

has called upon Rotarians and well-wishers to participate in the forthcoming cancer marathon. He made the remarks during the launch of the marathon in Jinja recently. [Denis Edema]



SOURCE OF INCOME

Surviving means

Fishermen fishing at River Nile in Jinja District recently. Many people in Uganda depend on River Nile as a source of livelihood because it is a source of water and food. PHOTO BY RACHEL LEFFERS

Land grabbing cases on the increase in Busoga – survey

Concerned. The commission of inquiry into land acquisition and management chaired by Justice Catherine Bamugemereire recently expressed concerns over the manner in which public land in Jinja District has been grabbed by government officials.

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JINJA/IGANGA/KAMULI. A recent survey conducted by *Daily Monitor* has revealed that public land in Busoga sub-region has been grabbed by investors and politicians.

This is attributed to the failure by the area authorities to process land titles, absence of the land board for two years, ignorance of the land law

by residents and failure by the government to redevelop the land.

Available statistics indicate that at least 11 primary schools in Jinja Municipality, including Main Street Primary School, Spire Road Primary School, Victoria Nile Primary School, Uganda Railways Primary School, Narambai Primary School, Mpu-mudde Primary School, Kiira Primary School and Maggwa Primary School have had their land taken.

Other public land that has been taken include that of Jinja Hospital, Napier Market, Busoga Square, Rippon Garden Children's Park, Bus Park, Kimaka Forest, Uganda Railways, Departed Asian Properties and Rippon Falls Hotel where Queen Elizabeth stayed on her maiden visit to Uganda to commission the Owen Falls Dam in 1954.

Voice

"Most public land is idle. Government has failed to put development projects on it hence giving people chance to grab land. But as a district, we have started leasing the land to prevent further encroachment," DENIS LYADA, KAMULI DISTRICT SPEAKER,

The recent loss of government land also saw plot 60/62 Alidina Road in Jinja District being sold at only Shs2.5m to Mr Simpson Birungi, the proprietor of Movit products, Mr Michael Nuwagira alias 'Toyota', was named as a conduit to Birus Properties that dubiously acquired the same land.

Justice minister, Maj Gen Kahinda Otaiire, was also implicated and admitted to have issued directives that led to the subsequent demolition of a government property.

While appearing before the land probe recently, Gen Otaiire said Mr Birungi who is also the managing director of Birus Property Services Ltd, wanted a lease and had applied to the Uganda Land Commission

briefly

Cyclists warned

MBALE: Boda boda cyclists in Kamuli District have been warned against drug abuse, personal hygiene and a bad saving culture. Kamuli Municipality MP Rehema Watongola made the call on Sunday during the Mulago Stage party at the Mayor's Garden. Mr Abu Waiswa, the stage chairperson, said they will monitor fellow riders, improve customer care and maintain their boda bodas. [Opio Sam Caleb]

Farmers get seeds

BUYENDE: Farmers in Bugaya Sub-county have received improved maize seeds under the Operation Wealth Creation (OWC) programme. While handing over the seeds at the weekend, Lt Col David Baisuka, on behalf of OWC, urged farmers to utilise the second rainy season to grow more food. The farmers had earlier raised concerns over the invasion of armyworms, fruit flies and delayed supplies of agriculture inputs. [Opio Sam Caleb]

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ISSUES

Taking action. The State minister for Lands, who is also the Namutumba District Woman Member of Parliament, Ms Persis Namuganza, said the ministry has embarked on re-registering all government land, including departed asian properties, school land, hospital land so that they have power to control it.

Government to blame. Mr Bamu Lulenzi, one of the councillors who opposed the proposal of approving the giveaway of the land to the school, attributed land grabbing issues to failure by the government to give councillors salary, which has prompted them to engage in dubious activities of accepting bribes in exchange of public land.

No land board. Jinja District has been without a land board since October 2015, it was until March 2017 that a new board chaired by Innocent Ndiko Ngobi, started working after it was sworn in.

Divided. In Kamuli, the municipality and district authorities are currently divided over the sale of five acres of land on Ssaza Road by the area chairperson, Mr Thomas Kategere. The land was allegedly sold to the Chinese Construction Company at a cost of Shs600m without the consent of the municipality leaders.

(ULC), seeking a letter of no objection. Other officials implicated in land issues, include the State minister for Cooperatives, Mr Fredrick Ngobi Gume, Jinja Central Division chairperson Mubarak Kirunda, Jinja District clerk to council Moses Magemeso, and four police officers who have since been suspended pending investigations.

In 2016, after the death of Uganda Cranes goalkeeper Abbey Dhaira, a resolution was passed to have the stadium named after him. However, part of the allocated land for the stadium was allegedly demarcated for sale to Mr Fred Hasibiri, the managing director of Samisa Telecom who has since denied the allegations.

This prompted Jinja residents to stage a strike in May.

According to the former mayor of Jinja Municipality, Mr Muhammad Baswaale Kezaala, the pitch in question was established by the defunct British American Tobacco (BAT) in 1954 and was donated to Jinja Municipality Council by the registered trustees of Jinja Club Golf Course in 1968.

Recently, residents of Mpu-mudde in Jinja petitioned the then Jinja Resident District Commissioner (RDC), Mr John Rex Achilla, over the illegal sell and grabbing of land that houses the sub-county headquarters by top administrators and political leaders.

The Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces (UPDF) was in February accused by residents of grabbing land belonging to Guardian Community Primary School in Mpu-mudde-Kimaka Division. The case is currently pending before court.

The speaker of Jinja Municipality Council, Mr Moses Bizitu, attributed land grabbing to failure by the municipal technocrats.

"There is laxity by technocrats in processing titles for public land which gives people chance to encroach on it," he said. Bugembe Town Council chairperson Steven Wante, said the land board is not independent in the way it delivers its services.

"Since they are being appointed by politicians, they act on influence of a clique of politicians. In cases where land board members are appointed after paying a bribe, they also find ways of how they can recover their money," Mr Wante said.

He added: "Most of the members are not trustworthy and Parliament must revisit the policy by including religious leaders who are trustworthy on the board."

Jinja Central Division chairperson, Mubarak Kirunda, who was recently implicated in land grabbing saga, blamed the vice on leaders who came to power with an aim of grabbing land to enrich themselves.

Mr Sula Menya, a resident of Jinja attributed land grabbing to failure by concerned institutions to sensitise the community about land-related issues which has left everyone ignorant about land law, public land and how to protect it.