

Museveni warns Makerere University land grabbers

By Cecilia Okoth

President Yoweri Museveni has vowed to demolish buildings erected on any piece of land grabbed from Makerere University. Museveni made this pronouncement after the incoming vice-chancellor, Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe, complained of land grabbing in his acceptance speech, during his installation ceremony yesterday. "Your Excellency, Makerere has faced challenges of losing land to grabbers and we are persistently in court with them. Currently, we are battling for our land in Makindye and Katanga (all city suburbs) and the battle is tough," he said. "We also have the issue of the Church of Uganda

land on which the College of Veterinary Medicine sits and there appears to be no solution in sight," he added. Nawangwe said the university had written to the ongoing Justice Catherine Bamugemereire land probe commission with the hope of finding a solution. "However, your personal intervention in this matter is urgently needed," he requested the President. In response, Museveni said: "The problem of land grabbing is easy to solve. Once we get the people who got titles on the land of the university, we shall cancel them (titles). The Ministry of Lands will cancel them." He added: "If you build on the university land, I will just bring my engineering brigade and dynamite the buildings.



Outgoing VC Ddumba thanked the Government for supporting Makerere

So that it sends a message to those who are in the habit of stealing public property." Explaining the land saga, Goddy Muhanguzi, the acting director of legal affairs, said the university has lost billions of shillings battling several court cases. On top of Makindye and Katanga land, Muhanguzi

said the university is battling grabbers on their land in Katalamwa, on Gayaza Road and Buyana in Mpigi district. The outgoing vice-chancellor, Prof John Ddumba Ssentamu, commended the Government for supporting him during his tenure amidst several challenges.

Relevant courses

Museveni asked the university's department of social sciences and economics to review their academic programmes, saying they are not marketable and do not create the wealth and jobs that the country so much yearns for. "Whereas the sciences department is doing a good job and have made a lot of innovations, the social sciences are missing a point. It is not

good enough and fair to teach young people courses that will not enable them jobs. It is also not fair for the parents who pay fees. Therefore, there is need to reform these courses by phasing out those that do not have demand in the market," he said, pledging that he would sit with both departments to analyse the problem. Museveni handed over two documents, including a presentation he made on the recent Nelson Mandela commemorative lecture, and his book addressing the socio-economic transformation and household incomes to Prof. Andrew Ellias State, the dean school of social sciences. Commenting on the President's remarks on social sciences being irrelevant to the job market, Prof. State said:

"Whereas it is not cultured to disagree with an elder, possibly he was misinformed, but social sciences are very relevant in so many areas. There is no country that has developed without social sciences because even in the engineering and medicine and other areas, when they invent something, they always have a social scientist to explain because we are the experts on society issues, culture and acceptance on innovations. However we shall work on what he has said." Hinting on the issue of salaries, the President said the scrapping of irrelevant courses would help save enough money to pay lecturers who are teaching courses that are on demand in the market and are competitive both regionally and internationally.