

DEADLINE

Congestion at law courts to go on for a while

By NATION Reporter

Congestion at the Nairobi Law Courts will continue a little longer than expected following a two-month delay in the conversion of a building into a courthouse.

Public Works minister Chris Obure yesterday instructed the contractor to hand over the building by June.

The work was delayed by sub-contractors installing the lifts, air conditioning and building a parking lot. The entrance and building is also incomplete, meaning an April 8 deadline will not be met.

Additional costs

Work on the building that used to house Kenya Revenue Authority's income tax department began in 2005 and was scheduled to end in December 2008. The deadline was, however, extended to April this year.

It was expected to cost Sh696 million but this is likely to hit the Sh900 million mark following additional costs.

"Even if they work day and night for the next 30 days, it obvious that the work will not be complete by Wednesday," said Justice Otieno Onyango, who heads the Judiciary's committee on the project.

The delegation commended the main contractors. "Normally, I'd be very firm due to the special nature of the work, but it will not be too harsh on them," said Mr Obure, adding, "But the sub-contractors need to pull up their socks."



Architect Kefa Osoro takes Public Works minister Chris Obure (left) on a tour of the building being redesigned into a courthouse. The minister instructed the contractor to complete the work by June. Photo/MICHAEL MUTE

ELECTORAL COMMISSION

New polls boss to be known today

Political intrigues threaten to derail process again as interviews are held

By OLIVER MATHENGE

Kenya's will today know who will occupy the powerful seat of chairman of Interim Independent Electoral Commission if the scheduled interviews are held without a hitch.

The chairman will be chosen from former House Speaker Francis Ole Kaparo, human rights activist Maina Kiai and former head of the Institute for Education in Democracy Koki Muli. Others are retired major James Oswago, Mr Ahmed Isaac Hassan, Mr Duncan Mwanjumba and Ms Jane Nyaboke Njagi.

However, it has emerged that political intrigues are threatening to derail the formation of the electoral commission once again. Allegations of political interference on the selection of the new electoral boss were widespread on the eve of the interviews for the job.

Nairobi Metropolitan minister Mutula Kilonzo yesterday accused Prime Minister

Raila Odinga and deputy PM Uhuru Kenyatta of interfering in the process.

The minister accused his two colleagues of holding secret meetings with members of the Parliamentary Select Committee allied to their parties — ODM and PNU — with the aim of influencing them.

But the Prime Minister's office denied the claims. His director of communication Dennis Onyango told the *Nation* that he was not aware of such meetings.

Without divulging details, Mr Kilonzo said the PM and Mr Kenyatta had separately met ODM and PNU legislators in a way that serves to "poison" the team.

Five nominees

He claimed that this was the reason why human rights activist and lawyer Pheroze Nowrojee had withdrawn from the race of the chairman of the Interim Independent Electoral Commission. He said Mr Nowrojee had chosen to pull out after learning that his name had been floated in one of the meetings.

Mr Nowrojee, who was among five nominees to be interviewed by the PSC today, became the third to pull out from the contest after Mr Cecil Miller and Ms Alice Yano.

The controversy arose after it emerged that a former Constitution of Kenya Review commissioner, Mr Ahmed Isaac Hassan, and Mr Kaparo were front-runners for the job.

Raila hints at radical reforms in Judiciary and the police force

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It will go on a retreat at the end of the month to deliberate on reforms as it enters its second year, among them changes

in the Judiciary and the police. The minister is telling you not to listen to the Chief Justice and the Commissioner are saying they are the ones on the job.

We are the ones going to action as government," Mr Odinga told journalists at his press office in Nairobi.

He has been criticised for his handling of the Judiciary and the Police. He said he would conclude on cases.

Yesterday, Mr Odinga said the Judiciary was guilty of stalling against corruption. He asked why criminal cases involving some top government officials remained in court for long and called for their speedy trial.

He said the coalition was in a hurry to implement reforms it was supposed to do under Agenda IV of the National Dialogue and Reconciliation.

Issues include writing a new constitution, conducting land reforms, tackling unemployment, ensuring equitable distribution of resources, and helping give the country a new direction, plans were established an independent review commission.

tion to replace the disbanded Electoral Commission of Kenya while *Kazi kwa Vijana* (Jobs for youth) initiative has been launched to create jobs for youth.

He regretted that efforts to deal with post-election violence in accordance with the Waki report had not been concluded because the formation of a tribunal to try those responsible were blocked by, according to the PM, people who suspect their names feature in the Waki list.

Accused media

He accused the media of campaigning for the suspects to be tried at the International Criminal Court at the Hague.

Mr Odinga, however, said the government hopes to reintroduce a fresh Bill for the formation of a local tribunal.

The ministry of Lands will table two Bills on land reforms at Cabinet next week, he said.

The government will carry out radical reforms of the Judiciary and the police and a team is being formed to oversee the process, he said.

Government to reintroduce a fresh Bill for the formation of a local tribunal, says premier

ciary and the police and a team is being formed to oversee the process, he said.

The Grand Coalition Management Committee during its weekend retreat will agree on reforms and when they will be implemented, he said.

The 14-member committee is headed by President Kibaki and Mr Odinga and draws membership from both ODM and PNU.

He denied that most Kenyans were disappointed with the coalition's leadership, saying many people had expected that some things will be done "overnight".

The world economic crisis had made the situation worse, the PM said, adding that he was hopeful the coalition will find favour with Kenyans once the current famine eases.

Mr Odinga dismissed a suggestion by Head of Civil Service Francis Muthaura that he be paid a salary equal to that of the Vice-President.

He said the National Accord was very clear that he was equal to President Kibaki.

However, since President Kibaki was "also performing" some duties as Head of State, he could only accept a salary between the VP's and the President's, he said. He said being paid the same salary as the VP will reverse the pecking order in the accord, which says he and President Kibaki were equal.

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