

GENOWA ECHO

ENDLESS POTENTIAL

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Inside this Issue: Special Coverage on Madaraka Day 2025

A Heartfelt Thank You for the Madaraka Day Celebrations

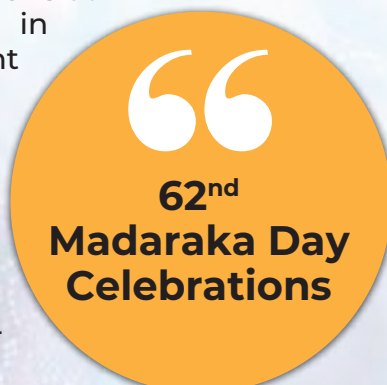
By H. E Governor Gladys Wanga, EGH



Governor Wanga delivering her speech during the Madaraka Day celebrations at the Raila Odinga Stadium.
Photo Credit: Eunice Atieno

We want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank everyone who contributed to the success of our **62nd Madaraka Day Celebrations** at the **Raila Odinga Stadium** in Homa Bay County. This achievement truly reflects the collaborative spirit of all involved.

We extend our deep gratitude to **President H. E. Dr. William Ruto, First Lady Mama Rachael Ruto, Deputy President H.E Pro. Kithure Kindiki** and the entire Government for their presence and support.



THE EDITORIAL TEAM

Ms. Roselyn Omollo
CECM Communications

Atieno Otieno
Chief Officer and
Editor-in-Chief

Steven Muga
Director Public
Communication & Sub Editor

Lawrence Magware
Managing Editor

Collins Ogutu
Editor

Eunice Atieno
Photography

Livone Molo
Photography

Geoffrey Khoore
Videography

Robert Wera
Videography

Carolyn K.
Design and Layout



County Government of Homa Bay

Homa Bay County
P.O. Box 469 - 40300,
Homa Bay.

communications@homabay.go.ke

We are incredibly honoured that Homa Bay County had the privilege of hosting this esteemed event, and we look forward to completion of the projects outlined during the celebrations.

We are delighted to have welcomed a visiting Head of State for the first time. Thank you, **H. E. Natasa Pirc Musar**, for joining us in the Bay of Endless Potential.

We look forward to cooperating further on areas of mutual interest, in commercialized apiculture and environmental conservation.

Our heartfelt appreciation goes to **Rt. Hon Raila Odinga and Mama Ida Odinga** for their presence, which provided invaluable support and confidence to our transformative agenda for Homa Bay.



Governor Gladys Wangari appreciating cheers from the crowd during her Madaraka Day celebrations speech. *Photo Credit: Eunice Atieno*

We would like to express our special acknowledgement to the dedicated **Security Teams**, including the KDF, the National Police Service and the National Government Administrative Officers (NGAO). Your unwavering commitment and vigilance in maintaining order are truly commendable.

We thank the **Members of Parliament** and the **County Assembly** from Homa Bay County for their vital support and collaboration in making the celebrations a success. Their leadership and unity were key in mobilizing and uplifting the spirit of the event.

To the **National Celebrations Steering Committee** and the Permanent Presidential Music Commission (**PPMC**), thank you for your hard work and exceptional management of the event, logistics, and entertainment.

To the **Staff of the County Government of Homa Bay**, we sincerely appreciate your contributions to the success of this event.

Your unwavering support and commitment greatly enhanced the efforts of all teams involved and lend to a successful day.

To our esteemed members of the **Fourth Estate**, your invaluable input and good media coverage has been instrumental in helping us reach a global audience. In the same breath, we extend our appreciation to the medical emergency teams for being on standby to provide necessary medical attention. We thank the avid **Kogalo and Ingwe Fans** who graced the Mashemeji derby and showed us the true spirit of football passion.

Lastly, we thank all those who are able to attend and to the **Wonderful People of Homa Bay**, your pride and spirit were evident throughout the celebrations. You truly made this event extraordinary.

Thank you all for your cooperation and support. May God Bless Kenya and Homa Bay County!



Jubilant crowd cheer on as the leaders address the nation from the stadium's podium. Photo Credit: Livone Molo

Governor Wanga's Madaraka Day Speech Hailed as Inspiring

By Lawrence Magware

On the grandest national platform ever established, before a distinguished audience that included Heads of State, esteemed foreign envoys, and diplomats, Governor Gladys Wanga of Homa Bay County delivered an inspiring and memorable speech that resonated deeply with Kenyans from all walks of life. Those present in the vibrant stadium and the millions following in their homes were captivated from the very first word.

From her prominent position at the podium, Governor Wanga effectively drew everyone's attention, eloquently emphasizing the unique attributes that make Homa Bay exceptional and competitive. She elaborated on how a united leadership in Homa Bay has successfully unlocked the county's vast potential, pulling it from the shadows of stagnation it experienced in the early years of devolution. Her words painted a vivid picture of resilience and progress, highlighting the transformative journey of the county and its people.

Here is the abridged version of the speech:



It is my honour to welcome you to Homa Bay, the Lake County of endless potential. We are immensely grateful to Your Excellency for allowing us to host Madaraka Day, marking the first time our community experiences these national celebrations firsthand.

Additionally, we appreciate your commitment to infrastructure improvements, as seen with the unveiling of our new 12,000-seater stadium and ongoing projects like the expansion of Kabunde Airstrip and various roads in Homa Bay Town. Homa Bay is blessed with natural beauty, featuring scenic beaches and unique wildlife.

As we celebrate the 62nd Madaraka Day, we pay tribute to Homa Bay's legends and honour Raila Odinga by naming the stadium in his memory.



We also highlight the achievements of women leaders in our county and our progress in achieving the Two-Thirds Gender Rule.

We commend your government's partnership with Homa Bay and the establishment of fresh produce markets to empower local farmers. Additionally, we seek your support for initiatives in the Blue Economy, including realizing the labour gap within the sector and the construction of critical road networks.

In our time in office, we increased our revenue by 700% and are committed to improving healthcare services and addressing issues such as maternal mortality and gender-based violence. We call for support in recruiting healthcare workers to enhance our services further.

increased our revenue

700%

President William Ruto Leads the 62nd National Madaraka Day Commemoration at Raila Odinga Stadium.

By Collins Ogutu



President William Ruto delivering his speech during the Madaraka Day celebrations. *All photo Credit: Agencies*

The 62nd National Madaraka Day celebrations took place with grandeur and patriotic fervour at Raila Odinga Stadium in Homa Bay. Kenyans across the country came together to commemorate this historic day, which marks the achievement of self-rule and independence. The event brought together an impressive array of political leaders, diplomats, local officials, and citizens, emphasising the nation's unity and progress.

President William Ruto led the celebrations, delivering an inspiring address that highlighted Kenya's milestones and outlined the government's vision for a prosperous and inclusive future. His speech emphasised the commitment to nation-building, economic growth, and social development, calling for continued resilience and unity among Kenyans.

The chief guest for the day was Dr. Natasa Pirc Musar, the President of Slovenia, who received a warm welcome as part of Kenya's efforts to strengthen diplomatic and regional ties. Her participation underscored Kenya's status on the global stage and its commitment to fostering international cooperation.

The event was further enriched by the presence of Deputy President Prof Kithure Kindiki, who represented the government's leadership and its commitment to the nation's development agenda. Prominent political figures, including Rt Hon. Raila Odinga, a pivotal figure in Kenya's political landscape, attended the event, symbolising the spirit of national unity and dialogue.



Former Prime Minister Rt. Hon Raila Odinga addressing the celebrations.

The host governor, Gladys Wanga, warmly welcomed all distinguished guests and attendees to the beautiful county of Homa Bay, a region rich in history, culture, and resilience. With heartfelt enthusiasm, she expressed her profound gratitude to President William Ruto for honouring her county by making it the host of this year's Madaraka Day celebrations which is the first time in history that Homa Bay has been chosen for this significant national event.

Representation from the legislative branch was strong, with Hon. Moses Wetangula, Speaker of the National Assembly, and Hon. Amason Jeffer Kingi, Speaker of the Senate, playing key roles in the proceedings. The legislative leadership was further complemented by the presence of both Majority Leader Hon. Kimani Ichung'wa and Minority Leader Hon. Junet Mohamed, whose involvement reflected Kenya's diverse political landscape and the importance of bipartisan cooperation.



Governor Gladys Wanga takes a moment to welcome celebrants to Homa Bay County



President William Ruto receiving sword salute from KDF Parade Commander.

Devolved leadership from the Nyanza region was prominently represented, with Kisumu Governor Professor Anyang' Nyong'o, Siaya County's James Orengo, and Migori County's Dr. Ochillo Ayako in attendance, demonstrating regional commitment to national development and unity.

The event featured vibrant cultural performances, national prayers, and the ceremonial hoisting of the Kenyan flag,

creating a patriotic atmosphere that is synonymous with Madaraka Day celebrations.

President Ruto's remarks called for renewed unity, resilience, and a collective effort to realise Kenya's vision of becoming a middle-income country by 2030.



Jubilant Kenyans, waving national flags and dancing, follow the proceedings

President Ruto's Madaraka Day Speech Key Takeaways

By the Communication Team



President William Ruto stressing a point during his address at the Madaraka Day celebrations. Photo Credit: Eunice Atieno

President William Ruto presided over the 62nd Madaraka Day celebrations at Raila Odinga Stadium in Homa Bay County, showcasing the unyielding spirit of the Kenyan people. The event drew immense crowds, with Homa Bay residents filling the 12,000-seat stadium well in advance, reflecting the strong public enthusiasm for this significant national event.

During his address, President Ruto outlined the major accomplishments of his administration since assuming office on September 13, 2022. He emphasised that the Kenyan economy has not only stabilised but also experienced significant growth, boasting an impressive average annual growth rate of five per cent since August 2022, outperforming both global (3.3 per cent) and regional (3.8 per cent) averages.

Inflation has dramatically decreased from 9.6 per cent in October 2022 to just 3.8 per cent in May 2025. Furthermore, the Kenyan shilling has strengthened from Kshs. 162 to Kshs. 129 against the US dollar, while foreign exchange reserves have surged to \$10 billion, sufficient to cover four months of imports.

Regarding the Affordable Housing initiative, the President lauded this program as a cornerstone of

socio-economic renewal.

With 11,000 out of the planned 150,000

housing units completed, he

announced for the coming

legislation that will empower housing

levy contributors to access home loans of

up to Kshs. 5 million at

single-digit interest rates. "We

shall put forward to Parliament a reform that ensures any contributor can obtain an affordable home loan of up to Kshs. 5 million, applicable to any housing unit available in the market," he asserted.



Homa Bay County Enforcement Officers during the pass out parade. Photo Credit: Eunice Atieno



Kagan-Kochia dancers in action. *Photo Credit: Eunice Atieno*

President Ruto also highlighted the success of the Taifa Care initiative, noting that since its launch in October 2024, 23 million Kenyans have registered with the Social Health Authority (SHA). Over Kshs. 43 billion has been allocated to healthcare facilities, enabling 4.5 million Kenyans to receive fully covered treatments. He announced that 1.7 million informal sector households have enrolled and paid for social health insurance, achieving the highest enrollment rate in a single year in Kenya's history.

In agriculture, Ruto underscored the transformative impact of fertiliser subsidies, reforms in the coffee and sugar sectors, and enhanced earnings for farmers. Coffee farmers are now receiving up to Kshs. 150 per kilo, an outstanding rise from an average of Kshs. 65 while tea earnings climbed to Kshs. 215 billion in 2024. Sugar production surged by 66 per cent, significantly reducing imports by 70 per cent. He also revealed the strategic lease of four state-owned sugar factories to boost efficiency and productivity.

“We have allocated Kshs. 5 billion in grants to aid 100,000 young people, each receiving Kshs. 50,000 in seed capital to kickstart their entrepreneurial journey by August this year, he declared.”



Entertainer displays a model of a fish during the celebrations. *Photo Credit: Eunice Atieno*

The President announced the ambitious Kshs. 20 billion National Youth Opportunity Towards Advancement (NYOTA) project, in collaboration with the World Bank, to support over 800,000 youths through skills training, business development, and seed capital grants. This initiative is set to empower youth aged 18–29, and up to 35 years for those with disabilities, improving employability and nurturing entrepreneurship.

With this year's Madaraka Day centred on the Blue Economy and Maritime Affairs, President Ruto stressed the critical importance of investing in fisheries and aquaculture. He outlined key developments, including the establishment of the Kabonyo Centre of Excellence, upgrades to fish hatcheries, and new landing sites and modern fish markets. “Once operational, it will produce 7 million fingerlings quarterly to replenish Lake Victoria, alongside fostering research, training, and innovation,” he concluded with confidence.

President Ruto's Pre-Madaraka Day Tour Yields Development Goodies for the County

By Owuor Brilliant

As the countdown to Madaraka Day intensified, all eyes were focused on the activities ahead of it. From upgrading the venues and the access roads, Homa Bay town was a beehive of activity. While most people focused on the town, President William Ruto and Governor Gladys Wanga had other ideas. Development programs, in their own words, must be as localised as possible.

Excitement filled the air in Magina, Ndhiwa, as President William Ruto arrived to officially launch the 30km Marindi-Magina-Pala-Oria Bridge section of Gor Mahia Ring Road, a key infrastructure project aimed at boosting connectivity and economic growth within the sugar belt in the region.

The Gor Mahia Ring Road, an entire 80km stretch, also includes the 50km Pala Koguta-Riat-Konyango Rabuor section and is expected to transform transportation in Ndhiwa, easing movement for traders, farmers, and residents. The project, spearheaded by the Kenya Rural Roads Authority (KeRRA), is part of the government's commitment to improving infrastructure in rural areas.

Still in Ndhiwa, the Head of State laid the foundation stone for the construction of the Ndhiwa Training and Vocational Institute at Ochol in Kanyamwa Kologi. The facility, jointly funded by the Ndhiwa Constituency Development Fund and the Ministry of Education, as well as the County Government of Homa Bay, is expected to be ready by mid-next year.



President William Ruto and Rt. Hon Raila Odinga acknowledging a crowd during the opening of the Homa Bay Modern Fish Market.
Photo Credit: Livone Molo



An aerial view of the modern market. Photo Credit: Livone Molo

President Ruto also flagged off the Rural Electrification and Renewable Energy Corporation (REREC) to a series of rural electrification projects in the county, aiming for last-mile electricity connectivity that will benefit over 25,000 households and effectively tackle power connectivity issues throughout the region. These projects include 10 direct connections targeting 1,431 households and last-mile connections across the county at KES 90.97 million in the next six months.

The following day, the president presided over the issuance of 110 affordable housing units to new owners in Homa Bay under the Affordable Housing Project, a clear testament to the government's commitment to ensuring low-income earners live a dignified life.

He then inspected the progress of the ongoing rehabilitation of the Homa Bay Pier.

Before flying to Rangwe subcounty, where he presided over the opening of the new subcounty headquarters, the launch of construction of the Rangwe-Oboke road, and the Kosiga-Rangwe-Asumbi Water project, the Head of State officially opened the Modern Homa Bay Fish Market that will accommodate more than 400 traders. The new market presents improved facilities such as clean, safe, and adequate spaces, as well as storage facilities like cold rooms for traders. This will enhance fish supply and distribution, attracting related support services, creating employment, hence, stimulating our growth.



The new look of Raila Odinga Stadium Homa Bay. Photo Credit: Livone Molo



The new Homa Bay Pier. Photo Credit: Livone Molo

Homa Bay's Economic Evolution: A County on the Rise

By Owuor Brillian and Jackline Atieno

Homa Bay County is undergoing a profound transformation. From newly rehabilitated roads to a booming business sector and expansive blue economy projects, the region is stepping into a new era of development. While much of Kenya's attention was drawn to the county during the 62nd Madaraka Day celebrations, the true story is unfolding; one of growth, opportunity, and the challenges that come with rapid change.

The post-Madaraka Day period has seen a notable uptick in business activity, particularly in the hospitality and retail sectors. Hotel occupancy rates surged by 150%, according to hospitality insiders, as visitors flocked to the county following the national event. Small-scale traders, especially those within the Homa Bay Fish and Municipal Markets, have reported increased sales, capitalising on the government-backed push to enhance fish trade hygiene standards.



President William Ruto doing a fish deepfrying demo.



Rt. Hon Raila Odinga and President William Ruto admiring a newly landed fish.

Food vendors, boda boda operators, and informal market traders have seen a 20-30% revenue boost, largely due to the influx of new customers and heightened investor interest.

Homa Bay's infrastructure is getting a facelift, with over 35 kilometers of road rehabilitation completed across major routes within town. There is also the Kabunde Airstrip expansion that will allow larger aircraft to land, improving transport efficiency. The Raila Odinga Stadium, upgraded at a cost of Kshs. 500 million, has become a modern sports and events hub, featuring natural turf, floodlights, and canopied terraces.

These developments are expected to attract investors, increase regional trade, and enhance mobility.

Homa Bay's future economic growth is strongly tied to its blue economy, with the government allocating Kshs. 1.5 billion to modernise the fishing and aquaculture industries. New fish landing sites have been established in Wakula, Mainuga, and Nyandiwa, featuring cold storage and fish processing units aimed at reducing post-harvest losses and increasing revenue for fishermen.

The Kabonyo Fisheries and Aquaculture Service and Training Centre of Excellence in Kisumu, funded by the Government of Hungary, will train youth in modern aquaculture techniques, besides undertaking the restocking of the lake.

The Aquaculture Business Development Programme (ABDP) is distributing pond liners and fish feed to small-scale farmers, helping them scale their operations.

Homa Bay stands at a pivotal moment. With national attention, financial injections, and growing investor confidence, the county has a rare opportunity to solidify itself as a regional economic powerhouse. The coming months will determine whether this momentum translates into tangible benefits for residents or remains a fleeting wave of development.



Traders at the new Homa Bay Modern Fish Market



The Homa Bay Affordable Housing Project units

Blue Economy Summit: Leaders, Stakeholders Commit to Growth of the Sector

By the Communication Team



A section of the leaders at the summit

The government is making significant investments in the blue economy to realise the vast potential of Lake Victoria, as highlighted by President William Ruto during the conclusion of the three-day Madaraka Day Thematic Week Summit on Blue Economy and Maritime Affairs held at Tom Mboya University.

President Ruto emphasised that the blue economy could substantially enhance the nation's wealth, food security, and employment opportunities. He noted that this sector, which has been historically overlooked, currently contributes around Kshs. 35 billion to the economy, although its true potential could reach between Kshs. 300 billion and Kshs. 500 billion annually.



President William Ruto delivering his speech at the summit



Governor Gladys Wanga at the Thematic Week Summit on Blue Economy and Maritime Affairs Summit at Tom Mboya University

To harness this potential, the government has allocated Kshs. 1.5 billion for the development of nine fish landing sites along Lake Victoria, including specific projects in Homa Bay County at Wakula, Mainuga, and Nyandiwa.

Furthermore, the government is actively working to expand commercial fish production in the lake by establishing 54 fish cages, with plans to procure an additional 55.

To bolster local fishing communities, the government is transforming Beach Management Units from purely social organisations into economic units, enhancing their operational capacity.

Additionally, a budget of Kshs. 600 million has been set aside for the acquisition of a ferry, which will facilitate the transportation of goods and people across Lake Victoria. The President announced that this ferry is expected to be operational by December this year.

Profile: Dr. Nataša Pirc Musar, President of the Republic of Slovenia

By Lawrence Magware

Since taking office in August 2022, Governor Gladys Wanga has hosted several dignitaries, including ambassadors and heads of multinational agencies. However, never has a sitting Head of State been her guest, until Madaraka Day happened.

Slovenian President Dr. Nataša Pirc Musar was in the country on the invitation of her counterpart, President William Ruto, and to attend the country's 62nd celebration of self-rule, the Madaraka Day. And when she touched down at Kabunde Airstrip aboard a Kenya Air Force Jet, President Ruto delegated the reception and hosting of President Nataša to Governor Gladys Wanga.

After the celebrations at the stadium and a state luncheon at the Homa Bay State Lodge, the two made a short trip to the Wire Forest in Rachuonyo South sub county.

Together, they visited the Wire Forest Management Association apiculture farm to explore collaboration opportunities in beekeeping and honey production. "Homa Bay has immense potential to advance commercial beekeeping, much like Slovenia, which is a global leader in natural honey production," Wanga said while at Wire.

But who is Nataša Pirc Musar, who leads the country with the highest beekeepers per capita in the world?

Nataša Pirc Musar, born in 1968 in Ljubljana, graduated from the Faculty of Law at the University of Ljubljana in 1992 and passed the national bar exam in 1997. She started her career as a journalist and news presenter at the Slovenian national television and later at POP TV. Nataša gained further journalism experience at CNN and studied at Salford University in the UK.



Slovenian President Dr Nataša Pirc Musar addressing the nation at the Madaraka Day celebrations in Homa Bay.

In 2001, she transitioned to the financial sector as Head of Corporate Communications at Aktiva Group. She served as the Director of the Training and Communications Centre of the Supreme Court of Slovenia and was elected the second Commissioner for Access to Public Information in 2004. After a term renewal in 2009, she completed her term in 2014.

Nataša became Vice President and then President of the Europol Joint Supervisory Body, overseeing data protection compliance. In 2014, she was sworn in as an attorney and led her law firm until December 2022. She earned her PhD in 2015 with a thesis on balancing public information access and personal data protection. Nataša served on the Executive Board of the Slovenian Bar Association and began her duties as President of the Republic of Slovenia in December 2023.



President Nataša at the Wire Forest Beekeeping Farm in Rachuonyo South







"The lake represents one of our county's most valuable assets. We are committed to not only enhancing fish production from our waters but also maximizing the potential of the blue economy to foster sustainable economic growth within our community." ~ Governor Gladys Wanga