

it creates unhealthy peer pressure. "Giving children too much pocket money creates unnecessary

that they have made it even before knowing how the world operates," Turyagyenda said.

backgrounds who struggle. Turyagyenda urged school administrators to actively engage learners.

Masindi sugarcane farmers protest weighbridge removal, minister demands action

By Nelson Kiva and Yosam Gucwaki

The state minister for youth and children affairs, Balaam Barugahara, has called for urgent stakeholder engagement over the closure of roadside sugarcane weighbridges, a move that has drawn criticism from some farmers in Masindi district.

On Friday, officials from the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Co-operatives, led by senior industrial officer David Kiiza and under police protection, closed the Rukondwa weighbridge in Bikonzi sub-county and the Kihande-Mile 2 weighbridge in Masindi municipality.

Barugahara argues that rather than removing the weighbridges, the trade ministry should implement clear guidelines on who can sell sugarcane at the scales and how to address the cane theft concerns raised by Kinyara Sugar Company and farmers.

In a letter to the trade ministry dated February 13, 2026, the youth affairs state minister called for a stakeholders' meeting tomorrow to harmonise positions and

BACKGROUND

On February 7, last year, trade minister Francis Mwebesa directed the cessation of roadside weighbridges, citing concerns about weight manipulation and cane theft.

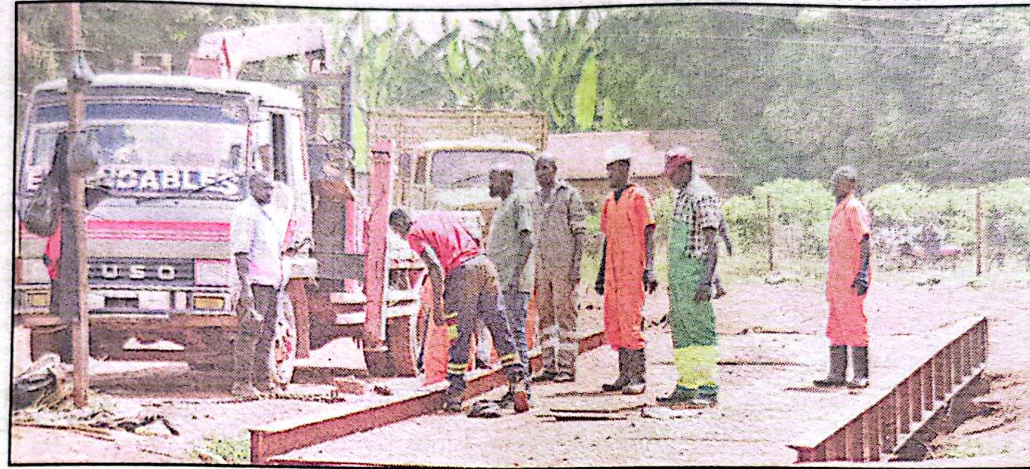
Internal affairs minister Kahinde Otafiire, in a letter of February 6, 2026, ordered the Inspector General of Police, Abbas Byakagaba, to halt roadside weighbridge operations.

Byakagaba, on February 12, directed Albert North regional police commander Damalie Nachucha to provide security for the trade ministry during the closures.

reaffirm government policy.

"Nobody should be denied fair price, fair bargaining and knowledge of what they are selling, the quantity, and the weight," he said.

Barugahara also urged the ministry to calibrate the weighbridges to ensure they



Technicians assessing the Kihande weighbridge in Masindi district before dismantling it. The trade ministry ordered the closure of weighbridges to curb sugarcane theft

meet standards, noting it is the duty of the ministry and the Uganda Bureau of Standards to protect farmers from being cheated.

"It is important to reiterate the trade ministry's position that weighbridges serve as trade enablers. They promote accountability, fair measurement, dispute reduction and equitable transactions between growers and manufacturers. Their presence supports structured trade, minimises losses and strengthens confidence across

sh70,000
The amount earned by farmers per tonne before coming of weighbridges.

the value chain," Barugahara said.

The minister noted that tensions have risen among outgrowers and manufacturers,

including Kinyara Sugar Works.

"There remain pending grievances that can and should be resolved amicably through structured dialogue," he said.

Barugahara highlighted the economic impact: prior to weighbridges, farmers earned between sh70,000 and sh80,000 per tonne. With the introduction of weighbridges, farmers now earn at least sh125,000 per tonne.

Masindi and Bunyoro's sugar sector, long dominated by Kinyara Sugar Limited,

has seen new players as Kiryandongo, Hoiri, Bwendero Sugar enter the market, competition. About 4,000 outgrowers supply these firms, though 4,000 sell through middlemen.

STAKEHOLDERS REACT

Haji Mohamoud Kazibwe, the chairperson of Bunyoro Sugarcane Co-operative Union, operates Rukondwa and 2 weighbridges, surprised at the closures.

"Weighbridges have competed with any company. They provide a ready market for farmers' private cane not registered with any company," he said.

Kinyara, however, denied involvement in the closures.

"We welcome interventions aimed at protecting farmers.

We want to operate in an environment where farmers benefit from their investment," Francis Mugerwa, Kinyara public relations officer, said.

He added that sugarcane theft affects farmers through middlemen and weighbridges, citing over 300 cases filed in Masindi district.