

DEVOLUTION

## North Rift counties step up joint effort to boost tourism

The North Rift economic bloc is making notable progress in its effort to boost tourism in the region.

Among the measures the bloc has taken is harmonising policies that promote the sector.

The seven counties that form the North Rift Economic Block (Noreb) have also set aside resources to fight recurrent insecurity in Kerio Valley caused by stock theft and border conflicts.

Recently governors from the region held a forum in Lodwar to formulate inter-county tariffs and discuss ways to promote tourism in a bid to increase revenues.

"The members of county assemblies from all the counties will harmonise laws, a process that will involve the budget making so that our budgets are in line with the regional economic bloc," said Uasin Gishu Governor Jackson Mandago, who is the Noreb chairperson.

Mr Mandago said the synchronised laws will create conducive business environment and enable the devolved units to tap the tourism potential in tourism.

Among targeted attractions are sports and culture, which has been boosted by construction of the ultra-modern Koitalel Samoei Mausoleum in

Nandi County.

Nandi County has allocated Sh2 billion in its five-year development plan to tap domestic and foreign tourism in a bid to increase revenue generation. It has prioritised community conservancies' tourism sites among its 10 flagship projects and has been collaborating with the Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS) and other government departments in promoting the sub-sector.

"Plans are on to invest in better roads and modern hotels to offer tourists substitute attractive sites away from sunny coastal beaches," Mr Lagat told *Smart Company*.

The county also targets sports tourism, cultural exhibitions and diversity of wildlife and plant species to woo local and foreign holidaymakers.

Among attraction sites are Kingwal swamp measuring 17.8 kilometres wide and home to rare aquatic antelope-Sitatunga, only found in Kenya and parts of central African but faces extinction.

West Pokot Governor Simon Kachapin noted that North Rift has huge untapped potential saying the region has suffered marginalisation by the colonial and subsequent post-independence governments.

— Barnabas Bii



From left: Governors Josphat Nanok (Turkana) Jackson Mandago (Uasin Gishu) and Cleophas Lagat (Nandi) during the launch of regional economic bloc last year. FILE/NATION