

Teargas fired as Butaleja, Budaka residents clash over boundary

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BUTALEJA/BUDAKA. A boundary dispute between districts of Butaleja and Budaka was yesterday the epicentre of fighting when locals from both sides clashed over ownership of the swamp that borders their two districts.

This is the third time in a space of two months that residents from the two districts are fighting over ownership of the disputed land.

According to local leaders the conflict has existed for a long time with the two parties involved failing to come to a compromise.

The Bukedi regional police spokesperson, Mr Sowali Kamulya, confirmed the development, saying that police was called in to calm the situation.

No one was injured during the clash.

"Police was prompted to fire tear gas canisters as both sides had engaged into a stone-throwing battle as others armed with pangas were seen around the border area. The situation was tense and we had to act swiftly before the arrival of the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Gen Kale Kayihura," Mr Kamulya said.

"Both sides armed with pangas, spears and machetes were counter attacking and accusing each other of encroachment. As police, we swiftly intervened and saved the situation that was culminating into bloodshed," Mr Kamulya added.

Gen Kayihura, who was meant to address the residents at the contested land did not turn up after meeting leaders and security operatives from the two districts in Butaleja District.

The angry residents had threatened to fight in the presence of the IGP to show their discontent.

However, Gen Kayihura, having gathered enough intelligence postponed his visit to the site up to today. "The pledged to visit the Lands ministry with surveyors to re-open the contested boundary," Mr Kamulya explained.

Reports from police indicate that residents from Butaleja District were the first to attack.

The Budaka Resident District Commissioner, Mr Chris Mike Okirya, said tension between farmers on either side of the districts is brewing up. "River Namatala changed course during the el-nino rains in 2008, which pushed the bank more into Budaka in those areas of Lyama, making some Banyole lay claim." He said the ministry of Lands and that of Environment should urgently consider quickly sending surveyors, to erect boundary marks between Budaka and Butaleja districts to avert future fights.

Local leaders on either side in

their previous inter-districts meetings came-up with resolutions that will definitely address the impasse -but tentatively recommended that no-person/farmer should continue to cultivate in the contested land until a lasting solution is found.

Budaka District chairperson, Mr Sam Mulomi, headed the Budaka side and asked residents to remain calm as the district is trying all possible means to address the problem with the ministry of Lands and Environment.

Residents told *Daily Monitor* that unless government demarcates the contested boundaries, the fighting will not end and yet they don't wish to take the violent path.

Mr Kamulya, however, said that the police have been deployed in that contested area to avert any possible clashes between the two districts but quickly said that the situation is under control.

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