

Makerere VC threatens to sack striking staff

By Mubarak Mugabo
and Ashraf Kasirye

There is a standoff at Makerere University as the staff strike went into effect yesterday.

The vice-chancellor, Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe, has threatened to sack all teaching staff on strike if they do not resume work following the beginning of the second semester of this academic year.

Makerere University Staff Association (MUASA) on Friday 18 announced a sit-down strike after the suspension of their chairperson, Deus Muhwezi Kamunyu, over alleged misconduct. The strike is also backed by Makerere University Administrative Staff Association, whose leader was suspended early this month.

Nawangwe told *New Vision* that whoever failed to report to work would be sacked.

"If they do not go back to work, the law is very clear. They will go through a disciplinary process and be dismissed," he said.

The suspension of the MUASA chairperson and the strike comes at a time students are reporting back for a new semester.

At the university campus, many students looked idle as only a few lecturers were seen in the lecture halls, with many of them being empty.

However, Nawangwe argued that lecturers and students were still few because the semester was just starting.

"There are few lecturers and students because the semester is just beginning," he said.

The MUASA executive yesterday told journalists that the strike will continue until the suspension of their leader Deus Kamunyu is lifted.

Eleven members of the MUASA executive held a four-hour meeting in the senior staff canteen inside the university campus.

The MUASA vice-chairperson, Edward Nector Mwavu, later said MUASA was ready to dialogue with

the University leadership, but would not go back to work until their demands were met.

"Our withdrawal of labour was effective midnight of January 18. We are ready to talk to the university leadership if it also lifts the suspension of our chairperson. He was representing our views as MUASA and not his individual views," Mwavu said.

Nawangwe, however, said he was not interested in speaking to MUASA over Kamunyu's suspension because he had suspended Kamunyu the individual, not the chairperson.

"I have not asked for talks with anybody because I do not want them, those individuals were suspended in their individual capacity," Nawangwe responded, adding: "I did not suspend MUASA, I suspended individuals."

The MUASA executive also expressed anger towards the amendment of the human resource manual, which gave the university powers to sack anyone charged with any offence.

The students' leadership condemned the move by the

lecturers at a time when students are meant to resume their studies.

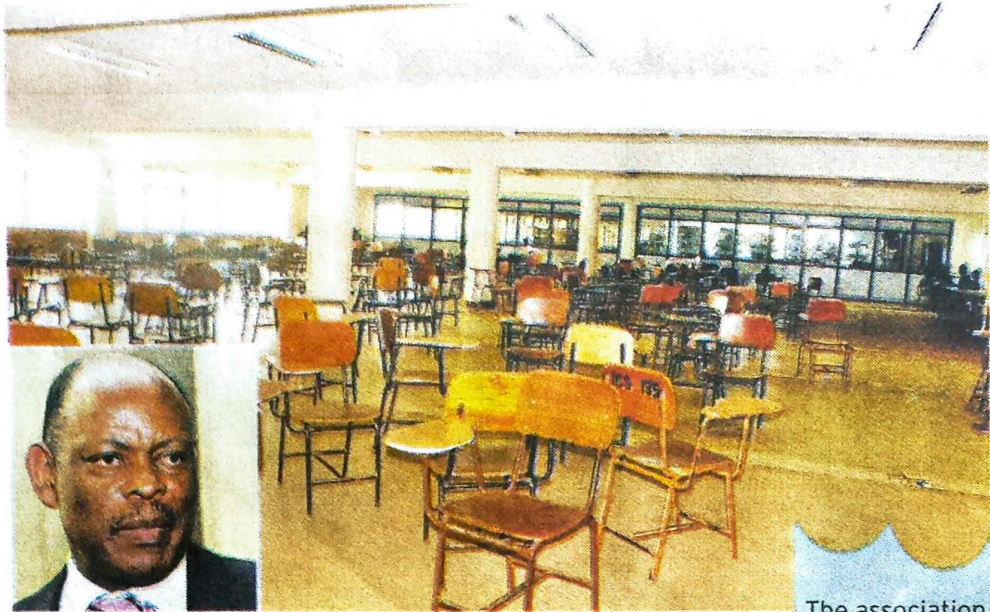
Salim Were, the guild president, told *New Vision* that as leaders of the students' fraternity, they had called for an emergency meeting tomorrow to make a conclusive decision on the next step as they fight for their rights.

"We cannot afford to be sacrificed just because lecturers are conflicting with the university administration, yet our parents struggle to pay for us tuition," he said.

Nawangwe's administration and MUASA woes have also attracted reactions from the national workers league leadership of the National Resistance Movement.

The chairperson of the league, James Tweheyo, asked Nawangwe to lift the suspension because it could have a ripple effect on other public universities in the country.

"We call on the vice chancellor to call off the suspension of the association's leadership and if they have any issues, let him present them to the relevant university organs for scrutiny and action," Tweheyo said, adding that the suspension was not called for at this moment.



An empty lecture room at the College of Computer Science and Information Technology. Inset is Nawangwe. Photo by Ashraf Kasirye

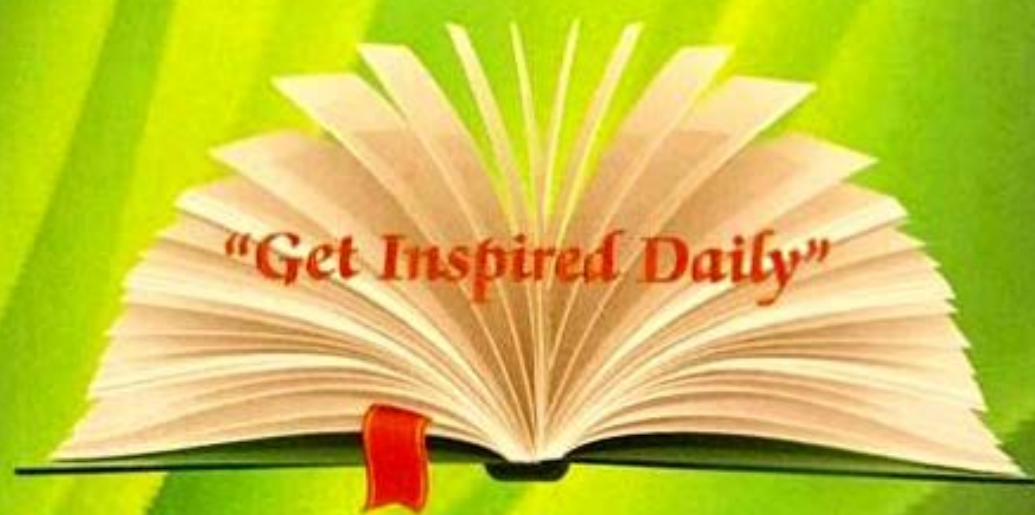
The association on Friday announced a strike with six demands from the university leadership:

- Removal of Hon Thomas Tayebwa and Bruce Balaba Kabaasa from the University Council.
- Reinstatement of suspended leaders Magara Bennet (MASA), Joseph Kalema (MASA) and Dr Deus Kamunyu Muhwezi (MUASA).
- Allowing Ruth Iteu to represent MASA in the University Council.
- Ending attacks on the autonomy of staff associations and their leaders.
- Facilitating staff appeals tribunal to hear staff appeals expeditiously.
- Degazetting the unconstitutional amendment of the human resource manual.

MUASA DEMANDS

THE WISDOM OF THE AGES

(Sayings of the Sages)



Compiled by: -

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&
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