Police in City of Kigali have arrested three traders said to be part of the ring that vandalise and steal electricity and broadband cables along Kicukiro-Bugesera Airport road, which is under construction and expansion.

They were arrested separately following complaints by the Chinese firm–China Road and Bridge Corporation–which is constructing the road.

Two of the suspects; Thierry Sindikubwabo and Jean Claude Uwamahoro were arrested in Ziniya market in Kicukiro where rolls of electricity and broadband internet cables were recovered.

The third suspect only identified as Twagirimana was arrested in Gisozi market (Agakiriro) with other quantities of the utility cables.

The trio was paraded before the media at Remera metropolitan on Saturday, October 3.

It is said that the three suspects work with thieves, who unearth broadband cables and cut electricity cables, especially at night.

Their role was, therefore, to sell the cables on the black market, according to available information.

Twagirimana, one of the suspects, said that he has been buying the cables from different people in the last two weeks. He, however, declined to disclose the identities of his suppliers.

“I was not aware that these cables were stolen and I did not bother asking my suppliers, which I regret. I have had different suppliers in the past two weeks and I had a big metalic case where I was storing them as I look for buyers,” Twagirimana claimed.

Sindikubwabo, another suspect, however, argued that he bought the cables during public auctioning last year at Rwf1.8 million.

However, the papers he claim supports his argument and proves his innocence, are under the names of one Hassan Kabera.

The papers indicate that Kabera bought cables during auctioning, last year. The papers also indicate the types of cables that were bought during the auction.

However, Kabera later sold the said auctioned cables to Sindikubwabo.

In the sale agreement between Sindikubwabo and Kabera, the latter also provided photos of all the cables he sold to the former.

None of the cables Sindikubwabo was caught with corresponds with the photos provided by Kabera.

It is alleged that Sindikubwabo has been using the auction papers as cover up to deal in stolen cables.

The Chinese firm also confirmed that cables the trio was caught with are those vandalised and stolen from their connected broadband and electricity lines.

Rwanda National Police (RNP) spokesperson, CP John Bosco Kabera condemned such acts of destructing public infrastructure, thus affecting many.

He said that black markets facilitate such criminal acts adding that the arrest of the trio is part of the force's target to also cut the chain of buyers and sellers.

"We know people call such items 'hot cakes' but we would like to remind the general public that anything bought must have receipts to indicate the source, prevent buying or selling stolen goods, and also to fight tax evasion," CP Kabera said.

"When you vandalise such public infrastructure, you know many people get affected; internet and electricity are disconnected, certain services get affected and the government will incur losses in terms of rehabilitation," he added.

He thanked residents, who provided information that led to the arrest of members of the ring and called upon anyone with more information on other members of the group to come forward.