

URC to rehabilitate all railways infrastructure to facilitate trade

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BACKGROUND

Ports. On February 25, 2017, the governments of Ugandan and Tanzania during the bilateral talks held in Dar es Salaam, agreed that Tanzania Ports Authority (TPA) and URC should re-open the Mwanza – Port Bell route for handling of Uganda's export and import traffic to and from the international markets by rail and wagon ferry transport

KAMPALA. Uganda Railways Corporation (URC) is going to revamp its old infrastructure in a bid to recoup what has been termed as wastage and missuse by the previous operators of the infrastructure.

Speaking to *Daily Monitor* on the sidelines of the East African Community heads of state Summit in Muryonyo, Mr Charles Kateebe, the URC managing director, said they were inheriting an extensively abused infrastructure and assets.

"The maintenance culture of our colleagues was very poor. So we have an enormous task of restoring the tracks, the stations and terminals, the workshops, the yards and some wayside stations, which were in between the terminal points. The ter-

minal points usually have extra lines for storage of cargo that is being collected at the centre for onward transmissions," he said.

He said most of the stations don't have that extra line linking railway

networks all the way from Dar es Salaam to Kampala. This was consequently followed up by a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the ministries of works and transport of Tanzania and Uganda on the Joint Ministerial Co-operation for improved on the ports, inland water ways and railway transport services with a view to attract Ugandan traffic to the port of Mombasa.

lines to key towns and factories, which means if you leave in Magamaga or Iganga, URC cannot pick your cargo so you have to move it by truck.

"Our model of operation is we serve you door-to-door so as a railway, we

would like to pick cargo from your door step and bring it all the way to Kampala and onward to Mombasa. We also want to do it the other way round and bring cargo from Mombasa, Dar es Salaam and deliver it to your door step," he said.

Rehabilitation

Mr Kateebe said the rehabilitation works are going to begin with the Port bell Kampala route, which they were going to restore to its previous operational status to allow for movement of cargo through Lake Victoria for Tanzania via Mwanza.

This development comes after both countries terminated their concessions with RVR and operations taken up by the national railway corporations of both countries.

Mr Deusdedit Kakoko, the director general of the Tanzania Ports Author-

ity (TPA), said Mwanza is going to be expanded to allow for containers, which will be brought in by rail from Dar es Salaam to Mwanza. The containers will then be put on a carrier ship for Port Bell and Bukasa ports, which are all planned.

Mr Kakoko said using rail and water transport will save the route three to four days in moving their cargo. He said they have also put in place incentives to give value and attract the business community to use the Dar es Salaam route, (Southern route).

"We have set aside special equipment and preferential shade for Ugandan cargo.

Mr Kateebe said they are looking at \$50m (about Shs181b) investment for redevelopment of Port Bell and Jinja port to serve eastern Uganda. He said the works on the ports are going to begin in a year's time.