

By Geoffrey Mutegeki

The construction works of the new Hoima International Airport, at Kabaale parish in Hoima district, is now at 45% SBC chief engineer Sharly Buchbut has said.

Buchbut made the remarks on last week, during a guided media tour of the site. Kabaale is about 50km from Hoima town

"We are progressing well and we expect to complete all the work by February 2023. We have completed about 45% of the works: The terminal building is going up and the runway, taxiway and apron will soon be paved," Buchbut said.

The airport is being constructed by SBC Uganda Limited – a joint venture company between UK's Colas Limited and Shikun and Binui namely SBI International Holdings AG.

The works include paving 3.5km of runways, carrying out of earthwork and drainage activities and pouring of cement and asphalt.

Others are building of electro-mechanical, communications and navigation systems and the erection of an air traffic control tower, fire station, fuel farm, a cargo holding building and terminal building and service structures.

Construction of the airport was flagged off in April 2018. This was after the Government acquired a loan of \$309m (about sh1.1 trillion) from Standard Chartered Bank and UK Export Finance to undertake the first phase of the construction.

Sitting on six square miles, Hoima airport, upon completion, will be the second international airport in Uganda, after Entebbe.

Buchbut said the airport will be built in full compliance with the international standards of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) as category 4F, with capacity of handling large cargo planes, such as the Boeing B747-800 and Antonov AN124.

The airport is expected to facilitate mobilisation of equipment for the construction of the Uganda oil refinery and the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) to Tanga in Tanzania. This is because many of the heavy and bulky components of these developments cannot be transported by road.

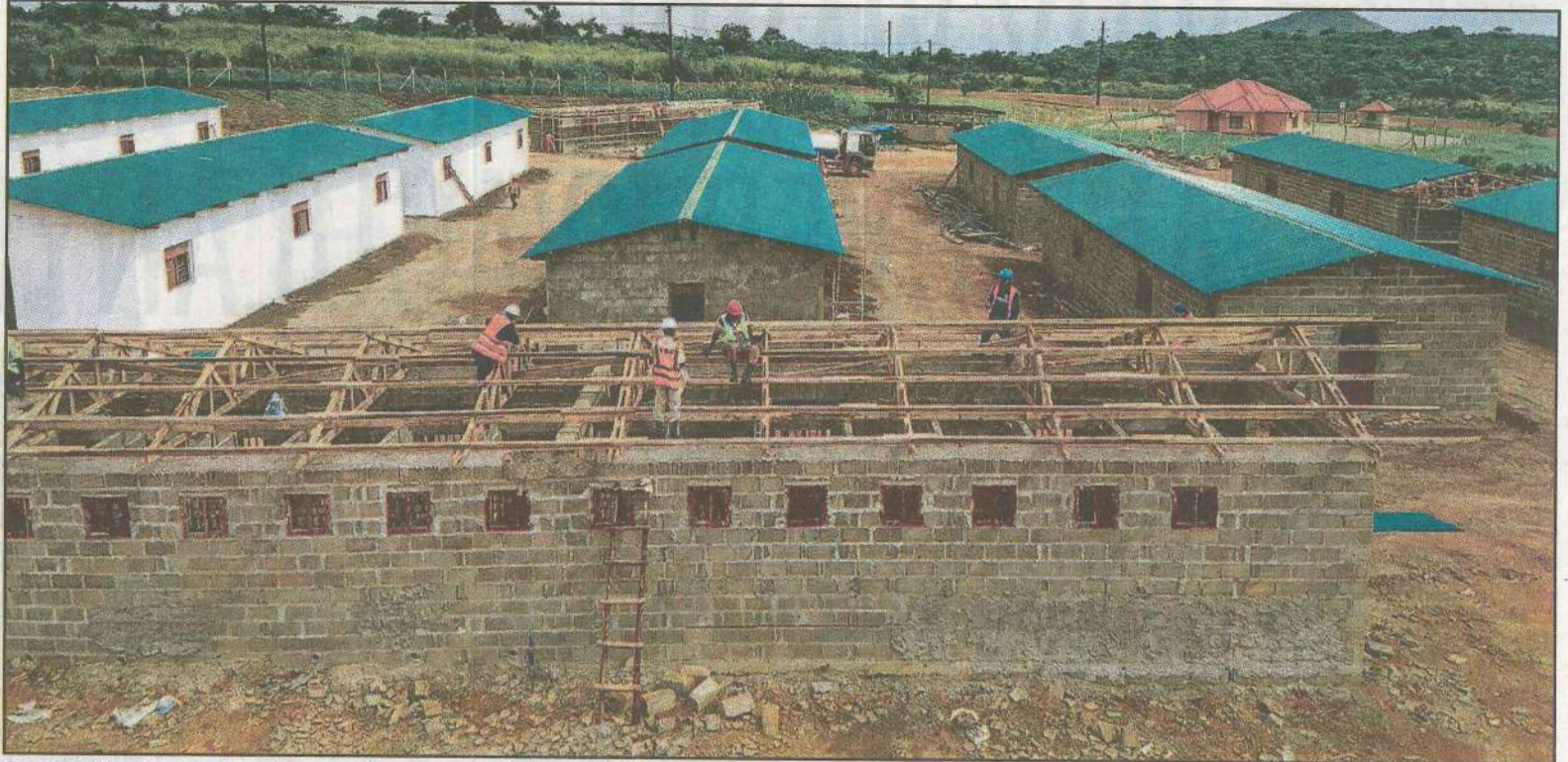
It will also transport oil experts, provide jobs and, at the same time, assist in the development of agriculture and tourism in Uganda.

Annet Kasoro, the Kabaale LC3 vice-chairperson, said residents are already benefiting from the project.

"Many youths are employed there as drivers and construction workers. As a community, our schools have been renovated and boreholes constructed. Even our health centres recently got an ambulance and beds," Kasoro said.

She urged her community members to prepare to reap from the industrial park and airport by engaging in agribusiness.

"With this airport, we have a direct route to the international market if we add value to our produce. There is also another business potential if we



Some of the houses constructed to accommodate staff at the Hoima International Airport due to COVID-19 regulations

# CONSTRUCTION OF HOIMA



**We had to halt works and find out how to handle the big number of workers we have, with reduced risk of exposure to the coronavirus**



An excavator at the construction site

aim to supply food to the industrial park," Kasoro said.

**COVID-19 DELAYS**  
 SBC Uganda senior project manager of Uganda Mihail Gorachinov said despite some delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they are still aiming to have the works completed by February 2023.

In order to keep up with the COVID-19 guidelines, transport restriction, works on the site were suspended for almost three weeks when the first potential exposure occurred in early March.

"We had to halt works and find out how to handle the big number of workers we have, with reduced risk of exposure to the coronavirus," Gorachinov said.

The company has 830 employees. Of these, about 20% are women and about 30% from Hoima district. Only 2% are non-Ugandans.

Some workers were laid off to cut on the number of people on site. The move was aimed at decongesting and implementing social distancing.

"Our workers used to reside in Hoima town, where buses had to

ferry them every day to work. This was risky and we could not operate with this kind of arrangement," Gorachinov said.

However, as a way of adapting, the company constructed camps for the workers. Three camps have been constructed and are accommodating up to 600 workers.

"An extensive programme of preventive COVID-19 measures was put in place, including social distancing, wearing of masks and putting up handwashing facilities all over the site. We are also

implementing a ban on travel to Hoima town," Gorachinov said.

However, the productivity was greatly reduced during this time period.

Recently, works and transport minister Gen. Katumba Wamala visited the site and was impressed by the progress.

"I spent a great part of the day in Hoima touring the ongoing construction of Kabaale Airport. I was impressed with the work being done by SBC. We shall continue to support and provide an enabling environment



An aerial view of the runway, which is under construction at Hoima International Airport in Hoima district. Construction works are expected to be completed by February 2023

# INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT NOW AT 45%

PHOTOS BY GEOFFREY MUTEGEKI



Faridah Nabbanja, one of the female drivers operating a road roller. The equipment is one of the heavy machines at the construction site in Kabaale, Hoima district



The runway underconstruction at in Hoima district



Gorachinov explaining the progress of the airport construction works

for the growth of the aviation industry," Katumba said in a Tweet.

### DEVELOPING INDUSTRIAL PARK

The airport is strategically located within the 29 square mile Kaabale Industrial Park, which will be developed, to accommodate the national refinery and various industrial and commercial complexes.

However, there is need to fast-track the construction of the industrial park, to go hand-in-hand with the airport.

"We are ready to take up the design, financing and construction of the

industrial park, in a similar development model of the airport, to support the efforts of government of Uganda to sustain and enhance the industrialisation of the nation," SBC director Yoran Dunsy said.

Lars Peter Jansen, the area manager with Colas Uganda, said they are in negotiations with the Government to finance the development of the industrial park.

"It will make a lot of sense to fast-track the industrial park. The airport will not just stand alone, other industries and businesses need to be up also," Jansen said.