

Local authorities clash over golf course land

Disagreement. The latest disagreement that has pitted political leaders against technical authorities emanates from the said giveaway of the golf course arena in the heart of Masaka Town to a private developer.

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MASAKA/ARUA. Authorities in Masaka and Arua districts are embroiled in a sharp disagreement over the continued allocation of greenbelts, open spaces and golf course land within the municipalities.

The latest disagreement in Masaka that has pitted political leaders against technical authorities emanates from the said giveaway of the golf course arena in the heart of Masaka Town to a private developer.

Masaka is among the few districts with gazetted golf facilities that have been reserved and maintained as public properties for decades.

However, part of the sports facility was last weekend fenced off after the land was allocated to a private developer who has since undertaken major construction works on it.

Sources within Masaka Municipal Council, who preferred anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter, revealed that the contested part of golf course land was earlier allocated to a local businessman, who later sold it to Bank of Uganda to construct a regional Currency Centre.

However, Mr Jude Mbaali, the Masaka District chairperson and the municipality councillors are bitter with Mr Godfrey Kayemba Afaayo, the Municipality Mayor and some technical

officers, whom they accuse of being behind what they described as "irregular land allocation." "I have actually reached out to many incumbent and former councillors of the municipality and all have denied knowledge of the giveaway of the land and the eventual change of use from a golf course to commercial use. To my surprise, the mayor tells me the land was gifted to a developer, which is unacceptable," Mr Mbaali noted.

Mr Robert Kambugu, a Nyendo-Ssenyange Division councillor, said council in the last term, unanimously rejected a proposal to give away the golf course land and resolved to preserve it as a greenbelt, and wondered how the transaction was later approved.

"To the best of my knowledge, this was an irregular process clandestinely pushed by the mayor and some technocrats," he noted, saying the matter should be investigated.

However, Mr Kayemba, in a telephone interview on Tuesday, denied any direct involvement in the transaction, saying the Bank acquired the land from its former owner—a private individual, who he declined to name.

"The currency centre they are planning to erect is worth Shs50b and I am sure it will automatically change the town's skyline as we push for a city status," he said.

Ms Christine Alupo, the Bank of Uganda communications director, confirmed the construction as a bank proj-

ect. Meanwhile, in Arua, more than 2,000 market vendors are stranded after the local authorities asked them to relocate to pave way for the construction of a Shs35b modern market beginning January.

The municipality officials had anticipated relocating the vendors to an open space at

Arua Golf Course but the management rejected such a move saying the municipality leaders did not seek their approval.

During a Municipality Council session last week, councillors directed Mr Andrew Otim, the new town clerk, to expedite the process.

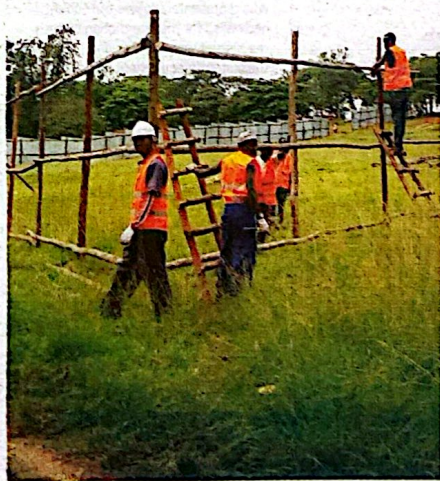
"We are going to meet the

golf club officials to discuss this matter as soon as possible. Our committee was supposed to meet them earlier but they had told me that they were busy by then" Mr Otim told the council.

The councillors argued that the golf club land has always been maintained by the mu-

nicipality as and that golfers kept the field inactive for the past five years.

The construction of the ADB-sponsored market was to start in 2009 but it delayed due to procurement processes, change in designs and lack of land for relocation of the traders.



Disputed. A section of Masaka Golf Course land being fenced off.
PHOTO BY MARTINS E. SSEKWEYAMA

Rwenzori

3x3 BASKETBALL

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