

Request. The parents want government to extend the planned closure so that schools finalise with the registration process.

BY STEPHEN WANDERA
wouma@ug.nationmedia.com

KAMPALA. Members of the Printers Association of Uganda (PAU) have suggested to government to allow them print ballot papers for the next general elections in the country.

The proposal was made by a PAU member, Mr Rajesh Chaplot, who said they want to promote the Buy Uganda Build Uganda (Bubu) policy to save the country's foreign currency and boost local production.

"Uganda spends \$20 million on importing of textbooks and when it comes to procuring ballot papers, it is billions. What we are saying is that this work can be done locally. We have the capacity and security safety features to deter malpractice," said Mr Rajesh who was representing PAU.

He made the suggestion to MPs on the Committee on National Economy when they visited Luzira Industrial Park on Tuesday.

The cost

It cost about Shs45 billion to print ballots for the 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections from the UK and United Arab Emirates.

"The printing sector is struggling because government, the biggest spender, buys books for Universal Primary Education and Universal Secondary Education from Kenya and Asian countries. This is not fair to us. We have the capacity to do all the printing but we have not been offered the chance," Mr Rajesh told *Daily Monitor* during the MPs' visit.

Mr Henry Musasizi, the chairman of the parliamentary committee, promised to submit the PAU proposal to the House.

The Electoral Commission chairperson, Justice Simon

PAU seeks to print ballots for elections



Diligence. Former Electoral Commission chairperson Badru Kiggundu and representatives of political parties inspect boxes containing ballot papers following their arrival at Entebbe airport in 2016. FILE PHOTO

GOVT PROMISE



"This is in line with Bubu policy and it is hardly one year since it was launched. Let them be a little bit patient. Government will give them business," EVELYN ANITE, STATE MINISTER FOR INVESTMENT AND PRIVATISATION

Byabakama, welcomed the idea but with reservations.

"I have no problem for local companies to print ballot papers. This has been my prayer to promote our companies but the stakeholders have to agree. The only problem is some people think there may be malpractice," Justice Byabakama said.

EC's response

"What should be done is to have safeguards against all loopholes of malpractices," he added.

Political parties and civil society have also welcomed the initiative, saying it would promote local companies. Democratic Party president Norbert

Mao was also positive about printing ballots locally.

"Printing ballot papers inside or outside the country is not the issue. Even when the ballots have been printed abroad, we have sent our representatives with the delegation. The reason is not political but to give business to local companies," he said.

Mr Crispin Kaheru, the coordinator of the Citizens Coalition for Electoral Democracy in Uganda, also backed the proposal.

"This is a good idea but the firms have to assure the public of the safety of the ballot papers. Otherwise, it becomes a very risky venture," he said.