

## MPs quiz minister over Mak strike

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**PARLIAMENT.** The Minister of State for Higher Education, Dr John Chrysostom Muyingo, yesterday faced a hard time while presenting a statement on the unrest at Makerere University to Parliament.

The minister, who also doubles as Member of Parliament for Bannanika County (NRM), said the chaos at the university was mainly driven by politics and fuelled by drug abuse and foreign funding.

Dr Muyingo said the 15 per cent tuition increment was only a pretext for pushing a political agenda. "Students make the choice to apply to Makerere University when they are fully aware of the fees chargeable for the programme to which they apply," Mr Muyingo said.

"The fees structure is further communicated to all admitted students through their admission letters," he added.



Your humble petitioners further aver that tuition increment requires an extensive consultative process of all key stakeholders including government, the university, students, and the public as well as undertaking a stakeholder analysis," the petition reads.

The minister said the new fees policy came into effect in July 2018 and it was approved following a report of the Special Committee of the Students Guild Representatives, which provided for a new fees structure with a 15 per cent adjustment on undergraduate programmes starting with the 2018/2019 first year intake.

"The modest adjustment in tuition fees was necessitated because of the ever-increasing cost of delivering university education..." he said.

The minister also called the timing of the protests into question. "It is important to note that the university experiences student unrest around October in the sense that some students use it to depict themselves as 'strong defenders of student interests' which would help their political ambitions as they contest for leadership positions in the students' guild..." he added.

However, MPs including Kalungu West MP Joseph Sewungu (DP) and John Baptist Nambeshe (NRM, Manjiya County), accused him of watching as the police and military violently descended on unarmed students. Some accused him of telling lies to Parliament and choosing a path of high-handedness.

Mr Nambeshe presented a dissenting statement, contained in a petition by students. In the 48-page document signed by more than 600 students, the students opposed the new fees structure, which they said is an impediment to their education. They also called for dialogue to solve the current crisis.