

BY CHARLES ETUKURI

Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA) on Wednesday announced the start of major construction of critical infrastructure in the Albertine region, which will see several roads in the districts of Hoima, Masindi, Buliisa, Rakai, Nwoya, Ssembabule, Kibaale, Fort Portal and Mubende, upgraded in order to achieve the 2020 oil targets.

The road projects, which UNRA estimates to cost sh3.3 trillion, are funded by the Exim Bank of China and the United Kingdom Export Finance Bank. Exim Bank will fund the construction of 600kms of roads, while United Kingdom Export Finance Bank will fund the construction of 98kms of roads, mainly in Hoima and Kabarle districts.

Addressing the media, while inspecting the several roads earmarked for construction, UNRA's executive director Allen Kagina noted that 2020 was not far away and that the Authority was committed to ensuring that the roads do not remain an obstacle to oil production.

"I am happy to note that this road network is doing well. Last year, we were here and the roads were terrible. I have learnt from our technical team that we are on track and are doing well. Initially, I have to admit, I was worried we would not make it to 2020. But they have assured us that we need to tackle the priority areas, which include, bridges, swamps, escarpments and the sharp corners," Kagina said.

She said these roads would experience heavy traffic, but that this would be for a short time, especially during the construction of the refinery, airport and the pipeline.

Kagina said they would start with the construction of the most critical areas needed most by the oil industry.

Other officials who accompanied Kagina are; Davis Muhwezi (transport economist), William Matovu (land acquisition specialist), Michael Ochola (bridges engineer).

ROADS EARMARKED FOR TARMACKING

Last June, the Government said it would prioritise the construction of roads across the country, but special emphasis would be on the networks in the Albertine

UNRA starts constructing sh3.3 trillion oil roads



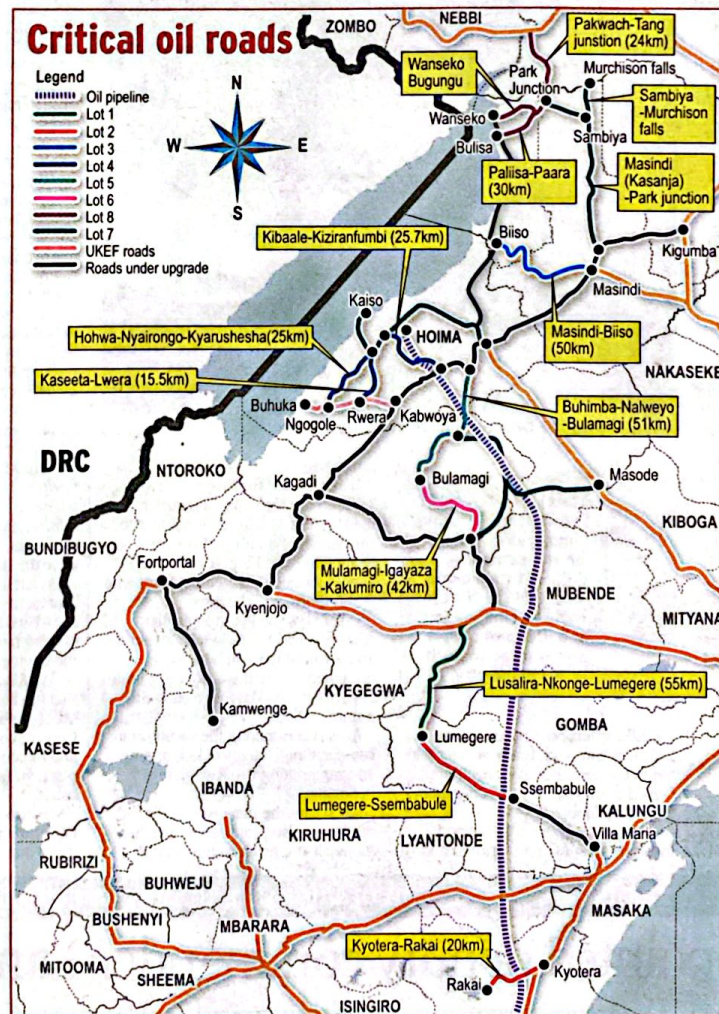
ALLEN KAGINA, UNRA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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region also known as critical oil roads.

The roads earmarked for tarmacking include, the Hoima-Butiaba Wanseeke Road 111 kms, which will run through Hoima and Buliisa districts; Masindi-Biiso road (54km); Masindi-Bugungu via Murchison Falls National Park (80km); Kaseeta-Lwera via Bugoma Forest (16km); Hihwa-Nyairongo-Kyarushesha road (25km) in Hoima district; Wanseeke-Bugungu Road (23km) in Buliisa district; Buhimba-Nalweyo-Kakumiro-Mubende road (93 km) which will go through Mubende and Kibaale districts.

Other are the Lusailira-Nkonge-Ssembabule road (97km); Kyotera-Rakai road (20kms); Bugungu Buliisa (29kms) in Buliisa; Kabale-Kizirafumbi (30kms) in Hoima, Tangi Junction Paraa including Tangi gate and Emmi Bridges (22 kms) in Nwoya districts; Kabwoya-Buhuka (43 kms) in Hoima and the Karugutu-Ntoroko via Semuliki National Park (55



kms) in Bundibugyo district.

TASK FORCE

Kagina said UNRA had created a special task force for the oil roads headed by Ochola, whose duty is to ensure the fast-tracking of all the stages in the road construction.

"In order for us to deliver these roads, we had to recruit

77 new staff so that there was no compromise on the work plan we already had," she said.

Kagina said the other road projects that UNRA was handling before the oil roads came on board, would not be affected.

Muhwezi told *Saturday Vision* that they were expecting close to 500 trucks

per day that will be delivering construction materials for the pipeline, airport and refinery construction, but UNRA officials would ensure that the Uganda roads are not abused. "We shall regulate the axle load to ensure that there is no overloading of the trucks," he noted.

One of the areas the UNRA and media team visited

was the Kingfisher oil field operated by CNOOC Uganda Ltd under a joint venture with Total E&P Uganda Ltd and Tullow Oil.

An official of the company, Andrew Otuba, told the media that they constructed their own road because of the difficulties they experience in transporting drilling materials, which in most cases were transported using a barge.

"In most cases, we are forced to call the different trading centres to ask if its threatening to rain and whenever we are told its raining we are forced to cancel disposal of the waste due to the poor roads," Otuba said.

ENVIRONMENT

UNRA land acquisition specialist, Matovu also noted that 60% of the land they intended to acquire for the road construction was either in the National Parks managed by the Uganda Wild Life Authority or the National Forestry Authority.

He said they had started compensating people affected by the projects.

Kagina said UNRA was in talks with NFA and UWA because some of the roads will pass through important ecological areas that must be preserved at all costs.

"The oils will never last forever and in construction of some of these roads, we must be mindful of the future of the country which lies in tourism," Kagina said.

In November, President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni and his counterpart Tanzanian counterpart John Pombe Magufuli launched the construction of an oil pipeline stretching from Hoima to Tanga Port in Tanzania. The 1,445 kilometre East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) will be able to transport 216,000 barrels of oil per day. It will be the world's longest electrically heated crude oil pipeline.

Uganda's current oil reserves stand at 6.5 billion barrels with 1.7 billion recoverable from the ground.