

THE PRESIDENT ADVISED THAT NALONGO ESTATES SHOULD NOT BE COMPLETELY THROWN OUT

By Mary Karugaba

Museveni intervenes in Centenary Park wrangles

A day after the parliamentary committee on commissions, state enterprises and statutory authorities (COSASE) ordered for the demolition of illegal structures in the controversial Centenary Park, President Yoweri Museveni has intervened and ordered that the proprietors should not be thrown out completely.

In an emergency meeting at State House Entebbe on Friday, it was agreed that after determining the land required by the proposed public infrastructure projects, Nalongo Estates, the managers of Centenary Park, should be allowed to use the remaining land.

"After listening to all the parties, the President advised that Nalongo Estates should not be completely thrown out. They should be given the remaining land," a source that attended the meeting told *New Vision*.

However, it was also agreed that illegal structures in the park be demolished to pave the way for the construction of the projects and Nalongo Estates should do the demolition but not KCCA or National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC).

"The meeting was of the view that the situation would be more civil if Nalongo Estates demolished the structures since she knows what to salvage," a source said.

The meeting was attended by chairman of COSASE, Abdu Katuntu, accompanied by a few committee members, officials from Kampala Capital City Authority, Uganda National Roads Authority, National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) and the proprietors of the park, led by Sarah Kizito.

It was also attended by the Minister for Kampala, Beti Kamya.

The meeting was called a day after the committee ordered for the demolition of the structures to enable the NWSC start work on the sewer project.



Soqea workers, the National Water and Sewerage Corporation contractors, at Centenary Park where work to install underground sewage pipes was put on hold following a stand-off between Nalongo Estates, the managers of the Centenary Park, National Water and Sewerage Corporation and Kampala Capital City Authority. Inset is Kizito

NW&SC, through a \$200m loan is currently implementing the improvement of the existing sewerage infrastructure of Kampala city under the framework of the Lake Victoria protection phase II project.

According to the plans, the project and other two projects

— the Kampala flyover and the relocation of the Uganda Electricity Distribution Company (UEDCL) — are expected to occupy a major part of the park, especially where there are structures.

NWSC managing director Dr. Silver Mugisha said because

the proprietors of the park, led by Kizito, had blocked the project, the contractor has since been demoralised and left the site. As a result of the delays, the corporation has incurred a loss of over sh1b in contractual claims. The contract is due to expire in July 2017.

KCCA executive director Jenifer Musisi reportedly informed the meeting that although Kizito, through her company, Nalongo Estates, ceased being the rightful owners of the land, they have refused to vacate the land and return it to KCCA.

Kamya confirmed some of the agreed positions, adding that the meeting was called after she briefed the President on the committee's decision.

"In order to calm the situation, the President, as the chief executive officer of this country, invited all the parties to a meeting. Although the President was concerned about the importance of the public infrastructure projects, he was also concerned about the interests of the investors," Kamya said.

According to Kamya, the President said that as investigations go on, Nalongo Estates should sign a temporary memorandum of understanding with KCCA regarding the management of the park.

"We agreed that after NW&SC has laid their pipes, Nalongo Estates can use the same land for leisure activities as long as they do not put up permanent structures," she said.

BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ According to Kamya, the President said that as investigations go on, Nalongo Estates should sign a temporary memorandum of understanding with KCCA regarding the management of the park.

During the meeting, Kizito reportedly accused KCCA of maliciously refusing to renew her lease request.

On the issue of compensation, Kamya said the President said the matter should be looked at by a competent legal authority, which should advise the parties.

"For me, it was a win-win situation. Previously, I had given guidance which KCCA refused to implement. The President always looks at the bigger picture, which considers the interests of all Ugandans," she said.