THE INSTITUTE WILL TAKE IN PEOPLE THAT ALREADY HAVE A DEGREE IN CHEMISTRY, BIOLOGY OR NATURAL SCIENCE

Makerere, Turkish university to set up forensic institute

By Jeff Andrew Lule and Juliet Kasirye

Forensic science remains one of the main dependable systems used in criminal investigations.

However, if poorly done, it can lead to wrong judgment by the courts.

To avoid such gaps, the Government has partnered with the government of Turkey to establish an independent institute of forensic medicine and science.

The institute, the first of its kind in the region, is expected to start in 2020 at Makerere University in collaboration with Cukurova University Adana in Turkey.

It will start with three courses namely; master of forensic medicine, master of forensic chemistry and toxicology, and master of forensic biology and DNA.

The deputy Police chief, Maj. Gen. Sabiiti Muzeyi, said the institute is timely because the Government is implementing a directive from President Yoweri Museveni to establish an ultra-modern forensic facility that will deliver world-class services in the administration of justice.

He said the application of forensics in investigations and the scientific evidence it produces plays an important role in criminal justice.

Muzeyi made the remarks while opening an awareness workshop in forensic medicine and science at Imperial Royale Hotel in Kampala last week.

The four-day event was organised by Cukurova University with support from the Government.

He said he was grateful that the academia had taken keen interest in nurturing the required forensic practitioner human resource.

"Forensic science is a rapidly developing field. With a constant stream of new technologies and scientific developments, there are ever increasing areas of application of forensics in criminal investigations," he said.

He said: "We can now trace evidence that would have been difficult to get years ago. We can connect multiple crime scenes to specific evidential material.

"Soon, there will be even more technical possibilities to enable extracting relevant information from smaller and smaller traces."

Muzeyi said the quality of forensic evidence and the integrity and expertise of the people involved are very crucial aspects, thus the need to train and retain the best of "our scientists". "Science does not lie, but those without integrity can manipulate it," he said.

Prof. Mete Korkut Gulmen of forensic pathology at Cukurova University said: "This is important for Uganda because it will have more scientists and academicians in the same field.

"These scientists will not only serve Uganda, but the entire region and other countries where forensic services are needed," he said.

He said the institute would also offer doctor of philosophy (PhDs) and capacity building among Police and other experts at various levels.

Gulmen said forensic science helps to bring out justice.

"Without forensic medicine and sciences, there is always a gap in the judicial system for the judges and prosecution," he said.



Muzeyi (left) shaking hands with Professor Damalie Nakanjako, the dean of school of medicine at Makerere University as Gulmen looks on. This was during the forensics science and medicine conference in Kampala last week. Photo by Jimmy Outa

BETWEEN THE LINES

The deputy Police chief, Maj. Gen. Sabiiti Muzeyi, said the institute would make it possible to trace evidence that would have been difficult to get years ago and also connect multiple crime scenes to specific evidential material.

What is forensic science?

Forensic science is the application of knowledge and methodology of various disciplines of science to legal matters.

It involves the use of multiple disciplines such as physics, chemistry, biology, computer science and engineering for evidence analysis.

It includes forensic biology or DNA (fingerprint analysis and DNA profiling) used to identify persons to eliminate suspects and getting biological evidence.

Other forensics include odontology used to identify victims when bodies are recovered, toxicology (human and drugs), anthropology (examination of compromised human remains or skeletons to help determine the age, height, gender, and ancestry), pathology (examine cause of death), and forensic medicine (analysis of medical samples).

Dr Robert Lukande, a professor at Makerere University, said the new forensic programme will target people that already have a degree in chemistry or in biology or biotechnology or natural science.

In order to create more employment opportunities in Uganda, the Turkish Ambassador to Uganda, Karem Alp, said they are interested in investing in health and education sectors.

"Since crime cannot be stopped, it can be investigated for the country to be safe. The investment in the security sector is important because we are combining all these elements to make Uganda a stable country," Karem said during the closing of the workshop.

As Turkey is sharing its development experience with Uganda in terms of innovation, technology, Karem said in order to ensure this programme is a success, he strongly believes that investing in human capital is the right thing to do.