

Busitema university salaries worth sh1.5b disappear

By Chris Kiwawulo

A total of sh1.5b meant for payment of salaries for Busitema University staff for the month of June has gone missing at the finance ministry.

This has prompted the university administration and staff to write to the finance ministry's permanent secretary, who is also the secretary to the treasury, Keith Muhakanizi, over the matter, fearing that staff could go on strike.

In a letter dated June 28, the executive committees of the three university staff associations jointly implored Muhakanizi to respond to the predicament to avert the stalling of the university's activities.

The associations are Busitema University Academic Staff Association (BUASA), headed by Dr Hannington Twinomuhwezi; Busitema University Administrative Staff Association (BUADSA), led by Eriya Ntaga and

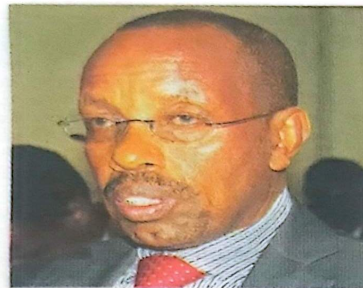
BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ A source, who preferred anonymity, noted that the money could have been put on a fixed account in a commercial bank with the aim of making a profit off it.

Busitema University Support Staff Association (BUSSA), headed by Deo Nyapalapala.

"In the meeting of the joint executives of staff associations of Busitema University, held on June 28, at the university main campus, it was resolved that a letter should be written to your office requesting you to address the above matter," the letter signed by all the three associations' chairpersons, read.

"Busitema University staff will go on industrial action effective July 5, 2017



Muhakanizi

(yesterday), thereby paralysing all activities at the university until they receive their June salary."

They copied their complaint to the President's office, Prime Minister, ministers of education, finance and public service. They also copied it to the permanent secretaries of the

ministries of education as well as public service.

According to the letter, the university management submitted all the required documents about the matter to the finance ministry, but the issue is yet to be rectified.

When contacted, Muhakanizi acknowledged the development.

"Money cannot disappear into thin air. The money was just distributed in such a way that other universities got more and Busitema got less," he explained.

Asked whether the issue had been rectified, Muhakanizi said it had not yet been resolved, but he hoped that it would be handled during this new financial year (2017/18), which started on July 1.

However, Twinomuhwezi noted that it was disturbing that they have not yet received any official communication from the finance ministry explaining what happened, despite writing two

letters seeking an explanation.

"For the last 90 days (since April), Busitema University has not been able to recover or receive this money from the finance ministry, despite a lot of effort. With the missing money and without any explanation from the Government; this, therefore, means that there is no salary for June at Busitema University," he observed.

Yesterday, officials at the university revealed that all staff were to hold a joint general assembly today to find a way forward.

A source, who preferred anonymity, noted that the money could have been put on a fixed account in a commercial bank with the aim of making a profit on it.

"I have heard stories that some public servants, who are responsible for making payments, withheld money with the aim of placing it in a fixed account so as to earn interest," he claimed.