



Shafique (standing) speaking during a meeting on Green Climate Fund project. Photo by Chris Mugasha

Armed thugs raid shops in Kagadi

The Police in Kagadi are investigating the circumstances under which a gang of armed thugs invaded three shops in Nakulabye sub-county and stole items worth over sh10m over the weekend. Romeo Ojara, the Kagadi district police commander, said the thugs broke into four shops including a mobile money shop and stole mobile phones and an assortment of merchandise at about 2:00am on Saturday. "I appeal to any suspects with information that may lead to the arrest of the suspects to forward it to Kagadi Police Station," Ojara said. He further disclosed that three people were attacked with machetes and are admitted at St Ambrose Charity Health Centre IV in Kagadi town council. The injured that include Geoffrey Mwinganiza, an ICT lecturer at African Rural University, his wife Nyangoma Mwinganiza and Grace Birungi, are residents of Nakulabye.

Legislators failing wetland conservation drive - RDCs

BUSHENYI

By Chris Mugasha

Resident District Commissioners (RDCs) in the western region have said some Members of Parliament are failing government policies.

The Kisoro district RDC, Shafique Ssekandi, said failure by leaders to speak with one voice had made it difficult to implement government directives/policies such as evicting people from wetlands.

The Rubirizi district RDC, Kule Muranga, said: "Whenever we attempt to push people out of the wetlands, MPs stop them on the pretext that these are *mzee's* votes."

The RDCs raised the concerns during the western region district leaders' meeting in Bushenyi district council hall to discuss the inception of Green Climate Fund project, which targets the restoration of wetlands across the country.

The Green Climate Fund worth sh85b is being funded and managed by the United

Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The UNDP representative, Onesmus Muhwezi, said the project's objective is to help communities to restore wetlands, hence increasing food production.

Destruction of wetlands
Earlier, the water minister, Sam Cheptoris, had said people had been allowed to destroy the country's wetlands.

"We tell people not to cultivate in wetlands but they don't want to listen," he said.

Cheptoris added: "Former president Idi Amin was a killer but he used to discipline people."

Cheptoris, however, insisted that by July 2018, people who encroached on wetlands must have vacated to allow for their restoration.

The minister said the Government would not allow the project to fail considering the effects of climate change which are already affecting critical services such as water supply.

BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ The Rubirizi district RDC, Kule Muranga, said whenever officials attempt to evict people from wetlands, MPs stop them on the pretext that these are *mzee's* votes.

"The poor are the people most affected by climate change. In Kabale people have used wetlands to plant tea. When the rains don't come, will the people eat the tea?" Cheptoris asked.

He said people who had reclaimed wetlands were greedy: "We are destroying our planet as if the world is ending tomorrow."

Pressure on wetlands

The Buhweju RDC, Emmy Katera, said there is pressure on wetlands, which he attributed to population increase.

"We have to maintain security in wetlands even at night to prevent people from farming in them during night time," Katera

said.

The Bushenyi RDC, Peter Mugisha, said some people who had encroached and degraded wetlands claim to be in possession of land titles which he said had been acquired recently.

"They are demanding compensation from the Government before they can vacate wetlands. The matter has been presented to the Office of the President and we are waiting for his guidance," Mugisha said.

The Rubanda district chairman, Kenneth Jogo, said sometimes the President's promise to compensate people complicates their enforcement efforts.

The RDCs said if they wait for compensation of the affected people it may delay the exercise of restoring the wetlands.

The Rukungiri district community development officer, Cleophus Tuweitu, said communities in Rukungiri had started destroying plantations, especially eucalyptus belonging to wetland encroachers.

Busia regulates bodabodas activities

Authorities in Busia have banned bodaboda operations after 11:00pm. The leaders said they want to harmonise the operations of bodabodas with those of Busia, Kenya, where riders stop at 10:00pm. The decision was reached at by local leaders during a security meeting attended by the LCI chairpersons in Busia town, division chairperson, mayor and Police. This follows the murder of several bodaboda riders in the neighbouring Busia county in Kenya. A total of 10 bodaboda riders have been killed since August last year. Security personnel have failed to arrest any suspects in connection with the killings. The leaders consequently recommend that meetings be held in the 24 villages in the municipality to sensitise the bodabodas and other residents to deteriorating security situation in the border t

Amuria speaker convicted

The Grade One Magistrate's court in Soroti district, Francis Emogu, to 16 months in jail after finding him guilty of impersonation and illegal possession of government stores. Grace Wakoili made the judgment on Thursday, three weeks after Emogu, 32, was remanded to Soroti main prison. Emogu was arrested by the Police on March 11 over the possession of handcuffs, purported State House ID and toy pistol, reported to have been used for conducting criminal acts. Delivering the judgement, Wakoili said prosecution had proved that Emogu committed two crimes. She said the accused seemed to have used his leadership position for conduct dubious activities.