

# Museveni backs Nawangwe on MAK issues

By Cecilia Okoth

President Yoweri Museveni has said he is firmly behind the Makerere University administrations' efforts to restore discipline to Uganda's oldest institution of higher learning.

"Nawangwe is an engineer, a professor of technology and wants to restore discipline to this institution. People want to continue with *buyayeism*. Imagine a professor who strips naked and is cheered on. He was apparently referring to Dr Stella Nyanzi. Makerere is a centre of learning, not stupidity. I am firmly behind him," the President said, referring to a move by Makerere University vice-chancellor, Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe, to suspend over 40 lecturers in December last year.

Museveni was responding to questions from journalists about the conflict between Makerere University administration and staff shortly after he launched the sixth phase of the Presidential Investors' Round Table at State House Entebbe yesterday.

The conflict between the university administration and its academic and administrative staff follows the suspension of various lecturers including two top leaders of Makerere University Academic Staff Association (MUASA) and Makerere Administrative Staff Association (MASA).

The administration argues that they



**Lorna Magara (left), chairperson of Makerere University Council, with Nawangwe during Makerere University Council retreat at Speke Resort Munyonyo yesterday. Photo by Miriam Namutebi**

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

The strike that has been on for close to three weeks has paralysed business at some of the university colleges and departments.

The newly constituted Makerere University Council yesterday held a high-level closed-door meeting at the Commonwealth Resort in Munyonyo to deliberate the strike among other issues.

The meeting, according to a source who preferred anonymity, discussed

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governance and also held an induction session for the new members.

A big section of the academic and administrative staff at the university has rejected calls by management asking them to return to work. The striking staff have demanded that the suspended leaders of MUASA and MASA be reinstated.

The MUASA and MASA leaders were suspended for inciting staff to strike and other indiscipline cases.

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

On Tuesday, Andrew Abuyang, the director human resource at the university, instructed all heads of

department — both academic and administrative, to conduct a head-count and submit a report to him on the same day.

The head-count, according to Abuyang's letter dated February 5, 2019, was intended to establish the members of staff who had not yet resumed their duties so that he would forward them to the director of human resources.

"All staff who will not have reported for duty by 8:00am on Wednesday 6, February 2019, will be considered to have absconded from duty and their case will be handled in accordance with the applicable laws and policies," the letter reads.

Responding to the head-count directive, MUASA, MASA and National Union of Education Institutions (NUEI) issued a joint statement on Wednesday re-affirming their determination to continue with the strike.

The joint association statement was signed by Associate Prof. Edward Mwavu (MUASA), Sarah Wegosasa (MASA) and Bruce Twesigye (NUEI).

The letter, which was signed by all the association heads, reiterated that the strike is still on and called on the members to be calm and not be intimidated.

They affirmed their commitment to dialogue within the three days that they gave that ended yesterday. MUASA members meet today to discuss the impasse.