Agenda Kenya

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LABOUR DAY EDITION
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President William Ruto engages a worker. The Government is improving the welfare of workers.

PAGE 3

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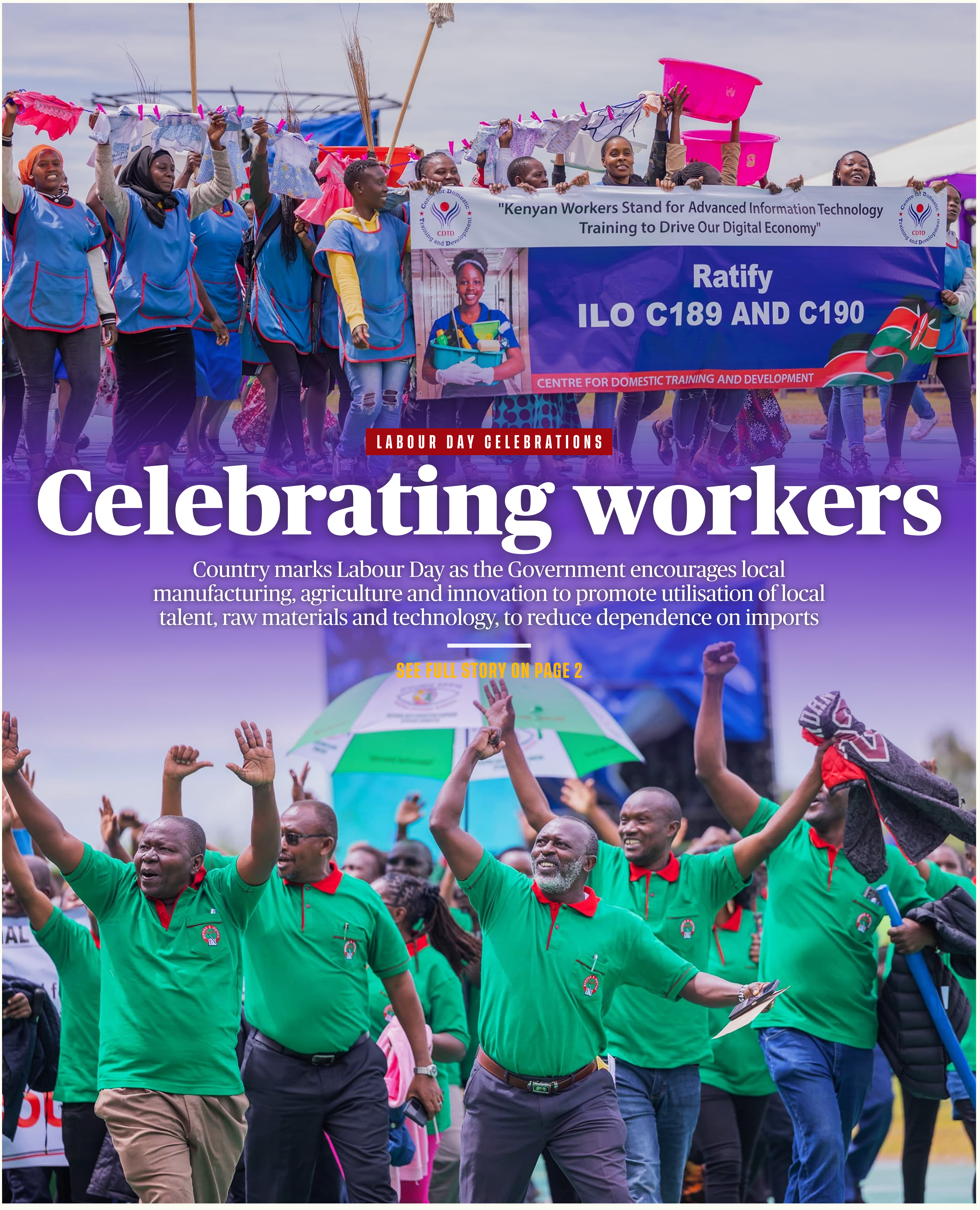


LABOUR DAY CELEBRATIONS

Celebrating workers

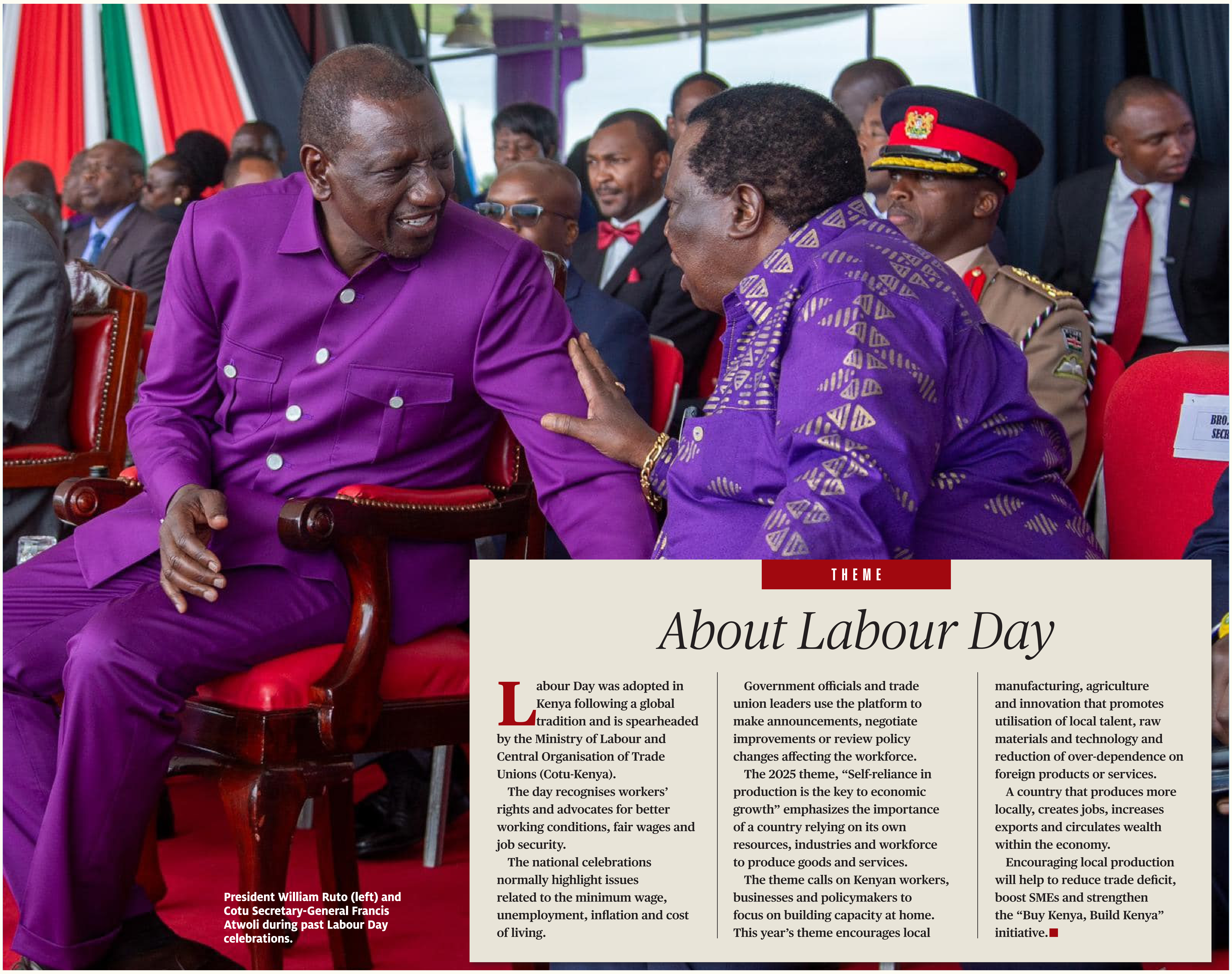
Country marks Labour Day as the Government encourages local manufacturing, agriculture and innovation to promote utilisation of local talent, raw materials and technology, to reduce dependence on imports

SEE FULL STORY ON PAGE 2

WORKERS' DAY

Government seeks to produce more locally as country marks Labour Day

Country marks Labour Day as the Government encourages local manufacturing, agriculture and innovation to promote utilisation of local talent, raw materials and technology, to reduce dependence on imports



President William Ruto (left) and Cotu Secretary-General Francis Atwoli during past Labour Day celebrations.

THEME

About Labour Day

Labour Day was adopted in Kenya following a global tradition and is spearheaded by the Ministry of Labour and Central Organisation of Trade Unions (Cotu-Kenya).

The day recognises workers' rights and advocates for better working conditions, fair wages and job security.

The national celebrations normally highlight issues related to the minimum wage, unemployment, inflation and cost of living.

Government officials and trade union leaders use the platform to make announcements, negotiate improvements or review policy changes affecting the workforce.

The 2025 theme, "Self-reliance in production is the key to economic growth" emphasizes the importance of a country relying on its own resources, industries and workforce to produce goods and services.

The theme calls on Kenyan workers, businesses and policymakers to focus on building capacity at home. This year's theme encourages local manufacturing, agriculture and innovation that promotes utilisation of local talent, raw materials and technology and reduction of over-dependence on foreign products or services.

A country that produces more locally, creates jobs, increases exports and circulates wealth within the economy.

Encouraging local production will help to reduce trade deficit, boost SMEs and strengthen the "Buy Kenya, Build Kenya" initiative.■

Kenya today marks Labour Day, whose theme is "Self-reliance in production is the key to economic growth."

The event being spearheaded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, through the State Department for Labour and Skills Development, will see thousands of workers, trade unionists and citizens gather at Uhuru Gardens in Nairobi.

The event is a testament to the Government's unwavering commitment to fostering self-reliance, boosting production and driving inclusive economic growth.

Labour Day, also known as International Workers' Day, has roots in the international labour movement and commemorates the struggles and gains made by workers and trade unions.

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This year's theme reflects a growing recognition of the importance of domestic production capabilities in fostering economic resilience and sustainability.

By emphasizing self-reliance, this theme advocates for strengthening local industries, enhancing technological innovation, and investing in workforce skills to boost productivity.

The State Department for Labour and Skills Development oversees workers' welfare. To enhance the Bottom-up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA), it ensures fair labour practices, resolving industrial disputes and overseeing compliance with labour laws, which directly impact the welfare and economic stability of workers, including those in the informal sector and small enterprises that are central to the bottom-up approach. The Government has come up with the following initiatives in bettering the lives of Kenyan workers:

a) Digital Empowerment for the Youth

The Government has broadened the national fibre optic network to ensure connectivity throughout the entire country. This enhanced access to high-speed internet, along with the digitalisation of Government services, the development of skills for the regional digital economy and the execution of significant government initiatives like Konza Technopolis City, have stimulated the creation of digital jobs through the Ajira Digital Programme, equipping the youth with digital skills and connecting them to freelance jobs within the economy. Over 500,000 youths have been trained in digital skills and are earning income from online platforms.

b) Strengthening Social Dialogue in Labour Relations

The Government has supported tripartism by promoting social dialogue via representatives of federation of workers and employers' organisations.

This strategy has helped to sustain harmonious industrial relations while responding to emerging employment and labour issues.

c) Transforming Social Protection

The National Social Security Fund (NSSF) has undergone a remarkable overhaul, with monthly contributions soaring from Sh1.4 billion to Sh65 billion. This followed increased contribution rates, with both employees and employers now contributing Sh2,160 monthly, up from Sh400. This change is intended to create a substantial pool of funds for investments and development projects within Kenya, thereby reducing reliance on foreign debt.

Benefit processing times have been slashed from 82 days to just 10 days, ensuring workers access their savings promptly. This transformation has strengthened trust in social protection systems.

Reforms to the NSSF are aimed at broadening coverage and improving benefits for employees in both the formal and informal sectors. The Universal Health Coverage (UHC) as a component of BETA seeks to enhance healthcare accessibility for workers and Maisha Namba and Inua Jamii are designed to improve access to Government services and social safety nets for at-risk workers.

Kenyans should be aware that NSSF is a mandatory pension scheme designed to provide social security benefits to employees in the formal sector. Established under the NSSF Act No. 45 of 2013, it aims to ensure basic social security for its members and their dependents, increase coverage and improve benefit adequacy.

d) Wage Remuneration Policy

The policy was developed to ensure the existence of a dynamic and equitable mechanism for the determination and administration of wages and remuneration in the country. The policy is awaiting Cabinet approval.

e) National Policy on Labour Migration

This seeks to enhance coordination of labour migration governance, promote transparency and flexibility and promote foreign employment while protecting the rights and welfare of Kenyan migrant workers. The policy also aims to maximise the participation of Kenyan migrant workers in the economic development of both Kenya and their host countries.

FACTS&FIGURES

GLOBAL EMPLOYMENT TRENDS FOR YOUTH

DIGITAL JOBS AND UPSKILLING

- **230 million digital jobs will be created in sub-Saharan Africa by 2030.**

Source: World Bank Group.

- **The scale of workforce upskilling and reskilling expected to be needed remains significant: if the world's workforce was made up of 100 people, 59 would need training by 2030.**

Source: World Economic Forum, 2025.

SKILLS GAP

- **On average, workers can expect that two-fifths (39 per cent) of their existing skill sets will be transformed or become outdated over the 2025-2030 period.**

Source: World Economic Forum, 2025.

- **57.8 per cent of workers are still in informal employment in 2024.**

Source: ILO, 2024, Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024.

- **Women are twice as likely to be potentially affected by automation.**

Source: ILO, 2023, Generative AI and jobs 2023.

- **Green skills will be necessary for African countries to progress on climate adaptation and mitigation and to shift to clean energy, industry and construction. It is estimated that the energy transition could create over 9 million jobs by 2030 and another 3 million by 2050.**

Source: AUC/OECD, 2024.

> I urge the relevant authorities, particularly the Ministry of Labour, to convene a meeting with the appropriate committee to discuss and implement a minimum wage increase of at least 6 per cent."
>
> **President William Ruto, Labour Day 2024.**

> Looking ahead, to ensure industrial peace and manage disputes effectively, I've instructed the Ministry of Labour to activate multiple Wage Councils outlined in the 2007 Labour Relations Act. They will negotiate minimum wages in different sectors, enhancing mediation and industrial peace."
>
> **President William Ruto, Labour Day 2024.**

Labour and Social Protection Cabinet Secretary Alfred Mutua addresses job seekers during labour migration forum. Below: Labour and Skills Development PS Shadrack Mwadime during Cotu's 60th Edition of Labour Day prayers. Workers at their places of work and during past Labour Day celebrations.