

Ugandans to the rescue



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Posted by Musa

Government sells 250 acres of prison land at Shs1.2m



PHOTO BY PAULINE KAIRU

LAND BONANZA: The Kirinya Prisons land that has gone to investors at Shs1.2 million.

By Mercy Nalugo
Posted by Musa

The government is once again in the spotlight over questionable sale of land in Jinja to private investors—at a laughable price. Parliament is investigating how 252 acres of Kirinya Government Prisons land on the shores of Lake Victoria was parceled out to investors at Shs5,000 an acre reportedly on the President's directives. Again this bring us to wonder what Museven has become in Uganda's privatization scheme! Why he alone can authorize the sale of private and government land? Where is the minister of Lands here?

The entire piece fetched Shs1.2m. Brokers Daily Monitor spoke to yesterday said land in the area goes for Shs20m an acre on the open market.

Caveat call

Documents produced before the Public Accounts Committee indicate that the land was given to Lake Victoria Information Communication Technology and Bio-Tech (LAVIT)—a firm owned by Mr Richard Raja, a businessman and the Jinja East MP, Mr Igeme Nabeta. Has anyone investigated this so called investment firm? Was an independent appraisal called in to appraise the land? Why was it just given away?

- Govt to move Kigo Prison to Kassanje-Ssisa
- Law courts register more cases

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The investors are to establish a computer processing plant on the land. The committee chaired by Budadiri West MP Nandala Mafabi yesterday directed the accounting officer of Uganda Prisons, Mr Simon Kimono, to write to the Uganda Land Commission to slap a caveat on the Kirinya land.

“Is it right to give away 252 acres of land to an MP and you ask tax payers to pay for the relocation? This is unheard of. The government should have used the money to construct more schools and hospitals so that the poor can access them,” said Mr Mafabi. **This is Museveni looting our land, using these fictitious investment firms as legitimate investors! But we shall retrieve all that belongs to us one day..**

A letter written in January 2008 by President Museveni—but only made public yesterday—directed then Internal Affairs Minister Ruhakana Rugunda to immediately transfer the land to LAVIT. **Exactly directed not asked!** “Coordinate with the ministry of Finance to expedite the facilitation of relocation. The prisoners can be kept anywhere in Uganda. That Kirinya land is prime, near town, at the shores of Lake Victoria and next to the railway line,” reads the letter. **So transfer the inmates anywhere else, pack them in an prison facility regardless of it’s original maximum occupancy capacity! This is why you see that most prisons in Uganda today are 125% overcrowded.**

“It should therefore be used to create employment, generate export of services to increase our forex earnings and contribute directly or indirectly to the expansion of the tax base,” it adds.

President

cited

The legislators, however, were skeptical that the President could approve a deal where public prime land is given away at peanuts. “As a committee, we are saying no evicting prisoners in Kirinya. How can we give Nabeta free land and build a prison elsewhere using tax payers’ money just because his business partner is brown? We are putting a caveat and we don’t want any activity on the land until we are through with investigations,” Mr Mafabi ruled. **You know very well that parliament is powerless to over rule the dictator, so how can you say that you are against it?**

The legislators, however, heard their concerns could yield little since the investors already possess the land title. **The title shall be revoked and the land taken back, once the true liberators arrive.** The land according to the Auditor General’s report, was given away hurriedly without a formal business/land use plan to justify the prison’s relocation. **All this is the evidence that will be used to prosecute.**

Mr Kimono told the MPs that the land transaction was done without his knowledge. MP Nabeta could not be reached as he is reportedly out of the country. The government has previously come under criticism for dishing out public land to investors--some of whom have failed to develop the facilities.