

Power regulator suspends Dott Services works

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HOIMA: The Electricity Regulatory Authority (ERA) has suspended Dott Services Limited's work on Waki hydropower project in Hoima District, mid-western Uganda.

This follows ERA's findings that Dott Services Ltd, which is seven months into the construction of the 4.8 megawatt power plant, is not adhering to good practices.

For instance, the company was curing concrete "in a rudimentary manner" - using casual labourers to ferry water in jerrycans from site water points to pour on the project's concrete surfaces.

Such a crude method, ERA said, prevented uniform cooling of the surfaces, which could lead to cracking.

According to ERA, it would have been better to use a large hose pipe.

Further, ERA raised doubts about the 15-year work experience of Waki HPP construction site's tunnelling expert. The regulator noted that the rock at the blasted tunnel faces was flaky and weak.

Troubled

Earlier clashes. Dott Services Ltd has been in trouble before. Early this year, President Museveni directed that the company should not be awarded any other road construction projects. The President's directive came on the heels of allegations that Dott Services was allegedly acting fraudulently in some instances. He has since reportedly reconsidered the 'blacklisting' of the company.

"There was no provision made for supply of fresh air to the [workers] undertaking works within the tunneling area..." ERA added.

Such an oversight, it said, exposed the workers to "the possibility of suffocation or poisonous gases that are common in tunnels".

During a field trip, which ERA facilitated for select journalists, this newspaper observed that Dott Services Ltd was putting up cubicles using plywood and corrugated iron sheets for Ugandan labourers.

ERA's chief executive officer Ziria Tibalwa-Waako said irrespective of hierarchical provision of services, all workers should be in safe working environments.

"...the Ugandan workers reside in miserable conditions and yet you put up better accommodation for the foreign workers. Isn't that discrimination?" Ms Tibalwa-Waako, an engineer, said during the tour on Wednesday.

Mr Godfrey Semanda, the general manager of Hydromax Nkusi Ltd, the project developer, said it is not their intention to discriminate against Ugandan workers.

Mr Sunil Reddy, Dott Services Ltd's Waki HPP site engineer, said the company would address ERA's concerns.