

explained.

... purposes, Kiiza mother Busoga Diocese in 2014. The headquarters are in Iganga.

avenues.

# Gen. Saleh supports Lake Victoria sand mining by Chinese

## NAKASEKE

By Frederick Kiwanuka

The managers of Mango Tree Group, the Chinese firm that was stopped from excavating sand from the shores of Lake Victoria over environmental concerns, has run to Gen. Salim Saleh, the national coordinator of Operation Wealth Creation, to help them reverse the government directive.

The National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) last year stopped the company from excavating sand after a tip-off that the firm which the Uganda Investment

Authority (UIA) had licensed to construct a ship on Lake Victoria, was criminally involved in large-scale sand mining in the lake.

The company's activities angered NEMA and Wakiso district authorities who opposed the move, citing laws that "prohibit disturbances on lake/river beds".

NEMA even went ahead to visit the areas where the company was excavating mining and, thereafter, issued a rejection letter to all relevant ministries, agencies and Wakiso district officials.

According to NEMA officials, scooping sand from river/lake



beds leads to a quicker flow of water levels and a decline in water quality and supply to surrounding wetlands. The NEMA officials say the practice is disastrous for both

*"Where shall we get sand from if we follow NEMA's logic?"*

**Gen. Salim Saleh**

people and animals in the surrounding areas.

However, the managers of the Chinese company, who on Monday addressed a joint press conference with Saleh at the latter's Nakaseke-based

Namunkeera Rural Industrial Park, dismissed NEMA's fears as mere "politicking".

The Chinese company officials who contend that sand mining in the lake is harmless, said they were licensed by UIA to construct ships, and that they were involved in dredging the lake, clearing the waterway and mining sand as a by the way.

Saleh who defended the Chinese, said there was a great demand for sand, especially silt sand in the construction of infrastructure. He said the Standard Gauge Railway alone required 12 million tonnes of sand, of which 1.5 million

must be of silt quality. Saleh who urged NEMA to reverse the ban on sand mining in the lake, also said he personally required large amount of sand for the construction of 30 rural industrial parks similar to the one in Nakaseke.

"Where shall we get sand from if we follow NEMA's logic?" Saleh said.

He also commended the Chinese firm over its proposal to dredge Port Bell, which he said has not been dredged for the last 20 years.

Saleh said Lake Victoria was not being maximally used in terms of transportation because it has not been dredged.