



Seated: Museveni (fourth-left) and the first daughter, Natasha Karugire (fourth-right) with the director of information and publicity at the NRM secretariat, Emmanuel Dombo (left), Vision Group CEO Don Wanyama (second-left), radio personality Christine Mawadri (third-left), other officials and bloggers after the Jazz with Jajja chat at the State Lodge, Nakasero yesterday. (Scan picture using the Vision Digital Experience to watch video)

# GRAND PLAN TO REDUCE COST OF INTERNET REVEALED

By Sarah Nabakooza

President Yoweri Museveni has revealed a grand plan to reduce the cost of internet in the country.

According to Museveni, discussions are ongoing with American-based tech entrepreneur Elon Musk on the possibility of introducing Starlink satellite internet to Uganda, should it prove affordable.

"If the satellite becomes cheaper, we shall allow it," he said. Starlink uses satellite-based internet as opposed to the current internet service providers who use the fibre optic cable and masts to ensure internet connectivity.

Museveni's revelation followed concerns raised by broadcaster Isaac Katende, popularly known as Kasuku, who wondered why data remains expensive.

Katende said expensive data undermines the livelihoods of young people who rely on online platforms for content creation, journalism and digital business.

In response, Museveni explained that Uganda has deliberately invested in undersea fibre-optic cables to reduce the historically high cost of internet, which had previously depended on expensive satellite communication.

"There were attempts by telephone companies to monopolise supply of internet services and we said no," Museveni noted, adding that the Government intervention was necessary to lower costs and expand access.

He explained that Uganda is connected to global data routes through undersea cables landing at the East African coast, linked to inland

fibre networks that now serve most parts of the country. The shift from satellite to fibre, he said, had already significantly reduced costs, although further reductions are still possible.

Museveni acknowledged that issues, such as taxation and last-mile connectivity could still be driving prices up and pledged that government would review these bottlenecks.

This was during a conversation dubbed 'Jazz with Jajja' in which Museveni had a candid talk with young Ugandans (*bazukulu*) at State Lodge Nakasero, yesterday.

The interactive engagement, hosted by the First Daughter, Natasha Museveni Karugire, brought together content creators, journalists, digital entrepreneurs and influencers.

Beyond infrastructure, Museveni urged young people to look beyond entertainment and short-term pleasures and focus on the fundamentals of economic transformation.

"It is interesting that many young people talk about dancing and football, which are good, but rarely talk about the regional market," Museveni said.

He added that while leisure has its place, prosperity requires discipline and focus.

"When I was young, I would also dance, fight and study. The problem today is that you people want to dance all the time," he said.

Responding to a question by TikTok influencer Sean Ibrahim, popularly known as Sean Styles, on what has driven his long political journey, Museveni traced his motivation to identity, history and a deep desire to protect Africa's freedom.

"What motivates me is that I love myself as a Munyankore from the 'nte (cow) clan,

## FACEBOOK SHUTDOWN

On social media, Museveni maintained that the shutdown of Facebook was prompted by misuse of the platform, but said government remains open to engagement if platforms operate responsibly. "We closed it because some people thought they could insult and play around with us."

The platform was blocked in January 2021, shortly before the general elections, after Facebook restricted accounts linked to government officials, arguing that they were engaged in co-ordinated inauthentic behaviour. At the time, the Government banned Facebook accusing it of bias and interference in Uganda's internal affairs.

as a Ugandan and as an African. I love you people. I see you as my children and grandchildren," he said.

He said history has shown that the world can be unforgiving to weak societies, stressing that his generation's struggle was driven by the need to prevent Africans from disappearing or returning to servitude. "My motivation is freedom for the black race."

The President attributed his personal stamina and resilience to traditional African livelihoods, particularly cattle keeping, which he said instilled toughness, self-reliance and endurance. He argued that African culture should not be discarded wholesale, but refined by removing outdated practices while retaining those that build strength.

### ON MADURO ARREST

Museveni used the engagement to comment on global politics, citing the recent arrest of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro by the US forces as a warning signal for Africa.

Museveni said the incident underscores the urgent need for Africa to strengthen its strategic security across land, sea, air and space. "The time is

now for Africans to realise the problem at hand and see how to deal with it."

While noting that details surrounding Maduro's arrest were still unfolding, Museveni said the episode exposed global power imbalances and the dangers faced by weaker or fragmented regions.

"I don't know what they are fighting for because Americans are saying that some of the Latin Americans are sending drugs to the US, but we shall learn more," he said, adding: "But whatever the case, you can see the gaps I am telling you about."

He warned that Africa risks remaining vulnerable if it fails to build economic strength, political unity and strategic capacity, pointing out that global powers are rapidly advancing in military technology and space exploration.

"The Americans, Chinese, Russians and Indians are on the moon. We are here. They see us as insects. We don't see them. This is dangerous," Museveni stated.

### DISCUSS EXISTENTIAL ISSUES

The President urged Africa's youth, especially digital influencers and content

creators, to use their platforms to discuss such existential issues rather than trivial matters. "What are you influencing when people are on the moon and we are here?" he asked.

Museveni noted that prosperity lies at the heart of the National Resistance Movement's (NRM's) ideology. Responding to a question by journalist Simon Kaheru, the President warned that Africa faces a danger if young people fail to understand how wealth is created.

"Prosperity does not come from begging. It comes from producing a good or service and selling it sustainably, with *ekibaro* (calculation)," he noted.

He said Uganda's diverse, multi-tribal structure created natural economic complementaries, which later informed the NRM's ideological pillars of patriotism - loving Uganda as a market, and pan-Africanism - embracing the wider African market.

"Uganda alone is not enough," Museveni said, noting that the country now produces surplus milk, maize, bananas, cement and steel, all of which depend on regional and continental markets to remain viable.

Museveni traced Uganda's economic challenges to the colonial enclave economy based on raw exports. By independence, he said, the economy revolved around the three Cs (cotton, coffee and copper) and the three Ts (tobacco, tea and tourism) covering only about 4% of homesteads. "When the NRM came to power in 1986, even that small economy had collapsed," he said.

He outlined progress made

since then, including restoring and expanding traditional exports, diversifying into dairy, fisheries, fruits and manufacturing, adding value to raw materials and transitioning into a knowledge economy with local production of vehicles, vaccines and computers.

However, he noted that 68% of homesteads were still outside the money economy by 2013, prompting the introduction of Operation Wealth Creation and later the Parish Development Model.

"The key is guiding people into enterprises that make economic sense for their land size."

### YOUTH MIGRATION

On youth migration for work, an issue raised by content creator Osman Kaweesa, popularly known as Jobless Billionaire, Museveni said many young people misunderstand where jobs come from.

"Jobs and wealth will mainly come from four sectors: Commercial agriculture, manufacturing and artisanship, services and ICT (Information and Communication Technology)," he said, stressing the four-acre model as a practical pathway to household income.

Museveni also highlighted the role of presidential skilling hubs and ongoing education curriculum reforms, saying Africa's biggest challenge remains mindset.

"We export coffee at \$2.5 per kilogramme, but after value addition, it can earn \$40," he said, adding: "Yet coffee is a \$460b global business, and Africa earns only a small fraction. That is the mindset change we are struggling with."