

Political analysts argue that the outgoing Speaker of Parliament should have realised that "time catches up with everyone".

BY SYLVIA KATUSHABE

The political future of Anita Among, the outgoing Speaker of Parliament, has taken an unexpected twist after a joint security team searched her homes amidst speakership turmoil, compounded by her own withdrawal from the race to retain the seat.

But did Ms Among see the writing on the wall? Piecing together events of the past few months point to a Speaker who may have smelt a rat but could have ignored it for a passing discomfort or overestimated her war chest.

Let's step back and look at a few tell-tale signs. Her tenure has been marred by controversy that left a blot on her image, especially around corruption in Parliament and misuse of power. And hints around this, which we will return to later in the piece, may have jolted her out of the comfort zone.

During the last elections, Ms Among ensured she stood unopposed in party primaries and the 2026 General Election in the race for Bukedea Woman Member of Parliament, even when critics opined she could have had a victory chance. But the exercise left a bitter taste in some contestants' mouths and the general public.

First, her challenger in the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party primaries, Ms Helen Odeke, was disqualified for "not meeting residency requirements", paving the way for Ms Among to be declared unopposed, and efforts to have Ms Odeke on the ballot fell flat.

In the general election, Ms Percy Marion Alupo (National Unity Platform), and Susan Norma Otai (Forum for Democratic Change) were disqualified by the Electoral Commission for voter registration irregularities.

Several critics felt that the struggle to contest unopposed may have been to avert fears of a shocking defeat, and, therefore, no chance at the speakership. So, it was safe to first become MP and then deal with the rest later.

Standing unopposed also gave her legitimacy to move around with NRM presidential candidate Yoweri Museveni, with whom she traversed the whole country. It was also seen as an attempt to gravitate towards Mr Museveni and gain favour to secure the vote.

While attending an event at Kalule Garage playground in Kyazanga Town Council, Lwengo District in June 2025, Ms Among was seen to be desperately trying to endear herself to the First Family when she likened President Museveni to "God the Father", and his son Gen Muhoozi Kainerugaba to "God the son".

"We believe in the Trinity. We believe in God the Father, and God the Father is President Museveni. God the son is MK [popular contraction of Muhoozi Kainerugaba] and now you are the Holy Spirit. Therefore, vote for them. God be with you all," Ms Among said.

During the NRM retreat in Kyankwandi last month, it was apparent that there was another candidate in Laroo-Peece Division MP Norbert Mao for the seat. And President Museveni threw the spanner in the works when he said the Speaker race was far from over even after the party's Central Executive Com-

Did Among see her downfall coming?

mittee (CEC) had endorsed Ms Among and her deputy Mr Thomas Tayebwa.

Ms Among took matters in her own hands to warn those who were entering the NRM 'bedroom' even when they were just guests, in a subtle hit at Mr Mao.

This newspaper got reports that intelligence blocked anyone from distributing money to MPs in a bid to campaign for speakership. Mr Museveni took the shine when he announced that he would give each of the MPs Shs100m, starting with Shs20m to help them ahead of the swearing-in ceremonies.

To any clever politician, the happenings in Kyankwandi would ring a loud bell.

Early this month, at the Patriotic League of Uganda (PLU) headquarters in Kampala, Ms Among rebuked claims that she harboured presidential ambitions for 2031, instead pledging support for Gen Kainerugaba.

The choice and timing of this revelation was interpreted that she could have sensed that the PLU team was the new power centre and would have a big say in the speakership race.

Corruption

Regarding corruption, in March 2023, Ms Among posted on her X handle condemning graft. She noted that it denies citizens opportunities and service delivery.

"Corruption is a vice that has eaten out society and billions of public funds

are lost every year, denying citizens opportunities and service delivery," she noted.

Ms Among was one of the senior government officials implicated in the theft of iron sheets meant for the vulnerable people of Karamoja.

Following investigations, President Museveni ordered officials who had irregularly received the iron sheets to return them or pay the equivalent. The outgoing Speaker complied, returning 500 iron sheets to the Office of the Prime Minister.

At least 20 ministers, 31 parliamentarians, and 12 chief administrative officers were implicated. Among them were Vice President Jessica Alupo, Prime Minister Robinah Nabbanja, Karamoja Affairs minister Mary Goretti Kitutu, her deputy Agnes Nandutu (since convicted), and State minister for Finance Planning and Economic Development Amos Lugolobi.

Amidst public uproar over corruption and misuse of State funds, Ugandans led by journalist-turned-activist Agathe Atuhaire and Makerere University lecturer Spire Ssentongo launched the "Parliament Exhibition" on social media, particularly on X.

The exhibition, which ran from February 24 to mid-May 2024, unearthed several contentious issues, including a Shs1.7 billion service award to former Leader of the Opposition in Parliament (LoP) Mathias Mpuuga and four NRM

parliamentary backbench commissioners.

A section of MPs requested time to de-

KEY EVENTS

Ms Anita Among, the Speaker of the 11th Parliament, seemed to have it all, including the solid backing of the President, and his NRM party parliamentary Caucus, and was tentatively endorsed for re-election.

From being an ardent member of the Opposition Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party, where she was the deputy treasurer, to joining the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party, Ms Among has had a meteoric rise within a space of 10 years.

Ms Among twice ran in 2006 and 2011 for the Bukedea District Woman MP seat on the FDC party ticket and lost in both elections. She changed party loyalty in 2016 and ran as an independent candidate, and emerged victorious.

But within FDC, sources said Ms Among had been President Museveni's mole in the Opposition, and with that came the bottomless cash basket at her disposal.

When she joined the NRM in 2020, Ms Among went unopposed in the party primaries and 2021 General Election, joining Parliament for a second term.

She was among the several NRM candidates who showed interest in contesting for the position of Deputy Speaker, which she ran for and won. But Parliament Speaker Jacob Oulanyah's death presented her with another opportunity to rise to the helm of power, propelling her to be the third in hierarchy in the country, after the President and the Vice President.

bate the corruption issues raised during the exhibition, but the Speaker brushed them off as rumours and mere "social media talk".

Around the same time, the US Department of State slapped travel sanctions on Ms Among over what it described as "significant corruption" tied to her leadership of Parliament. She was sanctioned alongside Ms Kitutu, Mr Lugolobi, and former Deputy Chief of Defence Forces, Gen Peter Elwell. These came hot on the heels of UK sanctions, which froze Ms Among's assets abroad.

When outgoing LoP Joel Ssenyonyi raised the matter in Parliament, Ms Among retorted that she didn't care about the sanctions, insisting the only passport she needed was the one taking her to Bukedea, her home district.

In March 2024, then Inspector General of Government Beti Kamya opened a corruption probe into Parliament, promising to submit findings on widespread abuse of office and unethical conduct to the President.

Yet amid the uproar, nothing happened to her. But the silence may have been loud in her political system.

These events were clear storm clouds on the horizon, signalling that Ms Among's position was under threat. She sought to shore up her standing with the President and her party, the NRM.

She established a teaching hospital in Bukedea, commissioned by President Museveni, with several wards named after members of the First Family.

Ms Among had also been a fixer in Parliament for the regime's wishes. She ensured government-backed Bills passed despite public and Opposition uproar, including the Coffee Bill, the Uganda People's Defence Forces (Amendment) Bill, 2025, and the Protection of Sovereignty Bill, 2026, which closed the 11th Parliament.

Analysts weigh in

Political analysts argued that Ms Among should have realised that "time catches up with everyone".

Ms Sarah Bireete, the Executive Director of the Centre for Constitutional Governance, said: "She was doing wrong. Wrong is wrong. As a leader, she should have realised that what she was doing was wrong. Abuse of parliamentary budget. Most importantly her tenure in the House was really terrible."

She added: "I don't know whether she imagined that she was immune."

Ms Bireete also raised concerns about Parliament's internal systems failing to check Ms Among's extravagant spending, noting that the Clerk and Internal Auditor should explain how things spiralled.

Analyst Yusuf Sserunkuma argued that Ms Among may not have sensed danger, believing she had done Mr Museveni's bidding and expected gratitude.

He suggested Ms Among's woes stem from a transition of power within the PLU, which seems to have no room for her services.

"I think we have a transition happening right now. And I think the transitional people are not really interested in her services. I think PLU is getting more entrenched and more connected to the grid," Mr Sserunkuma said.

He added: "While they appreciate the work she's done for Mr Museveni, they think she's a big embarrassment. So, I think it's not just the embarrassment."

So, whether the purge on her regime is politically-motivated or is a genuine fight against corruption is what we will see in the coming days.

