



Senior Police officers have been implicated in extorting \$400,000 from two South Korean nationals

John Nagenda

Should lake sand be dredged?

To many it mightn't matter greatly, but a lively spat has broken out: should lakes be dredged and their sands taken? It starts off almost innocently, but before you know it you have been overtaken by a crisis of immense proportions, difficult to stop. Interestingly enough our friend, Bush War hero General Salim Saleh, entered the subject in the nick of time. He was only doing what comes to him naturally: trying to find a way to help the youth of Uganda to earn a decent living. But often, by solving something, we create a bigger problem!

His idea came about logically. Uganda possesses, like many other countries on earth, a huge surplus of youth without jobs, therefore unable to feed themselves: a terrifying situation. On the other hand Uganda needs to build in every direction, including roads and buildings of every kind. For this it needs sand, and more sand, and here it is in the fortunate position of possessing many sources of it within lakes, including Lake Victoria, second largest fresh water lake in the world (which it shares with Kenya and Tanzania). Why not dredge from these huge supplies of sand?

The need, and the answer to it, seem superficially made for each other! The solution to the unemployed seems clear: let the unemployed dredge for sand, and create roads and buildings around the clock. Might it not even be the way our great friend China, with its almost limitless population, have solved its own problems? Perhaps the General was advised by Chinese chums! But then other Ugandans, including your un-humble columnist, remembered that in lakes live fish, a source of wonderful food for Ugandans, with the surplus sold for mighty dollars to help Uganda's inflow of foreign exchange. Fish and other fauna and flora aren't minor considerations. How on earth do you dredge for sand without obliterating them?

I started panicking. I typed into Google Search on my computer: Harm following excessive dredging of sea and lake floors. I hit gold, more accurately, solid rock. I found: "Sand mining: the global environmental crisis you've probably never



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heard of". It was backed by famous Pulitzer Center & Crisis Reporting. It said dredging can cause wildlife to die, local trading to wither, bridges to collapse and disappear. Also "booming industrialisation meant the demand for this increasingly valuable resource was unlikely to let up". It spoke of people who were raking in "many times more than before because of now trading in sand". Some machines dredged 10,000 tons in an hour! It concluded: "The dredging destroys fish breeding grounds... leading to fewer and fewer fish to be found." All around the world riverbeds and beaches were being stripped bare and farmland and forests torn up to get at the precious grains of sand. Closer to us in Kenya sand dredging was being stopped before further harm.

Already in Uganda photos of these hideously huge monster vessels have already been seen, maybe cast-offs from China. How can the hunger of profit in the pocket have moved so fast, so that destruction and havoc can be wreaked

before the population cries out when the damage is already done? Government of Uganda (to which the vast majority of Ugandans pays homage) must come to the aid of its current and future populations in this matter.

On February 16, 1976, that Holy Man, Archbishop Janani Luwum, was killed, along with ministers Erinayo Oryem and Oboth Ofumbi, on the orders of president Idi Amin Dada. Since Luwum was an archbishop, the news reverberated around the world. Amin talked about a car accident, but fooled no one. In fact he only wanted to belittle the event: he couldn't have cared less if nobody believed him.

When our Human Rights Commission a decade afterwards was taken to view the spot where the accident was supposed to have happened, I'll just say it was laughable; and leave it at that. Yesterday was a Ugandan Public Holiday in honour of the Archbishop, celebrated in Kitum, his home district. May our country with its wonderful array of peoples never have to suffer like this again!

A few quick thoughts: Zuma has gone out like a candle in a gale, and deservedly so. He could have saved face by going earlier but he thought he could bluff his way out of anything. Just as well he left in his true colours. In the US the President continues to outdo his own faults at greater and greater speed. He seems in a friendly-fire competition with his Israeli chum, to see who'll hit the ground first and harder.

This Column taps itself on both shoulders for having seen the looming possibility of the two sharing a percentage of what one had given to the other's nation in the way of Donation. After the latest charges against the receiving one, which surfaced this week, who can say this Column was inventing scenarios which were impossible to happen?! And so to the death this week of Morgan Tsvangirai, who, to appease him, was once given the empty office of Zimbabwean Prime Minister by Comrade Mugabe. At least Tsvangirai saw his political foe leave office not by his own choice (not indeed Tsvangirai's). May The Creator protect His Africa!