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Tug of war. Whereas Forestry officials insist the land where the abattoir is to be built is a forest reserve, the district says it was turned into an industrial park.

BY IVAN KIMBOWA
editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

MASAKA. Masaka District chairperson Jude Mbabaali has said the construction of a modern pork abattoir in Masaka Town must go on despite resistance from environmentalists.

Although the National Forestry Authority (NFA) says the three-hectare piece of land where the abattoir is to be constructed is part of Kumbu Forest Reserve, Mr Mbabaali insists the land was de-gazetted several years ago.

"We are just waiting for the appropriate time to give a full statement on the turbulences facing our construction process but nothing can stop us," Mr Mbabaali said on Saturday.

However, Mr Denis Sebugwawo, the NFA manager in-charge of Sango Bay Range, said if the district wants to use part of the forest land, they must follow proper channels rather than encroaching on it.

"Some people think that when a forest is in a town, it should be removed, forgetting that in developed cities, such places are preserved and usually attract tourists," DENIS SEBUGWAWO, NFA MANAGER

"The three acres of land being claimed by the district authorities are part of the protected forest reserve and anyone wishing to use it for any other purpose must follow the right procedures," Mr Ssebugwawo said by telephone on Saturday.

On April 17, a joint force of soldiers and police working with NFA arrested 10 workers who had been contracted to kick start construction of the abattoir on the land.

Mr Ssebugwawo said they had in March communicated to

Masaka leaders, NFA lock horns over abattoir



Contested. The disputed piece of land where the district authorities want to construct a modern pork abattoir at Kijjabwemi on the outskirts of Masaka Town. PHOTO BY IVAN KIMBOWA

the district authorities halting their plan to encroach on the forest reserve and wondered why they had sent builders to the site.

Mr Ssebugwawo said the forest reserve was gazetted in 1938 and since then, many developers have attempted to grab some of its land because of its strategic location.

The disputed forest forms part of the catchment area for Nabajjuzi wetland system, which is a tributary of Katonga River basin that drains into Lake Victoria.

Dr Lawrence Mayega, the district production officer, said they have a land title, which they acquired when the forest reserve was converted to an industrial park.

Dr Mayega said they have already secured part of the

Shs840m needed for the project and no one should stand in their way to implement it.

"The land was turned into an industrial area in 1985 and the

NFA officials acted in unprofessional way to interrupt the construction process; we are handling the matter for the work the site to resume," he said

ABOUT THE ABATTOIR

Once complete, the abattoir, which will have capacity to slaughter more than 200 pigs daily, is expected to have proper handling and storage facilities to avoid contamination and a well-maintained collection centre for all waste products. The facility will also support pig production and marketing services in Masaka sub region where

pork is on high demand. Mr Charles Ssewanyana, an executive member of Greater Masaka Pig Cooperative Union claims that NFA officials were being used by their critics to derail the project.

He appealed to district authorities to swiftly resolve their dispute with NFA, saying members of his union are yearning for modern abattoir in the ai