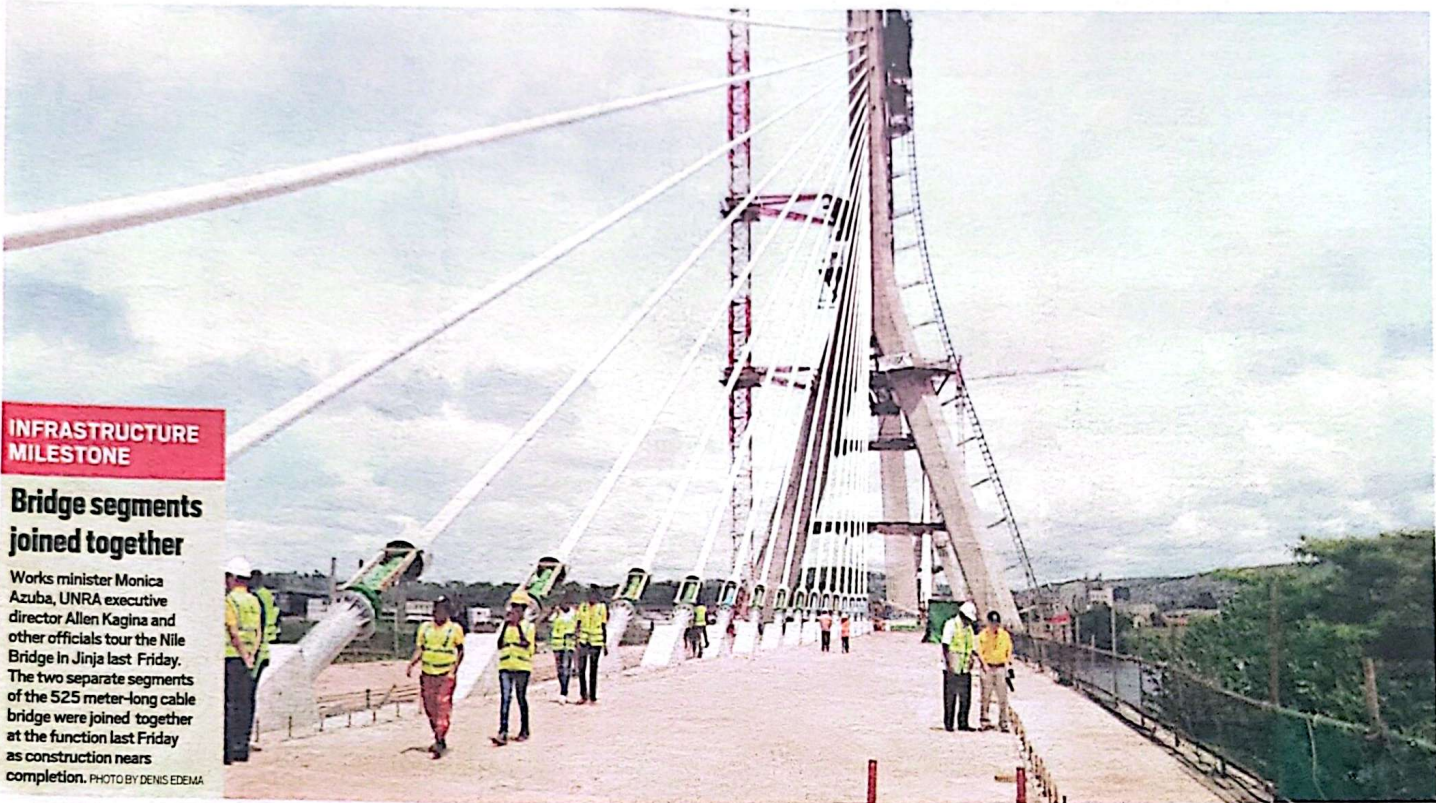


**ROTARY DONATES WHEEL-CHAIRS TO THE NEEDY.** Rotary Club of Jinja, in partnership with Crutches 4 Africa, have donated wheel chairs, walking sticks and crutches to more than 100 people living with disabilities. The Rotary Club president, Mr Francis Kimera, said the donation is part of their corporate social responsibility activities intended to help the disadvantaged. [Denis Edema]



**INFRASTRUCTURE MILESTONE**

**Bridge segments joined together**

Works minister Monica Azuba, UNRA executive director Allen Kagina and other officials tour the Nile Bridge in Jinja last Friday. The two separate segments of the 525 meter-long cable bridge were joined together at the function last Friday as construction nears completion. PHOTO BY DENIS EDEMA

# 4 pupils electrocuted as concerns grow over power theft in Sironko

**Background.** Most victims either touch live wires or attempt to tap power directly from the high voltage lines overhead.

BY YAHUDU KITUNZI  
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**SIRONKO.** At least four pupils have died in Sironko District in the last three weeks due to illegal electricity connections, the district security committee report shows.

The latest incident, which happened last Thursday, claimed a life of a 10-year-old boy identified as Zaidi Namisi.

Namisi was electrocuted after he stepped on an electric wire near the district headquarters, opposite the Resident District Commissioner's office, on his way to school in the morning. Earlier, two other pupils had also been electrocuted in Nakwira Village, Busulani Sub-county, and another died

with her mother after they stepped on electric wire while in the garden.

But residents say the number is higher than what is reported.

"Another boy was electrocuted but the parents feared to report because they would be arrested," says a resident who prefers anonymity.

Between January and February last year, 12 people lost their lives to illegal connections in the district, according to the security report.

The report indicates that the victims either touch live wires or attempt to tap power directly from the high voltage lines overhead. Others die while tampering with meters by adding foreign objects or removing vital parts.

The RDC, Mr Moses Wamoto Kigai, says illegal connections have remained a very big challenge in the district.

"At least 12 people lost their lives to illegal connections last year but unfortunately, now within three weeks, we have lost four children. This calls

**THE COST**

The Mbale Umeme branch manager, Mr Paul Ssemprira, noted that the power distribution company loses about Shs3b monthly due to illegal connections and vandalism in the Elgon sub-region alone. He said Sironko District has the highest number of illegal connections in the sub-region..

for intervention with stringent measures," says Mr Wamoto, who is also the head of district security committee.

He adds that he has convened a meeting with local leaders to educate them on the need to report the culprits.

"However, I call upon residents to report any illegal connection to my office, police and other authorities for action. I don't want to be a leader of dead bodies," Mr Wamoto says.

He adds that the district security committee has asked power distributor Umeme to launch a massive operation dubbed "Kick illegal connection out of Sironko".

The district chairperson, Mr Herbert Mulekwa, reiterates that the vice must be stopped, saying it dents the image of the district.

"We are determined to stop it by all

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## briefly

### Two held over theft

**JINJA:** Police in Manafwa District on Saturday arrested two men on allegations of stealing a motorcycle. Police identified the suspects as Isaiiah Wakama and Isaac Mulongo, all residents of Magale Sub-county in Namisindwa District. Mr Moses Manana, the chairperson of Magale Boda Boda Association, cautioned boda boda cyclists against carrying unidentified people, especially at night, as a best way of reducing theft of motorcycles. [Ronnie Weswa]

### Baby abandoned

**TORORO:** Residents of Ticaf-Greenland village, Osukuru Sub-county in Tororo District were on Saturday shocked to find a one-day-old baby abandoned in a polythene bag by the roadside. Mr Moses Were, who found the baby, said: "When I picked the polythene bag, I heard a voice of child crying. I called neighbours and when we checked, we found a baby," he said. The officer-in-charge of Osuku Police Post, Mr Barak Muhindo, said "We have assigned a nurse at Osul Health Centre III to care for the bat as we trace for the mother." [Josef Omollo]

## Calls grow for action on power theft in Sironko

FROM PAGE 9

### Voices

"At least 12 people lost their lives to illegal connections last year but unfortunately, now within three weeks, we have lost four children. This calls for intervention with stringent measures."

MOSES WAMOTO KIGAI,  
RDC

"We are determined to end illegal connections because they have tremendous consequences for the company and the community at large."

STEPHEN ILUNGOLE,  
UMEME MEDIA  
RELATIONS OFFICER

"We need our people to stop illegal connections. Many people have died and several houses burnt due to illegal power connections,"

IRENE  
MULONI, ENERGY  
MINISTER

means because we risk becoming a district known for power theft in the country," Mr Mulekwa says.

However, Umeme media relations manager Stephen Ilungole observes that illegal connections in Bugisu sub-region have reduced.

"We are determined to end illegal connections because they have tremendous consequences for the company and the community at large," Mr Ilungole says.

Last year, Elgon region police, in partnership with Umeme, launched a crackdown on illegal electricity connections that saw more than 500 suspects arrested and charged in court.

Mt Elgon region, which is comprised of Mbale, Manafwa, Bududa, Sironko, Bulambuli, Budaka, Tororo, Butaleja, Pallisa and Kapchorwa districts, has one of the highest number of power theft cases in the country.

### Shs330,000

#### THE MINIMUM WIRING COSTS FOR A HOUSEHOLD UNDER THE RURAL ELECTRIFICATION PROGRAMME

Energy minister Irene Muloni says vandalism and power theft is economic sabotage, adding that government has started educating residents about the dangers of the vice.

"We need our people to stop illegal connections. Many people have died and several houses burnt due to illegal power connections," says Mr Muloni.

She says as a way of fighting illegal connections, government, through the Rural Electrification Agency, will from June roll out a free electricity connection policy aimed at increasing the percentage of the rural population accessing electricity.

The 10-year Shs 2.6 trillion project will see at least three million new customers connected to the power grid at no cost.