

Environment Research Park launched in Monduli

From MARC NKWAME
in Monduli

IT is not always that Monduli District gets mentioned in tourism despite owning part of Lake Manyara National Park and a section of Tarangire National Park.

This week however, Monduli has made history for launching what is going to be the continent's first ever Natural Resources, Wildlife and Environment Research Park which is set to add another value to Tanzania's tourism industry.

"This is where Science is going to meet Tourism and we hope the Eco-science facility will form yet another tourism attraction in Tanzania but this time it will be tourism with a purpose not just the usual leisure travels," stated Mr Erasto Mbwilo, the Manyara Regional Commissioner.

Mr Mbwilo officially opened the Eco-Science property on behalf of the

Arusha Regional Commissioner, Mr Magessa Mulongo whose name has been engraved in the foundation stone's placard.

"Since this is going to be Nature sciences' study and research centre, we hope it will help to discover and possibly help to find solutions for the diseases ailing many species of wildlife causing most of them to die," said the Manyara RC.

The Monduli District

Commissioner, Mr Jowika Kasunga said he was impressed by the facility which not only adds potential investment and employment opportunities for the area but the Eco-Science centre will also help to transform the Monduli's wild savannah for the better.

Eco-Science which is a hybrid facility comprising of the nature research centre as well as luxury lodge, is situated on the North-Eastern border of Tarangire National Park; 20 kilometres south of the village of Makuyuni the main junction at the road to both the Ngorongoro Crater and Serengeti National park.

The Science Centre has been described as a satellite in Maasai land for scientists and students, for local and international universities in general, as well as research centres from all over the world.

"Small groups of scientists, researchers and students can stay at Eco-science for their investigations, studies or for conferences," said Dr Ben Beeckmans the Eco-Science Director who is also an Environment Scientist, and Physical Geographer.

He explained that the science centre, completely independent from the luxury lodge, consists of 10 very large tents. The two largest ones are a restaurant and conference rooms with a

library.

"We invite universities or individual scientists with a keen scientific interest in Northern Tanzania to propose projects which could be important for the local population or beyond it," said Mr Beeckmans.

According to him, natural sciences like geography, biology and geology, environmental sciences and agriculture will be the main sectors of the centre even though Eco-science is also open to other domains.

"The centre is also preparing a mobile unit for field work and the conditions to collaborate with Eco-science will be discussed between us and the participants and will depend largely on the nature of the project." He said.

The Eco-science Director explained further that part of the collaboration was to be in twofold; "Eco-science will ask some of the scientists to inform visitors of their work, and for every project a report or publication- depending on the importance- under our own "Eco-science" label will be forwarded.

"Our aim is to have a mixture of long term projects and shorter, punctual ones. Scholarships will also be part of the future," he said. The property will also study seismic forces with an aim of predicting future volcanic activities along the main Rift Valley.