



Affected. A view of Kampala Road where many commercial building have been erected but with hardly any trees. PHOTO BY MICHAEL KAHUMIRI

Way forward. KCCA has launched a tree audit to ascertain the number of trees needed in the city.

BY MISAIRI THEMBO KAHUNGU
mktthembo@ug.nationmedia.com

Environmentalists worry as city buildings replace trees

KAMPALA. Whereas as storeyed buildings in the city are a symbol of development, the structures have replaced much of the open green vegetation.

And with development, the city population increases and so do the vehicles, as many people flock the business centre to make ends meet.

The developments in Kampala have seen buildings erected on major roads such as Kampala Road, Kafumbe Mukasa, Ben Kiwanuka, Luwum, Nakivubo Road among others.

However, with the population of Kampala standing at about 1.5m people according to the 2012 population and housing census, environmentalists have warned that the city is destined for a health hazard if tree planting is not considered.

Big cities world over have large parks smack in the middle of the Central Business District where distraught city dwellers breathe fresh air, talk quietly or even play with their children.

Kampala Vs regional cities

According to the July 2017 report by World Economic Forum (WEF), African cities lag behind in the greenery spaces.

Only Durban and Johannesburg in South Africa made it to the top 15 cities with the most trees around the world.

Durban was ranked 5th and Johannesburg 6th on a list that is topped by Singapore city (Singapore), Sydney (Australia), Vancouver (Canada) and Cambridge (Massachusetts, USA).

For Kampala, the most significant tree species that dates far back in the colonial times is the *Spathodea campanulata*.

These trees that have a perfect boat shape and are guaranteed to give any marginally inventive child hours of fun are no longer found in the city centre because they were cut down for construction of big shopping centres and

arcades.

They can be found in older housing settlements such as Kololo, Mengo, Rubaga and around Nsambya hill.

However, for the neighbouring Kenya, Nairobi city has kept the famous Jacaranda trees which still keep it beautiful.

Much as some of these trees in Nairobi - "green city in the sun" as it used to be referred to are being cut to make room for road expansions, the Jacaranda still remains a face of Nairobi.

In Kigali, Rwanda, the city is first developing with skyscrapers, busy streets and crowded shops but large trees and plants find space to grow.

A mini survey conducted by *Daily Monitor* indicates that part of the Kampala is bare without significant trees, something that impacts on climate change.

It was also observed that Luwum Street, Kafumbe Mukasa Road, Ben Kiwanuka Road, Nakivubo Road, William Street and all the taxi parks and bus terminals in the city centre have no trees.

Kampala Road, one of the busiest roads in the city, has close to 200 trees with most of them planted on the island that separates the cars driving in the opposite direction. Jinja Road from the Station Road junction to the traffic lights near Electoral Commission offices has 45 trees.

Most of the trees in the city are concentrated in the large office location areas of Nakasero, Yusuf Lule road, Nile Avenue and residential of Kololo, Mengo, Namirembe, among others.

Sadly, gazetted green spaces such as Centenary Park have gradually been converted into commercial establishments.

Other green spaces include the little green strips between a dual carriage such as Jinja Road, the islands on roundabouts and intersections around the city, the tree lined strips of grass on the road, Chogm Park be-

Voice



"Strategic planning is wanting in the city but we are doing our best to address this situation. The only problem is that the National Tree Planting Act is not being implemented quickly as expected because everyone in Kampala needs trees."

LORD MAYOR ERIAS LUKWAGO

hind Parliament, Freedom Square and Sheraton Hotel gardens.

Mr Frank Muramuzi, the executive director of the National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE), told *Daily Monitor* that Kampala city stands a high risk of environmental catastrophe because of the

limited number of trees.

He faulted Kampala City physical planners for failing to realise that the population will increase as the business potentials go high hence the impact on environment.

For Mr Francis Mujuni, a wheelbarrow pusher on William Street, the verandahs are the only hope for shed during the dry months in Kampala.

Mr Mujuni said it becomes worse when the same verandah is being targeted by the pedestrians escaping the scorching sun.

"This street, busy as is, has no trees at all. The road is also narrow and I wonder where trees would be planted if there was any chance. We fight for the verandahs with vendors, traders who come to buy merchandise and pedestrians. If there were trees, some of us would be able to rest under them," he lamented.

Located about 50 metres off Entebbe Road in the city centre is Nakasero Market.

The market is known for fresh fruits and vegetables such as onions, cabbages, tomatoes among others.

The vendors say they are not spared by the lack of tree shades in the busy area.

Mr Frank Muramuzi, of NAPE, advises that there is need to include the tree planting police in the physical planning of Kampala.

He believes that it should be mandatory for every building plan to indicate the trees location of the site before it is approved.

The KCCA director for physical planning, Mr Moses Atwine Kanuniira, was not available for the comment.

Lord Mayor Erias Lukwago described the lack of trees in the city centre as "worrying situation" that is "not desirable at all".

Mr Lukwago said the Authority is doing its best to address issue by following the National Tree Planting Act.

CRIME WATCH

Suspect survives lynching

KAMPALA: A suspected thief in Matugga, Wakiso District early this week survived lynching by a mob which accused him of stealing goats. The suspect who is a resident of Mipadda, Gomba Sub-county, was caught red handed loading five stolen goats onto a truck. Hardly had the residents pounced on him with stones and blows, when police arrived at the scene. Police warned the residents against mob action but advised them to always report such cases to the authority. [Joseph Kato]

Police block fight

KAMPALA: Police in Ntete, a Kampala suburb, on Wednesday deployed heavily to block a fight between rival taxi drivers' associations. Taxi drivers and conductors loyal to Mr Mustafa Mayambala and those of Mr Yasin Sematimba had planned to face off at Ntete Taxi Park, during a sensitisation workshop. The workshop was organised by the Assistant Inspector of Police, Mr Steven Kasirima. Mr Kasirima cautioned drivers to ensure their vehicles are in proper mechanical conditions. [Joseph Kato]

Two detained over theft

WAKISO: Police in Buddo, Wakiso District at the weekend intercepted a taxi loaded with 200 stolen chicken. According to police, two suspects have been arrested and detained at Buddo Police Station in connection with the theft. The arrest comes days after police in Tula Kawempe arrested four people in connection to the rampant theft of cattle and other animals like goats and sheep. Earlier last week, police reported that 40 animals had been stolen in the month of November in Kawempe. [Joseph Kato]

Parents warned

KAMPALA: The police spokesperson, Mr Emilian Kayima, has warned parents against neglecting their children during the festive season. Mr Kayima said many wrong elements are now targeting children, especially girls who have completed exams. He also advised them to be cautious of who they entrust to take care of their children. Mr Kayima made the remarks while addressing journalists early this week. His warning comes days after a man was arrested by police in Kabalagala for sexually assaulting three girls he had been entrusted to train in Islamic religion. [Joseph Kato]

Police investigates

KAMPALA: Police in Kawempe is investigating circumstances under which a man allegedly burnt and buried his one-month old baby in the sand. According to residents, the suspect allegedly committed the offence after he developed a misunderstanding with his wife on Wednesday. The suspect is said to have fled to his home village in Isigiro District where he was arrested. [Joseph Kato]