

Ex-MAK council boss cautions varsity associations

By Cecilia Okoth

The Makerere University Council outgoing chairperson, Dr Eng. Charles Wana-Etyem, has demanded that all university associations leadership know their limits and give the council the chance to do its job.

Etyem said the council, which is the university's governing body, was often 'pushed' by the associations over demands that it could not handle immediately.

"There are certain issues that require finances and the institution does not have the ability to attend to such demands. However, the associations pressed us so hard with their demands," he said.

He cited the issue of pay rises which he said was beyond the council since they did not have the money.

Etyem, who made the remarks at a handover ceremony at Speke Resort Munyonyo on Friday, gave the new council a brief history of the continuous strikes at Makerere University (MAK).

Striking staff

Business at some of the colleges and departments of Uganda's oldest university has been paralysed for more than three weeks due to an ongoing strike between the

university administration and its academic and administrative staff.

The associations currently on strike include Makerere University Academic Staff Association (MUASA), Makerere Administrative Staff Association (MASA) and the National Union of Education Institutions (NUEI).

The strike started after some lecturers, including two top leaders of MUASA and MASA were suspended.

BETWEEN THE LINES

■ Etyem said sometimes the university associations demand so much from the council that it cannot provide answers immediately.

The administration argues that they were suspended for misconduct, indiscipline and involvement in acts that breach the terms and conditions of their employment.

The affected persons were Dr Deus Kamunyu Muhwezi, the MUASA chairperson, Bennet Magara and Joseph Kalema of MASA.

However, a big section of the academic and administrative staff at the university has rejected calls by management to return

to work, demanding that the suspended leaders be reinstated.

Return to work

Meanwhile, the newly constituted council, chaired by Lorna Magara, has asked the striking staff to immediately return to work while their grievances are being handled.

Magara, who had previously met with the associations' leadership, agreed that issues directed to the council be handled by the council once it is fully instituted.

As part of their demands, the staff also want Thomas Tayebwa and Bruce Kabaasa removed from the University Council and Ruth Iteu allowed to represent MASA.

Yesterday, *New Vision* learnt that the council constituted its committees on Friday. Jolly Uzamukunda, the education ministry's representative to council, replaces Kabaasa as the new chairperson appointments board.

Dr Muhammad Kiggundu, the acting manager communications and international relations at the university said he was optimistic that the university will return to normalcy by end of today given the continuous dialogues.

He also hailed the students for exercising maturity and remaining calm amidst these trying times.