

security are maintained.

to ensure government programmes such as the Parish Development Mod-

"When you talk about parish devel-

ected LC2 chairpersons,

BY MIKE SEBALU

Opposition faults govt for rushing LC1,2 elections

KAMPALA. Opposition political parties yesterday expressed mixed reactions to plans by the government to hold village, parish, and women councils grassroots elections after a three-year delay.

ICT minister and government spokesperson Chris Baryomunsi, and his Local Governments counterpart Raphael Magyezi, yesterday announced the elections for Local Councils 1 and 2 (LC1 and LC2) and Women councils, would be held between March and April.

The polls, to be held in more than 70,000 villages across the country, will consume Shs56.9 billion, with the office bearers to be chosen by lining-up behind the candidates.

Parties react

But various political parties have expressed fear that the grassroots elections will be plagued with the same irregularities that were witnessed in the recently concluded General Election.

The National Unity Platform (NUP) yesterday questioned the rush when even the contest against the presidential election results has not been solved.

Dr Lewis Rubongoya, the NUP parliamentary secretary general, said: "These elections have been delayed. We are still aligning with the contested elections, including the presidential and parli-

mentary elections."

"Why is the regime now in a rush to organise this election, even before the contest about the presidential election is resolved," he added.

He further said they will have to sit down as a party and come up with a clear position on whether to participate in the grassroots polls or not.

Mr Patrick Obbo Amuriat, the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party president, confirmed participation in the elections but challenged the Electoral Commission (EC) to carry out proper civic education before the polls are conducted.

"Yes, FDC is going to participate in these elections because these are crucial. Our people on the ground are prepared, and we encourage our chapters, the sub-counties, to continue with the mobilisation, identification of candidates and also mobilise the masses to vote for our candidates," he said.

Mr Amuriat added: "Civic education is lacking and for us to have anything meaningful, we have got to have proper civic education conducted so that the people understand what the election is all about and what choice of leader they need to vote for."

He also challenged the method of lining up behind the candidates during voting, saying it can cause grudges in



People line up in Kibuli, Kampala to cast their vote during the 2016 General Election. PHOTO/ ABUBAKER LUBOWA

the villages and called for an amendment of the law to either have a secret ballot or any other means applicable without creating conflict.

"Judging from the experience of the ruling NRM party primaries at the parliamentary level, a lot of acrimony was generated in the population," he said.

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ty president, said he will need to make consultations within the party to take a final decision of whether to participate or not.

"I expect more of the same rigging, including manipulation, and seeking unfair advantage, which took place during the General Election," he said.

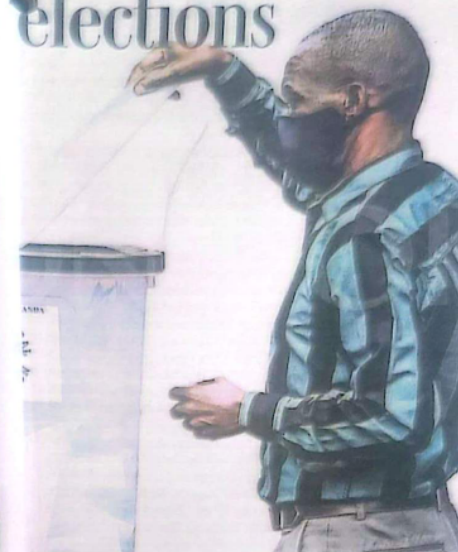
"Our final decision will come in the course of the week. We are also waiting

with the presidential and parliamentary elections, and we

Development powers to extend the term of office within the law"

local councils, and then have General Elections. So, we're harmonising the election cycle so

elections



A man casts his vote during the 2016 General Election in Kampala. PHOTO/FILE

to see how the EC is also going to work out this programme, I cannot authoritatively say which

way things are going to go until I synthesize everything and know what the situation is like."

he added.

Unscheduled elections

Mr Ssemu Nganda, the People's Front for Freedom (PFF) party spokesperson, accused the government and EC of holding unscheduled elections.

"We said we will never boycott these elections, but we're going to use these elections as a platform for fighting for freedom," he said.

He added: "We are going into these elections even after witnessing cheating. Everybody has witnessed the Electoral Commission participating in falsification of results and announcing people who have not won. We are going to have a meeting to guide the PFF party members and supporters on what to do."

But Mr Emmanuel Dombu, the Director Communications for the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party, expressed their readiness to participate in the elections.

"We already have flag bearers for LC1. When we were constituting our structures for the party at the village level, we also elected the flag bearers for LC1 and they have been waiting for this time. So, we are more than ready to participate in the elections in whatever format the EC advises us," he said.