The speakership race has reignited divisions within NRM party.

Eight factors that could decide speakership rac

BY ARTHUR ARNOLD WADERO & MARIA JACINTA KANNYANGE

The fight for the coveted speakership position has once again opened the deep fissures within the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party after an attempt to ring-fence the Speaker and Deputy Speaker positions for Ms Anita Among and Mr Thomas Tayebwa split debate.

Since then, a string of hopefuls from the ruling party, including Mbale City Woman MP-elect Lydia Wanyoto have thrown their hats in the ring.

"The biggest problem in NRM is NRM. It is not Opposition. People were fighting one another and attacking one another. In the areas that we went for by-elections and we lost because the NRM was fighting NRM," Mr Emmanuel Dombo, the NRM director for information and publicity, said as he hosted a section of the party members to a victory party in Bugisu Sub-region after the 2026 General Election.

Mr Norbert Mao, the Democratic Party president-general, eyeing the position, recently told journalists: "NRM has the majority of MPs, and it is natural that those with numbers shape the outcomes. That is why I am consulting, including with the NRM party leadership, and we shall talk openly. Everything we do must be in the interest of Ugandans."

So what are the 10 factors that could decide the speakership race?

The mighty CEC

The NRM's Central Executive Committee (CEC), which sits as the ruling party's highest decision organ chaired by President Museveni, wields so much power that it can tilt or reverse the majority decision emerging out of the NRM Parliamentary Caucus.

Similarly, it stands as the final arbiter of any spill overs from the NRM Parliamentary Caucus. Speaker Among sits at the CEC table, thereby allowing her easier access to classified decisions taken at that level.

However, history has shown that bitter exchanges can also cost members on the CEC table bitterly. This was witnessed when Speaker Among wrestled First Deputy Prime Minister Rebecca Kadaga out of her Second National Vice Chairperson (Female) position on CEC leadership strata in the party polls held last August.

Historical/precedence effect

The election of Ms Kadaga and the late Jacob Oulanyah as the Speaker of the 10th and 11th parliaments, respectively, had a historical impact.

They were both elevated to the position of Speaker, having served as deputies in the preceding reigns of Parliament.

The same argument was fronted to endorse Ms Among to replace the late Oulanyah, who died in March 2022. But this was not without contestation.

Ms Wanyoto said it took discussions and strict adherence to the NRM party electoral processes to endorse Ms Kadaga and Oulanyah.

She even recounted that "when [Edward Kiwanuka] Ssekandi did two terms, he was not unopposed. Other people contesting freely."



President Museveni interacts with Parliament Speaker Anita Among and her deputy Thomas Tayebwa on June 7, 2023 ahead of the State of the Nation Address. PHOTO/FILE

What they say...



Emmanuel Dombo, NRM director for information and publicity

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Norbert Mao, Democratic Party president-general.

NRM has the majority of MPs, and it is natural that those with numbers shape the outcomes. That is why I am consulting, including with the NRM party leadership, and we shall talk openly. Everything we do must be in the interest of Ugandans.



Fahad Kyazze, human rights advocate

While electing the next speaker, they should look for someone who is impartial and respects other MPs, not someone who will treat them like children. Otherwise, they are losing their Honorable title.



Chris Baryomunsi, Minister for ICT and National Guidance

They can always be deployed to many other positions [for example] to the chairperson of the committees [in Parliament], ministers, commissioners and then people are satisfied and then position can be brought to the caucus and we discuss it.

Individual brilliance

Mr Karim Masaba, the lawmaker of the Industrial Division in Mbale City, said it matters for colleagues in Parliament to pay attention to the competence levels of a given candidate.

In the view of Dr Chris Baryomunsi, Kinkizi County East MP, and Ms Wanyoto, the vetting process also provides a platform for other candidates to market themselves so that they are talked out of the race and in return be considered for other deployments inside Parliament and or in other areas with

and then people are satisfied and then position can be brought to the caucus and we discuss it," Dr Baryomunsi, who is also the Minister for Information and Communication Technology and National Guidance, said.

Regional card

Mr Mao's speakership has reawakened the age-old talk of sharing the national cake.

Observers said the Justice and Constitutional Affairs minister, who last week called Ms Among an "accidental Speaker", is primed to cover the vac-

following the President, Vice President, and the Speaker of Parliament

SIG effect

Parliament's Strategic Plan, published late last year, shows that MPs in the Special Interest Group (SIG) category account for 31.7 percent of the total of 556 lawmakers.

Specifically, this voting bloc is composed of listening posts from the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF), Workers' lawmakers, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), older persons, and youth. Winning th

to take the oath between May 1 are Independents. This makes it second biggest bloc, after the ter.

Whereas most Independ NRM-leaning and are expected a memorandum of unders (MoU) with the ruling part be up for grabs and, perhaps against perceived party lines ests.

House experience...

Does it matter to be experienc Mr Masaba said. He reasoned out of serving first an ordinar later rising through ranks of sec tary committee chairperson ty that one gains experience in others matters in the House.

"We need to look at the experien cause we have seen people who not even been in Parliament who are showing interest in co for speakership, which I believe ly wrong. They need to come in ment and of course gain some ence on how Parliament is run," saba told *Sunday Monitor*.

With experience, such leaders ciate the relevance of allowing to speak and or even picking q submit to national debates on

"We need [a] speaker and d speaker who can listen to the Members of Parliament or spe and every Member of Parliam ple time to speak because the c that usually comes is that we do of course enough time [to speak need to look at how best we can all members of Parliament benefit discuss," Mr Masaba said.

In the same way, Human Rights cate Mr Fahad Kyazze suggested perience comes with the ability impartial on legislative matters.

"While electing the next speaker should look for someone who is tial and respects other MPs, not one who will treat them like chil Otherwise, they are losing their able title. Imagine how Hon Sse was treated simply because he to bring a censure motion against commissioners! Such things weren the earlier Parliament," Mr Kyazze

Elsewhere, human rights lawyer thony Masake said the lawmakers choose someone who will be able "fair, allowing diverse views and es so that you can have many opinion coming up before a decision can made".

Museveni's final say

President Museveni's influence stem from, among other things, his positio as NRM party chairperson, CEC M tional chairperson and as appointi authority of the Cabinet, which ch ry-picks ex-officios sent to the House.

Mr Museveni has on previous oc sions physically attended and p nessed the voting process in which House Speaker and D

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