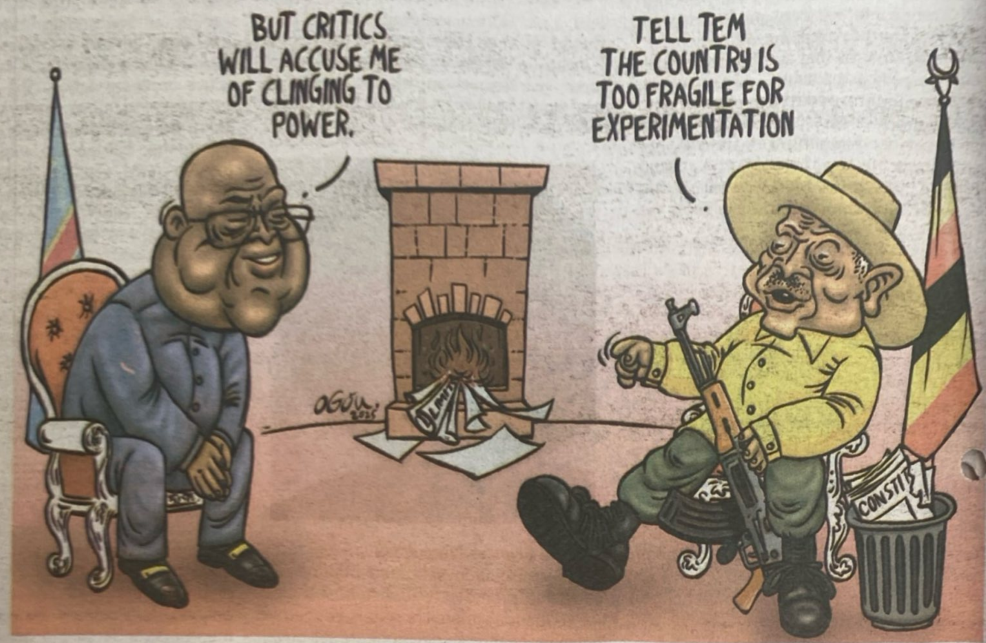
Transport Minister Gen Katumba Wamala: "We have had a lot of back and forth and finger ch party claiming it is not responsible, we now want to find solutions so that we can establish effective and enable Ugandans to get number plates as quickly as possible."

Cartoon. DR Congo leader Félix Tshisekedi hints at extending term and delaying polls.



Dangote Tanga Refinery will complement Uganda's refinery

The *EastAfrican* recently published a news story under the headline "Uganda's headache as Dangote eyes Tanga". The story attempts to shrink a strategic energy conversation into a narrow frame of rivalry and anxiety, and risks distorting public understanding of a vital moment in East Africa's energy evolution. An oil refinery in Uganda and another in Tanga, Tanzania, are not mutually exclusive.

Energy security is a pressing concern. A country without reliable energy cannot industrialise sufficiently or guard its citizens against economic shocks. President Museveni's resolve to build a refinery must be understood as a strategic and necessary investment. It is about ensuring that Uganda does not remain dependent on imported refined petroleum products with all the vulnerabilities that such dependence comes with.

The war in Iran, which has seen the vital Strait of Hormuz closed, has rocked global energy markets by disrupting supply chains and driving up energy prices, highlighting the dangers of relying heavily on foreign refineries in the Arabian Peninsula. For many countries, the consequences have been immediate, with fuel price spikes and supply gaps.

Heavily reliant on imported refined oil products, East African countries have not been spared. As transport costs continue to rise and production costs increase, the burden has been passed on to the ordinary consumer. This is the scenario that Uganda's refinery project seeks to avoid in the future. For example, if East Africa had adequate refining capacity within its borders, the current crisis would have been far less disruptive. Local refineries would have provided a healthy cushion against the current energy problems.

> Uganda's refinery project is also vital for the country's industrial and agricultural modernisation agenda.
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> **Jude Kamuganga**
> Oil

The major flaw in the *EastAfrican* news story, particularly its headline, is the misleading assumption that a refinery in Tanga is somehow detrimental to Uganda's interests. This view treats energy projects as if one can only succeed at the expense of another, which is erroneous. Energy systems can complement each other without creating losers. It is, therefore, both economically sound and strategically wise for East Africa to have multiple refineries.

As East Africa's cities continue to grow rapidly, while demand for energy rises steadily, a single refinery cannot suffice. The war in Iran has demonstrated how fragile global energy systems can be when they rely on concentrated supply routes and limited refineries. A wider distribution of refineries across the world, including East Africa, would reduce such vulnerability.

East Africa's economic future is hinged on cooperation rather than competition. Infrastructure projects such as pipelines, storage facilities and refineries are interdependent. For example, Uganda's refinery does not exist in isolation; it is part of a broader regional ecosystem. So, a refinery in Tanga would complement this system, enabling cross-border trade in crude and refined products, not forgetting the Eacop pipeline that stretches from Uganda to Tanzania. Having adequate refining capability in East Africa would give the region much-needed control on pricing, supply and distribution.

Uganda's refinery project is also vital for the country's industrial and agricultural modernisation agenda. Besides producing fuel, refineries create an ecosystem of value addition, petrochemicals, fertilisers and other downstream industries. These products have potential to drive agricultural productivity, manufacturing and job creation. A refinery would therefore be a catalyst for economic transformation and the realisation of Uganda's Vision 2040.

Therefore, building an oil refinery at Kabaale is a sovereign decision in line with Uganda's energy security strategy. This decision is not diminished by developments in Tanga but rather strengthened by them. The presence of multiple refineries in East Africa would be a welcome sign of economic maturity, reflecting a region that is beginning to take control of its energy destiny.

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