

MAKANDAY

weekly

TRUSTED. BOLD. INDEPENDENT



2ND - 8TH JANUARY 2026



ISSUE. NO 0019

Year in Review:

2025 Editorial Timeline

Story on page 2

This reporting stood out as a powerful closing chapter for the year, illustrating how investigative journalism can shine a light on the claims versus reality within major governance processes, especially one reshaping Zambia's supreme law just months before the 2026 elections.



Year in Review: 2025 Editorial Timeline

In 2025, MakanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism pursued one guiding question: who bears responsibility when systems fail ordinary people?

Across the year, Zambia's public conversation was dominated by promises, of development, reform, innovation, and opportunity. Yet behind those promises lay recurring patterns: weak oversight, elite capture of public resources, regulatory silence, and communities left to absorb the cost of decisions made far from them.

MakanDay's journalism set out to follow those patterns wherever they led — from classrooms experimenting with artificial intelligence, to flooded neighbourhoods in Lusaka, to forests stripped bare, roads turned deadly by bribery, mining pits worked by children, and fishing communities watching their livelihoods disappear.

This editorial timeline captures not just a collection of stories, but a year-long investigation into how power is exercised, neglected, or abused, and who pays the price. The reporting consistently moved beyond events to examine systems. How corruption becomes normalised, how environmental destruction follows familiar scripts, how public funds meant to uplift communities are diverted, and how weak governance turns risk into tragedy.

MakanDay's work in 2025 deliberately bridged sectors. Technology was treated not as a neutral innovation, but as a governance challenge. Climate impacts were traced back to planning failures and procurement decisions. Resource extraction stories examined not only minerals and timber, but security, labour, childhood, and survival.

Local investigations into Constituency Development Fund (CDF) misuse were placed alongside national and cross-border analyses of political capture in the mining sector, reinforcing the idea that corruption does not exist in isolation, it is systemic and interconnected.

At the centre of every story were people, families navigating floods, children risking death underground, motorists vulnerable to corruption on the roads, communities caught between survival and environmental collapse. By grounding structural failures in lived experience, the journalism made abstract governance debates real, urgent, and human.

What follows is a chronological account of MakanDay's key editorial work in 2025 — the questions asked, the failures exposed, and the moments where accountability journalism challenged silence. Together, these stories reflect MakanDay's mission: to expose wrongdoing, strengthen public accountability, and ensure that the cost of misrule is neither hidden nor ignored.

Blood on the Copper: Child Miners Risk Death in Zambia's Copper Pits

One of the year's most harrowing investigations: Blood on the Copper: Child Miners Risk Death in Zambia's Copper Pits. The story exposed hazardous child labour in illegal mining sites, documenting deaths, injuries, and the silence of institutions meant to protect children.



“These children are not workers, they are casualties of neglect.”

The investigation grounded policy failure in lived suffering, forcing readers to confront the real cost of regulatory absence.

“I Could Have Been the First to Die,” Says Chambishi Resident

Early in the year, in March 2025, MakanDay opened the year with a mine pollution story.

In a harrowing account from Chambishi on the Copperbelt, MakanDay documented the devastating aftermath of a tailings dam collapse at Sino Metals Leach Zambia Limited, a Chinese-owned copper mine, that unleashed highly acidic effluent across farmland and homesteads.

63-year-old farmer Jennifer Banduwell recounted the terrifying moment when toxic water surged into her home and maize fields, rising to waist height. She described how she and neighbours desperately tried to hold back the flood with blankets — and how she later realised she “could have been the first to die” from contaminated water she initially didn't know was toxic.

The disaster affected over 200 farmers, destroying crops that sustained families and livelihoods. In its immediate wake, local officials warned against drinking well water or consuming food from contaminated fields, leaving residents struggling with hunger, thirst and unsafe conditions.

Limited relief, a bag of mealie meal, some oil, sachet water and a small cash token, was offered while compensation negotiations dragged on, deepening the community's hardship.

Beyond personal suffering, the investigation highlighted wider environmental and governance failures: the acidic effluent polluted waterways, killed fish and forced water suppliers to cut off service to parts of Kitwe, spotlighting systemic weaknesses in regulatory oversight and disaster prevention.

This investigation marked the first in a series of reports on the Chambishi environmental disaster, opening the door for subsequent stories that examined regulatory failures, delayed remediation, compensation disputes, and the long-term health and livelihood risks facing affected communities.

“They Promised Development, We Got Eviction” — Zambian Farmers Demand Justice from Mining Giant

In one of the year's most compelling examinations of corporate accountability and community rights, MakanDay reported on the ongoing struggle of nearly 300 households displaced by First Quantum Minerals (FQM) in North-Western Province.

Voices like that of 49-year-old Maggie Luyako, a displaced farmer and mother of eight, illustrate the scale of the injustice: “They took my land in 2004 and only paid compensation this year. What can I do with that after 21 years?” she asked.

The investigation delved into pre-litigation action being prepared in the UK, where affected residents are represented by Leigh Day, alleging forced resettlement, poor consultation, and compensation that doesn’t reflect the value of lost land or livelihoods.

Despite FQM’s significant financial contributions, including hundreds of millions in revenues and statutory payments to the Zambian government, the affected communities argue that local justice has been elusive and that promises of development were unfulfilled.

This story not only highlighted stark inequalities in how Zambia’s resource wealth translates, or fails to translate, into tangible benefits for host communities but also underscored the growing role of transnational legal strategies in pursuing corporate accountability.

In June, MakaanDay followed the trail of governance failure into Zambia’s forests. Mukula Is Gone — Now They’re After Mukwa documented how illegal logging networks simply migrated from one tree species to another, exploiting opaque licensing systems, weak enforcement, and compromised traditional authority structures.

The story demonstrated that environmental destruction in Zambia is rarely accidental. It is systemic, predictable, and enabled by institutions that fail to intervene.

That same month, MakaanDay published Sell-Outs | Zambia, part of a cross-border investigation that examined political interference in mining licence allocation. The story linked Zambia’s mineral governance failures to a wider continental pattern of elite capture.

By placing Zambia’s mining crisis within a regional context, the investigation elevated local reporting into a broader analysis of power, influence, and profit across borders.

As the year moved into July and August, MakaanDay’s focus sharpened on how corruption kills, quietly and repeatedly.

Bribery on the Roads: The Hidden Killer in Lusaka’s Transport System exposed how routine police bribery undermines road safety enforcement, allowing dangerous vehicles and reckless drivers to remain on the roads.

What is often dismissed as “petty corruption” was shown to be a deadly system, with human consequences measured in injuries and funerals.

In September, MakaanDay shifted its focus to local governance through the CDF Under Scrutiny – Mufulira Series. The multi-part investigation tracked alleged manipulation of Constituency Development Fund bursaries, political favouritism, inflated fees, and weak council oversight.

The series demonstrated how national corruption narratives play out at ward level, affecting families who depend on public funds for education and opportunity.

Transnational Exposure: Zambia | First Contact

Published on September 8, 2025, this powerful investigation explored the hidden reality behind the recruitment of young Africans, including Zambians, into Russia’s controversial Alabuga Start programme, where young women were offered opportunities that masked harsher conditions and restricted freedoms.

Through months of effort, MakaanDay was finally able to reach a young Zambian woman inside the programme who described limited understanding of the work, significant tax deductions, strict conditions, and restricted contact home, sharply contrasting with polished promotional narratives circulating in Zambia.

MakaanDay’s first story on Russia’s Alabuga programme inspired journalists in seven other countries to pursue their own investigations, resulting in a significant cross-border collaboration.

October brought one of MakaanDay’s flagship investigations of the year. Guns, Gangs and Gold: The Dark Side of Zambia’s Gold Discovery examined the chaos at the Kikonge gold fields in Mufumbwe, violence, criminal gangs, police crackdowns, and a state unprepared for a resource rush.

“Gold promised opportunity, but delivered fear,” said one of the local leaders

The investigation revealed the security and social costs of unmanaged extraction, showing how absence of planning turns mineral wealth into instability.

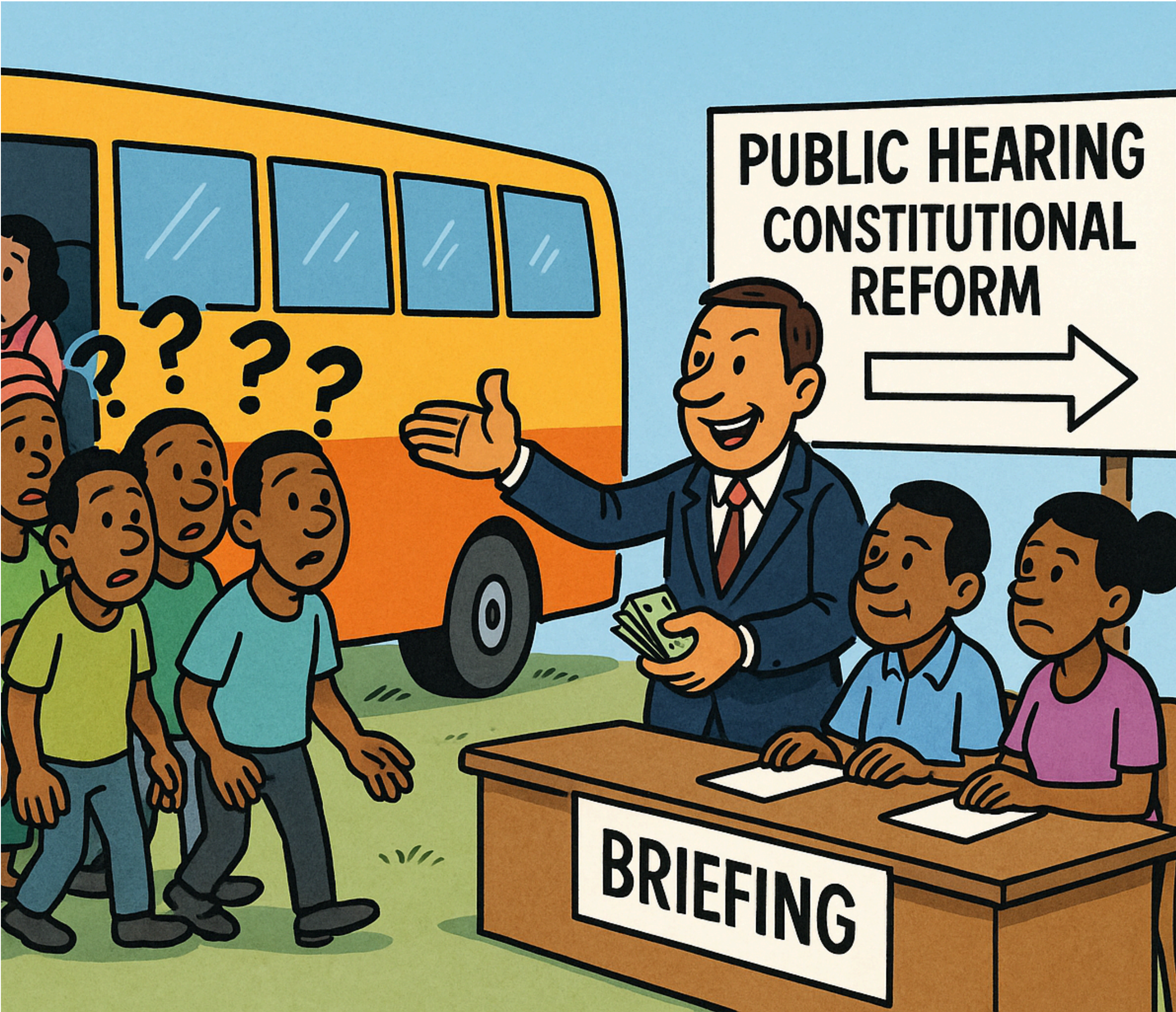
Buses, Briefings and ‘Support’ — What Chipata Reveals About Zambia’s Constitutional Reform

MakaanDay and a team of five Eastern Province journalists closed the year by turning a spotlight on the unfolding constitutional reform process (Bill Seven) by documenting the public hearings in Chipata.

As Zambia’s parliament reconsidered the contentious Bill, a reform that would expand constituency seats, reserve representation for women, youth and persons with disabilities, introduce a hybrid electoral system and increase presidentially appointed MPs, questions began to swirl about the authenticity of public engagement.

In Chipata, investigative reporting revealed scenes that undermined the government’s narrative of genuine citizen participation: buses ferrying mostly youths and women who weren’t fully aware why they’d been called, rehearsed submissions in support of the changes, queues for unexplained allowances and what appeared to be organised mobilisation rather than spontaneous civic input.

Observers and civil society groups cited in the report raised serious concerns that the process was poorly communicated, vulnerable to manipulation, and possibly engineered to produce predetermined outcomes, even as authorities maintained the reform was citizen-led.



This reporting stood out as a powerful closing chapter for the year, illustrating how investigative journalism can shine a light on the claims versus reality within major governance processes, especially one reshaping Zambia’s supreme law just months before the 2026 elections.

Auditor General Flags Deepening Governance and Financial Crisis in Parastatals

By Linda Soko Tembo

Billions of kwachas are tied up in Zambia’s parastatals, in pensions, railways, power projects, and public assets meant to drive national development. Yet the Auditor General (AG)’s latest findings show that much of this public wealth is being eroded by weak governance, chronic losses, and unresolved audit failures, raising urgent questions about who is accountable.

Every year, the AG tells parliament the same story, public institutions are losing money, ignoring the rules, and leaving audit problems unresolved. The difference this time is the scale of the risk, and what it could mean for pensions, public services, and taxpayer confidence.

The latest report covers unresolved audit matters across many state-owned enterprises and statutory institutions, including issues in governance, accounting, budget performance, internal controls, and statutory compliance.

The Report on the Accounts of Parastatal Bodies and Other Statutory Institutions for the financial year ended 31 December 2024, released by Acting AG Dr. Ron Mwambwa, reveals systemic weaknesses in governance, accountability, and financial management across several state-owned enterprises and statutory bodies, many of which remain unaddressed as of 31 October 2025.

One of the most alarming cases is the Public Service Pension Fund (PSPF). Actuarial assessments show funding gaps of K50.42 billion in 2020 and K43.88 billion in 2023, with pension assets covering only nine percent of future obligations. The situation is worsened by delayed government remittances of K96.56 million for December 2024 and K14.9 million in outstanding rental income, threatening the long-term sustainability of public sector pensions.

The AG warned that government’s delayed remittance of K96.56 million in pension contributions for December 2024, coupled with K14.9 million in outstanding rental income, threatens the long-term sustainability of public sector pensions.

The report also paints a bleak picture at Zambia Railways Limited, which recorded operating losses totaling K315.4 million over 2023 and 2024. The company continues to face negative working capital exceeding K1.17 billion, largely due to an ageing fleet and high operating costs. In addition, rolling stock valued at K447.5 million remained uninsured, exposing the company to significant financial risk.

In the regional transport sector, the Tanzania Zambia Railway Authority (TAZARA) incurred maintenance costs of US\$7.04 million and revenue losses of US\$3.3 million following 405 accidents, most of which were attributed to operational and infrastructure deficiencies. The absence of audited financial statements for three consecutive years and failure to collect K71.03 million in rental income further weakened accountability at the Authority.

Incomplete REA projects mean electricity is promised but not delivered.

At the Rural Electrification Authority (REA), weaknesses in contract management exposed public funds amounting to K22.5 million through unrecovered advance payments, missing guarantees and failure to charge liquidated damages. The report further notes that 23 projects valued at K88.46 million remained incomplete beyond agreed timelines, delaying the provision of electricity to rural communities.

The audit also cited Indeni Energy Company Limited, where failure to dispose of decommissioned refinery assets resulted in an impairment charge of K147 million, in addition to K4.84 million spent on care and maintenance. The company also paid US\$521,857 for materials that were not delivered, while its working capital declined to a negative K298.2 million in 2024, raising concerns about its financial viability.

CCPC’s failure to collect fines weakens consumer protection and emboldens offenders.

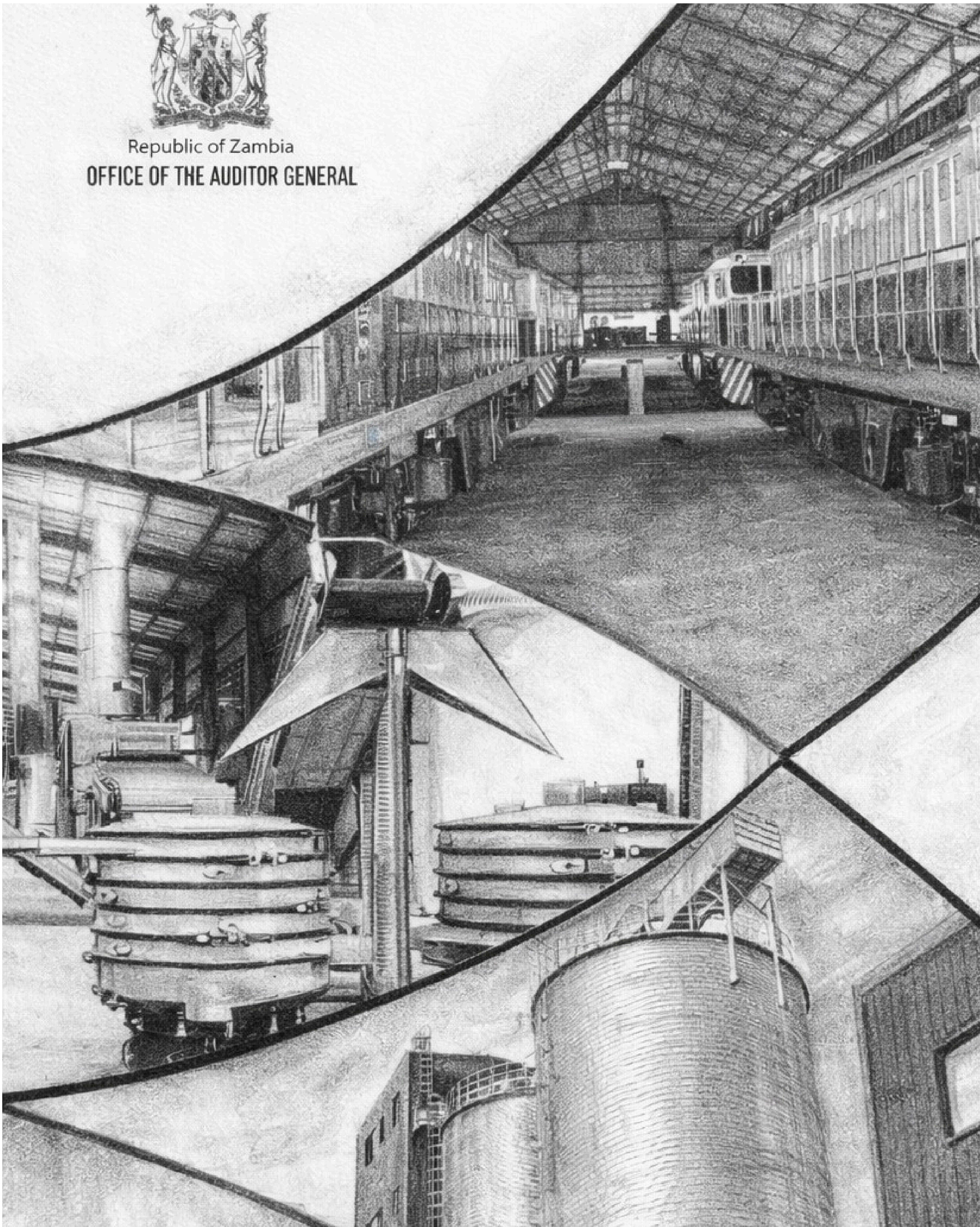
Meanwhile, the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) failed to collect K32.77 million in fines imposed on non-

compliant entities and K9.4 million from settlement agreements, a situation Dr. Mwambwa said weakens regulatory enforcement and consumer protection.

Infratel Corporation Limited was also faulted for incurring penalties of K1.08 million due to operational downtime and failing to recover K3.62 million from insurers owing to non-compliance with insurance conditions.

Overall, Dr. Mwambwa warned that the persistence and scale of the unresolved audit findings point to material fiscal risks, inefficient use of public resources and weakened oversight.

He called for urgent corrective measures, including recovery of outstanding amounts, stronger oversight by boards and controlling officers, improved contract and asset management, and strict compliance with statutory reporting requirements. Failure to act promptly, he cautioned, could erode public trust and undermine accountability in the management of public funds.



Opinion | When “Us First” Becomes Our Undoing

The head of Germany’s Catholic bishops last week warned against the dangers of rising nationalism in his Christmas sermon, arguing that the interconnected nature of the modern world makes isolation not only unrealistic, but destructive.

"Where does this new selfish nationalism, with its slogan of 'us first,' ultimately lead?" Bishop Georg Bätzing asked in the Limburg Cathedral, according to the pre-distributed text of his sermon.

Bätzing framed the Christmas message of God arriving as a defenceless child as a radical alternative to the power games of the mighty, an idea that directly challenges politics built on fear, exclusion, and domination.

"I admit, this idea has always personally fascinated me and convinced me to believe," the 64-year-old chairman of the German Bishops’ Conference said.

"The God to whom Christians profess their faith is so free that he relinquishes all divine power."

For Christians, Christmas marks the birth of Jesus Christ, believed to be God incarnate, who enters the world not as a ruler, conqueror, or strongman, but as a vulnerable child born into poverty. It is a message that turns power on its head.

While German Catholic bishops are warning against nationalism in a country largely united by shared identity, history, and institutions, the Zambian challenge is both different and more fragile.

In Zambia, a nation of more than 70 ethnic groups, the danger is not a single nationalism, but fractured nationalism, a politics increasingly framed around “our tribe first.” We see it repeatedly in election campaigns, public appointments, development priorities, and even everyday conversation.

Tribalism in Zambia is rarely loud. It is subtle, coded, and often disguised as cultural pride or regional loyalty. But beneath the surface, it functions as a powerful political weapon, used to mobilise support, reward allies, exclude others, and silence accountability.

We hear it when development projects are justified or condemned based on where they are located rather than who needs them most. We see it when corruption”

allegations are defended not on evidence, but on the identity of the accused. We feel it when national conversations quietly shift from “Is this right?” to “Is this one of ours?”

Unlike open nationalism, tribalism fractures the nation quietly. It does not declare enemies outside the border. It creates enemies within. And once leaders learn that loyalty can replace integrity, competence becomes optional and accountability collapses.

This is where Bishop Bätzing’s Christmas reflection speaks powerfully to Zambia.

The image of God choosing vulnerability over dominance challenges our fixation on strongmen, ethnic champions, and political “protectors”. It reminds us that leadership grounded in fear and exclusion ultimately hollows out society, no matter how loudly it claims to defend “its people”.

Zambia’s diversity has always been its strength, not its weakness. Our peace has been built on restraint, tolerance, and the refusal to reduce citizenship to tribe.

But these values do not sustain themselves automatically. They must be defended deliberately, especially by leaders, clergy, and citizens who understand that once tribal loyalty becomes the currency of power, the nation itself becomes expendable.



Ending the Year with Accolades

MakanDay closed the year on a high note, celebrating a major international achievement by Ennety Munshya, whose work earned Silver at the United Nations Correspondents Association (UNCA)–Italgas Global Prize for Digital Innovation and Artificial Intelligence.

The award recognises outstanding journalism that critically examines how technology, digital innovation, and artificial intelligence are shaping a more sustainable and equitable future. It honours excellence across print (including online), television, and radio journalism that advances public service and contributes to sustainable development.

Ennety’s winning story explored Zambia’s readiness to integrate artificial intelligence in the education sector, balancing promise with caution. The investigation highlighted potential benefits such as personalised learning and improved school administration, while exposing persistent challenges, including infrastructure gaps, limited teacher preparedness, and weak policy frameworks. Central to the story was a call for coordinated action among government, schools, and the private sector to ensure responsible and inclusive AI adoption.

The honour was conferred during the 2025 United Nations Correspondents Association (UNCA) Awards, held on Friday, 12 December 2025, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, recognising outstanding journalists from across the globe.



This week in the Bulletin and Record

Patrick Mucheleka sticks to his guns, will not be persuaded to join PF

By Charles Mafa

Keep your friends close, but keep your enemies closer. These are not exactly the sentiments of Patrick Mucheleka, MP for Lubansenshi, but he has taken the high road by telling the PF he will not join them because he would consider doing so as a betrayal of the people who voted for him.

Ruling political parties have a reputation of luring independent MPs to their side, and Mr Mucheleka has had his share of discreet enquiries from the PF, but there is no indecision on his part. There were three independent MPs after the 2011 general elections, one resigned to join the Patriotic Front while the other is serving as a deputy minister. Mr Mucheleka would consider such a move as one lacking personal integrity on his part.

“I was elected as an independent MP for a five-year period. I have been given that mandate,” he says. “Why should I suddenly change and resign to cause an unnecessary by-election at the expense of development? This is money that should be used to enhance service delivery in my constituency.”

He refers to the tactic used by ruling parties in saying an opposition MP can never take development to his constituency as “huge lies”. He says this “misconception” is especially common in rural areas. Money used for development belongs to the people of Zambia as “that is taxpayers’ money”, he says. “Even when the funds are borrowed, as is the case now when we have this propensity for borrowing, we’re still borrowing on behalf of the Zambian people,” he says.

The independent MP believes there is a price to pay for participating in the country’s leadership. His reflection on the on-going debate concerning the “low salaries” of MPs is that “Parliament is a service to humanity”. He says that as much as the salaries and allowances are low, the MPs should be ready to sacrifice and that “some of us are paying that price”. I am ready to pay that price. That is why those who have crossed the floor are being motivated by personal gain.”

Mr Mucheleka, born in 1965, has come a long way in politics. In 2001, he was caught up in the third term debate as he joined forces with members of civil society

organisations in opposing Frederick Chiluba’s push for a third presidential term.

That same year, he contested a Parliamentary seat in Lubansenshi. His motivation was to stand under General Godfrey Miyanda’s Heritage Party and its “village concept”.

“This concept was seriously misunderstood and distorted,” he says. In my view the HP did not do enough to explain what the concept was all about. What attracted me was the whole concept of bringing about balanced development. We were talking about transferring the terms of trade from the urban economy and also promoting the economic activities of the rural areas.”

Mr Mucheleka has a Masters in Development Studies with a specialisation in agriculture and rural development; his interest is to see that the country attains equitable wealth distribution. He worked in the civil society movement before making his second effort to re-contest the Lubansenshi Parliamentary seat, which he won in 2011.

Patrick Mucheleka sticks to his guns, will not be persuaded to join PF Cont...

“It’s so important that we identify what can be done by linking the rural areas to the urban economy.” He adds: “That is why the country requires a rural development policy, which I pushed through as a private member’s motion. But to date that policy is not forthcoming.”

In analysing the performance of the PF government, Mr Mucheleka observes that “they have lamentably disappointed”. He pointed out that there is “massive corruption” going on in the current government, making the MMD’s fraud “look like child’s play”. He says PF have failed in democracy and government by turning 360 degrees on the Constitution-making process and that apart from weakening constitutional offices, they have also stifled freedom of expression and assembly -- they have deliberately delayed enacting the Access to Information Act, so that people are kept in the dark.

The Lubansenshi MP is busy man and has to find a balance between family life – he is married with four children -- and the job of being the “voice of the voiceless”. When the B&R requested a meeting with him, he was in his constituency to meet his people. There was only a day between his return from the more than 2,500 kilometres road trip from Lubansenshi and air travel to South Africa for the Pan African Parliament. In fact, he is head of delegation for the country’s five MPs to Africa’s legislative assembly.

Mr Mucheleka is a member of the Bemba Royal family. He was born with leadership in his blood. His late father, Mr Alexander Mucheleka who was part of the liberation struggle, spent his life as a politician and held various positions in UNIP including District Governor for Luwingu in Northern Province. His mother is a retired teacher who lives in Kasama. Both his parents hail from the royal Bemba families. Despite this, he does not take his position as MP for granted. He says he is ready to be led by others if the people decide otherwise.

His evaluation of Zambia’s fifty 50-year journey is that there have been more challenges than successes. He says the country was on a success path from the time of independence to 1973 when all the industries where nationalised. He says economic challenges that took place eventually forced Dr Kenneth Kaunda to revert to a multiparty political system.

“Poverty levels have remained high despite the economic growth. Also, we have a multi-party system but the mentality is still that of a one-party system and most institutions have not transformed, they’re still tilted towards operating under a single party environment,” he observes. “This in my view is where we have wasted part of our 50 years.”

The story was first published in the September 2014 edition of the Bulletin & Record Magazine.

