

JINJA INDIANS PETITION LAND COMMISSION

BY HILLARY NSAMBU

The registered trustees of the Indian Recreation Club (IRC) in Jinja have appealed to the Land Commission of Inquiry to help them regain their six-acre piece of land with its developments.

The IRC's trustees contended that the effects of being denied the free and unconditional re-entry and possession of their property have greatly affected not only the Indian community, but also the public who would want to utilise the facilities.

The Land Commission, headed by Justice Catherine Bamugemereire, is mandated to investigate reports of rampant land evictions and assist the affected parties.

"The effects of denial to physically repossess the suit property have been colossal since the issuance of the repossession certificate granted to us by the minister. The Indian community has been denied proper participation in the management and full utilisation of their property, leading to great loss of revenue," the trustees said in a document.

The IRC trustees also said their property, that was fully developed with a club house, two office blocks, a library block and a recreation grounds, has been run down.

"We have investment plans for the stadium. We had also secured offers from local companies as well as those abroad, which are willing to refurbish the property to international standards," the trustees said.

Naren Mehta, the IRC chairperson contended that they are the true registered proprietors of the property,

having acquired its lease in 1913 for the initial period of 49 years that expired in 1961.

It was renewed for another 49 years and they were permitted to reoccupy their property after the fully paid the necessary dues.

Unfortunately, however, before a new lease could be handed over to them, they were forced to leave the country when Idi Amin expelled Indians in 1972.

"We had secured offers from companies willing to refurbish the property."

Although the minister concerned had cancelled the repossession, the High Court over ruled it blaming the minister for having wrongly cancellation.

When contacted for comment, the chairperson central division Jinja, Mubarak Kirunda, told *Sunday Vision* that it was not true that the property belongs to the IRC as their lease had long expired even before the expulsion of the Indians.

"Upon return to Uganda, the IRC were given up to 1993 to reclaim their property, but IRC failed and the property was reverted to the Jinja Municipality," Kirunda explained.

"We invited the Indian community to join us in developing the property, but they refused," he added.