



Natasha Museveni (left) and her husband Edwin Karugire (second-left) with Deputy Speaker of Parliament Thomas Tayebwa (third-left) at the dinner on Saturday

Dancers entertain guests at the Mehta Group centenary celebrations in Lugazi, Buikwe district on Saturday



MUSEVENI LAUDS MEHTA FOR PIONEERING SUGAR INDUSTRY IN UGANDA

By Vision Reporter

President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni has commended Mehta Group for pioneering the sugar industry in Uganda despite the challenges that were occasioned by political instability.

"I also thank them, particularly, Mahendra Mehta and his wife for not giving up after the disappointment of Idi Amin. When we called them back, they came immediately," he said.

Museveni, accompanied by the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Janet Museveni, made the remarks on Saturday during the centenary celebrations of the Sugar Corporation of Uganda Limited (SCOUL) in Lugazi municipality.

SCOUL, the first sugar factory in Uganda, was established in 1924 by the late Nanji Kalidas Mehta, the founder of Mehta Group.

The President congratulated the Mehta Group for their resilience, determination and loyalty to the country.

"On behalf of Uganda and that of the National Resistance Movement (NRM), I want to thank and congratulate the Mehtas on two counts: Number one, the elder Mehta who pioneered the sugar industry in 1924. I thank him and congratulate him.

"I also congratulate Mzee Mehta who came to Uganda in 1952 after studies and started engaging in the group's management. That is 72 years

TEN-POINT PROGRAMME

On the other hand, President Yoweri Museveni informed the gathering that Uganda's economy had grown progressively because of the correct ideology of the National Resistance Movement government.

"Now, the big problems in the world, particularly in Africa, have been mistakes on three fronts; philosophical, ideological and strategic mistakes. For instance, on philosophical mistakes, one question disturbing people has been what makes a man work best. Some people have made mistakes on that, they have not answered it well. We have altruism, but these are the minority. The majority of the people work for self-interest," he explained.

"Therefore, when you are designing a strategy for the whole society, it is not correct to design as if the whole society will work under the basis of altruism. That is why there were a lot of mistakes in Africa in the 1960s when the private sector was not encouraged. Fortunately, by the time we came into government, we had clarified our views on this and put them in what we call the 10-point programme."

The President explained that they advocated for a private sector-led economy, with the parastatals acting as a supplementary effort in the 10-point programme.

"We have parastatals like the National Water and Sewerage Company, Uganda Development Bank, National Housing Finance Bank, Post Bank and army companies which are doing very well," he said.

Museveni also thanked the Mehta Group for taking his advice of growing their own sugarcane and their corporate social responsibility in education and healthcare.

"The only people who can make money from sugarcane, maize and other crops are those using extensive agriculture. Therefore, relying on out-growers was not a good strategy. I am now glad you listened to me."

now, a good contribution," he noted.

"I can attest to Mzee Mehta's loyalty to Uganda. During COVID-19, I got information

that Mzee Mehta was stuck in London, but he did not want to stay there. Although we were not allowing tourists to come, I had to issue a special permit



Museveni (left) with Mahendra (second-left) and Jay Mehta launch a power plant in Lugazi on Saturday. (Scan picture using the Vision Digital Experience to watch video)

for Mzee Mehta's return. So, you fellows who like to go to London, Mzee Mehta and myself like staying here."

Museveni further revealed that the NRM government's decision to return properties to the Asians who had been expelled by former president Idi Amin was crucial in attracting them to invest more in Uganda.

"I want to thank the Mehtas because right now they are producing sugar and cables. They are also producing 16MW of electricity from biogas, ethanol, biofertilisers and growing roses," he said.

Museveni also directed that petroleum companies should start blending imported fuel with locally-produced biofuel.

"In the meantime, as we are still importing petroleum, I now direct that all oil companies blend imported petroleum with the ethanol made by our people here. Secondly, I will not allow the importation of cables, yet they are manufactured here with our raw materials," he said.

Museveni pledged to support Mehta's horticulture and floriculture business.

BETWEEN THE LINES

◻ The Sugar Corporation of Uganda Limited, the first sugar factory in Uganda, was established in 1924 by the late Nanji Kalidas Mehta, the founder of Mehta Group.

'BUILD FOR GENERATIONS'

Mrs Museveni lauded the late Nanji Kalidas Mehta for coming to Uganda at the age of 13 years and later setting up a sugar factory.

"It sounds like fiction or a dream, but this is what happened. I salute him because he demonstrated courage and persistence. He must have been a special kind of a person," she said.

Mrs Museveni commended the Mehta family on their values and business ethics.

"I am aware that besides being leaders in the business world, you have also done great work in community development. For example, I know that you run a hospital in Lugazi and various dispensaries. I also know that

you have established schools. This is truly commendable," the First Lady said.

"I pray that the young generation will learn something from people like you that it is possible to build for generations; we can create wealth for generations and make a significant contribution wherever God sends us in the world. Finally, I want in a special way to salute my sister and friend, Suni, who has been a real friend and sister over the years. Please know that we appreciate your friendship with us as family."

MEHTA THANKS PRESIDENT

The Mehta Group chairperson, Mahendra Mehta, thanked Museveni and the First Lady for gracing the group's celebrations.

He also lauded the President for creating an environment that had enabled companies like Mehta to thrive in Uganda.

"Your Excellency and the First Lady, we are grateful to you for supporting the group."

Ministers and MPs, among other guests, also attended the event.