

Govt takes over district road equipment repair cost

By David Lumu

The Minister of State for Works and Transport, Gen. Edward Katumba Wamala, has revealed that the central government will take over maintenance of the over 1,000 multi-billion road construction equipment that was recently distributed to various districts in the country.

Katumba said the move by the Government to foot the maintenance costs has been occasioned by the need to establish regional workshops to facilitate the mechanical repairs of district road equipment.

Katumba, who was speaking at the launch of the road user satisfaction survey by the Uganda Road Fund, said the Government will cover the maintenance costs for only three years.

"Maintenance is fully covered for three years," he said, explaining

that training of operators and other related logistics needed for the efficient use of the road equipment will be the mandate of the respective districts.

The move to repair the road equipment comes at a time when district leaders are debating whether the distribution of road equipment will deliver the intended purpose when resource allocation to the district road funds is dwindling.

"In all districts, instead of getting the usual 100% funding for the district road funds, the Government has reduced it to 83%. This is not good because since the Government's priority is on infrastructure development, more money should be allocated to roads, especially at district level," Godfrey Mafumu, the Butambala LC5 district chairperson, told *New Vision*, recently.

President Yoweri Museveni

Government will set up regional mechanical workshops in three years

commissioned the fleet of multi-billion road construction equipment for the districts recently. The fleet, which includes over 1,000 units, motor grader, wheel-loader, vibrio roller, water bowser and two dump trucks valued at sh2.7b and will be distributed to all districts.

Katumba warned that the Government will not distribute road equipment to districts without well-trained operators and organised committees to supervise the operation

of the equipment.

The Government estimates that by the end of the three years, regional mechanical workshops will have been constructed to support the maintenance of the road equipment.

Currently, the Government's central mechanical workshop at the Ministry of Works and Transport headquarters on Port Bell Road, is suffering from mismanagement problems. Various government agencies and institutions prefer to hire private services for vehicle repairs.

A user road satisfaction report by the Uganda Road Fund indicates that over 60% of Ugandans are dissatisfied with the road network in the country, citing the narrow structure of roads, potholes, poor drainage, dust and inadequate road maintenance. The report shows that Ugandans want government agencies responsible for roads to widen roads to dual carriage

status. However, the expansion of roads in the country faces challenges of land, given the fact that most road reserves and camps have been taken over, said Eng. Michael Odongo, the executive director of the Uganda Road Fund.

"Public land for roads is critical. We cannot be leaving it to chance. Freedom City, along Entebbe road, is built in a road camp. Road reserves must be gazetted by legal instruments. That is why we need to support the amendment on land," he said.

Last week, Deputy Attorney General Mwesigwa Rukutana tabled a Constitutional amendment Bill, which seeks to amend Article 26 of the Constitution, to enable the central or local government to deposit with a court of law compensation awarded by the Government for the property declared for compulsory acquisition.