

Thieves steal cables, poles for Karuma power project

The legislators say many critical parts of the dam have been vandalised and the repairs will take a lot of time to be complete.

BY MARKO TAIBOT
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The 600Mw Karuma Hydropower dam is unlikely to be commissioned for full operations by June 2022, the Parliamentary Committee on Environment and Natural Resources has said.

The committee blamed this on the vandalism of some critical equipment of the plant including the electricity pylons.

In an interview with *Daily Monitor* at the weekend, Mr Emmanuel Ojala, the chairperson of the committee, said fixing such gaps would take a lot of time.

"It is useless to commission the dam when you are not going to transmit power to the places that need them. The cost of repairing the vandalised pylon is more than double the cost of constructing it besides the time it takes to construct it," Mr Ojala said.

"Is Karuma going to be commissioned because when you are repairing you have to dig the whole thing and start afresh? Maybe, if vandals continue doing what they are doing we might not. Is it [wise to] commission Karuma and we don't transmit power?" he asked.

He gave an example of the 132KV Karuma-Lira transmission line, where 26 kilometres of the 66 kilometers of the line was vandalised.

Mr Ojala said the committee will urge the Prime Minister, Ms Robbinah Nabbanja, to summon all the responsible ministries to ensure that deterrent measures are quickly put in place to end the vandalism.

At the weekend, members of the committee conducted a



Part of the Karuma Dam which is still under construction. The 600Mw Karuma Hydropower dam is unlikely to be commissioned for full operations by June 2022, the Parliamentary Committee on Environment and Natural Resources has said. PHOTO/TBBIAS JOLLY OWINY

familiarisation tour of the dam.

Mr Okasai Opolot, the State Minister for Energy, said vandalism on

electricity transmission equipment is widespread in the whole country, adding that in areas where cameras

were installed to monitor such pylons, the cameras were stolen.

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The ministry is coming up with strategies including convincing the Ministry of Trade to ban the scrap metal business which is promoting vandalism. We are losing huge amounts of money due to vandalism, and if it is not controlled, it will make the economy collapse," Mr Okasai Opolot, the State Minister for Energy

strategies including convincing the Ministry of Trade to ban the scrap metal business which is promoting vandalism," Mr Opolot said.

He added: "We are losing huge amounts of money due to vandalism, and if it is not controlled, it will make the economy collapse."

He said an inter-ministerial committee consisting of the ministries of Trade, Works, and Internal Affairs has been formed to manage the vandalism.

Mr Opolot added that the dam will be commissioned in phases with the first phase to be conducted in April 2022.

"Karuma's six turbines will be commissioned in phases. Two of the turbines are set to start generating power by the end of April 2022, at the same time they will be commissioned because the transmission line to Kawanda is ready," Mr Opolot said.

"The trial commissioning is ongoing on the three turbines, which are fairly ready. We expect full commissioning by August," he added.

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REPORT

Previously

The committee's findings and concerns are similar to those of the 2021 Auditor General's report.

Mr John Muwanga, in his report, pointed out that several components of the project were incomplete and that it was unlikely that the 2022 completion deadline would be met. The completion of the land acquisition process for the 132kv

Karuma-Lira transmission line and Karuma dam reservoir remain outstanding.

This is likely to further affect the timely and successful commissioning of the dam, the report said.

"The delays in project completion are likely to result in increased supervision costs, by the supervising consultant, and increased commitment fees payable on undrawn balances of the loan," it stated.

Key non-conformities discovered during the audit included

unfinished 11kv switchgear installation, units one to six ring gate leakage, severe damages on the various 400kv cables, damaged conic sealing surfaces, cracks in the control building, and absence of a floating boom.

In June 2021, the completion and commissioning date for the dam was further extended to June 15, resulting in a delay of three years and six months from the initially planned completion date due to unfinished works.

Initially, the project was to be commissioned in December 2019,

but it missed the target date, and an extension of 12 months was granted, which the contractor again failed to meet in December last year after UEGCL raised concerns about quality issues and more defects.

The unfinished works include fixing defects like mechanical installations, electrical cables, and general cabling where some cables do not meet contract specifications and international standards, spillway rehabilitation, and other defects.