

# NEW CABINET SEES RETURN OF OLD TIMERS

By Umaru Kashaka

**T**he return of some of the National Resistance Movement's (NRM) old guard to Cabinet after a long period in the political wilderness symbolises their resilience and sends a reconciliation signal in regions where the ruling party wants to stabilise its support, analysts have said.

Among the old guard who have returned to tread the corridors of power are Dr Crispus Kiyonga, Lt. Gen. (rtd) Henry Tumukunde, Prof Ephraim Kamuntu and Sam Engola.

Others like former Bubulo East MP Simon Mulongo and former NRM chairperson the Women's League Jacqueline Mbabazi, who is the wife of former Prime Minister Amama Mbabazi, are going to enter the Cabinet for the first time as ministers.

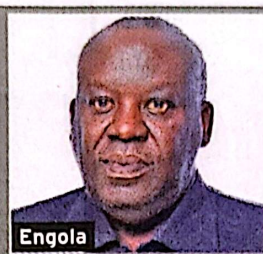
Kiyonga, who represents Bukonzo West in the 12th Parliament, was appointed Second Deputy Prime Minister and Deputy Leader of Government Business, while Tumukunde, who represents Rukungiri municipality, is the minister of gender, labour and social development-designate.

Kamuntu and Engola were appointed as ministers for internal affairs and relief, disaster preparedness and refugees, respectively, while Mulongo and Mbabazi were appointed as state ministers for employment and industrial and orderly affairs, respectively.

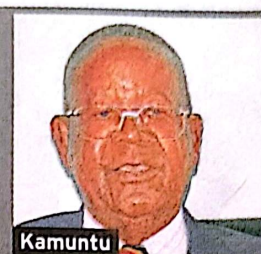
Tumukunde, a bush war hero



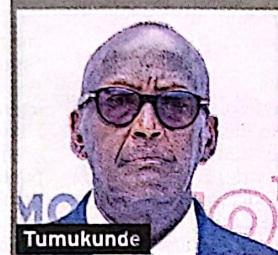
Mulongo



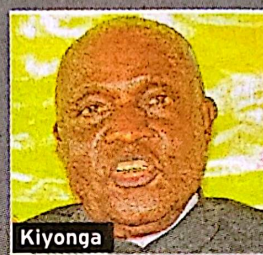
Engola



Kamuntu



Tumukunde



Kiyonga



Mbabazi

## KIYONGA'S MP PLANS

Dr Crispus Kiyonga, who first entered Parliament in 1980, said he would focus on improving incomes of the constituents and services, particularly education and health. "We are also going to focus on improving the agricultural sector because most of the people are in that sector. In the case of Kasese and particularly Bukonzo West, the main agricultural activity is coffee farming," he said.

encouragement and belief in my leadership throughout this journey. I look forward to working together with all stakeholders in advancing the national interest."

Engola, who also bounced back as MP for Erute South, thanked the President for the trust and confidence he has placed in him through his

appointment as minister.

"I am deeply honoured to serve our country in this important capacity and remain committed to working diligently to support government efforts in disaster preparedness, humanitarian response and the welfare of all Ugandans," he stated.

He pledged his full dedication

to serving with integrity, humility and patriotism as they continue building a stronger and more resilient Uganda.

Prof. Kamuntu, who also reclaimed his Sheema South parliamentary seat in the January 15 general election, thanked Museveni for the continued trust and confidence placed in him.

"Thank you, Mzee [President Museveni], for the opportunity to serve Uganda. I remain steadfast in my pledge of loyalty, dedication and total commitment to duty in the service of our nation," he added via his X handle.

On his part, Mulongo, who has been working as a governance and security consultant and *New Vision* columnist, also took to X and sincerely thanked the President for the appointment.

"I am humbled by this confidence and pledge to serve Uganda with integrity, dedication, and commitment. Grateful to the Bamasaba community and all Ugandans for their support. For God and my country," Mulongo, who is a former African Union diplomat, added.

## STABILISING NRM'S SUPPORT

Analysts say Museveni's cabinets are a mix of loyalty, regional balance and competence.

In Kasese and Rukungiri, for instance, the ruling party won all the parliamentary seats and also swept most of the positions in the local government elections, including those of district chairpersons.

The two districts had become a backbone of Opposition politics in western Uganda since Dr Kizza Besigye emerged on the political scene in the early 2000s.

Besigye, who is currently on remand in Luzira Prison in Kampala over treason-related charges, hails from Rukungiri.

As the face of Uganda's opposition under the Forum for Democratic Change, he contested in the presidential elections of 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016, losing all of them to Museveni of the NRM.

Besigye's incarceration had been expected to influence voting patterns in Rukungiri in the January 15 general elections, but it wasn't the case.

Analysts interviewed by *New Vision* said Tumukunde's comeback as MP and minister would revive his role as a voice on security and governance.

They also said how far he goes will depend on whether there is genuine reconciliation with the centre of power or just tactical tolerance.

For Mbabazi, who is also the MP for Older Persons in western region, her appointment to Cabinet brings her husband into the picture.

When the NRM election disputes tribunal upheld his wife's victory as the party flag-bearer for the MP seat, Mbabazi took to X and said: "Now is the time to close ranks, heal any divisions and move forward together as one united party as we prepare for the forthcoming general election. Together, we are stronger."