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Investors decry challenges at Namanve

By Mary Karugaba

Investors allocated land in the three industrial parks in Kampala have frustrations in setting up industries in the allocated land.

The investors argued that although Uganda Investment Authority (UIA) has put a time limit of three years within which to develop the plots, it has not met part of its bargain.

They noted that the parks lack infrastructure, such as access roads, water, electricity and drainage, which has forced some of them to abandon the allocated space.

In a meeting at the UIA offices in Namanve, Wakiso district, attended by the Investment minister, Evelyn Anite, members of the Uganda Investment Authority (UIA) board and the executive plus the investors yesterday complained about slow development of the infrastructure in the parks yet they were promised already serviced plots.

"UIA is the one to blame for the slow development. They promised us already serviced plots with water, roads, electricity and drainage, but look at what we are getting today? Many of the plots are waterlogged and we have to spend a lot of money to fill them, before we set up the industry. With all these problems, how can you meet the three-year deadline?" an investor allocated two acres of land wondered.

As a result, the investors requested the Government to extend the development period to at least five years since most of the reasons for failure to develop the plots were not of



The managing director of Bella Wines, Prudence Ukonika, Anite and the executive director of Uganda Investment Authority, Jolly Kamuhangire after a meeting with investors yesterday. Photo by Wilfred Sanya

their own making.

Frustrated investors

Gusta Lule of Ntaka Bakery Limited said he has spent over 1.5b on filling his waterlogged plots, but, unfortunately, he has even failed to get the land title.

Susan Ndaru from Aqua Coolers Limited complained of harassment from the owner of the neighbouring plot whom she identified as General.

"When we went to develop our plot, we were attacked

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by the guards of the General saying it's not our plot," she said. Another investor who

preferred anonymity said he has spent over sh150m filling his plot, that is located near an established factory, which he says, discharges its waste directly into his land.

"For over five years, I have been waiting for UIA to work on the drainage, but they say there is no money. I had brought my machinery and to date it is still in the containers," he said.

UIA reallocates plots

According to Hamuza

Galiwango, the UIA director of lands development, the authority has repossessed over 130 plots it had previously allocated to a number of foreign and local investors in the park since its establishment.

The plots were, however, reallocated to other investors after the original owners failed to live up to the lease investment terms and kept government land idle for more than five years without any developments.

Galiwango informed the investors that since 2016/17, a total of 10 plots were repossessed and reallocated to other investors.

Government position

Appreciating the investors' contribution to the economy, Anite insisted that the period will not be extended because government has already given them free land.

"This is *Kisanja hakume mchezo*. This is business unusual. If you do not develop the land, we are going to get it and give it to investors who need it urgently," Anite told the investors.

Anite was happy that at least 22 industries are up and running in the park, from 18 last year, employing over 12,000 Ugandans, despite a number of challenges faced by UIA, such as funding for infrastructure.

In addition to other incentives, Anite said the Government has scrapped the \$80,000 premium on land in Namanve.

"You are the people who drive our economy. We will address all the issues that affect your business. Do not wait for meetings to air out your views. We have a hotline through which you can contact us," she said.

Michael Sabila, the regional Police commander of Kampala Metropolitan East said the security situation in the park has greatly improved and cautioned the investors against paying cash to the workers.

He noted that most investors carry huge amounts of money to pay their workers, which has in most cases attracted thieves.