

Trials and tribulations of a presidential ambition



The trials and tribulations of having a presidential ambition through underhand methods is piling political miseries on Independent presidential candidate John Patrick Amama Mbabazi by the day as we move towards election day, February 18, 2016.

This is seen from the defections and outright rejections by some he had named to serve on his campaign task force.

Although the rumour of money that had lured many into Mbabazi camp has not materialised some analysts believe that he may or could unleash soft money to compromise the electoral process in the last week to voting, but that remains to be seen.

Mbabazi, who had for long lived in self-denial that he was not harbouring presidential ambitions, especially to run against President Yoweri Museveni is being left politically naked, first, by the very fact that he has not been followed by known senior NRM members, MPs and ministers of substance, except of course his wife Jacqueline and sister-in-law, Hope Mwesigye Ruhindi.

The latest opinion poll giving him just 4.9%, which many pundits consider an exaggeration, must have fouled Mbabazi's festive mood because it shows that his

main and publicly stated goal of being in the race to deny Museveni an out-right election victory within the first round cannot be achieved.

Among those who have publicly repudiated his offer on the campaign team are MPs Kassiano Ezati Wadri (FDC Terego), Florence Kintu (NRM, Kalungu), Kyawalabye Majegere (NRM, Bunya East), former state minister Gabriel Opio (NRM, Samia Bugwe South) and retired Anglican Bishop of Soroti Diocese, Charles Bernard Obaikol Ebitu.

While Josephine Mayanja, the Go Forward publicist, tried to put a brave face and down played the embarrassment, it is nevertheless telling how far Mbabazi is willing to go with blackmail.

All these are coming on the heels of poor public rally campaign performances in Kigezi region, Kalungu, Lwengo, Sembabule and Lango, where his handlers, especially on social media have been shy to publicise the events as if they never took place.

Those who pushed him into the lion's den of presidential race, retired Anglican assistant Bishop Zac Niringiye, civil society activists Godber Tumushabe and Sheila

Kawamara have now vanished, not seen campaigning for Mbabazi publicly, except of course if they are doing so underground.

It must equally be painful and embarrassing although not publicly acknowledged to have Dr Olara Otunnu, who could not vote for himself when he stood for president in 2011, now being one of Mbabazi's 'top campaign strategist'. Add that to the fact that Norbert Mao, another 'top strategist' is also not a registered voter, and David Pulkol has proven himself a political nomad, who has swung from one extreme end to the other without much success, except a lot of talk.

It should be recalled that Pulkol was the shouter of 'Museveni, No Change' in 2001, before briefly joining FDC in 2005 as the regional representative for Karamoja, then in 2009 joined Olara Otunnu, who had newly returned from self-imposed exile of over 30 years. Otunnu appointed Pulkol the UPC national organising secretary a post in which he left no visible mark as surely the party went further into the political abyss and Pulkol failed to secure a parliamentary seat for himself in Matheniko County, where he stood.

FDC Kizza Besigye has

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out rightly rejected the polls that have shown that he has dropped massively from the 26% he got in 2011 to 20% currently. In rejecting the findings, Besigye insists that he sees large crowds around him at the public rallies and that Museveni has fewer people, in fact, Besigye claims 'Museveni has no people in the villages'.

Josephine Mayanja Nkangi, has given a feeble defence for the 4.9%, saying her candidate should not be compared with Museveni and Besigye, who have been in the field longer.

But for Besigye here is the clincher, both the regions and leading personalities who supported him in previous elections from 2001 are no longer with him, and most have actually joined the Mbabazi team, where they see some prospects on easy money. Also, the issues Besigye exploited, such as the war and its toll on the people in West Nile, Acholi, Lango and Teso have since been resolved and there are no strong indications he can

regain those forts.

Among them, is former Buganda Katikro, Joseph Mulwanyamuli Semwogerere, who although twice in 2006 and 2011 failed to deliver Buganda, including Masaka his birthplace to Besigye is now heading the Mbabazi team. Also, a number of opposition MPs like Mathias Mpuuga (DP), Mathias Nsubuga (DP), Merdard Segona (DP), Brenda Nabukenya (DP), Beatrice Anywar (FDC), Bernard Atiku (FDC), and all the 10 from UPC have abandoned Besigye.

The combined opposition having failed to make electoral in-roads and denting the credibility of the Electoral Commission have now jumped on the harmless community policing initiatives of the crime preventers as scapegoat stir up trouble.

It is strange that a candidate would find it hard to know that the national voter's register is a public document that should be accessed for inspection by whoever desires to have it.

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sunday@newvision.co.ug