



# Major land row pits Kilifi investor, squatters

BY MAUREEN MUDI  
AND BRIAN OTIENO

A major row is simmering between an investor and squatters over land in Takaungu, Kilifi.

The standoff between Omar Rassam and the squatters, saw a Sh10 million perimeter wall demolished last week.

Now, the area commissioner of lands has been directed to appear before court to verify which title deed is genuine.

The demolition took place two weeks after the High Court in Kilifi barred the squatters from entering the land pending the hearing and determination of the suit.

But the squatters, led by Christopher Kazungu and Joshua Jefwa, also obtained orders in a case they filed, challenging any development on the disputed plot.

The land, has already been subdivided into plots which further complicates the case.

There were claims also that a senior police officer had called Rassam and asked him not to commence any development.

Kilifi district police boss Clemence Wangai said each party had gone to court and it was only fair that the orders be adhered to.

"The squatters had gone to court prohibiting any development. What we are waiting for is verification of the two title deeds. The inves-



ROW: Residents of Takaungu in Kilifi demolish the perimeter wall in a disputed land.

tor had however put up a perimeter wall. I went there twice to stop them from pulling down the wall but they could not listen," Wangai told The Star.

Rassam's lawyer Eric Odongo had mentioned to court that "professional squatters" had been sent to the plot to cause chaos by a prominent politician in an effort to

deny him his land.

In his affidavit, the investor claims, "I am just a victim of the games of professional squatters operating in the Coast province".

Judge Francis Tuyot issued an order restraining any interference with the land on May 15.

Rassam claimed the hired youth were transported in two trucks that

were escorted by four saloon cars.

Rassam's brother Mohamed Ali, who was present when the youth were demolishing the wall, said they were acting under strict instructions as they were well organised.

Ali said those who were occupying the land before his brother bought it in 2009 were compensated and resettled elsewhere.

## IN BRIEF

### Balala set to launch party

**MALINDI** Former Tourism minister Najib Balala has finalised plans to launch the political party he will vie on.

The Mvita MP spoke yesterday for the first time since he failed to appear at Deputy Prime Minister Musalia Mudavadi's public rally at Tononoka in Mvita two weeks ago.

Balala's absence at the rally sparked speculation that he might be contemplating to make another dramatic political move in preparation for the elections.

### Drugs fight campaign

**MOMBASA** Coast anti-drugs campaigners have opposed the government pilot project to provide 8 million free needles to drug users.

The NGOs, through their Coast community anti-drugs coalition secretary Amina Abdallah, have termed the move as retrogressive.

"We have refused this project in totality. We are giving the government seven days to withdraw their plans or face court action," said Abdallah who was speaking in Mombasa.

### Matatu crew row at bus park

**MALINDI** There was chaos at the new Malindi bus park yesterday after operators plying the Malindi-Mombasa route differed over the mode of operations.

Trouble started when one group of operators from the Munawar shuttle refused to follow the queue system introduced by the municipal council.

The other groups comprising of the Al Wahim shuttle, Lamu Star Shuttle and Malindi Shuttle hit back and blocked the vehicles from picking passengers.

### Sh8m maritime campaign

**MOMBASA** The Association for Women in the Maritime Sector in East and Southern Africa plan to raise Sh8 million to initiate a maritime sensitisation programme in girls' schools across the country.

The association which was formed to advocate for gender equity and improve access to maritime training and technology, said women are shying off from careers in the industry due to lack of information.

## MRC not a security threat to the country, says Mwazo

BY BRIAN OTIENO

A Cabinet minister from the Coast has denied that the outlawed Mombasa Republican Council is a security threat to the country.

Tourism minister Dan Mwazo also blamed the rise of the group on the government's complacency.

Mwazo said the group

does not use militants.

"I think they are not a threat because they are Kenyans. They live with us. They are saying they need a direct contact for them to dialogue," said Mwazo.

The government plans to build a new centre to house the National Security Intelligence Service in Kwale county allegedly due to the perceived threat

from the group.

Mwazo said the MRC is apprehensive of the intended plan. He added that the government should have acted when the Islamic Party of Kenya and the Kaya Bombo made headlines in the 90s for agitating for the rights of the Coastal people especially over land.

"The government should

have taken action during the IPK and Kaya Bombo times. I think the MRC anger would not have reached this level," said Mwazo during a meeting held at the South Coast region.

He said the channel used by the MRC to raise their grievances is not correct but they have a genuine case.

The new constitution has provisions to address the problems they raise.

The Voi MP said it is not true that the leaders at the Coast have refused to seek solutions to the issues that the group is raising.

Mwazo said he has been invited for talks by the group in order to find an amicable solution to address their grievances.

## First underwater museums in Africa to be built in Mombasa

BY ALPHONSE GARI

THE National Museums of Kenya is in the process of setting up Africa's first underwater museums to study marine life and shipwrecks in the Coast region.

Archeological studies revealed that they have discovered over 35 shipwrecks in the Indian Ocean which could be turned into underwater museums.

Experts say the museums would be different from the normal ones.

Head of Archaeology at the NMK Cesar Bitu said

because of the heavy costs of setting up the project, they have identified five shipwrecks that could be set up before embarking on the others.

Speaking on the phone, Bitu said study and excavation work for the three shipwrecks in Mombasa is complete.

"Under water museums are not buildings but the construction involves the development and preparation of shipwrecks that are underwater for people to be able to see," he said.

Bitu said the shipwrecks are spread all over Lamu, Mombasa, Malindi, Watamu and the South Coast adding that each will act as a museum of its own.

He said experts will dive under the water and install information and clean the area to ensure safety measures are put in place for those who would like to visit the museums.

The three Mombasa shipwrecks which would be dealt with are located at Fort Jesus, Nyali area the other one is in the Indian Ocean.

## DPP yet to respond in foreigners Shabaab link

MAUREEN MUDI

THE Director of Public Prosecutions is yet to submit the file in a case which a Belgium and Tunisian national arrested by anti-terrorism officers in Lamu, are accused of al Shabaab involvement.

Leading the prosecution, Peter Gitonge told the court that they needed a month to assemble vital evidence and put them on record, for the case against Hassan Kafi and Mohammed Debarli to proceed.

The duo are serving six months at the Shimo La

Tewa prison after being convicted of being in the country illegally.

They are also facing charges of being members of al Shabaab.

Chief magistrate Stephen Riech directed that they be repatriated back to their country after completion of their terms.

Yesterday, their lawyer Geoffrey Mutubia opposed the prosecution's application for a month, saying it was too long, and instead asked that the court reduce the number of days to ensure that there is a speedy trial for his clients.