

Court dismisses petition to block Owino market project

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KAMPALA. The High Court has dismissed an application seeking to block St Balikuddembe [Owino] market re-development project, citing lack of merit in the suit.

The petition was filed by Bamufunampola St Balikuddembe Market Association (BSMA), which sought to stop the Shs1.5 trillion project that was set to start early this year.

The petitioners are rivals to the current group, St Balikuddembe Market Stalls, Space and Lockup Shops Owners Association Ltd (SSLOA), which is managing the affairs of the market.

Justice Beatrice Atingu, in a February 10 ruling, observed that the petitioners through their lawyers, Mr Caleb Alaka and Samuel Muyizi, did not "sufficiently" prove that the proposed Owino makeover is "illegal and would cause them financial loss".

"The application is dismissed," ruled Ms Atingu, adding that the applicant (BSMA) pays the respon-

dents (SSLOA) all costs of the suit.

According to Mr Godfrey Kayongo, the SSLOA chairperson, an investor; Ketza International, will invest about Shs1.5 trillion in the 10-year market project.

"Now that this blockade has been overcome, we are soon launching the ground-breaking work of the project," Mr Kayongo said amidst jubilating traders yesterday at his office in Owino Market.

Mr Kayongo, who is also the president's advisor on markets, observed that the project will be in two phases, starting with construction of a re-location market.

According to the project plans, the facility will be developed into a 13-multi-storeyed market with a capacity of 14,000 shops and lockups and a reserved floor free of partitions for people who can't afford renting lockups.

After its completion, said Mr Kayongo, the market will accommodate at least 40,000 vendors, which is double the number that it holds in the makeshift form now.

The 1,230 evictees are part of the 3,543 people who took government to court for damages sustained during the 1992 eviction exercise.

The group was evicted in 1992 but up to now, a big number of them have never received anything, while a few have received a maximum of Shs500,000 out of the Shs12m which Court awarded each of them, together with interest after winning a case in High Court.

Mr Milton Twehangane, the leader of the group, said after the eviction, the people are now spread in the districts of Kibaale (where the majority are), Kyenjojo, Kabarole, Kyegegwa, Buhweju, Rubirizi, Kamwenge, Kasese, Ibanda while others are in Mbarara, Rukungiri, Kanungu and Kabaale.

He said the evictees were persuaded into voting the National Resistance Movement (NRM) flag bearer in 2011 after promising them that their money would be paid immediately but, to-date, no money has been paid.

"We have been frustrated enough. Government officials keep telling us to come back the following day, week or month for so many years so far. But what is baffling is the fact that the money accumulates interest of six per cent per annum. It has since accumulated to Shs21 billion," Mr Twehangane said in an interview with *Daily Monitor*.

Mr Muhakanizi said government has since paid part of it, remaining with Shs10.5 billion to clear the entire claim.