

**AVIATION, TOURISM AND CONSERVATION NEWS from Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean islands.**  
*A weekly roundup of breaking news, reports, travel stories and opinions by Prof. Dr. Wolfgang H. Thome*



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*Second edition June 2012*

#### East Africa News

#### **EAST AFRICAN TOURISM PLATFORM LAUNCHES TODAY**



The East Africa Tourism Platform launches in its first county in the East African Community today 08<sup>th</sup> June, namely in Tanzania, to facilitate active and focused engagement of the private sector in the East African Community (EAC) integration process.

The Platform, an apex private sector body for tourism in East Africa, will work closely with EAC State Ministries, the EAC Secretariat, East African Business Council and private sector organizations in tourism in all the member states to promote intra and inter-regional tourism through advocacy, marketing, skills development, research and information sharing.

In a prelaunch communication Waturi Matu, the EATP Coordinator said to this correspondent: ***‘A domestic and regional approach to tourism is needed in East Africa for the region to achieve its overall economic goals. Increased regional tourism promotion offers a lower investment option with greater benefits in terms of income and employment in the region.’***

The EATP aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Intermediate and reduce obstacles to intra and inter-regional tourism;
- Promote a regional tourism marketing approach;
- Encourage continuous skills development in the tourism sector;
- Promote harmonized standards and codes of conduct of tourism facilities and services;
- Facilitate access to finance and risk management services; and
- Provide Information and networking opportunities.

Other country launches scheduled to take place are ***Rwanda 14-16th June 2012 during the Kwita Izina Festival Week*** and in ***Kenya on 22nd June 2012 at the Kenya Travel Awards***. Dates for Burundi and Uganda will be determined at a later date.

The East Africa Tourism Platform (EATP) is the private sector body for tourism in East Africa established to foster private sector interest and participation in the East African Community (EAC) integration process. EATP works closely with EAC State Ministries, the EAC Secretariat, East African Business Council and tourism private sector organizations in all the member states.

EATP seeks to support intra and inter-regional tourism through:

- Lobbying and advocacy;
- Adopting a regional tourism marketing approach;
- Skills development;
- Harmonization of standards and codes of conduct;
- Access to finance and risk management services; and
- Information and networking opportunities.

In a related development has this correspondent worked closely with the EATP during its formative stages and on the platform's Facebook page via <https://www.facebook.com/#!/eastafrika.platform> are all tourism, aviation and conservation relevant content from [www.wolfganghthome.wordpress.com](http://www.wolfganghthome.wordpress.com) reporting about East African developments re-broadcast for the benefit of EATP's fast expanding membership and supporters. All the best on the Arusha inaugural launch and lasting success in uniting East Africa's often fragmented tourism sectors.

### EMIRATES CONTINUES MARKET OFFENSIVE WITH ENHANCED INFLIGHT ENTERTAINMENT



Dubai's award winning national airline Emirates continues to work the market in East Africa hard, in the face of increased competition by Gulf rivals Qatar Airways, soon to launch their 5<sup>th</sup> East African destination, and Etihad, coming to Nairobi more recently as their first East African destination, but also from the traditional European heavyweights, all of which have taken extra efforts to lure passengers during the busy summer season on to their flights with generous baggage allowance offers and attractive fares.

The recently launched ***Hello Tomorrow*** campaign has hit the market running and has received much attention in the Kenyan, Tanzanian and Ugandan market places, where Emirates presently flies to daily.

The latest emphasis by the airline is to highlight their new enhanced inflight entertainment product '***ice***' short for Information, Communications and Entertainment, using larger state of the art touch screens available in all three classes on the B777 fleet and shortly also on the A380 fleet.



(Picture courtesy of HK Strategies / Emirates)

According to information availed overnight to this correspondent, passengers will now be able to enjoy Emirates' award-winning entertainment with wider personal TV screens: 27-inch in First Class, 20-inch in Business Class and 12.1 inch in Economy Class-an increase from the 10.9 inch screen-making the latter the biggest in the world. Additionally, Emirates' new screens feature high definition (HD) resolution, making it one of the world's first commercial airlines to install such state-of-the-art technology. With the new cutting-edge HD-enabled screens, Emirates passengers will now enjoy video content in bright, vivid colour and ultra-sharp detail.

***'Emirates' goal is to ensure maximum comfort and choice for passengers during their in-flight entertainment, communications and inflight experience'*** said Essa Sulaiman Ahmad, Emirates Regional Manager for East Africa in his communication before adding: ***'In this, like other areas of its operation, Emirates seeks to lead the industry, enabling our customers to get the very most out of their Emirates journey.'***

Emirates has over the years bagged more than 500 international awards, including for best inflight entertainment, and operates an all wide body fleet of more than 170 aircraft with a further 230 on order for delivery over the next years. The airline presently flies to 123 destinations, more like Barcelona following soon, in 73 countries, connecting the world via Dubai like few others. Notably, Emirates operates both Boeing and Airbus aircraft and is

the largest operator in the world of the giant A380. Visit [www.emirates.com](http://www.emirates.com) for more information on schedules, fares and 'specials' from an airport near you.

## **Uganda News**

### **TOURISM SECTORAL REPORT RAISES OIL DRILLING CONCERNS**

The annual report by the Ministry of Tourism, in conjunction with the World Bank, has raised broad concerns over the level of future drilling and production of oil in the main concession blocks presently being explored. Located in the Albertine Graben, part of the Great African Rift Valley, several drilling sites are located inside national parks, mainly the Murchisons Falls National Park, the Semliki National Park and the Queen Elizabeth National Park, which is next on the list for exploration drilling in the Southern, aka Ishasha sector leading to the gorilla parks of Bwindi and Mgahinga.

Fears have been circulating amongst the conservation fraternity over the removal of drilling mud, thought to be highly toxic as well as the broad restoration of areas affected by drilling, once the well heads have been secured, and while past concessionaire Heritage Oil, which since sold their interests to partner Tullow Oil, itself farming down to Total of France and the Chinese national oil company, has at the time repeatedly offered free and unfettered access to exploration and restoration sites for this correspondent to ascertain the level of attention given to the entire complex of environmental protection and mitigative measures employed by them. Other oil companies have not been that accommodating and therefore come under increased scrutiny with the pending question what they might have to hide if they are not willing to openly disclose and grant access to the media.

Ministry officials though were tightlipped with one regular source claiming that anything to do with oil in Uganda was a highly sensitive matter almost treated as state secrets and that intervention 'from above' was always on the cards should the Uganda Wildlife Service, the Ministry or other bodies get 'too close to the core' when requiring evidence of mitigative measures or needed to investigate potential toxicity and issues related to potential spillages and the preparedness of the companies to instantly deal with them and not waste days to get equipment on site.

The Albertine Graben is home to 5 national parks and several forest and game reserves and considered as one of Uganda's premier biodiversity hot spots besides being a major source of water through the Semliki River, Lakes Albert, Edward and George and of course the River Nile traversing the Murchisons Falls National Park before flowing through a section of Lake Albert and then moving towards the border with South Sudan at Nimule.

Watch this space for regular updates right here on the future of oil exploration in Uganda's parks and wilderness areas and how it will play out in the medium and long term.

### **STAKEHOLDERS CALL FOR MEETING AMID ALLEGATIONS OF ASSOCIATION FAILURES**

Long pending differences of opinion and a range of allegations towards the incumbent leadership of the Uganda Tourism Association will come to a head this afternoon, after the Uganda Safari Guide Association broke the silence and called for a meeting of all stakeholders to discuss the state of the tourism private sector's apex body. Clearly dissatisfied with a lack of opportunities to openly discuss the state of the industry, allegedly because no meetings have been arranged by UTA for an extended period of time, USAGA must have thought that enough is now finally enough and in open defiance of attempts to silence them gone public with a widely circulated email availed to this correspondent, to meet at the Uganda Museum this Friday at 15.00 hrs.

A number of regular contacts in the industry also made contact following the release of the email and the subsequent flurry of behind the scenes activities and one had this to say on condition of strict anonymity, citing the potential backlash by association leaders now under fire as a result of being exposed in public: ***'It is true what Herbert has been saying in his mail. UTA has not held meetings and the member associations could not interact other than through one on one contacts and informally. Many have been fed up with the way the industry is not moving fast enough and UTA is supposed to spearhead the private sector efforts.'***

***This is a big year for Uganda Tourism, we are 50 years old as a nation and Lonely Planet made us their global top ranked destination for 2012. Too little has been done really to exploit that and now people are fed up and want answers. What we got is some people doing a peacock and maybe even using good office for promoting themselves. There have been efforts to sort this out but in vain and now matters have come to a head. Herbert saw no other chance but to go public with his concerns. Now it is in the open and we can start the process of revitalizing UTA and returning it to its glory days from you know when. What is sad that it had to come to this and our dirty linen is now washed in public instead of behind closed doors, but it could not have been avoided because of the resistance of some trying to hang on.'***

The full text of the mail in question is published herebelow for readers to form their own opinion and in particular for Ugandan stakeholders to attend this meeting and find out directly what the opposing sides have to say for themselves and how a way forward can be mapped out and followed through.

*Dear Members of the Tourism Fraternity,*

*I am writing to invite you as member of the Tourism community of Uganda to a meeting scheduled for June 8th, 2012 at the Uganda Museum, at 3:00 - 5:00pm, to discuss matters relating to UTA and its future progress. As stake holders, and members of UTA, we feel USAGA has tourism issues and contributions which would have been discussed at UTA level but due to lack of an avenue to do this, nothing can be done to our industry as it continues lagging behind.*

*The Government of Uganda and its development partners find challenging creating partnerships with loosely related private sector tourism stakeholders.*

*We have also realise that there has not been any Annual General Meeting or Governing Council meeting of UTA for more than 3 years.*

*We have also realise that there has not been any organised elections for the leaders for a long time. The current "Office bearers" may not have been formally elected into their office according to the constitution.*

*The purpose of this meeting therefore is to collectively chat out ways of strengthening UTA and ensure that we all ably represented in all aspects and our concerns and other members concerns are addressed.*

*It would be of importance if you confirm your attendance on this email or by sending a message to numbers below.*

*On another note; there is a monthly tourism forum going on every last Saturday of the month. The next forum will take place on the 30 of June at the Uganda Museum at 3:00pm*

*Your attendance will be very important in this process of reviving our apex body, Uganda Tourism Association.*

*Thank you*

*Herbert Byaruhanga*

As the saying here goes, watch this space to learn in due course of what direction the meeting took and where tourism is heading to thereafter. Best of luck in the deliberations.

## **BRITISH AIRWAYS INTRODUCES CREDIT CARD PAYMENT OPTION IN UGANDA**



British Airways' Commercial Manager for Uganda Faith Chaitezvi yesterday announced in Kampala that the airline's clientele can with immediate effect now use their credit cards to pay for bookings made on the airline's website, greatly enhancing the chances of actually doing transactions and not 'deserting' due to the complications arising from subsequently having to make physical payment by cash or cheque at the BA offices in the city. In a press statement availed to this correspondent Faith was quoted as having said: ***'BA as a full service airline is always looking for new ways of improving the customer travel experience by putting passengers increasingly in control of their departure, transit and destination planning; technology undoubtedly plays a big part in making this possible which is the reason we have launched the online credit card payment solution here in Uganda'*** before adding ***'making payment online is fairly simple and very secure. This is a growing trend that any serious airline cannot ignore, online solutions whether for payments or bookings are the vehicles of future travel'***.

A number of other airlines had previously already introduced secure technology for Ugandans and expatriates living in Uganda to book and pay for tickets via e-Commerce transactions, notably Kenya Airways and even RwandAir, leaving others trailing in their wake as the increasingly important direct bookings via websites could not be paid for in the absence of facilitating the safe and secure use of credit cards. British Airways' also pointed out that only the latest generation of credit cards with enhanced security features, known as **3D** or **SOLP** enabled cards can be used for transactions, while **Gold and Silver Members** of the airline's frequent flyer programme however can also use older credit or debit cards in conjunction with their membership numbers via a secure web page.

British Airways presently flies 4 times a week between London Heathrow and Entebbe. Watch this space for regular and breaking news aviation updates from the Eastern African region.

## **EMIRATES STARTS FARES OFFENSIVE IN UGANDA**



Emirates' Kampala office has yesterday launched a range of attractive market fares, reducing by up to 48 percent the cost previously paid for by travelers, when a new aggressive sales campaign was started by the airline, lasting till Sunday this week with travel valid until 15<sup>th</sup> of July.

Khalid Al Zarouni, the Uganda country manager of Emirates, said in a communication availed to this correspondent overnight: *'Emirates is keen on providing our Ugandan customers with outstanding value for money and the most attractive travel experience available. Our special fares to some of Emirates' most popular destinations in Asia and Europe represent a very significant savings, meaning that there has never been a better time to book a holiday, business trip or to visit friends or relatives overseas. By offering these discounted fares and free accommodation to passengers with a transit time of 8 hours or more, Emirates is demonstrating its investment in the total passenger experience and to ensuring that it is the airline of choice for all'*.

Asian destinations enjoying special fares include Bangkok from US \$972, Bombay / Ahmdabad from US \$668, Cochin / Bangalore / Kozhikode from US \$986, Delhi from US \$933, Dhaka from US \$1066, Guangzhou / Hongkong from US \$984, Kuala Lumpur from US \$1866, Manila from US \$2000 and Narita / Tokyo from US \$2077. European cities on offer include London from US \$977 and Istanbul from US \$665. All fares cover a return ticket and are notably inclusive of all taxes, fees and fuel surcharges. Tickets can be purchased from Emirates sales offices or through authorized travel agents.

Several airlines flying in and out of Entebbe have in recent months, very likely as a result of the arrival of Qatar Airways in November last year, introduced new cabin layouts, improved inflight entertainment, offered added baggage allowances for economy and premium class passengers and upped their miles earning under the respective frequent flyer schemes, showing how intense the fight for market share and passengers has become, benefiting travelers with better services and competitive fares. Watch this space.

#### **POLICE TAKE OVER HOTEL AND MALL SECURITY IN KAMPALA**

As witnessed in recent days across the city, Ugandan security organs have been seconded to Kampala's leading hotels, malls, high rises and even buildings under construction near *'sensitive sites'*, also confirmed late yesterday from a top cop in Uganda, who on condition of strict anonymity said to this correspondent: *'You know that since our boys went into Somalia for the AU and the UN we have been threatened by Al Shabab. They bombed us on the evening of the World Cup final and even while we got the culprits and they are in court or already sentenced, the threat remains. Kenya has joined in our fight in Somalia and you know, in fact you always write the moment something happens. I read you so I know. We have been given intelligence reports that Al Shabab is planning something dramatic and we will not wait for something to happen. This is a big year for Uganda. We are turning 50 as a nation and tourism is flourishing, trade is developing and our oil industry will bring new chances for investors. So we must protect our people, our visitors, our sites. We have not taken over security as such in hotels but are now complementing what they have at Serena, Sheraton, Munyonyo and so forth. The hotel security is boosted by our own boys now who are armed and well trained to monitor and do surveillance in the interest of increased security. You ask your friends at those hotels, they still have their own security of course, external and internal but we now work much more closely. I know some will talk of police state and such rubbish but at least you know that this is not true. We will boost our CCTV capacity also in key places and when we are now deploying in hotels this is for security, not what some of the press always insinuate like shadowing opposition or spy on someone. Our presence makes the hotels and malls safer. We can never guarantee total safety but our people will play their role to extend the best possible protection for Ugandans and our visitors. You tell them that'*. Of late several internationally wanted terrorists were reported to have crossed into Uganda in a clandestine manner and a manhunt is underway. The *'Martyr's Day Celebrations'* last Sunday went peaceful as the largest number of pilgrims in years made their way to the Namugongo Shrine, and tight security was in place with far in advance of the venue screening of vehicles and pedestrians, letting the event pass without incident. Well done there for the boys in blue, white and camouflage, keep up the good work!

#### **Kenya News**

##### **BEACH HOLIDAYS IN KENYA – SOME PLACES STILL GOT IT**

There are constant murmurs from within Kenya's tourism fraternity, and from the outside too, that in particular the beach resorts along the coast line have gone stale and tired and need some fresh impetus, fresh ideas, fresh investments, renewed focus and perhaps a new national vision and strategy for this important market segment.

A recent visit to Mombasa and resorts both north and south of the city, confirmed that indeed much can and much should if not must be done. Over the past years several resorts closed, notably the Alliance Hotels resorts of Jadini Beach, Africana Sea Lodge and Safari Beach, perhaps there for the owner's own fault to overextend in other ventures and for thinking they could do better themselves what a respected professional had taken two plus decades



to build for them. Wrong move mates and as they found out at their expense, there is hell to pay for a professional so scorned. Others suffered fire damage but never re-opened as the Two Fishes and yet others, most I visited, show a less than desirable state of repairs and to my surprise still offer literally the same menus and in house entertainment as they did 20 years ago when I left Mombasa for Uganda.

The Swahili Beach Resort opened just before Christmas last year, something at the time reported here, and when visiting two weeks ago showed the potential it has but also revealed the challenges to get into the market and get established as a new and upcoming resort.

But that said, my Kenyan colleagues themselves know only too well what and where improvements are needed, there are exceptions to the general trend. My visit to two leading resorts, the Sarova Whitesands Beach Resort and Spa and the Leopard Beach Resort and Spa, revealed some amazing improvements since my last visits many years ago. The Sarova Whitesands clearly has invested in their staff, managed to change their mindset and topped it with a vastly improved food quality, evidence that it can be done and repaid by – during my days of stay – full house at the height of the low season. That not enough, they are spending over 20 million US Dollars to upgrade their room product, with all seafront rooms ready by this year's Christmas season and the rest to be tackled next year. Their rates may well go up by anywhere between 20 to 25 percent as a result for the new rooms, but that is money I personally would gladly spend, having seen the sample rooms and Kenya as a destination will benefit from having a top class resort just half an hour from the international airport, which can host large events and conferences and meet international standards as seen in destinations competing most intensely with Kenya to get tourists to their beaches. The other resort I stayed was the Leopard Beach Resort and Spa, which while closed for their annual refurbishment and overhaul took me in nevertheless. There the sparkle too showed of innovative management and a conscious decision to invest in their product year after year, rather closing for two months than going the way of the competition to stay open during the low season, often earn pathetic rates – *Not applicable at the Whitesands I should point out* – and then face the next high season looking tired and feeling tired.

Here are my impressions about my visit in detail with more to come on my visit to Kenya, covering a splendid safari to Tsavo East's Satao Camp and then to the Sarova Taita Hills and Sarova Salt Lick lodges, from where I went to explore the Kenyan World War 1 battlefields, about which a major feature article is in the making.

Met at the airport, the Sarova Whitesands airport representative was instantly at hand, offered an iced towel and a cold drink and then I was whisked into a minivan for my half hour drive to the famous Bamburi beach north of the island of Mombasa, home to the ***Sarova Whitesands Resort and Spa***.



My arrival was free of bureaucracy, all relevant details from my booking readily at hand and once the passport was copied a check in slip was produced, signed while sipping some refreshing chilled Karkadel juice and then, hey presto, I was whisked to the room. Here seafront is of course the recommended option, where from ground floor to the second floor the vista extends over the Indian Ocean, making for spectacular sunrises and the never ending sound of the surf, at high tide nearer and at low tide further out towards the reef. And for those who want some true luxury, any of the resort's 8 suites offer some extraordinary added value for a couple on a honeymoon or coming for a romantic getaway, while rooms with connecting doors are best suited for families with children of course. The ***Sarova Whitesands*** sits on 23 acres and is the largest resort both north and south of Mombasa with 338 suites and rooms, conference facilities with several venues, five swimming pools including one with water slides and extensive gardens where on full house up to 700 guests still do not get the impression of the resort being really crowded. The resort, in spite of the low season when I visited, was fully booked on the days I stayed there, testament

to its popularity amongst guests, many of them repeat visitors from upcountry and the countries in the region. And I was happy to note, there was equal treatment for Kenyans and East Africans everywhere I looked in the resort, with the attitude of '*advantage muzungu wagenis*' simply not true at the **Whitesands** where *all guests are treated with the same courtesy and smiles and attention*.

Sports facilities like tennis or basketball are available through the hotel's animation team while an in-house contractor, an old acquaintance for that matter from my days at the coast, arranges for fun time with jet skies, for deep sea fishing, glass bottom boat trips to the reef, windsurfing and sailing. And diving too is available from a PADI certified centre at the **Whitesands**, which offers a free trial dive for those interested in one of the resort's pools.



What has been described as the longest beach access of any beach resort in Kenya, the blue waters of the Indian Ocean always invite for a quick dip and the white sandy beach, cleaned up daily of the inevitable seaweed whenever the tide goes out, is a perfect place for a stroll, a morning run or a walk at low tide towards the distant reef, which reveals an amazing diversity of fish and marine life. Spectacular sunrises await the early birds who take the trouble to get up at this hour as dawn gives way to a rapid sunrise and the kids just love the camel rides along the beach, riding the 'desert ship' in the sand by the sea.



But the pride and joy of this family friendly resort is undoubtedly the animation and entertainment team of 23 staff under the guidance of Nick Ladu, who bring the days to life from morning till late at night. While during the day much of their activities centre around the kids, adults too are not shortchanged with a range of fun sports and animated events guests can participate in for free, while in the evening a variety of performances, cabarets and bands are on the programme to keep the tourists both engaged as well as entertained. Also available are regular team building exercises for in house guests and the '*Ozone Activities*' tailored around the needs of kids from 4 – 12 years old, capably taken off the hands of their parents, able to enjoy meeting age mates while mom and dad frolic in the sand and can enjoy that crucial one on one time.

In the evening, the sounds of music drift across the resort, with a different live band every day playing the guests' favourite tunes, inviting them to swing around the dance floor before then following the action down to the beach side where the **Cocos Beach Bar** is the daily venue for evening performances and entertainment.

Moving on to food, one of the most important issues when one first selects a holiday destination and then a suitable resort as good cuisine is at the very core of a successful vacation. Most guests are booked on half board, i.e. having their breakfast and dinner included in their arrangements and in the evening they can eat their way through an extensive buffet display, which leaves really nothing to be desired. Yet, an almost separate ‘on the house’ meal is offered every afternoon at the **Cocos Beach Bar** where tea and coffee, sandwiches and cake are offered with compliments of the house, while the fancied and much in demand freshly made pancakes and waffles are available for a mere 100 Kenya Shillings, delighting the palate of kids and adults alike. It is also a social meeting place for guests to get acquainted with each other and the entertainment team is present too with fun activities like quizzes or random number pickings, where the lucky winners always walk off with a smile on the face and a round of applause – there are no sore losers at the Whitesands as the mood here is definitely not one for keeping or developing grudges.



Dinner at the **Pavillion** ranges from a wide selection of salads over soups to conventional starters, a daily choice of several main courses and grills and those quintessential deserts, one expects to end a meal with while on a holiday. Add a cheese board for good measure, and coffee or tea and let the indulgence begin – a fully equipped and staffed gym as well as a unique weight loss herbal massage treatment at the **Tulia Spa** can take care of a few extra calories, especially when they are packaged so attractively that the scent and sights of food draws everyone to see and enjoy the eye candies the Whitesands’ acclaimed chefs conjure up every day. And in a novel development for Kenya’s coastal resorts, the Whitesands actually offers a 24 hour dining option at their **Minazi Café and Lounge**, which remains open around the clock for the late night arrivals still feeling peckish or the early departures needing some breakfast before heading out on safari or to the airport for their flight home. So coming ‘home’ at 3 a.m. from a night out of visiting Mombasa’s exciting nightlife spots, guests can be sure there is a light meal available before heading to the room for a few hours sleep until another day dawns and the cycle of activities, sun and fun in the sand unfolds around the resort again.

The fully equipped **Tulia Gym** is available to adult guests for free, and at the **Tulia Spa** individual and couples treatment available at a reasonable cost, making it basically unnecessary to even leave the resort during one’s stay, considering that every human need is taken care of here, were it not for a range of ‘external attractions’ Mombasa has to offer. The themed buffet dinners included in the holiday package can be ‘upgraded’ to a romantic candlelight dinner by the sea at the **Lido Seafood Grill**, which serves some absolutely delicious interpretations of prawns, lobster, crab and ocean fish dishes but for those wanting to try out something else during their stay, some recommended options are available.

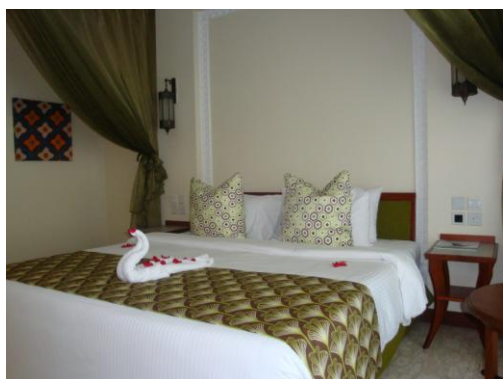
The **Tamarind Restaurant** is my personal ‘winner’ for the past 3 + decades, as is the **Tamarind Dhow**, where a set seafood menu – meat is available on request – followed by dance tunes from the onboard band makes the time fly by while cruising on the Tudor creek which separates Mombasa island from the northern coastline. **La Marina** and **The Moorings** at Mtwapa creek are similarly popular with visitors and bookings are highly recommended when wanting to go out. The same is the case for the highly recommended ‘**Son et Lumiere Show**’ which starts at sunset with a cruise on Tudor creek and then culminates in a dinner at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of ancient Fort Jesus. The nearby award winning **Haller Park**, a core area of over 200 hectares of rehabilitated quarry land with a further 400 hectares which is part of the nearby ‘**Forest Trails**’, offers walking and cycling (at Forest Trails only) options while offering the close up sights of wildlife, a reptile centre and twice a day the feeding of giraffes and hippos.





Waterbucks are grazing often only feet away not even looking up when visitors pass and pose with them at their side for pictures. At a cost of 400 KShs per person entry fee, it is money well spent and families with kids can simply not offer their children a better introduction to bird life – over 230 species are found at the Haller Park – and wildlife, settled here as a result of over 35 years of conservation and rehabilitation efforts, which transformed a barren moonscape into a forest and wildlife sanctuary of global acclaim.

The **Whitesands** has to be a resort of choice for families, couples and solo travelers seeking to have a good time and get value for money and especially honeymoon packages are popular with visitors from across the region, welcomed as guests and bid 'Kwaheri Ya Kuonana' as friends when they leave. With an ongoing investment of over 20 million US Dollars to upgrade the resort's entire room portfolio to truly luxurious 5 star standards, the **Whitesands** comes highly recommended and has to be the '*in place*' for anyone wanting to stay north of Mombasa and nearer to the city.



(Partial view of a sample what the newly upgraded rooms will look like)

Across the Likoni channel by ferry from the island of Mombasa is what is generally referred to as 'South Coast', though that particular description mostly fits for the resorts along the world famous **Diani Beach**, a 35 kilometres south of Mombasa located stretch of white sandy beaches only occasionally separated from the next equally endless expanse by the huge coral rock outcrops. Here the '**Chui**' is located, another highly recommended option, otherwise known as the **Leopard Beach Resort and Spa** – the South Coast equivalent to the **Whitesands** and yet quite different in style and location.

The '**Chui**' as the resort is fondly called by their staff and the guests, sits elevated on the coral rocks above the Indian Ocean shores and presently offers 150 rooms, suites, Chui cottages and beach side villas, catering for every budget. A further 28 2 and 3 bedroom villas are also being constructed nearer to the perimeter of the resort's 28 acres of land, adjoining to the main resort road from Ukunda, which when complete later this year will add another 75 rooms to the resort and help to meet the ever growing demand for quality holidays in Kenya.



Here, as at the **Whitesands** some 50 kilometres and a channel crossing apart, the addition of the word '**Spa**' already indicates that attention to a guest's well being and care features high in the resort's philosophy of service. Seeing the **Uzuri Spa**, its dedicated separate pool area and the tell tale signs that kids are not permitted in this oasis of peace, tranquility, rest and recreation, makes it abundantly clear why the treatment rooms and facilities are constantly in demand and prior bookings are a must. It is no wonder therefore that the '**Chui's**' award cabinet has swollen with prizes and recognitions from both within Kenya and overseas, as the resort has been voted repeatedly in successive years as Kenya's best beach property at the south coast by readers of East Africa's leading travel and lifestyle magazines and by the World Travel Awards as Kenya's leading resort in 2010 and 2011.



Fine dining, the resort is home to one of Kenya's few '**Chaine de Rotisseurs**' recognized restaurants, the **The Chui Grill**, is one of the hallmarks of the resort's hospitality, and weekly BBQ's and beach side dinners, buffet breakfasts and dinners at the main **Horizon Restaurant** or *al fresco* lunches at the **Coco Beach Mchana** are just a few choices guests can make, with the addition of an Italian specialty restaurant the **Pasta 'n Pizza Tomati**, a pool side bistro and the **Tutti Frutti** ice cream parlour. **Mario's Bar**, which could have come straight from a Hollywood movie and the open air **Marco's Bar** give enough clues that the initial owners of the hotel came from Italy and this pedigree continues to stand the hotel well. In fact, though under different ownership for the last decade, the resort has kept the tradition of being an example of superior hospitality with for instance a wine list of 68 choices from affordable to excellent, coming from South Africa, Argentina, Chile and Australia, Italy and California and the pedigree French Champagnes not missing either.

The accommodation matches the food and drink experience after multiple renovations, upgrades and refurbishments, which incidentally are a yearly event every May and June, keeping the sparkle on and making the **Chui** look as new all the time, a shining example in the midst of other and often rather tired looking 'resorts' along this stretch of beach.

One truly tropical feature, in both resorts, are the extensive and well manicured lawns and gardens, showing off tropical flowers, shrubs and trees and the amazing variety of palms found along the Kenya coast. The vervet monkeys at the **Whitesands** however are however outdone by the **Leopard Beach's** resident group of black and white colobus monkeys, primates for that matter, which sit on roofs, trees and mind their own business, rarely tampering with food or drink unlike their more curious cousins at the north coast.



The nearby Jadini Forest, or rather the protected remnants of it today, is home to hundreds of colobus and the local **Colobus Conservation** trust fund is rightly proud to show off what they have accomplished so far to visitors taking a half day or longer to visit the forest and the centre. In fact rope bridges were established across the increasingly busy Diani beach road to prevent the primates falling victim to speeding cars and else to avoid crossing the road on power lines, which has in the past led to the loss of several colobus not daring to face the cars and then falling foul of electricity wires. Other day outings can be done to the nearby 18 hole par 72 championship golf course which is just minutes walk from the resort, or else a trip to the **Kisite Marine National Park** where an al fresco lunch is served on **Wasini Island**. **The Shimba Hills National Park**, managed by Kenya Wildlife Service, is also just an hour's drive away and the distinctly cooler climate up in the hills makes for a nice change from the tropical heat on the beaches. Here at the **Chui** as at the north coast, there is really little reason for guests to venture out in search of dining options but when they do, what comes highly recommended are **The Sands at Nomads** and **Ali Barbours' Fourty Thieves** located in a cave near the beach not too far from the resort.

Does one even have to mention the abundance of water sports and animation activities available throughout the day from the **Chui** – probably not as the available choices cater for literally all tastes and interest and the kids, again of course, are taken off their parents' hands for the day, kept busy on their own with suitable and safe activities.

Kenya's other attractions, the game parks and private game sanctuaries, just a few hours' drive from either the **Sarova Whitesands Beach Resort and Spa** or the **Leopard Beach Resort and Spa, aka Chui**, offer various additional holiday options, from staying under canvas at the **Satao Camp** in Tsavo East or an hour further on at the **Sarova Taita Hills Lodge** or sister property **Sarova Salt Lick Lodge**, the first build in the style of a German fortress – the area is dotted with World War 1 battlefields and locations – or the contemporary style tree hotel on stilts, as **Sarova Salt Lick Lodge** presents itself. Two or three day safaris can be combined with a beach vacation and the guest relations staff at the **Chui** and the **Whitesands** both will be more than happy to organize a bit of a safari experience, be it for one, two or more nights, game drives included.

No Kenya holiday is ever complete without going on a big game safari, even if only for one night and two days. Sightings of hundreds elephant and even more buffalo during the two game drives, besides plenty of other game of course and dozens of bird species was reward enough for leaving the coastal resorts behind and venturing out to Tsavo East and then into the 28.000 acres private sanctuary in which the two Sarova lodges are located and from where I explored the 'Battlefield East Africa', the headline of an upcoming feature article on the World War 1 action seen in the Taita / Taveta area of Kenya.



I flew to Mombasa on the RwandAir nonstop service out of Kigali, having been in Rwanda for some other business but there are plenty of options reaching the Kenya coast by air from the entire region. RwandAir's business class service though offered a superior inflight experience with power sockets in the front cabin seats making even some work possible during the 1 ½ hour flight, and the crew's smiles did put me in the right mood for my coastal adventure.

## KENYA AIRWAYS SHARE RIGHTS ISSUE MEETS ONLY MINIMUM TARGETS



Information availed yesterday from Nairobi indicates that the much hyped share rights issue by Kenya Airways, aimed at raising some 21 billion Kenya Shillings, achieved a take up of about 14.5 billion Kenya Shillings according to airline executives and their financial advisory team. This meets the minimum target given at the onset of the exercise, when a 70 percent acceptance was set as the threshold for success, though privately several sources within and close to the airline expressed their personal regret of not having been able to go way beyond that figure. ***'A lot of private investors, which make up a significant percentage of shareholders, have forfeited their rights. Our bankers and financial brokers attributed that to the high interest rates in the market, which made it very difficult in times of inflation to then commit major savings or borrowed funds for the acquisition of shares. As far as that is concerned it was a bit unfortunate with the timing but the airline had to move and has accomplished their minimum target'*** said a regular source from Nairobi, when asked to comment on the results. At the same time did the share value fall back to 14 KShs per share, the actual price for which the share rights were sold, compared to about 16.35 KShs per share when 2 weeks ago Virgin announced plans to withdraw from Nairobi by September this year, giving KQ a windfall in passenger numbers to the UK, when that happens.

Under the carriers' 10 year strategic plan, known as Plan Mawingo, the fleet of ***The Pride of Africa*** is set to grow from its present 35 aircraft to 119, including 12 freighters, while aiming at 115 destinations on all continents, up from their present 56. The estimated cost of this ambitious expansion plan, at current prices, is thought to be between 3.5 and 4 billion US Dollars and the just concluded share rights issue was primarily to raise funds to pay up to 150 million US Dollars for loan guarantees and down-payments for new aircraft due to come on line over the next 2 years, including the long awaited B787 Dreamliner due for first delivery in Q1 of 2014.

Notably did the share of the Kenya government, which took full advantage of the offer, rise from previously 23 percent to almost 30 percent while the single largest shareholder KLM, holding 26 percent prior to the right issue, was apparently not given their full intended share, hence bringing their holding to only 26.7 percent instead of what could have been 33 percent. Here clarification is being sought why KLM was not apparently permitted to absorb more rights to be turned into shares, as it would have driven the overall take up deep into the 70 percent range. Equally, talks taking place with other investors to take up forfeited share rights, seem to have hit either a dead end or else are ongoing behind the scenes, leaving the door open to still raise more funds.

Other sources attributed the lower than expected take up on the immediate uncertain future of Kenya, now counting down to general elections probably due in March 2013, which has already raised fears over a renewed outbreak of ethnic violence similar to the last elections, and while growth forecasts for Kenya still stand strong, a reduction of tourist traffic might translate into lower flight occupancies and lower profits for KQ, all issues for shareholder to consider who might have high expectations on future dividends, while aviation analysts predict a tough year ahead mainly due to rising fuel and labour costs for the airline. Watch this space for regular and breaking aviation news from the Eastern African region.

## KENYA AIRWAYS LAUNCHES SKYPRIORITY IN NAIROBI



Frequent flyers of Kenya Airways and their ***SkyTeam*** alliance partners operating in and out of Nairobi will be delighted to hear of the latest initiative by the airline to make their travel more pleasant, starting with the check in on the ground. Termed a ***'branded priority service'*** by the airlines involved new measures are aimed at making priority visible and easily accessible for holders of frequent flyer cards under the ***SkyTeam*** banner while also offering premium passengers travelling in business or even first class a fast track solution from the moment they are stepping into the airport terminal.





The new service will be implemented in two phases starting this month with the airline's hub in Nairobi and Kenya Airways' main domestic destinations Mombasa, Kisumu and Malindi before extending into the region to Dar es Salaam, Entebbe, Juba, Kigali and Bujumbura.

The second phase rollout will then commence during the July to end in November period and will cover the rest of the airline's global destinations including the rest of Africa, the Middle East, Asia and the Far East, and Europe. Kenya Airways currently flies to 57 destinations from their Nairobi hub, the latest being New Delhi which was launched in mid May, and is presently operating a fleet of 35 aircraft with at least one new aircraft due for delivery on a monthly basis between July 2012 well into 2013. *The Pride of Africa* indeed. Watch this space for regular and breaking aviation news covering Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean islands.

#### JKIA RUNWAY CLOSURE ONCE AGAIN COSTS AIRLINES DEARLY



A landing mishap by reportedly Egypt Air, which according to reports came in 'long', skidded off the runway and got stuck in the mud, has prompted all incoming and outgoing flights from Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta Airport to be diverted and delayed indefinitely, it was learned two hours ago. No injuries to passengers or crew have been reported as yet and the aircraft, as this report goes to press, is still to be recovered and towed to a parking area for inspection and assessment on airworthiness status.

Long thought by Kenya Airports Authority if not the Kenyan government as a luxury, the need for a second runway has never been more urgent than when the single runway of East Africa's most important hub is closed for whatever reason, and today is once again the day when airlines, in particular Kenya Airways, will be counting the cost of the second runway still being years away from even being constructed, as outgoing flights are being delayed and cancelled while inbound traffic has ended up in Mombasa, Eldoret, Entebbe, Kilimanjaro and Dar es Salaam, causing untold interruption of travel schedules for tourists and meeting schedules for business travelers.

A regular and often very outspoken aviation source from JKIA in a call an hour ago had this to say: *'When are these @\$!%^ +#%&@~! finally going to start that process of getting permission to build a second runway. All good about the new terminals but if aircraft cannot come in or leave that will be in vain. We need that second runway NOW and a day like this will cost the airlines at JKIA millions in extra fuel burn, crews being out of hours after intercontinental flights requiring minimum rest time before they can fly the aircraft from wherever they were diverted to back to Nairobi, full flights not leaving and connections missed at the other end, hotels to be booked for passengers with meals and all and a shouting lot at our hands who will not appreciate that it is not the airlines but the airport at fault. KAA should be privatized and run like a business and all those political appointees should be retired so that the priorities can be identified by the aviation industry and turned into reality. We have for too long been punch bags for the bureaucrats. OK, such an incident can happen but really, w second runway would allow the airport to remain operational. We have no idea how long the clearing will take and then a lot of flights will have to sit in other airports for more time because the crews are no longer 'legal' to fly until they have rested'* before launching into another tirade of unprintable expletives over having to deal with scores of angry passengers wanting to leave for home or wherever they were scheduled to go and KAA not being able to give any detailed information of the time frame before flight operations can resume.



From reports received from other airports in the region it is clear that their parking capacity, as well as the lounge capacity at these airports and room capacity at nearby hotels is reaching saturation point and that the airlines with representation in these airports are calling in staff from their town offices to deal with the sudden inflow of passengers who may well have to be accommodated until the crews can take them to Nairobi. There, in the meantime, hotels are also filling up and the backlog of passengers is rapidly increasing to all destinations on domestic, regional and intercontinental routes, posing logistical nightmares for operations staff here and at the respective affected airlines home hubs. Watch this space while JKIA is attempting to get traffic underway again. **Meanwhile has Kenya Airways issued a statement for passengers and those expecting travelers in Nairobi of the whereabouts of the respective diverted flights, the ONLY airline contacted to actually within the shortest possible time providing such an update:**

**Wednesday, June 06<sup>th</sup> 2012**

### **Kenya Airways Statement**

Kenya Airways would like to inform its passengers, customers and the public that Jomo Kenyatta International Airport has been closed indefinitely since 0400hrs today Wednesday June 6<sup>th</sup> 2012, due to a disabled aircraft on the runway.

All Kenya Airways morning arrivals have been diverted to Mombasa, Entebbe and Dar es Salam as below. Flights diverted to Mombasa international airport includes, KQ311 from Dubai, KQ203 ex Mumbai, KQ101 ex London, KQ466 ex Bujumbura & Kigali, KQ331 ex Jeddah, KQ521 ex Dakar & Abidjan, KQ765 from Johannesburg.

Flights diverted to Entebbe international Airport in Uganda includes, KQ542 ex Lagos & Cotonou, KQ321 ex Cairo & Khartoum, KQ511 from Freetown & Accra and KQ117 from Amsterdam.

KQ 221 from New Delhi has been diverted to Julius Nyerere International Airport in Dar Es Salam.

All departing flights from JKIA Nairobi have been delayed indefinitely.

Kenya Airways station offices in Entebbe, Mombasa and Dar es Salaam have arranged for special handling of passengers affected by the disruptions. We may also experience resultant delays and cancellations as a result this disruption and appeal to our affected passengers for understanding and patience during this period.

All the concerned stakeholders at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport are working to remove the grounded aircraft to ensure normal operations resume.

We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.

For further details please contact any Kenya Airways sales office, travel agents or call our 24hr call center on 327 4747 and our website [www.kenya-airways.com](http://www.kenya-airways.com).

Corporate Communications Office

Kenya Airways

### **KENYA AIRWAYS DAY OF RECKONING ARRIVES**



Today is the official announcement expected by Kenya Airways and their financial advisory team of how the recently concluded share rights issue was accepted in the market place alongside the announcement of financial year results for 2011/12.

Overshadowed by continuously high interest rates, a deterrent of significance for private investors many of whom in the past borrowed against the shares they purchase then with loans, institutional investors were all reported to have taken up their share allocation and in the case of the IFC, the World Bank's private sector lending institution, bought into the airline in a major way from 'outside'.

While the tight lipped approach worked for some time, in recent days some leaks appeared from usually reliable sources and word in the financial corridors have it that 77 percent of take up has been accomplished at closure of the offer, with private investors largely forfeiting on their rights. However, the airline and their financial advisory team were locked in talks with additional financial investors and institutions to take up those unclaimed share rights, and that in fact will be the much awaited core of the announcement later today in Nairobi, just who and how much such a potential or several investors may have snapped up, as the share price had gone well above the 14 KShs per share the airline had asked for.

Meanwhile though, from a merely mathematical stand point should the 77 percent figure be confirmed later today, have the two main shareholders the Government of Kenya and KLM numerically increased their holdings from 23

and 26 percent respectively, a combined 49 percent as it stood before the share rights issue, probably increased their new stake well into the combined 50 percent range of ownership. The arrival though of new investors, eventually buying into the airline, would reduce that level again towards the pre-share rights issue holding of 49 percent. One thing though is clear, that the mandatory ownership of 51 percent resting in Kenyan hands, has been retained to secure the crucial status as a Kenyan owned airline, with wide implications on traffic rights under respective bilateral air services agreements. Watch this space as results will be announced later today and instantly reported right here.

## ALLIANCE LINKS GIVE KENYA AIRWAYS PASSENGERS ACCESS TO A380 FLIGHTS TO THE US



The membership in SkyTeam by Kenya Airways gives passengers flying with ***The Pride of Africa*** to Paris a third connection on the giant A380 aircraft into the US, now that partner Air France has made Los Angeles their latest daily destination served with this aircraft type. Information now confirmed indicates that the daily A380 flights commenced on 28<sup>th</sup> of May and follow in the footsteps of daily services to New York and Washington DC which paved the way for Air France into the US switching from the smaller B777 to the world's largest passenger plane. The B777 though is still used for the additional daily flights between Paris, JFK, IAD and LAX as the airline presently only has 8 A380 on its fleet.

Although the flights are not code shared between Air France and Kenya Airways – these services are however code shared with KLM, Delta and Alitalia – through-ticketing at often very attracting pricing is available for passengers using Kenya Airways as their airline of choice out of Africa, and needless to say are privileges for frequent flyers extended, miles earned and benefits given even on Air France operated sectors.

Related information also given by the same source in Nairobi also speaks of a 4 times a week A380 service to Montreal / Canada, the airline's fourth A380 destination in North America. Said the source, with not little pride: ***'With our alliance passengers from East Africa also have access to the A380, not just when flying via the Gulf, and you should mention that to your readers'*** – yes Sir, duly noted and delivered.

## TREETOPS SET TO LIGHT QUEEN'S BEACON

Known as THE place where a princess climbed up into a tree lookout one evening and came down as a queen the next morning, the world famous Treetops in the Aberdare National Park outside Nyeri, will be the place to be tonight in Kenya for all those fond of the monarchy. At 10.30 pm tonight, which is 08.30 pm in the UK, a beacon will be lit outside the present location of Treetops – since those days in 1952 shifted and enlarged several times – to give recognition and pay tribute to the 60 years Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Extensively refurbished earlier in the year and hence missing the actual anniversary on February 05th to the deep upset of many who had wanted to do pilgrimage, tonight at least, when the celebrations in London reach their climax, the lodge will be fully booked with representatives of both the Kenyan government and from the British High Commission present on site, to toast to many more years for the Queen to serve as the UK's monarch.

The guests will also be asked to plant trees as both the Treetop owners, Aberdare Hotels led by old friend James Waibochi as chairman of the board, as well as Kenya Wildlife Service have targeted over 125 hectares of adjoining forest for further replanting with indigenous trees to create additional tree cover in the wider area.

Kenya has clearly a special place with the British Royals as several members of the family have in the past visited the country and its wilderness areas, most notably the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, as Prince William chose a Kenyan safari with his then girlfriend to propose to her and set the stage for the Royal wedding last year.

***'This will be good publicity for Kenya in the UK and hopefully overshadow some of the negative press we got more recently, when the son of a British aristocrat, who spent much time with his mother at Diani every year, has died while in police custody. For now we hope that the Kenya connection the Royal Family has with us and which has been very friendly and resulting in many visits over the past decades, will rub off on us and give tourism to Kenya a much needed boost from the UK. From my side I am happy to see Britain celebrate a rare Diamond Jubilee for Queen Elizabeth and I am sure all people in Kenya tourism extend their good wishes. And in a few weeks our athletes will go to the London Olympics and I hope that our team does us proud there and comes home with a record haul of medals, because the too helps us to promote'*** said a regular source from Nairobi with clearly UK connections of her own.

But for tonight, at least for those not on the guest list in the UK, Treetops is the place to be to be part of the celebrations and commemorations, and if not tonight, remember, Treetops is now open again and has a fresh new sparkle in it, ready to host guests every night. Watch this space.

## GULF AIR READY FOR THE SUMMER RUSH



The daily flights between Nairobi and Bahrain, with onward connections into the Gulf Air network to Europe, the Middle East and beyond, 50 cities in 31 countries to be precise, are reportedly in great demand for the peak summer season, when expatriates from Eastern Africa are commencing their home leave and seek convenient connections at fair fares to their final destination.

Undergoing restructuring the airline enjoys the full backing of the government of the Kingdom of Bahrain and has invested substantially in a revamped Falcon Gold Lounge at its hub in Bahrain, with the latest features available to premium class passengers, already pampered by the presence of a dedicated sous chef on board in business class. For the first time are in this lounge available private sleeping rooms, a cigar lounge and shower rooms with hotel-style towels and luxury brand toiletries and amenities, besides a fully equipped modern business centre and a family lounge area with a Sky Nanny in attendance and a gaming room equipped with Xbox and PlayStation units. A similar lounge is also available in London Heathrow Airport Terminal 4 and in Dubai Airport, making travel for passengers in the front cabin more enjoyable while in transit and waiting for their onward flights.

CEO Samer Majali said according to a press statement availed to this correspondent overnight: *'I would like to thank the Bahrain leadership and the government for their continuous support and of course, our customers for choosing to fly with us as always. Though we have been going through some tough times, due to combinations of several unprecedented regional and economic factors and closure of some profitable routes due to the security situation and travel bans by several countries, we have been working hard to serve our customers with continuous improvement to our quality of service and products. This has reflected in the encouraging bookings we are witnessing on several sectors on our network for the summer season. We remain committed to providing the highest levels of customer service'*.

Gulf Air flies daily out of Nairobi using a state of the art A320 Airbus, connecting with wide bodied aircraft such as the A330 and A340 to Europe and their Asian destinations. Watch this space.

## Tanzania News

### NEW BOARD FOR AIR TANZANIA IS NEXT SAYS MINISTER



A few days after sacking former Acting CEO Paul Chizi did Dr. Harrison Mwakyembe, Minister for Transport in the Tanzanian government, make his first public comments about the circumstances which prompted him to take this decision and make Capt. Lazaro Lusajo the new man at the helm of the ailing state owned airline. The original announcement was made a few days earlier by his Permanent Secretary, who however only stuck to the prepared text and would not go into background information.

Dr. Mwakyembe cited murky deals, lack of transparency in major procurements including ignoring the provisions of the relevant laws on procurement by state corporations, but also outright disobedience of government directives vis a vis the insurance payout for the crashed Bombardier Q300 aircraft.

The minister is reported to have taken particular issue with the lease of the B737-500 aircraft from a Dubai based company, which according to a regular aviation source from Dar es Salaam *'... shows that the airline management had learned nothing of the scandal revealed by parliamentary investigations about the lease of the Airbus A320 aircraft some years ago. Instead of going for the mandatory public tender system, which is transparent enough, the airline negotiated a deal for this Boeing behind closed doors, and it seems even shutting out their own ministry representatives. After 6 ministers including the transport minister were sacked a few weeks ago, they should have known better and not provoke their new minister by doing the same shady things, leaving him no choice but sack and suspend them'*.

The minister was reportedly confronted by angry workers of Air Tanzania, apparently induced to vocally support their sacked Acting CEO, in a meeting on Thursday, but gave as good if not better than he got when he laid out the facts behind the suspensions and sacking, including the alleged unauthorized use of an insurance payout for the Q300 aircraft which crashed in Kigoma on take off a few weeks back. Here the minister in particular laid heavily into the former CEO and his suspended brethren for ignoring to deposit a reported 4 million US Dollar insurance payment into the main government account while at the same time receiving billions from government to pay for the repairs of the aircraft.

The minister then turned his attention to his ongoing efforts to appoint a new competent board, which in his words will have to enter into a performance contract, under which they would have to appoint a new permanent management team and shape the future of ATCL into a financially viable entity, or else also face the sack. Traditionally is the announcement of a chairman made by the president himself with the responsible minister then announcing the rest of the board members.

It seems that here as is the case in the natural resources and tourism ministry, the new brooms brought on board by President Kikwete are indeed sweeping the rot out of the front door and it is hoped that a new wind will sweep state corporations under these two ministries, but in particular of Air Tanzania, which seems to now be on its last life of the proverbial nine, and either makes it or breaks in attempting. Watch this space.

## AIR TANZANIA'S NEW CEO SPEAKS OUT ON FUTURE



Capt. Lazaro Lusajo, earlier this week appointed as Acting Chief Executive Officer of Air Tanzania following the sacking of his predecessor Paul Chizi, expressed his appreciation and gratitude to the Minister for Transport while swiftly reassuring his staff, the airlines' clientele and the public at large that the changes at the helm of the airline could lead to service interruptions.

Capt. Lusajo, a veteran aviator with over 12,000 hours of flying experience and having served at the Tanzania Civil Aviation Authority too in the past, was broadly welcomed as a new broom and is expected to fill the vacancies created by the suspension of four top executives by selecting personnel of his choice, allowing him to create a senior team ready and able to weather the competitive storm ATCL is now flying into.

With only one B737-500 operating right now between Dar es Salaam and Mwanza via Kilimanjaro, and a crash landed Bombardier Q300 under repair, the state owned airline will be trying to get additional jets and turboprops on lease to widen their domestic operations to other places like Kigoma, Dodoma, Zanzibar and other key towns across the sprawling East African nation, before extending flights to the region like Nairobi, Entebbe and Kigali amongst other options. The market in Tanzania is dominated by Precision Air's extensive operation with both B737-300 and ATR turboprop aircraft, covering Tanzania like not even Air Tanzania used to do during its heydays, while having also a firm grip on regional flights to Kenya and Uganda.

Capt Lusajo specifically addressed his intention to swiftly conclude therefore additional aircraft procurement which would see ATCL enabled to fly on the lucrative and high traffic routes now by default left to the private sector competition. Aviation observers in Tanzania welcome the appointment as *'a purely professional decision without political undertones'* but cautioned that the strong unions hitherto dominating ATCL in their cat and mouse game with management, would sooner rather than later re-emerge and demand a bigger slice of the cake, which however has not yet even been baked. Watch this space.

## PRESIDENTIAL WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY ADDRESS RAISES EYEBROWS

President Kikwete's address on the occasion of the World Environment Day has raised more than a few eyebrows amongst the conservation fraternity, when on Tuesday this week he was quoted to have said: *'If we don't take remedial measures to conserve the environment, our lives and welfare will be in danger'* before adding *'we are our own worst enemies and God is not to blame for this'* as he referred to environmental degradation now widespread in Tanzania.

The speech prompted a flurry of comments and mails to this correspondent, not a single one failing to point to a previous article *'The Corridor of Destruction'* which refers in a broader context to the planned assaults on key biodiversity hotspots in Tanzania between the town of Musoma at Lake Victoria to the town of Tanga on the Indian Ocean. In the article various dots were connected to show how extensive the aggressive nature of *'development and progress'* had become vis a vis national parks, ecosystems and forests. A rail project from Tanga to Musoma, a new harbour being planned in the middle of the Coelacanth marine national park, a highway across the most crucial migration routes of the Serengeti, the Lake Natron soda ash plant, the withdrawals of the Eastern Arc Mountains from recognition as a World Heritage Site to make the life of robber barons scheming for minerals and timber easier to accomplish, plans for Uranium mining in the Selous and the damming of the Rufiji River at Stiegler's Gorge, affecting a very wide area in the Selous in the most intensely used tourism zone of the reserve have all been promoted and aggressively pursued by the government of President Kikwete, considerably lessening the impact of his address on Tuesday vis a vis his own personal commitment to environmental protection. Said one regular source



in response: *'It would be a comedy if it were not so tragic. The president is asking development partners to support Tanzania in preventing desertification and yet his own government simply tramples on all which is dear to our conservation fraternity. Illegal logging is a cancer which has only increased of late and he asks for money for reforestation instead of cracking down on the wood poachers. Big game poaching goes on unabated as the WWF report last week clarified to the horror of conservationists and the promised countermeasures have not taken off at all. The various projects he promotes so keenly are all globally condemned for their recklessness and until Maige was sacked last month he insulted UNESCO time and again with misleading statements on the highway and by calling them 'inconsequential'. There is a method and strategy behind all of this and we are not going to believe that he meant it seriously unless he lets go of some of these controversial issues and seeks consensus and broader agreement. Germany and the World Bank are ready to finance a southern road routing around the Serengeti which would serve a lot more people but there the entire thoughtline is exposed for the fraud it is. The planned route across the Serengeti is to serve mining interests between the Serengeti and Lake Victoria, the Lake Natron soda ash plant too, so let us stop pretend that road is built for the people of Tanzania when it is for foreign mining giants. Yet, that offer has not been taken up as his government under his guidance clings on to the present Serengeti highway routing. Once it is built, promises or not, it will sooner or later be tarmacked, that is sure because the traffic projections on that road, compiled by government, are just showing how the numbers of cars will grow from a few hundred a day to thousands a day.'*

Controversy then instead of unity behind the common goal of environmental protection and the sustainable use of resources, and it comes as no surprise for those in the know of what is truly happening vis a vis conservation in Tanzania in recent years. Watch this space as this long running saga continues.

#### **ARUSHA AIRPORT SET TO REOPEN**

The current repairs on the Arusha Municipal Airport's runway are nearing the end it was learned when discussing the forthcoming Karibu Tourism and Travel Fair starting this weekend in East Africa's *Safari Capital*.

*'From what we have been told they expect to finish the work by mid July and even Precision Air will start flights again. We have all been complaining that for every flight we must go to Kilimanjaro which is too far away and now we can have the safari flights and even domestic flights use Arusha again. We only hope that those guys at Kilimanjaro are not crying again about losing revenue but really, the convenience of our clients should be the most important issue here. If we can fly to and from Arusha the cost of air safaris will be reduced by the cost of the long transfer to Kilimanjaro and the loss of time which we had so far'* said the regular source from Arusha when talking to this correspondent yesterday.

In a follow up it was also confirmed that Precision Air indeed plans to restore flights into Arusha using ATR 42 and ATR 72 aircraft for domestic services, which is thought to increase their traffic share and support from the local business community in and around Arusha, which hitherto had to drive 50+ kilometres to JRO to catch a flight. The same source at Precision, on condition of anonymity, also reconfirmed that their planned flights to Lusaka and Lubumbashi / Congo DR will commence on 22<sup>nd</sup> June and will operate three times a week using a B737-300 aircraft. Watch this space.

#### **AIR TANZANIA BOSS AXED, FOUR MORE SUSPENDED AS NEW BROOMS SWEEP HARD**



All posturing and peacock strutting about was not enough to save the former Acting Chief Executive Paul Chizi from the axe, which fell on him when the newly appointed Minister for Transport used a provision in law to remove him from office and instead appointed Mr. Lazaro Lusajo as the new Acting Chief Executive / Managing Director.

Four other officials were by ministerial directive also suspended to make way for a range of investigations now unfolding as the new minister too, like his colleague in natural resources and tourism, is set to sweep out corruption and incompetence following damning parliamentary findings of the true extent how the airline is indebted and has dragged government with guarantees into the dark deep financial red.

The suspended officials, all also working in an acting capacity, are AG Commercial Director Kagirwa Josephat, AG Finance Director Bashara Justus, Acting Legal Counsel Mziray Amini and AG Director of Engineering Ringo John who are now under formal probe by a three person panel of experts which is in particular looking at transactions made in recent months.



The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Transport, Eng. Omari Chambo, when making the announcement on behalf of the Ministry, appears to have acknowledged that these personnel changes may be a temporary challenge for the fledgling carrier, presently operating a single B737-500 leased only weeks ago and flying on the Dar es Salaam, Kilimanjaro – Mwanza routes, which has been struggling to regain market share from the private airlines now operating successfully in Tanzania, foremost of course Precision Air.

Sadly, more bad news about ATCL but not entirely unexpected as repeatedly suggested here, that not all is well with that state corporation which should for all purposes be declared bankrupt over long pending debts and closed down for good to spare the Tanzanian taxpayer from yet more damages than the multi million US Dollar obligations current and past managements left for the central government to absorb once again. Watch this space for regular and breaking news from East Africa's vibrant aviation scene.

### **KARIBU FAIR OPENS ON 08<sup>TH</sup> June 6, 2012**



East Africa's most important international tourism trade show, the Karibu Travel and Tourism Fair, is going to open its doors at the Arusha Showground on Friday this week with a dedicated tourism trade day for professional visitors and the media only, before on Saturday and Sunday offering entrance to all spectators, expected to flock to the Arusha Showground in their tens of thousands to sample the attractions the region as a whole has to offer to visitors and domestic / regional travelers.

The annual *Karibu Travel and Tourism Fair* is organized by the Tanzania Association of Tour Operators in conjunction with the Tanzania Tourist Board and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism and has established itself over the years as the premier regional tourism trade show for Eastern Africa, with exhibitors not just coming from the entire region and beyond but as far as Seychelles, while 'buyers' now come from as far as the US and the Far East to meet the regional tourism trade in one compact event. While in Tanzania many of them then take advantage to sample the '*greatest safari show on earth*' as a regular source from Arusha put it in an overnight mail, from '*East Africa's safari capital Arusha*'. Visit [www.karibufair.com](http://www.karibufair.com) for more information, as the opening of the event is now imminent.

### **THE VULTURES ARE CIRCLING ON MAIGE'S TAINTED LEGACY**

The parliamentary committee's report, which led to the downfall of former disgraced, and often said to be quite inept tourism minister Ezekiel Maige, has now triggered a formal investigation by the Tanzanian anti corruption watch dog PCCB, which is investigating the ministers' and his ministry officials conduct over the hugely controversial allocation of hunting blocks last year.

The investigation must have been ongoing for a while as a regular source from Dar es Salaam confirmed overnight that while the matter has only just come into the public domain, questions by PCCB investigators appear to have been posed for several months already and fear if not panic is spreading amongst suspected participants in the scheme within the Wildlife Department.

New minister Khamis Kageshaki has upon assuming office as the minister for natural resources and wildlife made it abundantly clear that we intends to leave no stone unturned to rid his ministry of corrupt and in his words '*unpatriotic*' civil servants which have disgraced the sector in the past. A number of jobs are on the line as both internal ministry investigations as well as the more official PCCB probe are underway and it is understood that the parliamentary committee on natural resources and wildlife too is not letting go, having claimed the scalp of the minister but wanting to see culprits charged in court and prosecuted over their alleged conduct.

The source also made comments available from the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau's Director General who reportedly said: '*At the moment I cannot reveal anything. We are still investigating the whole exercise and when this is done you will be informed*' before adding '*PCCB will leave no stone unturned in the investigation*'. The parliamentary committee had unearthed a range of glaring irregularities in the allocation of hunting blocks, allegedly denying government revenue through corrupt practices, which saw as many as 16 companies without a formal application being granted a hunting block while others were denied renewals under the pretext of giving Tanzanian companies a chance to get into the business. The subsequent outcry was dismissed at the time by Maige and his top lieutenants but as the parliamentary enquiry marched on he was eventually running out of excuses and found himself in a self created minefield of both official and unofficial comments he had made and subsequently, seen as a growing liability, got sacked from cabinet.

Hunting in East Africa is a hugely controversial activity and regularly under fire by the conservation community which complains that poaching is tearing greatly into the available wildlife stocks as it is, making hunting unsustainable, while pointing to past experience where in particular Middle Eastern block holders literally shot their concession empty with little if any supervision, before allegedly lighting fires inside parks and neighbouring blocks to drive game into their own sectors. Demands to ban hunting completely however have fallen on deaf ears so far in Tanzania as at least in the past – this development is at least circumstantial evidence towards that theory – has been lucrative enough to use corrupt practices to get hunting blocks allocated and then mint money, while supervision, monitoring and reporting remained deeply flawed.

Only last Friday did the chairman of the parliamentary committee make further comments in response to a WWF report on poaching in Tanzania and revelations by the Environmental Investigation Agency based in the UK over the scale of poaching in his country, which claimed that nearly 50 percent of the blood ivory nabbed in 2010 originated from Tanzania, following DNA analysis of the contraband. He alleged that between 20 – 30 elephant a day are being poached across Tanzania, progressively decimating previously thriving elephant populations in the interest of short lived financial gains and blamed corruption in the wildlife and other sectors for it.

Speaking at the launch of the Africa Ecological Footprint Report by the WWF in conjunction with the African Development Bank on Friday last week in Arusha, the WWF Director General, Mr. Jim Leape, was reported to have said the great demand for ivory (and rhino horns) in Asia was a matter of serious concern.

He demanded of African governments to protect the fragile ecosystem in the continent which was under pressure from spreading human populations into areas previously thought barely fit for farming, now causing increased human / wildlife conflict. Mr Leape was quoted to have said: ***‘Elephant populations in Central Africa alone are estimated to have declined by more than 50 per cent between 1995 and 2007 primarily due to poaching’***.

Watch this space.

## **Rwanda News**

### **KWITA IZINA 2012 PROGRAMME OUT**

A cycling race from 09<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> of June will kick off the formal start of Kwita Izina 2012 activities this year, when a large number of cyclists from Rwanda, the wider region and from overseas will set out from the Rwandan capital Kigali and ride their way across the country to Ruhengeri / Musanze, where the main festivities will take place again. The riders will be carrying the Kwita Izina spirit with them as they cross the hills and valleys enroute to the volcanic mountains which domineer the skyline from Musanze and their efforts will be a reminder for communities along the way to even more keenly anticipate the naming of the gorilla babies due on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> of June. Following the race will community centred activities take place, titled ***‘Igitaramo’*** during which water, sanitation and social amenities projects will be formally handed over to the beneficiaries by the Rwanda Development Board’s Tourism and Conservation Department on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June.

Preceding this will be a dedicated sustainability exhibition between June 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> in Kigali, where a range of products will be shown, known to use less electricity, reduce the volume of charcoal used for cooking and embrace solar technology as a means to tap into renewable sources of energy.

The naming of the young born gorillas will take place on the ***‘showground’*** just outside the national park head quarters on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> of June and a gala dinner that night for invited guests, donors, development partners and the conservation fraternity will this year celebrate the achievements of 2011/12, during which Rwanda again has made great strides in protecting the habitat of the rare primates, supported by an unshakable political will, turning the lipservice common elsewhere in the region into concrete measures and reality.

Notably has a follow on event been scheduled for media representatives known to be in support of Rwanda’s way of life when a select group of journalists will have the opportunity to witness the formal closure of the Gacaca Court system during a ceremony in parliament on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> June. The Gacaca Court system is a truly unique way of having administered justice following the genocide of 1994 which cost the country up to a million innocent lives. Here the spirit of reconciliation was amply demonstrated, concentrating to bring the key figures that promoted hatred and incited, finances and facilitated mobs turned killers to justice and re-integrating those who were misled into criminal acts into society as productive members, following a community based trial and rehabilitation education. Rwanda’s capital Kigali is connected by RwandAir from the entire region and the national airline is the official carrier for the Kwita Izina Festival 2012. Watch this space.

## **Seychelles News**

### **MAURITIUS SEEKS TO MEND FENCES OVER CARNIVAL ‘COPY AND PASTE JOB’**



The presence in the Seychelles of the Chairman of the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, Robert Desvaux, ostensibly on other business, was nevertheless used to put the major talking point across the entire **Vanilla Islands** and much of the global tourism world – allegations that his CEO Karl Mootoosamy had done a *copy and paste job* on the Seychelles Carnival success – to rest.

According to information at hand Mr. Desvaux hastened to mend the broken fences which the recent notable absence of Mauritius from other **Vanilla Island** events seemed to suggest, that Karl and his merry men were almost hellbent to undermine, if not outright sabotage the marketing alliance from their lager mentality of *'they are all against us and Seychelles is running circles around us'* as has been reliably reported from Port Louis.

The reaction though, on Mauritius itself, within the **Vanilla Islands** partners and further abroad, where consternation spread over this abrasive and confrontational approach by Karl's MTPA, must have triggered a reaction amongst political circles in Port Louis too and the arrival of MTPA's chairman in the Seychelles was clearly aimed at mending fences and pouring oil on stormy waters to calm the waves and restore order.

Mr. Desvaux was quoted by a source from Mahe to have said in the press conference, he jointly attended with his counterpart from La Reunion, Mr. Pascal Viroleau, the Seychelles Tourism Board CEO Mrs. Elsia Grandcourt and the Seychelles Tourism Minister Alain St. Ange, on whom much of Karl's recent resentment seems to have focused, that: *'that there was a misunderstanding as to what Mauritius was announcing and about the real intention of Mauritius'* before adding *'Mauritius [is] organizing a 'Shopping Fiesta' from the 29<sup>th</sup> June to the 5<sup>th</sup> August and that as part of the Fiesta will be taking place a sailing regatta and the carnival of Flic en Flac among many other activities.'*

Not that Karl's initial announcement was in the least misunderstood, it is satisfying to note that political expediency and diplomatic efforts have now reeled the gone way overboard CEO of MTPA back in and put him on what appears a tight leash, restoring Mauritius' standing with their **Vanilla Islands** partners and actively seeking a way forward and putting this sorry episode firmly behind them all.

Notably was it said by the MTPA Chairman Robert Desvaux on the occasion that: *'it was important to take note that it was now agreed that it was Seychelles [and La Reunion] who will continue to stage a carnival as the event of the Vanilla Islands'*.

The Seychelles Tourism Minister Alain St. Ange was reported to have said that before the press conference called by the MTPA Chairman he had personally presided over a meeting at the MAIA Resort with Robert Desvaux (Mauritius), Pascal Viroleau (La Reunion) and Elsia Grandcourt (Seychelles) where it was agreed that it was time to review the priorities of the **Vanilla Islands** and to take new decisions to ensure that the grouping of islands could make new headway.

*'We are many to fly the Vanilla Islands flag. It is now time to consolidate the working partnership and ensure we all remain united. The spirit of the Vanilla Islands remains very much alive and we now need to consolidate it'* before he also confirmed that the meeting between Seychelles, Mauritius and La Reunion which took place at the MAIA Resort had reached agreement on different important decisions.

He went on to mention: *'For example we agree that we shall all promote four Vanilla Islands' events as part of our regions calendar of events namely the Shopping Fiesta of Mauritius (29 June to 5<sup>th</sup> August), the Carnaval International de Victoria staged in Seychelles (8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> February), the International Tourism Fair of Madagascar (31<sup>st</sup> May to 3<sup>rd</sup> June) and the Liberté des Métisses et Food Festival of La Réunion (17 au 20 December) which commemorates the Abolition of Slavery. The door remains open for Comoros and Mayotte to also move to propose an event of their choice to appear of the Vanilla Islands Calendar of Events'*.

According to additional information sent to this correspondent overnight it has also been agreed that Tourism Ministers from the Vanilla Islands with the Chairperson or CEO of their Tourism Boards will meet in July in Seychelles at the same time as the ROUTES AFRICA 2012 Forum, the ICTP (International Council of Tourism Partners) General Assembly and the RETOSA Board Meeting will also all be taking place Seychelles. It was reportedly also resolved that the Vanilla Islands Seychelles meeting was needed to move the Indian Ocean Islands

Association forward. *‘The time has arrived for the Vanilla Islands to have its own Chief Executive Officer to manage the organization from a head office in La Reunion. The responsibilities of the Vanilla Islands Secretariat will be to look after the good running of the organization and to move forward joint promotional actions and plans. This will be a point on the agenda at the Vanilla Islands July Meeting’* the Seychelles minister said.

For the financing of the Vanilla islands Head Office and Secretariat, Minister Alain St.Ange explained that the group of islands will be appealing to the European Union for an adequate support budget. On this issue Pascal Viroleau said that the first mission of the **Vanilla Islands** members was to agree on their different projects that will enhance and showcase Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar, Comoros, Mayotte and La Reunion and to then lodge that with the European Union. Mr. Viroleau of La Reunion was quoted to have said *‘at the start there were four of us who pushed the idea of the Vanilla Islands. Many people did not believe that the grouping of islands would go far, but we have made progress. We have shown that we could all work together. We are all six mid ocean islands and remain united in our drive to make our region more visible and more known’*.

Well said and it is good to see that the negative fallout caused by one individual could be overcome and is now being turned into a regional common way forward, from which all the **Vanilla Islands** will jointly benefit and get promotional mileage in local, regional and international media.

It also confirms in closing the sentiments expressed here in previous articles about Karl’s way of running MTPA and that change is needed there too. Watch this space.

**AND** in closing today once more some worthwhile reads taken from *The Livingstone Weekly*, courtesy of Gill Staden:

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## ZAMBIA

### Search for Zambezi plane crash victims continues

From Fly Africa

A light aircraft carrying a couple has crashed into the Zambezi River after hitting into a ZESCO electricity pylon, Zambezi District Commissioner Lawrence Kayumba has confirmed.

The fate of the couple of Kitorokoshi Mission Hospital is still unknown as local people continue to search for the plane wreckage. Kayumba said the pilot and his wife were flying from Chavuma where they had ferried some passengers to the mission hospital where the accident had happened along the Zambezi river around 16:00 hours.

He added that the accident happened about 5 kilometres away from Mize palace in Zambezi District. He said frantic efforts are underway to trace the couple and the wreckage of the plane. Police Spokesperson Elizabeth Kanjela has also confirmed the development. Initially, it was thought it the plane involved in the crash was a commercial passenger plane.[Source: The Independent Post]

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### The Kasanka Challenge

Kasanka National Park in northern Zambia is fast becoming known as the place to see over a million straw-coloured fruit bats in November and December - the largest mammal migration in the world. Every night the bats emerge from their roost to blacken the sunset with their numbers.

Kasanka is not only home to bats; there are over a hundred





mammal species and the bird count exceeds 450 species. Kasanka is the place to see sitatunga, the shy water-loving antelope; special bird species include Pel's Fishing Owl and Ross's Lourie. Not far away at Banguelu Swamps the Shoebill, survive in large numbers with an occasional sighting in Kasanka.

Kasanka is run by a Trust which relies on income from visitors and donations from well-wishers. The park had been abandoned for many years before David Lloyd, an intermittent resident in Zambia, decided that he wanted to try to save the area from complete destruction. In 1987 the Trust was formed and the Parks Authority gave him the right to run the park privately. Kasanka now is well-known and flourishing; the wildlife numbers increasing and the environment stable.

For the second year the Kasanka Trust has run a bike race. On 25th May the Njinga Race took place with 25 entrants from the nearby villages on a 12 km course. A Buffalo Bike, sponsored by World Bicycle Relief, was the main prize. The Buffalo Bike is specially designed for African conditions and assembled in Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. The winner was Derek Mwape who led the race from the start and finished 20 minutes before the other competitors. His prize of a Buffalo Bike caused a lot of envy from his friends. Other participants won T-shirts.



On 26th May the main event of a 56 km Challenge (with 29 competitors) and a 22 km Chase (with 32 competitors) got underway at 8 am. The route through the park was a real off-road event with the odd wildlife challenge thrown in. At one point a hippo decided he wanted to join in the fun, so the route had to be diverted and game scouts put on guard for the safety of the riders. The Challenge was dominated by four cyclists who pushed each other to the finish line with Stephen Wells being victorious. Bec Farnam won the 22 km Chase.

In the afternoon 13 youngsters joined in the Kasanka Junior Race, over a 3 km course with proud parents giving their children a bit of help now and again. Jack Irvine was the winner.



General Manager of Kasanka, Ernst Jacobs, was very happy with this year's event which brought together competitors and sponsors from around Zambia. The sponsors covered most of the costs of the event by providing prizes, essential supplies and logistics.

In his report, Ernst said: *There was great excitement at the prize giving when Derek received his Buffalo Bicycle for all his effort. More bicycles were raffled out and two very happy contestants also became the proud owners of a new Buffalo Bike.*

*This event caused huge excitement in the local community and we hope that we can use it as a platform for local rider development and more sponsorship to make it a recognised race. We would also like to*



*include it on the same day as the main Challenge event as we can then have our local heroes recognised for their cycling prowess and even start such initiatives in other parts of the country to have a National race.*

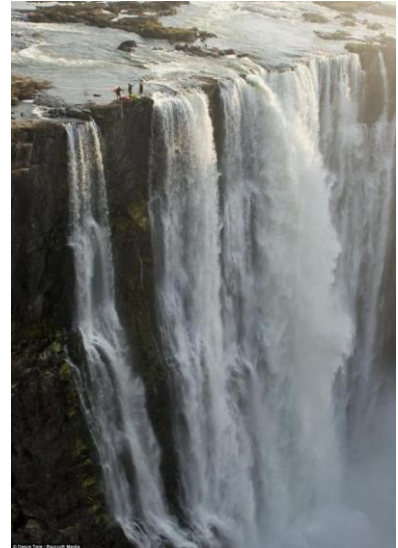
*Entries have increased four-fold over the first year and it is hoped that a major sponsor will come on board to help grow this event to a major draw-card on the Zambian sporting scene and so help to further the work of Kasanka Trust in the fields of conservation and community upliftment.*

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### **Stunning Photos of the Victoria Falls**

Three kayakers, Steve Fisher, Dale Jardine and Sam Drevo kayaked to the edge of the falls and abseiled down the cliff face. Meanwhile the whole expedition was photographed by Desre Tate. Check out the other photos on:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2148041/Daredevil-kayakers-paddle-precipice-Victoria-Falls--just-better-look.html?ito=feeds-newsxml>



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### **Golden Book of UNWTO signed by Michael Sata and Robert Mugabe**

On Tuesday the Zim-Zam border over the bridge was closed. A huge tent was erected in the middle; furniture and sound equipment was moved in. In Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe and his ministers arrived at Victoria Falls Town and in Zambia, Michael Sata and his ministers arrived in Livingstone. They all met up on the bridge with Taleb Rifai, Secretary General of UNWTO to sign the Golden Book of Travel and Tourism. By signing the Golden Book, both presidents agree to promote tourism in their countries as a means of sustainable development.

The whole event went off without a hitch and by our standards almost ran to time ... only about an hour late. Our president, Michael Sata, decided to drive to the bridge via a Sun International golf cart which upset his security personnel ... But we are used to our President being a bit unorthodox ...

While watching the spectacle I listened to some



comments from people. One of them said: *This is all about Zimbabwe. Zambia is just there help to promote Zimbabwe. We will end up being side-lined ... you watch ...*

And it wasn't long before the fallout started. The following day there were headlines in the press stating that Mugabe had been made an ambassador of tourism and that the world should complain.

From the British Guardian: *Seldom, however, has there been such anger, or questioning of the organisation's (UNWTO) credibility, as that greeting the appointment of a new international envoy for tourism: Robert Mugabe.*

*Improbable as it seems, the Zimbabwean president, who is widely accused of ethnic cleansing, rigging elections, terrorising opposition, controlling media and presiding over a collapsed economy, has been endorsed as a champion of efforts to boost global holidaymaking.*

*Despite that fact Mugabe, 88, is under a travel ban, he has been honoured as a "leader for tourism" by the UN's World Tourism Organisation, along with his political ally, Zambian president Michael Sata, 75. ... The development has stunned human rights campaigners and political opponents, who regard Mugabe as a tyrant.*

The UNWTO was quick to refute this: *UNWTO, which has headquarters in Madrid, insisted that it had not awarded Mugabe an official title. Sandra Carvao, its co-ordinator of communications, said: "Correct would be to say UNWTO has presented both presidents with an open letter which calls for them to support tourism as a means to foster sustainable development in their countries to the benefit of their people and consequently ask them to support the sector in this respect."*

It is often said that Britain is always against Zimbabwe and that they are a bit rabid in their approach to Mugabe. But it was only a few days later when Canada withdrew from the UNWTO.

From the British Guardian:

*Canada has formalised its withdrawal from the UN tourism body after Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe was invited to become a global leader in the sphere and sent a letter in recognition of Zimbabwe's co-hosting of the organisation's general assembly next year.*

*John Baird, the Canadian foreign minister, said the correspondence by the UN world tourism office (UNWTO), in which its secretary general reportedly praised Mugabe and the president of Zambia, Michael Sata, on Tuesday for their role in tourism at Victoria Falls, was the "last straw" in the country's participation.*

*... Mugabe, 88, is under a US and EU travel ban because of alleged human rights abuses in Zimbabwe. His tourism minister, Walter Mzembi, was quoted as brushing off Canada's snub as an inconsequential move by a "small player in the global tourism industry".*

*"It is not a player in the sector. It wants to leverage on the Mugabe brand. They want to take advantage of the Mugabe brand to be on the global map," Mzembi was quoted as saying on NewZimbabwe.com. "If they want to withdraw, let's go ahead."*

(As a point of interest, Canada has 16million tourists in a year compared to Zimbabwe's claimed 2.5million. Botswana has 1.5million, so I am a bit dubious about the figure for Zimbabwe ...)

I doubt that Canada will be the only country to withdraw from the UNWTO ... probably just the first of many. So what is the reality on the ground in Victoria Falls Town and Livingstone?

Actually most of us in the towns keep out of politics. We are interested in running our businesses. We know that we have little effect on the political situation in Zimbabwe. I did comment some weeks ago that the hosting of the UNWTO here was a bad idea, but, by then it was too late. Now we have to live with it and make the best of a very bad situation.

The fact that this is a political coup for Robert Mugabe and his ministers is very true and Zambia has been pulled into a political minefield. How we handle this is in Zambia very important.

Zambia has to be so careful in the run-up to the Congress. Here is a bit of an article from The Herald newspaper in Zimbabwe:

### ***EDITORIAL from The Herald, Zimbabwe***

*If you want to see the backside of the Victoria Falls go to Zambia, if you want to see the front side go to Zimbabwe, if you want a full view go to both sides, remarked one tourist recently. This aptly captures the reason why Zimbabwe and Zambia are co-hosting the 20th session of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation General Assembly at the Victoria Falls in August next year. ...*

If the towns of Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, and Livingstone, Zambia, work together for the UNWTO as a business proposition for the two towns and let the politicians be politicians the event can succeed. But it does seem quite likely that politics may get in the way.

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## ZIMBABWE

### **Walter Mzembi President of ATA**

The minister for Tourism and Hospitality, Walter Mzembi, was elected as President of the Africa Travel Association at their congress held in Victoria Falls the other week. Walter Mzembi will head the Association for the next two years.

At the same event Walter Mzembi was presented with a life-size portrait of Robert Mugabe, a portrait inscribed: *Man of the Moment*. The gift was presented to the minister by Friends of Joshua Trust. According to reports, he shed tears and said: *To me it was like being presented a portrait of my own biological father. President Mugabe is an inspiration and hero to me. I have been blessed to work under him and talking to him often receiving direct wisdom and philosophy of the revolution and experience, a blessing that many will not experience.*

