Balala taps hoteliers for Kenya tourism marketing campaign

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Tourism secretary Najib Balala has tapped hoteliers to help drive Kenya's marketing campaign.

Mr Balala appointed top hoteliers to help with the development of tourism growth and marketing strategy for a sector that suffered a series of terrorism attacks that had deterred foreign visitors a few years ago.

The hoteliers will feed the Kenya Tourist Board (KTB) with new shifts in Kenya's tourism sector to help promote the country as business and leisure travel destinations.

Among the executives picked for the coast working group are Mohammed Hersi (Pollmans Tours & Travels), Bobby Kamani (Diani Reef), Rakhee Kantaria (Leisure Lodge), Sheema Merali (Neptune Hotels), Alnoor Kanji (English Point Marina) and Hasnain Noorani (Pride Inn).

Their inclusion in the marketing of Kenya marks a shift from the previous strategy that divorced the industry captains from KTB work.

Kenya launched a tourism blueprint hinged on four pillars, including product development, beach strategy, infrastructure and marketing.

"The CS met the players from the coast to share views and growth plans around the beach strategy," said the ministry's spokesperson.

Kenya receives more than a million visitors annually from countries such as China, Germany, France and Britain who are attracted by big game safaris and sandy white beaches, especially in Diani.

Diani Reef Beach and Resort managing director Bobby Kamani (left) chats with Tourism secretary Najib Balala during a Kenya Association of Hotelkeepers and Caterers meeting in Mombasa. Looking on is Kenyatta International Convention Centre chief executive Nana Gecaga. LUCAS BARASA

1.47M

ARRIVALS

Kenya had 1.47 million tourists last year and earned Sh120 billion from their visits.

The palm-fringed Diani beach was this year voted the best in Africa World Travel Awards 2018.

"The private sector along with the Ministry of Tourism and KTB needs to work closely together to launch an independent international, domestic and digital marketing campaign for Destination Diani," said Mr Kamani.

"It is a two way street. The private sector needs to be involved in the conceptualisation and implementation of tourism strategy."

The sector working groups will be meeting monthly with the ministry and KTB to track progress.

Kenya is likely to earn 15 per cent more this year from tourism as the number of visitors grows by 17 to 18 per cent, the government has forecast.

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The forecast was based on a growing local market and new daily, direct flights to New York by Kenya Airways, which will attract more American tourists.

Along with agricultural exports and cash sent home by Kenyans living abroad, tourism is one of the top foreign exchange earners.

Cane transporters warned on load limit

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The Kenya Roads Board has warned sugar millers transporting cane against exceeding recommended axle load which it says is leading to road damage.

The Board's Executive Director Jacob Ruwa called on implementing agencies to enforce weight limit to safeguard the multi-billion road network across the country.

On a tour of completed projects in Nyanza region, KRB directors established that the trucks carrying sugarcane are notorious for overloading the product as they transport them to various sugar factories in the region.

"This does not mean that other road users are left out. They will not be spared in the scheduled crackdown which will target factories based in southern Nyanza," said Mr Ruwa.

The board established that some of the roads extensively damaged are classified under the Kenya National Highways Authority, Kenya Rural Roads Authority, Kenya Urban Roads Authority as well as county government roads.

"It is unfortunate that the roads which were built less than five years ago have completely been dilapidated by individuals who have decided to operate in complete disregard to the law," said Mr Ruwa.

A tractor transports sugarcane in Kisumu County. FIILE

But Kenha Nyanza region director Felix Osongo said they will launch night patrols next week as some millers have opted to transport the sweetener at night to avoid the dragnet.

"We have now acquired equipment needed to conduct the surveillance at night and those who will be found flouting the rules will not be spared," he said.

Mr Osongo said his officers would be stationed on key roads heading to Sukari Industries in Ndhiwa, Sony Sugar and Transmara Sugar Company in Kilgoris.

Homa Bay Deputy Governor Hanningtone Orata said sections of Rodi- Ndhiwa road have become completely worn out due to years of misuse and abandon neglect.

PSV owners say will defy city order

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Public Service Vehicle (PSV) operators have vowed to defy Nairobi county government plan to kick them out of the central business district starting Monday in a move which is set to paralyse transport within the city.

Matatu Owners Association (MOA) chairman Simon Kimutai said Thursday new termini proposed by the county do not have space to hold more than 16,000 PSVs travelling to the city on a daily basis.

The points outside the city centre also lack basic amenities such as lighting and toilets for crew members who will be operating the vehicles. "We have over 1,000 vehicles coming into the city centre on Waiyaki Way and another 2,000 on Jogoo Road. We can't go there because there will be a serious traffic congestion in the city," said Mr Kimutai.

Public service vehicles have been banned from entering Nairobi city centre starting Monday as City Hall moves to decongest the capital. In a notice published in the dailies Thursday, the county government says it has established 11 termini.

County Executive for Transport Mohamed Dagane said each matatu should not take more than five minutes to pick or drop passengers.

Pay ruled out for families in Nyeri hospital land row

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Three families whose 12-acre land was compulsorily acquired by government for construction of Mwai Kibaki Teaching and Referral Hospital Othaya will not get compensation, a Nyeri court has ruled.

Court heard that the families were paid Sh9,151 per acre

Justice Lucy Waithaka of the Environment and Lands Court dismissed the families' petition and ruled that they failed to make a case against the State.

The families of Wangechi Karoing'o, Thinji Kihiuhu and Githinji Wambugu lost the protracted dispute that started in 1990 when they were evicted from the land.

The land was acquired by government in 1979 for construction of a ward named Nyayo and extension of the health facility, previously known as Othaya District Hospital. The court heard that the families were paid Sh9,151 per acre.

In the court case filed in 2017, the claimants wanted further compensation arguing that the land was undervalued. They said they were supposed to be paid Sh120,000 per acre of land.

"We were forced to live like squatters since we did surrender our family land to the State in good faith without adequate compensation," the families said in a letter to the then Minister for Lands, Amos Kimunya, dated April 20, 2004.

They noted: "It is a pity the former government did ignore and neglected to pay the beneficiaries the right award on the disputed land although the claimants have petitioned the same without valid assistance forthcoming from the State."