

# Mayiga asks Museveni to clear air on sand mining

By Jeff Andrew Lule

Following the controversy surrounding sand mining in Lake Victoria, the prime minister of Buganda kingdom, Charles Peter Mayiga, has asked President Yoweri Museveni to intervene in the matter.

He noted that as Buganda, they are against sand mining, given its environmental implications.

Mayiga's reaction follows a clash between the Wakiso district leaders and some senior government officials on whether sand mining should be allowed to continue.

Last year, Wakiso leaders led by district chairperson Matia Lwanga Bwanika and National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) officials halted sand mining activities by a Chinese Company, Mango Tree, on Bussi Island, over environmental concerns.

Other companies which were stopped include a Chinese company called Only You, which was operating in Namagombe village in Kasanje town council, and Porch Limited, owned by Nigerians, operating in Nkumba-Bukolwa village, Katabi town council.

According to NEMA officials, scooping sand from river/lake beds leads to a quicker flow of water levels, and a decline in water quality and supply to surrounding wetlands. They also noted that it was also disastrous for both the human and animal population in the surrounding areas.

However, on the contrary, last week, the co-ordinator of Operation Wealth

Creation, Gen. Salim Saleh, came out to back Mango Tree, saying there is a great demand for sand, especially silt sand, for use in the construction of infrastructure.

Saleh, who was addressing journalists at his Namunkekeera Industrial Park in Nakaseke district, said the Standard Gauge Railway alone requires 12 million tonnes of sand, of which 1.5 million must be silt quality, and urged NEMA to reverse the ban on sand mining in the lake.

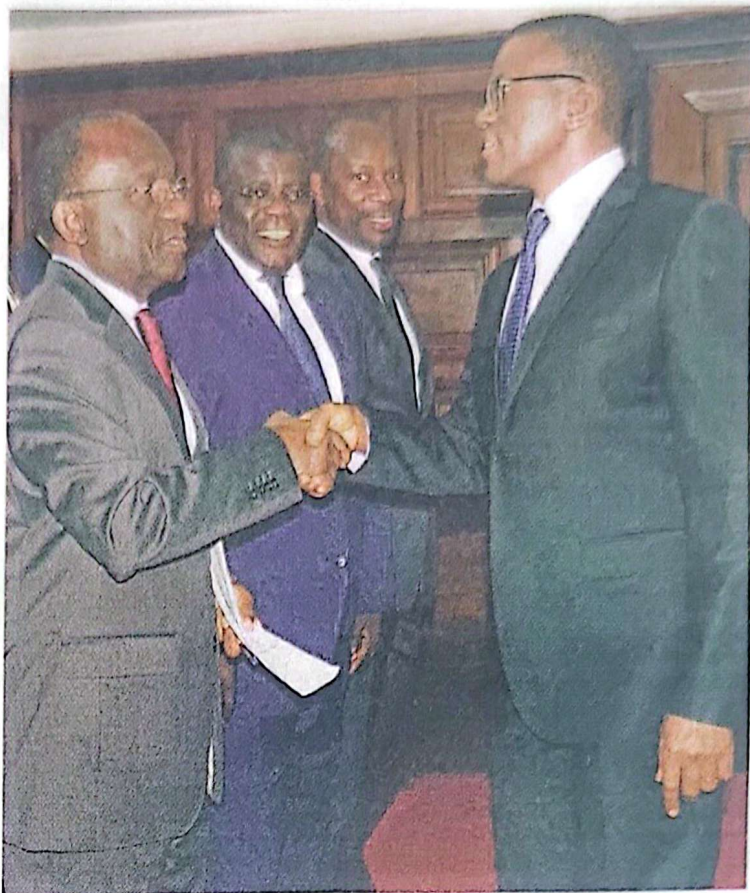
At the same briefing, Mango Tree's managers dismissed NEMA's fears as mere politicking.

***"I heard Gen. Saleh supporting sand mining in Lake Victoria. I was surprised."*** Mayiga

While addressing the first 2018 Buganda Lukiiko (assembly) at Bulange, Mengo in Kampala yesterday, Mayiga said it is very unfortunate that Saleh could come out and defend sand mining.

"I heard Gen. Saleh supporting sand mining in Lake Victoria. I was surprised," he said.

"As Buganda Kingdom, we support Matia Lwanga's position of fighting this activity and his endless fighting



Mayiga (right) chatting with his first deputy, Emmanuel Ssendaula, as the other deputies; Twaha Kaawaase (second-left) and Apollo Makubuya look on at Bulange, Mengo. Photo by Dickson Kulumba

to save the environment. We ask other leaders at various levels to do the same in order to protect the environment," he added.

The Katikkiro recognised Bwanika who also attended the Lukiiko for his endless work towards environmental conservation.

Mayiga said they want President Museveni to come out on the sand mining issue to save the lake from being destroyed and the general environmental situation in the country.

"I ask the President to come out strongly, this time on environment, because everything is getting destroyed. Forests continue to get destroyed, wetlands are being encroached on and now it's sand mining in the lake," the Katikkiro noted.

Mayiga also asked the Government to allocate more money to NEMA so that it does its work effectively.

"We know people need land to farm, but it does not mean to do it anywhere. These areas are protected because they play a big role in our

environment," he added.

## Buikwe land issue

On the Buikwe land controversy, Mayiga said the land belongs to the Namasole and cannot be sold to anyone, "because it remains Buganda land".

"In Buganda, several offices like that of the Katikkiro have land, but I cannot sell it. It is strictly for that office. You come and go and others take over. How can a whole minister like Ronald Kibuule claim not to know who the Namasole is?" he noted.

He also blamed the endless land conflicts on the weakness of the Police and Judiciary. "Cases take long in court. Even the Police that are supposed to help the people at times connive with land grabbers," the Katikkiro added.

Mayiga said they hope to complete the reconstruction of Kasubi tombs by December. "The work is in high gear, but we are being challenged by the lack of funds," he noted. It is now eight years since the tombs went up in flames.