

# Govt unveils plan on L. Victoria transport

**Preparation.** Works and Transport ministry in partnership with other government agencies are currently carrying out environment impact assessments and resettlement of people who will be affected before the project can start.

BY PAUL TAJUBA

ptajuba@ug.nationmedia.com

**KAMPALA.** Government has secured \$125m, (about Shs452.9b) from the World Bank and European Union to build or remodel 20 landing sites and two ports on Lake Victoria, this newspaper has learnt.

Mr Cypriano Okello, the programmes director of Lake Victoria Transport Project, said in an interview that the two ports at Jinja and Port Bell near Kampala are aimed at connecting Uganda to the rest of the world by water while the 20 landing sites are meant for inland connectivity.

Jinja Port and Port Bell are old inland ports established by the colonial government in 1910s to facilitate the export of coffee, cotton and other goods through Kisumu onward to Mombasa port.

## Reconfiguration

"We are going to reconfigure the Port Bell's layout and work on access infrastructure. We want a dual carriageway from Nakawa to the port and Spring Road from Bugolobi to Hotel Africana [roundabout]. In Jinja, similar intervention will be done on the road leading to the port [located



**Dilapidated.** Port Bell on Lake Victoria was constructed by the colonial government. PHOTO BY RACHEL MABALA

near Sailing Club]," Mr Okello said.

"When we invest and refurbish all these ports and landing sites, it will cut the cost of doing business across the lake by 30 per cent," the ministry of Works and Transport official added.

Eleven vessels will be purchased to transport both passengers and cargo on 11 routes connecting the

20 landing sites. The landing sites that will be constructed are: Masese, Buwazi, Namoni, Buvuma, Ki-yindi, Ssenyi, Buziri, Lwayi, Bugaia, Lyabana, Bwondha, Golofa, Matolo, Kyavumbi, Kyanvubu, Nakiwogo, Zingoola, Damba, Katosi, Namisoke, Ggaba and Kigungu.

Apart from Bugala Island in Kalangala District, most of these islands

do not have effective transport connectivity to the main lands. Mr Willy Lugoloobi, the Kalangala District chairperson, said islands have a lot of potential to trade with the outside world but they are wallowing in poverty because of poor transport.

"We can have a major harbour and several piers so that we encourage private people who can buy vessels

to ply the lake," he said.

Mr Okello added that toilets, docking ticketing offices, passengers waiting shelters and vehicle parking spaces are some of the things that will be built at the landing sites and ports.

He said the ministry in partnership with other government agencies are currently carrying out environment impact assessments and resettlement of people who will be affected before the project can start.

The new infrastructure development on Lake Victoria is a regional project under the Integrated Corridor Development Initiative aimed at improving transport on major corridors in the East Africa.

Modernisation of transport on the lake has been touted as one of the ways of reducing deaths on the lake. Statistics at the police's Directorate of Fire and Emergency Response indicates that more than 300 people drowned in the lakes and rivers in the last three years.

## ABOUT PORT BELL

Uganda has a dry dock at Port Bell that has, however, been disused. Ferries including MV Kalangala, MV Ssesse and MV Pearl are currently taken to Mwanza, Tanzania for servicing. Both private sector players and government have, however, started efforts to revamp and utilise dry docking site at Port Bell in Luzira as means to save resources as it is cheaper than taking vessels for repair in Mwanza.