



Zanzibar President Dr Hussein Ali Mwinyi pictured at the Zanzibar State House yesterday swearing in Valentina Andrew Katema (R) as a Judge of the High Court of Zanzibar. Photo: Zanzibar State House

## Dons in Africa weigh in on lecturers’ detentions

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only academic freedom but also the integrity of higher education and democratic governance, it explained.

Such developments encourage self-censorship among academics, limiting research and public discussions on issues of national importance, the letter pursued, urging that the government immediately releases the three lecturers unless credible charges supported by evidence are presented before a court of law.

It also urged authorities to guarantee due process, including access to legal counsel, communication with families, timely judicial review and the right to bail where provided by law.

It stressed the need for stronger protection of academic freedom, freedom of expression and institutional autonomy in accordance with Tanzania’s Constitution, national laws, the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and international standards governing higher education.

University lecturers should not face arrest, intimidation or disciplinary action solely for teaching academic content or expressing scholarly opinions in the course of their professional duties.

“Universities must remain spaces where ideas can be examined critically, evidence debated openly and knowledge advanced without fear of political reprisal. Ideas, after all, are not crimes,” the don intoned.

ACAF remains committed to defending academic freedom across Africa, where Tanzanian authorities need to address the matter in line with the rule of law and the country’s human rights obligations, he added.

## Family loses five as boat capsizes

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clearer through accounts from the survivors,” he said.

Chemchemi village chairman Alex Mgya said strong winds generated waves that entered the boat, causing it to capsize. “In the accident, two women and three children died instantly. The survivors were taken to TPC Hospital, where two have since been discharged while one remains under treatment,” he said.

TAG Chemchem pastor Silvanus Haule said the group had set off after a morning church service to attend a women’s conference at another TAG church in Mikocheni location.

They had initially been advised

to walk to the official crossing point before boarding a boat, but a local resident offered to ferry them directly to Mikocheni settlement.

Some passengers later asked the boat operator to take them to nearby Mikocheni location, where the conference was being held and as the boat approached its destination, strong winds whipped up waves that began filling it with water before it capsized.

“After the strong waves struck, the boat operator told everyone to hold on to the boat while he swam to shore to seek help. Before rescuers arrived, the two women and the three children had already let go of the boat and

drowned,” he stated.

All five victims belonged to the same family, with the two women being sisters and the three children belonging to one of them. Most of the survivors have since returned home after receiving treatment, while one person remains admitted to TPC Hospital complaining of headaches following the ordeal.

Police, working with the Fire and Rescue Force, are still investigating the incident.

The bodies of the deceased have been taken to Mawenzi Regional Referral Hospital, where they are being held pending completion of police procedures before being released to relatives for burial, the commander noted.



Police officers participate in an environmental cleanliness drive at Dar es Salaam city’s Mbagala Rangi Tatu fruit market on Thursday. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

# DCEA sweeps most Mara Region cannabis farming

By Guardian Reporter

CANNABIS cultivation in Mara Region has declined by up to 80 percent as a result of sustained government operations aimed at combating the production of illicit drugs.

Aretas Lyimo, the Drug Control and Enforcement Authority (DCEA) commissioner general, made this affirmation at a press conference yesterday after concluding a special operation conducted in Tarime and Rorya districts.

The operation resulted in the destruction of 291.2 acres of cannabis farms, the seizure of 15 sacks of dried cannabis and four motorcycles used in the illegal activities, while two suspects had been arrested, he said.

Investigations are ongoing to identify and apprehend other members of the network involved, he said, asserting that these achievements demonstrate the effectiveness of the government’s operations, as since in 2024 more than 3,500 acres of cannabis farms have been destroyed in the

Mara Region.

This effort has significantly reduced cannabis production and weakened cultivation networks in the areas that had been most affected, with the results showing that the government’s efforts are bearing fruit.

“Many citizens have begun abandoning cannabis cultivation and are instead focusing on lawful income-generating activities that benefit themselves, their families and the nation as a whole,” the commissioner remarked.

Those who are still involved in cannabis cultivation need to abandon the practice immediately and invest in the legal cultivation of food and cash crops, he said, encouraging the public to maintain cooperating with the law enforcers and similar agencies by providing confidential information about individuals involved in the production, transportation and trafficking of illicit drugs.

The DCEA intends to strengthen operations, including patrols and in-depth investigations across the country, taking firm legal

action against anyone found to be involved in drug-related offenses, he stated.

Stefano Kiabaroti, the Nchaje ward executive officer, said government investment has enhanced the agency’s capacity to conduct highly effective operations to control and eradicate cannabis cultivation.

Many people who previously depended on cannabis farming have now shifted to the legal production of food and cash crops plus livestock farming, a transition that has begun to generate economic benefits for families and communities, he said.

Kurwa Robert, the Rozana village executive officer, said that before these operations, cannabis use and trade had contributed to an increase in criminal activities, with some young people joining

criminal groups and taking the law into their own hands. As DCEA intensified operations to destroy cannabis farms, security has improved significantly and residents have begun returning to their daily activities in a peaceful environment, she stated.

Nkerege village executive officer Joseph Ryoba said the village was among areas most heavily affected by cannabis cultivation, with more than 3,000 acres destroyed during operations in 2024.

Most residents have now abandoned cannabis cultivation and turned to lawful productive activities, reflecting growing public awareness of the harmful effects of illicit drugs and the importance of participating in legitimate economic and community development activities, he added.

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## VP affirms new constitution ‘essential for wider reforms’

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unfinished for more than a decade.

A widely accepted constitution would provide the legal authority needed to overhaul laws that citizens consider outdated or inconsistent with democratic governance, he said.

“When you get a new constitution, all existing laws that conflict with that constitution will die on that very day. That is why the constitution is greater than any other law,” he stated.

Presenting the constitution as the supreme instrument for reform, he suggested that long-standing concerns over governance, accountability, human rights and the rule of law cannot be fully addressed without first resolving their constitutional premises.

In a significant political acknowledgement, Dr. Nchimbi disclosed that public demand for a new constitution emerged as one of the strongest messages during nationwide consultations conducted while he served as CCM secretary general.

The issue was so prominent that he urged the party’s manifesto committee to include a commitment to constitutional reform, and the party’s presidential candidate should publicly pledge to deliver it once in office, he explained.

He said he later consulted the CCM chairperson and president, who supported the proposal after seeing how the criminal justice commission had reached the same conclusion.

The candidate thus promised that the proposal would be implemented as election promises cannot be abandoned, he said, underlining that the exchange showed that political commitment is essential if the constitutional process is to move

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forward.

Meaningful reform must be built on broad participation and national consensus, as demands for a new constitution have persisted for four decades, gaining momentum following the restoration of multiparty politics in 1992, he said, reflecting on the country’s constitutional journey.

He acknowledged progress made during the constitutional assembly in 2014 but the process ultimately stalled, challenging human rights defenders, civil society organisations, political parties and other citizens to prioritise constitutional reform above other governance demands.

“We may have 40 things to fight for, but in any strategy you must choose the biggest issue. To win that battle, you must choose the one issue that can carry the rest,” he emphasised.

A new constitution would strengthen good governance, reinforce the protection of human rights and dignity, creating a durable framework for inclusive national development.

“Tanzania needs a constitution that will guide the country for the next 50 years and one that makes every citizen proud to identify themselves as Tanzanian,” he added.

## ‘Not prepared for school’: 25pc of Z’bar youngsters

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literacy and social-emotional development—two foundational skills essential for learning, communication and classroom participation.

Stark disparities were noticed between children from different backgrounds, as those living in rural communities and socioeconomically vulnerable households were significantly more likely to struggle with school readiness than their urban and better-off counterparts, it said.

The study, based on research by Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS) staff in collaboration with Ifakara Health Institute (IHI) researcher Dr. Ester Elisaria and others, asserted that inequalities begin well before children enter primary school.

The study is the first population-based assessment of school readiness in Zanzibar, with the findings expected to provide policymakers with evidence to strengthen early childhood development programmes and improve learning outcomes across the islands.

Conducted between September and October 2024, interviewers sat down with 362 child-caregiver pairs across Unguja and Pemba islands to establish a baseline of children’s preparedness for formal schooling.

The participating children had a median age of 60 months, while caregivers had an average age of 34.8 years. Women accounted for nearly 87 percent of caregivers interviewed, reflecting their central role in childcare, while around 43 percent had only primary education or no formal education.

The survey also revealed broader challenges affecting children’s development, as only about half of the households had access to children’s learning materials, consumed food from all three recommended food groups, or consistently provided three meals a day.

In addition, fewer than half of the children—about 47 percent—lived in households classified as having the lowest level of vulnerability after researchers assessed factors such as household income, food security, nutrition, health, housing, education, psychosocial support, child protection and access to basic care.

School readiness was measured using the International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA), an internationally recognised tool that evaluates children’s development in emergent literacy, emergent numeracy, motor skills and social-emotional development.

While many children performed relatively well in motor skills and early numeracy, significant gaps were noticed in literacy and emotional development as nearly 40 percent of children struggled with emergent literacy.

About 37 percent showed difficulties in social-emotional development, suggesting that many are likely to face challenges recognising letters, understanding simple language concepts, regulating emotions, cooperating with classmates and participating effectively in classroom activities, the researchers asserted.

They found that age was an important predictor of school readiness, with each additional month significantly increasing a child’s likelihood of achieving higher readiness levels.

Geography also played a major role, as children living in urban areas were found to be almost five times more likely to demonstrate school readiness skills than those in rural communities.

The findings point to the need for urgent investment in early childhood development programmes, particularly for younger children in disadvantaged communities.

“These findings provide strong, context-specific evidence to support urgent strengthening of early childhood development strategies in Zanzibar. Priority should be given to younger children in rural communities and vulnerable households through integrated, community-based early learning and nurturing care interventions,” the researchers declares.

There is need for embedding such interventions within existing health, education and social protection systems to accelerate progress towards universal access to quality early childhood development and pre-primary education by 2030, they added.