

Retiring judges to get hefty package

Justification. The move comes after Cabinet passed the Judicial Administration Bill, that, among others, provides for the statutory retirement benefits of judges.

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KAMPALA. President Museveni and Cabinet have approved the Bill allowing 78 retiring judges to go with their full benefits, including salaries, when leaving service as a way of appreciating their contribution to the country.

Sources told *Daily Monitor* that a special Cabinet meeting chaired by the President on January 22 unanimously passed the proposed Administration of Judiciary Bill, also known as the Judicial Administration Bill, that, among others, provides for the statutory retirement benefits of judges and strengthening of the independence of the Judiciary.

"In the meeting, the President instructed Finance minister Matia Kasajja to provide the Certificate of Finance Implication to Justice minister Kahinda Otufire or Attorney General William Byaruhanga to facilitate the tabling of the Bill for first reading in Parliament this week or next week.

Under the proposed legislation, 11 judges of the Supreme Court (11), 15 of the Court of Appeal, 50 from High Court and two from the Commercial Court will continue being paid their statutory benefits after retirement. The benefits are a monthly salary of between Shs9m and Shs11m each, security, housing allowance, motor vehicle, domestic servants and medical care.

Deputy Attorney General

tasked to ensure the Bill is passed by Parliament, was unavailable for a comment. However, ministers who talked to *Daily Monitor* on condition of anonymity because Cabinet meetings are not public, talked of unconditional support to the Bill.

They said the judges should be 'sorted' the same way government did for former presidents, vice presidents, speaker and deputy speaker of Parliament and prime ministers under the retirement benefits law.

They also quoted the President emphasising the need to ensure the judges maintain stability in their earnings until death and that they should not regret why they joined the bench.

“Better remuneration of judicial officers will strengthen their independence as they don't have to worry about glossaries of life to the extent of being compromised,” FRANCIS GIMARA, UGANDA LAW SOCIETY PRESIDENT

When contacted yesterday, the Judiciary permanent secretary, Mr Kagole Kivumbi said: "I don't know where you got that information but what I can tell you is that during the 20th annual judges' conference, the Deputy Attorney General (Rukutana) confirmed the matter having been considered by Cabinet a week before... that's what I know as far as that matter is concerned."

However, the Cabinet decision has enraged the lower-cadre judicial officers particularly the chief magistrates, registrars and



Service. Left to Right: Deputy Chief Justice Owiny Dollo, Principal Judge Yorokam Bamwine and Uganda Law Society president Francis Gimara at the opening of the new law year on Monday. PHOTO BY MICHAEL KAKUMIRIZI

similar benefits. They have labelled the Bill "discriminatory" and asked Parliament to provide for all judicial officers.

They have criticised what they have called "selfishness of the judges" and vowed to petition the President when the Bill is tabled in Parliament.

As judges retire with full benefits, the lower category is entitled to unspecified amount of money under the 'Computed Pension Gratuity'. The money paid to this category of judicial officers under the Pension Act is a one-off payment and is tagged to one's level at retirement and years

of service. Mr Godfrey Kaweesa, the president of the Uganda Judicial Officers Association, vowed to fight the discrimination and ensure all judicial officers benefit under the new Bill.

"That will be selfishness. The Judiciary should be administered as one unit and we shall not take it lying low. Because whenever benefits comes, it is judges who benefit yet the lower cadre staff do 80 per cent of the work," Mr Kaweesa said.

"The President had a meeting with judicial officers and it was resolved that the Bill applies to judges, chief magistrates and registrars because Judiciary is one unit. Why discriminate? That

PROPOSED RETIREMENT BENEFITS FOR 78 JUDGES

- Full Salary-Shs9m- Shs11m each
- Two government-paid security guards
- Housing allowances-Shs400m each
- A chauffeur-driven car-Shs160m each
- Medical care for the judge and his or her spouse
- Two domestic servants