

# Roads to Prosperity

## INTERVIEW WITH ENG. ABRAHAM BYNADALA

MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND WORKS



**JAMES ABRAHAM BYNADALA**

Abraham Byandala is an engineer and politician. He holds a Master of Science in Civil Engineering from the University of Strathclyde. Prior to his appointment as Minister of Transport and Works, he served as the Kampala City Engineer and Surveyor. At one time he served as the Chairman of the government's Committee on Physical Infrastructure. He is an elected Member of Parliament, representing Katikamu County North, Luweero District.

### What are the principal strategic objectives and challenges of the Ministry of Transport and Works?

Uganda has experienced rapid economic and social development over the last 20 years, and is already a very different country to the one that emerged from prolonged civil strife in the late 1980s. Rapid development is expected to continue, especially as an indigenous oil sector develops in the coming years. However, it is necessary for future growth to be balanced, both sectorally, to ensure coherence in the overall development thrust, and regionally, to ensure equitable distribution of the fruits of development. Long-term development plans for the different economic sectors will help ensure that the overall planning effort will be well coordinated, and that critical blockages in key sectors do not impinge on the development of other sectors. It is particularly important that the infrastructure sectors – transport, electricity, and water – should be capable of ensuring the orderly advance of agriculture, industry, and commerce. With this in mind, the National Transport Master Plan (NTMP) sets out a framework for development of the transport sector over the next 15 years (2008-23). Since transport is the “blood” circulation system of any economy, this Plan constitutes an essential element for



Chinese construction companies are actively engaged in building Uganda's new transport infrastructure.

overall planning of the medium-term economic and social development of Uganda.

The NTMP reflects the key role that transport plays in facilitating the development of agriculture, commerce and trade; the movement of people for business, social needs and leisure; and the delivery of health, education and extension services. It is a pre-requisite of efficient economic and social activity that good and reliable transport be available not only between towns, villages and remote settlements throughout the country, but also within the larger cities themselves, especially the capital Kampala and the immediately surrounding area. The NTMP focuses on transport: road, rail, water, and air. We have agreed on regional corridors within the EAC to improve trade between member states and to develop tourism, agriculture and energy. We need to provide transport infrastructure to rural areas in the interest of national unity. The priority right now is providing access to oil producing areas such as the two roads that link us to South Sudan for example; we have funds from the World Bank ADB and IDB to help with this crucial project.

### What plans do you have for the railway network?

As regards railway transport, there is a tripartite agreement between Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda (and that will include South Sudan) to build a standard gauge railway with a spur to South Sudan. The heads of state meet every two months on this project and others. We are talking to the Chinese about funding. The Chinese Premier, Li Keqiang was here, and he seemed optimistic that Beijing would be interested in helping fund this eight billion dollar project. We also want to provide railway infrastructure to mining areas, particularly in the south. At the same time we are trying to upgrade our existing narrow gauge track. There are also plans to revamp the Rift Valley Railways, particularly the Mombasa to Nairobi stretch.

### How do you intend to improve transport around and across Lake Victoria?

We want to improve water transport on Lake Victoria, because we are not using this huge mass of water to our best advantage. We have begun navigational mapping of the lake to find new landing sites, and hopefully private investors will want to invest in transport. The private sector could be especially useful in this respect. There

are a number of opportunities in passenger ferries and cargo transport, mainly serving neighbouring countries. We are going to build an inland port on Lake Victoria near Kampala to reduce dependence on Kenya's Mombasa. The port should take three years to build and cost about US\$180 million. When the port at Bukasa, on the outskirts of Kampala, is finished, Ugandan imports will be cleared through Tanzania's Indian Ocean ports of Dar es Salaam and Tanga and ferried by rail to Tanzania's Musoma, on the shores of Lake Victoria. The cargo will then be shipped over the lake to Bukasa. We are also developing a master plan to expand Entebbe International Airport (EIA) alongside four aerodromes. Under a 20-year Civil Aviation Master-plan (CAM) valued at over \$400m, about US\$300m will be spent in the expansion of EIA, as well as Kasese (\$60m), Gulu (\$26m), Arua and Kotido. A Chinese company has carried out a feasibility study and an environmental impact assessment. We are looking for funding and hope the Chinese will get involved.

**What are your plans for improving traffic flows and reducing congestion in the capital?**

The government has embarked on a long-term plan for improving the transport network and easing traffic congestion in metropolitan Kampala within the context of the NTMP. With effect from the 2011-12 financial year, the government embarked on the programme for expansion of key highways leading to and from the city. The government will also support the newly created Kampala Capital City Authority, to speed up the improvement of the city's infrastructure. The future connection between Uganda's capital and the country's

largest and busiest airport has been approved in order to get an effective and quick link between these two important destinations; a modern link which will be much better suited than the existing Kampala-Entebbe Road to handle the heavy traffic that traverses it day and night.

We also have a masterplan to improve the traffic situation in Kampala that will see the construction of a dual carriageway to complete the 21 km bypass, along with new footbridges, widening of junctions, and the construction of new interchanges. Further to the bypass works, service roads shall be constructed and utilities relocated as required.

**What is your funding model for these projects?**

It depends. For example, PPP is difficult for railways, so we will go for soft loans. The expansion of the airport in Entebbe will also be a soft loan. The new road connecting Kampala with Entebbe will be a toll-road and a four-lane, dual carriage expressway with limited access. The Chinese government will lend up to US\$350 million for the construction of the highway, repayable over forty years. Public Private Partnership (PPP) can work on some roads. We also intend to build a new bus system in Kampala that could be run along similar lines: the state provides the infrastructure and a private company runs the service. Most of the above projects will be funded through a multi-pronged approach, that includes utilisation of our own domestic revenues and implementation of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), in addition to traditional sources of financing from bilateral and multilateral institutions and non-concessional financing.

**Projects will be funded through a multi-pronged approach**



Construction of the Kampala - Entebbe expressway.