

TAYEBWA WARNS MPS AGAINST BEGGING

PHOTO BY MIRIAM NAMUTEBI

By Sarah Nabakooza

Deputy Speaker of Parliament Thomas Tayebwa has warned newly elected members of the 12th Parliament (MPs) against poor financial management, while urging them to embrace reading, research and discipline as they begin their legislative duties.

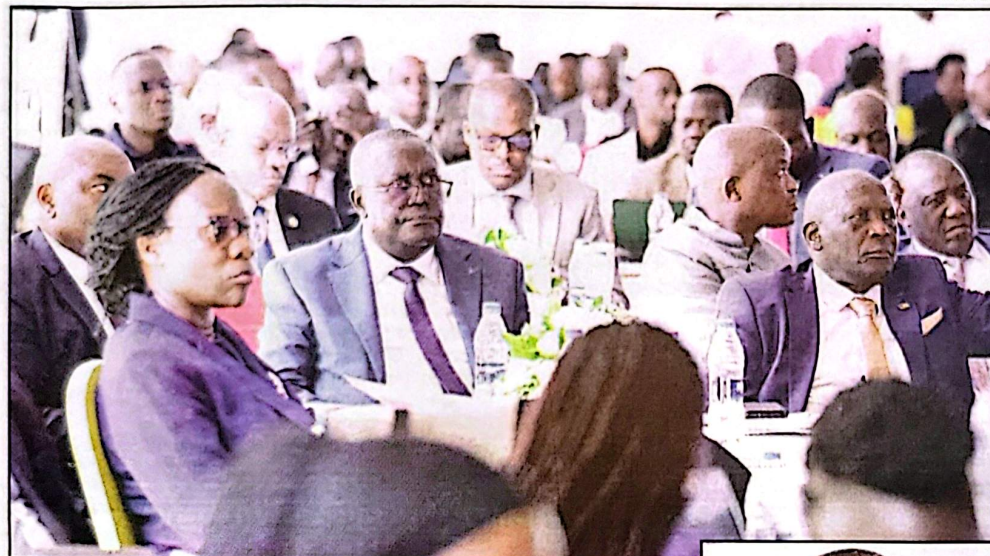
Speaking during the opening of the MPs' orientation at Parliament yesterday, Tayebwa cautioned legislators against exerting financial pressure on presiding officers and fellow leaders, saying MPs should learn to manage their salaries responsibly.

"Do not look at the Speaker as a moving Automated Teller Machine (ATM). There are times when I would fear coming to office because I do not have sh5m or sh10m for members," Tayebwa said.

"Each one of us is paid a salary and we need a well-refined system that helps and benefits all of us."

Tayebwa urged newly-elected MPs to embrace the institutional systems and structures within Parliament, instead of depending on presiding officers for personal assistance on every issue, saying lawmakers should familiarise themselves with committees, departments and administrative procedures that facilitate their work, including welfare, travel and official co-ordination.

The three-day orientation is intended to equip MPs with knowledge on parliamentary procedure, legislation, oversight and administration ahead of the commencement of business in



MPs during the opening of the orientation week at Parliament

the 12th Parliament.

Tayebwa stressed that effective representation begins with understanding national plans, government programmes and budget priorities, warning that legislators who fail to read and prepare adequately risk making weak contributions on the floor of Parliament.

He reminded the MPs that by taking the oath of allegiance and oath of office, they had assumed major constitutional obligations requiring integrity, patriotism and commitment to public service.

"There are lots of government

programmes hidden in very many documents. You, as a reader, will only be able to go and lobby if you go much deeper and see where the projects are in government documents, including ministerial policy statements and the national budget."

PUBLIC SCRUTINY

He also cautioned MPs that Parliament now operates under intense public scrutiny because of social media and increased public awareness. "We are joining Parliament at a time when citizens across the world are changing rapidly. Citizens are more informed,



Deputy Speaker Tayebwa

stakeholders are more demanding," he said.

"The level of scrutiny of today, even a person who has never entered a class can go on TikTok, do a video and hold you accountable."

The Clerk to Parliament, Aden Mwesigye, urged members to actively participate in the orientation programme, saying it is critical in helping lawmakers understand the legal, administrative and operational framework of Parliament.

Adrine Katusiime Mwebesa, the Sheema District Woman MP, described the orientation as an important foundation for lawmakers, especially first-time MPs who are still learning the procedures and operations of the House.

"You cannot just get up and speak in Parliament without following the rules of procedure," she said.

Asensio Maari Mujuni (Isingiro South) said the programme had exposed them to several important aspects of parliamentary work that many of them were previously unaware of.

There are 529 MPs in the 12th Parliament. Of these, 372 belong to the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM), the National Unity Platform has 50 MPs and Uganda People's Congress has 11 MPs.

The Forum for Democratic Change has eight MPs, Democratic Party has six MPs, the People's Front for Freedom has two MPs and the Alliance for National Transformation has one MP.

Parliament also has 68 independent MPs, many of whom are considered sympathetic to the ruling NRM party.