

***Nairobi, Kenya, September 5 (Infosplusgabon) - Kenya's Deputy President William Ruto, who once wielded executive power within government, has been dominating the media headlines in recent months.***

This week, was no exception. The Deputy President, who co-founded the Jubilee Party with President Uhuru Kenyatta in 2013 and was promised political backing to secure the Presidency under the ruling Jubilee party, has been dominating the headlines for his isolation from the government he helped to create.

Referred to as the co-President with more power and no authority, Deputy President Ruto has been seen in the news more often leading family prayer sessions at his official residence than engaging in the official and constitutional task of helping the President to govern.

On Monday, the Deputy President was addressing a virtual meeting of the Council of Governors, which brought together all the 47 Governors, to discuss the progress in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic when his screen suddenly went blank.

Ruto praised President Kenyatta for providing "steadfast leadership" and mobilising the state and non-state institutions to the fight against the coronavirus.

"Admittedly, some very difficult decisions have had to be made with very far-reaching effects on us as a nation. The Counties have proved that they are not only centres of growth and centres of power, but they are also centres of solutions," Ruto said before the screen went blank at the 31 Aug. meeting.

There was no official comment on why the Deputy President who was emphasising the implementation of the government agenda in fighting the coronavirus pandemic was suddenly disconnected.

A former Director of Diaspora affairs and digital strategist at Kenyatta's State House, Dennis Itumbi, said there was no justification nor explanation for the eventual disconnection of the internet.

"The Internet at the Deputy President's Residence is strong and stable. Even at the point of disconnection, the signal was at full strength, we Livestream 'Every Hustle Matters' every Thursday using multiple devices and with zero interruptions," Itumbi wrote in a social media reference to the event.

He said the communications team: "The Council of Governor's Summit "played games" because clearly, their system had no issues and even after the technical challenges, no-one bothered to call to find out what the problem was, they had the answer."

Political commentators say the role constitutionally assigned to the Deputy President, apart from being the "Principal assistant to the President," remains weak and ambiguous because the role lacks a proper definition of the duties to be performed other than those assigned by the President.

In June, President Kenyatta dissolved the Executive Office of the Deputy President in an Executive Order 1 of 2020. The new, Order, stripped off the Deputy President of the powers to hire staff and ordered all the functions previously assigned to the Deputy President to revert to the office of the President.

In 2018, the Executive Order on the organisation of Government had created a form of "shared Presidency" between the President, the Deputy President and Cabinet. However, President Kenyatta re-arranged the government to tactically exclude the Deputy President, with whom he shared the government on a 50-50 basis.

The two who formed the Jubilee Coalition from an arrangement comprising The National Alliance, led by Kenyatta and the United Republican Party (URP) led by Ruto, to form the Jubilee Party, had initially agreed to share power. President Kenyatta would run for two five-year terms and politically support Ruto for another 10 years.

However, President Kenyatta, whose term ends in 2022, appears intent on a new political arrangement which creates the office of an Executive Prime Minister appointed from the leader of the party with majority seats in Parliament. The new political process is currently being championed under the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI), which is the result of President Kenyatta and opposition leader Raila Odinga's "hand-shake," which ended the protracted political crisis after the 2017 elections debacle.

In this week's newspaper headlines: "Switched roles, Raila has made Ruto as stranger in his government," the Standard newspaper, wrote the opposition leader was now more powerful in the government than Ruto, the Deputy President.

News coverage of Ruto intensified lately after the Deputy President admitted candidly in an interview that the Jubilee Party was split and that it had been hijacked. Ruto said the notion was created of the existence of parallel state agencies known as the "deep state" and "System," which decided who would occupy the Presidential seat.

Ruto insisted during an interview with veteran broadcaster Joe Ageyo, of Citizen TV, there was no such thing as the deep state defining the outcome of the elections and insisted the Jubilee had won the 2013 and 2017 elections. He, however, the Deputy President was challenged on the outcome of the 2007 elections, where he was the chief agent of Presidential candidate Raila Odinga.

He said for as long as there was no court declaration of any election irregularities, the elections were credible. Headlines such as: 'Ruto in office but powerless and Raila is powerful and no local title' have dominated the local headlines. In March, columnist Kwendo Opanga, wrote the significance of the March 2018 handshake, lay on the future, not on the past election.

"The BBI is two-pronged. There is the bureaucratic-cum-technocratic-cum-intellectual arm that is the secretariat. It purports to collect views from Kenyans on the Kenya they want. Then there is the mobiliser of public opinion, rouser of support, and organiser of the sales pitch for designated change. This arm drives the partisan political rallies at which Mr Odinga presides as BBI co-principal," Opanga wrote on the Nation newspaper in March.

Ruto's perceived powerlessness continued to dominate the weekend newspapers, the local television broadcasts and bloggers pages.

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