IGG orders probe into encroachment on Busega–Mpigi expressway

BY DAVID WALUGEMBE

MPIGI. The Inspectorate of Government (IG) has ordered investigations and enforcement action over renewed encroachment on land reserved for the Busega–Mpigi Expressway and the Standard Gauge Railway, despite earlier compensation of affected persons.

Deputy Inspector General of Government Anne Twinomugisha Muhairwe said the inspectorate was dissatisfied with the handling of the matter and accused the Works ministry of failing to decisively address the illegal developments.

"We were not satisfied with the explanation given. If there is encroachment, the ministry should have acted," Ms Muhairwe told journalists after an inspection tour of the project corridor yesterday.

She warned that some individuals were taking advantage of project delays to reoccupy land and erect new structures within gazetted boundaries yet some had received compensation.

"There are citizens building within the SGR boundaries and acquiring property in anticipation of compensation. We have seen fresh buildings and we are going to name and hold those responsible accountable," she added.

The IGG also tasked the government chief valuer to ensure transparency in compensation, citing complaints from project affected persons (PAPs) over inconsistent valuation of similar properties.

The Tuesday inspection was conducted jointly with officials from the Works ministry and contractors, including China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation and China Railway 19th Bureau Group Company Ltd, amid concerns that land disputes continue to slow progress.

Responding to the concerns, Works ministry contract manager Isaac Ssekubunga said enforcement action had commenced.

"They [encroachers] were all compensated; encroaching on the project is illegal. Our enforcement team has started following up, and we have issued notices before demolition of the structures," he said.

He added that the expressway will be fenced upon completion to prevent future encroachment.

Under the National Physical Planning Standards and Guidelines, structures are prohibited within at least three metres of major road infrastructure to ensure safety and orderly development. However, field observations revealed both semi-permanent and permanent buildings erected within restricted zones.

Project delays and rising costs

The 27.3-kilometre expressway, which forms part of a key transport corridor linking Kampala to southwestern Uganda and regional borders, has faced delays largely attributed to funding gaps and land acquisition disputes.

Originally launched in 2020 at a cost of Shs547.5 billion, the project cost has since risen to about Shs1.35 trillion following scope expansion to include interchanges, toll infrastructure, and bridges.

Mr Godfrey Bihemaiso, the assistant commissioner for road construction and rehabilitation, said completion timelines have been pushed back. "If all outstanding risks related to land acquisition are resolved by December 2028, we will complete the project," he said, noting that earlier targets had been missed due to funding constraints.

He added that the government has secured additional financing from the African Development Bank, with final contractual addenda expected to be concluded to allow full-scale construction to resume.

Officials say about 80 percent of the 4,270 PAPs have been compensated, with Shs30.5b still outstanding.

Once completed, the expressway is expected to ease congestion along the Kampala–Masaka highway and improve regional connectivity. The road will operate as a toll facility, with access controlled through designated interchanges at Busega, Kyengera, Maya, and Lungala areas.