...ing economic (FDI), remittances, and donor funding. The government is pursuing an ambi- cess to fundi...

Mengo raises red flag over Sovereignty Bill, calls for key amendments

BY SHABIBAH NAKIRIGYA

KAMPALA. Buganda Kingdom has petitioned the Attorney General, raising concerns over the draft Protection of Sovereignty Bill, 2026, warning that its current provisions could undermine constitutional freedoms, disrupt development programmes, and strain Uganda's investment climate.

In a submission dated April 13, the kingdom's attorney general, Mr Christopher Bwanika, said while Buganda supports efforts to safeguard national sovereignty, some provisions risk harming the constitutional mandate of cultural institutions and the broader national interest. "Our wish is to assist the government and Parliament in refining this legislation so that it truly serves its stated object... without harming the welfare of Ugandans," Mr Bwanika wrote.

He emphasised that the kingdom's position is not political opposition but a contribution grounded in partnership with the government.

"These submissions are not partisan in nature... Buganda regards itself as a partner of government in national development," the letter states.

Mr Bwanika questioned the Bill's broad definition of a "foreigner" and "agent of a foreigner," arguing it risks misclassifying Ugandans in the diaspora and cultural institutions.

"A Ugandan residing abroad does not lose citizenship... contributions to initiatives like the Kabaka Birthday Run and *Oluwalo Lwaffe* could be unfairly treated as foreign interference," he said.

The kingdom also warned that donor-funded programmes supported by organisations such as UNAIDS, UNESCO, and USAID could wrongly label Buganda as an agent of foreigners.

"To designate family members as agents of foreigners is a profound injustice," the submission reads.

What they say.

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– Christopher Bwanika, kingdom attorney general

Buganda Kingdom further warned that clauses in the Bill could criminalise legitimate public engagement on policy matters.

"Any engagement on land rights, health, or education could be interpreted as influencing government policy," Mr Bwanika said, urging Parliament to clearly distinguish between harmful foreign interference and lawful civic advocacy.

Mr Bwanika singled out Clause 13 on economic sabotage as overly vague and punitive, noting it could penalise individuals for expressing critical economic opinions.

"A kingdom official raising concerns about a government project could be prosecuted... penalties of up to Shs2 billion or 20 years in prison are excessive and inconsistent with constitutional guarantees on freedom of expression," he said.

On financial provisions, Buganda described the Shs400 million threshold for foreign funding approvals as unrealistic, arguing it could cripple its multi-sector development programmes in health, education, and agriculture.

The kingdom also criticised the requirement for public disclosure of funding sources, saying it violates privacy.

"Many diaspora contributors give out of cultural obligation... public disclosure may deter this support," the submission notes, proposing confidential reporting instead.

Buganda Kingdom further warned that mandatory registration requirements for entities deemed "agents of foreigners" could "cripple operations" of institutions such as the Kabaka Foundation and the Nnaabagereka Development Foundation. The kingdom argued that the Bill could reverse Uganda's gains in attracting foreign investment.

"This appears to be a policy reversal... and will scare away potential investors," Mr Bwanika said, cautioning that capital could shift to other East African countries with less restrictive regimes.

"The damage caused may outstrip the intended benefits," he added.