

to assist in putting out the fire using locally available fire extinguishers.

"We tried using extinguishers but the flames were too big and had already en-

rooms, making it difficult to put them out," Mr Ouma said.

He added that the fire was prevented from spreading to the entire building after officers from the Police Fire and Rescue Services came to the rescue.

Mr Lamu Wandera, the officer in charge at the facility, said the fire completely gutted the drug store, destroying all medicines, as well as a computer room, medical equipment room, and records department.

Shs15b Masaka City Hall works kick off

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MASAKA. Construction works on the Masaka City Hall have finally begun after a decade of waiting.

The delay in constructing the Shs15b hall was partly blamed on a dispute over the ownership of the piece of land on Kitabiro-Kizungu Hill, which was chosen to host the project.

However, this dispute was settled early this year, with the district authorities handing over the title deed for the 3.2 acre piece of land to the city leadership, paving the way for the construction works.

The construction works, which are expected to last two years, are being undertaken by Hanan Contractors Limited.

Masaka City Clerk Daniel Kaweesi said the hall will have three floors, which will be built in phases, and the first phase is going to cost Shs4.7b.

He said they would commence the works with Shs1.2 billion that was raised from sale of the former Mayor's Garden.

Mr Kaweesi thanked district leaders for surrendering the land to pave the way for works.

"The construction works were delayed due to the engagements we had with the district authorities to give us this piece of land, which was initially registered under the district's name," he

told *Daily Monitor* at the week-

end. Masaka City Mayor Florence Namayanja said the site chosen for the project has historical significance because the first governor for Masaka during the colonial times had an office in the same area.

"This very place housed the office of the governor, and it has the mark stone that indicates the same. We managed to secure the title deed, and we are going to use our connections everywhere to secure more funds to add on what we already have to

complete the project in the set time frame," Ms Namayanja added.

Ms Josephine Nabakooza, the Masaka City assistant resident commissioner, urged the contractor to ensure there is value for the money.

"Masaka City offices are scattered in different buildings; we think the completion of this project will help to bring all workers under one roof," she added.

Masaka City leaders are currently operating in different locations, with mayors' offices on Edward Avenue, while the town clerk operates from another building on Elgin Street in Masaka City.

Other city departments are scattered across different buildings in the city, which sometimes affects the quick execution of city business.

For nearly a decade, Masaka leaders have mulled over the idea of erecting a multi-billion-dollar spacious city hall to accommodate all offices under one roof.

Masaka City Council and the district leaders have, since 2020, been bickering over the ownership of Kitabiro land after the Ministry of Local Government issued the first guidelines that directed that most properties within the city boundaries should be taken by cities where they are located—a decision Masaka District leaders opposed.

BACKGROUND

Masaka town was elevated to city status on July 1, 2020. It had a council hall in the 1970s, but the structure was bombed during the liberation war that led to the fall of then President Idi Amin's government in 1979.

In 2011, a half-acre piece of land that housed the bombed town hall was allocated to the now defunct Crane Bank to construct its Masaka branch and the then municipal council passed a resolution to sell the Mayor's Gardens to raise money to finance the construction of a new city hall.