

statement reads in part.

with court for the property owner or termination of the dispute.

URBAN

BY FREDERIC MUSISI
musisif@ug.nationmedia.com

Whistleblower petitions Kadaga to probe drugs authority

KAMPALA. The National Drug Authority (NDA) is under fresh scrutiny over “massive irregularities” in the expenditure of Shs10b and abuse of office, according to information this newspaper has seen.

The details are contained in a dossier dated June 21, sent to Speaker Rebecca Kadaga to prompt investigations.

According to the dossier, NDA management paid Shs9b as down payment to construction firm, Seyani Brothers, which was awarded procurement tender for construction of drugs authority headquarters on Lumumba Avenue but the process was riddled with irregularities.

Seyani Brothers beat Roko and two other bidders to the deal, but Roko appealed to the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Authority (PPDA) for administrative review but was overruled. Consequently, the company appealed to the PPDA tribunal,

raising red flags in the tendering process but before ruling on the matter, sought court redress as well.

“There are glaring anomalies in the tender award as Seyani did not meet the minimum requirements of having constructed a building of similar nature,” the dossier reads in part.

NDA initiated the procurement in September last year, which attracted 23 eligible firms out of which seven reached the last round. Seyani Brothers quoted \$8.1m (Shs28b) as the bid price while Roko quoted \$7.7m (Shs27b), according to people familiar with the matter. The contracts committee early this year tapped Seyani Brothers as the qualified bidder after financial comparison and “arithmetic checks” of the Bills of quantities (provides project specific measured quantities of the items of work). The firm’s bid was said to have qualified for

a margin of preference.

On February 15, sources intimated to this newspaper, Roko applied for administrative review at PPDA having filed the same at NDA a month earlier but was rejected. Roko, in the application, a copy seen by this newspaper, argued that Seyani “did not meet the requirements of benefiting from the margin of preference in accordance with Section 59A of the PPDA Act. Roko also argued that there was no proof of Ugandan citizenship furnished to NDA by Seyani Brothers and Company.

The case is currently before the High Court. The petitioners also claim that the drugs authority in May moved offices to Rume Towers on plot 19 Lumumba Avenue, the property owned by Renee Pharmacy and Rene Industries, a local pharmaceutical manufacturing firm, which constitutes “conflict of interest.”

The whistleblowers also want management investigated for, among others, abuse of office on grounds that the NDA secretary, Ms Donna Kusemererwa, since assuming office last year, has moved the traveling budget of all departments under her watch, and “high handedness and selective prosecution” of pharmacy owners.

“There are glaring anomalies in the tender award as Seyani did not meet the minimum requirements of having constructed a building of similar nature,” DOSSIER

In an interview with *Daily Monitor* last week, Ms Kusemererwa declined to comment on the Seyani-Roko tender battle because it is currently before court. “It is true the building we shifted to belongs to Rene Pharma-

ceuticals but it is not that we intended to move here. We did put out adverts looking for space and Rume Towers had the best offer and slightly lower prices (of \$10.5 per square metre), so what were we supposed to do?” Ms Kusemererwa said.

On travels, Ms Kusemererwa acknowledged that she indeed centralised the traveling budget under her office which she said was bound to “rattle some people” because previously each department had its own budget of traveling and staff would travel at “will”, sometimes without management approval as long as they communicated being on “official duty.”

“Over the last one-and-a-half years we have been and are still struggling with public confidence; it is hard to convince them that we are fighting corruption in the NDA,” she noted.