

When signed, the CFTA will be the biggest trade agreement bringing together 55 African

made in the negotiations. He emphasised that the CFTA, together with other frameworks on the continent, would enable

regional corporations. ministers gave guidance to the senior officials and the negotiating forum on the outstanding areas

largest arable land (874 million hectares) of which only 274 million hectares are under cultivation.

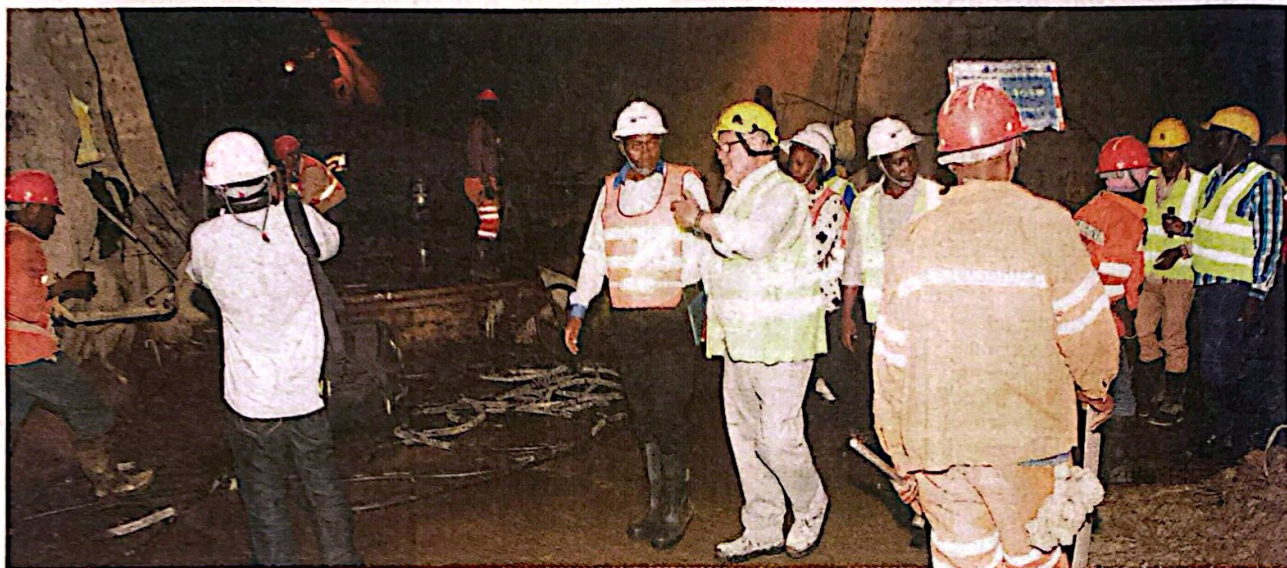
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UEGCL board members during a visit to the Karuma hydro power project site recently. Photo by Richard Sanya

Delayed transmission lines worry Karuma managers

By Benon Ojiambo

The Uganda Electricity Generation Company Limited (UEGCL) has expressed concerns over delay in the setting up of the lines that shall transmit power from Karuma dam.

The construction of the 400 kilovolt transmission lines from the 600 megawatt (MW) project to different substations was expected to be completed concurrently with the generation plant but this may not be possible.

Three transmission lines that include Karuma-Kawanda, Karuma-Lira and Karuma-Oriyo are meant to transmit power from the dam to different substations.

2018 deadline

Though works on the 600MW project are ongoing amid optimism of beating the December 2018 deadline, there is fear that delay in the transmission segment may delay its progress.

"There could be delays on the project because of land issues associated with the transmission line," Dr. Eng.

Harrison Mutikanga, UEGCL chief executive officer, said.

Mutikanga was speaking on the sidelines of a board of directors' quarterly assessment visit to the project.

He attributed the delay to the land acquisition issues in some areas where the transmission lines shall be constructed.

Concerns reechoed

Eng. Proscovia Njuki, the board chairperson, raised concern about areas where land has not been acquired, saying this may cause an overall delay in the project.

"There are areas where land has been identified but compensation has been delayed. Because the first unit of the project is expected by December next year, the transmission line should be prioritised," Njuki said.

However, Mutikanga said they are working closely with other stakeholders such as Uganda Electricity Transmission Company Limited (UETCL) as well as the energy and finance ministries to ensure acquisition of all the required land by the time the project is commissioned.

Karuma dam shall be powered by six turbines, each producing 100MW. Two of the turbines are expected to be switched on by December next year.

Thereafter, one more turbine shall be switched on every subsequent month until the project is fully operational and handed to the Government.

Though there are challenges, Mutikanga described the progress so far good.

"Physical works are estimated to be 71% complete. So far, 48 months of the 60-month contract duration have elapsed. Come December next year, the project shall be up and running," he said.

Lower rates expected

The \$2.2b project was contracted to Sinohydro Corporation, a Chinese firm. Once the project is commissioned, it is expected to result into lower charges per unit of power consumed because its power shall be generated at US5 cents, lower than the current power generators in the market.

UETCL spokesperson acknowledged the existence of

challenges in land acquisition and attributed it to delayed payment of the agreed amount. "Some people say their land and property were valued at lower costs and want it revalued," he said.

Double work

He explained that this means taking the chief government valuer back to the sites.

"It is a process for us to get approval of property values. What causes the rejection is the time lag between valuation and actual compensation. When they request for a revaluation of their land, it is likely to take even more time," Otim said.

He added that they have acquired land where the transmission towers shall be constructed and the contractor shall soon start work.

Albert Byaruhanga, UEGCL project manager, said works on the dam, intake, tailrace tunnel and the powerhouse are in advanced stages.

"Currently at the powerhouse, spiral cases that form part of the water conductor system that direct water to the turbines for power generation are in and are being welded."