

Karimojong block NFA plan to cut trees

Use. Besides providing rain, the residents say they have a traditional attachment to the forest.

BY STEVEN ARIONG
editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

MOROTO. Residents of Tepeth community, living on the slopes of Mountain Moroto, have for the second time blocked plans by the National Forestry Authority (NFA) to cut down some of natural trees in the area.

The NFA executive director, Mr Michael Mugisa, and his team last Wednesday held a meeting with the residents in Moroto Town in a bid to allow them cut down the trees.

But residents turned rowdy and threatened to burry whoever attempts to touch the trees.

In March the elderly and youth in Tepeth walked for more than 70Kms from Tapac Sub-county to the then Resident District Commissioner's office, Mr Peter Ken Lochap, after NFA marked trees to be cut down.

Mr Lochap intervened and asked the authority to halt the plan until the local community is consulted.

The forestry authority intends to harvest more than 5,185 mature trees, planted in 1945 by the colonial government on top of Mt Moroto.

Mr Samuel Lote, one of the Tepeth elders, said cutting down natural tress in water stressed areas such as Moroto will expose them to severe drought, heat and water shortages.

"Those tress play a vital role in the lives of Tepeth people a reason they have stayed for hundred years



NFA director Mr Michael Mugisa

without being tampered," he said.

Ms Grace Nangiro, another resident, said besides generating rainfall, the Tepeth community has a special traditional attachment to

the tress. "That forest acts as our traditional healing place where we take our people with strange sickness such as epilepsy, women who cannot give birth, and many other things," she said.

Mr Elijah Omiat Kuron, one of the elders, instead asked the forestry officials to support them in planting more trees that will benefit the community.

"I thought the NFA team had come to tell us how to plant more tress but again they are coming up with dangerous plans," Mr Kuron said.

But Mr Mugisa said they will work in the interest of the community: "As NFA we are going to support you to protect all trees on the mountain since you don't want us to harvest them."