

Land probe: NFA boss held over Kajjansi forest giveaway

By Edward Anyoli

The executive director of National Forest Authority (NFA) has been cited in illegal giveaway of Kajjansi Central Forest Reserve to a private developer.

The commission probing the land sector in Uganda heard that Michael Mugisa without due regard, wrote a letter of no objection to allocate the forest reserve to J2E Investment Corporation Ltd.

NFA is the body mandated to oversee the conservation of the forest reserve.

The land was transferred from a city businessman Bosco Ntaganda, who later sold it to J2E Investment Corporation Ltd at sh9b. Ntaganda had initially acquired the land to develop it into an international camping site.

Yesterday, Mugisa was quizzed for several hours by the commission over his involvement in the giveaway of the forest reserve.

Mugisa was further quizzed by the commission over failure to take action against encroachers as they parceled the forest reserve right under his nose. He said his office has been investigating the matter since 2013.

Mugisa, who assumed office in 2011 and whose contract is due to expire on January 31, went on the defensive to deny the claims as the commissioners tasked him to explain the giveaway.

When a number of documents relating to alleged illegal allocation of the forest reserve were shown to him during the hearing, he categorically denied saying: "My lord, we don't have these documents on file."

Mugisa's evasion of questions prompted the commission's chairperson Catherine



Michael Mugisa, the NFA boss

Bamugemereire to direct him and NFA legal manager Ruth Kisakye to record an additional statement.

Mugisa was briefly held by the detectives attached to the commission to record an additional statement regarding the giveaway. The commission also directed Mugisa to avail his bank account for further investigation.

Last year, when Mugisa appeared before the land probe, he denied claims that Kajjansi Central Forest Reserve had been allocated to private developers.

However, it emerged at the hearing yesterday that Mugisa gave the go-ahead to J2E Investment Corporation Ltd. Mugisa's directive is contained in a letter of no objection dated March 2017 and he retrospectively wrote to Solicitor General in August 2017 seeking legal advice. Mugisa sought the Solicitor General legal advice on whether it was proper for Ntaganda to transfer his interest to another private developer over part of the forest reserve measuring 269 hectares (acres 336.74).