

As we enter August, Kampala has been seeing quite a bit of rainfall. While the rainy season typically begins in September, it seems this year it may be arriving a little early.

1. Uganda's National Cleaning Day

The Ugandan government has designated the last Saturday of every month, from 7:00 to 10:00 a.m., as "National Cleaning Day" — a time for the entire nation to come together and clean up their communities.

The very first cleanup took place on July 25th. The public announcement was made just two days prior, on the 23rd, making for quite a rushed rollout. On the day itself, traffic was restricted during the cleanup hours, and commercial establishments suspended their operations. In Kampala, Prime Minister Nabbanja and other cabinet ministers took to the streets themselves, and the sight of them collecting rubbish was broadcast live on television. A similar initiative has been implemented in neighboring Rwanda, where it has reportedly been a great success. Uganda's new cabinet has declared its commitment to tackling policy challenges with a "no sleep" spirit — and true to that pledge, ministers were out in full force from early Saturday morning.

That said, as this was the very first implementation and came together so quickly, a number of areas for improvement were identified — for instance, garbage collection trucks were not sufficiently arranged in time. Preparations in regional cities outside Kampala also appeared to be lacking. Within Kampala, the KCCA has previously made efforts to keep streets clean by paying small fees to local residents for street cleaning. However, the city is often dusty, and the habit of littering still remains common. I hope this initiative will raise more awareness among the general public.

2. Handover Ceremony at the Kiteezi Waste Disposal Site

In August 2024, a devastating incident occurred at the Kiteezi landfill on the outskirts of Kampala, where heavy rains caused a massive collapse of the garbage mound, resulting in many casualties. The Japanese government, through a UN agency, UN-Habitat, provided emergency assistance to improve the proper management of the waste disposal site — something I have also touched on in this column, including in the December 2025 issue.

This time, the UN-Habitat project came to a close, and a handover ceremony was held to formally transfer the site to the Ugandan side.

In a surprise that was not on the official program, Prime Minister Nabbanja made her way to Kiteezi in between parliamentary sessions to attend the ceremony.

The Fukuoka Method has been applied at Kiteezi. Professor Emeritus, Matsufuji Yasushi of Fukuoka University visited the site on numerous occasions throughout the project's implementation, and his dedication and passion for the work has been truly inspiring. Professor Matsufuji also devoted considerable effort to nurturing local businesses. As a result, methane gas extraction pipes manufactured with the involvement of local startups have been installed at the site. This project was a fine example of Japan providing funding for technical expertise while entrusting much of the work to the people of Uganda themselves. The foul odor has almost completely disappeared, and rainwater is now draining naturally.

Waste management is a shared international challenge faced not only by African cities but by cities around the world. There are still several other waste disposal sites outside Kampala, and addressing those will also be an urgent priority. Together with the National Cleaning Day initiative introduced above, I look forward to seeing a meaningful shift in the awareness of people.



3. Japanese Tea Ceremony

Japanese cuisine — recognized as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage — is popular in Uganda as well. While many Ugandans are not particularly fond of raw fish, Japanese food in general is undeniably well-loved, from maki sushi and tempura to noodles, and beverages such as sake and Japanese whisky.

This month, we hosted an event to introduce Japanese culture from a slightly different angle. The theme was matcha. We organized an experiential event centered around the tea ceremony, featuring a meal and sweets made with matcha. For the tea ceremony itself, we were grateful for the cooperation of Mr. Yoshifumi Yamaguchi, Japanese Cuisine Goodwill Ambassador, and the members of the Tea Ceremony Club of the Japanese Association.



For most of the attendees, it was their first experience with a tea ceremony. The event began with a demonstration of Tea ceremony, followed by an explanation of history, customs of the tea ceremony and their meaning. Guests then enjoyed a bowl of matcha themselves.

Matcha is already commonly found in Kampala — in matcha lattes and ice cream, for example. However, an experience like this traditional tea ceremony may well have been entirely new for many. And compared to the matcha products available in supermarkets, the tea served was without sweetener and had a much richer, more full-bodied flavor.

This was our first attempt at this kind of event, and we hope to continue introducing authentic Japanese culture, one step at a time.

4. Peacebuilding in Uganda

In this column, back in March and April of this year, I took a brief look at Uganda's history — specifically, how the current government centered on the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) came to be formed out of the civil conflict known as the Bush War. The NRM, led by President Museveni, came to power in 1986, though the conflict continued well into the 2000s.

Adding further complexity to the situation was the continuous influx of refugees from neighboring countries. That flow continues to this day, with the total number of refugees now standing at approximately two million.

In response to this challenging and multifaceted situation, Japan has long been engaged in peacebuilding efforts in border regions such as West Nile, primarily through JICA.

The work involves navigating the relationships between local communities and refugees, as well as between local populations and the central government, with whom tensions have persisted over many years — all while supporting the local government officials who administer these areas. There are few major industries in these regions, making job creation another pressing need.

From August 13 to 21 of this month, JICA's peacebuilding team brought together not only local residents and government officials, but also stakeholders from neighboring countries, for a workshop. Participants engaged in candid discussions about the specific challenges facing

the region, possible responses, and the way forward. In addition to Ugandan participants, we were pleased to welcome representatives from South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Rwanda.



The issues run deep, and solutions may not become clear overnight. But if peace cannot be maintained in this region, instability will only continue to grow. We are committed to pressing on with these steady, painstaking efforts in the hope of contributing to lasting peace and stability across the region.

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