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BY NOELINE NABUKENYA

KAMPALA. A protracted land dispute has emerged between former High Court judge Justice Anup Singh Choudry and the Uganda Civil Aviation Authority (UCAA) over a 30-acre parcel in Entebbe, with both sides trading accusations over legality, land use, and national security concerns.

Justice Choudry, through his lawyer Ronald Mukundane, accuses the aviation authority of frustrating his long-running attempt to obtain a freehold title for land on plots 3-27 on Brother Amans Drive in Entebbe Municipality, Wakiso District.

The former judge says he began acquiring the land in 2008, purchasing it piece by piece from *bibanja* holders, with plans to establish a grapefruit farm and later venture into wine production.

"They have frustrated me for years yet I have similar registered plots of land in the same vicinity," Justice Choudry said.

His lawyer insists that the Justice, who is of Indian descent but born in Masaka, is entitled to own land like any other Ugandan.

"Despite his colour, Justice Choudry is a born of Masaka entitled to a right to own land just like other Ugandans," Mr Mukundane said.

The dispute escalated after the UCAA wrote to Wakiso District authorities, ob-

Ex-judge, CAA in heated dispute over Entebbe land

jecting to any private development in areas adjacent to Entebbe International Airport.

In a March 16, 2018, letter signed by then Managing Director Fred K. Bamwesigye, UCAA requested that no land in the buffer zone be allocated to private developers, citing aviation safety concerns.

"We instead requested that this land be surveyed and given to the UCAA for safety of the airport as per the CAA Act," the letter stated.

Mr Mukundane, however, disputes the authority's position. "I thought CAA would come at a time when the owner wanted to develop the land. Titling alone has nothing to do with the security of the airport," he said.

Wider attention

The matter gained wider public attention after Wakiso District chairperson Matia Lwanga Bwanika raised concerns, arguing that the contested area forms part of the Namiiro wetland and also lies within sensitive airport infrastructure zones. "The land also contains infrastructure for the runway for Entebbe International Airport. Giving out that wetland to the Justice poses a secu-



Justice Anup Singh Choudry

rity threat to the airport," Mr Bwanika said in a recent press briefing.

However, lawyer Mukundane said technical assessments by the Ministry of Water and Environment indicated otherwise.

"They told us the plots do not fall within the wetland, although plots 15, 17, 19, 23, 25 and 27 have some overlap into the Namiiro permanent wetland," he said.

He added that the ministry later issued guidance allowing development outside wetland coordinates, effective-

ly giving a "no objection" for registration under a letter dated March 27, 2020.

The dispute has also played out in court, where Justice Choudry successfully challenged Wakiso District Land Board.

In a ruling delivered by the High Court Civil Division in Miscellaneous Cause No. 0135 of 2024, the court directed the land board to reconsider the application and issue a report to the Registrar of Titles within 21 days to facilitate issuance of freehold titles.

The court further awarded the applicant damages and costs, ordering Wakiso District Land Board to pay a total of Shs450 million—comprising Shs200 million for frustration and suffering, Shs100 million in punitive damages, and Shs150 million in legal costs.

Mr Bwanika has, however, maintained that the application process was flawed, alleging inconsistencies in land documentation.

He said while physical planning approvals covered five plots, deed plans submitted to the Commissioner of Surveys reflected up to 12 plots.

Mr Bwanika further alleged that the applicant obtained certified deed plans and approvals through irregular means

and insisted that approval from the National Environment Management Authority (Nema) was required due to the ecological sensitivity of the area.

UCAA stands firm

UCAA spokesperson Vianney Luggya said the authority will not alter its position, stressing that its actions are guided by the Uganda Civil Aviation Authority Act, Cap 348, and international aviation safety standards.

"The Act is founded on other international obligations that the State of Uganda has committed itself to in order to have orderly international civil aviation operations," he said.

He added that safety standards require land around runways and approach paths to remain free of developments that could interfere with aircraft operations.

Mr Joseph Ssembatya, the commissioner for Land Administration, said government is now reviewing the matter to establish a harmonised position among stakeholders.

"It is highly probable that there could have been some omissions in the process leading to creation of that title," he said.