

5 more parks to boost tourism

Tanzania - President John Magufuli has approved a proposal to upgrade five game reserves into national parks to widen the country's tourism scope. Natural resources and tourism minister, Dr Hamisi Kigwangalla, broke the good news in the National Assembly on Tuesday while winding up the ministry's budget estimates for the 2018/2019 fiscal year.



Image via [Wikimedia Commons](#) - Selous Game Reserve, Tanzania

He named the upgraded game reserves as Burigi, Biharamuro, Kibisi, Ibanda and Chief Rumanyika. "The president's approval is timely as the ministry strives to open up other tourist corridors in the country," he said.

Dr Kigwangalla told the House that the ministry was taking advantage of Chato Airport to open the North-East tourist corridor, hinting that the ministry has further forwarded other requests to the head of state to have more game reserves upgraded. They are Swaga Swaga, Mkungunero, Rungwa, Mhesi, Ugala, Kibosi and Moyowosi. The minister promised to work hard to improve infrastructure to attract more tourists in the areas.

Opening tourist corridors

"We intend to have eight million tourists in the next seven years to meet our target of collecting \$16bn (over 36tri/-) by 2025. We have therefore opened new tourism sites." He pointed out that the northern corridor is almost exhausted with many tourists, making it difficult even to maintain the roads. He said every month funds are incurred in road maintenance, while there are other tourist attractions with similar animals but remaining idle.

Speaker of the National Assembly, Job Ndugai had advised the ministry to consider legislators' concerns over the setting up of new beacons. Many lawmakers had proposed the suspension of the exercise pending consensus of all parties involved. He said it will be awkward if Tanzania National Parks Authority (TANAPA) will continue with the new borders' demarcation by putting beacons in areas already occupied by people.

"It is better you settle the differences first then go on with the fixing of the new beacons instead of fixing them while knowing there are pending issues which need attention," advised speaker Ndugai. He said the fixing of new beacons has been a source of conflicts, especially in game reserves, creating hatred between residents and government officials.

Protecting and preserving ecology

In another development, the government has expressed its commitment to protect and preserve the ecology of Selous Game Reserve and mitigate any environmental concern that might be occasioned during the execution of Stiegler's Gorge Hydroelectric Project. Dr Kigwangalla said the government has formed a leadership committee for implementation of the project within the game reserve, one of the world's largest World Heritage sites, along Rufiji River.

"We have sent our new proposals to the committee. We want to use the Voluntary Pay Principle (VPP) for creation of small levy that will be returned for environmental conservation," the minister said. He pointed out that trees that would be cut in execution of the project will be sold commercially. The minister said that the trees will be harvested instead of being destroyed by a bulldozer.

According to the minister, projections show that the harvested trees will generate between 400bn/- to 600bn/-, the amount that will be spent in conserving the area.

Another environmental strategy in the area is deployment of an expert team from at least eight ministries and other government institutions. The team, said the minister, is at the project areas taking different species and conducting research to identify each of them to establish the exotic species. The species are of trees, grasses, crawling animals, swimming animals, fish and birds, which, according to the minister, will be preserved in another area to be replenished later.

The ministry is digging three dams in conjunction with the project, which will be used to preserve the species during the transition period.

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