



MPs at Nyakisharara airfield last week. CAA says airport land is being encroached on by unknown people. Photo by Abdulkarim Ssegendo

# CAA appeals to MPs on airports

**MBARARA**

By Abdulkarim Ssegendo

Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has called for intervention from Members of Parliament (MPs) to ensure all airports are protected from encroachment.

Samuel Wonekha, the manager in charge of upcountry airports, said encroachers have taken land belonging to national airports.

He added that the problem is becoming an obstruction to the development of aviation.

Wonekha raised the concern while addressing MPs on the committee of commissions, statutory authorities and state enterprises (COSASE). The committee visited Nyakisharara airfield in Mbarara and Kisoro airfield last week.

The committee members, led by their chairman Medard Ssegona, were on a fact-finding mission to scrutinise the status of airfields and installations of the aviation authority.

Wonekha told MPs that CAA is also facing resistance from stakeholders and leaders in the areas where they have airports and that many of the leaders are behind the encroachment.

He said CAA is constrained in terms of financial resources to pay off people who are in the vicinity of the airports, to give way for expansion and development.

In Kisoro, Wonekha reported that in addition to encroaching on the airfield's land, the residents had also vandalised its property.

He said the authority is also constrained by the lack of money to construct an alternative road from the current Kisoro-Kabale road, which crosses the runway.

Wonekha appealed to all district leaders where CAA has airports to ensure no developments take place within the demarcated land without clearance.

"We do not want any developments near the airports because they can obstruct operation of aircraft," he said.

"We need to have the co-operation

*"Mbarara municipality is soon becoming a city. It is imperative that Nyakisharara airfield be upgraded." Itungo*

of the local leaders. Local leaders in many of the areas are the culprits. They are the ones behind the developments around the airport and encroachment," he added.

The committee demanded that CAA and the lands ministry survey and establish the ownership of land neighbouring airports.

Ssegona said: "In Mbarara, we have found improvement in terms of fencing, but issues relating to encroachment have been raised. We made specific demands of the area survey to establish the ownership of

the neighbouring land, to know when it was acquired, because we have received complaints that some of the airports' land was taken by big people in the area."

The committee members also asked CAA to produce a comprehensive master plan and engineering designs to the committee and the forms required for the expansion of the airports.

They noted that airports, especially those that are strategically located in terms of business, like in Kasese and Arua, need to be developed immediately.

"The airports are important to the country, especially for tourism, security and evacuation. We must expand and develop them," Nathan Itungo, a committee member and MP of Kashari South, said.

"Mbarara municipality is soon becoming a city. It is, therefore, imperative that Nyakisharara airfield be upgraded," Itungo added.

In total, Uganda has 14 proposed sites for national airports.

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