

Enforcing trade order: Ignore noise

It has been a few weeks since the enforcement of the trade order campaign started. It began with Kampala, which had become one big, chaotic and embarrassing capital city. Traders were operating in the middle of the roads and had made life difficult for those who were working in organised shops.

Movements in the city were a nightmare for both motorists and pedestrians, because roads and walkways had become trading zones. Once the enforcement was concluded, Kampala now looks like a city indeed. Therefore, the government must remain resolute in enforcing orderliness in our cities, towns and urban centres.

Of course, the usual noisemakers, especially those who were benefiting from chaos, are up and about, making endless pleadings to be spared. It is ridiculous that even pastors, whose makeshift churches were affected, are up in arms resisting the enforcement, as if laws that govern the rest of the society should spare them.

Organised trading spaces are crucial for enhancing economic growth, and improving safety.



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Politics

The cleaning of illegal trading centres was not a Kampala thing alone. The demolition of illegal trading zones is now taking place across all urban centres in the country. The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Local Government, Mr Ben Kumumanya, in a circular dated March 10, addressed to all Chief Administrative Officers, city and municipal town clerks, outlined a plan to reclaim urban spaces and restore "trade order".

The directive came amid a surge in unlicensed street vending, informal settlements and unplanned structures that had increasingly overwhelmed city and town streets.

What the local leadership should now emphasise is massive communication, such that the affected parties are told in time, so that when the demolition exercise begins, they are not caught unawares.

Mr Kumumanya empha-

sised that all commercial activity must comply with the Trade (Licensing) Act, Cap 101, requiring traders to hold valid licenses and operate strictly from designated areas.

Some traders, however, have raised concerns about insufficient facilities and poor lighting in designated markets, arguing that compliance without viable alternatives threatens their livelihoods. Despite these concerns, Kumumanya and local officials say the operations will continue until order is fully restored.

What is shocking is that some politicians have jumped on this noble campaign to gain cheap political capital. Hiding under the guise of defending the rights of the poor, they shed crocodile tears for the evicted, without offering the alternative that is not chaotic trading.

It is very annoying that after the government spent a lot of money and built modern markets across the country, traders refused to move in, preferring to trade on the roadside. A case in point is the Lukaya Market, where traders refused to use an organised market, which the government spent hundreds of millions to construct.

It is very imperative that, as a government, we become firm and rein in impudence. People are not trading in the middle of the road because of little income, per se. It is largely the feeling that, after all, nothing can happen to them.

For a long time, Ugandans have been complaining about the chaotic way we manage our towns and cities. Every time we visit our neighbours, we are awed by how neat and organised their cities and towns are. We exalt their leadership using all the superlatives.

What is strange is the fact that when our own leaders also begin putting our own house in order by enforcing organised trade, they are attacked, and the government is falsely accused of being against the poor.

Organised trading spaces are crucial for enhancing economic growth, improving safety, and ensuring efficient, transparent commerce. By centralising transactions, these spaces increase liquidity, allow for fair price discovery, and protect participants through regulated rules. Well-managed spaces also boost local economies, provide secure environments, and reduce urban congestion.

Finally, if we don't enforce both trade order and organised physical developments, we shall lose out on achieving the much-fancied tenfold growth strategy by 2040. This is because no tourist loves seeing chaotic and unplanned developments because such is always associated with insecurity.

The writer works with the Uganda Media Centre.

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