

Corruption will grow, not die

There is this lady who was paraded recently at the Kyankwanzi leadership-cum-NRM-indoctrination outfit.

Fame came to the lady for dealing in illicit parliamentary support. Her choice of customer was unusual. At least we thought. Here we go:

Senior officials of a government department would give her bribes to secure the endorsement of her parliamentary committee in the process of getting Parliament to approve the expenditure of government money by that government department.

My English is stupid. I cannot describe properly the action perpetrated by the woman and her colleagues. It was the product of weird genius.

As a result, the woman herself has become a celebrity. Actually, she is a kind of work of art in her own right; an exhibition piece. Like Mona Lisa; Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting.

The living artwork at Kyankwanzi was a perfect thief. I mean, you cannot improve the work's expressive power or magnificence.

At the exhibition, members of Uganda's ruling party, NRM, who were recently elected to the 12th Parliament, exploded with joy just short of a standing ovation.

In the presidential tradition of forgiving exceptionally creative people who engineer great personal wealth from incompetently managed and negligently guarded public cash conduits, the Kyankwanzi masterpiece had been forgiven.

She had joined other heroes who had attracted presidential magnanimity and

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On the Mark



evaded damnation in blockbusters like The Gavi Syndicate, Junk Choppers and Operation Iron Sheets.

These were true stories that have grown into inspiring parables. They should assure the new NRM lawmakers that those who can navigate the dens and plunder their way to great wealth have nothing much to fear. The director of the NRM experience remains the same man.

All they have to endure is lip service by their superiors, for the obvious political need to address public anger and envy. And to suffer the croaking of Opposition politicians, which anyway is of little consequence.

To emphasise that NRM will not change a game plan that had served it well for 40 years, President Museveni himself spoke passionately about his resolve to eliminate corruption, but also quickly demonstrated his readiness to follow standard form by giving all new MP's some free money.

Not petty cash, but reportedly a cool Sh100

million per NRM MP, part of it (Sh20m) in cash.

Assuming this bizarre exercise is eventually completed, a sobering Shs45 billion would have migrated (probably from taxpayers) to the legislators.

Whatever reasoning is presented to mitigate the arbitrariness of this alleged expenditure, the new legislators would have, in effect, been initiated in the NRM cult of excess and impunity.

You might have noticed a recent trend. There seems to be a coordinated design to display great wealth and luxury by many senior members of the ruling party. Birthday gifts like luxury cars are becoming normal. A five-year-old boy has just got one.

I suppose their egos are pumping them. But it could also be to entice other people to join the NRM, the party where money floods.

Another effect could be to mask the excesses of the very top ruling elite. Why; because the critics and the disgusted can see that it is not only the small super elite that is damaging the wretched taxpayer. Guilt is thus shared out among a broader horde of vampires.

Sustaining this lifestyle means stealing more public money over the next five years. And preserving the regime means that the thieves must be protected. In exchange, those who are 12th-Parliament legislators will remember the Kyankwanzi heroine and support whatever the Executive fancies.

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