INNOVATION LEADERSHIP

Graduands jubilating during the graduation ceremony

Akaezuwa (left) handing Alwi the Exceptional Leadership Award. On the right is Bhabuu

A cultural troupe entertaining guests during the event

economy.

"You are not leaving with just degrees, but with breakthroughs. Build with purpose. Think beyond borders. Africa is rising, but your impact must be global," she said.

Mohamed encouraged the graduates to lead with empathy and integrity, noting that success is measured not only in profit, but also in dignity, inclusion and the legacies one leaves behind.

"You are the architects of Uganda's future and the entrepreneurs of East Africa's renaissance," she said.

Delivering the keynote address, Dr Cosmas Mwikirize, the Superintendent of Industrialisation at the Science, Technology, and Innovation Secretariat, said that true industrialisation requires ecosystems where ideas progress from research to prototypes, products and markets.

He said universities must serve as engines of innovation, not ivory towers and commended IUEA for fully embracing this mission.

"IUEA's incubation spaces are nurturing startups that address real-world problems, from renewable energy to digital education platforms," Mwikirize said, urging graduates to become job creators in a continent where millions of youth enter the job market each year.

He encouraged them to be bold, collaborative and unafraid of failure.

"Your breakthrough is not the degree you hold, but the difference you will make in the world," Mwikirize added.

The best performing graduates received awards amid cheers from parents and faculty. The ceremony featured cultural performances and a cake-cutting moment, attended by dignitaries, including the Amb. Hassan Alwi, Amb. Moses Kiwe Sebunya, Dr Jacinto Amandua and guild president Daniel Mayen.

IUEA innovators develop machine to boost produce value

By Vision Reporter

In a groundbreaking development, engineering students at the International University of East Africa (IUEA) have designed and built a packaging machine that could transform the way Ugandans process and package agricultural produce and manufactured goods.

The innovation, unveiled during the university's 12th graduation ceremony yesterday, is being hailed as a major step towards value addition and technological independence for local industries.

The student-developed machine is designed to package a wide range of items, including grains, fruits and various manufactured products hygienically and efficiently.

According to the university, the technology is user-friendly, affordable and adaptable to multiple packaging requirements, making it ideal for small-scale farmers, processors and local manufacturers.

Officials say its introduction could significantly reduce reliance on imported packaging machines.

"Businesses in Uganda that need to package products, whether eggs, bottles or any other goods, no longer have to import these machines," the university stated.

CUTTING IMPORT COSTS THROUGH LOCAL ENGINEERING

IUEA vice-chancellor Prof. Emeka Akaezuwa said the innovation aligns with ongoing national calls for value addition and local production.

"Building machines here will cut down the cost of importing them. It ensures affordability by reducing purchase and maintenance expenses," he said.

Akaezuwa added that maintenance costs will drop because local engineers will be trained to service the equipment and spare parts will be readily available within Uganda.

"You won't have to wait for parts from Dubai, China or the UK. They will come from Kampala or other areas around Uganda. Because we built the machines, we also understand how to fix them affordably," he said.

DRIVING JOB CREATION AND INDUSTRIAL GROWTH

Beyond reducing import dependence, the vice-chancellor said the machine will generate employment at various stages, from manufacturing to operating and transporting the completed products.

"Our graduates won't need to look for jobs. They will be building machines, employing others and taking orders from customers across the country and continent," he said.

"These machines will be needed in other African countries as well, so Uganda will have something to export."

Akaezuwa revealed that the university plans to digitise the production process to enhance efficiency and scale. He said the institution aims to start by manufacturing five machines a day, gradually increasing production as demand grows.

He noted that 80% of the materials used are sourced locally, although challenges remain with quality and construction timelines.

"We are not ready to give up because we know where we want to be," Akaezuwa said.

The vice-chancellor said the priority is to supply the Ugandan market before exporting to the region.

"The machines will be affordable because production costs are low. We also avoid the heavy transport and shipping costs associated with importing equipment through Mombasa," he said.

Akaezuwa emphasised that affordability will empower small and medium enterprises, which often struggle with high packaging costs and a lack of suitable equipment.

INNOVATION BEYOND PACKAGING

The packaging machine adds to a long list of inventions by IUEA students. Over the years, they have developed electric motorcycles, electric tractors, electric boats and even a ventilator during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The university has also produced farm and intelligent rovers, AI systems for agriculture and smart farming technologies. Last year, its Intelligent Virtual Reality STEM Lab won the 2025 Global AI Movement Evolution (GAIME) Startup Battlefield competition.

"We are now moving into a new direction, where innovations are no longer stopping in classrooms and laboratories. They are being transformed into real businesses," Akaezuwa said.

BUILT ON TECHNOLOGY, VISION

Founded in 2010, IUEA was established on a vision of technological advancement and a modern learning philosophy that blends traditional academic values with innovation-driven approaches.

Technology remains at the heart of the university's identity. IUEA believes the 21st century is defined by rapid change and that technology should be embraced rather than resisted.

The institution says its mission is to support students to the best of their abilities, provide the opportunities they deserve and treat them as future innovators, rather than merely learners.