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Streamline trade in minerals

I wish to commend President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni for concluding the construction of the mineral refinery. At the recent NRM celebrations Kiboga on February 25, he pointed out that the refinery shall be up and running to add value to the abundant natural resources found in many parts of the country. The President said that the refinery will be beneficial because the country will be in position earn more forex in refined minerals.

I am indebted as an appointed official to persuade investors from abroad to come and invest in country. However, this may not be realised in the country where the exploration business and buying of refined goods is not properly outlined.

In an effort for investors to partners in such ventures, it is crucial that the Government streamlines the procedures and processes for engaging in this lucrative business. There are many investors who are interested in gold as one of the minerals from Uganda, but unfortunately the investors have been conned by



fraudsters masquerading as licensed traders in minerals. They pretend to have dealt with many prominent minerals businessmen worldwide.

They claim to be highly connected to high offices in the country and untouchable. This behaviour and actions of the *bafere* threatens the minerals business and could be seen as a business for the mafias.

This, therefore, calls for public sensitisation on the availability of the

minerals by the responsible authority or ministry. For example, Uganda is currently known for exporting refined gold, though not much information is available to the public and 'investors' on the regulations and procedures to deal in such minerals.

In circumstances where such procedures are missing or not popularised, the common take advantage and defraud investors in their quest for the refined gold and other high income generating minerals.

The Government should, therefore, inform stakeholders in minerals on where, what and the regulations for the exploration and exportation of minerals. This may solve the challenge faced by the diasporians who persuade investors to come to Uganda but are continuously being defrauded.

The Government needs to create a diaspora/investor's commission of inquiry into fraud matters. Such a commission must have powers to prosecute and arbitrate over cases registered with the Police.

The writer is a Special Presidential Assistant on diaspora issues