

BY KARIM MUYOBO

KAMPALA. Until this week, Deputy Speaker Thomas Tayebwa appeared almost certain to retain his position in the 12th Parliament, buoyed by growing influence within the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) and a close political alliance with Speaker Anita Among.

But recent political developments have injected uncertainty into the race for Deputy Speaker.

Mr Tayebwa, who joined the NRM in 2010 after leaving the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), had projected confidence about returning to the office alongside Ms Among.

"I have a strong conviction that the NRM is going to produce both the Speaker and Deputy Speaker. I, therefore, request my colleagues to support Ms Anita Among for Speaker and also support me because she needs a deputy she can work closely with," Mr Tayebwa said last month after Justice and Constitutional Affairs minister Norbert

Fresh twists rock Tayebwa's Deputy Speaker bid

Mao expressed interest in the Speakership.

He urged party members to avoid open divisions over leadership positions.

"There are many positions in Parliament and in the party. The good thing is that the NRM has set a good precedent on how we conduct our internal elections, and I believe we can handle this amicably behind closed doors," he added.

Mr Tayebwa also pointed to his long-standing loyalty to the ruling party.

"I have been in the NRM for 15 years. I joined in 2010, and in 2016, I was elected unopposed," he said.

Before becoming Deputy Speaker, Mr Tayebwa served as Government Chief Whip, where he built a reputation as a skilled mobiliser and influential insider within the ruling establishment. His elevation followed the death of former



Thomas Tayebwa

Speaker Jacob Oulanyah in 2022.

Since then, he and Ms Among have often campaigned together, publicly defended one another, and projected a united political front ahead of the next

parliamentary term.

"I only have one term to serve; after that, I will hand over to Thomas Tayebwa," Ms Among said in July last year, remarks widely interpreted as an endorsement of his future Speakership ambitions.

However, the latest developments within the Patriotic League of Uganda (PLU), a political pressure group associated with Chief of Defence Forces Gen Muhoozi Kainerugaba, appear to have complicated the equation.

In a May 12 statement signed by PLU Secretary General David Kabanda, the organisation withdrew its earlier endorsement of Ms Among and Mr Tayebwa for Speaker and Deputy Speaker respectively.

PLU further directed its members-elect to support candidates who will eventually receive President Museveni's endorsement.

Although Mr Kabanda said the group

had not yet settled on a candidate for Deputy Speaker, sources familiar with recent political meetings say several names are being discussed within PLU circles.

Among those mentioned are outgoing State minister for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees Lillian Aber, Health minister Jane Ruth Aceng, who is also the Lira City Woman MP, and Gomba West MP Robinah Rwakoojo.

Mbale City Woman MP Lydia Wanyoto has also openly expressed interest in the position.

"I want to request you to think about me, Wanyoto, as the Deputy Speaker to work with Mr Oboth," she said recently.

The developments have left the race for Deputy Speaker wide open, with attention now shifting to the NRM Central Executive Committee (CEC), which is expected to play a decisive role in determining the party's official candidates this week.