

Multitudes descend on the sleepy town of Ficksburg

The 45th Cherry Festival kicked off with song and dance in Ficksburg to usher in the festive period for the Eastern Free State town. What started in 1967 as an agricultural show is now a lifestyle leisure and music gathering attracting thousands of people all over the country and the Kingdom of Lesotho.

The 9 day Festival has become a huge cash injector to the economy of the small farming town of Ficksburg in Setsoto Municipality. Reports indicated that R45 million is pumped into Ficksburg during this festival. This is largely in the form of accommodation, restaurant, filling station and salaries paid to workers, performers, and of course the sales of the famous cherry liqueur and other commodities.

The Cherry jazz festival boasted by the big names such as Ringo, Hugh Masikela, Spho Hot Stix Mabusa, Siphokazi, Malaika, Tshepo Tsola, Theuns Jordaan, Kurt Darren and many more from South African Entertainment Industry. Festival goers were treated to a variety of activities like cherry bowls tournament, potjiekos competition, golf tournament, cherry pip competition, air gun target shooting, a tour on the game view, sky diving, petting tour to see lions and cheetahs, horse riding and a beer gardens was available for the people to refresh themselves.

The Caledon Park Primary School held an art exhibition at the Marschal Library which displayed pictures of Nelson Mandela made by pupils using colourful small piece of paper from magazines to create collections of Madiba. Exhibitions of this year improved successfully than other years. They also created paper art out of wrappers from Lucky Star pilchard cans and produced animals made from crushed beverage cans.

Keen to make sure that the festival becomes the driver of the economy of the area, the MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, MEC Mamiki Qabathe urged the organisers to pull out all stops to make Cherry Festival bigger and better in 2012. Reports indicate that more than 30 000 thousand people attended this year. This event, the MEC believes, has a huge potential to turn the sleepy town of Ficksburg into a tourism centre of note “The Cherry Festival is one of the oldest festivals in South Africa and attracts people from all parts of our land. We cannot downplay this activities importance to tourism and economic development” said MEC Qabathe.

MEC Qabathe and Members Free State Legislature and other guests toured to cherry orchards, asparagus farmers and chocolate-factory to have a firsthand experience of this event. The MEC urges the organisers to work close together to ensure seamless 9 day of entertainment, fun, leisure and razzmatazz for the next Cherry Festival.

**Compiled by Communication Unit
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