

National News

Descendants of resistance 'eat big' in new Museveni Cabinet

While Museveni injected "fresh blood" by appointing children of political heavyweights, he has not lost sight of his old allies, keeping them on a short leash.

BY FRANKLIN DRAKU

President Yoweri Museveni on Tuesday unveiled the full Cabinet, finally putting the rumour mill to rest after weeks of speculation about who would land which portfolio.

The appointments were a mixed bag; surprise first-timers in Parliament, seasoned old guards, and technocrats brought in to steer key ministries.

Most strikingly, children of the resistance - those whose parents fought in the bush war or served as senior government officials, including former ministers - "ate big" in the new Cabinet. This marks a bold step toward fulfilling Museveni's 2021 pledge to appoint descendants of the resistance to pivotal government positions.

"I have been discussing with my children, who are now senior adults, the timelines of creating the DRA (the Descendants' Resistance Army I) to take forward the work of the original National Resistance Army (NRA) of their parents," Mr Museveni said.

"These are people who work for passion, not money. Against resistance, I put one of them, Ms Irene Kagwa, to manage Uganda Communication Commission (UCC). She is doing a commendable and clean job from the little I hear of. The young movementists are liberating the Uganda Airlines. It is easy for the National Resistance Movement (NRM) to defeat corruption..."

Yet, in a twist of fate, Mr Museveni later removed both Irene Kagwa and Jenifer Bamuturaki from their posts, reinstating the old guard.

Among the new faces announced on Tuesday evening were Sharts Kutesa Musherure, daughter of the former long serving Foreign Affairs minister, who was appointed minister of State for Finance in-charge of Micro Finance; Siraji Musa Ali, son of Gen Moses Ali, named State minister for Works; and Jus-



Justine Nameere

tine Nameere, daughter of former Defence minister Vincent Ssempiija, appointed State minister for Local Government.

Dr Charles Ayume, son of former Speaker Francis Ayume, was named as State minister for Primary Health Care.

The appointments raised eyebrows in some quarters while putting smiles on others.

Mr Mathias Mpuuga, the former Leader of Opposition in Parliament, told this publication the reshuffle was part of Museveni's grand design to extend his family's grip on power beyond 45 years.

"That Museveni has not changed and he still has his eyes on his political agenda and programme. Whether your appointment is meant to fit into his programme, it's upon those who are appointed to the leadership to find a way of either breaking his agenda or stopping his programme. He's on his project," Mr Mpuuga said.

He argued that while Mr Museveni injected "fresh blood" by appointing children of political heavyweights, he has not lost sight of his old allies, keeping them on a short leash.

"I think he knows his allies and you are either an ally directly or through a son or daughter. He is keeping tabs on his base; that's why he is recycling the likes of [Henry] Tumukunde, they will come back. The [Ephraim] Kamuntus will come back. That's what they call keeping a base. Of course, some of the appointments are meant to try and expand his base without necessarily losing the old base. And for me, he's not going to change the way he works. That's his way. You



Dr Charles Ayume

just need to understand it," he said.

Meanwhile, ordinary Ugandans without political connections were left "out in the cold."

Mr Mpuuga warned that while this is a pressing problem, citizens must think beyond today's headlines and find ways to break the tightly woven scheme designed to keep power in the same hands.

"Trouble is, the ordinary Ugandan has not accepted the fact that they are things they are not able to understand and because of that, the ordinary Ugandan is playing politics the ordinary way," he said.

"That's why, in the ordinary way of doing things, Museveni continues to achieve the same goal because he knows his nemeses have not changed their ways. So, the political position of the ordinary Ugandan must think beyond the faces they see, they must go beyond ordinary debate," Mr Mpuuga added.



Rationale.

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Sharts Kutesa Musherure

However, not everyone sees it as a problem. Dr Grace Lubaale, the Bishop of Busoga Diocese, said the President has constitutional authority to appoint those he can work with.

"The Constitution is very clear. Once you have voted a person as President, then you have empowered him to make a Cabinet. So, I am sure that the President appoints ministers from his wisdom, based on institutional memory, competence, loyalty, support, and votes given. The President is empowered to appoint people to work with him," he said.

"The way I am a bishop, I am empowered to appoint people to work with me and so, the position of the President is like mine. You appoint people, based on, largely, institutional memory. They are based on competence, on loyalty, on service delivery, on gender balance, you have regional balance, you have religious balance," Bishop Lubaale added.

Similarly, Mr Alex Brandon Kintu, the former NRM Parliamentary Caucus spokesperson, said Mr Museveni knows the demands placed on government and hand-picks the best people for the job.

"If you remember, when the President took oath, he said this is a term of no sleep. So, you find that this Cabinet is a mixture. This is a mixture because if you just look at development and you only have to deal with pure politicians, some of them also have their own intentions. Instead of service, they do things for their own benefits. So, I would like to appreciate the President that it's a mixed and I believe it's a very competent Cabinet. We should all support and look forward for positive outcomes," he said.