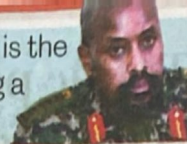
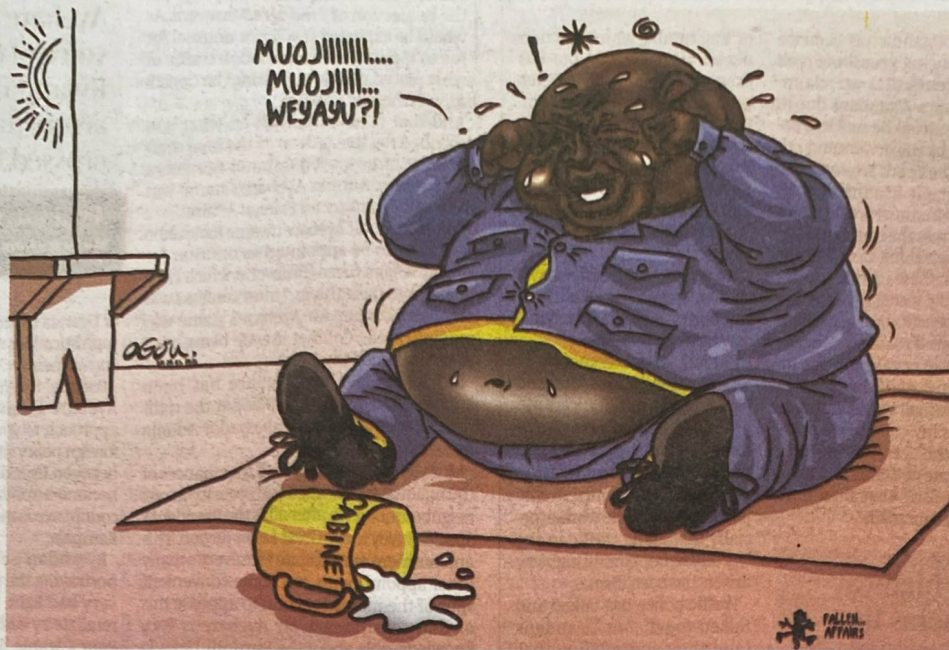


Kainerugaba on PLU Secretary General: "My young brother [David] Kabanda is the secretary of the Patriotic League of Uganda, a much more important position than being a minister. His job is to organise and mobilise the millions of young people in our country."



Cartoon. The outgoing State minister for Foreign Affairs, Henry Okello Oryem, has expressed disappointment after being dropped from Cabinet by President Museveni.



New Cabinet, same centre of gravity, 40 years of wandering in the wilderness

New Cabinet, right? Let me take you back 'ka small. Late one night, May 1999, Wafula Oguttu, then editor-in-chief of this newspaper, gave me an assignment as he drove out of *The Monitor* headquarters. I was to hunt down all the former ministers who had served in President Museveni's Cabinet, interview them, and tell their stories of life after Cabinet.

At that time, Mr Museveni had been in power for 13 years. Waf, methinks, assumed that since, in mid-1997, I had successfully traced the survivors of the October 17, 1988, Uganda Airlines crash in Rome (Editor Charles Onyango-Obbo's assignment) and put together a minute-by-minute story of that ill-fated flight, I would make minced meat of this one too. Fausse supposition! Wrong assumption!

The air crash survivors were 19 (out of 52). It was a tough job, alright, given that we didn't have mobile phones at that time (only a handful of well-to-do folks could afford mobile telephony in 1997). There was no social media, since even the concept of internet was only filtering through to Uganda like a rumour. One had to move from person to person and place to place to get information.

Still, it was certainly much easier than Waf's project. See, by 1999 mobile phones had begun to be accessible, thanks to the entrance of MTN, which broke the Celtel monopoly in October 1998. But I can confirm that it was easier to number the stars in the sky than count Museveni's ex-ministers in 1999.

My estimate was that I needed several months (while doing nothing else) to complete Waf's project. And, as fate would have it, a few weeks thereafter, I joined our 'Noisy Neighbours' on 1st Street, Industrial Area, Kampala, when my dear 'Barbs', now head honcho thereat, came calling. Today, if Waf re-assigned that project, he would,

We have mastered the ritual of political renovation, yet our problems persist.



**Gawaya Tegulle
Objection**



in all certainty, need World Bank financing and the machinery of the national census to accomplish it. Only one person, over the past 40 years, has been a constant in that Cabinet — President Museveni.

With each new Cabinet or Cabinet reshuffle, we've been given high-sounding slogans, powerful promises, and still endured the very same problems. Our people are poor, have no jobs, die early and easily, and get no proper education. No water, no electricity in our homes.

The rulers attend hospitals in Europe and North America, and take their children to school there — not in the country they lead. All promises and pretences of democracy have since been put paid to: elections are officially violent. The ruling party wins elections when its key opponents and their campaign agents are in jail. And exile.

Separation of powers died long ago: the rulers issue orders as to who should lead the Legislature. And with the leader of the Judiciary having been installed without procedural transparency and, to make matters worse, sworn in at the President's home, any-

body who thinks we still have an independent Judiciary needs to see a doctor. The preamble to the Constitution tells a powerful story of what Uganda was coming from and where it aspired to reach. But if you read it again, you will agree that, as a nation, our goose is cooked. Put simply, like the children of Israel, we've wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, going in circles, without getting anywhere.

We have mastered the ritual of political renovation: new faces, reshuffled portfolios, fresh photographs, and energetic slogans — yet our problems persist. We have lived through seasons of slogans — grand declarations promising action, urgency, transformation, and prosperity. Nations, however, are not transformed by catchphrases. Slogans are easy. Systems are hard.

A nation cannot convince itself that repainting the walls amounts to building a new house. Changing ministers while preserving the same centre of gravity often feels less like reform and more like rearranging seats in a vehicle travelling the same road. We have missed the ultimate test of true and stable democracies: repeated cycles of a leader serving for a definite term and, at its end, holding peaceful elections on level playing ground, hand over power to another, and go do other things.

There is a tragedy worse than standing still. It is movement without progress. It is marching, singing, voting, celebrating anniversaries, and cutting ribbons while the verdict is written in the sky: we've wasted 40 years going nowhere, because we've mastered the art of moving in circles.

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