

National News

Museveni shakes up Speaker race

The President's latest remarks have thrown wide open the race, especially within the NRM party, where four aspirants have expressed interest in unseating Ms Anita Among. DP's Norbert Mao and State minister for Housing say they will also contest for the same seat.

BY BUSEIN SAMILU

The battle for the Speaker of the 12th Parliament yesterday took a dramatic turn when President Museveni, the ruling NRM party supremo, said previous decisions on the matter will be reconsidered.

Mr Museveni told newly-elected MPs yesterday that the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party's Central Executive Committee (CEC) will reconsider its previous decision on the matter and possibly vet all candidates seeking to become Speaker.

"We shall discuss that matter at the right time, because CEC had recommended that we maintain the two [incumbents] because it had become like a tradition, but this was our recommendation [because] it is not us who decide, we [just] recommend," he said.

Mr Museveni added: "...We shall discuss [the matter] since we recommend, and we always support our recommendation with valid reasons [and] if Odria wants to be Speaker, we shall discuss that at the right time and all others who want to be Speaker, we will weigh our decision of CEC."

The President's response was triggered by a question from Aringa South MP Alioni Yorke Odria who had asked him to clarify on the matter of the elec-

tion of Speaker following rumours that CEC had bypassed the prescribed internal party processes and endorsed incumbent Speaker Anita Among and her deputy Thomas Tayebwa for another five-year term.

CEC is the party's highest decision-making body responsible for top-level policy formulation, strategic leadership, and supervising party activities, and largely get automatic backing from the party's Parliamentary Caucus.

But Mr Odria, who used his two minutes of question time during an interface with the President at the ongoing NRM party retreat in Kyankwanzi, chose to put the CEC resolution to test.

He first condemned the reported maladministration and corruption in the 11th Parliament, and then asked Mr Museveni to pronounce himself on the matter of the election of Speaker, which he said they had long only heard as rumours.

Indeed, Mr Museveni admitted that CEC had decided on the matter, but will revise it and give other candidates a chance to present their cases, but that would be done at the right time.

The President's latest remarks have thrown wide open the race, especially within the NRM party, where four aspirants have expressed interest in unseating Ms Among.

They are Mr Odria, Mbale City Woman



NRM leaders welcome the party chairperson and President-elect Museveni (left) at National Leadership Institute, Kyankwanzi, yesterday. PHOTO/ NRM ONLINE X HANDLE

MP-elect Lydia Wanyoto, and Dr Asimwe Florence Akiiki, the Masindi District Woman MP.

These have been joined by Mr Norbert Mao, the Democratic Party (DP) president general, who is also the Justice and Constitutional Affairs minister; and Ms Persis Namuganza, the Bukono County MP (Independent), and doubles as junior minister for Housing.

All six candidates are part of the more than 400 MPs who are attending a one-week retreat at the National Leadership Institute at Kyankwanzi.

The retreat, which is hinged on aligning the NRM leaders towards protecting the gains and making a qualitative leap to the higher middle-income status society, commenced on Tuesday and will close next Wednesday.

Mr Mao, who is the Laroo-Pecce MP-elect, was among the first candidates to declare his bid for Speaker, a position he intends to use to propose the creation of an Upper House based on sub-regions for purposes of balance.

They say...



Prof Venansius Baryamureeba, politician

Mathias Mpuuga, House Commissioner

NRMO...should allow expression of interest from NRMO members and those with whom it has signed a cooperation agreement, such as Hon Norbert Mao.

The Speaker issue is a matter for MPs, not the NRM Caucus! The NRM as a party should have interest, but should respect the capacity of MPs to choose their leader.

He said the arrangement would guarantee regional equity, ensuring even smaller sub-regions have equal representation at a higher legislative level alongside their more populous counterparts.

On several occasions, the incumbent Deputy Speaker, Mr Thomas Tayebwa, has advised Mr Mao to back-off his ambitious plan because the NRM cannot make a mistake of electing a candidate who does not come from within its ranks.

But Mr Mao, whose party has a working cooperation agreement with the NRM, in response said he would have a discussion with the party leadership to consider his candidature since he is already working with the ruling party.

CEC, the NRM party top organ, in February endorsed Ms Among and Mr Tayebwa to run to retain their positions for another five-year term.

Mr Museveni on March 4 forwarded to Mr Richard Todwong, the party secretary general, names of the candidates