

# Business deals rewiring the economy

## Mergers & acquisitions.

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In Uganda, deal-making doesn't often make global noise. A string of disciplined buys and bolt-ons have taken control of the economy's choke-points in the last two years; from cement and pharma to bank balance sheets, telecom backbones, and transition-era minerals.

However, now that many of them have been completed, or are in the last leg of completion, the real test now is execution: approvals, integration, and capital delivery that turn paper gains into productivity, will be the next phase.

In this article, we look at business deals that have redrawn markets, and the ones about to move the business choke-points.

### Hima Cement acquired by Sarai Group/Rwimi Holding

Holcim/Bamburi's exit placed one of the country's most strategic, price-setting assets in the hands of a Ugandan industrial group - Sarai Group/Rwimi Holding - with a reputation for operating at scale.

The deal, which was closed in March 2024, promises to change the spectrum of the cement industry, breaking years of bureaucracy under multinational control.

It promises also to ease decisions on kiln upgrades, alternative fuels, and the logistics that feed upcountry markets.

Cement remains the heartbeat of housing and public works; even modest efficiency gains ripple into project costs and delivery timelines. The early test will be price stability during peak build seasons.

### Africa Capitalworks acquires Quality Chemical Industries

The acquisition shifted control from Indian drug manufacturer Cipla to a regional investor with a local mandate.

The deal, which was closed in November 2023, has begun to stabilize, allowing the pharmaceutical company to rebrand in February 2024 to a more familiar name - from Cipla Quality Chemical Limited to Quality Chemical Industries Limited.

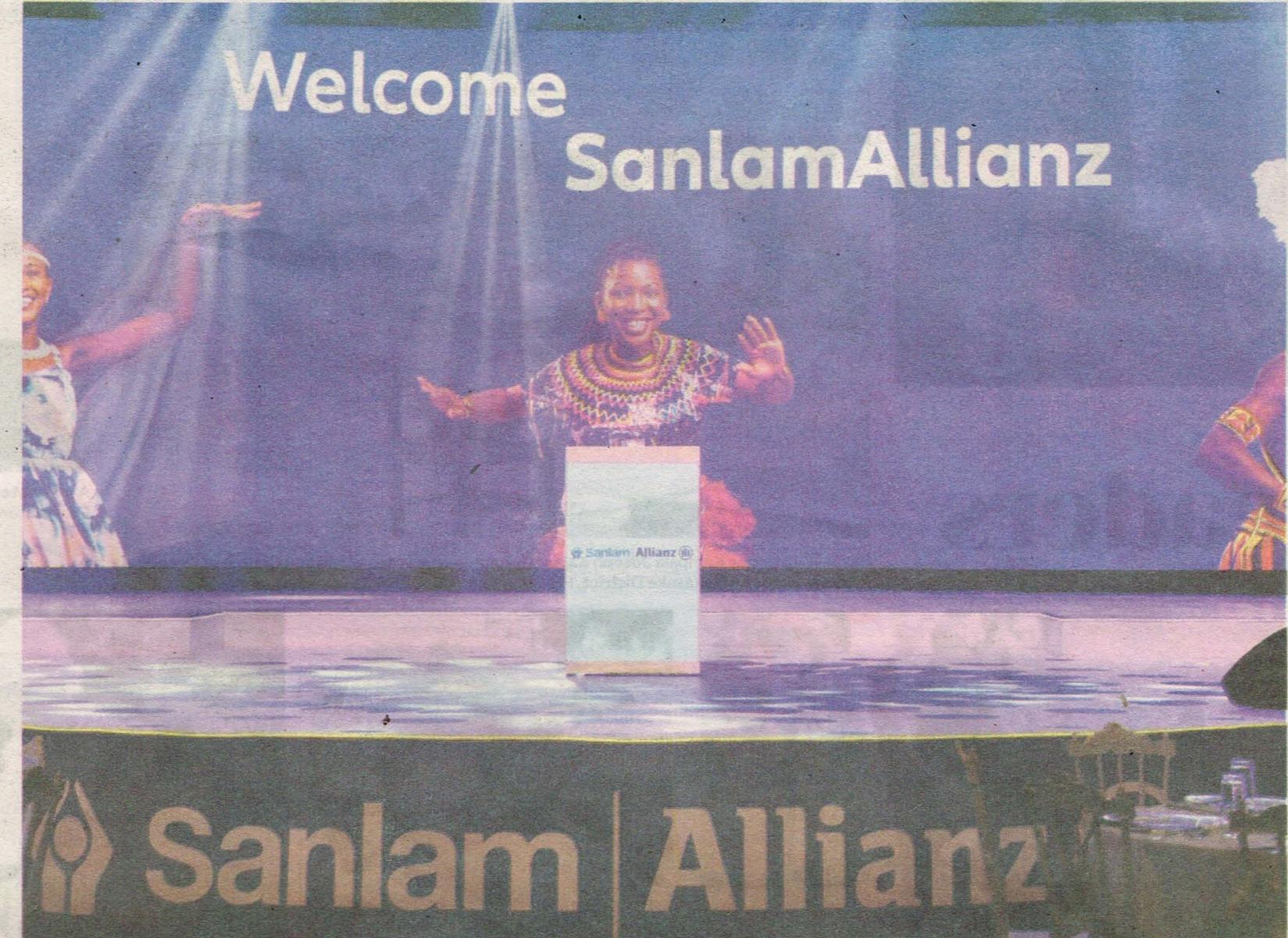
Cipla had largely controlled the operations of Quality Chemical Industries through a 51.8 percent stake purchased in 2014.

However, Cipla exit has accelerated decisions on product expansion and export markets, while keeping good manufacturing practice discipline and public-market scrutiny.

The company has also since returned to profitability after a long stretch of losses.

### Sanlam General and Jubilee Allianz General merger

The Insurance Regulatory Authority has long nudged scale and consolida-



The approval of the Sanlam and Jubilee Allianz merger on July 25, 2025, paved the way for an integration of two industry giants, setting up one of the market's largest general insurers. PHOTO / FILE

tion. The approval of the Sanlam and Jubilee Allianz merger on July 25, 2025, paved the way for an integration of two industry giants, setting up one of the market's largest general insurers.

The new entity, SanlamAllianz, promises broader product suites, leveraging a solid balance sheet that will also be key in speeding up claims.

Insurance penetration remains low; thus, a stronger balance sheet and better service could pull more SMEs and households into formal cover, if integration preserves service quality and talent.

The merger could also be the beginning of further action in an industry where the regulator has nudged for mergers and acquisitions.

### Access Bank acquires 80% in Finance Trust Bank

The deal was signed in January 2024, but has remained quite with little to no updates.

However, it is a deal in which, once everything is integrated, a pan-African balance sheet will meet a commu-

#### Key figure

\$2.3b

At the close of last year, Diageo announced that it had agreed to sell its 65 percent stake in EABL to Japanese Asahi for \$2.3b.

51.8%

Africa Capitalworks' acquisition of 51.8 percent stake in Quality Chemicals from Cipla is beginning to yield results with the drug maker cutting years of losses.

100%

Canal+, last year announced the completion of agreements for a 100 percent takeover of Multichoice and GOTv subsidiaries, across Africa, including in Uganda.

nity bank with a small and medium growth DNA.

The drive is to build a bank with stronger capital, deeper treasury and cross-border rails layered onto a franchise long focused on women-led businesses and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises.

It will also be expected to create sharper SME products, trade finance, supply-chain lending, and digital collections, alongside tighter risk management.

### Uganda Telecom (UTel) recapitalisation by Rowad Capital Commercial

The \$225m deal was signed in October 2024, seeking to restore UTeL as a credible third force in wholesale, enterprise, and gov-tech.

However, what followed has been silence, with the delivery of the deal seemingly hinged on regulatory clearances, a timely capital injection, and a 12-month network modernisation sprint.

Because the deal promises the crea-

tion of a third force, the industry is expected to have a large supply of competition on corporate connectivity and data pricing, better redundancy for state networks, and leverage for government as a big buyer.

### Ionic Rare Earths acquires 94% of Rwenzori Rare Metals

The Share Purchase Agreement was signed in December 2023, with a promise to help Uganda edge into magnet metals - dysprosium and terbium - vital to EVs and wind power.

The commercial arc now depends on project finance, permitting, and offtake agreements that can anchor an export industry.

This will be key in diversifying the export basket beyond coffee, gold, and fish, into strategic inputs for global tech, which would be a structural shift.

### Pearl Dairy (Lato/Maziwa) acquires Highland Creamers, Kenya

With Uganda's milk suffering constant blockades, it was strategic for Pearl Dairy to buy into a Kenyan com-

pany. The deal, which Comesa approved in March 2024, was a regional supply-chain move that will stabilise raw-milk intake here and deepen market access across the border.

This is also proof that Ugandan brands can scale regionally, not just defend local market share.

#### William Byaruhanga acquires 14.63% stake in Sidian Bank

Former Attorney General William Byaruhanga, through Kenbe Investments, acquired a 14.63% stake in Kenyan Sidian Bank, becoming the fourth largest shareholder.

Estimates peg the deal at Shs35.2b, sourced from Centum's ongoing sell-down.

The acquisition was a notable marker of Ugandan private capital playing offense in regional banking.

If Sidian executes, the stake can become a template for other Ugandan families and institutions looking to diversify across the EAC without leaving the region.

#### Canal+ acquires MultiChoice Group

Canal+, at the close of last year announced the completion of its 100 percent takeover of the Multichoice and GOTv subsidiaries, across Africa, including in Uganda.

The move by the French broadcasting giant followed conditional approval in South Africa by the country's Competition Tribunal in July.

Canal+ had initially extended the completion date to October 8, 2025, but announced at the close of last year that the two entities had reached an agreement pending regulatory approvals.

In Uganda, Uganda Communications Commission has already invited the public for its views as required by the law.

#### AkzoNobel takeover of Kansai Plascon operations

Kansai Plascon Africa in 2023 announced an Africa-wide sale of its operations to AkzoNobel.

However, the deal remains pending after regulators objected to the creation of a near monopoly.

AkzoNobel had proposed to acquire the decorative paint business of Kansai Plascon East Africa, which includes Uganda and Kansai Plascon Africa Limited.

However, on September 2, 2023, the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa Competition Commission issued its first-ever merger prohibition.

The proposed merger, it noted, would not result in a significant market share increase of the merging parties.

Comesa, however, approved the merger of the industrial coatings' businesses of the two companies.

#### Government leases Soroti Fruit Factory

At the close of 2023 government announced it had leased the operations of the Soroti Fruit Factory to a private investor.

Details have been scanty in public disclosures, but government has previously indicated that it had leased the factory to former Ethiopian First Lady Mesfin Zenawi.

The deal is thought to have been a public-private partnership rather than a disclosed equity sale.

Government still owns 80 percent of the factory through Uganda Development Corporation, while farmers through their union, own 20 percent.

#### Other significant deals

Beyond mergers and acquisitions, a quiet wave of business restructuring, consolidations and scaledowns have

also reshaped telecoms, insurance, and beverages sector.

#### Telecommunications

MTN Group and Airtel Africa last year agreed to a network-sharing deal covering Uganda and Nigeria.

The deal, the telecoms said in media releases, sought to cut capital expenditure and speed up coverage.

In the same measure, Indus Towers, a Bharti Airtel affiliate, announced its entry into Africa with plans to operate in Uganda, Nigeria and Zambia.

#### MTN mobile money spinoff

MTN Uganda's shareholders in July last year approved the fintech spin-off, carving the mobile money business out of telecom operations.

The focus is to create a unicorn across the telecom's operating markets with a touch of autonomous splits through listings on local bourses in three or five years.

The separation, a divorce of convenience, is expected to free growth capital for fintech without diluting the core network agenda. The process of the total separation is still ongoing.

#### Insurance

Beyond the headline merger of Sanlam General and Jubilee Allianz General, in the insurance sector, there was some interesting business deals last year that are likely to shape this year.

In July, the board of Old Mutual Insurance agreed to start the process of changing its name across its operating markets, including in Uganda.

The change had long been overdue following Old Mutual's acquisition of a controlling stake in UAP.

The insurer has already dropped the UAP moniker, a change that is expected to tighten brand alignment across different markets.

In the same measure, Liberty Life announced plans to exit health insurance by mid-2026, signalling a sharper divide in capacity and focus between life and health lines.

Across town, in April, Jubilee Holdings announced the amalgamation of its life and health units, which received required approvals from the Insurance Regulatory Authority at the end last year.

The insurer has already begun the process to tidy its balance sheet for scale and capital efficiency.

At the close of last year, Kenyan-based AAR, which had for years focused on its franchise of health maintenance organisation (HMO), expanded its operation into general insurance, receiving regulatory approval to join Uganda's non-life business.

The insurer stepped into a tight and crowded space that last year registered some headline mergers, consolidations, business restructuring and some scale-downs.

The new entity will trade as AAR General Insurance placing itself directly into one of the toughest and most competitive sectors of Uganda's insurance industry, where scale and distribution are already entrenched.

#### Beverages

In beverages, EABL's April 2025 tender offer delivered a small top-up stake in Uganda Breweries Limited, thereby locking in strategic control.

EABL had, through a UGX5,630 offer per share, sought to increase its stake in UBL to 100 percent, but the bid failed after minority shareholders stayed away from the deal.

The offer returned a muted performance, with EABL managing to increase its stake by a negligible 0.14 percent from 98.18 percent to 98.32 percent.

**What the deals tell us**  
**'Markets are coalescing around fewer, stronger players, with regulators, especially in insurance, quietly privileging solvency, speed, and consumer outcomes.'**

The offer was in other words grossly under subscribed.

Still on EABL, at the close of last year, Diageo announced that it had agreed to sell its entire 65 percent stake in East African Breweries Limited (EABL) to Japanese Asahi for an estimated \$2.3b.

The deal, which is expected to be completed this year, remains subject to regulatory approvals, with EABL remaining listed on the Kenyan exchange and cross-listed on the Uganda and Tanzania stock exchanges.

EABL remains a major player operating across Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, with distribution extending to more than 10 African countries.

Its brand portfolio includes Tusker, Bell Lager, Kenya Cane, and licensed Guinness production.

The deal has, however, been put on ice by a court in Kenya, pending the resolution of a dispute with a distributor.

If completed, the acquisition by Asahi, will pivot the Japanese brewer into

a growth market that continues to leverage a growing urban youth population and the expanding middle class.

#### Banking

At the close of last year PostBank conducted a countrywide caravan to consolidate its rebranding to Pearl Bank.

The new brand identity and the shift, designed to modernize the bank's identity, widen its appeal, and position it as a competitive commercial player, draws from Uganda's moniker, the Pearl of Africa, symbolizing growth, prosperity, and national pride.

Pearl Bank described the rebrand as more than cosmetic, tying it to broader ambitions to attract strategic partners, grow deposits, and scale services to micro, small, and medium enterprises and agriculture.

The move followed a strong financial year, in which the bank reported a Shs35.4 billion profit after tax in 2024, with growth levers spread across income, deposits, and lending.



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