

Mining Zambia's Carbon Forests

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What's at Stake as Bill 7 Comes Before Parliament

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Bill 7: The Reform That Benefits Political Elites More Than Ordinary Citizens

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What’s at Stake as Bill 7 Comes Before Parliament

By Gibson Zulu

Zambia’s contentious constitutional reform initiative, Bill Seven, is expected to be tabled in Parliament this morning, setting the stage for debate and a possible vote.

When it resurfaced in Parliament on presidential instruction, it reignited a national debate over constitutional reform, this time focused as much on how the proposed amendments were developed as on what they contain. Some churches, civil society groups, legal experts and ordinary citizens have questioned whether the consultation process met the threshold of transparency and inclusivity promised by government.

Officials maintain that the Bill seeks only technical adjustments, including increasing the number of constituencies, expanding proportional representation, harmonising terms of office for elected officials, and clarifying electoral procedures. They argue that these changes are necessary to improve representation and administrative efficiency.

However, concerns have emerged around the conduct of public submissions, particularly allegations of monetary inducements, inconsistencies in how consultations were organised across districts, and growing scepticism toward the work of the technical committee.

These concerns are unfolding against a politically sensitive backdrop, with the ruling United Party for National Development (UPND) falling short of the two-thirds parliamentary majority required to amend the Constitution.

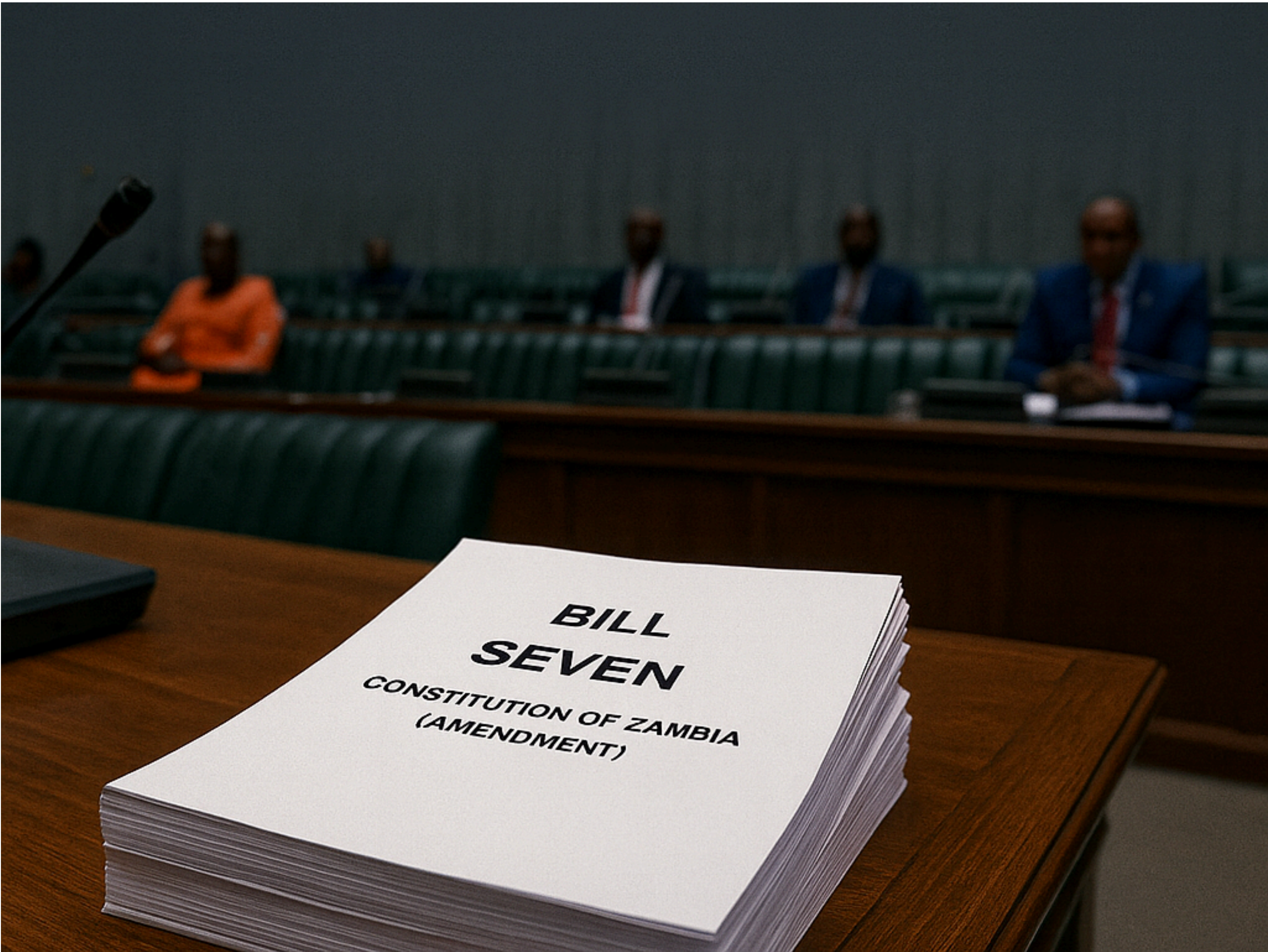
In this context, questions have arisen over whether the reform process initiated by the UPND-led government was entirely citizen-driven, or whether elements of it may have been managed in ways that created the appearance of broad public support. Events in Chipata, Eastern Province, have become central to this scrutiny.

“I witnessed people being given K100 for the submissions they made during the constitutional amendment process in Chipata. I received the money too,” a source who attended the hearings told MukanDay. The account was independently corroborated through multiple, independent interviews with participants who described similar experiences.

Taken together, these accounts have fuelled criticism that the process may have been rushed, unevenly communicated, and vulnerable to influence, raising fresh questions about whether the consultations fully captured the views of ordinary Zambians.

Civil society leaders say the technical committee did not operate with sufficient openness or meaningful public engagement. One observer who attended the public sittings in Chipata was blunt in her assessment.

“The technical committee was window dressing. In our view, the process was designed to ensure Bill 7 passes,” said Laura Miti, Executive Director of Alliance for Community Action.



Chapter One Foundation Executive Director Josia Kalala echoed the concern, warning that procedural flaws undermine legitimacy.

“When the constitution amendment process is defective, the substance that emerges cannot command public confidence,” he said.

Under Article 79 of the Zambian Constitution, any attempt to amend the Constitution requires, a two-thirds majority vote of the total number of members of parliament.

The national assembly has 167 members, 156 elected MPs, eight presidential nominees and three ex-officio members (Vice President and two Speakers — not allowed to vote). This leaves 164 voting MPs.

How the numbers stand:

- UPND: 89 elected MPs
- Nominated MPs: 8
- Independents: 11
- PF: 54
- NCP: 1
- PNUP: 1

To pass the Bill, the government needs approximately 111 votes.

“The ruling party has 89 MPs. The Bill cannot pass without support from outside the party,” said Chapter One’s Kalala.

Even if all UPND MPs and all nominated MPs vote for the Bill, the government reaches only 97 votes, still 13 to 14 votes short of the required threshold.

This political reality has raised suspicions about whether inducements or patronage are being used to secure additional votes or to create the appearance of popular support.

There are also concerns about the danger of rushing constitutional changes.

“Constitutional reforms must be grounded in a credible, transparent and participatory process,” Kalala told MukanDay.

He urged MPs to reflect carefully on the lack of clarity surrounding the Bill, inconsistencies in the submission process, and the risk that the proposed reforms could weaken, rather than strengthen, constitutional governance.

Despite mounting criticism and the arithmetic challenge in Parliament, the Minister of Information and Media, who is also the chief government spokesperson, has maintained that Bill Seven is well-intentioned and is supported by majority MPs.

For citizens, the question remains, will constitutional reform strengthen Zambia’s democracy, or will it deepen mistrust in the institutions meant to protect it?

The image accompanying this story is AI-generated and is used strictly for illustration. It does not depict any actual scenes from the National Assembly.

Mining Zambia's Carbon Forests

A newly approved mine by a Chinese-owned company has moved machinery into a forest area linked to a major REDD+ carbon project — raising alarm over land rights, livelihoods, wildlife, and Zambia's climate commitments.

By Womba Kasela

A quiet invasion at dawn

At sunrise, the hills of the Muchinga Escarpment echo with the groaning of heavy machinery — drowning out the birdsong and elephant calls that once defined the Chiawa Game Management Area (GMA). Behind a newly erected wire fence, trees lie uprooted, heaps of earth rise like new hills, and a processing plant takes shape where wildlife once roamed freely.

This is the emerging footprint of Deco Luck Investments Limited, a little-known mining company that has quietly set up operations in one of Zambia's most ecologically sensitive landscapes. Its presence has triggered outrage among residents, conservationists, and tourism operators, who fear the mine could permanently scar the ecosystem and undermine local incomes.

A project shrouded in secrecy

The mine is located in Kafue district, and is expected to begin full operations before the end of the year. It follows the controversial footsteps of Mwembeshi Resources, whose plan to mine inside the Lower Zambezi National Park was halted after massive public outcry. But where Mwembeshi failed, Deco Luck appears to have slipped through the cracks of oversight and community scrutiny.

Documents reviewed by MakanDay reveal that the exploration licence was originally issued to Sino Mine Resource Geological Engineering Company Limited.

The licence was later transferred in 2022 to Deco Luck Investments, a company whose PACRA records show directors Cao Chujun and Sun Lei, with Sun Deli listed as shareholder, all Chinese nationals.

However, a critical timeline discrepancy raises questions about legality and procedure. A press query was sent to the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Mines and Mineral Development, Dr Hapenga Kabeta, but several follow-up attempts went unanswered. When he eventually responded a week later, he indicated that the ministry's principal public relations officer, Shamwinda Tembo, would handle the query. To date, no response has been provided.

Deco Luck was incorporated on 13 September 2022.

Yet a mining licence transfer agreement between Sino Mine and Deco Luck—obtained from the ZEMA website, shows the transfer was approved months earlier, on 08 June 2022, valued at K2 million.

This means the licence was transferred to a company that did not yet legally exist, a red flag under the Mines and Minerals Development Act.

ZEMA approval and a royal signature — but no community voice

In September 2024, ZEMA approved Deco Luck's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), on condition that the company obtain consent from the local royal establishment before commencing operations.

By late 2024, the Chiyaba Royal Establishment issued a letter confirming its approval.

“With the authority bestowed upon me as head of the chiefdom, I hereby certify and confirm that Deco Luck Investments Limited has been granted the rights for the exploration of minerals in Chiyaba Chiefdom,” read the signed document,” reads the letter.

But behind this official green light lies a story of silence, confusion, and deep community division.

A source within the royal establishment contradicted the public position, saying the decision was made without community consultation.

“The community was never consulted,” said a source from the royal establishment. “The same land allocated for mining had earlier been designated for community forest management under the REDD+ carbon reduction project by BioCarbon Partners (BCP) in 2022.”

REDD+, which stands for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, plus conservation, sustainable forest management and enhancement of forest carbon stocks, is a UN-backed framework that allows forests to be protected and managed to reduce carbon emissions, often generating carbon credits while restricting destructive land uses such as mining.



The REDD+ contradiction: forest protection vs mining expansion

The contested land overlaps with areas designated under the Luangwa Community Forests Project, one of Africa's largest REDD+ programmes, covering 2.1 million hectares, with Chiawa contributing over 68,200 hectares.



REDD+ zones are meant to protect forests from degradation and extractive threats such as commercial mining.

These initiatives form part of Zambia's climate commitments under the UNFCCC, meaning the country has pledged internationally to protect forests and reduce emissions as part of its response to climate change.

UNFCCC stands for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

It is an international treaty adopted in 1992 that provides the global framework through which countries commit to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, protect ecosystems, and adapt to climate change.

Because Zambia's forest protection and emission-reduction commitments fall under the UNFCCC, decisions that permit mining or deforestation in designated areas raise questions about compliance with both national law and international climate obligations.

BCP Project Coordinator, Solomon Kazadi, declined to comment on land allocations, directing questions to the Community Forest Management Group and the royal establishment.

However, he emphasised: “REDD+ zones are legally protected through Community Forest Management Partnership Agreements and Form four submissions, which record community consent, forest boundaries, and prohibited activities such as commercial mining. These safeguards enable communities to challenge any incompatible land use that threatens their forests or carbon rights.”

This suggests that if mining overlaps with REDD+ zones, there may be grounds for a legal challenge.

Tourism or tailings? A region torn between two futures

Chiawa lies at the heart of the Lower Zambezi ecosystem — home to elephants, lions, leopards, and hundreds of bird species. Tourism brings in steady revenue and supports community projects.

But mining brings short-term jobs and long-term scars.

A conservation source warned.

“Mining may create short-term jobs, but tourism has no lifespan. Once the minerals are gone, the company will leave, and the damage cannot be undone.”

Mining Zambia’s Carbon Forests Cont....

Experts also warn that noise and blasting could drive wildlife into villages, worsening already tense human–wildlife conflict.

Promises broken: local people feel betrayed

In Kanyangala village, farmer Musifu Kakumbo recalls joining mine setup work in search of better income. Instead, he earned K50 per day, received no meals, and was frequently replaced.

“They keep removing people,” he said. “You work for a few weeks, and then they replace you. I have eight children, K50 a day was not enough and I have since gone back to farming.”

Other residents echo similar frustrations, outsiders are being prioritised for work, despite promises that locals would be first in line.

Chitende Ward Councillor Paul Kajiye confirmed receiving several complaints.

“They were told the mine would bring jobs, but that hasn’t happened,” Kajiye said. “People are angry and feel used.”

A senior headman, however, defended the approval, saying the community felt neglected by wildlife authorities and hoped the mine would bring long-overdue benefits.

“When animals attack us, ZAWA (wildlife authority) says there’s no fuel. We thought the mine would help us, they even promised to buy vehicles for our headmen. We’re still waiting.”

When asked whether the land allocated to the mine was part of the BCP project, he denied stating that the land for the REDD+ project remains intact and is not the land where the mine is set to begin operations.

Company defends itself; environmental risks remain

Deco Luck’s Human Resource Manager, Kennedy Mubanga, dismissed allegations of exploitation or any wrongdoing.

“Those claims are false,” he said. “We have employed locals and are fully compliant with government regulations. The people spreading lies are former subcontractors who no longer work with us.”

Environmental activist Richard Kakuwa argues otherwise, warning that mining “robs animals of their very existence” and that pollutants can linger for decades, contaminating water systems and affecting human health.

He further notes, “despite EIAs, the damage continues because many companies do not follow the guidelines along the way”.

The unanswered question: who protects Chiawa’s forests?

As bulldozers keep carving into the escarpment, Chiawa sits at a crossroads, between economic desperation and ecological collapse.

“We believe we will benefit from the mines and not tourism,” said the senior headman.

Womba is a fellow under the Wildlife Crime Prevention (WCP) environmental fellowship for journalists.

The MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism, in partnership with WCP, supported the reporting of this story.

Licenced to Pollute: Inside Zambia’s Copperbelt Pollution Crisis

Across Chingola, Kalulushi and Mufulira, communities are living with toxic air, contaminated water, and recurring mine spills, while regulators delay enforcement and mining companies operate with near impunity.

By Justina Matandiko

On 18 January 2025, after days of heavy rain, part of the tailings dam at Mimbula Mine on the outskirts of Chingola collapsed, releasing acidic effluent into streams that feed the Kafue river. Farmland was destroyed, water sources for three townships were contaminated, and hundreds of families were left without a livelihood. Seven months later, no penalties have been imposed.

For communities across Zambia’s Copperbelt, the spill was not an isolated disaster, but a familiar warning of how environmental harm persists long after regulators promise action.

Copperbelt communities depend on the land and water around the mines, which means the unchecked pollution and environmental damage has immediate and lasting consequences. Crops fail, drinking water becomes unsafe, and respiratory illnesses spike during periods of heavy emissions. Across the region, communities in Chingola, Kalulushi and Mufulira describe living with uncertainty about when the next incident will occur, and whether anyone will be held accountable.

Zambia’s environmental regulator, the Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA), is responsible for approving environmental impact assessments, monitoring mining operations, and enforcing laws meant to prevent pollution and environmental damage.

However, enforcement has often been slow and inconsistent. Official records show that ZEMA is understaffed and underfunded, constraints that limit routine inspections, timely follow-ups, and effective oversight.

In interviews with MakanDay, former and current ZEMA officials acknowledge that enforcement is, at best, not proactive and at worst, selective to ensure that mining continues uninterrupted, no matter the environmental or health costs.

Members of Parliament representing mining-affected constituencies have questioned regulators and ministers about ongoing emissions and delayed interventions, highlighting inconsistencies in how environmental orders are enforced. But communities do not believe this has improved oversight or stopped mining companies from flouting environmental laws.

The three companies in the spotlight for environmental harm are Mimbula Minerals in Chingola, Avocado Mining in Kalulushi, and Mopani Copper Mines in Mufulira.



Licenced to Pollute: Inside Zambia’s Copperbelt Pollution Crisis Cont....

In November 2024, ZEMA issued a cease-and-desist order to Avocado Mining following serious pollution and environmental concerns. Avocado continued operating in spite of the order. A year later on 14 November 2025, ZEMA shut the mine down, arrested two directors and confiscated 55 copper blisters following a sulphur dioxide emission in September that covered Kalulushi. Residents described it to MakanDay as the worst toxic emission todate.

ZEMA gave the mine 30 days to explain why their mining licence should not be cancelled.

Kalulushi MP Kampamba Mulenga had repeatedly warned parliament about continued emissions, questioning why enforcement targeted other companies while Avocado, a Chinese-owned mine, operated unchecked.

Despite attempts by MakanDay, Avocado Mining has not responded to requests for comment. On 25 November, a letter was sent to the company through a representative who identified himself only as ‘Champo,’ requesting a response to residents’ concerns. No reply has been received.

The human cost of slow or inadequate government action is described by one resident with a chronic respiratory condition who lives near the Avocado mine.

“My chest tightened. I thought it was my last day,” she told MakanDay.

The cost of inadequately monitored mining extends far beyond health.

When the Mimbula Mine tailings dam burst and spilled acidic effluent into the Mushishima and Chananyama streams, and eventually into the Kafue river in January 2025, more than 156 hectares (about 290 football fields) of farmland were destroyed.

“We woke up and everything was gone,” recalled Fridah Kapelembe, a sugarcane and vegetable farmer. “They made me sign for K2,000 as compensation... but my farm yields much more than that. We were told to wait. For how long?”

Under the Environmental Management Act (2011) and the Mines and Minerals Development Act (2015), mining companies must prevent contamination and maintain tailings dams. Environmental advocates say Mimbula failed to meet these obligations, and ZEMA’s slow intervention left communities exposed for months.

Environmental watchdogs, including Sustainable Natural Resources Empowerment Initiative (SUNRIE) national coordinator Eugene Mulenga, warned that without proper remediation, the return of the rains could wash pollutants downstream once again.

Despite ZEMA stating it would penalise the company, no action followed for seven months. Only in August did Mimbula unveil an environmental response plan and hire Drizit Environmental to carry out environmental assessments. For affected families, the delay meant hunger, financial loss and lasting ecological damage.

The mine, which is 85% owned by UK-based Moxico Resources PLC, has not responded to questions from MakanDay, including a request for details of the ‘comprehensive environmental and community response plan’ announced in August 2025 and the scope of work assigned to Drizit Environmental company. Corporate Affairs Officer Ian Chomba acknowledged receiving the letter but did not provide a response.

Mufulira’s Kankoyo - Living and dying with senta

In Kankoyo, Mufulira, a town on Zambia’s border with the Democratic Republic of Congo in the north, pollution is not an incident, it is a way of life. Corroded roofs greet visitors long before they meet residents who breathe sulphur dioxide, locally known as senta, which eats away at both homes and lungs.

Section 67 of the Public Health Act prohibits air pollution and harmful gases, described under the nuisance provisions emissions, yet residents say senta continues to engulf the township, often at night.

Under Section 68, local authorities are empowered to issue notices requiring a person or entity to abate a nuisance. Mufulira Municipal Council acknowledged receiving questions on why it has not acted, but did not respond.

On 20 September 2025, resident Abigail Kabulafilmed the township engulfed in a thick white sulphur fog. The video went viral.

Another resident, Abigail Bweupe, left Kankoyo after a severe exposure incident.

“I inhaled the fumes and woke up in Ronald Ross Hospital,” she said. I will never go back... I want to live.”

Annie Chileshe, 68, believes pollution has contributed to countless deaths. She recalls a visiting relative who died after exposure and cites the well-known case of the late Mufulira District Commissioner Beatrice Miti, whose family won a Supreme Court case against Mopani in 2022 for negligence.

Former miner Andrew Mpundu, who worked under both ZCCM and Mopani, said emissions have remained constant.

“They say it’s within ‘acceptable standards’, but we choke and die. Government cares more about investors than us,” he said.

At Clinic five in Kankoyo, a health worker, speaking anonymously, said they receive three to five cases daily, mostly children. Severe cases are referred to Ronald Ross Hospital.

Vegetable seller Charity Mwelwa, 48, sources her produce from outside Kankoyo.

“Nothing grows here, not even the famous lunsonga,” she said. “All my children have been affected by senta. Just last month, I rushed my baby to the clinic, the records are there.”

A senior Mopani employee dismissed the residents’ videos as AI-generated, claiming the plant had shut down on 16 September.

But Kankoyo MP Heartson Mabeta told parliament this was untrue and urged Mines Minister Paul Kabuswe to intervene.

Still, regulatory action remains sporadic — and often symbolic.

Mopani Copper Mines’ Public Relations Manager, Nerbert Mulenga, did not respond to a request for comment. Since 2024, a majority stake in Mopani has been held by International Resources Holding (IRH) through its subsidiary, Delta Mining Ltd, which owns 51%, while ZCCM-IH retains the remaining 49%.

Why enforcement fails?

Under the Environmental Management Act (2023), penalties for serious offences can reach 700,000 penalty units (around K21 million) or imprisonment of up to seven years or both. But for multi-million-dollar mining companies, these fines are negligible.

In practice, companies pay small fines and resume business as usual.

Speaking to journalists after a stakeholders’ meeting at Garden Court Hotel in Kitwe in March, following the Sino Metals pollution incident, lawyer Mehluli Malisa Batakathi of the Conservation Advocates Zambia consortium questioned why the government continues to treat environmental crimes “with kid gloves”.

“The law already provides for punitive measures,” he said. “Companies should not operate above the law.”

ZEMA’s own annual reports show persistent capacity gaps. At the end of 2019, the agency had 101 staff against a target of 135. By 31 December 2024, staffing stood at 142, far below the approved establishment of 246.

The 2024 report also confirms that monitoring and licensing activities were scaled back due to budget constraints. ZEMA received ZMW 110.3 million against an approved annual budget of K 185.9 million, with only K 76.2 million coming as a treasury grant.

These shortfalls help explain why ZEMA often intervenes only after public outcry or viral videos force action.

Political and economic influence

During a debrief following the Sino Metals incident, Minister of Green Economy and Environment Collins Nzovu acknowledged that the ministry faces resource constraints. Inspectors cannot monitor all sites, and reports are often delayed or weakened by the influence of powerful mining interests.

That influence is underpinned by the sector’s enormous economic weight. According to the Zambia Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (ZEITI) report, Zambia, Africa’s second-largest copper producer, depends heavily on the sector, which accounted for 72% of export earnings and 44% of government revenues in 2022. Extractive revenues totalled approximately K33 billion in 2023 and about K38 billion in 2024, including taxes, non-tax payments and dividends.

Licenced to Pollute: Inside Zambia’s Copperbelt Pollution Crisis Cont....

With so much at stake, transparency often suffers. Communities rarely see lab results, inspection reports or compliance audits. They rely on what officials tell them, often too little, too late.

No responses were received from the Ministry of Mines and Minerals Development, the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, Chingola, or Kalulushi Councils.

Justina is a fellow under the Wildlife Crime Prevention (WCP) fellowship for journalists. The MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism, in partnership with WCP, provided training in investigative journalism skills and supported journalists in working on impactful stories that promote environmental protection and drive change.

This Week in the Bulletin & Record

The man who sparred with Ali

As Zambians celebrates Catherine Phiri’s world title, Leonard Koloko remembered another boxing champion who won the African and Commonwealth titles and sparred with the great Muhammad Ali

Two female boxers have recently heightened the nation’s name by grabbing world titles, feats quite elusive to male boxers in the past. Although the exploits of Esther Phiri and, more recently, Catherine Phiri (see our lead story Fighting for her country on the previous pages) are worth their salt, Zambia’s world title chases were unarguably pioneered by one man: Lottie Mwale.

It was on a fateful November 28, 1980 when the legendary boxing icon climbed into the ring to make a challenge for the World Boxing Council (WBC) Light Heavyweight title against Philadelphia homeboy Matthew Saad Muhammad. Before a worldwide television audience, Saad Muhammad unleashed a ferocious upper cut into the face of Lottie, sending the title dream crashing to the canvas in round four.

Lottie, whose dream had started as a youth in Kitwe’s Wusakile Mine Township, was actually born in Kamitondo Township on April 14, 1953. His parents hailed from Jumbe Village (now Mambwe District) in Chipata. His father Simon Mwale, nicknamed “Gunduzani” - the shaker - had earned himself some reputation because of his strength and street fighting prowess, and is said to have never lost a single fight. The dreaded Mwale Senior was a cook with the mines.

Right from boyhood Lottie excelled with his hands, goalkeeping in football and drumming in music. However it was boxing which stole his heart through the Rhokana Amateur Boxing Club at Scrivener Stadium.

He debuted for Zambia in the early 1970s as a lightweight, beating Ethiopian Fakedi Selaisse on points. Next came the East and Central African (ECA) Championships held in Kenya where he won a Bronze medal. During the 1972 Munich Olympic Games he was unfortunately disqualified alongside several other Zambian pugilists for failing to make the correct weights. He was then a light welterweight.

In 1973 Lottie, then a trainee soldier also fighting for Zambia Army ABC, reaped his first ever gold medal during the ECA Championships held in Lusaka.

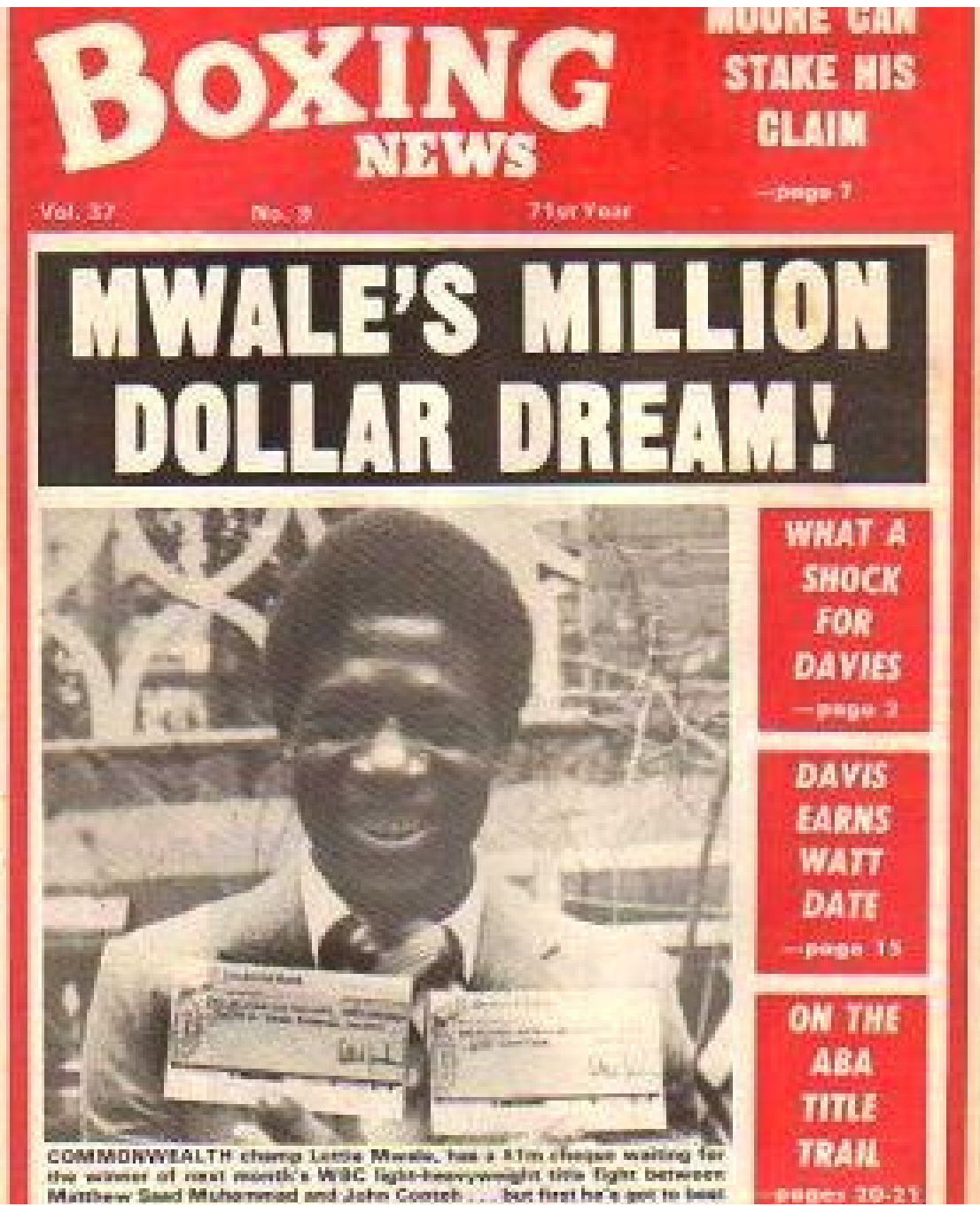
It happened that one Tanzanian fighter, Titus Simba, had no opponents in the Light Heavyweight category. Lottie, as a light middleweight, volunteered to take him on but he had to undergo a 24-hour weight gaining programme. He went on to floor the Tanzanian at Jubilee Hall.

Next stop: the 1974 Commonwealth Games, Christchurch, New Zealand. Here he first stopped Cook Island’s Nio Mare and then demolished Kenyan David Makumba in the first round. In the semi-finals he beat a tough Englishman, Robert Davies, on points before felling Scottish contestant Alexander “Sy” Harrison to reap Zambia’s only gold medal at the games. He won another gold medal by knocking out a Camerounian at the 1975 All-Africa Military Games.

Sadly, Lottie’s Olympic Gold medal dream was again shattered by the solidarity boycott of African nations from the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games in protest against New Zealand’s participation after they were sanctioned for maintaining sporting ties with apartheid South Africa. However, a gold medal win over Keith Brown at the World Military Games rightly compensated the Olympic miss out.

Lottie quit the army in 1977 and turned professional under the stables of a Nigerian aeronautic instructor, Gibson Nwosu. That same year he challenged his elusive amateur adversary Julius Luipa for the Zambian Light Heavyweight title but before the two could lock horns tragedy struck when, in succession, Lottie’s brother Uram and his father passed on. Despite his misfortunes, the fight proceeded and on August 27, 1977 Lottie beat Luipa in a sixth round technical knock out. Lottie was later assigned to George Francis’s Wellington Stables in London for further shaping up.

In 1978 he recorded six knockouts from seven fights, the greatest win being against Marvin Johnson whom he beat on points in an eight round thriller in Belgrade. The live televised fight was an under-card to the world title contest between Lottie’s stable mate John Conteh and Mate Parlov. Parlov won but afterwards lost the title to Johnson.



Though strongly itching for the African title held by Malian Bagayuko Sounkalo, Lottie was instead given a shot at the British Commonwealth title held by Gary Summerhays. On March 31, 1979 he grabbed the Commonwealth belt after comprehensively beating “the Canadian gentleman” on a technical knockout at Independence Stadium.

The African Light Heavyweight title bout was finally billed for September 30, 1979 in Lusaka.

“If I lose to Lottie the sun will never rise in Bamako,” bragged Sounkalo before the fight. It nevertheless did even though he was blacked out through a fifth round knock out. With the two major titles to his name, Lottie was subsequently crowned Zambia’s 1979 Sportsman of the Year.

Lottie’s popularity grew globally, attracting a number of nicknames which included “Golden Boy”, “Hope of Africa”, “Gunduzani” and “Kaingo” – the leopard. His blows were nicknamed N.P.P.P (Nuclear Power Packed Punches). He even sparred with Muhammad Ali in a London exhibition bout impressing “The Greatest” with his artistry and bravery. During the 1980 world title fight, San Diego fans were captivated with the same qualities as Lottie ran rings around the champion, jabbing and scoring well in the opening rounds.

The man who sparred with Ali Cont...

“I was winning that fight but I made a mistake,” recalled Lottie during a special television interview with Frank Mutubila. The mistake was to try and “fight” Ali instead of boxing him as he had done in the first two rounds, he said. “You know I dropped my guard and he got me. He beat me clean,” Lottie said when reviewing the fight.

Lottie was scheduled to make a second shot at the world title but a last minute eye injury derailed the proposed fight against Dwight Braxton who had defeated Saad Muhammad. Frustrated by the turn of events, he left England for Lusaka.

Efforts to get Lottie back to London were fruitless and in the process his former handlers shifted their attention on grooming his compatriot Chisanda Mutti. On July 5, 1982 Lottie staked his two titles against Mutti, winning in the thirteenth round on a stop fight technical knockout decision at Independence Stadium.

In 1990, Lottie defeated Ghana's Ray Acquaye to win the vacant WBC International light-heavyweight title which he lost two years later to Virgil Hill of the US. Interestingly, despite not having laid his hands on the WBC title proper he was still honoured by the organisation and placed on a life long pension, which they started disbursing to him in 2001.

But by then a fate typical of great pugilists had caught up with Lottie: declared bankrupt he was, like Ali, diagnosed with Parkinson disease. The legendary Zambian boxing icon passed on in Lusaka on October 18, 2005.

The story, written by Leonard Kaloko, then a Kitwe-based freelance journalist, creative writer, and visual/graphic artist, was published in the December–January edition of The Bulletin and Record magazine.

Professional Ring Record

Fought:	53
Won:	44
Knock Outs:	34
Lost:	9 (7 by KO)
Drawn:	0



From page 1

Comment

Bill 7: The Reform That Benefits Political Elites More Than Ordinary Citizens

At exactly 11:30 hours on Thursday, 18 December 2025, at the Mulungushi International Conference Centre, President Hakainde Hichilema assented to Bill Number Seven, one of the most contentious constitutional amendment bills Zambia has seen in recent years.

Just three days earlier, on Monday, 15 December, the national assembly approved the amendment, to among other changes, expand the number of lawmakers from 156 to approximately 266. The changes also introduce proportional representation seats for youth, women, and persons with disabilities, and passed with more than 130 national assembly votes.

Supporters argue that the reform strengthens democracy by broadening representation. Critics, however, warn that it alters the balance of power by increasing presidential influence, eliminating by-elections, and weakening local accountability.

At face value, Bill Seven speaks to a real and longstanding problem. Zambia’s national assembly has never adequately reflected the country’s demographic realities. Women, young people, and persons with disabilities remain underrepresented in decision-making spaces that shape national priorities. Proportional representation appears to offer a corrective, a faster route to inclusion than waiting for political parties to reform candidate selection on their own.

But constitutions are not merely symbolic documents. They are systems of power, accountability, and incentives. And it is within this deeper structure that Bill Seven raises difficult questions.

By expanding parliament by more than 100 seats, many of them filled through party lists rather than direct constituency elections, the amendment fundamentally reshapes political accountability. Lawmakers who owe their positions to party leadership are more likely to be loyal upward than accountable downward to voters. This weakens the already fragile link between citizens and those who represent them.



The removal of parliamentary by-elections compounds this problem. While by-elections are often criticised for their cost, they serve an important democratic function - allowing citizens to withdraw their mandate when representatives cross the floor, abandon their constituents, or fail in their duties. Eliminating this mechanism may save money, but it also removes one of the few mid-term accountability tools available to voters

There is also the question of cost that remains largely unanswered. A larger parliament means higher spending on salaries, allowances, offices, and administrative support, at a time when Zambia continues to face fiscal pressure, strained public services, and competing development priorities. Without a transparent and credible justification, the expansion risks reinforcing public suspicion that political reforms benefit political elites more than ordinary citizens.

Perhaps most troubling is how the amendment was passed. Constitutional change requires broad public trust, extensive consultation, and consensus across political and social divides. Bill Seven instead unfolded in a climate of sharp contestation, with many Zambians feeling that the Constitution was amended for them, but not with them.

As we reported, in Eastern Province for example, there were instances where citizens were allegedly paid to support amendments that aligned with the executive’s position. These reports raise serious questions about the credibility of the consultation process.

What remains unanswered is why there was such intense focus on increasing the number of MPs, rather than on strengthening Zambia’s institutions to effectively check the excesses of power.

Inclusion is not a luxury in a democracy, it is a requirement. But inclusion without accountability is a fragile foundation. Bill Number Seven may succeed in expanding representation on paper, yet still weaken democratic practice if it concentrates power, dilutes voter oversight, and distances lawmakers from the people they are meant to serve.

The real test of this amendment will not be how many seats are added to parliament, but whether citizens emerge with stronger influence over governance, or find themselves further removed from it. In a democracy, growth should deepen accountability, not trade it away.

Zambia’s limited progress cannot be explained by the number of Members of Parliament alone. In many cases, it is from weak accountability, self-interest, and leadership that prioritises personal or political gain over the public good. That, rather than the size of parliament, remains one of Zambia’s most pressing governance challenges.