

National News

The Speaker says the car is a birthday gift.

BY ISAAC MUFUMBA

The Speaker of Parliament, Ms Anita Among, has got a new Rolls-Royce Cullinan 2025 model valued at £440,000 (Shs2.2 billion), *Weekend Monitor* has established.

Sources at Entebbe International Airport told this publication that the vehicle, a full-size luxury crossover sport utility vehicle (SUV), was airlifted from Britain during the course of last month.

The airlift was done by Ms Albeity Limited, an England-based firm that was involved in the controversial procurement of two Mercedes-Benz S500S for the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of Parliament at £520,000 (Shs2.4 billion) back in April 2022.

The cost of the latest addition to Ms Among's fleet of pricy luxury cars is set to rise to within the region of just under Shs4 billion. This is once taxes have been paid and the cost of freight from Britain, as well as other clearance charges, have been factored in.

Birthday gift

Speaking during a conference call with four people, including Mr John Musinguzi Rujoki, the Commissioner General of the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), Ms Among confirmed that she was indeed the proud owner of a Rolls-Royce Cullinan. Ms Among hastened to add that she had not paid for the five-seater luxury SUV.

"It was a birthday gift," she told *Weekend Monitor*.

Official records indicate that Ms Among was born on November 23, 1973. *Weekend Monitor* was unable to establish whether the car, Rolls-Royce's first all-wheel-drive vehicle, was a belated birthday gift or rather one sent ahead of her next birthday later this year.

The Speaker and her husband, Mr Moses Magogo, were both sanctioned by the United Kingdom (UK), where the Rolls-Royce Cullinan was purchased, and the United States (US) in the first half of 2024.

The sanctions, which included travel

Speaker Among gets Shs3.4b Rolls-Royce



Speaker Anita Among. PHOTO/IBRAHIM KAVUMA

bans and asset freezes, brought on after being linked to the iron sheet corruption scandal, do not bar her from receiving anything purchased from either country.

Ms Among accused her detractors of

peddling the story for purposes of alerting her bosses about her latest acquisition. Ms Among, however, hastened to add that her bosses were already aware that she had got the vehicle, adding that they are aware of her love for cars.

The matter of the Rolls-Royce came to light amid unverified claims that Ms Among had paid only Shs100 million in taxes for the car.

Mr Musinguzi, however, clarified during the conference call that a tax of Shs1.2 billion had been levied on the car by the taxman. He further revealed that Ms Among had entered an arrangement with the taxman to have the tax cleared in a staggered manner.

The URA Commissioner General went on to tell *Weekend Monitor* that the Shs100 million that is being touted was only the initial payment.

The revelation comes after the taxman parted company with Mr Asadu Kisitu, its erstwhile Commissioner of Customs. Mr Kisitu, who was replaced by Mr Henry Kwaligonza Byenkya, left his position at URA shortly after the Rolls-Royce Cullinan was imported. It is not entirely clear whether his departure is directly linked to the import duty that the SUV attracted.

Exclusive club

Ms Among now joins an elite club of business leaders, tycoons, celebrities, entertainers, and sports stars who own a Rolls-Royce Cullinan.

The list also includes Royalty. The SUV was what King Charles II was gifted for his coronation.

Business leaders who own a Rolls-Royce Cullinan include Mukesh Ambani, the Indian tycoon who has business interests in neighbouring Kenya. Mr Ambani, one of the wealthiest men in the world.

Reuben Singh, owner of the Jewels Collection, and Amjad Sithara, chief executive of BCC Group, also own the luxury SUV. The vehicle appears to be popular among the wealthy in India,

AAA'S LOVE AFFAIR WITH LUXURY CARS

Mercedes-Benz S500L AMG Line

The high-security 2022 model is used for the House Speaker's specialised parliamentary travel.

Range Rover Vogue/Autobiography

The high-end SUV valued at Shs500 million was gifted to her partner and Budiope East law-maker, Moses Magogo, in November of 2022.

Lexus LX 600

Known for its pure power and on-road agility, this full-size luxury SUV is listed as part of the House Speaker's fleet of vehicles.

Mercedes-Benz G-Wagon

The luxurious, iconic, boxy SUV is listed as part of the House Speaker and her partner's collection.

thanks in no small part, to its custom options.

Celebrities and entertainers like Shah Rukh Khan, Ajay Devgn, Allu Arjun, Bhushan Kumar, and Urvashi Rautela have it in their garages.

In Africa, Ghanaian artiste Shatta Wale is known to own a Rolls-Royce Cullinan. Elsewhere, sports stars like Patrick Mahomes (white Cullinan) and Odell Beckham Jr (custom orange interior) are known to have broken the bank to own a vehicle renowned for its immense, boxy presence and exceptional comfort.

Uganda's entry into the elusive club of countries with a Rolls-Royce Cullinan owner belies many deep-seated issues. The East African nation is among the 47 least developed countries in the world. Its nominal GDP per capita oscillates anywhere between \$1,093 (Shs4 million) and \$1,374 (Shs5.1 million), with most of the country's population living in abject poverty despite—or in fact because—the economy is heavily agrarian.