

Monday, January 23, 2017

FROM THE Counties



NAKURU

Police arrest three linked to robberies

Police in Naivasha have arrested three suspects said to be behind a spate of robberies in the town and recovered assorted weapons, including a toy pistol. Administration Policemen officers arrested the suspects in Kihoto estate and recovered electronic goods. The arrests came hours after a gangster broke into a business mall in the town and raided several shops. A senior police officer, who declined to be named, confirmed the arrests, adding that two other suspects had fled. "It's a matter of time before we catch up with them," said the officer.

MACHAKOS



Sand harvesting fuelling food and water insecurity

Massive and uncontrolled sand harvesting in local rivers as well as rampant pollution of Athi River have been cited as the key factors in diminishing food and water security in Ukambani. A special stakeholders' meeting convened by Yatta MP Francis Mwangangi at Katangi market at the weekend resolved, among other things, to agitate for a clean-up of the river and enforce a ban on commercial sand harvesting from local rivers to mitigate the food crisis in the region.

MOMBASA

Students meet to discuss how to combat rape

More than 200 high school students converged at the Aga Khan Academy on Saturday to discuss sexual violence in the region. The students, meeting under the aegis of Stand Up Shout Out (Suso), a youth organisation that seeks to combat social ills, condemned what they described as a "casual" attitude towards rape. "We decided to come together to discuss rape because the society seems to normalise sexual violence," said Arzoo Rajpar, a student and director of Suso.

Fire destroys 10 acres of grass in park



Locals and park warders put out a fire at Lake Nakuru National Park. More than 10 acres of grassland was consumed by the fire. The cause of fire was not immediately established.

[PHOTO: CAROLINE CHEBET/STANDARD]

City eyes forest land for cemetery in swap deal

NAIROBI/NAKURU

City Hall says it is willing to compensate Kenya Forest Service in monetary terms

By JOSPHAT THIONG'O AND ANTONY GITONGA

Nairobi is planning to swap the filled up 100-acre Langata Cemetery with a 50-acre forest nearby.

The deal is meant to bring to an end the frantic search for a new cemetery by City Hall. The land belongs to the Kenya Forest Service (KFS).

County Lands Executive Christopher Khaemba yesterday confirmed that the property swap was aimed at gaining a new burial ground for Nairobi residents after revelations that the current cemetery is full.

"We have already written a proposal to the Kenya Forest Service to take the cemetery and convert it into a forest in exchange for the 50-acre parcel," said Mr Khaemba.

Speaking to The Standard, he said the swap proposal was a fall-back plan after KFS refused to sell the land

SEARCH FOR NEW LAND

• Langata Cemetery was declared full about 20 years ago and the city government has since been looking for alternative land

• Efforts to buy new land have hit a snag in the past because of unavailability and high costs

• In 2009, City Hall lost millions of shillings after the now defunct City Council paid Sh283 million for 48.5 acres in Mavoko, Machakos County.

• The land had however been valued at Sh24 million

to the county for Sh80 million.

"We were willing to buy the land at the current market rate, which is Sh80 million, but KFS denied," added Khaemba.

He said the county was willing to compensate KFS for the trees on 50 acres. City Hall, he said, was willing to cater for expenses incurred in fencing the cemetery and buying tree seedlings to plant there.

"If they also want us to compensate them via monetary terms, we will be willing to do so as long as we can

get fresh land to serve as the city cemetery," he said.

According to reports, the cemetery was declared full about 20 years ago and the city government has been looking for alternative land ever since.

Consequently, families have been forced to bury their loved ones in shallow graves, thus failing to meet the recommended six-foot depth.

Efforts to acquire new cemetery land in the past have hit a snag, primarily because of high costs and unavailability of land.

COSTLY VENTURE

In 2009, City Hall lost millions of shillings after the now defunct City Council paid Sh283 million for 48.5 acres in Mavoko, Machakos County. The land had been valued at Sh24 million.

In the budgeting for the current financial year, the county had also expressed interest in acquiring burial land in Kajiado County, which turned out to be a costly venture.

"The Mavoko land is too rocky to serve as a cemetery, which is why we are seeking new land," said Khaemba.

In addition, City Hall wants a developer who dug a trench through the cemetery, exposing human skulls and bones, jailed.

Khaemba said the developer had already been charged in court. He

however declined to reveal his identity.

And the County Government of Nakuru has embarked on a second attempt to buy cemetery land for three major towns as the crisis around burial sites deepened.

After the first attempt failed, the county expressed interest in 65 acres for cemetery land in Nakuru, Naivasha and Mai Mahiu.

This came as it emerged that the county government was facing challenges in disposing of close to 200 unclaimed bodies in all the county's mortuaries.

Last year, efforts to secure cemetery land hit a brick wall after various communities objected to having burial sites near their homes.

Already, cemeteries in Nakuru, Naivasha and Molo towns are full.

According to Governor Kinuthia Mbugua, the county government is seeking a minimum of 50 acres in Nakuru, 10 in Naivasha and five in Mai Mahiu.

Speaking earlier, the governor said the county had allocated funds to buy cemetery land but finding the ideal land was a problem.

"Some people have gone ahead to hike the prices of their land while some communities are totally opposed to the idea of having a cemetery next to their homes," he said.