

Cabinet orders on kaveera ban

Another attempt. The Environment minister says the new plan to ban the plastic bags seeks to address challenges that led to the collapse of earlier efforts.

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KAMPALA. After eight years of failed attempts to ban the use of polythene bags (*kaveera*) in the country, Cabinet on Friday instructed Water and Environment minister to present a new plan for the implementation of the successful ban.

The line minister, Mr Sam Cheptoris, who blamed the failure to ban *kaveera* on "politics" told this newspaper yesterday, that the new blueprint will, among other things, seek to address challenges that led to the collapse of earlier efforts.

"We discussed that matter in Cabinet, and I was advised to present a fresh paper such that Cabinet can review the whole matter," Mr Cheptoris said. "I am confident that the ban will be implemented."

In her 2009 budget, the then Finance minister, Ms Syda Bumba, announced a total ban on the use,

importation and production of all polythene materials.

Importation and production of these items was banned with effect from July 1, 2009.

However, the ban was greeted by protests from some business people.

An excise duty of 120 per cent was also imposed on some plastic materials, but this did not stop the use of *kaveera* in the country.

Attempts by the lawmakers to compel the government to implement the ban also failed because of politics.

Discontent about plastics and polythene bags manufacture and use in the region, like elsewhere, has lately gained momentum.

Rwanda set a no-*kaveera* use law which is followed to the letter. Kenya is the latest country in the region to ban *kaveera* setting a four-year jail term or a maximum fine of \$38,000 (about Shs134.7m) for the offenders.

In her 2009 Budget speech, Ms Bbumba, said government would, through new taxation policies, prevent the importation of polythene bags citing their huge damage they pose to the largely agricultural



Problem. Students carry their belongings in polythene bags in Kampala recently.

PHOTO BY ALEX ESAGALA

dependent country.

Plastics and polythene bags, the National Environment Management Authority (Nema) officials say, have been responsible for blockage of drainage channels and sewers, which cause floods and stagnation of water leading to increased incidence of diseases such as malaria.

Once they integrated in the soil, these plastics and polythene bags do not decompose, but instead block the percolation of water, hence affecting soil fertility.

They kill domestic animals when ingested. Despite the negative side of polythene bags, Nema officials mandated to effect the ban have

struggled to stop the use and continue to be in hide and seek games with traders and manufacturers backed by Trade ministry officials. The ban suffered a stillbirth.

In 2002, in a case filed by the non-governmental group Greenwatch, Judge Eldad Mwangusya ruled that plastic bags are a danger to Ugandans and urged the government to pass a law against them "as a matter of urgency."

PREVIOUS ATTEMPT

In March 2015, lawmakers on the National Resources Committee banged tables, called the then Water and Environment minister, Ephraim Kamuntu names, before kicking him and his officials out of a meeting called to discuss a ban on the use of polythene bags.

Attempts by Prof Kamuntu to blame "the politically charged nature of any debate about polythene" and the "lack of coordination" for the delay in banning *kaveera*, only further infuriated the committee.

However, it is not yet clear which key Mr Cheptoris intends to use in order to succeed where his predecessors have failed.