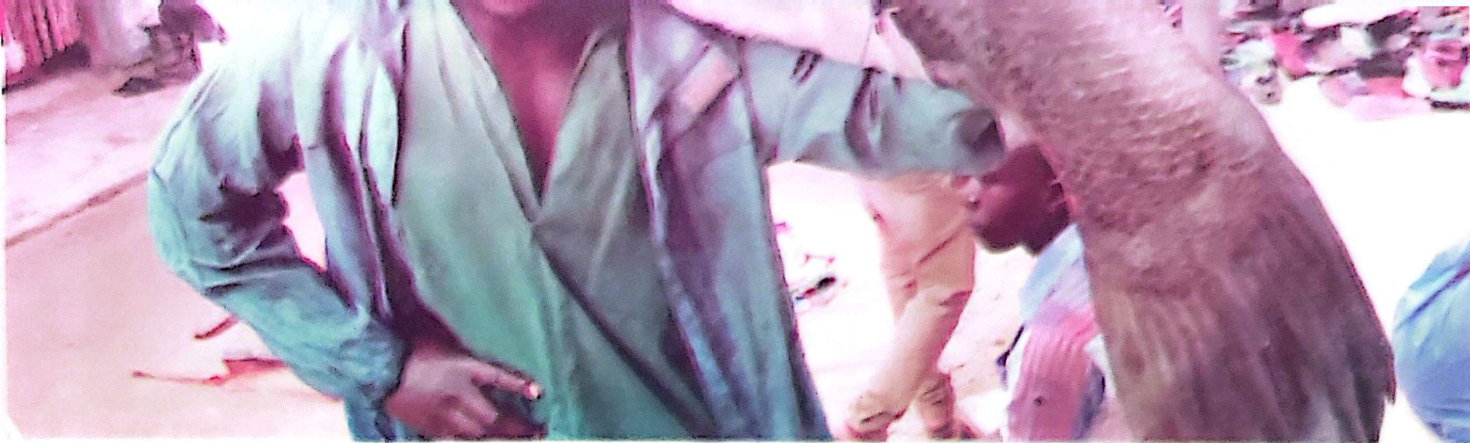


Fishmongers are all smiles

A fisherman at Kasenyi Landing Site displays a Nile perch. Authorities at various landing sites say they are catching sizable fish, following the crackdown on illegal fishing and immature fish dealers. PHOTO BY JOSEPH KIGGUNDU



Experts raise the red flag over tree cutting in Masaka town

Not affected. Ms Lillian Nakaweesi says central forest reserves in the area will not be affected by the project.

BY BRIAN MUGENYI
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MASAKA. Environment conservationists have condemned the ongoing massive felling of trees in Masaka Town.

Several trees on major streets in the town have been cut to pave way for widening and repairing of roads under the second phase of Uganda Support for Municipal Infrastructure Development (USMID) project being funded by the World Bank.

Under their umbrella body, National Association of Professional Environmentalists (Nape), the activists say the move will affect the town's green cover and the good climate.

Speaking to *Daily Monitor* recently, Mr David Kureeba, the Nape's officer-in charge of forests and bio-diversity,

said the town authorities could have first rolled out a tree planting programme before felling the existing ones.

"It takes a long time for newly planted trees to mature and benefit residents. That is why we are advising authorities in Masaka Town to retain and preserve the few remaining trees, especially those that are outside the mapped area for road widening project," he said during an interview last weekend.

Some of the trees in Masaka are believed to have been planted by the Europeans and Asians who lived in the town before Uganda gained her Independence in 1962.

The most affected trees are those overlooking Masaka Golf course where a sidewalk row of mature trees on both sides of Katwe Road and Alex-Ssebowo Road have been cut down. A walk on Katwe Road revealed that at least 40 trees have been cut down in the past three weeks.

Katwe Road connects the town cen-

ISSUES

Affected area. The most affected trees are those overlooking Masaka Golf Course where a sidewalk row of mature trees on both sides of Katwe Road and Alex-Ssebowo Road have been cut down.

Number of trees. At least 40 trees have been cut down in the past three weeks.

tre to Masaka Regional Hospital.

A couple of years ago, the town lost many mature eucalyptus trees to pave way for widening of Yellow Knife Road which was commissioned recently.

Mr Kureeba noted that if carbon emissions from cars and factories in the town are not controlled, the few existing trees will die or even burn out, causing a "feedback" effect that will accelerate climate change.

"Any tree that is cut down has an effect, but the magnitude of the damage to the environment differs," he said.

"It is therefore, determined by the number of trees being cut down. And if authorities in Masaka don't heed to our call, the town would suffer from obnoxious gas emissions from vehicles and factories which could have been absorbed by the trees around," Mr Kureeba added.

Although Ms Pauline Nabadda, the

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briefly

Safe delivery cases rise

MASAKA. Masaka District authorities have said there is a noticeable increase in the number of mothers delivering from health centres and seeking medical attention. According to Dr Stuart Musisi, the district health officer, delivery of mothers in health centres is now at 102 per cent. "This means more mothers are gradually shunning traditional birth attendants," he said. However, he noted that the number of mothers who complete the four antenatal care visits is still down at 46 per cent. [Moses Muwulya]

District leaders tasked

LUWEERO. Civil Society organisations operating in Luweero District have tasked leaders from the area to ensure that they include the needs of residents especially women, youth and children in their budgeting processing for the 2018/2019 financial year. Ms Christine Nakalema, a member of the village budget club, under the forum for women in democracy, advised district leaders to beef up the schools inspection programme and ensure provision of separate pit-latrines for the boys and girls. [Dan Wandera]

Masaka cuts trees to pave way for roads

Voices

FROM PAGE 9

"It takes a long time for newly planted trees to mature and benefit residents. That is why we are advising authorities in Masaka Town to retain and preserve the few remaining trees, especially those that are outside the mapped area for road widening project,"

DAVID KUREEBA, NAPE OFFICER IN CHARGE OF FORESTS

"It is true trees were cut down and more are going to be but there are plans to replace them. Personally, I am more obsessed with preserving nature but road construction here had to affect them,"

PAULINE NABADDA, MASAKA MUNICIPALITY ENVIRONMENT OFFICER

Masaka Municipality environment officer couldn't independently reveal the actual number of trees that have so far been cut down, she insists that they are few and have no damage on the environment.

"It is true trees were cut down and more are going to be but there are plans to replace them. Personally, I am more obsessed with preserving nature but road construction here had to affect them," Ms Nabadda said.

She added: "The good thing is we have put in place adequate measures through which the environment will be conserved and one of them is the introduction of 'Keep Masaka Clean-Day,' which is aimed at cleaning the Masaka Town."

According to Ms Nabadda in 2011, Masaka Municipality working jointly with Japanese government, schools, Lion Club and Rotary Club of Masaka, planted more than 1,000 trees along major streets in Masaka Town to restore the green cover, but unfortunately, some trees withered a few days after being planted.

"Some of the tree seedlings were stolen and others destroyed by stray cows, but we were going to replace them," Ms Nabadda revealed.

Mr Sylvester Kivumbi who has lived in Masaka Town for the last five decades revealed that indiscriminate felling of trees in the area started in 2001 when several trees including eucalyptus and mahogany, that had existed for more than 60 years were cut down and the timber sold off under unclear circumstances.

"The former mayor, Mr Tebyasa Matovu, complained about what was going on then, but the town clerk who was here, was unscrupulous and he was doing everything behind his back," he alleged.

Currently, it is only Birch Avenue, which connects Masaka Town to Kizungu, an upscale suburb that still has some mature trees.

Masaka is one of the oldest urban towns in Uganda built by the colonialists.

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