



The General Kago Funeral Home in Thika, Kiambu named after the famous Mau Mau freedom fighter Kariuki Kago Mboko. [File, Standard]

How Thika's 'five-star mortuary' got the name of Mau Mau general

► General Kago was nicknamed "the crusher" for the ruthless way he dealt with enemies

► He was cremated alive in November 1954 after being captured by colonial soldiers

WAINAINA NDUNG'U, KIAMBU

Any deaths from criminal activities in the counties of Kiambu, Murang'a and Machakos are likely to end up at the General Kago Funeral Home.

The mortuary at the Thika

Level 5 Hospital is one of the largest public facilities in the area after it was expanded and rebranded in a Sh300 million public-private partnership with Mount Kenya University which uses it as a teaching facility for its medical students.

The expansion to a capacity of 112 bodies from the old congested 12-body facility built by the colonial regime in 1941, saw installation of new cold rooms and refrigeration equipment.

General Kago Funeral Home was opened in 2014 changing the face of Kiambu County's largest hospital. But the facility though raising the profile of one of Mau Mau's most fearless and illustrious generals only picked the name by chance.

It was so called in a rebranding move after the expansion, but the name was probably picked because like the hos-

pital and Mt Kenya University, it is on General Kago Street in Thika town.

Also on this street is Thika Technical Institute (now a national polytechnic), the national library, Thika Prisons and St Patrick's Catholic

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Church. The only public institution in the area that previously carried the name of the revered Mau Mau general was General Kago Primary School, sandwiched between the old Thika Cemetery, the library and Mt Kenya University.

Built by the municipal council in the 1980s, the primary school carried the name gallantly until the now famous morgue with spacious parking yard and sheltered waiting bays was commissioned in 2014.

The General Kago Stadium in Kangema in neighbouring Murang'a county is also named after the Mau Mau hero. Kago was nicknamed General Makanyaga (the crusher) for the way he dealt with his enemies.

Colonial officials under the Saganu based Brigadier Lord Thurlow informally referred to him as "The

Black Napoleon' for his bravery.

Born Cege wa Kariuki in Rwathia, Kangema in 1920, his only schooling was at St Peters Clavers Primary in Nairobi where he was expelled for "being rebellious" and disrespectful to the school authority.

His father was an urbanised African and a staunch member of the Kikuyu Central Association formed in 1924 to agitate for African land rights. Kago stayed with his father and started working in Nairobi, before the British Government forcibly enrolled him as a soldier in 1939 for World War Two sending him to fight in Europe and the Middle East as a member of the British troops.

On return, he became a newspaper vendor but by the time the State of Emergency was declared in 1952, he was farming in the Rift Valley where he was already a member of the Mburu Ngembo Army, a Mau Mau affiliated militant group that was mainly operating in Rift Valley.

Returning to the Kikuyu Reserve under the Operation Anvil, he was appointed the head of the Mau Mau in Murang'a commanding over 600 men.

Most Mau Mau historical accounts describe Kago's courage, organisational ability and remarkable knowledge of military tactics as "unequaled."

Between October 20, 1952 when the State of Emergency was declared and his capture on March 31, 1954, he carried out several successful attacks on colonial installations that prompted Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi to pen him a congratulatory message.

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But he was captured after a three-day battle at Kariani Post in Kandara (now in Gatanga), a military post that his men had confused for a police post and attacked on March 28, 1954.

After leading his men gallantly, Kago was shot and captured and the British troops chained his hands and feet and built a 10 metre heap of wood over his head. They then doused the wood with kerosene and cremated him alive by firing bullets from a distance to light the fire.

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MOMBASA

Egyptian, Kenyan scholars team up to discourage youth from extremism

Scholars from Egypt are on a countrywide campaign against violent extremism among youth. The scholars facilitated by the Egyptian Embassy have held sessions in Lamu, Malindi and Mombasa in the campaign that has taken more than a month.

Several Kenyan Muslim scholars have joined in the drive to discourage youth from engaging in terrorism. Youth, particularly the jobless, the scholars said, have been targeted for violent extremism.

Yesterday, the scholars advised youth at the Coast to shun extremism teachings used to shed blood by people seeking to gain from chaos.

The Egyptian Embassy, in partnership with Masjid Shibu in Mombasa, held a religious teach-

ing session to urge youth to denounce violent extremism, saying it was against Islam.

The embassy has been facilitating the teachings dubbed 'Renouncing Violence and Extremism in Islam' in mosques countrywide.

Sheikh Attia Abdrabou from Al-Azhar Al-Sharif University, who was the main speaker, said Islam did not condone extremism.

Sheikh Abdrabou urged Muslims to use Islam to provide impetus for the human pursuit of knowledge in science. "Islam is a peaceful religion that preaches love and forgiveness. The youths should shun extremism and embrace love and respect to the human race," Abdrabou said at the Masjid Shibu.

He said it was only through science that Cov-

id-19 would be defeated, and urged Muslim faithful to follow set protocols to stem the spread of the disease.

Shibu mosque administrator and Madrasa teacher Mohamed Shebah urged youth not to allow themselves to be misled by those who want to make money from chaos.

He said Islam should help counter-terrorism to ensure peace and growth in society. "Islam is not a religion of extremism and it does not encourage bloodshed. So I encourage youth to come out openly and disregard any extremism teachings," said Shebah.

He urged youth to prepare to take over from the older generation and preach peace to ensure continuity of the human race. [Joackim Bwana]



Sheikh Attia Abdrabou from Al-Azhar Al-Sharif University, Egypt, (left) and Shibu Mosque administrator Mohamed Shebah yesterday. [Joackim Bwana, Standard]