

URA seizes Rakai medical supplies

RAKAI

By Davis Buyondo

The Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) has seized a consignment of medical supplies meant for Rakai Hospital.

The supplies worth sh8b were donated by ABA Foundation, an American non-governmental organisation.

Dr Joseph Kiyimba, who mobilised the donations, said the consignment contained an X-ray machine, ultra-sound machine, operating table, anaesthesia monitor, ECG machine, patients' monitor, autoclave, suction machine and wheelchairs.

He said the donation was lobbied for by Kooki chiefdom's head Apollo Ssanza Kabumbuli II.

The supplies were to aid a week-long medical camp organised by the chiefdom at Rakai Hospital that concluded on Saturday.

Last week, Kooki's Queen Mother (*Omugo*), Rebecca Tulituuka and the public service minister, Muruuli Mukasa, received a team of 27



Kamuswaga (in black kanzu) hands over a wheelchair to a person with disability during the camp

doctors from the US at Entebbe International Airport led by Dr Medhat Allam. They took part in the camp.

The team flew in two containers which were intercepted by URA officials at Nakawa, frustrating the camp.

They later cleared one container of drugs, gloves and other medical kits.

Patients frustrated

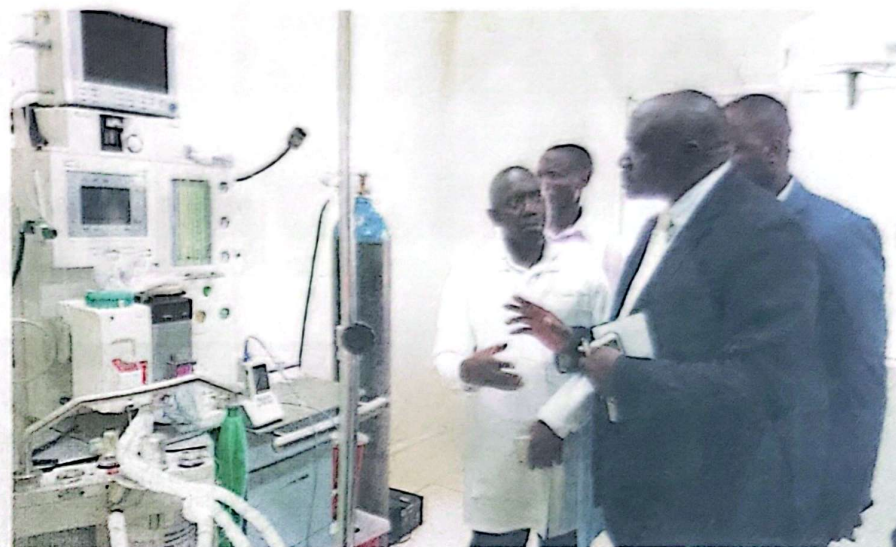
On Monday last week, following radio announcements by Kooki officials, patients started arriving from different districts for the free treatment.

As of Saturday, at least more than 1,000 had been screened and treated for malaria, skin diseases, typhoid and boils.

Those with hernia, cancer, heart, lung and kidney defects were told to wait due to delayed equipment.

At least 35,000 people missed treatment and the majority are still camping at the hospital waiting for the equipment to arrive.

Josephine Nakamya, a resident of Kacheera sub-county, is among the hernia patients who have camped at the hospital since last week.



Officials inspecting equipment in the theatre at Rakai Hospital during the camp

She said that commuting over 50km would be too expensive for her.

Although such medical equipment had been exempted from taxes, Phiona Nyamurungi, URA's assistant commissioner, said the consignment would remain at Nakawa until further communication.

Better health services

Kamuswaga said he was concerned about the poor health conditions of the people in Rakai, Kyotera and neighbouring districts.

He said he convinced the doctors to come to Rakai and offer their services due to their proven experience.

Gertrude Kizza, the principal

BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ The containers included an X-ray machine, ultra-sound machine, operating table, anesthesia monitor, ECG machine, patients' monitor, autoclave, suction machine and wheelchairs.

nursing officer, said doctors from different hospitals and health centres in Masaka, Mbarara, Kalisizo and Kakuuto were invited to learn from the American team in order to enhance their skills.

Kizza said once URA clears the containers, the old equipment would be replaced.

The Rakai district chief

administrative officer, Alex Kwizera, said Rakai Hospital receives sh36m which is not enough to run its operations compared to the patients they receive and therefore, such a donation was a welcome relief.

Dr Yasin Kiyemba said the hospital had been operating without an X-ray machine for over 20 years, forcing them to refer patients to Kalisizo and Masaka hospitals.

Dr Allam and Dr Christopher Torres from the US said the stance taken by URA officials may affect future donations for other health centres in Uganda.

However, Vincent Seruuma, the URA spokesperson, advised the affected parties to lodge a formal complaint with the tax body for intervention.