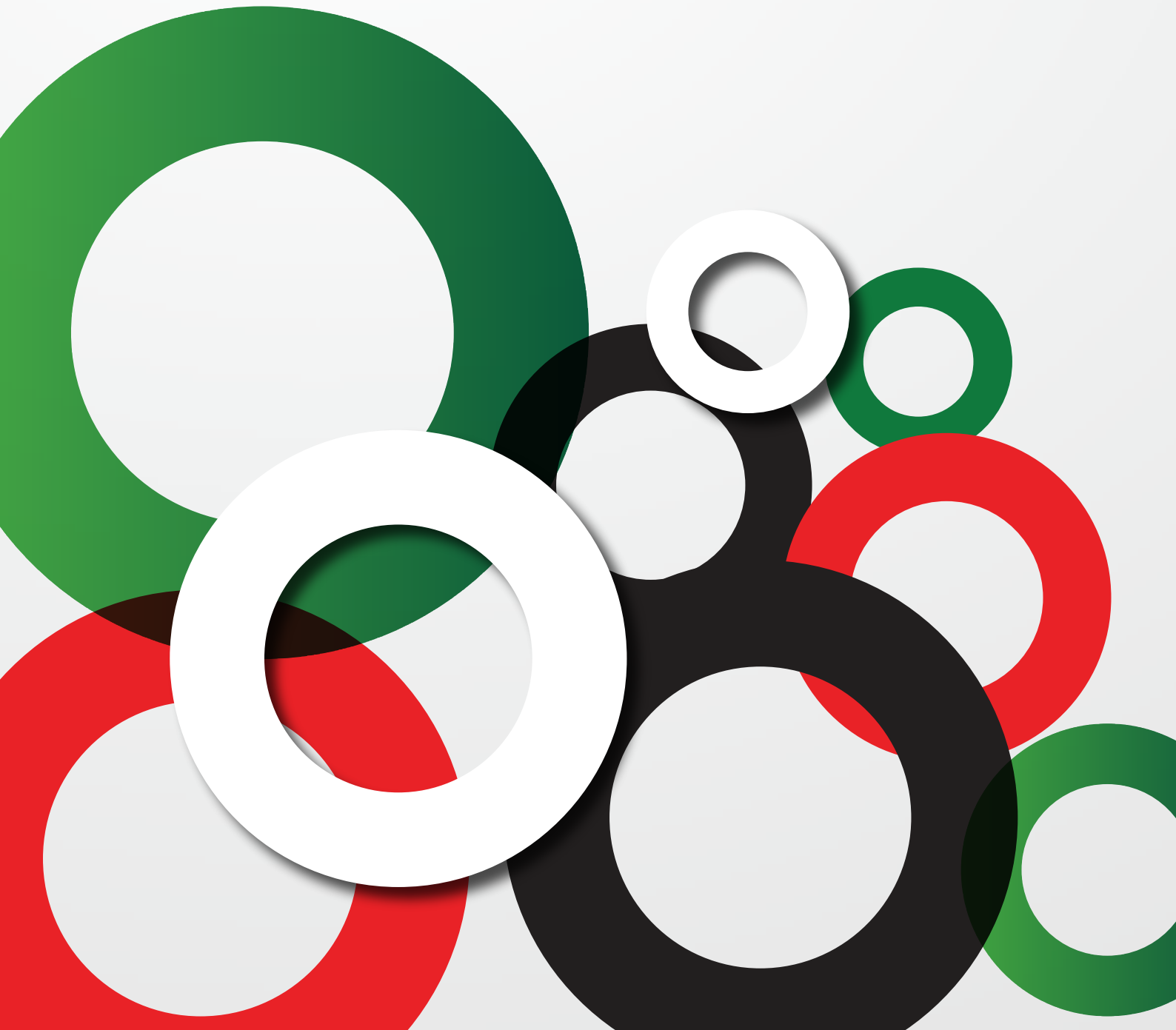


Chamber Quarterly

1st QUARTER

JANUARY - MARCH 2022



**SATURDAY 8TH JANUARY, 2022**

Sneak peek at the course that will host World Cross Country Tour



Next month, tens of athletes from across the world will be heading to the North Rift town of Eldoret for the Memorial Agnes Tirop World Cross Country Tour. The lush course at the Lobo village, about 8km from Eldoret town, is a sight to behold. It is between Eldoret town Central Business District and Eldoret International Airport. By Tuesday when the inaugural cross country which is scheduled for February 12 was launched, the course was ready to host a world class event, according to the Course Director Ibrahim Hussein – a three-time Boston marathon winner. A stage was being set for a thriller, with the start, the finish and the meandering 2km lap clearly marked. There are six loops in the flat course. A large water pan that was created from a swamp has been spruced up to enhance its magnificence. Uasin Gishu County chapter Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI) chairman Willy Kenei said the course will offer corporates a platform to market their products and services. Governor Mandago said: “We are privileged to host this event as a region. It was possible to host it in Nairobi and elsewhere but we thank the organisers for choosing to have it here in Eldoret. We are going to make sure that we have a successful event that will give birth to other international events.” [Read more](#)

**SUNDAY 9TH JANUARY, 2022**

Despite pandemic and polls, let's make New Year good for business



As I scanned through social media on New Year's Eve, Kenyans expressed their expectations on the period ahead. The expectations showed this year will be tough for businesses. And being in a pandemic year, that will also see us hold the General Election, expectations of the business community differ. A peek into Kenya's electoral cycle shows that business activity tends to decline during electioneering years. Both local and foreign investments usually dip owing to political jitters. Kenyans usually spend less and as a result, businesses downsize expecting low demand for goods and services, which increases unemployment. (Continued)

The business community expects the political class to inspire confidence in the economy by shaming and castigating all forms of violence. A call of the business community in 2021 was the cost of doing business, particularly in the manufacturing sector. Having faced the introduction of regressive taxes like the minimum tax (which thanks to the Judiciary was thrown out), adjustment of specific excise duty rates for inflation, and high fuel prices, businesses look forward to some breathing space this year. [Read more](#)



TUESDAY 11TH JANUARY, 2022



KNCCI Nairobi Chapter lauds Kenya-China trade deals



Kenya China Chamber of Commerce and Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Nairobi Chapter have lauded the Government of Kenya and the People's Republic of China for signing six memorandums of understanding. The six MOU's that touches on trade, investments, digital innovation, and green development will increase import and export opportunities for small and medium enterprises, whose end goal will be to reduce the trade imbalance between the two countries. Speaking at a press conference in Nairobi, Kenya China Chamber of Commerce, Chairman Tim Chen said that these six MOU's will further strengthen the relationship between Kenya and China business communities. "Our aim is to connect businesspeople in the two countries with opportunities, facilitate trade and help solve import & export issues. Therefore, these MOUs are most welcome, because we need to support Kenyan agro-processing sectors through value addition," Chen said. He pointed that Kenya has the best opportunity to export and add value to agricultural products such as Avocado. [Read more](#)



WEDNESDAY 12TH JANUARY, 2022



Businesses suffer huge losses over major power outage



The country was yesterday plunged into a power black-out which lasted about five hours leading to huge losses as businesses were disrupted. The national power utility company Kenya Power said the outage resulted from a collapsed tower on the Kiambere-Embakasi high voltage transmission power line at around 10am.

“Our engineers are working to ensure electricity supply as the repairs are being undertaken,” read the unsigned statement to the public. Among the regions that reported blackout was the capital city Nairobi, West Kenya, Mt Kenya, North Rift, South Nyanza and Central Rift. James Kitavi the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry CEO, said productivity of many factories was grossly affected. In the North Rift region, Willy Kenei, the KNCCI Chairman, Uasin Gishu branch said the outage caused a lot of anxiety and major disruptions. “The entire Eldoret town was affected, and most businesses were unable to print, produce receipts or use computers,” said Kenei. In Trans Nzoia, Gertrude Bonyo, who sell chips at Maila Saba trading centre, reported work but was unable to do any work. [Read more](#)



WEDNESDAY 19TH JANUARY, 2022



Kenya to up value addition to bridge trade gap with Egypt

Kenya is banking on agricultural produce value additional to bridge the trade deficit with Egypt. Speaking yesterday at the opening of the Nile Food Africa Trade Initiative in Nairobi, the Kenya National Chambers of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI) chief executive Samuel Matonda commended Egypt for opening its market to Kenyan small traders, especially in the food sub sector. “Tea and tobacco have been Kenya's dominant exports to Egypt. Value addition on other raw products will go along way in achieving at least 50:45 trade version,” Matonda said. Last year, the value of Kenya's exports to Egypt stood at \$80million (Sh9.1 billion) compared to \$184 million (Sh20.9 billion) worth of imports from the Mediterranean country. The value of trade between Kenya and Egypt has grown 43.98 per cent to Sh61.91 billion between 2014 and last year, with the latter being the major beneficiary. Official trade statistics shows the value of exports to Egypt —largely tobacco, paper and paperboard, fruits and vegetable textile fibres. [Read more](#)



WEDNESDAY 19TH JANUARY, 2022



Egypt eyes more fruit imports from Kenya

Egypt plans to import more fruits and other food products from Kenya in a move that looks set to reduce the trade imbalance tilted in favour of the North African country. Business delegations from the two countries Tuesday started a two-day trade forum where new trade deals would be signed. Kenya mainly sells tobacco, paper and paperboard, fruits and vegetable textile fibres to Egypt, with the value of the overall imports growing 8.67 per cent to Sh18.98 billion between 2014 and 2020.



Exports from Egypt include vegetable and animal products, minerals, chemicals, plastics and rubber — jumped 68.13 per cent to Sh42.93 billion over the same period, highlighting a trade partnership that heavily favours the Maghreb economy. Egyptian ambassador to Kenya Khalid Abyiad yesterday called on local farmers and businesses to tap the vast Egyptian market with increased shipments of fruits. “Kenya is the leading trade partner for Egypt in the East African region and the opportunity for growth in the two countries are boundless. [Read more](#)



WEDNESDAY 19TH JANUARY, 2022



Kenya-Egypt Trade Expo Launched Targeting Food Commodities

In 2020, Kenya exported goods worth USD26,118 million into Egypt mainly tea, flowers, and coffee while the latter exported goods worth USD 6,033 million with sugar and yeast among key commodities. Kenya generally exports primary produce from the agricultural sector to Egypt. In return, it imports processed goods and natural minerals from Egypt. Dubbed the Nile Food Africa trade initiative, the forum seeks to link 21 Egyptian manufacturers to trade opportunities in Kenya as well connect Kenyan business communities eyeing the Egyptian market with the right trade partners. Speaking during the launch, KNCCI CEO Samuel Matonda encouraged Kenyan traders to seize the opportunity to showcase their products even as he called for more focus on fruits such as avocado which he says have huge export potential. He said the forum which was organized by the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI), Egyptian Commercial Service (ECS), Ministry of Trade and Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) is of high value to both economies and will drive development and job creation. [Read more](#)



THURSDAY 20TH JANUARY, 2022



Kenya-China Chamber of Commerce Opens Office in Beijing



The newly opened office will play a critical role in unblocking the trade challenges between the two countries, at this time when the movement of goods and people has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaking at the Nairobi China Trade Investment Forum, KCCC Chairman Tim Chen, said that the Beijing office will focus on supporting businesses in two countries. “The last two years has been challenging to both Chinese and Kenyan business community, due to Covid-19. Our business people haven’t been able to import and export in large quantities, because of the pandemic restriction. This has led to delays of imports and exports widening the trade balance between Kenya and China. That’s why as Kenya China Chamber of Commerce we have set up an office in Beijing to start facilitating the trade and identifying export opportunities for Kenyan companies,” said Chen. He added that the office will also address trade imbalance between Kenya and China, by identifying new business opportunities in agriculture. [Read more](#)



FRIDAY 21ST JANUARY, 2022



Nairobi plans e-platform to export agricultural products to China

Kenya is working on an online platform that will sell agricultural products such as tea, coffee and macadamia nuts to the Chinese market, following the signing of six memoranda of agreements (MoUs) with the Asian giant.

The two countries also plan to have exchange programmes by June to boost the export of avocados. Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry Nairobi Chapter chairman Julius Opio said the platform would ease access to Chinese markets for the exporters. It is expected to cut new logistic challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic causing delays in supply and affecting business. Some of the firms that have made pitches for the e-commerce market are Huawei Technologies, China Mobile Technology and Xingyun Group. “We’ve companies giving us a platform where we can market our exports to the Chinese markets online. These are the kind of opportunities we are looking at,” said Mr Opio. “We’re coming from a Covid-19 impact and there are a lot of logistics challenges businesses are facing like not shipping on time or getting goods on time. We are trying to see how we can go online and build efficiencies.” [Read more](#)



FRIDAY 21ST JANUARY, 2022



Mombasa To Host A Major Innovation Week Forum



Mombasa and other coastal counties will host the 3rd Edition of Pwani Innovation Week (PIW) to create a widespread culture of innovation in the region. The innovation week, under the theme, “Leveraging on Covid-19 opportunities to create a better future,” will provide an opportunity for individuals and both public and private sectors to address challenges and solutions in business and other economic activities. The forum is being organized by the Swahilipot Foundation Hub in collaboration with the Kenya National Chambers of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI), Mombasa County Government and other partners. The annual event which did not take place in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic is slated for 28th to 31st March, this year. It will involve among others hackathons/challenges, training boot camps, and networking, women in technology, exhibition techkids expo, panel discussions and pwani gat talent. “Innovation catalyzes the aspiration of individuals, private institutions and governments to achieve developments by generating creative ideas and introducing new products and services that improves the overall quality of life,” said Swahilipot Founder, Mahmud Noor. [Read more](#)



MONDAY 24TH JANUARY, 2022



Varsity, KNCCI Partner To Support Business Growth

Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI) has signed a memorandum of Understanding with Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) to support business growth in Kakamega. The University has pledged to actively participate in training, capacity building of business persons and conducting research on best practices of conducting business in Kakamega. Vice Chancellor Professor Solomon Shibairo said through the partnership, the University together with KNCCI will actively participate in advocating for better laws that target business persons in the county. For instance, Prof Shibairo said they have noted a law that is being formulated at the county assembly seeking to woo investors. “I have directed Professor Charles Mutai to follow up on that law which is being formulated so that the university can participate,” he said during a breakfast meeting in Kakamega. The Vice Chancellor said the two institutions will strive to create an enabling environment for youth to engage in businesses asking the national and county governments to minimise requirements needed for one to start a business as they were discouraging the youth. [Read more](#)



**MONDAY 31ST JANUARY, 2022**

Indonesia seeks Preferential Trade Agreement with Kenya



The Embassy of Indonesia is pushing for a Preferential Trade Agreement with Kenya. This emerged on Wednesday during a webinar dubbed “Kenya-Indonesia Business Forum” to promote trade balance between the two countries. Indonesia Ambassador to Kenya Hery Saripudin said with the new Kenyan mission in Jakarta, more trade will emerge, strengthening the bilateral relations. "I am pleased to inform you that Kenya and Indonesia's relations have seen a new milestone. That new milestone is the opening of the new Kenyan High Commission in Jakarta. ""We encourage Kenyan businesses to use the momentum of the official opening of the new embassy to come to Jakarta and seek opportunities with their Indonesian counterparts," Ambassador Saripudin said. The envoy said they are confident that the new mission in Jakarta will be in a proper position to input on how crucial it is for Kenya and Indonesia to have a PTA to enable stronger economic ties. [Read more](#)

**TUESDAY 1ST FEBRUARY, 2022**

Busia suspends licence, business permit renewals amid double fees increment protests



The Busia government has suspended the renewal of business permits and licenses after traders protested against double fee increment. Traders were told on Monday to halt payments for licenses and business permits until the matter is resolved. County deputy director of revenue Joseph Okole said the suspension will last until an amicable solution is found to the current stand-off between the county and traders. The decision to suspend the payments was arrived at during a meeting in Malaba town convened by traders and officials from the county's revenue directorate. Another meeting will be convened on Monday in Malaba town between traders and officials from the county's revenue department.

Finance chief executive Phaustine Barasa and Finance chief officer Nicodemus Mulaku are expected to attend the February 7 meeting in Malaba. "Let us wait for Monday for our bosses to come. For now, you can relax," Okole told traders. Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry Busia secretary Fred Papa told the Star on Tuesday that the double increment in the charges was unfair to traders who are still struggling from effects of Covid-19. [Read more](#)



WEDNESDAY 2ND FEBRUARY, 2022



KNCCI Invites Views From Scrap Metal Dealers On Trade Ban



In a statement, KNCCI noted that the survey findings will assist in "developing KNCCI Position Paper to assist President Uhuru Kenyatta in reconsidering the directive." "The purpose of this survey is to establish the extent of the economic effects of the directive, existing supply-chain challenges of the sector as well as gather possible suggestions to improve the sector," it said. The deadline for the survey was set for February 4. The Head of State while imposing the ban said that it was part of government efforts to end the rising cases of vandalism of key government infrastructure which he described as economic sabotage. "As of today, we will no longer allow, and we have put a moratorium on the export or the buying or selling of any scrap material until we have put in place proper guidelines that will ensure that material is not coming from the hard-won investments that the Kenyan people have made," he said on January 20 during the passing out parade of the 298 direct entry. [Read more](#)



THURSDAY 10TH FEBRUARY, 2022



Pakistan Decries Hard Stance By Kenya For Delay In Exports



Pakistan has decried hard stance by Kenya on sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures and other tough laws as a reason for the delay in exports of her key commodities to Kenya. Non-Transparency, unpredictability, tough regulations, and standards are some of the main reasons cited by Pakistan's commercial Counsellor LD Khan who says Kenya-Pakistan bilateral trade is hugely in favor of Kenya. Khan, who spoke to Capital Business, said the country faces a huge trade barrier in trying to access markets for her mango, citrus fruits, dates among other agricultural products and engineering items.

“Kenya is one of the largest importers of Pakistani rice but bilateral trade between the two countries is dominated by black tea and rice which is not enough because many areas could be explored for diversification of trade for a win-win situation on both sides,” Khan told Capital Business. Kenya and Pakistan are set to sign a raft of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) that will aid to boost bilateral trade. Pakistan exported goods worth USD 249million to Kenya with rice accounting for USD 155 million and the rest being pharmaceuticals, textiles, and tractors. [Read more](#)



FRIDAY 11TH FEBRUARY, 2022



It is all systems go for Pwani Innovation Week next month

Mombasa will host the second edition of the Pwani Innovation Week (PIW) between March 28 and 31. The first one was held between December 3 and 6, 2019, followed by the Blue Hackathon on December 8 and 9.

The Innovation Week is a joint initiative by the SwahiliPot Hub Foundation and its partners to foster innovation and technology in Kenya's coastal counties. It aims to encourage innovators, policymakers, corporations, funders, researchers and other stakeholders to embrace new ideas and trends. This year's theme is 'Leveraging on Covid-19's opportunities to create a better future.' It will focus on innovative ways of working that have evolved as a result of the pandemic and its catastrophic impacts. Speaking yesterday in Nairobi during media and sponsors breakfast engagement, Mahmoud Noor, the Swahilipot Hub founder, said the innovation week aims to bring together innovators within the coastal counties to showcase what they have. [Read more](#)



WEDNESDAY 16TH FEBRUARY, 2022



Scrap metal ban rings alarm bells on sector reforms

For a week now, the multi-billion-shilling scrap metal business has been in the limelight over a presidential directive imposing a moratorium on January 20, 2022. The primary objective of the temporary ban was to curb the rising cases of vandalism of public installations.



The provisions and losses associated with repair and maintenance of some public installations account for over 10 percent of the cost budgets for organizations such as the Kenya Urban Roads Authority (KURA). This ban is no doubt deleterious to key economic indicators and a catalyst for the stigmatization and low rating of the associated businesses. The sector contributes over 0.6 percent of Kenya's exports and is no doubt a key direct and indirect employer for thousands of Kenyans. But the stakeholders in the sector should view the ban as an opportunity to 'clean house' through cross-cutting reforms spanning the entire scrap metal value chain. Self-regulation is an effective solution for any segment wishing to cast confidence and guarantee control in its business operations. [Read more](#)

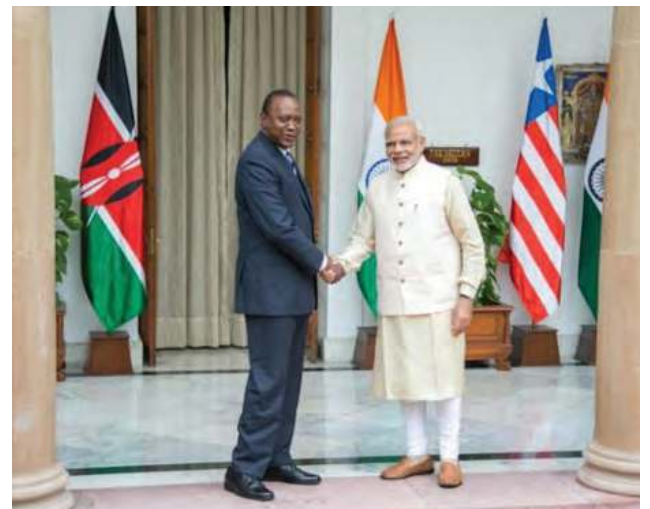


TUESDAY 22ND FEBRUARY, 2022



Inside India's plan to grow trade, investment with Kenya

India is keen to tap more trade and investment opportunities with Kenya, its High Commission in Nairobi now says. This, as it remains the second biggest import source for the East African Community nation, after China. "We are looking at growing the bilateral trade, drive investments both into Kenya and India and create a conducive environment for Kenyans to do business in India," High Commissioner Virander Paul said. He spoke during the inaugural East FM's "High Table with the High Commissioner" show recorded on Friday. According to Virander, there are huge potential in agro-processing and value addition that is yet to be exploited in Kenya, with potential for Kenyan industries and MSMEs to tap the Indian market. Medical, manufacturing, tourism, trade and industries also remain key areas of focus for India, he said. Close collaborations between the Kenyan National Chamber of Commerce and Industry and its Indian counterpart, together with other private sector bodies and governments is expected to drive trade and investment between the two countries to new heights, with both economies angling to bounce back from the pandemic. [Read more](#)



MONDAY 28TH FEBRUARY, 2022



Traceability the route to SME export growth



In its quest to become a player of formidable significance in international trade, Kenya, and to a larger extent Africa, urgently needs commodity traceability as a principle and base practice. The Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS), cites ISO 9001:2015 that views traceability as the ability to identify the history, application, use and location of an item or its characteristics through recorded identification data. This definition views traceability as the ability to track the movement through specified stages of the extended supply chain and trace backward the history, application or location. Traceability is important in ensuring compliance such as Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) in agricultural products, managing the supply chain needs and quality assurance. This is in addition to abiding by the rules of origin in trade. There have been cases in the Kenyan commercial space that have given cues to the compromise in our trade competitiveness brought about by the absence of a traceability practice, particularly in the food and agricultural products. [Read more](#)



WEDNESDAY 2ND MARCH, 2022



Sh4.6b road works resume, expected to boost business

The ongoing construction of a 3km stretch of the Webuye-Kitale-Endebess road is expected to ease traffic that has hurt business in Kitale town. The completion of the project was delayed last year following prolonged rains. The section of the road is part of a 45km road being built by the China State Construction Engineering Corporation at a cost of Sh4.6 billion. The project is funded by AfDB. Despite being a rich agricultural region, business in Kitale is affected by the poor roads and lack of business space for traders. Residents are upbeat that the road will help in uplifting the face of the town. Hotelier John Mbugua said, "The carpeting will reduce the dust levels in the town." Bad roads have stopped investors from coming to Kitale town. "When you enter Kitale, big potholes and dust give visitors a bad impression," Mbugua said. "The road project is expected to improve the area's economy," said Martin Waliaula, the local chairman of the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry. [Read more](#)



SATURDAY 5TH MARCH, 2022



Absa, KNCCI Host Businesswomen Ahead Of International Women's Day



Over 1000 women SME owners have benefited from a five-day financial training tour designed to help women entrepreneurs running small businesses strengthen their financial situations in the post-pandemic era. The training, organized by Absa Bank Kenya in partnership with the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI), was part of the bank's celebrations ahead of the International Women's Day. Speaking during the final session of the county tour at the Safari Park hotel, Absa Bank's Managing Director Jeremy Awori affirmed the bank's commitment to empowering Kenyan women entrepreneurs in the next five years, as part of its diversity and inclusion agenda. "We are engaging women entrepreneurs through grassroots mentorship and networking platforms in partnership with like-minded stakeholders such as the KNCCI and other corporate clients to understand their fundamental needs. These engagements are crucial for us, as a bank, in developing holistic and tailor-made solutions that serve their unique and evolving needs," said Awori. [Read more](#)



MONDAY 7TH MARCH, 2022



Traders want Ojaamong to resolve hiked licence fees stand-off before March 31



Traders in Malaba, Busia, who were slapped with high license fees have asked Governor Sospeter Ojaamong to intervene and solve the impasse. The governor is expected to meet the traders, although a date is yet to be set. The traders say the charges have increased by between 100 and 300 per cent. They said on Monday the problem should be addressed before March 31, the deadline for renewing business permits and licences. Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry Busia chapter director Fred Papa told the Star the traders' grievances have been presented to the county chief. "We tasked Malaba Central MCA Benard Ibela to meet the governor and organize a meeting. We are still waiting for the governor's response so we can set a date for the meeting," Papa said. The traders say the increase may deter prospective businesspeople from setting up shop in Malaba town. Last month, a meeting convened by traders and attended by Busia Finance executive Phaustine Barasa ended prematurely after businesspeople claimed the CEC was non-committal in assuring them a lasting solution to the problem would be found. The traders walked out of the meeting.

[Read more](#)



TUESDAY 8TH MARCH, 2022



RUTTO: It's time business people got into politics



It is high time that the business community in Kenya borrowed from the words of Napoleon Bonaparte "If you want a thing done well, do it yourself". For far too long, we have lamented over challenges facing businesses at both the county and national levels, with appeals and delegations to the political class ending in vain. To get the results we so yearn for, we need to join the political class come August. As of June 2021, the national government owed suppliers Sh36.35 billion. Make no mistake, this is not inclusive of the debt owed to suppliers by county governments. Times without number have we witnessed business owners going bankrupt and others being auctioned due to delayed payments, with some going as far back as 1995. Above everyone, the Kenyan business community feels the pain and agony of delayed payments. It is time we ourselves ran for political seats, went to the Senate and expedited the passing of the Prompt Payment Bill of 2021. This Bill requires government to make payments to suppliers within 30 days of delivery failure to which interest accrues. [Read more](#)



WEDNESDAY 9TH MARCH, 2022



Why SMEs should share stories of their pain, struggles



You have likely come across the 'rags to riches' story of that businessman or woman who one day on a mystical whim or strategic plan decided to open a shop to sell some product or provide a certain service. The story will glorify how after a few months or whatever incubation period, the founder is making millions from the business venture. Such stories motivate other would-be entrepreneurs to either quit their jobs as well or start some side hustle to tap into this profitable business environment. It is only then that they realize it is not all rosy. When you started, the road appeared well tarmacked, smooth with pavements and designated lanes showing speed limits, bumps ahead, climbs and descents - only for you to realize the tarmac vanished at the horizon and you have to dig your own road from there. These stories about the uncertainties of running a small enterprise are what investors say should be shared, not just the joy that comes with making your first Sh1 million or inking that lucrative contract. "Entrepreneurship is not easy, it is not for the faint-hearted," said Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Support Centre Chief Executive Linda Onyango. [Read more](#)



THURSDAY 10TH MARCH, 2022



County Employs Youth, Women In Community Service

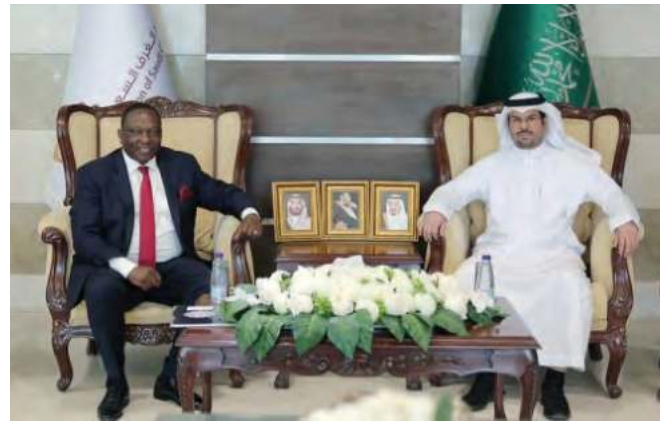


At least 3,000 residents of Kakamega draw salary from the county government coffers by serving in various roles in the communities as service men and women. This includes 1800 youth and 1200 women. Kakamega Governor Wycliffe Oparanya said during a breakfast meeting with stakeholders convened by Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI), that the county government spends Sh6 million every month in paying the group that cleans and beautifies Kakamega town and its environs calling for more partners to support the initiative to absorb more jobless youth. Apart from the cleaners, other beneficiaries of the County Youth and Women Empowerment Program serve as security guards, taking care of county infrastructure projects, and those clearing the road sides as they are supervised by Sub County Administrators. The County's Chief Officer Social Services Development, Sports Youth, Women Empowerment and Culture, Dr Brendah Barasa, said the county government has also partnered with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in the Youth Empowerment program, to empower them with technical skills so that they can start income generating activities. [Read more](#)

 **MONDAY 14TH MARCH, 2022**



Saudi-Kenya Business Forum opens new horizons for trade and investment



The Federation of Saudi Chambers of Commerce hosted here Monday a Kenyan trade delegation headed by President of the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry Richard Ngatia. The delegation met with Acting Secretary-General of the Federation of Saudi Chambers of Commerce Hussein Al-Abdul-Qader, and a number of the Saudi business owners, in the presence of Kenyan Ambassador Peter Ogego. The Saudi-Kenya Economic Forum dealt with aspects of trade and investment cooperation between the two friendly countries and ways to develop them in various fields to serve the common interests. During the forum, a memorandum of understanding was signed, which aimed at enhancing economic cooperation, exchanging information on available investment opportunities, enabling commercial and investment partnerships, encouraging participation in exhibitions and forums as well as exchanging visits and trade delegations. — SPA. [Read more](#)

 **WEDNESDAY 16TH MARCH, 2022**



Kenya eyes increased flower, tea exports to Saudi



Kenya seeks to increase its flower, tea and coffee exports to Saudi Arabia, with a plan to double the value in the short-term. This follows an MoU between the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI) and the Federations Council of Saudi Chambers (FCSC) on Monday. According to KNCCI president Richard Ngatia, the agreement that focusses on trade opportunities targets to improve the balance of trade currently hugely tilted in favor of Saudi Arabia. Pre-Covid-19 pandemic (in 2019), Kenya's imports from Saudi Arabia were valued at Sh127.2 billion, the Economic Survey 2020 shows, with refined petroleum products as the top product with an import bill of \$843 million (Sh96.3 billion). Kenya also imports distillation products, plastics and fertilizer from Saudi. The import bill is fourteen times more than the value of Kenya's exports which totaled Sh8.9 billion, a drop from Sh10 billion a year earlier. Cut flower was the top export commodity valued at \$20.4 million. Other commodities Kenya is keen to export under the agreement are mate and spices, live trees, plants, bulbs, roots, edible fruits, nuts, peel of citrus fruit and melon. [Read more](#)



THURSDAY 17TH MARCH, 2022



Kenya opens third embassy in Southeast Asia

Kenya has opened a new embassy in Indonesia two years after it pledged to enhance ties with the southeast Asian country. The mission in Jakarta brings to three the diplomatic stations Nairobi has in the region after setting up one in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, five years ago. The other is in Bangkok, Thailand.

Kenya says the embassy's opening in Indonesia would help improve business ties by adequate consular support. Foreign Affairs Cabinet Secretary Raychelle Omamo opened the mission formally on Thursday, accompanied by her Indonesian counterpart Retno Lestari Marsudi. "The opening of this mission is no doubt a momentous occasion because it marks an incredible milestone in our bilateral relations since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1982," she said. Indonesia opened its embassy in Nairobi 40 years ago, but Nairobi had often addressed its interests in Indonesia through its Bangkok embassy. Officials from both countries said they would now work on regular contacts to enhance trade between them and discuss common positions on international matters. The two sides say they are focused on improving trade, agriculture and fisheries, education and healthcare collaboration, with Kenya seen as a gateway for East Africa for Indonesian goods. [Read more](#)



**MONDAY 21ST MARCH, 2022**

Discussing Economic Trends, Investment Opportunities and Ease of Doing Business in Kenya with KNCCI

Q: Samuel Matonda, as CEO of KNCCI, what is your general assessment of the Kenyan economy?



The Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry has been in operation since 1965. Luckily, our membership has grown from the last time you interviewed my predecessor, from 20,000 to 47,000 direct members. We also deal with more than 7 million members who are affiliated to associations who are members of the Chamber. This means that more than 80% of our membership is micro and small enterprises (MSMEs). Before the pandemic, the general business was operating very well. We could see all the sectors vibrant and cooperating normally. Tourism was booming. The agribusiness sector was too, and there were movements from one area to the other. That was very good. The economy was projected to grow and move to a higher level but then came the pandemic, which brought a total disruption of the economy and some sectors had to close down. In Nairobi, at the CBD, we had hotels like the Intercontinental Hotel closing completely. Now, it is on sale because it closed. There is a hotel, which is just behind me about 500 meters, the Silver Spring Hotel. [Read more](#)

**FRIDAY 25TH MARCH, 2022**

Competitive SMEs key to AfCTA trade

SMEs should be made more competitive for Kenya to start benefiting from the Sh250 trillion African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). This was one of the key messages during the third edition of the Nation Media Group SME Expo at Kenyatta International Convention Centre, held jointly with the Ministry of Industrialization Trade and Enterprise Development, Micro and Small Enterprise Authority and the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The three-day event, which began on Thursday and will run up to March 26, featured exhibitors, policymakers, parastatal heads, business leaders, entrepreneurs, innovators and researchers, among others.



Industrialisation Chief Administrative Secretary David Osiany said while the level of skill among Kenya's entrepreneurs cannot be questioned, a lack of standards and consistency in their products has hindered them from accessing larger markets. "Some doors made in Lamu cost up to Sh1 million in Nairobi.

[Read more](#)



MONDAY 28TH MARCH, 2022



Readiness of SMEs for the AfCFTA implementation



As a flagship project of the African Union's Agenda 2063, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is, a blueprint for attaining sustainable, inclusivity and development across Africa. It aims to boost intra-African trade by providing a comprehensive and mutually beneficial trade agreement among the member states, covering trade in goods and services, investment, intellectual property rights and competition policy. With its well laid out principles, Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) can be described as an ambitious trade pact, a game changer that is set to aid Small and Medium Sized sector become big winners in the cross-border trade within Africa. The AfCFTA is set to expand intra-Africa trade through the harmonization and coordination of trade liberalization and facilitation instruments across the various regional economic communities on the continent. The AfCFTA entered into force on 30 May 2019. African countries opened their markets on January 1 2021, under the continental free trade agreement and duty-free trading of goods and services across borders is now underway despite the COVID-19 pandemic and other teething problems. [Read more](#)

MEDIA PICTORIALS

1st Quarter Jan - March 2022



DAILY NATION TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2022

Powering SMEs

Invest in a brand identity that anyone can use to identify your products

Public relations and communication are key tools of growth for SMEs

In today's world, social media plays a crucial role in connecting people and developing relationships and provides a great opportunity to provide top notch customer service by gathering input, answering questions and listening to feedback

BY DIANE ONDITI

SMEs play a very critical role in providing the country's economy, employing 80 percent of the working population. The government should therefore ensure that SMEs are well equipped with information and ideas on how to improve or take their business to a higher level.

Public Relations and Communication are important aspects for all businesses, big or small. There are some of the tools that can make SMEs more competitive by communicating better with the general public about the products or services they offer.

Effective communication can be achieved by ensuring consistency in communication and making sure that the communication sent out does not conflict with the needs of your business and the picture it projects to the public. It is important to invest in a brand identity that anyone can use to identify your products. Many companies use a variety of brand identities that convey, for instance the logo and corporate colours.

They employ 80 percent of the working population, therefore the government should ensure that they are well equipped with information and ideas

I believe the same can be adopted by SMEs too, by creating logos that identify with their business and create websites or social media handles that can give the link-ups through online searches.

In today's world, social media plays a crucial role in connecting people and developing relationships, not only with key influencers and journalists covering your company's sector, it also provides a great opportunity to offer top notch customer service by gathering input, answering questions and listening to feedback.

The insights you gain from social media listening provides organisations with a better understanding of what's working and what's not, and gives a big way in helping improve an organisation's public image.

It's important to be aware of what people are saying about your company as well as your competitors. Social media allows you to get your message out to your target audience faster. You can create content and share information immediately without a news announcement or video, to catch the eye of a reporter or blogger who's browsing Twitter or Facebook looking for story ideas.

People are constantly sharing and engaging information across social media, therefore channels such as LinkedIn and Pinterest are useful tools to get the word out to more people and engage with your target audience. Social media offers a cost-effective approach that can help drastically increase both visibility and brand awareness.

The writer is Communications Officer, Kenya National Chamber of Commerce & Industry

INVESTMENT

Trade lobby opens new office in China

The Kenya China Chamber of Commerce (KCCC) has opened an office in Beijing, China to facilitate trade between the two countries.

The office will play a critical role in unblocking trade challenges at a time when the movement of goods and people has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Speaking at the Nairobi China Trade Investment Forum in Nairobi, KCCC Chairman Tim Chen (below) said the last two years have been challenging to both Chinese and Kenyan business community due to the pandemic.

"Our business people haven't been able to import and export in large quantities because of the pandemic restriction," he said.

"This has led to delays of imports and exports widening the trade balance between Kenya and China. That's why as Kenya China Chamber of Commerce we have set up an office in Beijing to start facilitating the trade and identifying export opportunities for Kenyan companies."

He said the office will also identify new business opportunities in agriculture.

Kenya exported goods worth \$134.8 million (Sh15.2 billion) to China last year with import worth \$3.29 billion (Sh371 billion). This is a huge disparity considering that the Kenya has potential to export more of agricultural products.

[Standard Reporter]

DAILY NATION THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2022

Powering SMEs

This is the third edition of the conference

NMG is using platform to mobilise stakeholders to support small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

BY EVANS ONG'ARA

Participants of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are in for a treat as KCCC hosts a three-day event dubbed the SME Conference & Expo 2022.

The double event kicks off today and closes on Saturday 25, organised by the Nation Media Group in collaboration with associate donors from the public and private sectors. This is the third edition since the debut event was introduced.

The exhibitions and conference make for an interactive outing to KCCC and its surroundings. The theme for this year is "Building the SME Sector Competitive Armed Global" with the understanding that there is a need for small stakeholder partnerships towards strengthening the all-important sector.

The guest line-up for this event, therefore, features top executive leaders from various sectors, as Kenya all eager to share their insights and experiences with SMEs. It is expected that the conference discussion, webinars will find new ways to support the sector that contributes significantly to the economy of the nation.

The conference will kick off with a Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI) official sharing highlights of the country's SME landscape. His address will therefore set the tone. This will be followed by remarks by Richard Mwangi, Chief Executive Officer of the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, who will likely share perspectives of the SME landscape and the support they need. Other speakers of the day include the Chief Executive Officer of Micro and Small Enterprises Authority (MSEA) Henry Rithika, and NMG Group Chief Executive Stephen Gikagamba.

The chief guest is David Osiang the Chief Administrative Secretary (CAS) in the Ministry of Industrialisation, Trade and Enterprise Development. He will talk on the tangible impact of the SME Credit Guarantee Scheme in supporting SMEs during the economic recovery process.

Kenya Climate Innovation Centre (KCIC) Consulting CEO Vianam Prabhakar will give a presentation titled, How to drive the Entrepreneur, Social and Governance (ESG) conversation among SMEs. KCCC is a key supporter of particularly SMEs in the agriculture sector.

Dr Eric Buttu, the Vice-President of KCCC, will address the topic, Enhancing SME resilience towards business recovery. SME and insurance will also be a subject of discussion, the focus being on affordability. This is informed by the limited provision of insurance to the SME sector.

Acting Kenya Power Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Eng Rosemary Odhiambo, will speak on the topic, SME and Energy, a hot topic, given the cost of electricity in the country.

Webinar Hosts, Country Manager, Zira Corporation, will give a presentation on How SMEs should leverage on technology in their businesses.

Dave Osiang, General Manager, Octa-

KICC hosts third edition of SMEs Conference & Expo

Kenya Innovation Exchange Ltd, will then talk about Building an inclusive innovative business case.

A representative from Equity Bank will give a presentation on SME financing, among the challenges that SMEs face in accessing finance.

Dr Buttu will address the topic: Market access for transforming SMEs post-Covid-19, this being the thrust of the event's discussions, given the theme.

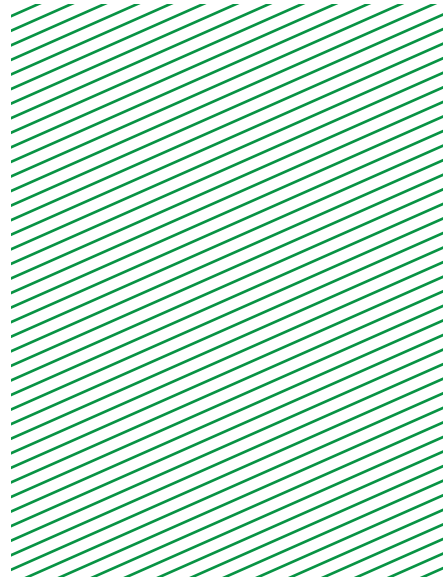
The inaugural SMEs Conference & Expo was held in 2020 in partnership with the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce (KNCCI). It was convened on February 24-25, 2020, at KCCC, Nairobi, under the theme "Powering SMEs". The conference attracted 4,000 participants and 91 exhibitors, and was presided over by Cabinet Secretary for Interior and Constitutional Affairs, Government, Dr Paul Mwangi, in a hearing with KCCC President Richard Mwangi.

The second edition, under the theme "Resilience, Recovery and Sustainability", was held on February 23-25, 2021, also at KCCC grounds. This address examined the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on SMEs. More emphasis was placed on what had worked, to pick up losses and employ more ways of boosting the resilience of SMEs to adversity.

The audience attracted more than 120 exhibitors and over 10,000 participants. It featured key industry players, and the companies were KCCC, KNCCI, MSEA and KIPPRA.

The third edition is a new one, as SMEs continue to face the gloom to mobilise stakeholders in support of SMEs, and for the latter to discover their products and services as they create new networks.

For more information, contact: www.nmg@nationmedia.com



MEDIA PICTORIALS



DAILY NATION THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2022

Powering SMEs

The UN economic report of 2021 pointed out that most MSMEs were oblivious of their vulnerabilities

There is no reason why MSMEs should not succeed

The Covid-19 pandemic helped to highlight the general unpreparedness of MSMEs in Africa, most of them were not resilient enough to hold, with over 67 per cent reported to have faced "strong" adverse effects

ities - AfCFTA is now the buzzword continentally. It has been billed as the strategic framework for delivering on Africa's goal of inclusive and sustainable development, and is a concrete manifestation of the present-day pan-African drive.

With 36 African countries having deposited the instruments of ratification, trading under AfCFTA officially commenced on January 1, 2021. The opening was accompanied with tremendous optimism over what was arguably going to be the biggest free trade area globally with a population of 1.35 billion and a combined GDP of 3.4 trillion dollars.

According to the World Bank, the implementation of AfCFTA could increase Africa's exports by 560 billion dollars, boost income by 450 billion dollars (a gain of seven percent), improve wages for unskilled workers by 10.3 percent and skilled workers by 8.8 percent, and radically transform women's wages and access to trade opportunities by 2035.

Even in Kenya and the rest of Africa get down to perfecting the clauses and protocols underpinning the trade agreement, the reality that MSMEs stand to contribute significantly to socio-economic growth is a foregone conclusion. According to the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), MSMEs in Africa account for about 50 percent of industrial jobs and nearly 90 percent of the manufacturing sector in terms of the number of enterprises.

For MSMEs to be ready for AfCFTA, they need supportive policies and initiatives. To give an indication of what needs to be done, PricewaterhouseCoopers, following studies says the "missing middle" phenomenon keeps down the MSME sector. Further, the sector is beset by skills shortage, multiplicity of taxes, and high cost of doing business.

MSMEs need to be technologically and digitally agile. For this, they need platforms that will enable them to share information. In this respect, trade procedures should also be digitised. Flexible financing frameworks that accommodate the dynamism of MSMEs should be explored. This will take care of financing requirements for the often side-lined segments like start-ups, social businesses and services that have no collateral.

The Chamber has been actively participating in financing MSME export competitiveness, establishing MSME-focused incubators, and advocating for infrastructural development by government.

One of the areas that the KNCCI is currently working on is a certificate of origin platform that supports the dynamic environment created by e-commerce.

The author is the Chief Executive Officer, Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry

BY SAMUEL MATONDA

There is high probability that if you are reading this, you are a Micro, small, and medium enterprise. That is because over 60 percent of operating businesses in Kenya are MSMEs.

The question we are posing today is: Are MSMEs in Kenya prepared to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) that seeks to accelerate intra-Africa trade and boost the continent's position in the global market?

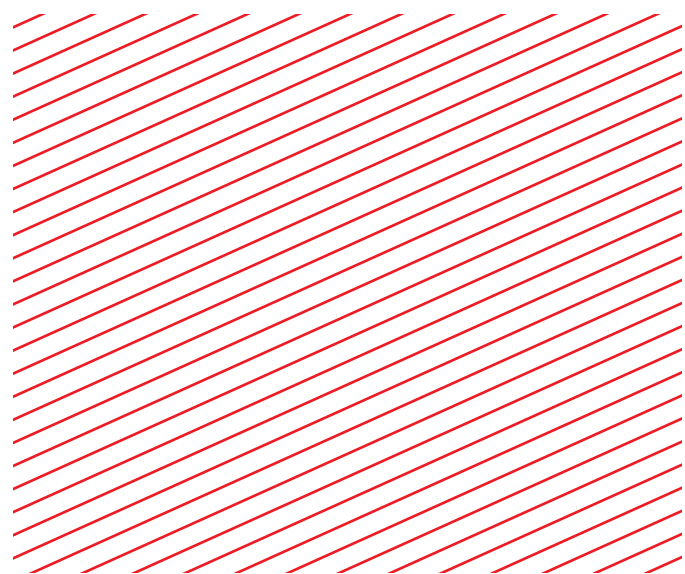
The Covid-19 pandemic helped to highlight the general unpreparedness of MSMEs in Africa. Most of them were not resilient enough to hold, with over 67 percent reported to have faced "strong" adverse effects.

In fact, the UN economic report of 2021 pointed out that most MSMEs were oblivious of their vulnerabil-




Trade Torch

MOMBASA Mombasa County team lights the Africa Trade Torch during an event attended by the CEO of East Africa Chamber of Commerce Charles Kahuthu among other officials yesterday. -KNCCI



MEDIA PICTORIALS



Opinion

Create more awareness on intellectual property rights for SME exporters

Those that understand the importance of SMEs acknowledge that this sector has contributed significantly to the world economy, generating millions of jobs. However, despite their relevance, SMEs tend to underestimate the mechanisms of protection and appreciation on intellectual property, especially those in export industry.

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) are crucial elements that SMEs in the export industry should take into account. One might ask why?

Well, when you have a new innovation as a new work, it is important that it be registered and patented to prevent competitors from copying, to prevent others from taking advantage of and unfairly benefiting from your effort. Also, if SMEs are well acquainted with intellectual property systems, it helps them avoid getting involved in activities that border on the illegal.

Categories of IP are classified by the World Trade Organization in two those that take care of copyrights of literary and industrial property rights. To narrow it down, aspects that are important to SMEs exporters include patents, trademarks and trade secrets. A business producing fruit juices, for instance, can patent the procedure formula itself, protecting imitation by the competition. When it comes to trade marking, SMEs exporting or wishing to export its products must register a trade mark, otherwise their value and prestige in the market could be seized by its competitors, profiting from the same name.

In Kenya, we have the IP Bill 2020 that seeks to control policy around IP enforcement, however, not much has been done and achieved, and the need to create awareness on this is wanting. It is an effort that requires a combined effort from IP-related agencies such as Kenya Intellectual Property Institute, the Kenya Copyright Board and the Anti-Counterfeiting Agency.

These agencies should also work in partnership with private sector organisations such as the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Kenya Private Sector Alliance, and the Kenya Association of Manufacturers, whose membership constitutes a good percentage of SMEs, to address issues and challenges faced by SMEs especially in the export industry.

The Covid-19 pandemic showed us how innovative and creative our SME sector is. The government should therefore take the initiative to nurture the talent that has not been exploited and protect the IPs of these SMEs. This can only be achieved through a vigorous campaign and awareness creation at national and county level. Intellectual Property Rights are more than about ensuring exclusivity, these are assets that need to be effectively exploited.

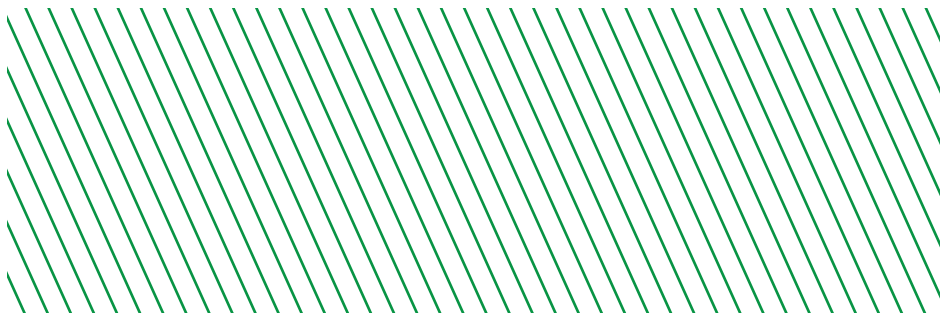
By Sakina Asman, County Programmes and SMEs Development, Kenya National Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Kenya-China trade lobby opens branch in Beijing

From left: Kenya National Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KNCCI) director Ronald Meru, Kenya-China Chamber of Commerce (KCCC) Chairman Tim Chen, KNCCI Nairobi County vice-chairperson Cynthia Kamau and KNCCI's Nairobi Chapter Chairman Julius Opiyo yesterday at the Serena Hotel. KCCC has opened an office in Beijing to address trade challenges between the partners brought about by Covid-19. DIANA NGILA / NATION

Kenya-China trade forum

NAIROBI Kenya National Chamber of Commerce & Industry Nairobi chapter chairman Julius Opiyo (left), the Kenya China Chamber of Commerce (KCCC) chairman Tim Chen, and the National Bank of Kenya MD Paul Russo during the Nairobi-China Trade and Investment Forum at Serena Hotel yesterday. The KCCC has opened an office in Beijing. DIANA NGILA



MEDIA PICTORIALS



Coastal Counties to host Innovation Week Forum

BY MOHAMMED HASSAN

Mombasa and other coastal counties will host the third edition of Pwani Innovation Week (PIW) to create a widespread culture of innovation in the region.

The innovation week whose theme is "Leveraging on Covid-19 opportunities to create a better future" will provide an opportunity for individuals and both public and private sectors to address challenges and solutions in business and other economic activities.

The forum is being organized by the Swahilipoti Foundation Hub in collaboration with the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI), Mombasa County Government and other stakeholders.

The annual event which did not take place in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic is slated for 28th to 31st March this year.

It will involve among others, Hackathons/challenges, training boot camps, and networking, women in technology, exhibition techkits expo, panel discussions and pwnai get talent.

"Innovation catalyzes the aspirations of individuals, private institutions and govern-

ments to achieve developments by generating creative ideas and introducing new products and services that improve the overall quality of life," said Swahilipoti founder, Mohamed Noor.

Noor said this will provide a platform for the national and county governments, industries, businesses, organizations and individuals to showcase, engage, discuss and explore how the world through the coastal counties' lens, is harnessing economic growth by leveraging on Covid-19 opportunities.

"We intend to inspire innovators, policy makers, corporations, business, researchers and other players to take risks on new ideas and trends, collaborate across sectors and transform the Kenyan Coast through the scaling of innovations," he added.

Noor said the main objective of the innovation week is to provide innovators, startups and established businesses, which are addressing challenges affecting communities in the coastal region, the opportunity to showcase their innovations.

"The event will also promote public-private sector partnerships to improve trade, economic resilience and encourage young people to take responsibility for solving societal problems," said the Swahilipoti patron.

Noor also thanked the Cabinet Secretary for ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs, Lawrence Wachera for his valuable support to the event and other activities geared towards promoting innovation and talent of the youth in the region.

Noor also thanked the Ministry of Sports, Heritage and Culture through the National Museums of Kenya for hosting the Swahilipoti Hub and the Innovation Week since its inception.

"We truly appreciate the continuous support in our activities by the Cabinet Secretary and the Ministry," he

added during a press briefing at Swahilipoti Foundation in Mombasa on Friday.

Kenya Technology Chief Manager of Business Development and Innovation, Ms Stella Muthoni commended the Swahilipoti Foundation for the initiative and pledged to support the event.

"We support such events through our platform as technology is key to the development of our country," said Ms Muthoni.

Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry Chief Executive Officer, Jarami Kitavi said the Pwani Innovation Week will provide a good opportunity for individuals, businesses and companies to interact and

work solutions to challenges facing them.

During the last edition in December 2019, the Pwani Innovation Week attracted more than 600 participants drawn from national and county governments, development partners in technology, upcoming innovators and students.

Among the sponsors were Safaricom, ICT Authority, Huawei, UKaid, Seacom, Africa Youth Trust and Kenya Red Cross.

Swahilipoti Foundation Hub is a non-profit making organization in Mombasa that focuses on inspiring and nurturing entrepreneurship and creative Africa through networking, technical training, support, professional mentoring and coaching.

Chief Administrative Secretary (CAS) in the Ministry of ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs, Nadia Ahmed is the product of Swahilipoti and outstanding in public speeches where she was a volunteer.

Nadia urged youth in the country to be innovative and challenged them to turn their abundant talent, confidence and energy into sources of income to spur economic growth.



Patron of the Swahilipoti Foundation Hub in Mombasa, Mohamed Noor, briefing the media on the innovation week.

Sh4.6b road works resume, expected to boost business

TRANSPORT

The ongoing construction of a 3km stretch of the Webuye-Kitale-Endebess road is expected to ease traffic that has hurt business in Kitale town.

The completion of the project was delayed last year following prolonged rains.

The section of the road is part of a 45km road being built by the China State Construction Engineering Corporation at a cost of Sh4.6 billion. The project is funded by AfDB.

Despite being a rich agricultural region, business in Kitale is affected by the poor roads and lack of business space for traders. Residents are upbeat that the road will help in uplifting the face of the town. Hotelier John Mbugua said, "The carpeting will reduce the dust levels in the town."

Bad roads have stopped investors from coming to Kitale town.

"When you enter Kitale, big potholes and dust give visitors a bad impression," Mbugua said.

"The road project is expected to improve the area's economy," said Martin Waliaula, the local chairman of the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry. [Osinde Obare]



THE SMEs CONFERENCE & EXPO 2022

3RD EDITION

THE EXPO CONTINUES TODAY AND TOMORROW @ KICC Courtyard, Nairobi

8:00a.m-5:00p.m

THEME: Making the SME sector competitive amid Covid-19; A multi-stakeholders approach.

FREE ENTRY FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC

EXHIBITORS

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DEADLINE | 6TH MARCH 2022

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Close to 80 percent of SMEs in Kenya are unlicensed

New digital platform to boost market access for small firms

The newly created seamless market under the African Continental Free Trade Agreement is expected to boost opportunities for businesses in the continent.

It is easier and safer to lead to the government, but less helpful to lead to the economy. SMEs of today are the backbone of tomorrow. Do not just take interest in them when they have peaked into big corporates. Walk the journey with them.

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Why SMEs should share stories of their pain, struggles

Highlighting challenges will help other entrepreneurs to soldier on despite the hardships, and to seek solutions.

You have likely run across the "tags to riches" story of that businessman or woman who one day on a tropical island or strategic plan decided to open a shop to sell some product or provide a certain service.

The story will likely show how after a few months an otherwise jobless person, the founder is making millions from the business venture.

Such stories motivate others would-be entrepreneurs to either quit their job as well or start some side hustle to tap into this profitable business environment.

It is only then that they realize it is not all rosy.

When you started the road appeared well-lit, marked, smooth with pavements and designated lanes showing speed limits, bumps ahead, dips and descents - only for you to realize the terrain vanished at the horizon and you have to dig your own road from there.

These stories about the uncertainties of running a small enterprise are what investors say should be shared, not just the joy that comes with making your first \$1 million or asking that lucrative contract.

"Entrepreneurship is not easy. It is not for the faint-hearted," said Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Support Centre Chief Executive Linda Ovingang.

"Many give up. It is important to share these stories because you will prevent people from giving up."

Ms. Ovingang said running a business has to be mission-driven.

"It has to be something you want to do to live to be a passion because it will be very hard. There will be very low moments, there will be moments you will cry. I have cried many times, because of rejection," she said on the sidelines of the launch of the SME Blue Pages platform in Nairobi last week.

"We go through somewhere, you are rejected. That is normal. They should just learn that it is normal to be rejected, what is important is that you keep moving."

The SME Blue Pages is a digital platform that aims to give businesses global exposure for all made-in-Africa brands.

The event was attended by SME owners, leaders and officials from the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KPSA) and Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI).

Eva Mutaya, KPSA director in charge of gender and SMEs, and also chief executive of communications firm BSO Group said it is always easier to tell the stories of success.

"But it is better to tell the story of the in-between - what it means to be an SME in this country," she said.

"I think we need to tell more stories of falling forward, falling seven times but rising eight."

She said that all businesses, including the large corporates existing today, were once SMEs and such stories are key to growth.

"We need stories of how did you land your first contract? How did you fund it? How did you recruit your first employee?" said Ms. Mutaya.

"SME is a serious business and as we get to this election season, we must make a real case for SMEs."

"If your business was still operating at 5pm today your shop is not closed. Even if you closed shop yesterday, know that you can open tomorrow, be proud of yourself," she said.

During the interactive meeting, logistics, brand visibility and cost of advertising were highlighted among the top challenges facing SMEs.

Even with the digital age, it was noted that such transformation on how business is done has not been smooth for SMEs.

"During Covid-19, consultants told SMEs to open social media accounts, open Facebook, I met one SME owner who told me she opened an Instagram account but did not even have one like," Ovingang said.

"Even with the digital age, it was noted that such transformation on how business is done has not been smooth for SMEs."

"We want all of you to go digital but it is not easy to direct traffic to your Instagram. It is so easy on paper, but practically it is not."

It is such challenges that led to the birth of the SME Blue Pages, which is meant to connect SMEs across the continent.

Ovingang said, unlike large corporates, information about SMEs is often lagged.

"Furthermore, to even say I have this order, how do I fulfil it? How do we make information accessible and not for the elite?" she posed.

Right now, through our platform, any SME can access any service that they want whether logistics, insurance or finance."

KNCCI Chief Operating Officer Patrick Nyangwenjo said financing has been a key impediment to the passion and growth of SMEs.

He said most banks would only consider lending to government and large corporates.

"What is left for SMEs are small financial institutions such as SACCOs because they (banks) demand a lot of documentation including collateral and this has been a very tough space for SMEs to really thrive and even learn with little opportunity in terms of financial support," Mr. Nyangwenjo said.

He further said the SME sector is the most regulated.

"Today even with the desired structure, you will get a lot of multiple taxes and fees, or even transfer property from Nyandarua County to Mombasa for example, you will get a lot of multiple taxes and fees," he said.

"This over regulation has been a key impediment to the growth of SMEs and all of us must engage the government and other development partners to a) contract the dialogue, and b) increase its fair play for the SMEs to be able to thrive."

Nyangwenjo said data is key for decision making and to support SME growth.

"We call upon everyone to invest much in data. Data will help to identify areas of opportunities, especially how to expand your business," he said.

MEDIA PICTORIALS



Third edition of SMEs conference continues in Nairobi



Iran Ambassador to Kenya Jafar Barmaki (second left), Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Richard Ngatia (third right) and the Representative of the Embassy of Indonesia, Aditya Aji Nugraha (second right) during the third edition of the SMEs Conference and Expo at the KICC courtyard in Nairobi yesterday. The expo, themed 'Making the SME sector competitive amid Covid-19; a multi-stakeholder approach,' ends today. PHOTO: POOL



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