

# Lands officials issued titles in forests - Nema

**Inquiry.** The buyers allegedly targeted government compensation ahead of major projects.

BY EPHRAIM KASOZI  
& JALIRA NAMYALO  
editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

**KAMPALA.** Ministry of Lands officials are on the spot over fraudulently issuing land titles in wetlands and forest reserves at Namanve and Bukasa in Wakiso District.

It is alleged that the officials created numerous imaginary roads to form the basis for the ministry to issue more than 36 land titles measuring in hectares in Namanve Central Forest Reserve as well as in Bukasa and Kinawataka wetlands.

Evidence presented before the Commission of Inquiry into Land Matters indicates that the contested land titles were acquired in 2014 by purported developers targeting compensation as government seeks to implement infrastructural projects.

The targeted projects, according to Dr Tom Okurut, the executive director of the National Environment Management Authority (Nema), include Bukasa Port, an electricity transmission line, the Standard Gauge Railway and the Kampala-Jinja Expressway.

Appearing before the Commission, Dr Okurut, without identifying the registered proprietors on the contested areas, said the titles were issued in areas that have to be fully conserved for filtering waste water from other ecological

functions from Kampala Industrial Park.

"Different land titles have been issued on wetlands where water is three to four metres below. In fact, it is floating land comprised both in wetland and forest reserves," he said, adding that they learnt about the contested land titles upon granting approval to the Uganda Electricity Transmission Company for construction of a power line in 2015.

He testified that the titles will be cancelled as per the 2016 Cabinet directive in connection with all titles issued in protected areas after 1995.

“

"The land titles were created targeting the planned government projects but they were issued without the consent of the Nema. We do not have a list of owners but we are aware that the titles have changed names so many times," TOM OKURUT, NEMA BOSS

Dr Okurut admitted that Nema has never held any interaction with the physical planning authorities to account how the roads were created.

Dr Okurut was responding to land probe summons in connection with investigations into land titles in wetlands. Justice Catherine Bamugemereire, who chairs the land probe, said the concerned officers will be summoned to explain how the titles were issued.

everywh