

Excitement as new look Kibuye market phase one reopens

TRADERS: More than 3,000 traders at Kibuye Market in Kisumu are set to resume their businesses after the county completed construction of modern market stalls.

Governor Anyang' Nyong'o yesterday graced the opening of the first phase of one of East Africa's largest open-air markets, months after demolition of old structures.

Last year, Kisumu County kicked off the modern construction of the Sh500 million Kibuye Market after demolishing more than 300 illegal structures.

Nyong'o assured the traders his administration would construct a new modern and spacious market stalls which meets the Covid-19 social distancing protocol.

"I am happy to be here to commission phase one of the complex that has cost Sh315 million in a record six months," he said amid applause from traders.

He was flanked by Kisumu Acting City Manager Abala Wanga and Kisumu Central MP Fred Ouda.

The first phase involved construction of four ablution blocks,

a wall (masonry and steel grating), roads, walkways, drainage, offloading and customer front parking.

It also includes sheds and warehouses for the wholesale market to cater for majority of traders who were moved to the parking bay at Moi Stadium, Kisumu.

Launched Phase 2

The completed phase is expected to accommodate about 3,000 traders and those who were displaced to give room for the construction will be given priority.

Nyong'o also launched Phase 2 of the market which will cost about Sh185 million and will take in additional 1,500 traders.

Several traders were happy with the developments. Trader Judith Matengo and Eric Otieno thanked the governor for underscoring the importance of SMEs.

The traders said micro firms and SMEs are significant due to their importance as key drivers of employment, economic growth and innovation.

-Kepher Otieno



Governor Anyang' Nyong'o addresses traders at the refurbished Kibuye Market, Kisumu. PD/VIOLA KOSOME

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Bamburi Cement switches to solar

POWER: Bamburi Cement Plc has signed a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with an Independent Power Producer, MOMNAI Energy Ltd, to set up two solar plants adjacent to the company's Mombasa plant and Nairobi grinding plant. The project which aims to save on power costs and contribute to net zero carbon emissions by switching to renewable energy, is set to deploy solar power systems with a total capacity of 14.5MW and 5MW for Bamburi's Mombasa and Nairobi grinding plant respectively. This will account for up to about 40 per cent of the company's total power supply. "We are excited about this agreement which will lead to a significant reduction in power costs and promote achievement net zero carbon emissions," said Miriam Ngolo, Bamburi's Strategy & Business Development Director in a statement. Construction of the solar power plants is scheduled to begin at the end of this year.

- Bernard Sigei

EPZ firm workers protest continues

STANDOFF: Unrest by workers at the Athi River Export Processing Zone over alleged unlawful dismissals entered day two yesterday.

More than 4,000 workers in one of the garment making company, Hela Intimate, staged protests over allegedly being forcefully subjected to be enrolled in new payslips in a scheme they say is aimed at denying them service payment fee. The workers said the company has recently been engaging in summary dismissal of workers who question the management over violation of their rights.

"We want the company management to be investigated about the many deductions in our pay slip. We also do not understand how a single worker can have two payroll numbers and paid one salary," said Mueni Mutua. However, Hela Intimate management through an internal memo yesterday denied claims that the company intends to change its name though it did not address the other myriad issues raised by the workers.

"We reiterate that there is no change in management or ownership of the company and no plans for any redundancy," it said.

- Christine Musa

Hope for local startups as Saudi Arabia unveils \$6.4b tech push

Gulf country expects huge injection into its innovation ecosystem to be utilised in research, support for startups and development of global technology products

by Fred Aminga in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia @PeopleDailyKe

Kenyan investors and government can tap the growing appetite for technology prowess in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to help steer similar growth in the nascent sector and take it to the next level. The move comes after Saudi Arabia took a bold step to battle Israel, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Iran, Qatar, Egypt, and Jordan by investing over \$6.4 billion (Sh726.72 billion) in the quest to build the region's ultimate tech hub.

Speaking at the inaugural Leap22 tech summit in Riyadh yesterday, Saudi Minister of Communications and Information Technology Abdullah Alswaha said the gulf country has decided to leap forward and chart a path towards a tech-powered economy.

He said the huge injection by the country into its technology ecosystem will be utilised in research, support for startups, and the development of global tech products. The amount is the equivalent to the money that can be used to launch two SGR projects in Kenya.

Digital economy

"These investments and initiatives are a manifestation of the Kingdom's push towards the growth of the digital economy for the greater good of people, the planet, and the prosperity of the MENA region," Alswaha said.

The country's technology sector is said to be worth more than Sh4 trillion which is more than Kenya's annual budget illustrating the magnitude of the investment for potential investors and techie startups.

The minister revealed that over 318,000 jobs in the technology sector have been created, with a rate of participation of women in the ICT workforce hitting 28 per cent in recent years from 7 per cent in the last three years.

The country boasts new tech investments which include the just launched Aramco Venture's Prosperity7 Fund, a new diversified growth venturing programme worth Sh110 billion, and a similar amount from NEOM Tech & Digital Company.

Prosperity7, according to Amin Nasser,



A section of participants at the ongoing LEAP tech conference in Saudi Arabia. (INSET) Abdullah Alswaha, Saudi Minister of Communications and Information Technology. COURTESY

CEO of Saudi Aramco, will connect the dots through big ideas, top talents, and disruptive technologies from around the world as the company looks beyond the energy value chain.

He said the company seeks to venture into areas like healthcare, education, and blockchain, for viable solutions to the world's most pressing challenges," said

Kenyan startups which have been at the forefront of the global digital revolution can leverage this opening to front ideas that can be in line with the new development.

The Gulf nation has set up "The Garage: Start-up District", which is a combination of physical location, start-up incubator, accelerator to provide start-ups with grants, investment, marketing, and training support, full-service workspaces.

Digital Cooperation Organisation (DCO), a multinational organisation established to enable digital prosperity for all announced the launch of the DCO Start-up Passport to make it quicker, easier, and less expensive for start-ups to do business across borders, opening up potentially lucrative markets with a combined population of more than half a billion people.

"The Start-up Passport reduces administrative and financial burdens and accelerates corporate registration and other processes for entrepreneurs. Through this passport, they will be able to enter the markets of other DCO member states," Deema

Al-Yahya, Secretary General of the DCO said.

In addition to access to deep-tech labs, talent, and research networks, amongst other incentives to empower local and international start-ups, The Garage aims to launch start-ups with local and international potential.

Technology giants

Munir Eldesouki, President of King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology said the Garage is inspired by the humble beginnings of some of the biggest companies in technology today and aims to provide everything that start-ups need to grow their ideas, to become the next global technology giants.

"It is conveniently located in close proximity to state-of-the-art facilities and to large numbers of talent which creates an ideal startup district," he said.

Telecommunication company Stc announced a MENA Hub, another Sh110 billion investment in regional connectivity and infrastructure, which will support Saudi Arabia's digital and cloud sector.

The company said it will manage data centres and continue to invest in new data centres across the Kingdom and the region, along with other digital infrastructure to attract foreign direct investment.

It will also localise content and develop cloud services to realize Saudi Arabia's digitalisation plans.

ALSWAHA

These investments and initiatives are a manifestation of Kingdom's push towards growth of digital economy.