Mr Omojong said.

Uganda's failure to establish and operationalise a National Health Insurance Scheme to save the population from

proportion of the population ... below the $3.6 (Shs13,280) poverty line by heavy out-of-pocket health expenditure, as per World Bank data, Uganda is

"It is only Uganda in the entire East Africa that doesn't have an NHIS. Why? Is it politics, is it fear? I think it is more

rate meeting.

According to data from the World

affected by the same, according to data from the World Bank.

Developers face Shs4m fine for building without permits

The amendments, which took effect on March 19, aim to curb illegal construction, enhance public safety, and hold developers accountable.

BY KARIM MUYOBO

Developers constructing buildings without approved permits now risk paying fines of up to Shs4 million under the new Building Control (Amendment) Act, 2026, signed into law by President Museveni.

A 100-square-metre residential building constructed without a permit could cost the developer Shs4 million, while the use of prohibited methods such as steel–timber–concrete composites could attract fines of Shs100,000 per square metre. Liability for construction-related accidents has also gone through the roof, with penalties rising from 288 currency points (Shs5,760,000) to 500 currency points (Shs10 million), or 12 years in prison and or both.

The amendments, which took effect on March 19, aim to curb illegal construction, enhance public safety, and hold developers accountable.

Speaking to journalists yesterday at the Uganda Media Centre, Ms Flavia Gutto Bwire, the executive secretary of the National Building Review Board (NBRB), said the changes are intended to align penalties with the scale of the offence and deter widespread disregard for approval procedures.

"Previously, constructing without a building permit attracted a flat fine of 50 currency points or one to two years' imprisonment. Today, the penalty is two currency points per square metre. An average residential building is about 100 square metres. If you build without permission, that translates to about Shs4 million. And this fine is now issued as an express penalty, so it is enforced immediately," Mr Gutto explained.

A currency point is currently valued at Shs20,000, meaning offenders will pay Shs40,000 per square metre for illegal construction. These penalties will be issued as express fines, allowing authorities to enforce compliance more swiftly.

The reforms also target developers who continue construction after their permits have expired. Such individuals will face similar penalties of two currency points per square metre unless they formally apply for an extension.

Under the new law, NBRB has introduced clearer procedures for permit extensions, noting that developers must commence construction within 12 months of approval and complete works within five years.

"We have introduced clear procedures for permit extensions. Construction must start within 12 months and end within 60 months. If you fail to meet this timeline without extension, you will be penalised," Ms Gutto explained.

Guidelines on demolitions.

No one will arbitrarily demolish a building. Procedures will be clearly defined in regulations...If you miss the 12-month window, you must apply afresh and pay again."– Flavia Gutto Bwire, the executive secretary of the National Building Review Board (NBRB)

She added, "This could result in huge penalties, especially for high-rise buildings. Many developers have used this method, so they need to check their compliance immediately."

The Building Control Act (Cap 136) provides the legal framework for regulating building operations, standards, and maintenance. It also established the NBRB under the Ministry of Works and Transport to oversee compliance.

"On every project, there are architects, engineers, and surveyors. If we identify professionals acting negligently, we will refer them to their regulatory bodies," she explained.

Under the new amendments, the NBRB has been granted expanded powers to enforce compliance. These include issuing stop and evacuation orders, imposing express penalties, accessing construction sites, and referring offenders to the police or professional bodies.

"If we find that an architect, engineer, or surveyor has acted negligently, we will refer them to their respective regulatory bodies for disciplinary action," Ms Gutto said.

Building committees at the local government level have also been strengthened. Membership has been reduced from 11 to five to improve efficiency, and committees can now order demolition of non-compliant buildings.

Notably, the committees now have the authority to order demolition of buildings that do not comply with the law. However, Ms Gutto emphasised that demolition will follow clearly defined procedures to prevent arbitrary action.

"No one will arbitrarily demolish a building. Procedures will be clearly defined in regulations...If you miss the 12-month window, you must apply afresh and pay again," she said.

The amendments further clarify the building permit application process. Applications may now be approved, rejected, or deferred, with applicants given up to 12 months to submit additional information in case of deferral. Those who fail to comply within this period will be required to reapply and pay fresh fees.

In a bid to streamline complaint handling, the law designates local government accounting officers as the first point of contact for building-related grievances. These include chief administrative officers at the district level and town clerks in urban authorities.

The law introduces a proactive approach to regulating construction innovations. Developers must submit new technologies for review before use, replacing the previous reactive system that banned methods only after failure.

"In the past, we allowed a method, waited for it to fail, then banned it. That was risky. Now, innovations must be reviewed and approved before implementation," Ms Gutto explained.

EXPIRY OF PERMITS

The new Building Control (Amendment) Act, 2026, among others, targets developers who continue construction after their permits have expired. Such individuals will face similar penalties of two currency points per square metre unless they formally apply for an extension.

Under the new law, National Building Review Board has introduced clearer procedures for permit extensions, noting that developers must commence construction within 12 months of approval and complete works within five years.