

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR OF PARLIAMENT, CHRIS OBORE UNDER PROBE

By Michael Odeng

The Inspector General of Government (IGG) has summoned the former Parliamentary commissioners who benefited from the controversial sh1.7b service award as the dragnet into graft allegation involving outgoing Speaker Anita Annet Among Intensifies. *New Vision* has learnt.

The commissioners who benefited from the service awards are former Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Mathias Mpuuga, (the immediate former Member of Parliament (MP) for Nyendo Mukungwe, Solomon Silwany (MP for Bukooli Central), Easter Aloyochan (Zombo District Woman MP) and Prossy Mbabazi Akampurira (Rubanda District Woman MP).

TOKEN OF APPRECIATION

The commissioners received the payments as a budgeted ex-gratia token of appreciation for their political leadership and oversight roles. However, the payments sparked widespread public criticism after it emerged that the beneficiaries had reportedly approved the awards themselves.

Following the service awards, five MPs launched a motion to impeach the four commissioners after they were given time to resign in vain. However, they were not impeached.

The five MPs were Theodore Ssekikubo, Joseph Ssewungu, Patrick Nsamba Oshabe and Yorke Alioni Odria.

The National Unity Platform (NUP)'s top organ, led by party president Robert Kyagulanyi, suspended and resolved to recall Mpuuga from his position as a commissioner.

While suspending Mpuuga from the post of deputy party president in March 2024, Kyagulanyi claimed that Parliament awarding Mpuuga and the three other commissioners sh1.7b was an act of corruption and abuse of office, which violated numerous laws, including Section 9 (1) of the Leadership Code Act (2002), which prohibits leaders from taking part in meetings at which matters of personal interest to them are to be discussed.

"You have thus far failed to provide any satisfactory explanation for engaging in this action, which goes against the vision, mission and objectives of the party. It also goes against Article 53 (b) and (f) of the party constitution, which obligates party members to conduct themselves in a manner that does not bring

IGG SUMMONS EX-PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONERS OVER AWARDS



Ex-commissioner, Mathias Mpuuga



MP Silwany Solomon, ex-commissioner



Ex-commissioner, Prossy Akampurira



Aloyochan Esther, ex-commissioner



The Clerk to Parliament, Adolf Mwesige

Clerk faulted

Justice Singiza faulted Clerk to Parliament Adolf Mwesige over his role in the implementation of the service award payments.

The court ruled that Mwesige bore personal responsibility under Sections 43(8), 76 and 77 of the Public Finance Management Act due to what the judge described as dereliction of duty during the decision-making and payment process.

The judge directed the Permanent Secretary and Secretary to the Treasury, Ramathan Ggobi, to institute disciplinary proceedings against Mwesige within 12 months from the date of the ruling. However, it's not known whether he appeared before any disciplinary committee.

Although the Clerk does not participate in decision-making, the judge said he had the legal authority, as accounting officer, to reject payments that were procedurally improper.

WIDER PROBE

A source privy to the IG probe says Parliament's director of communications and Public Affairs, Chris Obore, as well as aides attached to the Speaker, have also been summoned.

The source, who preferred anonymity, told *New Vision* that one of the investigators told him that the government officials will appear at the Inspectorate of Government (IG) next week to make a statement, but could not specify the dates.

The development follows a meeting between President Yoweri Museveni, IGG Justice Aisha Naluzze and her deputies over investigations into corruption allegations against Anita Among. Sources indicate that Naluzze is expected to scrutinise the asset declarations of the outgoing speaker and investigate allegations of corruption, illicit enrichment and abuse of office.

Under the Anti-Corruption Act, the offence of abuse of office attracts a maximum sentence of seven years' imprisonment upon conviction, while illicit enrichment carries a sentence of up to 10 years. The offence of corruption elicits a 10-year jail term and disqualification from holding public office for a similar period.

The source indicated that the IGG has directed that all relevant evidence against Among be compiled, with the report expected soon. The same source said the review will focus on verifying the accuracy, consistency and legitimacy of the Speaker's declared assets in line with the Leadership Code Act.

disrepute to the name of the party, as well as practice accountable leadership," he told Mpuuga in a suspension letter dated March 27, 2024.

However, Mpuuga's recall was rejected by Speaker Among, who reasoned that the party has no powers to recall a serving commissioner under the current laws.

Among is said to have chaired the meeting in which the commissioners were given service awards.

Court documents indicate that Mpuuga received sh500m, while the other commissioners each received sh400m.

The May 2022 payouts triggered public outrage and

were later challenged in court. A concerned citizen, Daniel Bwette, sued the Parliamentary Commission, arguing that the service award was illegal.

However, on August 13, 2024, the High Court upheld the sh1.7b service awards, ruling that the payments were lawful since they had been included in the Executive's budget and approved by Parliament.

In his ruling, Justice Douglas Singiza declared that the decision made on May 6, 2022, to award Mpuuga sh500m and the three commissioners sh400m each had been duly approved by Parliament and formed part of the national



Communications director Chris Obore

budget presented by the Executive.

The ruling followed a judicial review application filed by concerned citizen Daniel Bwette against the Parliamentary Commission, seeking a declaration that the payments were illegal.

The judge noted that the vote for the ex-gratia payments had been presented in the Appropriations Bill by the Executive and later passed by Parliament.

RAIDS AND CONFISCATIONS

IGG's summons follow a joint security team raid on the Speaker Among's residences in the districts of Kampala and Wakiso and her offices starting Saturday last week, also part of an investigation into alleged corruption.

The raids have seen the investigators impounding over five luxury cars from two of Among's residences including a Rolls-Royce Cullinan with registration plates UA 426EH valued at about sh3.4b, a Range Rover Sport Utility Vehicle registration number AAA 3, a Mercedes-Benz Maybach with personalised

number plates and a Lexus SUV. On Tuesday, detectives and forensic auditors sealed off the office of Among and launched an extensive search operation. The dramatic operation, conducted under tight security, marked a major escalation in investigations targeting Among and some of her close associates.

Sources within Parliament said detectives first moved into the precincts on Monday evening at about 4:00pm, when a team quietly sealed off Among's office on the fifth floor of the House's North Wing.

Some officers reportedly spent the night inside Parliament to ensure that nobody accessed the area before the official search commenced.

The security operation has widened, with investigators expected to widen their search to Among's residence outside central Uganda, including Bukedea district in what Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba described as "Operation *Maliza Ufisadi*". *Maliza Ufisadi* is a Swahili phrase that directly translates to "end and, or finish corruption".

Muhoozi said the operation had just begun and that they had already retrieved "quite a lot of the people's money and property".

"Everything will be returned to the Treasury. I will give a partial report soon. I advise all government officials to co-operate fully with the security...in order to avoid arrest," he posted on social media.

These incidents happened a few days after a group of

lawyers and activists, led by Andrew Karamagi, petitioned IGG Naluzze, seeking a comprehensive investigation into Speaker Among for alleged breach of the Leadership Code Act.

They want the Inspector to investigate the source of her wealth and conduct a lifestyle audit over her surroundings her assets and alleged accumulation of wealth while serving in public office.

The operation comes at a time when Among has announced that she will seek re-election as Speaker at the 12th Parliament following weeks of political pressure intensifying investigation