

Hindus'
new year
starts today

Hindu youths perform a cultural dance during Diwali celebrations at the Mombasa Sports Club on Saturday. Diwali is an annual event that marks the end of the year for Hindus. About 1,500 people attended the event that was marked by fireworks. They start the new year 2017 today.
[PHOTO: OMONDI ONYANGO/STANDARD]



KWALE

Senator claims Jubilee leaders eyeing minerals

Kwale Senator Boy Juma Boy has claimed the Jubilee Government wants to unfairly exploit minerals in the area worth billions of shillings. Addressing Dzoombo ward elders on Friday, Mr Boy claimed a top Jubilee leader had acquired 3,000 acres in Kwale under unclear circumstances. "We are still investigating to find out why he acquired the land and if it was grabbed or bought and if bought was it worth the price he paid," he said. The senator also claimed some leaders in the ruling coalition want to grab land whose leases have expired or are about to expire. But Kwale Land and Natural Resources Executive Ali Mafimbo said the claims by Boy were baseless. — Tobias Chariji

MOMBASA



Lobby group defends Uhuru's anti-graft record

A Jubilee Party lobby has defended President Uhuru Kenyatta's record in the fight against corruption. Coast Jubilee Movement (CJM) claimed Uhuru has in the past sacked several Cabinet secretaries linked to the vice. In a statement yesterday, the lobby group members led by Amina Abdalla and vice-chairman Mbarak Hamed claimed COBD leader Raha Odginga had failed to fight corruption in countries under his party. Elsewhere, Party of National Unity (PNU) has decried grand corruption rocking the Jubilee administration. National vice chairman Sheikh Juma Ngao called for thorough investigations into the alleged \$15 billion corruption scandal at the Ministry of Health.

MACCACKOS

Gulf Power donates books to empower local school

A local private electricity generating company has donated text books worth more than Sh200,000 to support education. Gulf Power General Manager Norman Wanjiri accompanied by a section of the company's staff toured Maivoko Primary School in Athi River where they gave out an assortment of textbooks to cater for the 1,200 pupils. Mr Wanjiri said the initiative was part of the organisation's Corporate Social Responsibility programme aimed at improving livelihoods. Gulf Power, one of the independent power producers owned by Kenyan investors, has set up a 80 megawatts medium speed diesel power plant in Athi River.

SGR should not pass through game reserves, protesters say

MOMBASA

By PHILIP MWAKIO

Conservationists say the Jubilee government should use alternative routes instead of constructing the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) through animal sanctuaries. Convener of the protesters held at Jomo Kenyatta Public Beach yesterday, Mr Mishal Gudka from Corridio East Africa, said they will continue to resist the move to have the SGR pass through game parks in Nairobi and Rift Valley. "Nairobi National Park is likely to lose its significance should plans to build a railway line through it be allowed to proceed. We are saying a firm no and hope our government will heed our calls," Gudka said. Hamdi Keif Yusuf, a protester said: "Kenya's founding father Mzee Jomo Kenyatta asked the Maasai to give up the land for conservation purposes and they obliged. That is the sole purpose for which this land must be used."

Similar protests went on in Kili, Malindi and Diani where protesters argued constructing the railway line through parks will endanger animals and destroy the ecosystem.

MOMBASA

By PHILIP MWAKIO

Poor tourist arrival figures worry investors

Investors have expressed worry over a marginal rise in international arrivals at the Coast.

Reacting to a report issued by the country's top tourism marketer, Kenya Tourism Board (KITB), international arrivals for January to August 2016 by air and sea closed at 581,808 compared to 496,576 in 2015, illustrating an increase of 17.2 per cent.

Kenya Association of Hotelkeepers and Caterers Coast branch Executive Officer Sam Ikwaye said the latest statistics demonstrate that the country is yet to achieve substantial recovery to reflect Kenya's best reference year of 2011.

"From the KITB statistics, this shows short-term (year on year) and long-term (base year) comparisons that indicate that yes, we have grown +17 per cent but we are overall still down at 50 per cent compared to the industry's better years," Mr Ikwaye said.

He said the figures were worrying most investors, especially in the Coast region.

"The reality is more vivid in Malindi and Watamu sub-regions, especially after the suffocation of tourists

TOURIST ARRIVALS

- International arrivals for January to August 2016 by air and sea closed at 581,808 compared to 496,576 in 2015
- And at the Moi International Airport, 57,219 visitors arrived this year compared to 48,031 in 2015, a 19.1 per cent growth
- Uganda remains top as Africa's largest supplier of tourists to Kenya with 9,771 arrivals in Kenya
- South Africa, Tanzania, South Sudan, Nigeria and Rwanda were also among the top African nations sending tourists to Kenya

due to inaccessibility of the region after the national carrier, Kenya Airways (KQ), pulled out from the route," Ikwaye said.

He said smaller airlines have not succeeded in filling the gap in passenger airflits to the coastal tourism hub of Malindi.

Ikwaye added the situation was worse, especially for the few visitors

who have challenges using local carriers.

Arrivals at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport grew by 16.5 per cent to 522,709 compared to 448,549 in 2015.

And at the Moi International Airport, 57,219 visitors arrived this year compared to 48,031 in 2015, a 19.1 per cent growth. There were 1,880 cruise ship passenger arrivals recorded until August 2016.

Uganda remains top as Africa's largest supplier of tourists to Kenya, with 9,771 arrivals.

Out of this, 8,933 Ugandans come to Kenya purely for holiday while 248 visitors were here for business and another 299 to attend conferences. There were 13 who come for medical treatment and a further 51 transiting through Kenya to elsewhere.

South Africa, Tanzania, South Sudan, Nigeria and Rwanda were also among the top African nations sending tourists to Kenya.

From the Asian continent, India brought in 6,480 tourists as of August 2016, while China had 7,541 tourists.

The United States had 9,921 visitors coming to Kenya. Out of the total, 8,603 come for holiday.

Australia had by August 2016 brought in 1,807.

The United Kingdom had 10,799 visitors, with 9,513 coming for holiday.

County splashes Sh140m to uplift small businesses

MAKUENI

By ERASTUS M MULWA

The county government has unveiled a Sh140 million fund to support business ventures by the youth, women and persons with disabilities. Deputy Governor Adeline Mwan said the initiative is part of the recently launched 2025 strategic plan to transform residents' economic and

social standards.

She said the funds will be made available in form of interest-free loans and that beneficiaries will enjoy up to three months grace period before they can start repaying.

"This initiative is part of our deliberate plan as a government to economically empower women, the youth and persons with disabilities through encouraging and supporting entrepreneurial activities among

them," said Ms Mwan when she made the first disbursement of cheques to various registered groups at Matitiku in Nzau Sub-county at the weekend.

The scheme, dubbed "Tetheka Fund" will be implemented in partnership with Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB), which will provide a seamless system of disbursing the cash to over 4,000 registered self-help groups as well as offer technical training to beneficiaries.

Ms Mwan said each of the county's 30 wards will get Sh4 million, which will be distributed in form of a "rotating fund" through table-banking system. She said the decision was informed by the need to empower vulnerable groups that form the majority of the county's population. Ms Mwan said such groups face challenges in accessing funding from conventional financial institutions.