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Insight

Royal tombs torched, riots rock Makerere

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For more than 120 years the Baganda have proudly guarded the final resting area for their kings only for a mysterious fire to consume the royal grounds in hours. This is the fate that befell Kasubi Royal Tombs viewed by many as the custodian of Buganda's royal regalia and tourist attraction site.

Many were left in tears as they saw large tongues of fire reduce the beautiful tombs to ashes. The many loyalists who turned up could not put out the fire as the flames were too strong for the few buckets and jerry cans of water.

What followed was real drama as politicians visited the scene with some, including the President and UPC's Olara Otunnu encountering a hostile reception. Gunshots tore the skies apart as the youth threatened to stage riots leaving three dead and scores nursing gunshot injuries.

Many broke down when the Kabaka got out his hand kerchief to wipe his eyes after being overcome by the demolition.

Police said they would investigate the cause of the fire as loyalists engaged in cleaning up the area and started putting up the traditional fence using reeds.

Campus riots

Earlier, at Makerere University, riots were sparked off at God is Able Hostel in Kikoni after a private security guard shot and killed two students and injured another. The incident happened at a time when students were preparing to vote their next leaders. It is said that one candidate and his supporters stormed the hostel to lobby for more votes when a scuffle ensued attracting the

guard's attention.

NMG's jubilee

In Nairobi, Nation Media Group, the mother company of Monitor, K-FM, The East African and NTV is celebrating 50 years of existence as the oldest media house in the sub-Sahara region. Started in 1960 by His Highness the Aga Khan, Nation has established itself as a leading multi-media house in East Africa with plans to become the top media of Africa for Africa. To follow the event that has attracted the greatest speakers and a number of African presidents, you can log on to www.nationmedia.com.

Meanwhile activist have outrightly rejected the proposed law that would empower the information minister to appoint a media council which would in turn close down any media house at will. Activists argue that by so-doing the law will be muzzling the freedom of press who want a self-regulatory body.

Museveni vs donors

Donors were the first to demand the Electoral Commission to speed up the process of electoral reforms when President Museveni shot back insisting that he needed no lectures on governance. The President was categorical in asserting that the donors can only advance their assistance to Ugandans where they need development but not where "I am already an expert". However, both local and foreign pressure continued mounting over delayed reforms in preparation for a free and fair election exercise next year.

Rukiga by-election

Rukiga is a hive of activity after President Museveni and opposition Forum for Democratic Change leader Kizza Besigye pitched camp in the area as the by-election there heats up. President Museveni hopes to collect all votes for NRM candidate Adson Kakuru while Dr Besigye is convinced Jack Sabiiti will be the next area MP. But the two are not alone in the race; Amos Mugisha decided to bow out of NRM and run as an independent.

As she tried to lobby for her comrade in the struggle, FDC Women's League chairperson Ingrid Turinawe was allegedly beaten into a coma by police. The fracas started when police arrested a group of FDC youth on suspicion that they were planning to disrupt the by-election. When Ms Turinawe went to check on the detained youth, she was allegedly beaten by a senior police officer.

Faces in the news

DISSOLVED:

Nigerian Vice President Goodluck Jonathan was not contented with the way the cabinet appointed by bedridden Umaru Yar'Adua. In a swift move, Dr Jonathan dissolved the cabinet as his information minister announced that there was no power vacuum. The affairs of the ministries will now be run by permanent secretaries.

CRITICISED:

The cultural leader of the Bakonzo in Rwenzururu Kingdom Charles Wesley Mumbere is not a happy man. He says MPs from Kasese District have abandoned the people who brought them to power. The Omusinga claims the district deserves more than being left to 'beg' for services entitled to the residents.

RETIRED:

Long-serving Director General of Health Services Sam Zaramba has come of age and retired from the Health Ministry that has been haunted by several scandals ranging from drug theft to negligence. Dr Zaramba will be replaced by Dr Kenyan Nathan Byamugisha who has been working as the director of community services.

Verbatim

"People should be firm and strong. This was just an accident so people should not play the blame

game until investigations are completed," Inter-Religious Council Chairman Metropolitan Jonnah Lwanga calms down those weighed down by the damage at Kasubi tombs.

"Tell Otunnu that he should not start to play with the blood of our people. There is politics and treachery and we hope he does not cross the red line," Intelligence Agencies Coordinator David Tinyefuza warns Uganda People's Congress president Olara Otunnu against inciting people's feelings by drawing their attention to the deaths in Luweero.

"This matter was decided at a meeting chaired by President Museveni...the President decided that we rent (lease) instead of buying and this was not my decision," Foreign Affairs Minister Sam Kutesa draws the President's name into the Chogm car deal saga.

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