

Probe team quizzes Sudhir, Ntaganda over school land

Background. The two businessmen were questioned in connection with fraudulent acquisition and leasing of Kololo SS and Nakasero Primary School and playgrounds in Kampala.

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KAMPALA. City businessman Sudhir Ruparelia yesterday became the second person to be quizzed over acquisition of public school playgrounds in Kampala.

Mr Ruparelia, who is accused of fraudulently acquiring a lease for a playground belonging to Kololo Secondary School, said he followed the legal procedures with guidance from the Uganda Land commission (ULC), which holds in trust the disputed land.

"In 2013, we learnt about an ongoing move between Kololo SS and a company - Demark - entering a joint venture for commercial developments. I got concerned that we were going to lose a play field, which we were using as a school, and I contacted my lawyers to find out the exact owner of the land comprised of a playground, and they advised that it belongs to ULC," he told the Commission of Inquiry into land matters.

Lease title

Mr Ruparelia, who is accused of under looking beneficial owners - Kololo SSS - in applying for the disputed lease, also admitted the lease title acquired by Kampala Parents School is restricted to the Ministry of Education and Sports (Kololo SSS).

The land in question is on plots 60 to 69 on Lugogo Bypass in Nakawa Division. It is alleged that Kampala Parents School in 2014 illegally acquired the lease on the land under use by Kololo SSS to deprive government and the community of a social amenity.



Questioned. City businessman Sudhir Ruparelia (2nd Right) after appearing before the land probe yesterday. PHOTO BY STEPHEN WANDERA

The Kololo SSS board of directors had asked the Commission to intervene and have several land titles issued on the land cancelled.

However, Mr Ruparelia testified that he met former ULC chairman

Mayanja Nkangi, now deceased, and proposed to establish a modern sports facility at the site.

"I applied through the normal procedure and it was within the powers of ULC to grant the lease and our intention is to establish a

world class facility because of the requirements like power, water and sanitation as well as human resource," Mr Ruparelia said.

Looking back

MPs in May 2016 allowed the businessman to redevelop the playground on condition that he signs a memorandum of understanding, giving the school unlimited access.

But yesterday, the commission faulted Mr Ruparelia for failing to adhere to rightful procedures, including carrying out proper due diligence, consulting the community that was using the playground and other stakeholders.

The businessman also revealed that the entire school land has since been parcelled out, titled and allocated to 15 other developers including a Chinese hotel called Nanjing, and Kesington Africa Ltd

NTAGANDA'S CASE

On Wednesday, Mr Ntaganda was also quizzed in connection with the fraudulent acquisition and leasing of Nakasero Primary School playground in Kampala City.

It is alleged that Mr Ntaganda, through his company, Prestigious Apartments Ltd, connived with some officials in the Education ministry, ULC and KCC to obtain a lease for two hectares of land without the consent of the school management.

Evidence before the Commission indicates that ULC parcelled out the land on Plot 34A and created plots 34A1 and 5C on Kyaddondo and Mackinnon roads, respectively. Mr Ntaganda confessed that he knew Nakasero Primary School was using the land but he went to city authority because it is the controlling authority.

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