Union leaders are expected to hand-pick congress delegates who will push their agenda and get rid of Kaaronda.

The most prominent and long-serving union members on the GIPF board of trustees are Peter Nevonga of the Namibia Public Workers Union (Napwu) and Risto Kapenda, whose term ended in October 2008. Evilastus Kaaronda, secretary general of NUNW, has demanded that those who represented workers’ interests on the GIPF board should account for the losses. Kaaronda and Nevonga had already crossed swords during the aborted formation of Kuleni, which was formed by GIPF trustees to act as investment advisors to the fund. It appears that the two have not reconciled since then and with the renewed focus on the mismanagement of GPF funds the chasm between the two has widened.

The clashes between Kaaronda and Nevonga, which in union circles are seen as principle differences, are now threatening the future of the outspoken NUNW secretary general in the trade union movement.

Nevonga was reported recently as having pressured the Napwu leadership into proposing another candidate for the NUNW top position. The name of the former general secretary of the Namibia Farm Workers Union, Alfred Angula, was thrown into the hat to challenge Kaaronda for the secretary general position. Union sources say attempts to topple Kaaronda appear to be on the wane, but other sources in the know say Cabinet ministers have joined the anti-Kaaronda crusade.

Nevonga has denied the allegations to The Namibian, saying he was an ethical person and would not conduct himself as alleged.

The Namibian understands that there is also another candidate, favoured by the group accused of self-enrichment in the unions, in the race. The said candidate is said to have compromised himself several times and is alleged to have misappropriated union funds.

“They are afraid that he could come after them if he is re-elected,” said a union insider, who compromised himself several times and is alleged to have misappropriated union funds.

Kaaronda was the visible face of NUNW on the BIG campaign, but since the federation’s recent withdrawal of NUNW from the BIG Coalition is another divisive matter that has pitted top leaders in the federation against each other.

Recent media reports around the N$650 million loss of GIPF funds invested in start-up Black Economic Empowerment companies have angered some trade unionists, who have called for an investigation into how union trustees on the fund could allow this to happen under their noses.

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