

Historic surgery > Girls have spent two years in hospital

Conjoined twins separated at KNH

A team of 60 specialists perform delicate procedure for 23 hours

BY ELIZABETH MERAB @cnnkeans enerab@kenationmedia.com

After 23 hours of surgery, twin girls, born joined at the lower back two years ago, began a new life apart yesterday.

In an intricate round-the-clock operation, doctors at the Kenyatta National Hospital (KNH) successfully separated the conjoined twins.

The team of 60 specialists, among them neurosurgeons and plastic surgeons, was led by the hospital's chief paediatric surgeon, Dr Fred Kabuni, and the University of Nairobi's head of neurosurgery, Prof Nimrod Mwang'ombe.

"This surgery needed a multidisciplinary team and it is a statement that KNH has the skills for such serious undertakings. It is also a sign that we are catching up with the rest of the world," said KNH's acting chief executive,

Dr Thomas Mutie.

The operation, seen as a major breakthrough in Africa, started on Tuesday morning and ended yesterday at 5am.

Dr Kabuni said the separation — from the operation to taking the children to the intensive care unit lasted 23 hours.

However, the medics are yet to rebuild the anal canals of the twins as they need to heal first.

106 Millions of shillings the surgery is estimated to cost and which KNH said it will pay

Wounds need to heal. We also need to have their muscles grow further to enable us create an anal canal for each"

Nimrod Mwang'ombe, UNH head of neurosurgery department

"Right now they have massive wounds that need to heal. We also need to have their muscles grow further to enable us create an anal canal for each one of them," said Prof Mwang'ombe.

The twins, Blessing and Favour, have been admitted in KNH's specialised paediatric ward for over two years, with doctors waiting for their key organs to develop and for the girls to gain appropriate muscles to withstand the surgery.

Bill of Sh106 million

They were born in 2014 with each being fully formed save for their lower spines and rump, which were fused together, making them share an excretory opening.

The hospital said it would foot the bill that is estimated to be Sh106 million.

"The successful surgery is a testimony that the country is endowed with medical specialists who can handle complicated human health challenges," added Dr Mutie.

Once the children's wounds heal, the doctors will start reconstructive surgery, which is estimated to be performed in a year.



One for the future

PHOTO | PSCU

First Lady Margaret Kenyatta plants a commemorative tree during the Young Presidents Organisation spouses forum at Karura Forest, Nairobi, yesterday.

World could lose two thirds of all wildlife, new study warns

BY LEOPOLD OBI

The world could lose more than 67 per cent of its wildlife in the next three years if no action is taken, a new study warns.

The Living Planet report released yesterday by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) raised the red flag over the declining wildlife population and cites habitat loss through degradation,

unsustainable use of natural resources — among other human activities — and climate change as major contributors to the unprecedented loss of the Earth's biodiversity in four decades.

Populations of vertebrates according to the study that tracked 14,000 animal species indicates that numbers have decreased by 58 per cent.

Researchers now fear that two-thirds of all the wildlife, including birds, fish,

amphibians and reptiles could be wiped out by 2020 if no immediate interventions are put in place.

Mr Fred Kwame, WWF Africa regional director, said human beings had accelerated destruction and unsustainable use of natural resources in the past few decades rather than building new ways to minimise biodiversity loss.

Demand for ivory and rhino horns in the Asian black market, for instance,

has claimed over 75 per cent of Kenya's elephants leading to a decline in their population from 167,000 to less than 38,000 between 1979 and 2016.

Even though conservationists have stepped up efforts to protect game parks from poachers and encroachment as well as plant trees, government projects such as the standard gauge railway appear to undermine such conservation efforts.

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KWS reduces entry fees to parks and reserves

BY COLLINS OMULO

Kenyans will now spend less to visit national parks and game reserves after Kenya Wildlife Services reduced entry fees.

According to a statement sent to newsmen yesterday, entry to KWS-managed national parks and reserves has been capped at Sh860 for adult Kenyan citizens, Sh215 for children and students and \$60 (Sh6,000) for non-residents, effective November 1, 2016.

Entry into category 'A' parks such as Tsavo East and West has been capped at Sh515 for Kenyan adults and Sh215 for children and students.

For category 'B' parks like Mt Kenya, Meru and Aberdares, entry fee will be Sh330. The charge for children and students will remain as in the first category of parks.

The move follows the government's decision to exempt entry fees to national parks and reserves from Value Added Tax.

Consequently, park entry and other service fees have been reduced to reflect the 16 per cent VAT exemption.

VAT was previously factored in in all entry fees and other services offered in national parks and reserves managed by KWS.

Spur growth LOCALS, RESIDENTS TO PAY DIFFERENTLY

Reduction: Entry fees into parks like Nakuru and Amboseli has over the years been reduced from \$90 (Sh9,000) to \$60 (Sh6,000) for non-residents, while Tsavo East, West and Meru have seen it reduce to \$52 (Sh5,200) from \$75 (Sh7,500)

Competition: Reduction in fees is expected to spur competition regionally.