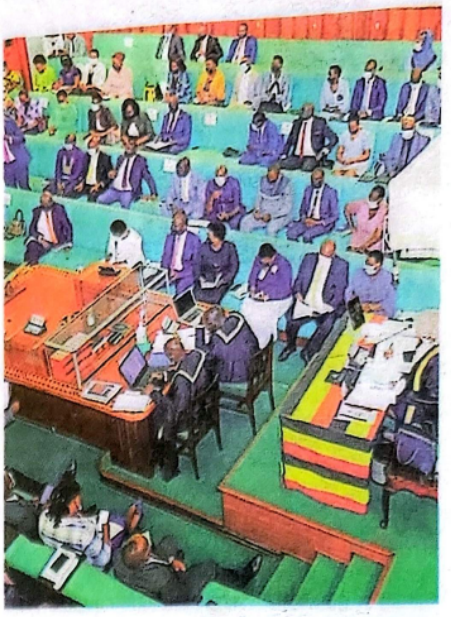
LETTERS

Cars for MPs, pain for the people: Leadership mindset exposed



"When elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers." In Uganda, the grass is exhausted. Uganda's problem is not a lack of leaders.

It is a dangerous mindset that has turned leadership into a business venture. Politics is no longer service; it is investment. And the returns are paid by ordinary citizens.

Consider this: each Member of Parliament is set to receive Shs315 million as a car allowance. With 529 MPs in the 12th Parliament, that amounts to Shs166.8 billion in a single financial year, public money spent on vehicles.

Let that sink in. Shs166 billion could have:

Bought ambulances for district hospitals that still rely on pick-up trucks and goodwill.

Paid health workers' salaries in rural clinics where one nurse serves an entire sub-county.

Rebuilt government schools where children sit on the floor, share textbooks, and study without hope of competing fairly.

Instead, the money is parked in MPs' driveways.

We are told these vehicles will "improve service delivery." That claim insults common sense. Service delivery does not fail because MPs lack cars; it fails because hospitals lack drugs, schools lack teachers, and jobs are allocated by surnames rather than skills.

This mindset has become normalised: Public office is profit. Education is business. Healthcare is a transaction. Jobs are family property.

Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." In Uganda, that weapon is locked behind school fees. For millions, getting sick is a financial death sentence. Merit counts for little without connections.

Corruption no longer shocks us, it is planned for, budgeted for, and defended. This is not because Ugandans lack values. It is because the prevailing mindset rewards greed and punishes honesty.

When doing the right thing keeps you poor and doing the wrong thing makes you rich, integrity becomes optional.

Albert Einstein once warned that "we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking that created them." Changing faces without changing thinking only recycles failure.

Uganda does not need powerful individuals. It needs strong institutions, real accountability, and leaders who understand that public resources are not personal rewards.

The issue is not whether Uganda can do better.

The issue is why we continue protecting a mindset that serves the powerful and abandons everyone else. A mindset that forgets the future of its children.

Sam Olara
human right advocate.
olarasamuel@hotmail.com

CamScanner