

# Kasaija tasked on underfunding to varsities

**Complaint.** Public universities say the Finance ministry is giving them less money than they collect as fees.

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**PARLIAMENT.** Finance minister Matia Kasaija yesterday did not appear before the parliamentary Committee on Education to explain why he had allocated less funds to public universities than had been projected.

This forced the committee chairperson, Mr Jacob Opolot (Pallisa County), to give the Finance ministry team up to today to appear or else the MPs would submit their report to Parliament without the ministry's explanation.

Last year, the Finance ministry decided that all the money collected in

public universities be remitted to the Consolidated Fund and then paid to the institutions on a semester basis.

According to Mr Opolot, they invited the minister following complaints from universities that it was becoming difficult for them to run because the Finance ministry was giving them less money than they had collected as fees.

"Our main aim was to understand the basis for the allocation of appropriation on aid to the universities. All universities are complaining that what they are getting is less than their projection and less than what they have been able to realise in this financial year," Mr Opolot said after his team waited for ministry officials for about two hours.

He added: "We gave them a chance because we could not conclude on a report when we have not yet heard



**On the spot.** Matia Kasaija, Finance minister

from them. If they don't come, we shall make our recommendations to the House and if the House adopts it, that is what we will go by. The only time they have to come is tomorrow (today) morning. Beyond that, there will be no other opportunity for them to come. If they don't we will conclude our report."

The Permanent Secretary in the ministry of Education, Mr Alex Kakooza, last Thursday told MPs on the Education committee that their counterparts in Finance introduced the appropriation on aid last year without consulting them.

"We have never engaged with ministry of Finance to discuss appropriation on aid and how it should be collected and how it has worked in other areas in the world. Of course it causes some delays. It is collected by the Uganda Revenue Authority and that is how they had come to set lower rates to send to universities at first and that caused problems. Where a university is collecting Shs20 billion they were giving them almost half. When you give the university half the money, it strains their operations," Mr Kakooza said.

Sources at Makerere University

yesterday said they were only able to get half of the money between July and December but when it came to the second semester, only a fraction of the money expected was released. In addition, the ministry of Finance has cut all universities' projections for the 2019/2020 budget.

However, Mr Opolot is concerned that the system is going to create a crisis in universities, which will likely cause unrest.

"Now you are saying if I am paying Shs1 million, the university collects and remits it to Uganda Revenue Authority and only half is paid back to help in the running of the university. How will the university be able to give me the services for which I paid? We shall have endless strikes. And if you have not engaged, how could the decision be taken without engaging the ministry?" he said.