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KenGen suspends construction of Sh6.9bn power project in Meru

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KenGen managing director Albert Mugo during a past event. The firm has suspended construction of a Sh6.9 billion wind power project. PHOTO | SALATON NJAU | NATION MEDIA GROUP

In Summary

- The first phase of the Meru Wind Farm Project that is expected to cost Sh6.9 billion was scheduled to be completed in December, this year.
- To speed up the demarcation process of the disputed land, a budget of Sh6 million was approved by the national government.
- The area has been in a conflict of interest from many stakeholders since the power company identified it for the mega project.



By AGNES ABOO

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Power generating firm KenGen has suspended the construction of a 400-megawatts wind power plant in Meru County until land rows rocking the project are resolved.

The first phase of the Meru Wind Farm Project that is expected to cost Sh6.9 billion was scheduled to be completed in December, this year.

The project will sit on an 18,700-acre-piece of land in Tigania East Sub County.

According to KenGen's managing director, Albert Mugo, the construction has been delayed due to land disputes.

"As you see in the papers, we await land adjudication so that we can deal with the bona-fide land owners," Mr Mugo said through a text message.

BIG BLOW

The project is aiming at contributing to economic development and mitigate climate change and sustainable national energy matrix by producing environmentally sound electrical energy and avoid the generation of carbon emissions at reasonable economic costs.

To speed up the demarcation process of the disputed land, a budget of Sh6 million was approved by the national government.

The process was expected to be completed within two months to allow the firm to construct the plant this year.

However, this has faced a big blow after Meru Governor Peter Munya put an injunction to stop the process.

"Those purporting to be committee members have not been gazetted. Whatever they are doing in the land is illegal. If we allow them to continue with the illegal process, the poor will be deprived of their land," he said.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The governor said he will only allow the process to go on once an all-inclusive land committee is constituted.

Mr Munya said the bona-fide land owners should be given a two-week notice before meeting to choose a committee that will oversee the subdivision of the land.

The area has been in a conflict of interest from many stakeholders since the power company identified it for the mega project.

The area which is located few metres from the Isiolo international airport is also seen as an avenue for the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport (Lapsset) Corridor project.

According to the District Lands and Adjudication Settlements Officer (DILASO) Kephers Obingo, the demarcation process will be done before the KenGen wind power station is set up.

"We need cooperation from all those involved to ensure the exercise runs smoothly. Genuine land owners will get documents immediately after the demarcation," Mr Obingo.

The wind mill project will occupy the sections of Ngaremara and Gambela locations.



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