



BESIGYE WARNS ON SECRECY IN OIL SECTOR

BY MOSES WALUBIRI

The recent plummeting global oil prices notwithstanding, the prospect of Uganda joining the elite affluent club of oil-producing countries is a matter of national pride.

However, Dr. Kizza Besigye used his presidential campaigns in Masindi district on Friday to caution Ugandans against counting their chicks before they hatch, citing what he contends is a veil of secrecy surrounding Uganda's budding oil sector.

"Oil in this country is set to become a curse unless this Government gets out of power. The law regulating the oil sector gives a lot of power to the minister and that was a matter of contention during the debate that preceded its passing," Besigye, a flag-bearer for Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) told his supporters.

Besigye, who first highlighted issues that form his election plank, decided to delve into the 'oil debate' last in an area where a huge chunk of Uganda's viable oil reserves has been discovered.

"It is important that the area where oil is discovered gets a clear percentage of the oil revenue, besides a fund that goes into managing the environmental impact of oil exploration," Besigye said. He promised that if elected, he would make sure that majority of workers in the oil sector come from oil-producing regions.

Uganda discovered commercially viable oil deposits in the Albertine Graben region in 2006. Efforts to exploit the 3.5 billion barrels of estimated reserves have proceeded fitfully, beset by disputes over taxes and development plans.

In December 2012, Parliament passed the contentious Petroleum (Exploration, Development, and Production) Bill into law bringing to rest the controversy surrounding Clause nine (9) that gives the Energy minister unrestricted powers to grant or revoke oil licenses.

Activists and opposition lawmakers had called for



Besigye arriving for campaign at Masindi Municipal Boma ground on Friday

an independent body of professionals to be bestowed with such powers after due consideration.

Those opposed to giving the minister of energy powers to grant and revoke oil licences at the time raised apprehension that the minister might abuse his/her powers, or be reduced to literally doing the president's bidding.

The face-off between the executive and lawmakers saw President Yoweri Museveni address Parliament in a special sitting aimed at allaying fears of those who were claiming that Uganda had got a raw deal in oil sharing agreements with multinational conglomerates like Tullow Oil.

Museveni accused some MPs who were stridently opposed to some of the clauses in the Bill of fostering interests of foreign countries and companies.

Government eventually relented on not disclosing oil revenue sharing agreements

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by depositing copies of the agreements at Parliament for MPs' perusal.

Earlier, the kingdom of Bunyoro Kitara of which Masindi district is part, mooted a proposal in which it sought to be granted 10% of

the oil revenue.

Museveni has always responded to concerns of Uganda possibly traveling the slippery and treacherous route path taken by Nigeria, where oil has spawned violence and disastrous environmental degradation in the Niger Delta, by saying Uganda will pick a leaf from countries like Norway where oil revenues are being soundly managed.

Meanwhile, Besigye has advised South Sudanese leaders to ensure that Ugandans in Africa's youngest nation are 'protected and treated with the respect they deserve in order not to endanger the lives of South Sudanese in Uganda.'

Following South Sudan's acquisition of independence in 2011, the volume of trade between Uganda and its neighbour grew exponentially with thousands of Ugandans opening up business ventures in South Sudan.

However, the relations between Ugandans and South

Candidate Dr. Kizza Besigye will campaign in Nakasongola today

A recent Vision Group poll showed the top five concerns for voters in this district as:

- Health related issues
- Water and sanitation related issues
- National security
- Road network
- Education

Fredrick Kiwanuka asked residents what they expect from Besigye today.

PEOPLE'S MANIFESTO

Adam Lubwama

The biggest problem is poverty. We need a leader who will create jobs.



Charles Sennyimba

I want a leader who will develop Nakasongola and ensure peaceful co-existence of all tribes.



Edith Nabagqala

Women need more affirmative action. I want a leader who will give us first priority.



Dan Kigozi

I want Besigye to address the issue of high taxes which affect businesses.



Prossy Naggayi

Besigye should tell us how he will help small scale traders to grow.



Lydia Nambwai

I will elect a leader who will care about women issues.



Sudanese have remained frosty on account of alleged mistreatment of Ugandans in South Sudan.

The situation was exacerbated following the outbreak of an internecine power struggle between President Salva Kiir and his erstwhile deputy, which for some time saw South Sudan titter on the brink of total breakdown of law and order.

Last year, lawmakers demanded that Kampala

submits a formal protest to Juba after a wave of attacks on Ugandan traders saw thousands of them scamper back home without their merchandise.

Last week, Police intervened to forestall possible attacks on South Sudanese in Bwaise, a Kampala suburb after news spread that a South Sudan national had shot dead Cornelius Oloya, a local musician popularly known as Master Blaster.