

Katikkiro Mayiga urges Ugandans to work together despite religious, ethnic and political differences, among others.

BY SHABIBAHNAKIRIGYA

Hundreds of faithful and dignitaries gathered at St Nicholas Orthodox Cathedral in Namungoona to mark the 71st birthday of Kabaka Ronald Muwenda Mutebi II, in celebrations characterised by prayer, cultural symbolism, and calls for unity, peace and good governance.

As early as 6am, guests had begun arriving at the cathedral, with security personnel already heavily deployed along the main access roads to ensure order throughout the event.

The presence of security personnel remained visible as more people streamed in during the early morning hours.

By 8am, dignitaries from both the central government and the Buganda Kingdom had taken their seats, awaiting the start of the celebrations.

The Orthodox Church choir stood on standby, ready to welcome distinguished guests, including Nnaabagereka Sylvia Nagginda.

At approximately 10:45am, Katikkiro (prime minister) of Buganda Kingdom, Mr Charles Peter Mayiga, arrived at the cathedral in the company of the Nnaabagereka. The duo was received by Archbishop Jeronymos Muzeeyi of the Orthodox Church.

Archbishop Muzeeyi led them on a guided tour of the cathedral before presenting gifts from the Orthodox community to the Kabaka, in line with cultural traditions observed during such occasions.

Shortly after, the celebrations officially commenced with prayers led by Archbishop Muzeeyi, assisted by Bishop Silvester Kisitu of Jinja and Eastern Uganda.

In his sermon, Bishop Kisitu commended Buganda Kingdom for its continued support towards the growth of the Orthodox faith in Uganda, particularly through the provision of land where churches have been established in Namungoona and Luby in Rubaga

Calls for unity, peace dominate Kabaka's 71st birthday prayers



Nnaabagereka Sylvia Nagginda (left), joined by Archbishop Leronymos Muzeeyi of the Orthodox Church, Katikkiro Charles Peter Mayiga and members of the royal family, cuts cake to mark Kabaka Ronald Mutebi II's 71st birthday in Namungoona, Kampala City, yesterday. PHOTO/GEOFREY MUTUMBA

Division.

He noted that the Kabaka's reign has been marked by significant achievements, particularly in promoting peace, unity, and socio-economic development among his subjects.

"As we celebrate Kabaka's 71st birthday, we also reflect on what he has accomplished over the years. There have been remarkable gains, especially in fostering unity, improving health, and advancing economic development," Bishop Kisitu said.

In his address, Archbishop Muzeeyi praised the parents of Kabaka Mutebi for fostering an environment that allowed freedom of worship, noting that Buganda has historically accommodated diverse religious beliefs.

Archbishop Muzeeyi also used the platform to raise concerns about issues affecting the country, including reports

ABOUT KABAKA

His Majesty Ronald Muwenda Mutebi II was born on April 13, 1955 at Mulago hospital to Ssekabaka Muteesa II and Namasole Sarah Nalule Kisosonkole of the Nkima clan. At the time of his birth, his father was in exile in Britain at the beginning of the political unrest in Uganda. He was enthroned as the 36th Kabaka on July 31, 1993.

of land grabbing, arrests and alleged torture, particularly involving individuals in political spaces.

"We are witnessing an increase in land-related disputes, yet leaders seem to be looking on. We urge the relevant

authorities to take action and ensure justice for all Ugandans," he said.

Katikkiro Mayiga, in his remarks, underscored the importance of the main themes for the celebrations which include leadership, health, and unity as the pillars that have sustained the Buganda Kingdom over the centuries.

He likened Buganda to a cooking pot supported by three stones the Kabaka, the kingdom officials, and the clan system. "The Kabaka, the officials who implement his directives, and the clan system together form a strong foundation that has sustained the kingdom for over 900 years," Mr Mayiga said.

Commenting on the kingdom's effort to promote health, he pointed to the Kabaka Birthday Run as a key initiative aimed at mobilising the population towards addressing public health challenges. He noted that the annu-

al run has, for the past several years, focused on the fight against HIV/AIDS and stressed that national development is closely linked to the health of the population.

The Katikkiro urged Ugandans to embrace their shared identity and work together despite differences in religion, political affiliation and ethnicity.

"We may belong to different religions or political groups, but we have more in common than what divides us. Unity is key to our progress," he said.

Away from the main celebrations, Kalangala MP Hellen Nakimuli called on religious leaders to speak more openly about governance issues affecting the country. She expressed concern that some leaders remain silent due to fear of repercussions.

The lawmaker pointed to concerns about justice and human rights, citing cases where some individuals receive more attention than others, particularly political prisoners who remain in detention without trial.

The State minister for Higher Education, Dr John Chrysostom Muyingo, who represented the central government, commended the Kabaka for his leadership and contribution to both the Buganda Kingdom and the nation at large.

He conveyed President Museveni's message and delivered a contribution of Shs20 million towards the birthday celebrations, describing the gesture as a sign of the strong relationship between the central government and the Buganda Kingdom.

Responding to concerns raised about governance, Dr Muyingo cautioned against introducing political debates into cultural celebrations, arguing that such platforms should remain focused on unity and heritage.

"This is a time to celebrate Kabaka and his achievements. There are appropriate platforms where political issues can be discussed," he said.

The celebrations concluded with cutting the cake by Nnaabagereka. The event was also officiated by several members of the royal family led by Kabaka's sister, Nalinya Kagere.