

Raila moves to stem fallout as Ababu accused of abdicating role

ODM leader unhappy that secretary general and western colleagues raised concerns in the media instead of party structures

By RAWLINGS OTIENO

ODM leader Raila Odinga yesterday pressed party secretary general Ababu Namwamba on concerns he had abdicated his duties.

During the first party meeting since a rebellion was sparked in the party by six western MPs, Raila is said to have been unhappy with the leaders for raising party-related complaints in public.

Multiple sources that attended the meeting of the Central Management Committee said Raila put his party's secretary general to task for absconding his duties at Orange House.

Raila is also said to have taken issue with some senior party officials for frustrating Namwamba.

Last week, Namwamba and ODM vice chairman Paul Otuoma led a group of five MPs from the region in castigating the party leader and chairman John Mbadi for undermining them by visiting their constituencies without informing them.

The MPs also said the party had frustrated initiatives by Namwamba to rejuvenate the party and warned they would be forced to consider other options if the party did not pay attention to their grievances.

And in a five-hour meeting at Orange House meant to heal the rift, the committee gave disgruntled members two weeks within which to present their grievances for redress.

The committee chaired by Raila and in charge of the day-to-day management of the party affairs yesterday agreed that there were underlying issues raised by its secretary general and the five Western MPs.

According to a source, some members criticised the manner in which the team went to argue their case in the media and not through the laid-down party structures.

The officials were of the opinion that Namwamba and the disgruntled MPs should have channeled their grievances through the established party structures.



MPs ACCUSED RAILA OF UNDERMINING THEM

Six western Kenya MPs accused party the leadership of undermining them. They said Raila and Mbadi are frustrating Namwamba's initiatives to rejuvenate the party. But Mbadi says secretary general's office is empowered in a way that no one can frustrate its bearer. A section of leaders accuse MPs of ignoring party structures to prosecute their case in the media. Another meeting will be called to hear grievances raised by the Western MPs.

Raila is said to have told Namwamba that he had his blessings and should play his role as the secretary general and to avoid any unnecessary wrangles that could undermine the party.

"This is not the time for quarrelling, the elections are around the corner. That is not the way to go," Raila reportedly said.

Namwamba is said to have defended himself, protesting that the concerns raised by western MPs had been narrowed down to him with some party members directly attack-

ODM Secretary General Ababu Namwamba greets supporters outside the party's headquarters in Nairobi after a meeting with party leader Raila Odinga yesterday. (PHOTO: WILLIS AWANDU/STANDARD)

ing him.

He is said to have stood his ground and defended his position that there was no way he would have presented the matter to those being accused of frustrating his work plan.

The source added that Namwamba in particular raised concern over the claim by Siaya Senator James Orenge, during a meeting in Busia, that he (Namwamba) could have been auctioned to their rivals.

He also denied deserting his duties as the secretary general of the Orange party.

And at the press briefing, Namwamba who read the statement on behalf of the party, said the meeting was looking into the composition of Parliamentary Select Committees.

He however stated that they will meet in two weeks to iron out any emerging issues in the party.

"Today we were meeting to look into the internal issues of the party. The issues are in the public domain and without pre-empting, it is sufficient to say we have put in place a framework to handle the emerging issues," said Namwamba.

"When issues are raised to strengthen the party, then that is not being disgruntled. We want the party strengthened," he maintained.

Mbadi noted the party constitution had given enormous powers to the office of the secretary general and that of the chairman and that nobody can purport to frustrate bearers of these offices.

"The constitution has given immense powers to the SG and the chairman to an extent that they cannot be frustrated. Instead, the office bearers, if they decided, can frustrate others. But the SG and I have the responsibility of serving," said Mbadi.

The closed-door meeting that lasted three hours was attended by three party officials and vice chairmen Josephat Nanok, Otuoma and John Waluke, an NEC member.

Others were National Treasurer Timothy Bosire, Women Leader Beth Syeng'o, Youth Leader John Ketora and National Assembly Deputy Minority Leader Jakoyo Midiwo.

“When issues are raised to strengthen the party, then that is not being disgruntled. We want the party strengthened - Ababu Namwamba

Parliament investigating Sh500 million SGR payouts

By ROSELYNE OBALA

Parliament is investigating claims Sh500 million may have been paid out irregularly as compensation for land acquired to build the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR).

Lands committees of the National Assembly and Senate are investigating alleged fictitious payments by the National Land Commission (NLC) and the Kenya Railways Corporation (KRC).

This follows complaints by people who claim compensation was skewed even after their properties were taken. Also, a KRC audit has raised concerns over alleged questionable payouts and blames NLC for the irregularities.

The report unearths how payments were made to unknown people and compensation inflated in some cases.

Even worse, there are those whose names are not in NLC's master list or KRC payment schedule yet their properties were taken.

In its report, KRC is concerned with the double payments of Sh1.09million and Sh3.5million said to have been paid to two wrong people. It is also concerned over what it terms irregular payment at Manyani and Mbololo. At least Sh11.3million was paid without identifications and names as well as payment of Sh9.8 million, among others are troubling KRC.

IRREGULAR COMPENSATION

Valuation of a sisal plantation, resulting in a variance of Sh337.2 million and alleged irregular compensation of public land of Sh43 million are some of the issued to be investigated.

NLC chief executive officer Tom Chavangi told The Standard he could not comment on the report.

"That report you are referring to is a draft and I cannot comment on it until when it's finalised," he stated.

George Oner, a member of the National Assembly lands committee, said although KRC's report is just a draft, it forms a basis for investigations to establish whether the compensation process is above board.

"We are inviting the two agencies to appear before us on a yet to be agreed upon date to shed light on this matter. There are complaints that must be substantiated," said Oner.

He added: "The committee has seen the report and we will use it to frame questions to both KRC and NLC. There is the issue of huge disparity in the compensation of sisal farms at the Coast and the equal payment of all lands in Voi despite the size."

The SGR compensation issue has been outstanding for a while and the two agencies have shifting blame, with NLC claiming it is KRC that is mandated to make the payment.

In its report, KRC questions payments allegedly made to the wrong people, yet NLC has details of the deserving beneficiaries.

It is the compensation trail that undeserving Kenyans were reportedly paid Sh3.5 million, 14 unknown people got Sh 5.1million and 16 others with only one name pocketing Sh11million. Also, there was an alleged over-payment of Sh1.09 million, the report further says.

Muturi tells CORD to name Justice committee members by today

By MOSES NJAGIH

National Assembly Speaker Justin Muturi yesterday gave CORD until today to replace members it dropped from the Justice and Legal Affairs Committee.

Mr Muturi told the House that despite the Standing Orders stating that replacements should be done within 14 days, he had established that CORD had not submitted any names to replace the discharged committee members as required.

"I wish to draw to the attention of

the CORD coalition and indeed the House that today, Wednesday June 29, is the 13th day from when the discharge of the members took effect, implying that only one day remains for the said vacancies to be filled," said Muturi.

"The coalition is therefore advised to hasten submission of nominees to the Committee of Selection for appointment to fill the vacancies," he ruled.

On June 16, the Speaker announced the discharge of 11 CORD members who sat on the Justice com-

mittee, protesting its continued handling of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission issues when the coalition was pushing for the process to be tackled by other organs.

The CORD members discharged from the committee were David Ochieng, Agostinho Neto, Peter Kalume, Fatuma Ibrahim Ali, Ben Momanyi, Tom Kajwang, Mutua Mutei, Olago Aluocho, Christine Ombaka, Benjamin Andai and Mwamkale Kamoti.

Meanwhile, two Jubilee coalition

members have written to coalition Chief Whip Katoo ole Metito seeking to withdraw their membership from House committees to accommodate CORD "rebels" who were de-whipped from committees.

MPs Moses Kuria (Gatundu South) and Johnson Sakaja (nominated) have requested Metito to replace them in the Energy and Finance committees respectively, with Kilifi North MP Gideon Mung'aro and Mwingi North's John Munuve, who were discharged from their committees by CORD.