

TOURISM | Festival seeks to entice both local and international holidaymakers

Easter cultural fete to attract 60,000 tourists, says official

Malindi has already begun experiencing an influx of people from upcountry, claims hotel union

BY SANDRA CHAO
schao@ke.nationmedia.com

More than 60,000 tourists are expected to attend the third annual Malindi cultural festival this Easter weekend.

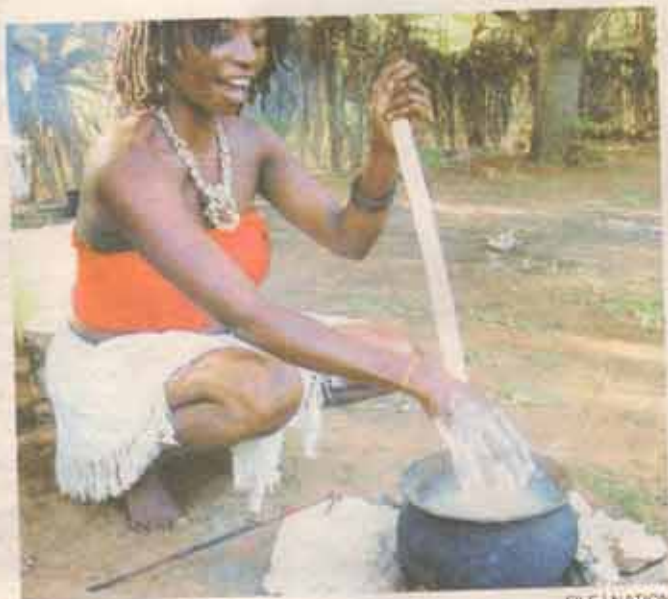
The fete, which is hosted by the National Museums of Kenya, is expected to attract more local tourists to Malindi at a time when the number of international tourists is low.

According to the Watamu branch chairman of the Kenya Association of Hotelkeepers and Caterers Malindi, Mr Philip Chai, the town has already begun experiencing an influx of people from upcountry.

"The festival is an added attraction to entice both local and international tourists to come and see the multiculturalism of Malindi. Many of the hotels have started receiving guests for the Easter weekend," Mr Chai said.

Malindi is a preferred destination for tourists from Italy and the United Kingdom because of its white sandy beaches and remoteness that provides a sense of privacy.

The tourism sector normally experiences a big nose dive



A model demonstrates how the Mijikenda used to cook on pots during the Princess Hando competition last year.

particularly after the Easter holidays forcing the closure of many hotels and loss of jobs for locals.

"Many hotels are likely to close down until the last week of July when things start to pick up again. Hotels like Eden Roc, Coral key, Driftwood and Tropical Village in Malindi will remain open while those likely to survive in Watamu are Ocean Sports, Hemingway's and Turtle Bay," noted Mr Chai.

The tourism sector was worst hit in 2008 following the post-election violence which saw many of the Italian tourists shift to Zanzibar.

Speaking to the *Sunday Nation*, NMK senior curator Ghazal Swaleh said that the festival had over the years become an integral part of the tourism calendar just like the festival in Lamu.

"We are trying to create

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People from upcountry should come and see what Malindi has to offer,"

Ghazal Swaleh

a high season in a period of off season. Normally between March and August, there is fair weather in Europe so we do not have a lot of international tourists," said Mr Swaleh.

"We are not targeting international tourists but we are out to promote domestic tourism and people from upcountry should come and see what Malindi has to offer," said the curator.

Apart from being a tourist attraction, the home-grown initiative is an important tool for national cohesion because, unlike other festivals, there is a showcase of other cultures like that of the Luo, Pokomo, Kamba, Waata, Taita, Mijikenda and Orma who also live in the town.

The fete will for the first time incorporate the Princess Hando competition as the museum have partnered with the hosting cultural group Maeto Africa.

"We normally hold Princess Hando later in the year. This year we decided to hold it in April to strengthen the Malindi festival," noted the group coordinator, Mr Anthony Kadenge.

The competition will see 15 girls selected from Malindi and Kilifi to model in *hundo* which is a Giriama cultural dress.

Those visiting for the first time will also get an opportunity to tour other attractions like the Vasco da Gama pillar, Takwa ruins, Gede ruins, the Malindi Marine Park and Watamu Marine Park.

Lawyers differ over lifting of adverts ban

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competitive way to reach out to the world. He added that rules should be put in place to regulate the advertising so that it is not abused by some law firms.

He agreed with the court's decision that, even though the legal profession should not be seen as merely a business which in effect cheapens the image of lawyers, the prohibition of advertising had become a serious challenge both locally and internationally.

"Many countries have lifted the ban on advertising for lawyers by adopting a regulatory approach that attempts to maintain public confidence in the legal profession. What we need are rules that will ensure that there is a level playing ground for lawyers in advertising," Mr Omwanza said.

His sentiments were supported by Mr Evans Ondieki, who said the decision had opened up new dimensions not only in the legal frater-

nity but also in business. Mr Ondieki said it would be a win-win situation for lawyers, the public and entrepreneurs.

"More media channels will rake in money from these adverts, which in turn will boost the economy. Members of the public too will know the lawyers they want instead of just going to a lawyer who does not understand the problem," he said.

The mandate

The lawyer argued that Justice Majanja was within his mandate to lift the ban in line with the Constitution. The judge declared that the section was inconsistent with Article 46 of the Constitution, which gives consumers a right to information that will enable them make an informed choice.

He ruled that advocates play a key role in the administration of justice and the ban on advertising of their services undermines the consumers' right to access information and make informed choices.

Impending tough rules for coffee trade cause disquiet

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to business interests.

A weakened Kenya Planters' Co-operative Union has only made the position of the small-scale farmers worse, some growers say.

KPCU offered infrastructure for milling, warehousing and marketing to the small-scale coffee owners, hence sharing out the costs enabling them to earn more.

There is now a proposal to turn the union to real estate development and vehicle parking business.

The combined effect of these two developments, farmers say, is that the small-scale coffee farmers will be left at the whims of few dealers in the sector.

"The small-scale coffee farmers will be disadvantaged in this arrangement where there is no structure in the value chain that they control. It is possible for the private firms to fix prices," said Francis Mara, the chairman of Giftwe Coffee Society in Kiambu.

Kenya Co-operative Coffee Exporters that was formed by ministry of Co-operatives to assist farmers access market through the second window of direct sales has progressively been outmanoeuvred through pricing by the large dealers.

From handling 15 per cent of coffee sales at one time, now it is down to under 5 per cent.

Big risk

"There is now the danger of going back to a situation where few controlled coffee business before the sector was liberalised. There is need to strengthen KCCE by providing it with financial muscle to compete with the big dealers," said Mr Wachira Mwago, a former chairman of Coffee Board of Kenya.

"Without a lead agency controlled by farmers as is the case with New KCC in milk sector, there is likelihood of the few big firms dictating terms leading to lower coffee prices," said a former KPCU manager, who requested not to be named because of current job obligations.

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Red Hill Road, Gigiri; P. O. Box 54999 - 00200, Nairobi;
Tel: (020) 7205000, E-mail: cs@che.or.ke
Website: www.che.or.ke



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