

APPEAL FOR ASSISTANCE

Fire burns 70 huts, 200 flee

Residents look on as fire burns houses in Kakoro Sub-county, Butebo District, last Friday. More than 70 houses were burnt, leaving hundreds displaced. PHOTO BY MUDANGHA KOLYANGHA



Namayingo suspends two mining firms over licences

Justification. The authorities say the two companies from Tanzania are illegally evicting residents from their land and are operating without genuine mining licences.

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NAMAYINGO. Namayingo District has suspended two mining companies for allegedly lacking mineral extraction licences.

The Resident District Commissioner [RDC], Mr Sylvester Opera, last week revealed that the mining companies - both from Tanzania and trading under one name, ALJOURA - are illegally evicting residents from their land and are operating without genuine mining licenses.

A 2007 report by the Department of Geological Survey and Mines in the

Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development revealed that Namayingo District was endowed with minerals like gold and limestone.

Places with traces of gold include Sigulu Island, Nakudi Village, Bukana Village, Banda Sub-county and Simasa, among others.

"We only see pseudo companies extracting minerals in our areas. As a district, we are being left out from enjoying our gold," he said.

"Whenever we ask them, they say they were cleared by government, leaving us wondering whether government has started giving out mineral exploration licences to private miners instead of extraction licences," he added.

Mr Opera noted that the companies started extracting gold in Banda village in 2008 and since then, the district has not benefitted from the mines. It is for such reasons that the district council

THE REPORT

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passed a by-law, stopping such companies from extracting any minerals until they sign a memorandum of understanding [MoU] with the district on what percentage they remit.

The RDC added that they have since 2009 been asking the companies to give the district a fair share of the revenue from the minerals and avail extraction licences but in vain.

Ms Miriam Akeno Mayanja, a councillor representing Namayingo Town Council and Buyinja, where gold mining is taking place, says the council, which sat on September 8, resolved to suspend the companies from extracting gold and any other minerals.

"They [companies] told us that they were cleared by government but when we told them to produce their licence, they failed. We are not going to allow thieves masquerading as

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briefly

Two held over theft

JINJA: Police in Buyengo Sub-county, Jinja District, are holding two men for allegedly stealing a music system. The officer-in-charge of Buyengo Police Post, Mr Joseph Ojuka, told *Daily Monitor* last Thursday that the suspects, all from Kampala, are said to have hired the music system from Abdul Band to help them organise a show in the area but they instead mortgaged it. Mr Ojuka said the suspects will soon be presented in court once investigations are complete. [Abubaker Kirunda]

Factions to end land row

MBALE: The leaders of Budaka and Butaleja districts have resolved to a longstanding boundary dispute that has left several people dead and property destroyed. During a meeting Mbale Town at the weekend, the elders, who agreed that surveyors from the ministry of Lands should use the 1965 map to demarcate the boundaries, also resolved to rein in the communities against attacking each other. [Mudangha Kolyangha]

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companies to steal our gold which is the only rich asset we have," she said.

The District Woman MP, Ms Robinah Mukisa, said the companies have no right to evict residents from their land.

"We want companies that will work with the residents and the entire district not those that will make our people onlookers as they extract their minerals," she said.

"Companies which were stopped from extracting gold for lacking valid licences will be forced to compensate people for the damages caused on their land," she added.

Without quoting figures, Ms Mukisa said the district has lost revenue in the past nine years as a result of illegal mining by such companies.

The district chairman, Mr Ronald Sanya, asked government to inform local governments of the mining licences it awards to private companies.

Voices

"We want companies that will work with the residents and the entire district not those that will make our people witnesses as they extract their minerals,"

ROBINAH MUKISA, NAMAYINGO WOMAN MP

"There would be no reason to stop these companies from mining if government had informed us about them or if it is true they were cleared by government,"

RONALD SANJA, LC5 CHAIRMAN

"Evicting me from the gold mine will be 'the end of my life' because I know nothing apart from gold mining,"

SSENYOJO KYEYUNE, RDC

Authorities speak out

"There would be no reason to stop these companies from mining if government had informed us about them or if it is true they were cleared by government," he said.

Mr Sanya said he is worried residents who own land around the gold mines might become squatters if such companies continue evicting them, claiming they were endorsed by government.

Since gold mining in Namayingo has become a lucrative business, people have started living in fear of being evicted from their land.

Mr Mutwalibu Balaba, the chairperson of Nsango Gold Mine, said they are hearing rumours of how they will be forced out of their land to allow mining companies to do their work.

Mr Peter Okware, a miner at Nsango gold mine, says he is worried because most youth working in the mines might become iron bar hit men should they be chased away.

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