

# Govt declares sand, murram minerals

By Apollo Mubiru

Anybody found extracting sand or murram without a licence from the energy minister will be liable to one-year imprisonment or a fine not exceeding sh500,000 or both. In case of a company, the fine is sh1m.

This is after Cabinet approved the mining and mineral policy, which widens the definition of minerals to include sand, granite, stones and murram.

"Sand is as precious as cement. When sand becomes scarce, it calls for regulations," Frank Tumwebaze, the ICT and national guidance minister, said yesterday at a news conference in Kampala.

The minister said the policy provides for the energy and mineral development minister as a person responsible for issuing mining licences and penalties to anyone involved

in illegal mining.

"The categorisation of sand, granite, stones and murram as minerals puts in place guidelines on how to extract them. The mining policy is very important because it's an intervention in response to environmental degradation. The value these resources have added to our country must benefit every Ugandan, hence the regulation," Tumwebaze said.

He said the Government would establish a laboratory to process all mineral samples in the country to ascertain their purity levels and also link mining to other sectors of the economy.

## Govt owns minerals

Clause 3 of the Mining Act of 2003 stipulates that: "Subject to any right granted to any person under this Act, the entire property in and control of all minerals in, on or

Sand miners loading trucks in Lwera, Masaka district recently. Government has instituted tough measures for miners to hold licences or else face the law for illegal sand mining

under any land or waters in Uganda are and shall be vested in the Government, notwithstanding any right of ownership of or by any person in relation to any land in, on or under which any such minerals are found."

Clause 4 (1) states: "Subject to the provisions of this Act, a person may acquire the right to search for, retain, mine and dispose of any mineral in Uganda by acquiring such right under and in accordance with the provisions of this Act."

No person may explore or prospect for, or retain or mine or dispose of any mineral in Uganda except under, and in accordance with, a license issued under this Act, Clause 4 (2) states. Any person who contravenes subsection (2) of this section commits an offence



## BETWEEN THE LINES

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and is liable on conviction in the case of an individual, to a fine not exceeding sh500,000, or imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year or both; and in the case of a body corporate, to a fine not exceeding sh1m.

Under the Act, no mineral right shall be granted to or held by an individual who is not a citizen of Uganda;

is under 18 years; is, or becomes an undischarged bankrupt, as a result of having been adjudged or otherwise declared bankrupt under any written law. A company must be registered in Uganda or incorporated under the Companies Act.

## Sand miners speak out

Livingstone Kasule, a sand miner in Mukono, said the introduction of a licence would definitely hike the price of sand and might reduce the number of miners in the industry.

Kasule said many factors are considered in buying a plot where sand is extracted, which include the type of the sand, colour, depth and the reach of a sand site. He said sh1m was required for a sand plot of about 100ft x 100ft.

He said the area LC1 leaders charge 10% of the paid amount. In cases where a sand plot is located on an official Buganda kingdom mailo land, a kingdom village representative (Omutongole) charges about 20% of the paid amount.

## Buganda reacts

Buganda Land Board spokesperson, Denis Bugaya, welcomed the sand mining regulations, but called for comprehensive consultations before implementation.

"We think it's a small step towards the right direction. Before the Government goes ahead to implement the policy, they should consult us because most of the land where sand mining is done is on *bibanja* and leasing holding on mailo land," Bugaya said.