

Standard Gauge Railway will not displace Abacus plant

By Taddeo Bwambale

A pharmaceutical plant belonging to Abacus Parenteral Drugs (U) Ltd will not be demolished when construction of the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) starts.

The facility is located 33km from Kampala, along the Mukono-Mbalala road in Wakiso district, where a section of the railway line is expected to cross the road on a raised platform (an overpass).

The SGR's senior public information officer, David Mugabe, clarified yesterday that buildings at the pharmaceutical plant will not be affected by the new railway.

"It is only a small portion of the land in front of the plant that we are negotiating with the proprietors to buy off," Mugabe explained.

He was responding to a report in *New Vision* on Wednesday that mentioned Abacus as one of the factories that will be affected by the SGR project.

At least four other industrial plants and a number of schools will be affected by the construction of the SGR and will receive either compensation and helped to relocate.

The works minister, Eng. Esther Azuba Ntege and the permanent secretary, Wasswa Bageya, spent much of the day on Tuesday touring the



Azuba Ntege (left) on a tour of where the new railway line is going to pass in Wakiso district

Construction of the railway is earmarked to start in March

area from Buikwe to Kampala earmarked for the SGR project.

To prepare for the SGR project, land acquisition process is underway across 11 districts along the Tororo-Kampala route of the railway line.

Kenya is due to complete the first phase of the SGR

project with a 427km line from Mombasa to Nairobi, which is expected to extend the line to Malaba and connect to the SGR network in Uganda.

In Uganda, construction of the \$2.3b (sh8 trillion) railway is earmarked to start in March, when the land acquisition process is expected to have been concluded.

Of the 11 districts along the railway route, land acquisition, which includes compensation of claimants, has been completed in at least five districts, including Tororo, Butaleja, Namutumba and Luuka. The process is almost complete in Iganga and Jinja and due to start in the

remaining districts.

The SGR is envisioned to expedite economic growth in East Africa by reducing the cost of doing business, increasing regional connectivity and enhancing regional integration.

Over 95% of all the freight movement in the region is by road, which is expensive, unsafe and unreliable. The 5%

through a dilapidated meter gauge railway system.

Unlike the old metre gauge that has been in existence in some parts of the country since colonial days, the SGR will be an electric rail featuring a wider, more efficient width of 1.5 metres.

There will be 64 major overpasses where the railway

line will cross over roads. Along valleys and swampy areas, there will be viaducts to support the railway line.

Cargo trains are expected to move at a speed of 100km per hour and passenger trains at 120kms per hour. Unlike the old train, whose capacity is 1,500 tonnes, the SGR's capacity is 5,000 tonnes.



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