Minister tips locals on jobs in oil sector

HOIMA

By Robert Atuhairwe

Lokeris discouraged the residents from vying for employment and business opportunities in the nascent oil sector only, saying it creates frustration when some people miss out.

As Uganda's oil reserves are expected to be depleted and, therefore, unable to eradicate unemployment and the economic challenges of the country, residents in the oil-rich Bunyoro sub-region have been advised to acquire skills which will help them get employed in other sectors of the economy.

The state minister for minerals, Peter Lokeris, said skills, such as carpentry and joinery, welding and metal fabrication as well as civil construction are not only restricted to the oil sector.

Lokeris was speaking during the commissioning of the newly expanded and rehabilitated health centres III of Buseruka and Kabaale in Buseruka sub-county, Hoima district on Friday.

He discouraged the residents from vying for employment and business opportunities in the nascent oil sector only, saying it creates frustration when some people miss out.

Lokeris added that over 70% of the jobs that will be created during oil production are for technicians and artisans.

He, therefore, urged Ugandans not to run away from sectors, such as agriculture, because the projects will cause a boom in the region's population hence providing ready market for their farm produce.

Lokeris, using the analogy of the 'Dutch disease', explained to the people saying when oil is discovered, people abandon all the other sectors of the economy and run to get money from it. Prices of other commodities shoot up, which causes inflation.

He said the expansion and rehabilitation of Kabaale and Buseruka health centres marks one of the achievements made towards the implementation of the resettlement action plan for the oil refinery. The oil refinery establishment project displaced 7,118 people.

This was after the Government secured 29,000 hectares of land at Kabaale parish in Buseruka sub-county, Hoima district, where it plans to construct an oil refinery. The refinery will add value to its crude oil reserves currently standing at 6.5 billion barrels, where between 1.4 to 1.7 billion barrels are said to be recoverable.

The area Member of Parliament, Pius Wakabi Rujumba, urged the district's technical department and the health ministry to ensure that facilities are utilised well for the benefit of the community.

He said people will throng the area to work or seek opportunities in the oil sector as the country moves to produce oil by 2020. Rujumba cautioned that with the increase in population, diseases are also bound to increase.

The permanent secretary in the energy ministry, Robert Kasande, in a speech delivered for him by Irene Batebe, the acting commissioner midstream facilities, said the energy ministry is rehabilitating and expanding Buseruka, Nyahaira and Kyapaloni primary schools as part of the resettlement action plan.

Kasande said the ministry still has more infrastructure to build in the area as part of the refinery resettlement action plan including a Police post, churches, mosques, electricity line, community hall and piped water for the communities which were evicted from the refinery land.

Dr Charles Olara, the director in charge of clinical services in the health ministry, said the project includes donation of the health equipment.

He said the newly expanded and renovated health facilities have the capacity to serve a population of between 50,000 and 70,000 people an increase from 7,000.

Ojay Odoch, a project estimator from Transactional International University, without revealing how much the two health centres cost ,said they constructed a new outpatient department, two new staff houses, maternity and one general ward, landscaping and fencing on each of the facilities.

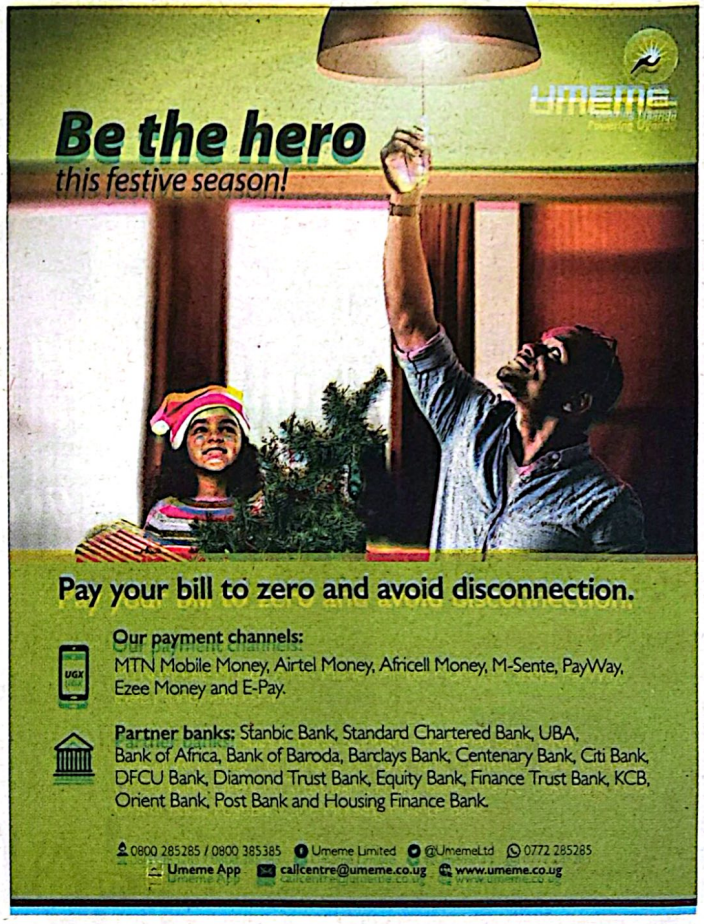
Others include laboratories, toilets, a modern water harvesting system and they also renovated the existing inpatient wards.

ON THE GROUND

The area MP, Pius Wakabi Rujumba, urged the district technical department and the health ministry to ensure that facilities are utilised well, cautioning that with the increase in population, diseases are also bound to increase.



Lokeris, cuts a ribbon to commission the new outpatient department at Buseruka health centre III in Hoima district on Friday. Photo by Robert Atuhairwe





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