Mediation to end 20-year Qualicel bus park feud starts

By Michael Odeng and Sophia Kagoya

Mediation to end the long-standing land dispute between the family of the businessman Francis Drake Lubega and the bus owners starts.

The case concerning the ownership of a 0.518-hectare piece of land on which Qualicel Arcade, Nabukeera Plaza and Pentagon Arcade were built has dragged on for over two decades.

One of the parties involved was the former motor rally champion Charles Muhangi, who died on December 6, 2018, at his home in Munyonyo, Kampala. Muhangi was the proprietor of Horizon Coaches Limited.

The family of the late Muhangi is now battling over the property with city businessman Lubega. Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) is also a respondent in the matter.



The land next to Qualicel shopping arcade in contention between Drake Lubega, the late Charles Muhangi's family and bus owners. Inset is businessman Drake Lubega

SH11B PROPERTY OFFER REJECTED

When the case resumed on May 8, 2026, before the Court of Appeal deputy registrar Jane Mugala, Lubega's lawyers offered to compensate Horizon Coaches Limited sh11b for the property. The businessman was represented by Adam Kirumira and Yusuf Kalema.

But the offer was rejected by representatives of Horizon Coaches Limited, who demanded sh55b, citing the long duration of the case and alleged damages caused to them during the long land dispute.

"The matter has taken long," Hamim Sentongo, the Uganda Bus Operators Association Limited (UBOA) chairperson, said.

Sentongo told the registrar that Lubega has destroyed everything on the land, adding that he has been winning cases technically because he does not possess a formal land title. "We decided to appeal to assert our rightful claim," the UBOA chairperson stated.

MEDIATIONS ADJOURNED

During the hearing, the lawyers representing Lubega stated that the court had previously directed them to summon members of UBOA, including Hamim Sentongo, Dan Kwata Mpola and Musa Junju, to attend the mediation sessions.

With the parties unable to reach a compromise, the court adjourned mediation, until May 25, 2026, leaving the fate of the disputed land unresolved for the time being.

The land in question has long been a focal point for Kampala's transport sector, historically serving as a hub for bus operations in the central region.

The prolonged legal wrangle highlights the challenges in reconciling historical land ownership issues with modern business interests.

Court documents indicate that in 2002, Horizon Coaches Limited, together with Christine Nabukera, John Sebalamu and John Bosco Muwonge, were assigned land by Uganda Bus Operations Association Investments Limited (UBOA), where the company's portion measured 0.75 hectares. The company subsequently purchased the land from UBOA with the consent of KCCA's predecessor, Kampala City Council (KCC).

Afterwards, the company obtained possession of the land and began developing it while running the bus park through its sister company, Mountain Gear Group Limited.

TURNED TABLES

In a turn of events, UBOA in 2005 filed a suit against Horizon Coaches' managing director, Muhangi and its sister company Mountain Gear Group Limited, claiming that they had trespassed on the land. However, UBOA withdrew the suit, but on the same date, Horizon Coaches Limited was dispossessed of the land by an eviction order, effected in the execution of a court order, where the company was not a party.

The order was issued following a suit filed by KCC against Kobil Uganda Limited, over the same piece of land. KCC challenged the sub-lease of the suit land by UBOA Limited to Kobil because no prior consent as required under the lease agreement had been secured from KCC.

CONNIVANCE CLAIMS

Following its eviction, Horizon Coaches Limited contended that Lubega and KCCA were complicit in depriving it of possession of the land, a claim which was denied by the two parties.

Lubega refuted Horizon Coaches Limited's claim of interest in the land, contending that at the time he purchased the land on February 9, 2006, it was registered in the name of UBOA Limited and the lease term of five years was due to expire on August 1, 2007.

Lubega claimed that at the time of the brokerage agreement between him and Barnabas Taremwa, William Tumwine, city lawyer Geoffrey Nangumya, on March 22, 2006, Horizon Coaches Limited had no interest in the land.

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