

happens when The humiliation of public confiscation credit to high-risk clients, knowing re- possession is profitable. 5011. "Customers are given clear repayment

BY FELIX AINEBYOONA

MBARARA. Human Resource (HR) officers across the country have been cautioned against acting on verbal directives from politicians, with a call to insist on written instructions as a safeguard against corruption and undue influence in recruitment processes.

The State Minister for Public Service, Ms Grace Mary Mugasa, issued the warning on Friday while addressing the annual Public Service Human Resource Management Conference in Mbarara City.

Ms Mugasa acknowledged the pressure many HR officers, especially at the local government level, face from political leaders seeking to influence recruitment and promotion decisions.

"I have been in local government. I know what it means to work in local government," she said. "Some politicians intervene in your professional work, and you fear to speak out because you are afraid of being blackmailed or denied promotion," she added.

HR officers urged to reject verbal orders from politicians

The minister noted that HR officers are often coerced into irregular recruitment practices, including being directed to offer jobs to relatives and associates of political leaders.

"When you are doing recruitment and selection, a politician will clearly come and tell you, 'Give it to my son.' It is like we are pulling jobs from the drawer," she said.

To counter such practices, Ms Mugasa urged HR managers to demand written communication from any political leader seeking to influence recruitment decisions.

"If I want my son there by hook or crook, tell me to write to you. Let me put it in writing," she said. "Is that too much to ask? As policymakers, if we need to intervene, let it be formally documented."

She encouraged HR officers to uphold merit-based recruitment and resist the temptation to "sell jobs" at the district

Appeal.
If I want my son there by hook or crook, tell me to write to you. Let me put it in writing; "Is that too much to ask? As policymakers, if we need to intervene, let it be formally documented- Grace Mary Mugasa, State Minister for Public Service

level, emphasising that their role is central to building a competent public service.

"HR, what are you known for? Telling the truth and guiding leaders; God made you an HR. He is the one going to elevate you, not the politician. So do your work well," Ms Mugasa said.

The Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Public Service, Ms Catherine Bitarakwate, described the conference as

both strategic and capacity-building, aimed at equipping HR managers to support implementation of the Fourth National Development Plan under the public sector transformation programme.

"As HR managers, you are both the foundation and enabler of government transformation," Ms Bitarakwate said. "You grow the establishment, populate it, and monitor service delivery standards. Without you, we cannot achieve a successful public sector transformation," she added.

She stressed that HR officers play a pivotal role in ensuring institutions are staffed with competent and ethical personnel capable of delivering services efficiently.

Ms Bitarakwate also underscored the need to confront corruption in local government service commissions, echoing concerns repeatedly raised by President Museveni in various national

addresses.

"If you recall the President's inaugural speech, there was emphasis not only on productivity but also on fighting corruption," she said.

"We cannot hide our heads in the sand while this 'weevil' continues to eat into our system," she added.

She said complaints about irregular recruitment and bribery continue to surface through community barazas, Parliament debates and direct citizen feedback, underscoring the urgency of reform.

Ms Bitarakwate said restoring integrity in recruitment systems is critical to building public trust and ensuring value for money in government programmes.

The conference brought together practitioners from central and local governments to reflect on ethical leadership, accountability and strengthening systems to support national development priorities.