LETTER OF THE DAY

Rule of law and an efficient public service don't need billions to fix

As President Museveni begins his new term in May 2026, Uganda, once again stands at crossroads. NRM boasts of 6–8 percent GDP growth, a rising money economy and oil prospects.

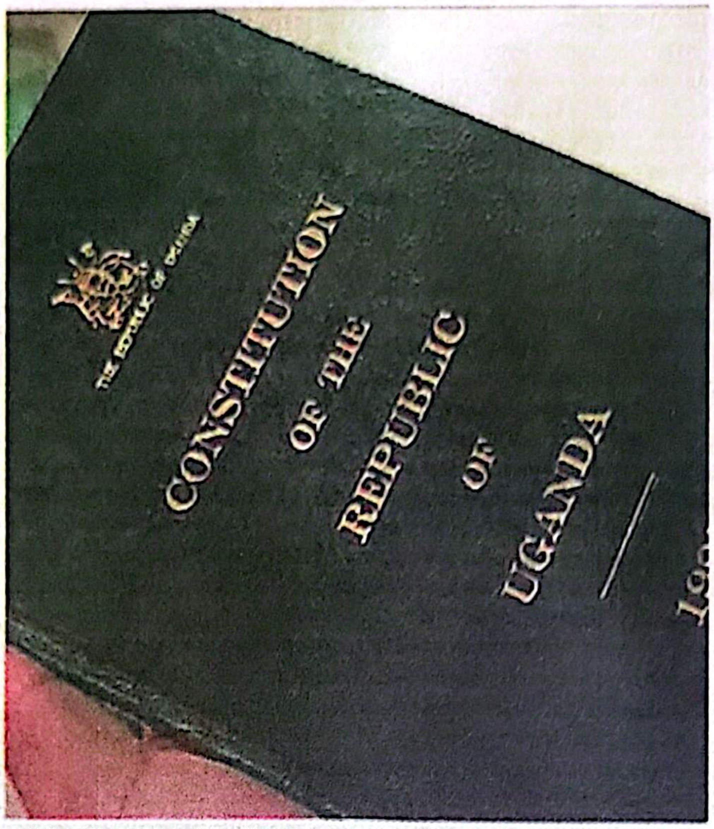
On paper, Uganda is a success, but for millions, the economic growth is unreal: mothers deliver on hospital floors, classrooms are dilapidated, roads are rotten, Courts are slow and public servants lack customer care.

Will 2026–2031 be "another rap" of impressive statistics with little impact or will President Museveni turn growth into development Ugandans actually feel?

Economic growth measures the size of the economy, often quantified through GDP, exports or industrial output while Economic Development focuses on the quality of life and human welfare. Although Uganda's economic growth charts and graphs are encouraging and exciting, the development experience at the grassroots remains deplorable.

To bridge this gap, the NRM must focus on the low-hanging fruits of development. In my opinion, three practical measures can turn growth into real gains i.e. Constitutionalism, rule of law and private sector efficiency in public service.

Constitutionalism: In Uganda today, the Constitution doesn't just look weak but it's emptied of real substance. Under Yoweri Museveni, the Constitution has increasingly been treated not as a binding social contract, but as a tool to be adjusted whenever it stands in the way of power. However, all hope is not lost, As the NRM enters the 2026–2031 term, it faces a defining choice of reinventing itself as a guardian of constitutional order. The spirit of constitutionalism may be weakened, even battered, but it is not beyond rescue. The same system that has bent the rules can still choose to restore them with intention and political will.



Because the truth is that constitutionalism is not just a legal ideal, it is an economic strategy. When constitutionalism is respected, it not only sustains order but ensures economic gains are fairly shared and translated into real improvements in people's lives.

Rule of law: Closely linked to constitutionalism, the rule of law guarantees that legal frameworks are applied consistently and fairly. It protects property rights, enforces contracts and ensures that public servants are held accountable for their actions. If Museveni is serious about transformation in his 7th term, he must accept that investors do not fear strict rules, they fear unpredictable ones. When contracts are enforced and no government official or military general can wake up and interfere, investment grows, businesses hire, build and expand. But when rules depend on connections or moods, investors run, opportunities shrink and jobs disappear. Predictability does not just attract investment; it keeps it working for ordinary people.

The rule of law is not a legal luxury, it is an economic weapon with which growth is effortlessly translated into real improvements in people's lives.

Private sector efficiency in public service: Many treat efficiency as a private-sector issue, yet Uganda's public sector is defined by complacency and arrogance. Civil servants often work when they feel like it, show up late, leave early and treat citizens with the worst customer care. They act as if being at work is a punishment. They are lost in side gigs and hustles, they have unclear targets with little or no accountability making it easy to get away with it. The result is frustrated citizens and a government that looks busy but delivers little.

The public sector must drive officials to be competent, responsible and citizen focused hence directly linking growth to improved living standards.

Constitutionalism, the rule of law and an efficient public service are low-hanging fruits because they don't need billions to fix. They only require discipline, accountability and political will. Yet, have the ability to unlock massive development, turning growth on paper into real improvements in people's lives. In conclusion, President Yoweri Museveni's new term in office comes with a defining opportunity. For decades, the NRM has survived on the rhetoric of economic growth yet for most citizens, this growth has been numbers on paper: hospitals lack medicines, corruption thrives, service delivery is poor, etc.

The low-hanging fruits i.e. constitutionalism, rule of law and an efficient public service are the transformative fixes. They do not require billions; they require discipline, political will and courage.

Will NRM this term deliver its usual rhetoric, or finally deliver the long-awaited prosperity?

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