

THE POLICE SAID AN OLD WOMAN WAS KILLED IN ISINGIRO DISTRICT

Floods kill 3 in Mbarara

MBARARA

By Abdulkarim Ssengendo

Three people have been confirmed dead and four others are still missing following a heavy downpour that inundated parts of Mbarara town and its suburbs.

The Police have identified the dead as Vincent Mubangizi, 29, a bodaboda cyclist, whose body was recovered at Rwebikona near Rwizi Arch Hotel in Kamukuzi division, Mbarara municipality. The second body is of an unidentified person and was found in Nyakizi ward. The third victim is Irene Korugo, 94, whose body was washed out of her house in Isingiro North, Isingiro district.

The Rwizi region Police rescue team was camped at Rwizi Arch Hotel, as the search for the four missing persons continued. The missing persons are suspected to have been swept away by floods during the downpour.

"We are still searching for the missing people. They disappeared from a part of Mbarara town that was submerged," the Rwizi region Police spokesperson, Samson Kasasira, said.

Vincent Atugonzire, a bodaboda cyclist, was rescued by residents

"I was travelling with a woman and floods overpowered me and swept us away, though I managed to jump out. The lady was rescued by residents who were nearby," he said.

A total of 23 villages in Bucuro and Bubaare sub-counties in Mbarara were also affected by the rains.

David Kitengye, the Bucuro sub-county chairperson, urged



Mbarara residents gathering at Rwizi Arch Hotel where a body was recovered after a heavy downpour. Leaders said the hotel is on a wetland. Photo by Abdulkarim Ssengendo

the Government to empower local governments by providing a disaster and preparedness budget at all sub-counties to support the victims of such disasters.

The Mbarara resident district commissioner, Capt. Martha Asiiimwe, also blamed Rwizi Arch Hotel for causing the flooding because it was constructed over the water channels.

She also condemned the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) for failing to play its role in protecting wetlands. Asiiimwe said, following the directive from President Yoweri Museveni, all those occupying wetlands must leave.

"How can government officials look on as people perish? Everyone has become

BETWEEN THE LINES

■ River Rwizi that originates from Buhweju hills is the main source of water to Mbarara town. Much of the river's catchment areas have been affected by human development.

adamant, even when they know that they are in the wrong, they do not care. Rwizi Arch Hotel must be closed to safeguard people.

"NEMA must explain how the hotel came to be constructed within the wetlands of River Rwizi," she said.

The Mbarara municipality mayor, Robert Kakyebi, cautioned people against

blocking water channels and warned those constructing without municipal council approval of their plans. Kakyebi said officials who allowed people to construct illegal structures in towns should be punished for failing in their duties.

Rehema Marura, the manager of Rwizi Arch Hotel, said the incident was unfortunate and cautioned those misinforming others on social media that the hotel had collapsed.

"The hotel is fine. We have visitors with us. The only part of the hotel that was affected lies in the valley, where water washed away the perimeter wall".

She requested the Mbarara municipal council to open the water channels that were blocked.