

Museveni orders miners to vacate

Acknowledged. Mubende District Woman MP Benny Bugembe Namugwanya acknowledged receiving the President's letter and said MPs from the district will soon convene a meeting about the same.

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President Museveni has directed artisanal miners in Mubende District to vacate areas, which the government licensed to investors.

Since June, the artisanal miners have been receiving verbal threats of evictions from local leaders but they had not received any formal communication from the President.

In a letter dated June 28, addressed to Members of Parliament from Mubende District, President Museveni acknowledged receipt of their letter dated June 16, requesting government to give artisanal miners ample time before being evicted.

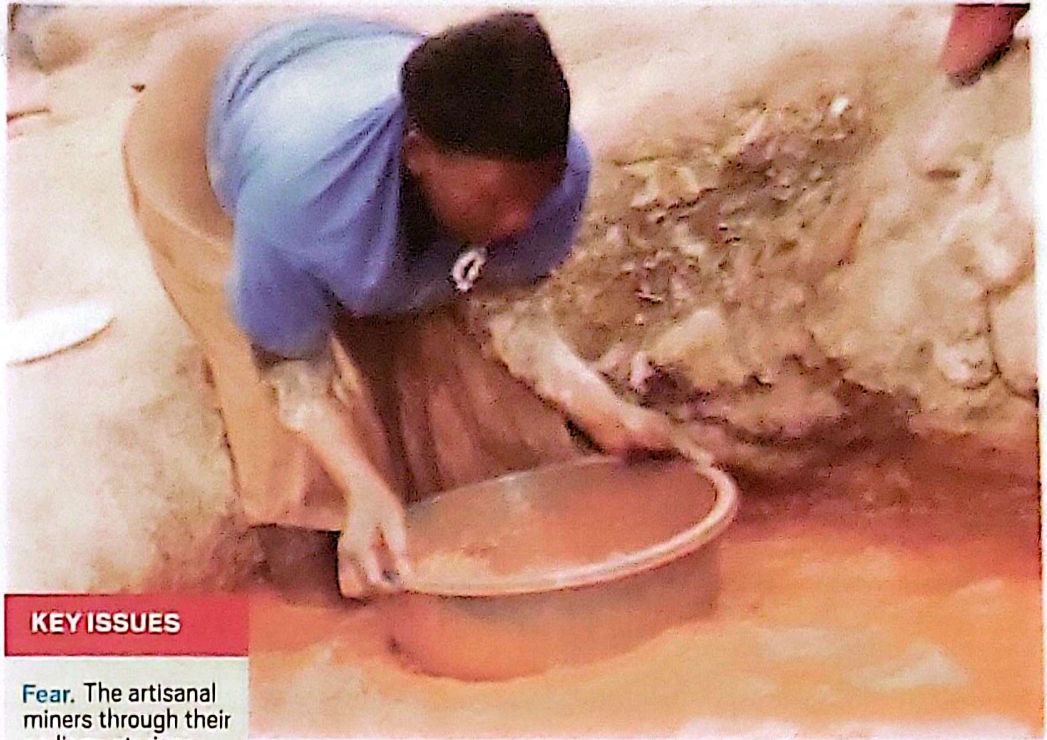
"I agree to give ample time to the artisanal miners in Mubende District. That is not a problem. The bigger issue is to keep in mind what we talked about in the meeting," the President said. By press time, this newspaper could not independently establish the details of what transpired in a meeting that was reportedly held in June between the President and MPs from Mubende.

According to the letter, the meeting compared the minerals to a family banana plantation where by children of the family or any other family members do not cut immature bananas. Even where the bananas mature, it is the head of the family, in this case the government, to determine how much bunches should be cut by who and when.

The artisanal miners through their parliamentarians have expressed fears that there is an impending eviction of more than 50,000 miners in Kitumbi and Bukuya sub-counties.

"The investor is there to help us know whether there is gold and if so, how much of it. Why should anybody interfere with this?" President Museveni said.

He directed that those who invaded the area where the investor had made excavations must straight away leave. "The ample time we talked about should be in portions that are away from where the in-



KEY ISSUES

Fear. The artisanal miners through their parliamentarians have expressed fears that there is an impending eviction of more than 50,000 miners in Kitumbi and Bukuya sub-counties.

Bickering. Artisanal miners in Mubende District have been bickering with Gemstone International, a Ugandan Company that has a licence to explore gold in the district.

Applied. Artisanal miners applied for a location licence in March 2016 from the Directorate of Survey and Mines but the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development did not give them any feedback.

To be evicted. A woman searches for gold in Kitumbi Sub-county, Mubende District recently. PHOTO BY FRANCIS MUGERWA

vestor had gone to work," President Museveni added in a letter he copied to the prime minister, the Inspector General of Police (IGP), the chief of defence forces, the Defence and Mineral Development ministers.

Ms Irene Muloni, the minister of Energy and Mineral Development, told this newspaper that the government had over the years engaged artisanal miners and guided them on a procedure through which they can be licensed to mine gold.

"We have advised and trained those people to form associations through which they can apply for licences so that whatever they do is formal. If you encroach on a licenced area, what do you expect? They just need to adhere to the law," Ms Muloni told this newspaper last Friday.

Artisanal miners in Mubende District have been bickering with Gemstone International, a Ugandan Company, that has a licence to explore gold in the district.

Mr John Bosco Bukya, the spokesperson of the Singo Artisanal and Small Scale Miners Association, said the miners request the President to review his directive and protect them.

He said artisanal miners applied for a location licence in March 2016 from the Directorate of Survey and Mines but the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development did not give them any feedback.

“ We have advised and trained those people to form associations through which they can apply for licences so that whatever they do is formal. If you encroach on a licensed area, what do you expect? They just need to adhere to the law.”

IRENE MULONI, MINISTER OF ENERGY AND MINERAL DEVELOPMENT

