

BY SYLVIA NAMAGEMBE

Eala hopefuls weigh options after by-election called off

KAMPALA. Aspirants seeking to run in a by-election to represent Uganda in the East African Legislative Assembly (Eala) have expressed mixed reactions following the suspension of the process over conflicting legal interpretation.

Mr Adolf Mwesige, the Clerk to Parliament, called off the process in a communication dated March 28, but did not give a new date.

Nomination of candidates for the by-election had been scheduled for March 30 and 31, but were abandoned over the legality of declaring vacant two Eala positions held by Mr James Kakooza and Mr Dennis Namara, who were recently elected to the 12th Parliament but have not yet been sworn in.

Several of the candidates say while the decision came as a shock, they are adjusting their strategies as they await further communication from Parliament and other relevant authorities.

Mr Charles Odongtho, one of the candidates cleared for nomination by NRM party, said while the decision was understandable, it had disrupted his cam-

paign momentum.

"I have no problem with the suspension because it is based on the law and guidance of the Attorney General. However, it has interrupted my mobilisation since I had already started meeting MPs and had a clear campaign plan," he said.

But Mr Odongtho raised concern about a possible shift in the electorate, from the 11th to the 12th Parliament.

"If voting is done by the 12th Parliament, then some of the MPs we had already engaged [in the 11th Parliament] will no longer be voters, and we may have to start afresh in analysing new candidates and the dynamics," he said.

But Mr Ronald Mivule welcomed the suspension, arguing that the process had been prematurely initiated. "There were no vacant positions in Eala because the affected members have not yet been sworn into the 12th Parliament," he said.

Mr Mivule said it was right the process was halted to avoid litigation.

"The nominations were done in an-

ticipation of vacancies which do not exist. The process will have to be repeated, and I am ready anytime, although we have spent resources campaigning among members of the 11th Parliament, many of whom will not be part of the 12th Parliament, which is a wastage

BACKGROUND

The ruling National Resistance Movement party closed its nomination for its aspirants on March 25, with a total of 32 candidates cleared to contest for the two seats. With a few contesting as independents, it remains unclear whether other political parties will front candidates to tussle it out with the NRM party members. The by-election is expected to take place on April 15.

of resources," he added.

However, Mr Moses Nsereko, an independent aspirant, said he is considering legal action, arguing that the suspension may be unlawful.

"I am consulting my lawyers with the intention of filing a case challenging the suspension. The decision raises legal concerns and needs to be tested in court, given that we've paid Shs3 million for nominations and collected the required signatures," he warned.

Mr Nsereko said his move is intended to seek clarity and ensure the process follows the law.

Mr James Byarugaba said the suspension had affected candidates financially and psychologically. "We invested time and money engaging MPs of the 11th Parliament, and they had even endorsed our candidature," he said.

"Now all that effort becomes void if the process shifts to the 12th Parliament, which will require fresh endorsements," he lamented.

Mr Byarugaba said they had been af-

fected in terms of resources, especially money spent and morale, but expressed eagerness to restart once a new date is announced.

But Mr Thomas Ainebyoona said the suspension presents a blessing in disguise, with the opportunity to strengthen his campaign. "It gives some of us more time to prepare and reach out to the voters we had not engaged with. Those who had invested heavily and were ready for nominations are now forced to go back to the drawing board," he said.

Ms Stella Kiryowa said while the suspension has slowed down their momentum, it offers an opportunity for a more orderly process to avoid potential litigation and manage emerging controversies.

Mr Ronex Kisembo Tendo said: "I support the decision because it provides a chance to ensure a more transparent process. Halting the process to follow due procedure is a welcome idea. It helps us avoid unnecessary disputes."