

Emulate me on conservation - Ssemogerere

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KAMPALA. Former Democratic Party president Paul Kawanga Ssemogerere has asked Ugandans to emulate him and protect the environment.

Dr Ssemogerere, 85, says he has preserved over two square miles of forest land on Bugala Island, Kalangala District, despite temptations to destroy it.

"We (as a family) own 500 acres of practically forested land in Kalangala where I was actually born. ... We own as a sub-clan, about two square miles on Bugala Island and we have not destroyed it. We stand firm," Mr Ssemogerere said Thursday at a monthly public talk organised by Nature Uganda, a conservation organisation.

Diminishing forest cover

According to the National Association of Professional Environmentalists, 3,600 hectares of forest were cleared to pave way for 7,000 hectares of oil palm growing in Kalangala District.

Before Kalangala started growing palm oil, the district had more than 221kms of tropical forests, representing 49 per cent of total area cover and a good number of healthy wetlands.

Dr Ssemogerere said he resisted the temptation to convert his land to palm oil growing.

Mr Matia Lwanga Bwanika, the Wakiso District chairman, said government lacks the political will to protect the environment.

"... these mafias who are building in wetlands get police officers, each with a gun, and you know what it means one having a gun. That means the most powerful are condoning it (wetland degradation)," he said.

Mr Bwanika has in the recent past clashed with Gen Salim Saleh and others who back sand mining in Lake Victoria.