed to protect animals and benefit communities in Kenya!

The Kenya Society for the Protection and Care of Animals (KSPCA) is the leading organisation working to improve the welfare of animals in Kenya.

We work on long-term projects as well as responding to emergency cases of injury and abuse. We follow up on over 6 000 calls per year, rescuing injured animals and investigating reports of cruelty and neglect.

Our long-term projects include work with donkey owners and users, and in urban communities in Nairobi. We work with slaughterhouses to promote humane practice. We have shelters in Nairobi, Mombasa and Naivasha, and work in Nanyuki.

We also provide essential trap, neuter, and release services to businesses, small and large, to help them control unwanted animal populations humanely, especially cats.

Become a corporate member.

Show your support for KSPCA with a commitment to our work @ www.kspca-kenya.org

Sponsor a project or an activity.

Corporate sponsors are much needed to support our work, and will receive prominent acknowledgement through physical signage, labelling and social media.

Involve your staff.

Volunteers with professional skills are much needed to support KSPCA for short- or long-term support as part of your corporate social responsibility schemes.

Engage our humane population control services.

Ask us to assess and quote for work to reduce your feral animal problem

Claim tax relief on your corporate social responsibility work.

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