

Bitekyerezo asks for tough sentences on drug theft

MBARARA

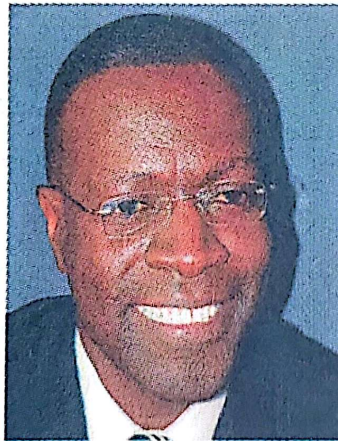
By **Abdulkarim Ssendo**

The National Drug Authority board chairperson, Dr Medard Bitekyerezo, has challenged judges and magistrates to give heavy sentences to people stealing government drugs.

Bitekyerezo said stealing of drugs from government hospitals has become rampant. He attributed the increase in theft to lenient court sentences.

"I have arrested many people who stole government drugs. We took them to court but imagine someone stealing a lorry full of drugs just to be given a fine of sh500,000. Such people should be jailed for many years," he said.

Bitekyerezo made the remarks at the opening of Bishop Stuart University medical camp on Sunday in Mbarara.



Bitekyerezo was concerned that because of simple punishments, people have continued to steal drugs and sell them.

"Drugs are now smuggled outside the country and sold in supermarkets in the DR Congo, Burundi and other countries," he said.

"Imagine someone stealing a lorry full of drugs just to be given a fine of sh500,000," **Bitekyerezo**

Health camp

The camp focused on diseases that have been on the rise in the past few years. They included HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B and diabetes.

Bitekyerezo encouraged doctors to always accept to work in rural health centres, saying this will help to eliminate the problem of drugs expiring in government health centres. He noted that the problem

of expired drugs in hospitals is increased by lack of enough doctors in health centres to make proper diagnosis.

Bitekyerezo also urged the Government to increase the number of doctors in health centre IVs and medical assistants in health centre IIIs.

He urged the parliamentary committee on budget and health to give a reasonable amount of money to the Ministry of Health, adding that emphasis should be put on healthcare.

Philemon Ahabwe, the in charge of Bishop Stuart University medical centre said primary healthcare services should focus on highly populated areas.

Prof. Mauda Kamatenesi, the Bishop Stuart University chancellor, urged the Government to increase partnership with organisations willing to promote primary healthcare services.