

IGG probes Soroti varsity top jobs

Issue. In a letter by the whistle-blower, the university council is faulted for blocking other competent Ugandans from applying for the two top positions.

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SOROTI. The Inspectorate of Government is set to launch investigations into how the positions of vice chancellor and deputy vice chancellor at Soroti University were filled, *Daily Monitor* understands.

The investigation stems from an April 20 petition by a whistle-blower who said the process that saw Prof John Robert Ikoja and his deputy, Prof Lawrence Okema, appointed, was irregular and contradicted the University and Other Tertiary Institutions Act.

"IGG received the letter complaining about the two positions at Soroti University. There is a process going on that will lead to commencing of investigations into whether the appointments were procedurally done," said Ms Munira Ali, the IGG's spokesperson.

In the petition copied to the Speaker of Parliament, Office of the President and the National Council for Higher Education, the whistle-blower said the university council blocked other competent Ugandans from applying for the two top positions because they "were not advertised".

"The irregular appointment of the above officials is being viewed by many concerned [people] as an attempt by the university council to ring-fence the said positions to benefit the current vice chancellor and deputy vice chancellor without necessarily subjecting the said positions to competition and the due process



Inspection. Officials inspect ongoing construction works at Soroti University last week. PHOTO BY SIMON EMWAMU

UNIVERSITY RESPONDS

The Chairman of the University Council, Mr Xavier Lubanga, yesterday refuted the claims, saying whatever was done was lawful.

Mr Lubanga said the two officials have been appointed in the positions to continue running the university pending the operationalisation of the senate and the office of the Chancellor.

"The issue of not advertising the positions is correct because it was not necessary at the time

of appointment," the petition reads in part.

since there is no senate and search committee to handle the process. We could not advertise before going through the process of instituting a search committee. But we needed the people to run the university as we head towards massive enrolment in August," Mr Lubanga said.

Mr Lubanga said Prof Ikoja and Prof Okema had been acting in their positions for the last four years and the council appointed them to continue pending the operationalisation of the senate and a search committee.

"By this letter therefore, your office is called upon to intervene to en-

sure that the due process of appointment of a vice chancellor and deputy vice chancellor is adhered to and the posts are advertised and competed for on merit but not by ring-fencing as it is in the above case," the petitioner added.

Prof Ikoja and Prof Okema had been in acting positions at the eastern regional public university before being substantively appointed.

It is also alleged that the university council ignored the legal process of instituting a search committee that is supposed to vet the different applicants to find a suitable vice chancellor and deputy VC.

The petitioner also faults the university council for "rushing through the process" in the absence of the senate which is supposed to play a key role in the appointment of such top officials.