

People's parliament wants more funds for health, education

By Paul Kiwuwa

The people's parliament has tasked the Executive with giving the health sector more funds to enable it deliver and maintain an efficient and effective healthcare service delivery system in Uganda.

This was on Friday during the second annual Parliament Week that consisted of activities like public dialogue, exhibitions, and a charity walk to raise money to build a centre for people with albinism.

The participants also urged the Government to increase funding to the education sector so as to provide support and promote quality education and sports to all persons in Uganda for individual and national development.

The public are given an opportunity to become MPs once in a year in the parliamentary chambers to deliberate on matters of national importance.

Discussing a brief on the national budget framework paper for the 2018/2019 financial year for the education sector, the participants observed

that although the Government wants education for all, that ambition is not matched with funding.

According to the 2018/19 budget framework paper, the health sector proposed budget is about sh1.6 trillion, compared to last year's sh1.8 trillion.

Education and sports is

BETWEEN THE LINES:

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allotted sh2.4 trillion, compared to sh2.5 trillion for the year 2017/18.

The 450 members of parliament (participants) constituted themselves into three political parties: the Workers, Farmers and the Green Party.

The participants from all walks of life, appearing for the first time in the chambers,

looked timid and excited.

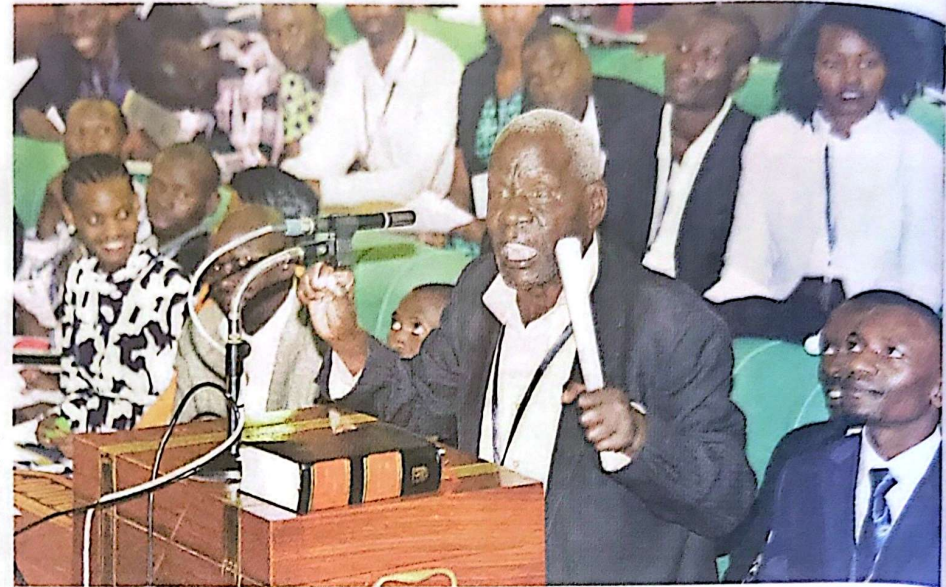
Despite the tough rules of procedure like the switching off of their mobile phones, majority of the youth spent their time on their phones taking photos for the memorable experience, instead of concentrating on the debate.

Like any other political contest, tensions ran high as the members selected their speaker; Kevin Wanjala Ouma.

The occasion was graced by Parliament Speaker Rebecca Kadaga and her Deputy Jacob Oulanyah, Prime Minister Dr Ruhakana Rugunda and Leader of Opposition in Parliament Winfred Kiiza (Kasese Woman) who oriented them on the three arms that constitute the Government.

Oulanyah guided them on the Parliament rules of procedure and how to respect each other during a plenary session, but many kept fumbling on the House rules.

The public leader of opposition, Michael Mulamira (Green Party) said: "The health sector is critical in the attainment of Uganda's Vision 2040 by producing a healthy



A member of people's Parliament only identified as Mzee Semakula addressing the people's parliament last week. Photo by Kennedy Oryema

and productive population that effectively contributes to social and economic growth, which needs funds."

To make it an all-inclusive discussion, the country's official language (English) was dropped in special cases where some participants were allowed to air out their views in local languages.

The 80-year-old Francis Namuli Kawanga (Green Party) from Luwero district appreciated Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE) funding, where government provides monthly stipends of sh25,000 to older persons of 65 years and above to enable them access basic services and start income-generating activities.

She said: "We are grateful but

sh25,000 should be increased to at least sh60,000 to cater for the increasing prices of basic commodities."

Amina Nakasi (Farmers Party) from Mukono district faulted government for failing to inspect the investors who fail to meet the Occupational Safety and Health Act, 2006. The Act requires employers to compensate their workers in case they suffer work-related injuries.

"Many victims of workplace accidents in Uganda have always cried foul whenever it comes to their compensation," Nakasi said.

Juvelentine Atiku (Workers Party) from Arua municipality said government should increase the budget to teach children local languages to

develop their talents.

On her part, Kadaga said last year's theme critically appealed to government to increase funding and take charge in the fight against climate change in Uganda to decrease environmental degradation.

"I call upon you (public) to give your views to government on critical issues and how you wish the taxpayers' money should be utilised in the next budget," Kadaga said.

Rugunda, who also doubles as the leader of government business, promised to incorporate the people's views in this year's financial budget.

Howard Mwesigye (Workers Party) proposed that the health budget be increased to at least sh3.8 trillion to address the major loopholes in the sector.