



The Price of a Vote:

• How Politics & Weak Enforcement Are Fuelling Zambia's Motorbike Crisis

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An investigation into how politics, weak enforcement, and youth unemployment are driving Zambia's expanding and largely illegal motorbike transport sector.



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From front page

By MakaanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism

Funeral after funeral

Road Transport and Safety Agency (RTSA) figures show motorcycle deaths in Zambia have risen sharply, from 112 deaths in 2021 to 484 in 2025 — the equivalent of nearly one person dying every day in motorcycle-related crashes.

On a grey April afternoon in Chingola, mourners gathered around the grave of 24-year-old Maxwell Nkhoma as brass instruments from the Chiwempala Reformed Church choir echoed through the cemetery. Days earlier, Nkhoma had been riding a motorbike along the busy Kitwe–Chingola Road when he collided with a truck near Chambishi.

By the time his body was lowered into the ground on 15 April 2026, another funeral linked to a motorbike crash was already being prepared elsewhere on the Copperbelt.

Across Zambia, scenes like this are becoming increasingly common. Hospitals are filling with crash victims, graveyards are receiving young riders, and police statistics point to a transport sector operating largely outside the law. Yet even as deaths rise, politicians are increasingly embracing motorbike riders as a growing political constituency ahead of the August general elections — through public endorsements, empowerment programmes, and direct engagement with largely unregulated rider groups.

“When you’re talking about accidents, they can even happen to those who are qualified and have licences,” said Minister of Youth, Sport and Arts Elvis Nkandu, whose empowerment programme has distributed motorbikes in parts of northern Zambia despite the sector’s growing association with fatalities and weak regulation. “So accidents can be there, but I think what we need to do is to caution our bikers on the importance of observing traffic rules.”

A three-month investigation by the MakaanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism, working with a nationwide network of young investigative

journalists mentored and trained by MakaanDay across Zambia, found that what is often presented as youth empowerment is also feeding a dangerous and weakly regulated transport system marked by poor enforcement, unlicensed riders, allegations of political interference, and mounting public health costs.

RTSA data obtained by MakaanDay paints the clearest picture yet of the scale of Zambia’s motorcycle crisis. Recorded motorcycle crashes rose from 1,428 in 2021 to 3,849 in 2025, while fatalities increased from 112 to 484 over the same period.

Nkhoma’s death is one of many recent motorbike-related deaths across Zambia. In case after case, the pattern is similar: grieving families, public outrage, and official regret — often without meaningful action.

Widely circulated footage on social media showed the severity of the crash. Police say investigations are ongoing.

“The motorbike reportedly cut in front of the truck, resulting in a collision,” a police report stated.

“There is always the excuse of unemployment, and yes, young people are being empowered (by politicians) with motorbikes, but we need laws that will safeguard the lives of riders and the people using them as public transport,” said Emmanuel Zulu in an interview with MakaanDay during Nkhoma’s burial.

A week later, a journalist working on this investigation attended another burial — this time of 18-year-old Sydney Chishala Kaunda in Mufulira. The burial had initially been postponed as the family struggled to raise money and sought compensation.

“Unfortunately, the victim was riding without a licence and the motorbike was not registered, making it difficult to pursue compensation,” the journalist said.

According to Copperbelt Police Commissioner Mwala Yuyi, 2026 accident statistics



indicate that only one in ten motorbikes is registered, and just one in fifteen riders is licenced.

RTSA says that by the end of 2025, more than 53,000 motorcycles had been registered nationally and an additional 1,367 tricycles, while about 35,000 riders had been licenced — figures authorities say still fall short of the rapidly growing number of operators on the roads.

The rise of an unregulated transport system

RTSA confirmed to MakaanDay that under Zambia’s current legal framework, motorcycles cannot legally operate as public passenger transport, despite the rapid expansion of the sector across the country.

What began largely as an informal survival strategy for unemployed young people — with motorbikes sourced mainly from neighbouring Tanzania and Mozambique — has evolved into a rapidly expanding but weakly regulated transport network operating across towns and rural districts.

Most of the motorbikes dominating Zambia’s informal transport sector are low-cost imports from China and India, with brands such as Bajaj, TVS and Haojue among the most common on the roads. Models such as the Bajaj Boxer BM150 have become popular because they are cheap, fuel efficient, and easy to maintain. But authorities say the rapid expansion of these motorcycles is outpacing enforcement, licencing, and safety controls.

Passengers interviewed during this investigation said they continue using motorbikes despite the

risks because of limited public transport options, poor road networks, affordability, and the ability of motorbikes to move quickly through congested areas.

Politics on two wheels

As elections approach, politicians are increasingly engaging motorbike riders as a key constituency of unemployed youths. In some areas, motorcycles are being distributed through empowerment programmes, while rider groups are becoming visible features at political meetings and campaign events.

“We appreciate the support because many of us were unemployed and struggling to survive,” said one rider in Kaputa who said he recently received a motorbike through a political empowerment programme. “The motorbike has helped me make money and support my family, but the truth is that when politicians give out these bikes, they also expect support in return during campaigns and political activities. The challenge is that many riders are on the road without licences, training, or proper safety equipment. We need empowerment, yes, but we also need rules that protect both riders and passengers.”

In some parts of the country, motorbike riders operating without licences or registration have also become a prominent feature of political mobilisation activities, including escort processions and roadside welcome events during visits by senior political leaders.

This was evident during President Hakainde Hichilema’s recent visit to Chinsali in Muchinga

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Province for Labour Day celebrations, where large numbers of motorbike riders participated in welcome processions.

In Solwezi, the growing visibility of motorbikes has extended beyond campaign activities into formal government engagement.

In a public statement in May, RTSA said its Solwezi team had held what it described as a “fruitful engagement meeting” with the North-Western Motor Bikes Association at the Provincial Administration offices.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Transport and Logistics Frank Tayali and North-Western Province Minister Robert Lihefu, with discussions focusing on road safety and responsible riding practices.

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During the meeting, Tayali signalled that government was considering stronger regulation of the sector rather than relying solely on enforcement measures.

“This regulatory framework is something that is extremely urgent and very important,” he said. “In fact, part of the legal framework that we are trying to develop is that you cannot sale a motorbike without a helmet.”

However, critics argue that such high-level engagements risk legitimising a transport sector that continues to operate largely outside effective regulation, with many riders still lacking licences, registration, and insurance.

Nkandu admitted distributing motorbikes in two districts in northern Zambia, including his constituency, Kaputa, under what he described as an empowerment programme. However, he dismissed suggestions that the initiative was promoting the illegal use of motorbikes as public transport, arguing that the programme provides only 12 motorbikes per constituency.

“Anything that can alleviate the challenge of transporting people is welcome,”

he said in an interview with a Radio Mano journalist working on this project from in Kasama, when asked why he was promoting motorbike use as public transport despite legal restrictions.

He added that his efforts have been limited to Nsama and Kaputa, arguing that he cannot be accused of wrongdoing because motorbikes are already widespread across northern Zambia.

In the same week that Nkhoma died, aspiring Kalulushi parliamentary candidate Rashida Mulenga held a meeting with motorbike riders and shared a video of the engagement on her Facebook page. The post was captioned: “Our engagement and interaction with some of our motorbike riders from Kalulushi District. Ours is leadership that listens and interacts with the people.”

During the meeting, one rider appealed to Mulenga to help empower riders with motorbikes and assist those operating without licences. Her response to those requests was not captured in the video. However, she is seen riding one of the motorbikes without a helmet.

Mulenga avoided repeated attempts by a Chingola-based journalist to obtain her response. She initially agreed to be interviewed but later failed to return calls or respond to messages.

Across Zambia, a rapidly expanding and largely illegal motorbike transport sector is reshaping mobility and livelihoods. But beneath that growth, a more dangerous system is taking hold — driven not only by economic desperation, but also by weak regulation, political visibility, and growing pressure to accommodate the sector despite mounting fatalities.

However, it remains difficult to determine how many motorbikes are being distributed by political actors, as some donations are reportedly made discreetly through informal local arrangements.

Allegations of political interference

As this story was being finalised, a journalist working on the investigation in Luwingu, Northern Province, shared images of an injured woman admitted

to hospital after the motorbike she was travelling on crashed into a stationary truck. The rider, who was reportedly unlicensed, and two passengers sustained serious injuries.

Interviews with riders, police sources, and community members — alongside field reporting across multiple provinces — point to a deeper layer of complexity. MakanDay gathered accounts from sources in Chipata, Chingola, and Solwezi alleging that when police or RTSA impound motorbikes, instructions to release them sometimes come from political actors, mainly ruling party leaders at provincial and district level.

“You impound one bike, and a phone call comes telling you to release it,” said an RTSA officer in Chipata, pointing to what he described as growing political interference in enforcement.

MakanDay put these findings to RTSA, seeking clarification on enforcement, licencing, and allegations of political interference in the impounding and release of motorbikes.

In its response, RTSA acknowledged awareness of such allegations but said enforcement was conducted “strictly within the provisions of the law”.

“RTSA has noted such allegations circulating in certain areas,” said Chilufya Mwelwa, RTSA Head Public Relations. “Where credible complaints or evidence of interference are presented, RTSA is prepared to investigate the matter through appropriate internal and inter-agency mechanisms.”

Mwelwa said the agency had introduced measures aimed at safeguarding the integrity of enforcement operations, including documented impoundment procedures, supervisory approval requirements, joint enforcement operations with security agencies, and internal audit mechanisms.

In Solwezi, riders and traders alleged that some traffic police officers are working with the North-Western Motorbike Association, a group formed by riders to regulate the sector. Sources say the association collects money from operators without proper documentation,

with a portion allegedly shared with some traffic police officers.

Police in the area denied wrongdoing but confirmed receiving intelligence reports that the association was collecting money from riders without issuing official government receipts.

“I wish to categorically state that the police have never received any official complaint from the riders against the association pertaining (to) the issue of the money being collected without government receipts,” said North-Western Province Police Commissioner Brighton Siwale.

Graham Kahang’u, chairperson of the association, denied the allegations but said the group is affiliated with RTSA and works closely with the police to promote road safety.

Receipts allegedly issued by the association show that some offences, such as failure to wear safety attire, can attract fines of up to K120 — equivalent to about US\$6.

A crisis beyond the road

What is emerging is a system where risk is pushed downward — onto young riders, passengers, and families — while political visibility and influence increasingly flow upward.

Young riders take to the roads without licences, insurance, or protection. When accidents happen, the cost is carried by families, communities, and an already strained public health system.

As the August elections draw closer, the motorbike has become more than transport — it is now part of Zambia’s evolving political landscape. But for many families, it is increasingly becoming a vehicle of loss.

On that April afternoon in Chingola, as brass instruments played and mourners lowered Nkhoma’s body



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“Unless that pattern is broken, the funerals will continue,” said one rider at the funeral.

In Part II, MakaanDay investigates the hidden human and economic cost of Zambia's rapidly expanding motorbike transport sector — from overwhelmed hospitals to families pushed into debt and disability.

Additional reporting by: Pride Nyirenda (Luanshya, Copperbelt Province), Beverly Subeti Busanga (Chingola), James Mwape (Ndola, Copperbelt), Helga Chola (Mansa, Luapula Province), Christian Kasonde (Kasama, Northern Province), Doris Chifunda (Mbala, Northern Province), Joseph Mwape (Luwingu, Northern Province), Richard Simbaya (Isoka, Muchinga Province), Joseph Kapandula (Itezhi Tezhi, Southern Province), Kebby Sianjame (Kalomo, Southern Province), Sikuka Situmbeko (Mongu, Western Province), Vincent Phiri (Chipata, Eastern Province), and Sanjimba Kanganja (Solwezi, North-Western Province).

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PART II

The Human Cost: Inside Zambia's Growing Motorbike Injury Epidemic

An investigation into the growing human, medical, and economic burden created by Zambia's rapidly expanding motorbike transport sector.

By MakaanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism

The hospital ward called “Gatoma”

At Chipata General Hospital, one ward has earned a nickname that reflects the growing reality of Zambia's roads: “Gatoma.” Named after a motorbike supplier, the ward is increasingly filled with

victims of motorcycle crashes — young riders, passengers, and schoolchildren whose injuries are overwhelming hospitals across the country.

A MakaanDay investigation found that this shadow transport network, operating largely outside the law, is increasingly stretching Zambia's public health system.

Road Transport and Safety Agency (RTSA) provincial data shows that Eastern, North-Western, and Luapula provinces are among the areas experiencing some of the sharpest increases in motorcycle crashes and deaths, reflecting how deeply the informal transport system has expanded beyond major urban centres.

In Eastern Province alone, motorcycle-related crashes rose from 239 in 2021 to 656 in 2025, while fatalities increased from 27 to 88 over the same period. North-Western Province recorded a rise in crashes from 118 to 633, with deaths increasing from 11 to 87. In Luapula Province, crashes climbed from 97 in 2021 to 551 in 2025, while fatalities rose from three to 41.

For decades, Chipata has served as a hub for motorbike transport, a shift that began when motorbikes gradually replaced bicycles as a cheaper and faster mode of movement.

More than 1,500 kilometres away, at Solwezi General Hospital, hospital data show that 684 motorbike accidents were recorded in 2024, with four victims brought in dead and three later dying in hospital. In 2025, the number rose to 951, with seven deaths, and in January 2026 alone, 59 accidents were recorded.

At Mansa General Hospital — the main referral facility in Luapula Province — the surge in motorbike-related injuries is overwhelming the system. Victims are now being admitted across male, female, and children's surgical wards because of the growing number of cases. Hospital data shows a steep rise: from 199 cases in 2022 to 525 in 2023, 808 in 2024, and 1,040 in 2025. Some riders are as young as 15.

“All these issues culminate in injuries, deaths, and long-term complications such as disabilities—people losing their limbs,”



said Mackford Chipili, the hospital superintendent. “As a hospital, we are incurring huge costs in rehabilitating and trying to save these patients from their injuries.”

Even these figures capture only part of the true scale of the crisis. Across Zambia, hospitals are increasingly carrying the burden of a transport system operating outside effective regulation.

“It's becoming a public health problem,” said Solwezi General Hospital Clinical Care Director Dr Joshua Chisanga.

The human cost

To understand the human cost of these accidents, consider the case of Snefa Njobvu from Chipata. She fell from a motorbike, severely injuring her leg, and was admitted to Chipata General Hospital for a week before being referred to Lusaka — about 600 kilometres away — for specialised treatment at significant cost to her family after the rider reportedly fled the scene. She was only assisted by nearby farmers working close to where the crash occurred.

“The bone was completely damaged. I'm now waiting to be moved to Lusaka for specialist treatment,” she said.

Under Zambia's Road Traffic Act and Public Service Vehicle Regulations, motorcycles are not recognised or licensed as public passenger transport. Only designated vehicles such as buses and taxis are legally permitted to carry fare-paying passengers.

“Under the current legal framework, motorcycles cannot be licensed to operate as public service vehicles for passenger transport,” said Mwelwa. “RTSA, working jointly with the Zambia Police Service and local authorities,

has intensified enforcement measures aimed at curbing illegal passenger-carrying operations.”

According to RTSA, these measures include routine road compliance inspections and joint enforcement operations with the Zambia Police, impounding motorcycles operating illegally as public transport, prosecuting offenders found contravening road transport regulations, conducting public sensitisation campaigns on road safety and legal compliance, and verifying rider licensing, registration, and insurance compliance. RTSA says it has also increased surveillance in identified high-risk areas where illegal motorcycle taxi operations are prevalent.

However, despite these enforcement efforts, motorcycle-related accidents and injuries continue to rise sharply across the country, placing increasing pressure on Zambia's health system.

RTSA data shows serious motorcycle-related injuries rose from 402 cases in 2021 to 1,613 in 2025, while slight injuries climbed to nearly 2,000 cases annually.

Health experts and international agencies warn that the economic burden of road traffic injuries extends far beyond the crash itself. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), road traffic crashes cost most countries about 3% of their Gross Domestic Product through medical treatment, rehabilitation, funeral costs, lost productivity, and long-term disability. In Zambia, a UNDP road safety investment case found that severe road traffic injuries can cost

The Human Cost: Inside Zambia’s Growing Motorbike Injury Epidemic cont...

thousands of dollars in medical care alone, while families often lose income when victims or caregivers are unable to work. The report estimates that road traffic accidents cost Zambia about US\$700 million annually — equivalent to roughly K16.7 billion or 4.7% of the country’s Gross Domestic Product.

Funeral after funeral

On that April afternoon in Chingola, as brass instruments played and mourners lowered Nkhoma’s body into the ground, another motorbike crash had already occurred elsewhere in Zambia. For families across the country, the motorbike has become more than transport. It is increasingly becoming a source of funerals, disability, debt, and trauma.

Young riders continue taking to the roads without licences, insurance, or proper training. When crashes happen, the cost is carried not only by victims, but also by hospitals, families, and communities already struggling economically.

“Unless that pattern is broken, the funerals will continue,” said one rider at Nkhoma’s burial.

Additional reporting by: Pride Nyirenda (Luanshya, Copperbelt Province), Beverly Subeti Busanga (Chingola), James Mwape (Ndola, Copperbelt), Helga Chola (Mansa, Luapula Province), Christian Kasonde (Kasama, Northern Province), Doris Chifunda (Mbala, Northern Province), Joseph Mwape (Luwingu, Northern Province), Richard Simbaya (Isoka, Muchinga Province), Kebby Sianjame (Kalomo, Southern Province), Vincent Phiri (Chipata, Eastern Province), and Sanjimba Kanganja (Solwezi, North-Western Province).

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The Bankruptcy Question That Ended Chanda’s Presidential Bid

From page 1

By Makanday Reporter

Last year in August, MakaanDay published an investigation revealing that Zambian opposition leader Charles Chanda had been declared bankrupt following repeated allegations linking him to questionable land transactions conducted through Brook Cherith Estate Agents, a company he controlled that was later forced into liquidation.

The report detailed how businessman and United Prosperous and Peaceful Zambia (UPPZ) leader Chanda was officially declared bankrupt in a judgment delivered on July 24, 2025, by High Court Judge Malata Ononuju — a development that threatened both his business interests and political ambitions.

MakaanDay had earlier detailed allegations of questionable land

dealings linked to Chanda and Brook Cherith Estate Agents, with multiple clients claiming they paid for plots that were either never transferred to them or remained tied up in incomplete purchase processes years later.

Months later, MakaanDay’s continued reporting and follow-up inquiries contributed to the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ) disqualifying Chanda from contesting the 2026 general elections after determining that he was bankrupt.

The development followed sustained investigations by MakaanDay into Chanda’s legal status and eligibility to stand for public office.

In a press query dated January 8, 2026, addressed to the ECZ Chief Electoral Officer, MakaanDay sought clarification on whether

a person declared bankrupt by the High Court could legally contest presidential elections under Zambian law.

The inquiry was based on a High Court bankruptcy order issued on July 24, 2025, in the matter of Nathan Sinkala and 119 others versus Charles Chanda.

According to court documents reviewed by MakaanDay, the bankruptcy proceedings arose from a creditors’ petition filed under the Bankruptcy Act after Chanda allegedly failed to settle a judgment debt amounting to K3,837,637 stemming from a 2020 High Court ruling involving allegations of breach of contract and fraud.

Court records further showed that Chanda was served with a bankruptcy notice on April 5, 2022, but failed to comply. The court also noted that substituted service was later effected in March 2025 and that Chanda did not respond to the bankruptcy proceedings.

In its letter to the ECZ, MakaanDay asked whether Zambian electoral law permitted a bankrupt individual to contest presidential elections, whether bankruptcy status was verified during the nomination process, and what action the Commission would take if such a candidate were eventually elected.

However, during a follow-up interview on April 23, 2026, ECZ Corporate Affairs Manager Patricia Luhanga said the matter was outside the Commission’s jurisdiction at that stage because nominations had not yet commenced.

“You were asking us a question that is outside our jurisdiction. We are not the ones who declare candidates bankrupt,” Luhanga said.

She explained that the ECZ only becomes involved once candidates file nomination papers, at which point concerns relating to eligibility and qualifications can formally be raised.

“It only becomes relevant during nominations,” she said, adding that the Commission could not act before the process had officially commenced. Although Luhanga promised to retrieve the file and provide a formal response, no further communication was received by MakaanDay.

Following Chanda’s continued political activities — including reports that he had paid the K100,000 nomination fee to the ECZ — MakaanDay wrote to the Judiciary on May 14, 2026, seeking clarification on whether the bankruptcy order remained in force and whether a bankrupt individual could legally contest public office.

The letter further questioned whether Chanda was legally permitted to continue operating businesses and conducting substantial financial transactions despite the bankruptcy declaration.

By the time of publication, MakaanDay had not received a response from the Judiciary.

The matter eventually came to a head when on Monday 18 May Chanda appeared before the ECZ to file his nomination papers and was informed that he had been disqualified on grounds that he was bankrupt.

Following the disqualification, Chanda took to Facebook to dispute the bankruptcy status.

“I am not bankrupt as we challenged the matter and it’s still in court. It is well. I leave the matter in God’s hands,” he wrote.

The development now places fresh attention on how bankruptcy laws intersect with Zambia’s electoral process and raises broader questions about candidate eligibility, legal disclosure, and institutional verification ahead of the 2026 general elections.



OPINION | Elections Are Not Football Matches

From page 1

As Zambia heads towards the 13 August general elections, the country has once again entered the familiar season of campaign promises, political slogans, dancing crowds, and endless declarations from politicians claiming they alone can rescue citizens from poverty and hardship.

Every election cycle sounds almost identical. Candidates move from market to market, church to church, and compound to compound promising jobs, development, lower prices, youth empowerment, and a better future. Many present themselves as defenders of ordinary people, insisting they understand the suffering citizens face daily.

But elections are not won by promises alone. They are also a test of memory, judgment, and character.

Recent events have once again exposed the deeper realities of Zambia's politics.

One aspiring candidate appeared at the nomination centre as an independent after failing to secure adoption by his party the previous day, only to leave with a torn shirt after reportedly being attacked by youths linked to the same political organisation. The incident served as yet another reminder of the violence and intolerance that continue to cast a shadow over Zambia's democracy.

Elsewhere, another politician returned to seek office in Roan Constituency after previously losing the seat when he left to join another political party as a presidential consultant. Today, he says he wants another opportunity to serve.

When many politicians speak, they all claim they want to lead because they have solutions to Zambia's problems. But citizens must ask tougher questions: Do these individuals genuinely want to serve the people, or are many simply attracted by the privileges that come with power — allowances, influence, business opportunities, security escorts, and the "Honourable" title?

Too often, politics in Zambia has become less about public service and more about personal survival, influence, and accumulation of wealth.

Some politicians attempt to reinvent themselves every election cycle, hoping voters will forget their previous conduct, statements, or records in office. Yet leadership is not measured by campaign songs, motorcades, branded materials, or emotional speeches at rallies. Leadership is measured by integrity, humility, accountability, and how one behaves when entrusted with public office.

That is why voters must never stop examining the track records of those seeking power.

One of the lessons Zambia can draw comes from past investigations into political leadership and public accountability. In 2014, concerns emerged in Luanshya over the growing perception of political entitlement and rapid wealth accumulation surrounding then Roan Member of Parliament Chishimba Kambwili.

Residents described him as the "boastful billionaire" of Roan Constituency, raising questions about luxury properties, expanding business interests, and alleged abuse of influence while serving in public office.

Whether every allegation was true or not is not the only point. The larger lesson is that democracy becomes dangerous when citizens worship politicians instead of scrutinising them.

Across Africa, many voters ignore warning signs until it is too late. Some leaders present themselves as champions of the poor while quietly enriching themselves. Others use tribal loyalties, political militancy, emotional rhetoric, or intimidation to avoid accountability. Some appear humble during campaigns but become untouchable once elected.

Zambians must remember that elections are not football matches where citizens blindly defend

political teams. Elections determine who controls national resources, who makes laws, who influences public institutions, and who shapes the country's future for years to come.

A vote is not simply a mark on paper. It is a transfer of power.

This election season, voters must ask difficult but necessary questions before handing over that power. They must examine each candidate's record and ask how that person behaved when previously entrusted with leadership.

Citizens should question whether aspiring leaders are transparent about their wealth, businesses, and conduct, or whether unresolved concerns continue to follow them. Voters must also pay attention to whether politicians unite people through ideas and respect, or whether they thrive on violence, intimidation, insults, and division.

Most importantly, Zambians must determine whether those seeking office are genuinely motivated by public service and national interest, or whether they are driven primarily by personal ambition and the privileges associated with political office.

Leaders who disregard institutions, accountability, and the rule of law during campaigns are unlikely to suddenly embrace them once elected.

As campaigns intensify, citizens must resist manipulation, empty promises, and political excitement. They must remember that behind every slogan is a human being with a history, a character, and a track record.

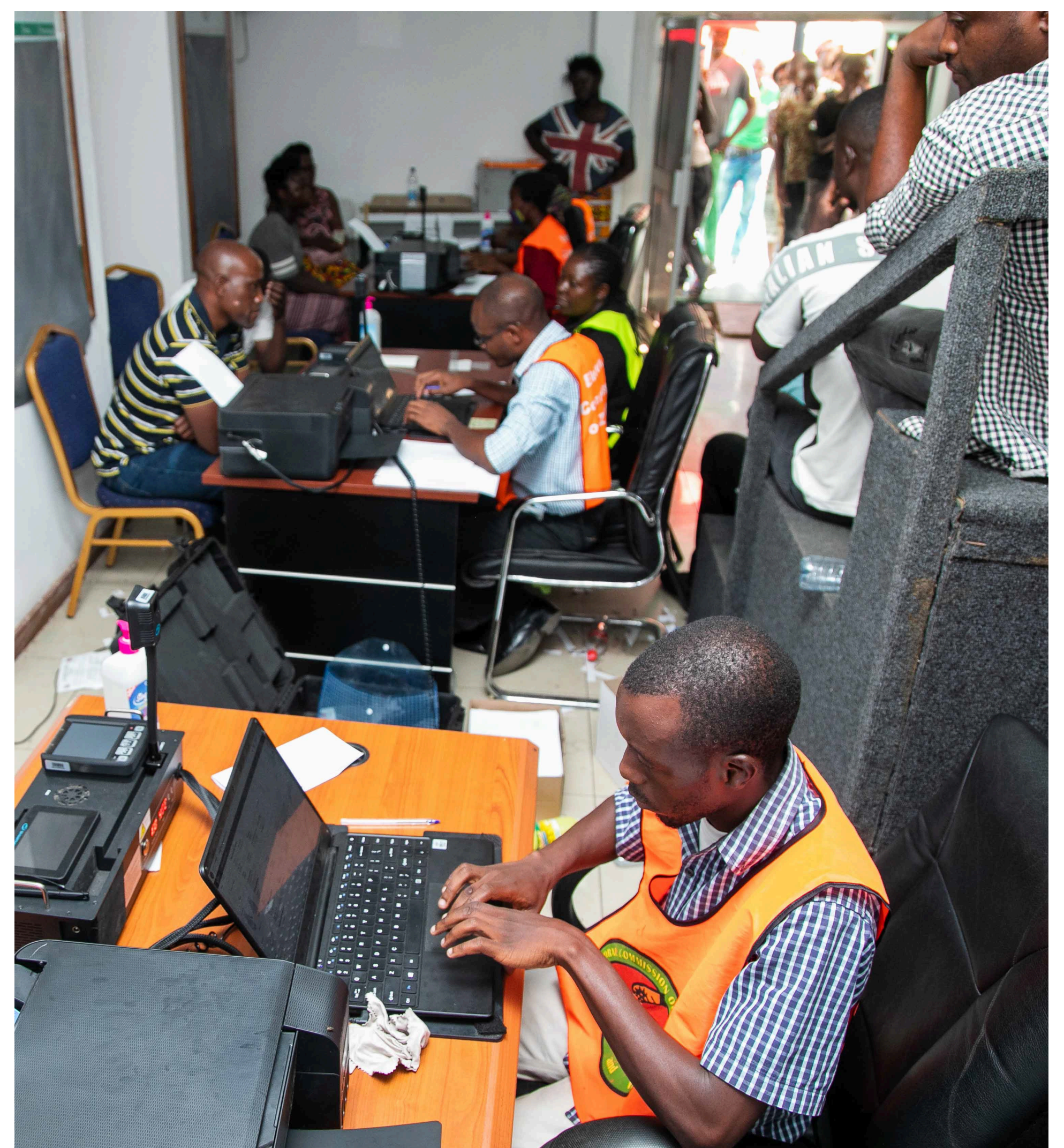
And sometimes, the greatest mistake voters make is not that they were never warned — but that they chose not to pay attention.

For journalists, the greatest mistake is to treat elections as isolated events rather than part of a long political pattern that unfolds over many years.

Our continued coverage of Charles Chanda — the United Prosperous and Peaceful Zambia (UPPZ) leader and presidential aspirant whose business dealings, including questionable land transactions, had previously raised public concern — is a reminder of why journalism must go beyond campaign rhetoric and remain focused on accountability, public records, and unresolved questions surrounding those seeking public office.

MakanDay's sustained investigations into Chanda's bankruptcy status and legal eligibility ultimately contributed to heightened public and institutional scrutiny that led to his disqualification from the presidential race.

Photo Credit | ECZ



Looking back | The saga of the “boastful billionaire”

Kambwili takeover of golf club land gives members a handicap - and a headache

By Charles Mafa

MPs often face grizzles and complaints from their constituents but in the case of Chishimba Kambwili, MP for Roan constituency and also Minister of Sport, that discontent seems to be bordering on resentment, even hostility.

The Kambwili of today is almost unrecognisable from the rookie who Michael Sata took under his wing and gave him the sports portfolio, after a brief stint as foreign affairs minister, where he was replaced by Given Lubinda. Today he is described in his constituency as the “boastful billionaire” of Luanshya. Some say he may well be one of Zambia’s 10 richest men.

What is it that makes people rate him that way? Well, he is a big man and he talks big, and loud. If you were to meet him travelling along the road you couldn’t miss him, the cars in his convoy have personalised number plates all bearing his initials – CK. Is it true that personalised number plates reflect a boastful ego? Maybe.

Do the people of Roan in Luanshya have a genuine grievance against their MP, or are they merely jealous of him, his wealth and his success? The B&R wanted to find out from the man himself and so calls were made to his office and a letter was submitted asking Mr Kambwili how he had amassed his wealth. But he has avoided all approaches, which might be considered unusual for a man who normally likes to express himself forcefully. A follow-up to his office resulted in the secretary tersely sending this writer away. She would say only, “The letter is on his table. We received it on the 16th of September, 2014.” Part of the content of the letter asked the minister to respond to Luanshya people’s concerns over his business dealings and leadership style.

It seems that the position of government minister has brought fame and, possibly, fortune to Mr Kambwili. Luanshya people describe him as a big shot who does not like to fly into Ndola airport without being greeted by a delegation of followers,

along with a little girl holding out a bouquet of flowers for him. A kind of mini-presidential arrival, perhaps? Could it be this flamboyance that led President Sata to recently sound a warning to his followers to “stop campaigning for him” after the ever-loquacious sports minister announced that Mr Sata had selected him as his successor?

Mr Kambwili seems to have quickly acquired a chain of luxurious, newly-built mansions and businesses dotted around Luanshya – a feat that has amazed some of the townsfolk, many of whom are barely surviving the plunge in fortunes of this town, once called The Garden City of the Copperbelt.

Mr Kambwili has a company called Mwamona Engineering and Technical Services operating in Luanshya. Mwamona was registered as a company in 2001. Its directors are Carol Chansa Kambwili and Chishimba Mwamba and its business address is plot 458, 5th street, Nchanga South in Chingola. It is believed this company is used to acquire road contracts in Luanshya.

The Minister is owner of a spacious new garage in Luanshya’s rundown industrial area where he parks a fleet of large goods vehicles. The lorries carry names of his children and family members inscribed on them; among them are Mwamba Nsala and James Chewes Chansa. Within the same vicinity is an almost identical garage and office said to belong to former Luanshya mayor, Mr Nathan Chanda, who is seen to be an ally of Mr Kambwili.

Mr Kambwili also owns an assortment of luxurious houses tucked away behind a smart wall fence. These have been built on land said to belong traditionally to the Luanshya Golf Club, although there is some doubt now about who actually owns the land. It was once mine land but when the mine was sold, ZCCM retained control of the land, including the golf course. The Luanshya city council then became involved in selling plots of the land, though their right to do so is

questioned by many. The residential address of Mr Kambwili’s buildings is 1 Westeria, and they are on the controversial golf course land.

Thus, the “Kambwili Estate” controversy reached boiling point when the minister decided to build on land that had traditionally been part of the golf course. The issue was further inflamed when Mr Kambwili allowed his domestic animals to graze on the golf course. This appeared to enable him to build an access road across the golf course to his new estate.

When members of the club decided to question the minister’s authority to do this, he emerged in the night banging his fists on the tables and threatening to close the place down. In his company were former mayor, Mr Chanda, and Mr Alex Mwansa, former Luanshya Town Clerk who was later transferred to Lusaka.

Even if the minister’s threats might have been just bluff, they were quite effective. The golf club was closed for three weeks. Police were stationed there to ensure that no one disobeyed orders relating to the takeover of club land.

In addition to the mansions by the golf club, other of the minister’s buildings are under construction along the Luanshya-Ndola Road. On one plot, there are several dwellings. Those familiar with the area say they are residential houses earmarked for rent. In the Luanshya city centre, another structure set aside for a shopping centre is under construction behind the National Pensions Fund building.

The minister has also opened a nightclub in former sports buildings at the Luanshya Sports Complex. Called Belle Isle, the nightclub doubles as a restaurant and beer garden during the day. Once upon a time the sports complex housed a number of recreation and indoor sports such as badminton, tennis and gymnastics.

People in Luanshya accuse Mr Kambwili of “bullying”, saying he uses his influence to amass

wealth for himself. They also accuse him of conducting government business in a manner that benefits himself, his close family members and friends. They say he is ruthless and no one dares oppose him openly.

Most information available about Mr Kambwili is scanty and unrevealing. According to the National Assembly website, he was born on 3rd June 1969, married, and his education qualifications include a diploma in business management, a certificate in industrial relations, an MA in legislative studies and a recently acquired degree in public administration from Copperstone University on the Copperbelt. He has on two occasions from 2006 to date, been elected MP for Roan Constituency, which adjourns Luanshya Central.

He has many critics in Luanshya, no doubt about that, but whether they are correct in saying that his background is “dodgy” is anybody’s guess. The fact, as relayed by locals, is that prior to being an MP he was supported by his wife, a nurse working in the UK. Nothing wrong with that. He later started dealing in scrap metals said to have come from the mine during the time it was closed. Again, who knows? He is not saying anything.

Earlier this year the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) opened an inquiry into Mr Kambwili’s alleged use of public funds to run adverts congratulating himself for obtaining a degree. The minister was alleged to have directed his ministry to advertise congratulatory messages in the Times of Zambia and the Zambia Daily Mail for the recent degree he obtained from Copperstone University. This case was later dropped by the state’s corruption watchdog for what it termed a lack of proof. The ACC however, advised that administrative action be taken against some officers at the sports ministry. The Commission did not say why this action should be taken, or for what.

With his bulk and grumpy demeanour, Mr Kambwili looks ready to pounce on

Kambwili takeover of golf club land cont...

whoever comes his way. He has on several occasions threatened violence and in the process has angered people. During a Confederation Cup match involving Nkana Football Club and Etoile du Sahel of Tunisia, Mr Kambwili confronted Ethiopian referee, Tessema Weyesa, accusing him of biased officiating. Only a quick intervention by police saved the referee from the minister's ire at the end of the match. Nkana was later fined US\$ 10,000, equivalent to K60,000 for pitch invasion.

His latest brawling has been within the ruling party, where some of his colleagues demanded an investigation into his business contracts. This came, according to The Post, after President Sata told Copperbelt youth chairperson Nathan Chanda to stop campaigning for Mr Kambwili. What followed were several PF members having it out in public, with several spats directed towards Mr Kambwili, who surprisingly has chosen to lie low.

Observers say, Mr Kambwili might be enjoying the version of fame that comes with being a minister, but this might cost him a severe dressing-down eventually from the people he is meant to be serving. They say in order to survive the 2016 contest, he will surely have to mentally assemble everything he has learnt about politics, much as a commander assembles his decimated regiment, for a final assault.

Refuge at the Golf Club threatene d by loss of land

By Charles Mafa

The older generation in Luanshya, home to one of Zambia's original copper mines, experienced the rugged ups-and-downs caused by closure, botched takeover and subsequent privatisation of the mine.

Almost every pocket relied heavily on the mine, miners and townfolk alike. All felt misery and hopelessness when the mine began to lay off workers.

A place of refuge for many townfolk was the Roan Antelope Golf club, once one of Zambia's premier golfing locations, built in 1931 by RST, the mining company at the time. Two South African professionals, the famous Gary Player and Herold Henning, designed the course. It has attracted many distinguished golfers, including Bobby Lock. In 1968 President Kaunda invited the Roan Antelope team to play at State House.

But years later the privatisation shambles meant a loss of sponsorship from the mine and little or no spending from its members.

For years the club was closed. It is only now that a few residents are struggling to bring it back to life. They say the 18-hole golf course is an important piece of history that should not be allowed to die.

Members who came together to ensure its revival currently own the golf club. They work hard to make it self-reliant by providing as much of their time and resources as they can to help sustain it. They have had to give up part of their incomes and make donations of whatever they could bring to the table. Now, the bar and restaurant is up and running, and the members have banded together almost as a family to restore the club.

Their task is not easy, says chairman and local businessman Mr Dilip Bodalia,

who heads a committee of six. He appeals to corporates and local investors to support their efforts. Members have managed to raise K75,000 for a tractor to work on the fairways and greens – an effort that someone described as an example of the power of vision in the face of adversity. Membership is reported to be growing by the day.

Mr Bodalia would not answer questions about the row that ensued with the Minister of Sport over his alleged encroachment on to golf club land, insisting that that was water under the bridge. (See main story) Other members who spoke on condition of anonymity said they are deeply disappointed with the minister's decision to claim part of the golf course's land.



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