

NRM prioritises peace and infrastructure - Museveni



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BY ALEX ASHABA

The NRM presidential candidate, Mr Yoweri Museveni, has said the NRM government's top priority throughout its years in power has been maintaining peace, which he describes as the foundation of Uganda's development.

Mr Museveni, who was campaigning in Ntoroko District last Friday at Karugutu Primary School, said without peace, no country can progress. He cited ongoing conflicts in neighbouring countries as evidence.

"Other countries like DR Congo have been at war. Ugandans living near the border, especially in Ntoroko and Bundibugyo, can testify to this. Uganda is hosting 700,000 Congolese refugees who fled because of insecurity. Those are the ones who survived; many lost their property. So when you vote for NRM, know why, you are voting for peace."

The President said the NRM's second major contribution is development, which includes both economic and social growth. He highlighted road construction as an example of the government's commitment to improving economic infrastructure.

"When we came to power, the tarmac road coming to this side ended in Mityana. We had no money, so we used barter trade with Yugoslavia. We gave out cow-peas so that we could work on the road up to Mubende, then pushed it to Fort Portal, Bundibugyo, Lamia, and other areas in Bunyoro and Kamwenge," he said.

Mr Museveni, however, expressed concern that some of today's leaders do not follow what he called the "bush war method" of disciplined and patient



President Museveni campaigns in Fort Portal City on Saturday. PHOTO/NRM X ACCOUNT

work.

"Today I came by government helicopter from Kanyamirima in Bundibugyo, where UPDF soldiers are still staying in grass-thatched houses. For us, the bush war people, that is our method. One by one, we make a bundle," he said.

He stressed the importance of prioritisation. He criticised the idea that soldiers must first be provided with luxury housing before focusing on national defence.

He added that many roads the government built through hard work are now deteriorating because leaders fail to prioritise.

He also cited the recent strike by Arts

teachers demanding immediate salary increment, calling it an example of indiscriminate and misplaced priorities.

"From now on, we are going to be strict. Your Speaker of Parliament travelled on a bad road, fell sick, and was hospitalised. She has seen it. NRM cadres must know what comes first. Roads are important, even if you are a teacher, a good road helps you. Farmers also need good roads. For us, peace is first, roads second, then electricity, health, education, and the rest if the budget allows."

On education, Museveni said Ntoroko District has 38 government-aided primary schools and five government-aid-

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ed secondary schools. He compared this to the early 1960s, when the entire region had only a few secondary schools.

"In 1961, when I was at Ntare, there were only three boys' secondary schools and three girls' secondary schools. Bwamba County, which is now Bundibugyo and Ntoroko, had very few schools. Our plan is for every parish to have a primary school and every sub-county to have a secondary school," he said.

Regarding health services, Mr Museveni said out of Ntoroko's 10 sub-counties, two have health centre IVs while four lack health centre III. He announced government plans to elevate Karugutu Health Centre to a district hospital and upgrade other facilities from health centre II to III.

President Museveni said development is meaningless if people do not have wealth.

"In the 1960s, people talked about development; people had been on tarmac roads and had electricity, but they remained poor. Even in Kampala today, children are born in slums. There is tarmac and electricity, but people are still poor. People must learn to differentiate between development and wealth," he said.

He added that some people who are wealthy today earned their riches through hard work, especially by engaging in agriculture.

Mr Museveni said Ntoroko's lowlands are suitable for growing mangos, which is a perennial crop that provides continuous harvests.

He also praised the people of Bundibugyo for doing well with cocoa, coffee, and palm oil, enterprises they adopted after learning from practices in DR Congo.