

From corruption allegations to street protests, the 11th Parliament endured one crisis after another.

BY BUSEIN SAMILU

Parliament yesterday kicked off a three-day event of swearing in its new 529 MPs who will formulate laws, represent their constituents, analyse and pass the national budgets, and scrutinise how government funds are used.

The MPs, who will, after swearing-in, elect the Speaker and deputy, will replace the 11th Parliament, which from the onset was plagued with challenges, chaos, and scandals.

But the Government Chief Whip last week paid glowing tribute to the tenure of the 11th Parliament, saying the House had outperformed its expectations.

Nevertheless, Mr Denis Hamson Obua, who is also the outgoing Ajuri County MP, admitted Parliament had faced some tough times during its tenure. However, he hastened to add that the House had managed to sort out some of the challenges through constant engagement.

Mr Obua's optimism was reinforced by Mr Chris Obore, the Parliament director of Corporate and Public Affairs, who said: "There was actually less acrimony in the House, save for one or two incidents where some MPs wanted to play to the gallery."

Mr Obore, nonetheless, said the House aims to do better in the 12th parliament.

"The Parliament is not responsible for the behaviour of external actors who use Parliament as a source of donor funding for their activities, hence the shamelessly persistent and disgusting propaganda against the institution and in particular its leader," he said.

However, critics paint the outgoing House in not such flattering colours as would both Mr Obua, and Mr Obore.

Daily Monitor revisits some of the major scandals that rocked the House led by Ms Anita Among, and Mr Thomas Tayebwa.

Karamoja mabaati

On March 20, 2023, President Museveni came close to firing part of his Cabinet when he grilled them over involvement in the diversion of iron sheets meant for the vulnerable people of Karamoja.

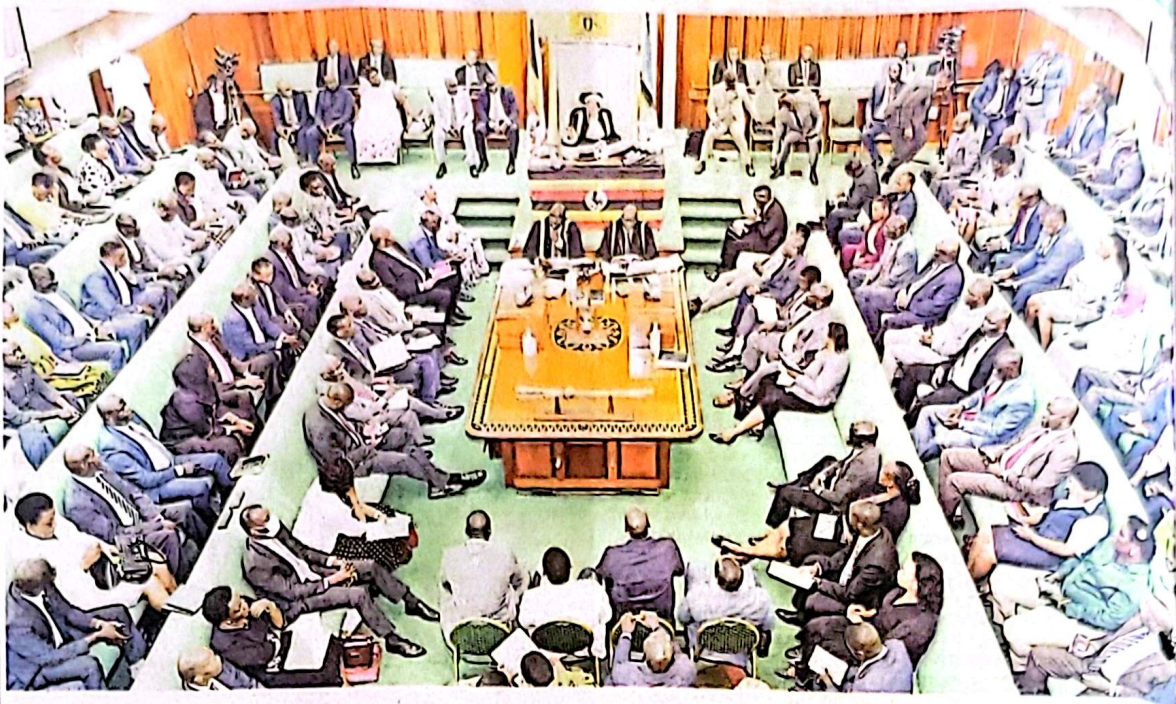
The scandal had implicated some 20 ministers, more than 30 MPs, resident district commissioners, and religious institutions, among others.

Among the public officials cited in the muddle were Parliament Speaker Anita Among, Vice President Jessica Alupo, Prime Minister Robinah Nabbanja, Karamoja Minister Dr Mary Goretti Kitutu, State Minister for Finance (Planning) Amos Lugolobi, State Minister for Karamoja Agnes Nandutu, Finance Minister Matia Kasajja, and First Deputy Prime Minister Rebecca Kadaga.

Some of the officials, including Ms Among, Mr Kasajja, Mr Lugolobi and Ms Kadaga, acknowledged receiving the iron sheets and returned them.

But President Museveni ordered the Directorate of Criminal Investigation (CID) to carry out thorough investigations into the matter.

At the end, although three ministers



Members of the 11th Parliament during the plenary session chaired by Speaker Anita Among on July 2, 2024. PHOTO/FILE

Chaos and scandals that defined 11th Parliament

tutu were arrested, only Nandutu was sentenced to four years imprisonment last month.

Parliament Exhibition

Amid the public outcries about the mismanagement of the House, a group of activists under the online civic platform, Agora Discourse, led by journalist-turned lawyer Agather Atuhaire, teamed up with Makerere University lecturer and cartoonist, Dr Spire Ssentongo, and launched the #ParliamentExhibition on microblogging X-platform, formerly twitter.

The exhibition, which started on February 24, 2024, and ran until mid-May 2024, unearthed various issues, among them the contentious Shs1.7 Service Award to the former Leader of the Opposition in Parliament (LoP) and four NRM Parliamentary backbench Commissioners.

During the same period, the US Department of State slapped travel sanctions against Ms Among over her involvement in what they described as significant corruption tied to her leadership of Uganda's Parliament.

Ms Among was sanctioned alongside other government officials, including Dr Kitutu, Ms Nandutu, and Mr Lugolobi over their involvement in the iron sheets scandal. The former Deputy Chief of the Defence Forces, Gen Peter Elwelu was also sanctioned over human rights abuses.

Ms Among's sanctions came a few weeks after the United Kingdom also slapped similar travel sanctions on her and even froze all her assets in the UK over similar reasons.

The flood of accusations of corrup-

conduct of her public and personal affairs have not been proven.

March to Parliament

On July 23, 2024, the government used force to quell a youth-led march to Parliament that was demanding the resignation of Speaker Among and the four Parliamentary Commissioners who reportedly benefited from the Shs1.7 billion Service Award.

Subsequently, more than 100 youths were arrested in the two days of protests that were led by Ms Shamim Nam-basa, the former Makerere University Guild president, 24-year-old technician George Otieno, Kennedy Ndyamaki Makana, and Praise Opolose, a law student.

Speaker's questionable Shs3b trips
Ms Atuhaire on February 29 posted

TIMELINE OF SCANDALS IN 11TH PARLIAMENT

- March 2023: Karamoja iron sheets scandal erupts,
- February 2024: Agora launches #ParliamentExhibition
- March 2024: Questions raised over Speaker's travel expenses
- July 2024: Youth-led march to Parliament suppressed
- 2024: UK, US impose sanctions on Speaker Among
- 2024: NUP fallout over Shs1.7b

documents which showed Ms Among, who is also the Bukedea Woman MP, reportedly allocated Shs3b for 10 trips outside the country between July 2023 and January 2024, which travels were allegedly not undertaken.

The Daily Monitor scrutinised the claims in its March 4, 2024 article titled, 'Questions linger over Parliament spending.'

Although Mr Obore in the story acknowledged that Ms Among made some of the trips to Russia and South Sudan, the rest of the trips, he said, were mere forgeries by people who want the Speaker to look bad before the public.

An analysis of the Parliament Hansard by this newspaper in March indicated the Speaker was in the country and chaired the House during the days Mr Obore claimed she had travelled, for instance, to Russia.

Huge withdrawals, CSR activities

The Agora Parliament exhibitors also posted documents that indicated that Ms Among was using her junior staff to draw unspecified billions of monies for donations and other activities. Mr Obore during the X-space held by Agora Discourse on May 6 admitted the funds were being passed through the accounts purposely for donations and other parliamentary corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities.

Recruitments and other anomalies

Other queries that arose from the exhibition centered on accusations that the House Speaker had allegedly placed some of her private employees in her school and hospital on the Parliament payroll and that she influenced the om-

never made any formal response but a communication team led by Mr Obore have made some responses to the allegations raised.

Ms Among later blamed the election campaign on imperialists and supporters of homosexuality who were seeking to undermine her work following her stewardship of Parliament that overwhelmingly passed the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023.

"Honourable members, I will never, and I'm saying, I will never give you an answer on hearsay on rumour mongering. And we're not going to run this House on rumour mongering...Me to answer you on hearsay? On things you have cooked up on social media because I have said no to 'bum-shafting'? I will not, next item," she said.

Similarly, when she was sanctioned by the UK, the Speaker said the sanctions were politically motivated because of the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023.

The service award

The Shs1.7b service award saga spread beyond Parliament to splitting the National Unity Platform (NUP) party.

Mr Mathias Mpuuga, the former LoP who was at the time of exposure serving as a House Commissioner, was part of the beneficiaries of the May 2022 self-allocation of the funds during the 96th Parliamentary Commission meeting chaired by Ms Among.

This particular saga was not taken lightly by the NUP party leaders, who ordered Mr Mpuuga to return the "dirty money" and apologise to the country and resign his new Commissioner position which he declined, escalating the fallout.