

Indian tycoon accused of land grabbing in Mbale

By Edward Anyoli

An Indian businessman has been cited in land grabbing and forceful eviction in Mbale district without certificates of title.

The commission of inquiry into land matters on Wednesday heard that Praful Patel is engaged in unlawful eviction without any documents to prove that several properties that he is claiming belong to him.

Patel, 80, claims to have bought some of the properties from the defunct Uganda Commercial Bank in 1985, but when put to task by commission's lead counsel, Ebert Byenkya, he failed to produce a sale's agreement and certificate of title signed by him and the bank.

"Do you have a certificate of title in your name and do you have a sale agreement between the person who sold the land to you, and the date when the agreement was signed?" Byenkya asked

Patel said he bought Plot 1,1 on Republic Street from the bank when it was being mortgaged and titles are with his lawyer, whose name he could not remember.

The commission also established that

Patel, a timber dealer is also claiming plots 19/19 Elgon Avenue, Plot 16 North Road, Plot 5 Nakibi Lane and Plot 2, Bugwere Road, Plot 9 to 11 Terrace and Plot 1-3 Freight Road.

Patel told the commission that the plan to take away the land from him is being orchestrated by the Custodian Board.

Accusation against Patel

The family of the late John Matanda, who was the deputy mayor of Mbale, while appearing before the commission last year, accused Patel and his nephew Patel Parimal of grabbing their land.

Robinah Matanda, the daughter of Matanda, told the commission that Parimal and Patel are claiming ownership of their land and a house at Plot 11 Republic Street.

Matanda told the commission that the two businessmen obtained court orders to evict them on their land which they acquired in 1969. It is not clear how big the land is.

Matanda explained that she was surprised to establish that another claimant, John Narema, had also filed a suit in Mbale High Court claiming ownership

of the same land.

She said Narema who was their former tenant filed the suit against Parimal seeking to take possession of the same land without their knowledge.

Background

Matanda was the deputy mayor of Mbale between 1981 to 1985. Matanda passed away in 2014.

According to Robinah Matanda, her father acquired the land in 1969 through a lease offer that expired in 2006 and the lease had been extended for another 10 years.

Commission mandate

The commission's mandate is to probe efficiency of the laws, policies and processes of land registration, acquisition, administration and management.

It is also tasked with inquiring into the effectiveness of the Uganda Land Commission (ULC) in administering public land and relevant bodies in the preservation of wetlands, forests, road reserves, and national parks, among other gazetted spaces.

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