

Traders counting losses 2 weeks after cancelled governors meeting

► Boda boda operators say they took loans to service motor-bikes

► Governor Kivutha Kibwana says the county to be compensated

ESTHER DIANAH, MAKUENI

Businessmen and women in Makueni are counting losses following the cancellation of the devolution conference that was to be held in the county.

From boda boda operators in Wote and other towns, to hoteliers and suppliers who had anticipated a windfall, the outcry is loud.

The traders gathered at a meeting in Wote earlier this week to commiserate with each other.

“We took Covid-19 jabs as advised, about 400 of us, we had standard requirements for the motorbikes because we expected to carry dignitaries.

“We took loans to service our motorbikes and we hoped to recoup the money during the conference,” said Albanus Mndaisy, a boda boda operator.

The boda boda Sacco had branded reflectors and numbered them to make it easy for visitors to identify who was carrying them.

“We had had arranged with the police to only allow certain boda boda riders to operate within the confined region and adhere to rules.

“As the chair, I loaned some members, through the Sacco so they could acquire licences, service their bikes and get helmets,” said Ma-Wote Boda Boda Sacco chair James Sami.

A trader, who identified herself as Veronica, ordered mangoes, oranges



Makueni Boys High School where the seventh Devolution Conference was to take place from August 23-26. [Stephen Nzioka, Standard]

and bananas from various farms, hoping to cash in on the conference.

“I am currently under pressure from the farmers to pay for the fruits because as I instructed them, they did not sell the fruits to anyone else,” she said.

Christine Mutuku, the chair of Marikiti Grocers Association in Wote, said the losses have caused them sleepless nights.

Cleaned public areas

“I asked the women who would be vending fruits to have their hair done and get clean or new aprons in order to look presentable during the conference,” Mutuku said.

And like the boda boda riders, taxi operators also took loans to service their cars.

The hotels and caterers society was not left behind.

Anthony Ngunga, the chair of Lower Eastern Hotels and Caterers,

8,000

GUESTS

NUMBER of people that hotels in Wote town and its environs expected to cater for during the conference.

said they have a 22-member consortium that was formed two years ago.

“The conference has been cancelled for the third time now, and every time we expected it to happen, stakeholders prepared for it,” said Ngunga.

“We blocked our rooms, restocked foods and beverages, bed sheets, got new beds, repainted and cleaned areas around our hotels. This was all done with money,” he said.

Ngunga said the Council of Gov-

ernors was actively involved in the preparation because their representatives constantly visited the county to check how traders had prepared for the conference.

Negotiated prices

“As a consortium, we were to cater for 8,000 guests. The number went down to 4,500. We were given a contract for 2,000 people three weeks to the conference.

“We negotiated our prices based on the numbers and settled on Sh2,400 per plate and Sh500 for VIP tea breaks,” he said.

According to Makueni Governor Kivutha Kibwana, the county government itself incurred losses.

“We used a lot of money and we need compensation. We would have used that money on other things,” said Prof Kibwana.

Endombi@standardmedia.co.ke

MOMBASA



Petition wants Joho declared unfit to hold public office

Governor Hassan Joho has seven days to respond to a petition seeking to bar him from holding public office after he was found guilty of abuse of office.

Joho and his co-accused, Changamwe MCA Bernard Ogutu, were also found guilty of contempt of court.

High Court judge Sila Munyao had, in 2019, convicted Joho and Ogutu for illegally demolishing a multi-million shilling perimeter around the property of businessman Ashak Doshi and his wife Pratibha Asho.

Justice Ann Amollo had, on May 6, 2019, issued orders restraining the duo from demolishing the perimeter wall and trespassing on Doshi's property in Changamwe but they defied the orders.

On May 21 this year, Joho and Ogutu were also found guilty for contempt of court after they also failed to appear before Justice Munyao to explain why they should not be jailed for bringing the wall down against a court order.

In February 2020, Munyao had found the two guilty and convicted them to six months in jail but suspended the sentence to allow mitigation.

However, Joho and Ogutu failed to appear before court forcing Justice Munyao to sentence them to either pay the fine or serve two months in jail.

Munyao issued an order to Mombasa County commander to enforce the arrest and make sure that Joho was in jail.

[Joackim Bwana]

MERU

Over 90 per cent of counties have broken the law, says Ombudsman

More than 90 per cent of counties have flouted the Access to Information Act which requires them to publicise entities that have been awarded tenders.

Ombudsman Florence Kajuju said that while the Constitution demands that county governments allocate at least 30 per cent of tenders to youth, women and persons living with disabilities, devolved units were not revealing beneficiaries.

Speaking when the Commission on Administrative Justice conducted public participation forums on the Access to Information Act in Meru on



Ombudsman Florence Kajuju speaks at the Meru National Polytechnic in Meru County yesterday. [Courtesy]

Thursday, Kajuju said her office might be forced to take action against offending office holders.

She said the public was entitled to know tender winners in push for 30 per cent procurement law.

“We have a challenge in compliance of the 30 per cent procurement requirement. Counties do not want to release information,” said Kajuju.

She was categorical that county and national government officials had to comply with the law, or else her office will seek Parliament's intervention. **[Phares Mutembei]**

BUNGOMA

Police arrest four in probe after chief was killed and buried in a maize plantation

The police in Mt Elgon, Bungoma County, have arrested four people in connection with the killing of a chief.

Geoffrey Kipsang, the chief of Chepyuk location, was reported missing on Sunday last week before his body was discovered in a shallow grave in a maize plantation, about three kilometres from his home on Friday.

Kipsang, popularly known by residents as Michuki, fought production and consumption of illicit brew.

And after his killing, angry residents stormed an illicit brew den and torched houses they suspected were harbouring the people who might have killed him. The residents also lynched a suspect they linked to the killing of the 57-year-



old. Kipsang, who had served as chief since early 90s, was also instrumental in the fight against insecurity and pregnancies among teenagers.

Area County Commissioner Samuel Kimiti said four suspects are helping police with investigations. **[Micah Sali]**