



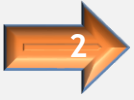
Roger Stone, a notable political theorist and analyst, recently posed a thought-provoking question: "Is our media fraternity lazy or evil?" This inquiry strikes at the heart of an ongoing issue in our media landscape, which seems to be trapped between these two extremes. This concern has been echoed by several prominent figures, including the late President Benjamin William Mkapa and our current President, Samia Suluhu Hassan. Their observations highlight a pressing need for introspection and transformation within our media houses.

### **Historical Context and Recent Criticism**

The late President Mkapa, known for his forthrightness, was among the early voices warning about the detrimental culture prevailing within our media fraternity. His concerns centered around the media's reluctance to engage in deep, critical analysis of national issues, often resulting in superficial reporting that fails to challenge the status quo. This critique has not lost its relevance; it was recently echoed by President Samia Suluhu Hassan during a meeting with media representatives on June 18, 2024. President Samia expressed frustration with what she termed as "intellectual laziness" among media houses, underscoring a growing disconnect between media practices and national development discourse.

### **Learning from Our Neighbors**

To understand the nature of our media's shortcomings, we can look to the media practices of our neighboring countries, such as Kenya and Uganda, which offer valuable lessons. In Kenya, for instance, KTN News TV station broadcasts live discussions every day from 6:00 AM to 9:00 AM.



These programs feature a diverse array of professionals and intellectuals engaging in robust debates on national and global issues. The discussions are characterized by intellectual rigor and open-mindedness, providing valuable insights to both the public and government institutions. This level of discourse highlights the media's role in fostering an informed and engaged society.

Similarly, Uganda's media landscape offers notable examples. NBS TV's "Front Line," a popular live program broadcast every Thursday from 10:00 PM to midnight, is a platform where distinguished professionals and intellectuals discuss pressing issues of national and international importance. The critical questioning and in-depth analysis featured in these programs set a high standard for media engagement.

### **A Call for Change**

In contrast, the media in our country often appears to be mired in trivial reporting, failing to address critical national issues with the depth and seriousness they deserve. This disparity raises important questions about the role of media professionals in shaping our society. As Edmund Burke famously suggested, the media acts as the "Fourth Estate," a vital checkpoint that influences other state organs, sets agendas, and informs and transforms society.

The current state of our media seems to reflect either a deliberate or inadvertent avoidance of substantial issues, which undermines its potential to contribute meaningfully to national discourse. This raises a fundamental question: are our media houses truly serving the public interest, or are they succumbing to inertia and superficiality?



## Moving Forward

The recent remarks by President Samia can be seen as a call to action for our media fraternity. It is imperative for media houses to shift their focus from sensationalism and trivial matters to engaging in discussions that address national interests. By prioritizing topics of significant impact and involving well-regarded professionals in these discussions, the media can play a transformative role in our society.

In conclusion, President Samia's critique signals a potential turning point for our media industry. It is an opportunity for media houses to emerge from their cocoon of fear and embrace their role as catalysts for national development. By aligning their practices with the 4Rs of President Samia's vision—relevance, rigor, responsibility, and reform—the media fraternity can contribute more effectively to the progress and betterment of our nation. It is time for a paradigm shift in media practices to ensure that the media fulfills its crucial role in shaping a more informed and engaged society.

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