



ENTERTAINMENT

Making money on streets

Street performers on Kampala Road entertain passersby. The performers make a living through performing in crowded places.

PHOTO BY MATTHIAS MUGISHA

Fishermen demand five-month ban

Issue. The fishermen say the ban will help increase fish stock in the lakes.

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MUKONO. Fishermen on various landing sites in Mukono District under their umbrella body, Association of Fishers and Lake Users of Uganda (AFALU), have asked government to impose a five-month fishing ban to save the dwindling Nile perch and other fish species in Lake Victoria.

Members of AFALU claim that the ongoing operation by Fisheries Protection Unit (FPU), a special unit of the marine Force headed by Maj James Nuwagaba, has failed to curb illegal fishing on major islands and landing sites.

"We are fishermen and know what we are talking about. If government listens to us and imposes this ban, we will be able to get enough fish both for the local and international market. They declared a crackdown on illegal fishing, which is spearheaded by the army but we are not seeing any change. The situation is

just getting worse by the day," Mr Fred Mukasa, a member of AFALU and chairperson of Katosi landing site, said during an interview on Wednesday.

Mr Mukasa, who owns at least 60 boats, says at the start of the operations, FPU was doing a commendable job, but some soldiers have now started beating up AFALU members, destroying their boats and extorting money from them.

FPU was established by the government early this year to crackdown on illegal fishing in the country.

During their operations, many people dealing in immature fish have been arrested and several un-gazetted landing sites destroyed along the shores of Lake Victoria in the districts of Wakiso, Mpigi, Kalangala, Masaka, Kyotera Rakai, Mukono, Buvuma and Buikwe.

"They started recruiting unknown extortionists who are just looking for money and mistreating the fishermen," Mr Mukasa claimed.

Mr Mukasa said if the ban is imposed as suggested, the fish would multiply at a fast rate.

FISH STOCK

Available statistics from the National Fisheries Resources Research Institute also indicates that fish production in the lake reduced from 268,000 tonnes in 2014 to 149,000 tonnes in 2015.

But with the crackdown, fish production is expected to increase from 572,000 tonnes to 674,028 tonnes in the next five years.

He said a female Nile perch lays about 20 million eggs per day and 80 per cent of them get hatched.

A Nile perch has capacity to produce live 16 million fishlings daily translating to 480 million fish.

He also noted that since operations by SPU started, two of their members have been attacked and seriously injured by the soldiers.

"When they impound the illegal fish and nets they sell them off instead of burning them," he said adding that "If government wants to continue deploying soldiers, let them also recruit professionals from the district to work with that team."

Mr Hakim Wandwase, the chairperson of Bugula Landing Site, said the conduct of the soldiers is only aimed at elbowing them out of business.

"President Museveni appointed the soldiers hoping that they will work as expected but they are doing the opposite and pushing for individual interests," Mr

briefly

New town councils created

MPIGI. Government has created two new town councils in Mpigi District. These include Kayabwe and Buwama in Mawokota South Constituency. According to the district leaders, the new units will help improve service delivery in the area. "The two town councils will serve our people just like Mpigi Town Council has been doing but the only challenge is that there will be little local revenue collected since many revenue sources such as the daily market dues and parking fees were abolished," said Mr Michael Lutalo, the assistant chief administrative officer on Wednesday. [Sadat Mbogo]

Nigerian national drowns

ENTEBBE. Residents of Nkumba Bwaise in Katabi Town council were on Tuesday left in shock after one of their own, Jessie Kiddi, a Nigerian national and manager of Porch mining company, drowned in a trench. According to eyewitnesses, Kiddi fell in the trench as he tried to escape from National Environment Management Authority security officials who had gone to stop the illegal sand mining in the area. [Paul Adude]

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Voices

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FRED MUKASA,
CHAIRPERSON OF
KATOSI LANDING SITE

"We are only collecting 30 per cent of the revenue because many fishermen are living in fear and no longer go to work,"
SSENFUKA, FAISAL
KIGONGO, MUKONO
DISTRICT SECRETARY
FOR PRODUCTION

"We are not working in isolation as they claim; those people very well know that there are committees at various landing sites where fishermen are members. I think they are speaking negatively about our operations because they are not individually part of our team,"
MAJ JAMES
NUWAGABA, FISHERIES
PROTECTION UNIT

Wandwase said.

But when contacted, Maj Nuwagaba dismissed the allegations, saying they are aimed at discrediting his team.

"We are not working in isolation as they claim; those people very well know that there are committees at various landing sites where fishermen are members. I think they are speaking negatively about our operations because they are not individually part of our team," he said.

He added: "If they (fishermen) say the committee members are not known to them, then they are wrong, they just want to sabotage our work, but we will not accept that."

Maj Nuwagaba said the fishermen, who claim they are being tortured, could be part of a racket dealing in immature fish. "The alleged beating and torturing of fishermen is done through self-defense because they (fishermen) also use force and usually attempt to push our members into the water," he said.

Politicians blamed

He also blamed some politicians especially those in districts around Lake Victoria for the mess on the lake and landing sites. "Politicians are always supporting the wrong people because they want votes; they have never support the right side," he said.

Recently, Maj Nuwagaba revealed that some fishermen had resorted to poisoning the fish after their illegal fishing gears were confiscated.

Mr Faisal Kigongo, the Mukono District secretary for production and Natural resources, said the ongoing operation against illegal fishing in the area has affected the district revenue by 70 per cent. "We are only collecting 30 per cent of the revenue because many fishermen are living in fear and no longer go to work," he said.

According to Ministry of Agriculture data, the country has a fish capture potential of 750,000 tonnes annually; the current production is at 461,000 tonnes and 100,000 tonnes from aquaculture.

There are 250 species of fish in the country's major lakes of Victoria, Kyoga, Albert, George, Edward and more than 160 minor lakes

briefly

UNRA to change signposts

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