

Isimba dam: Quarry owners' claim of sh200b rejected

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A group of quarry owners are seeking compensation of sh200b from the Government for their land in Kayunga district, on which Isimba Dam is being constructed.

Disson Nsubuga and eight others, insist that they should be compensated on the premise that they have not been paid for the rock which is being used for the construction of the dam.

The claimants were initially paid and they relinquished their interests to the Government in 2014, but they want to be compensated again for loss of what they referred to as their livelihood.

Appearing before the commission of inquiry into land matters on Thursday, Nsubuga said when their land was valued for the Isimba project, they were not paid for the rocks.

"We complained to Kagga and Partners. They promised to re-evaluate the land and I also asked them why my stone had not been valued, but they did not give me feedback," Nsubuga said.

The land, which according to the commission, measures 22.01 acres, was farmland.

Nsubuga defended the demands, saying they had been quarrying the land for commercial purposes, but it was halted after the Government took over ownership.

However, the commission's lead counsel, Ebert Byenkya, queried why

the claimants were demanding an exorbitant amount, yet each of them would only make sh1m from the stone quarrying in a year.

"I am wondering how someone who was making sh1m a year, suddenly has come up with a claim of sh200b," Byenkya said.

Nsubuga said they were all compensated by the Government, adding that the amount each claimant received was insignificant and not commensurate to the value of their land.

Byenkya dismissed Nsubuga's claims of using the land for quarrying, adding that at the time of valuation, there was no evidence of quarrying.

Project chair complains

China International Water and Electric Corporation is constructing the 183-megawatt Isimba dam at Nakatooke, Kayunga district, at \$567m (about sh2.1 trillion).

Appearing before the commission last week, the chairperson of the project steering committee in charge of overseeing construction of both Isimba and Karuma dam projects, Eng. Badru Kiggundu, said the project, which ought to be completed later this year, would not meet the set deadline because they were being frustrated by the exorbitant demands for sh600b from land claimants.

Justice Catherine Bamugemereire chairs the probe commission whose proceedings are conducted at the Archives and Records Centre on Lourdel Road in the city suburb of Nakasero.