

Regional News

Is 25% Cabinet share good enough for Buganda region?

Some party loyalists argue that Buganda region's contribution to the NRM resurgence during the January 15 General Election was not adequately rewarded with senior Cabinet positions.

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Buganda Sub-region has emerged as the biggest beneficiary in the new Cabinet line-up President Museveni released on May 26, with 21 slots.

Despite this achievement, some critics and National Resistance Movement (NRM) supporters from the region are disgruntled that the 21 slots that account for 25 percent of the appointments is a good starting point, but not enough given the region's immense contributions.

Some party loyalists argue that Buganda region's contribution to the NRM resurgence during the January 15 General Election was not adequately rewarded with senior Cabinet positions as majority appointees are junior ministers with less political influence. The debate has reopened a long-standing political question in Uganda's power matrix: does electoral support directly translate into political appointments?

In the newly appointed Cabinet of 30 full ministers, Buganda secured only five Cabinet slots. These include Gen Edward Katumba Wamala, who was moved from the Works and Transport docket to Public Service; Minsa Kabanda, who retained the Kampala Capital City and Metropolitan Affairs slot; Judith Nabakoo, who retained the Lands, Housing and Urban Development docket; Kuryowa Kiwanuka, who was moved from the Attorney General slot to the Defence docket, and Sam Mayanja, formerly a state minister for Lands and now the new Attorney General.

The remaining appointments from the region are largely junior ministerial portfolios, commonly referred to as ministers of State.

Among the notable new entrants from Buganda are Desire Muhooza (State for Agriculture) Robert Migadde (State minister for Fisheries), Cissy Mulondo (State minister for Finance in-charge of General Duties), Amina Mukalazi (State minister for Finance in-charge of Privatisation and Investment), and Sharts Kutesa Musherure (State minister for Finance in-charge of Microfinance).

Others are Justine Nameere (State minister for Local Government), Susan Nakawuki Nsamu (State minister for Tourism and Antiquities), and Lawrence Muganga (State minister for Internal Affairs). Those retained include Diana Mutasingwa (State minister in Office of Vice President), John Chrysostom Muyingo (State minister for Higher Education), Amos Lugolobi (State min-



Gen Edward Katumba Wamala



John Chrysostom Muyingo



Joyce Ssebugwawo



Judith Nabakoo



Kabuye Kyofatogabye



Minsa Kabanda



Sam Mayanja



Susan Nakawuki Nsamu



Aisha Sekandi



Amos Lugolobi



Cissy Mulondo



Robert Migadde

ister for Planning and Economic Development), Joyce Ssebugwawo (State minister for Information Communications Technology and National Guidance), Kabuye Kyofatogabye (State minister for Kampala Affairs), Aisha Sekandi (State minister for Water) and Haruna Kasolo, transferred from Microfinance to Foreign Affairs (Regional Affairs).

For a region that has historically produced some of Uganda's most influential political figures, the numbers have stirred unease. During earlier governments under Museveni, Buganda occupied some of the country's most powerful offices.

For example, Kintu Musoke, Prof Apollo Nsubambi and Dr Samson Kisekka served as prime ministers.

Edward Ssekandi, Prof Gilbert Bukenya and Dr Kisekka served as vice presidents, while Gerald Ssendawula once headed the Finance Ministry (1998 to 2005). Mr Jaber Bidandi Ssali served in different capacities as minister for 17 years, while Abu Mayanja served in key positions from 1986 to 1994, including Attorney General and third deputy prime minister.

Political analysts say the latest Cabinet appears to signal a strategic balancing act rather than outright regional reward.

During the 2021 elections, the NRM suffered heavy losses in Buganda as the Opposition National Unity Platform (NUP) party swept through districts such as Wakiso, Masaka, Kampala, Mukono and Mpigi. The region became the epicentre of Opposition politics, with NUP leader Robert Kyagulanyi, popularly known as Bobi Wine, drawing overwhelming support from urban and peri-urban voters.

However, the January 2026 General Election showed signs of recovery

25%

The percentage share Buganda region has taken in the current Cabinet.

for the NRM in parts of Buganda. This was particularly in rural districts where the ruling party regained parliamentary seats and local government positions. Areas such as Luwero, Nakaseke, Kyotera, Sembabule, Mubende, Kiboga and parts of Greater Masaka registered improved NRM performance compared to the 2021 General Election.

The party also retained influence in traditional NRM strongholds across western Uganda, including Ankole and Kigezi, while maintaining dominance in much of northern and eastern Uganda.

Some NRM supporters in Buganda now argue that the improved performance should have translated into more senior Cabinet positions.

"There was expectation that Buganda would be rewarded because people sacrificed to rebuild the party image after the difficult 2021 election," said Mr Abdul Kiyemba, an NRM mobiliser in Wakiso District.

"Many youth returned to support the party in 2026, but when the Cabinet came out, people started questioning whether the region is still trusted within the government," he said.

Others believe the President deliberately avoided concentrating power in Buganda because of the region's volatile political dynamics.

"Museveni always calculates politically," said Juliet Nsimire, a long-time NRM supporter in Rakai District.

"He may have looked at Buganda as still politically divided and decided to spread key positions across the country to maintain national balance," she said.

Indeed, the new Cabinet reflects stronger representation from western Uganda, where several senior ministries remain concentrated. Analysts note that the President traditionally rewards regions considered politically stable and loyal to the ruling party over a long period.

"Take the example of Kigezi Sub-region, they voted Museveni overwhelming and this explains why out of the eight districts each of the seven has a minister in the new Cabinet" explains Sam Sekamatte, a political observer in Masaka.

The exclusion of several senior ministers has also intensified debate. Veteran figures such as Matia Kasajja, Moses Ali, Jeje Odongo, Musa Eweru and Okello Oryem were among those dropped.

Some observers interpret the reshuffle as an attempt to rejuvenate the government with younger faces while preparing the ruling party for future political transitions.

But critics within Buganda say the imbalance may deepen feelings of political alienation in a region already viewed as increasingly sceptical of the NRM government.

Alexander Mackay Muhinda, a former contestant for the LCS position in Rakai District on the Independent ticket, said Cabinet appointments in Uganda often carry symbolic political meaning beyond administrative roles.

"In Uganda's politics, people interpret the Cabinet not just as governance but as recognition," he said. "When a region feels under-represented, it creates perception problems even if the government argues that appointments are based on competence and national in-

terest."

Still, some NRM diehards have defended the President's choices, arguing that Buganda should focus more on delivering votes consistently rather than demanding positions.

"You cannot compare Buganda to regions where NRM wins overwhelmingly with ease," said Sam Mwesige aka Kaanakaambaata, an NRM youth leader in Kyotera District. "The President rewards loyalty and stability. Buganda is improving, yes, but politically it remains a contested territory where NUP has an upper hand."

Presidential win

According to results declared by the Electoral Commission on January 17, Robert Kyagulanyi aka Bobi Wine of National Unity Platform (NUP) narrowly won Buganda with 1,160,780 votes (49.37 percent), while Museveni who has been in power for nearly four decades followed closely with 1,157,832 votes (49.25 percent).

Out of Buganda's 26 districts, Kyagulanyi won 13, while Museveni also secured 13. Museveni's victories were largely recorded in the so-called cattle corridor districts, except Luwero, while Kyagulanyi dominated the central and southern parts of the region.

In the parliamentary races, NRM won several constituencies previously held by NUP. NUP lost at least 24 parliamentary seats in Buganda.

According to Mr Siraje Nsanja, a political analyst and lecturer of political science, the latest Cabinet did not reflect a major political shift because President Museveni largely retained his old guards while cautiously recycling a few familiar faces.

"There were expectations that Buganda would benefit if the President opted for a broad reshuffle that could usher in new influential leaders from the region," Nsanja said. "But because he maintained a cautious approach and largely retained trusted cadres, Buganda appears to have missed out on the bigger share many anticipated."

He noted that in other regions, the President maintained long-serving political allies and technocrats whom he has consistently relied on over the years.

"This is why the debate has emerged on whether Buganda's improved vote for NRM carried the political weight many expected," he added.

Prof Nsanja argued that Buganda's remaining hope could now lie in other strategic government appointments, including parliamentary leadership, heads of government agencies and parastatals.

He, however, commended the President for bringing more technocrats into government, citing figures such as Lawrence Muganga the vice chancellor of Victoria University, and Ambassador Adonia Ayebare as examples of professionals whose appointments could strengthen service delivery.

"But when you look at Buganda specifically, many of the individuals appointed do not command the same political influence or public stature as the older generation of leaders from the region," he said. "That comparison also shapes public perception because representation is not only about numbers, but also the political weight and influence carried by those appointed."

As the debate continues, one thing remains clear: Buganda's place within the NRM power structure is once again under scrutiny. Whether the latest Cabinet will strengthen or weaken the ruling party's renewed efforts in the region may become clearer long before the next election cycle begins.

BUGANDA'S DOMINANCE

The central region has over the years dominated the Cabinet since President Museveni came to power in January 1986. This could be partly because Buganda is the most populous region, with currently an estimated population of 12.9 million out of 45 million people. For ex-

ample, the 1986 Museveni Cabinet was notably dominated by people from Buganda region, with 14 of the 30 ministers then. The eastern region had the second biggest number of positions, with seven out of the 30 Cabinet ministers. The western region held six of the 30 positions in addition to the President, while the northern region and West Nile had only two representatives in the Cabinet. However,

the Buganda region's dominance in the Cabinet was broken when it came to appointing deputy ministers, with the largest number of appointees coming from the east, which provided six of the 10 deputy ministers.

Ms Gertrude Njuba was the only deputy minister from the central region among the 10, while appointees from the western region dominated the group.