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TUSIIME CHRISTOPHER

Chief Editor

Dear Reader.

Welcome to the 10th Edition of The Rwenzori Times. This milestone reflects our commitment to amplifying stories of progress, unity, and transformation across the Rwenzori region.

In this edition, we highlight key developments-Kabarole's designation as a Water Supply Authority, Kamwenge's new service and cold chain facilities, and King Oyo's call for unity and

development in Fort Portal Tourism City. We also shed light on environmental restoration efforts in Bunyangabu and the untapped natural beauty of Kitagwenda.

As we celebrate ten editions of impactful storytelling, we thank our readers and partners for their continued trust and support. Together, we move forward informing, inspiring, and shaping the future of a vibrant Rwenzori.

The Editor, Rwenzori Times

**KABUGHO
SHARON**

Editor



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ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION: CULPRITS IN BUNYANGABU CAUTIONED AS ENFORCEMENT TAKES EFFECT

By Christopher Tusiime, Communications Officer, Bunyangabu District



Encroachers had planted eucalyptus trees in parts of the wetland. The trees were cut down during an enforcement operation

The Deputy Resident District Commissioner (RDC) for Bunyangabu, Robert Kamuntu, has issued a strong warning to residents involved in environmental degradation, saying those encroaching on wetlands and other protected areas will face stern action.

Speaking during an enforcement operation to restore the Nyabyako Wetland in Kabonero Sub-county on Monday, 6th October, 2025 Kamuntu said the government is determined to reclaim all degraded wetlands to safeguard the environment and ensure sustainable livelihoods.

The operation saw several crops and eucalyptus trees illegally planted in the

wetland destroyed. Some encroachers had dug trenches to drain water, while others had turned large portions of the wetland into farmland.

“Bunyangabu is blessed with favorable weather that supports year-round farming. But if wetland degradation continues, the district will soon experience severe climate changes,” said Kamuntu, adding that enforcement operations will continue until all wetlands are fully restored.

The Kabonero Sub-county Chief, Teopista Komuhangi, identified Nyarugongo A and Nyarugongo B as the most affected villages. She said the sub-county is working with district authorities to ensure complete

restoration of the degraded areas and to prosecute repeat offenders.

Meanwhile, the District Environment Officer, Grace Kansiime, reminded residents that wetlands and other natural resources are public assets protected by law. She encouraged communities to adopt sustainable income-generating activities such as beekeeping, fish farming, and indigenous tree planting in wetland buffer zones.

"Residents who wish to use wetlands for activities like harvesting raw materials for handicrafts should formally apply for permission through their sub-counties for district approval," Ms. Kansiime said.

She further emphasized the critical ecological role of wetlands, explaining that they control floods, purify water, provide wildlife habitats, and store carbon all essential functions in combating climate change.

"Wetlands act as natural sponges, absorbing excess water, filtering pollutants, and sustaining biodiversity,"

she added.

President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni has repeatedly directed the restoration of all wetlands across Uganda as part of national efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change.

In Bunyangabu District, enforcement operations have already been conducted in Rwimi Sub-county, Nyakigumba Town Council, and other areas.

Kamuntu reaffirmed that similar exercises will continue until all encroachers vacate protected wetlands.

"We shall not relent until Bunyangabu's wetlands are fully restored. Those still encroaching should act now and vacate voluntarily," he warned.

The district's ongoing enforcement marks a significant step in aligning local environmental management with Uganda's broader climate resilience strategy.

Independence Journey



Protectorate Era: Uganda declared a British Protectorate in 1894.

National Symbols: Black-Yellow-Red flag designed by Grace Ibingira; Crested Crane – a symbol of peace.



GCIC - STATE HOUSE



Road to Freedom: Civil protests led by Ignatius Musaazi, Abu Mayanja and others pushed for self-rule.

Flag Raised: 9 Oct 1962 at Kololo



Key Events After Independence



1966-1986: Coups & dictatorship; Amin expels Asians (1972), 300,000+ deaths, inflation over 1,000%.



1986: National Resistance Movement takes over power and restores stability.



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1995:

New Constitution guarantees rights & democracy.



2001:

Multiparty politics return.



Today:

63 years of self-rule, economy growing by 6% for three decades.



KING OYO CALLS FOR UNITY AHEAD OF 2026 GENERAL ELECTIONS

By Stephen Ainganiza, Communication Officer, Kabarole

The Omukama of Tooro His Majesty King Dr. Oyo Nyimba Kabamba Iguru Rukidi IV, has called upon his subjects to embrace unity and collective development as the driving forces behind the transformation of Fort Portal Tourism City and the entire region.

The King made the appeal while addressing residents at the Tooro Botanical Gardens during his tour of the Fort Portal Kingdom County, urging citizens to strengthen cooperation and harmony, especially as the nation approaches the 2026 general elections.

King Oyo cautioned political leaders against sowing divisions along tribal or religious lines but should instead encourage peaceful and development-oriented campaigns.

He emphasized that sustainable progress can only be achieved through unity and shared purpose among the people of Tooro.

"Let us stand together as one people. Our unity is our strength, and it is through working together that Tooro can prosper," the King said.

He applauded residents of Fort Portal for their continued commitment to peace, noting the city's growing reputation as a leading tourism hub in Western Uganda. The



King also called for renewed efforts in environmental conservation, encouraging the planting of trees in homes, schools, and churches to combat the effects of climate change.

On public health, King Oyo urged his subjects to take an active role in the fight against HIV/AIDS, advising those affected to seek treatment and enroll in antiretroviral therapy (ARVs) to improve their wellbeing.

During the visit, Kalege Ernest, the Fort Portal Saza Chief, appealed to the King to support the establishment of hatcheries under

the Youth Empowerment Project, an initiative aimed at promoting poultry farming among young people who lack sufficient land for traditional crops like cocoa and coffee.

The royal tour also featured the launch of KRC TV and an inspection of a bio plant designed to produce nutrient-rich feed for dairy farmers, a step expected

to boost the region's agricultural productivity.

King Oyo's message of unity and development reaffirmed his commitment to building a prosperous, peaceful, and environmentally sustainable Tooro Kingdom, with Fort Portal Tourism City at the center of that vision.

KABAROLE DISTRICT DESIGNATED AS WATER SUPPLY AUTHORITY

By Stephen Ainganiza, Communication Officer, Kabarole District



Kabarole District has been officially designated as a Water Supply Authority, following recognition by the Ministry of Water and Environment for its outstanding performance in the operation and maintenance of water facilities.

The declaration was announced by Mr. Watsisi Martin, the Coordinator of the International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC) for the Rwenzori region, during a stakeholders' orientation meeting for gazetted districts held at the Kitumba District Headquarters.

Since 2016, Kabarole District has enjoyed



a strong partnership with IRC, which has significantly advanced its Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) agenda. Through this collaboration, the district has implemented major projects, including the extension of piped water systems in Kabende Sub-county, Kyamwirukya, Kivacado, Masongora Parish, Mubali in Kijura Town Council, and Kicwamba Sub-county.

“In this partnership, IRC has constructed VIP latrines at healthcare facilities and market centers to enhance sanitation and hygiene while reducing waterborne diseases,” said Mr. Watsisi.

The organization has also strengthened institutional capacity through training of the District Water Office, water boards, and hand pump mechanic associations. In addition, IRC supported the formulation of key district WASH policies, including a WASH Master Plan (2016–2030), operational guidelines, and a District Sanitation Ordinance.

Kabarole’s success in Operations and Maintenance (O&M) has been credited to innovative local initiatives such as the Yahura Yohoza Fund, which promotes community-led maintenance of water facilities, and the “Pay As You Fetch” model at 15 boreholes. These are supported by effective record-keeping and accountability systems.

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Mr. Hakiza Arthur, described the designation as a “historic achievement,” commending the Ministry and IRC for their partnership. He emphasized

that community involvement and service sustainability remain central to maintaining Kabarole’s leadership in WASH.

District Chairperson, Dr. Rwabuhinga Richard, said the district’s recognition reflects years of commitment and innovation. He noted that access to safe and clean water currently stands at 77%, with functionality at 82%, and pledged efforts to achieve 100% coverage.

“This status challenges us to do more. We must ensure every household in Kabarole has access to safe and sustainable water,” Dr. Rwabuhinga said.

He also urged WASH partners to invest in environmental conservation, noting that water provision is only sustainable if natural ecosystems are protected.

Mr. Sam Tusiime Tinkasimire from the Ministry of Water and Environment revealed ongoing collaboration with the African Development Bank to expand water supply in Kasenda Sub-county and Kasenda Town Council, where communities have faced challenges with bilharzia.

Meanwhile, Assistant Resident District Commissioner, Mr. Asaba Frank, reaffirmed the NRM government’s commitment to ensuring at least two water sources per village, urging residents to take ownership in protecting water facilities.

The gazetting of Kabarole as a Water

Supply Authority marks a significant step toward localized management of water services under the Community-Based Management System Plus (CBMS+), combining community participation with professional service delivery.

This milestone positions Kabarole as a model district in sustainable WASH governance, inspiring other local governments in the Rwenzori region and across Uganda.

GOV'T TO ESTABLISH ONE-STOP ZONAL SERVICE UGANDA CENTRE IN KAMWENGE

By Joy Kiiza, Senior IT Officer, Kamwenge District



Officials during the meeting

Kamwenge District is set to benefit from the establishment of a One-Stop Zonal Service Uganda Centre, an initiative aimed at improving service delivery and strengthening coordination among government agencies.

This was revealed by Ahimbisibwe Lebron from the Ministry of Public Service, Management Services Department, during a sensitization and engagement workshop held at the Kamwenge District Council Hall.

The workshop brought together key district stakeholders, including the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), heads

of departments, political leaders, and technical staff.

The engagement focused on raising awareness about the concept, purpose, and operational framework of the proposed zonal centres.

According to Kasuja Denis, the Cabinet of Uganda, under Minute Extract 4038 CT 2019, approved the establishment of regional Service Uganda Centres to bring public services closer to citizens.

These centres will serve as integrated



one-stop points where people can access services from multiple ministries, departments, and agencies under one roof.

He explained that the initiative will help eliminate challenges previously faced by citizens such as long queues, service delays, and difficulties in accessing information by promoting digital integration and inter-agency collaboration.

Kamwenge District Chief Administrative Officer, Harriet Katusiime, welcomed the development and pledged full support toward its implementation.

“The district administration is committed to ensuring that this facility is successfully established and

operationalized for the benefit of our community,” she said.

The Secretary for Social Services, Fred Mbonigaba, commended the Ministry for engaging local leadership and appreciated the planned infrastructure setup.

“The centre will significantly improve access to public services and promote transparency in government operations,” he noted.

Once operational, the Zonal Service Uganda Centre in Kamwenge is expected to transform how citizens interact with government institutions, making service delivery more efficient, accessible, and people-centered.

KITAGWENDA DISTRICT WORKERS DEFY NATIONAL STRIKE, CONTINUE SERVICE DELIVERY

By *Ainomuhangi Justus I.T Officer Kitagwenda District*



Kitagwenda district headquarters

Civil servants in Kitagwenda District have chosen to remain on duty despite the ongoing national strike that has paralyzed public services across many parts of Uganda.

Local government staff in Kitagwenda have continued to deliver essential services, earning praise from district leaders and the local community.

Civil servants in Kitagwenda District have opted out of the ongoing nationwide strike by local government workers, choosing to remain at their duty stations despite pressure to join calls for salary increments.

The Uganda Local Government Workers' Union, led by General Secretary Hassan



CAO Kitagwenda Mr. Dalili R.K Moses

Lwabayi Mudiba, last week declared industrial action over government's alleged failure to implement promised pay rises.

But Kitagwenda officials say abandoning work now would cripple vital services.

According to the Chief Administrative Officer Mr. Dalili R.K Moses, the district's workforce has demonstrated a commendable sense of responsibility and devotion to the people they serve.

"While we understand the grievances expressed by our colleagues nationwide, our workers here have chosen dialogue over disruption. Their dedication ensures that citizens continue accessing vital services," he said.

Mr. Dalili also described the strike as unfair, arguing that government has already shown willingness to improve workers' welfare.

"It's really unfair for us to join the industrial action when the government has already committed to enhance our salaries," Dalili said.

He stressed that downing tools would hurt communities that depend on civil servants.

"Whereas we demand for an increment, there should be diplomatic approaches that do not disrupt service delivery. Withdrawing tools now would be a disservice to the public," he noted.

Dalili also dismissed claims that no adjustments had been made, pointing to science, natural resources, and production departments where salaries have already been raised.

He further cited government's long-term commitments under the National Development Plan IV (NDP IV), which

he said would gradually address salary concerns. "Government has already made commitments under NDP IV to meet pre-set targets in the next five years," he said.

"It calls for patience as measures for economic growth are implemented. Once revenues improve, all will be achieved."

While several districts have been hit by service disruptions as workers stay away, Kitagwenda has become a rare exception where employees continue reporting to office.

As the national strike continues to draw mixed reactions, Kitagwenda District's stance has become an inspiring example of balance between advocacy and duty.

District leaders have reaffirmed their commitment to ongoing dialogue with government ministries and workers' unions to ensure that concerns are addressed without compromising public service delivery.

Kitagwenda's story stands as a reminder that service, even amid protest, remains the true measure of leadership and patriotism

KAMWENGE GETS MODERN CONTAINERIZED COLD CHAIN FACILITY

By Kiiza Joy, Senior IT Officer, Kamwenge District



containerised cold chain facility

Kamwenge District has received a significant boost in its animal health services with the installation of a modern containerized cold chain facility powered by a hybrid solar energy system to support vaccine storage and distribution.

The facility was established by the Government of Uganda through the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) and installed by Staunch Machinery (U) Limited. The initiative follows the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreak that struck Kabambiro Subcounty in February 2024, spreading from neighboring Ibanda District and affecting several communities in Kamwenge.

For years, the district has grappled with vaccine preservation challenges due to limited cold storage and unreliable

electricity. Previously, Kamwenge relied on a single functional refrigerator with a storage capacity of just 15,000 doses, which often led to vaccine spoilage and interrupted disease control programs.

According to Dr. Mbago Paul, the Principal Veterinary Officer of Kamwenge District, the new facility represents a milestone in improving veterinary health and livestock productivity.

“Kamwenge was selected among the 53 districts to benefit from the first phase of the national cold chain program,” said Dr. Mbago. “The new cold chain room can store up to 1.5 million vaccine doses and, with its hybrid solar system, guarantees consistent and reliable preservation.”

District Chairperson Hon. Joseph Karungi commended President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni and Hon. Frank Tumwebaze, the Minister of Agriculture, for prioritizing Kamwenge in the rollout of this vital infrastructure.

"We are grateful to the Government for recognizing Kamwenge's needs. This facility will strengthen our efforts to control animal diseases and safeguard the livelihoods of our farmers," Hon.

Karungi said.

Located at the Kamwenge District Headquarters, the cold chain facility is fully installed and awaiting official commissioning. Once operational, it is expected to enhance vaccine management, strengthen disease surveillance, and promote sustainable livestock health across the district and neighboring regions.

UNVEILING THE NATURAL GEM OF KITAGWENDA; THE MAJESTIC CYCADS

By Ainomuhangi Justus I.T Officer

Kitagwenda District

Kitagwenda District in western Uganda is home to one of the world's most remarkable natural treasures: the cycads. These ancient plants often called "living fossils" offer a unique intersection of ecology, history, culture, and tourism.

Tucked away in the rolling hills of Kitagwenda lies a treasure trove of natural beauty, waiting to be discovered. The cycads of Kitagwenda are a sight to behold, their ancient, majestic presence a testament to the region's rich biodiversity.

In Kitagwenda, the dominant cycad species is *Encephalartos whitelockii*. It is endemic to Uganda (meaning it doesn't naturally occur elsewhere). Its populations are located mostly along the Mpanga River, both above and below



cycad fruit



cycad trees in kitagwenda

Mpanga Falls, as it approaches where the river empties into Lake George. The cycads grow at elevations of about 1,000 to 1,300 meters above sea level. *Encephalartos whitelockii* forms one of the largest single cycad colonies in Africa. It is estimated that there are about 8,000 mature individuals in its known habitat.

The cycads are found in steep gorges and rocky slopes along the

Mpanga River. The terrain is dramatic granite rock faces, steep inclines, lush vegetation and often hard to access. Villages such as Karubuguma (Karuguma I & II) are known as "cycad villages." These are places where cycads grow naturally in large numbers, often up the slopes of valleys, sometimes intertwined with local farms and forest fragments.

Cycads are among the oldest seed plants on Earth. Their lineage goes back hundreds of millions of years long before many of the modern flora we are familiar with. They have a distinctive appearance palm-like leaves, tough stems, and often large cones when they reproduce. There are male and female plants. These living fossils, remnants of a bygone era, have been thriving

in Kitagwenda for millions of years. With their sturdy trunks, feathery leaves, and vibrant colors, the cycads are a true marvel of nature.

The cycads of Kitagwenda are not only a feast for the eyes, but also hold significant cultural and ecological importance. These plants have been an integral part of the local ecosystem, providing food and shelter for various animals and insects. For the local communities, the cycads are a symbol of tradition and heritage. They have been used in traditional medicine, rituals, and ceremonies for generations. The cycads are also a source of pride and identity for the people of Kitagwenda, reflecting their deep connection with nature.

Conservation efforts are underway to protect these incredible plants and their habitats. The local authorities, in collaboration with environmental



cycad village in karubuguma kitagwenda district

organizations, are working tirelessly to safeguard the cycads from threats such as habitat destruction, over-harvesting, and climate change. As you wander through the lush landscapes of Kitagwenda, the cycads stand tall, their beauty and majesty leaving a lasting impression. Whether you are a nature enthusiast, a photographer, or simply a curious traveler, the cycads of Kitagwenda are a must-see destination.

In terms of opportunities, these cycads are beneficial in; **Tourism potential:** The cycad villages are being promoted by the Uganda Tourism Board as part of a strategy to diversify tourism beyond gorilla trekking, wildlife safaris, etc. They offer a unique product—"Jurassic plants," scenic walks, nature trails, waterfalls, vistas over Lake George, culture from local Batagwenda communities, **Scientific value:** Because *E. whitelockii* is endemic and forms large colonies, it offers an excellent site for studies in ecology, conservation biology, plant reproduction, climate resilience and **Local community development:** By building eco tours, interpretive centers, craft markets, and other tourism services (guides, lodging, food), communities can benefit economically.

To ensure that these beautiful cycads continue to thrive (and contribute to both nature and people), a few steps are important:

- Strengthen protection of key cycad habitats (along Mpanga River, steep slopes), possibly via local or national conservation designations.
- Promote awareness among local

communities about the ecological and economic value of cycads, to reduce destructive practices (burning, clearing, illegal collection).

- Sustainable tourism development: build trails, signage, rest spots, viewing platforms; train local guides; ensure infrastructure is eco-friendly; manage visitor numbers so that the habitat is not disturbed.
- Monitoring and research: track cycad population sizes, regeneration rates, impact of threats like fire and livestock; study their biology (pollination, seed dispersal) to inform conservation.
- Benefit sharing: ensure that tourism profits or conservation funding go to local people—villages of Karubuguma, Karuguma, etc.—so that conservation has tangible rewards for them.
- Also, conservation efforts (fencing off areas, educating locals, alternative livelihoods) can reduce destructive practices.

The cycads of Kitagwenda are more than botanical oddities they are living links to Earth's deep past, rare treasures in Uganda's natural heritage, and vibrant potential for sustainable tourism and community development. Preserving them is both a responsibility and an opportunity. With wise conservation, meaningful community engagement, and investment in eco tourism, the cycad villages of Kitagwenda could become a globally recognized destination not just for plant lovers, but for anyone seeking to connect with nature, history, and Uganda's quieter wonders.

Economy Sector



✓ Uganda has a strong, resilient, and fast-growing economy, recently ranked seventh by the IMF among the world's **9** fastest-growing economies.

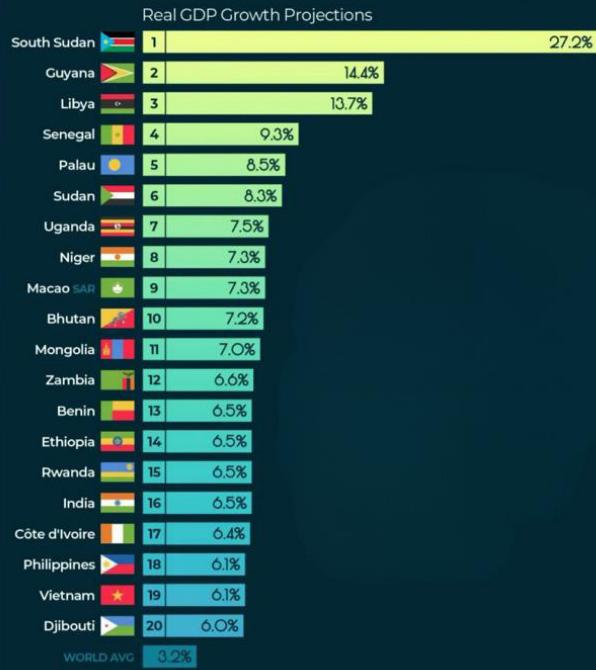
✓ In FY 2023/24, the economy grew by **6.1%**.



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Fastest Growing Economies

in 2025





Energy Sector

Celebrating;

- ✓ A **1,443 km** heated pipeline connecting Hoima, Uganda, to the Port of Tanga, Tanzania.
- ✓ Expected to be operational by 2027.
- ✓ Projected to transport **230,000 barrels per day**.





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