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SOLWEZI | PUBLIC FINANCE

MINING REVENUE UNDER SCRUTINY

A Mining Town, a Narrow Revenue Base: *The Test Facing Solwezi's New Mayor*

Evans Lubelenga spent years as a journalist asking why Solwezi's mineral wealth had not translated into better services. Now, as the city's newly elected mayor, he inherits another question: why has one of Zambia's fastest-growing mining towns become so dependent on the industry for its property-rate revenue?

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FROM THE ARCHIVE

Nevers Mumba — the presidency that never came

After decades in public life, Dr Nevers Mumba has announced his retirement from active politics.

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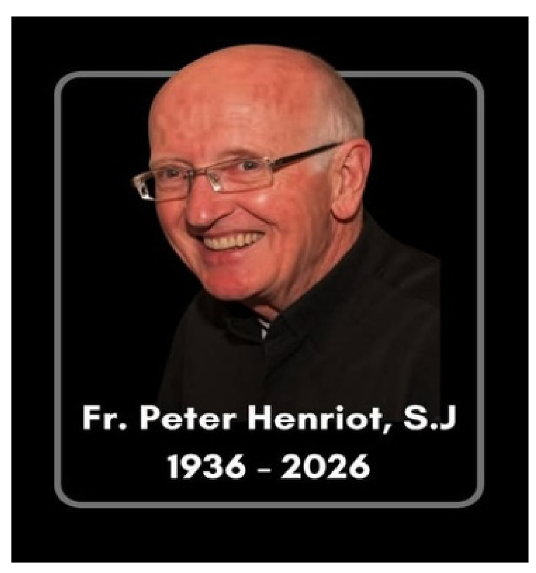


Fr. Peter Henriot, S.J
1936 - 2026

A Mining Town, a Narrow Revenue Base: The Test Facing Solwezi's New Mayor

When Lubelenga campaigned to become mayor of Solwezi, a mining town in north-western Zambia, he carried with him questions he had spent years asking as a journalist: why had the mineral wealth generated around the town not translated into better roads, reliable water and improved public services?

Now that he has won the mayoral seat, those questions have followed him into office. Lubelenga takes charge of one of Zambia's most important mining towns at a time when MakanDay's examination of Solwezi Municipal Council's finances reveals another challenge beneath the city's visible development problems: a property-rate revenue base that has been overwhelmingly dependent on mining.

In 2021, for every K1 Solwezi Municipal Council collected in residential property rates, it collected more than K51 in mining rates.

Council financial statements show that the local authority collected K63.98 million in mining rates that year, compared with K3.5 million from industrial and commercial properties and just K1.24 million from residential properties.

Mining therefore accounted for about 93% of the K68.7 million collected across those three property-rate categories.

Four years later, the scale of Solwezi's financial relationship with mining remained striking.

Kansanshi Mining Plc paid K95.3 million in property rates directly to Solwezi Municipal Council in 2025 — the largest payment identified in MakanDay's earlier examination of mining rates paid to six local authorities, based on figures reported by the Zambia Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (ZEITI).

But the K95.3 million was not Kansanshi's entire property-rate obligation for the year.

In response to questions from MakanDay, Kansanshi said its total rates liability for 2025 was K125.16 million. Of this, K95.3 million was paid directly to the council in cash, while the remaining K29.86 million was settled through road construction carried out for the municipality.

For Lubelenga, the figures turn an old question into a governing challenge.

As a journalist, he could ask why a city surrounded by mineral wealth continued to struggle with poor roads, inadequate water supply and other basic services. As mayor, he now sits at the head of a council confronting a related financial problem: how to secure greater benefit from the mining economy while building a municipal revenue base that is not overwhelmingly dependent on it.

MakanDay asked Solwezi Municipal Council what it was doing to reduce its dependence on mining rates, expand its property-rate base and prepare for the eventual loss of mining revenue. The council acknowledged the questions and promised to respond, but had not done so by the time of publication.

An examination of council financial records and research into Solwezi's rapid expansion suggests that this dependence has been years in the making.

Mining dominates the rates

Kansanshi says the K63.98 million recorded as mining rates in 2021 represented its rateable value rather than an entirely cash payment. According to the company, K55.48 million was paid in cash and K8.5 million was accounted for through construction of Kankankwa Road.

The pattern continued the following year. In 2022, the council reported collecting K53.99 million in mining rates, compared with K3.79 million from industrial and commercial properties and K1.20 million from residential properties.

Kansanshi's figures put its total 2022 rates liability at K63.98 million, comprising K53.98 million paid in cash and K10 million settled through road works. Again, more than 90% of the property rates collected across those categories came from mining.

The figures reveal an extraordinary feature of the finances of one of Zambia's most important mining towns.

While Solwezi has expanded rapidly around the copper industry, its municipal property-rate collections have remained heavily dependent on that same industry.

Kansanshi, 80% owned by Canada-based First Quantum Minerals and 20% by ZCCM-IH, was also the largest mining ratepayer identified in MakanDay's earlier examination of six councils.

Its K95.3 million cash payment represented about 40% of the more than K238.5 million in property rates mining companies reported paying across those councils.

But Kansanshi has now told MakanDay that its total 2025 rates liability was considerably higher, at K125.16 million, once K29.86 million worth of road infrastructure provided under its arrangement with the council is included.

A town transformed by mining

The scale of Solwezi's transformation is closely tied to the expansion of mining.

Kansanshi's growth attracted workers, contractors, businesses, property developers and jobseekers. As the population expanded, so did demand for housing, roads, markets, drainage, sanitation, waste collection and water.

Those demands remain visible across Solwezi today. Residents continue to contend with poor roads and gaps in basic services, including water supply — problems Lubelenga inherited when he took office.

But the figures examined by MakanDay do not establish how mining-rate revenue was spent, whether it was sufficient to meet Solwezi's infrastructure needs or whether shortcomings in service delivery resulted from a lack of revenue.

What they do show is that, as demand for municipal services grew, the council remained heavily reliant on mining for the property-rate revenue examined in this investigation.

Research into Solwezi's development suggests that the council's ability to capture revenue from the growing town did not always keep pace with that growth.

Social anthropologist Professor Rita Kesselring spent years studying Solwezi, including time inside Solwezi Municipal Council's planning department observing how the local authority operated and made decisions.

In her 2025 book, Extraction, Global Commodity Trade, and Urban Development in Zambia's Northwestern Province, Kesselring examines the relationship between the expanding mining economy, Kansanshi and the local authority.

Her research describes a council struggling to govern a town being transformed by mining investment and rapid population growth.

One comparison is particularly revealing.

Following changes to district boundaries, Kesselring writes, the valuation roll used by the new Solwezi district contained 4,415 entries. Another study, the Solwezi Urban Baseline Study, had identified approximately 29,750 plots within the proposed new township boundary.

The two figures are not directly comparable. A plot is not necessarily a rateable property and not every property should necessarily appear on a valuation roll.

But Kesselring argues that the comparatively small number of properties captured by the valuation system pointed to a wider problem.

Development was taking place faster than the council's revenue system was capturing it. Properties created through subdivisions were among those that could remain outside the council's effective revenue net.

For a rapidly expanding municipality, that matters. Property rates are one of the ways councils finance local government. If large numbers of eligible properties are absent from, inadequately valued by or otherwise not captured within the rates system, urban growth can increase demand for services without producing a corresponding increase in municipal revenue.

Solwezi, however, had another major source of property-rate income: Kansanshi.

That historical weakness makes the current state of Solwezi's valuation

A Mining Town, a Narrow Revenue Base: The Test Facing Solwezi's New Mayor cont...

and collection system particularly important for Lubelenga's new administration.

MakanDay asked the council whether its valuation roll has since been updated, how many residential properties are currently captured for rates, what proportion of billed residential rates it collects and what steps it is taking to bring eligible properties into the rates system.

The council had not provided answers by publication.

The mine fills the gap

Kesselring records that when the council approved new rates during the period she examined, the only increase was imposed on mining property. The multiplier for mining property increased from 0.025 to 0.04.

Under the resulting estimates, property-rate revenue was projected at approximately K38.6 million. Kansanshi alone was expected to contribute 65%.

In other words, roughly two-thirds of projected property-rate revenue was expected to come from one mining company.

The problem was not simply identifying other potential sources of revenue.

The council also struggled to collect money it expected to receive.

In 2014, according to figures cited by Kesselring, Solwezi Municipal Council collected only 52% of its estimated total revenue. By December 2016, it was owed about K15.7 million in rates and another K32 million from other revenue sources.

The significance of those figures is not that Kansanshi was paying too much. Rather, Kesselring's research suggests that the mine's contribution compensated, at least in part, for weaknesses elsewhere in the council's revenue system.

Council financial statements from several years later show that this dependence persisted into the 2020s.

First Quantum Minerals acknowledges that the council's dependence on mining revenue is a concern.

"Yes, this is a reality and a concern," the company said in response to MakanDay. "Mines often act as economic anchors in previously undeveloped areas while other industries develop around them."

Kansanshi said it was trying to encourage economic diversification through local-content initiatives, its Small and Medium Enterprise Incubator programme and other social-development programmes.

From asking questions to answering them

For Lubelenga, the figures turn an old question into a governing challenge. As a journalist, he could ask why a city surrounded by mineral wealth continued to struggle with poor roads, inadequate water supply and other basic services. As mayor, responsibility for confronting some of those problems now falls partly on the council he leads.

After taking office, the former journalist told MakanDay that he wanted to bring greater openness to the local authority.

"The council belongs to the people and should therefore not operate with secrets," he said.

His administration now inherits a broader financial challenge: how to broaden the revenue base of a city whose growth was driven by mining, but whose property-rate system has remained heavily reliant on the industry.

The issue is particularly significant because Lubelenga has also argued that Solwezi has not received a fair return from the mineral wealth extracted from the district.

That leaves his administration confronting two related challenges: securing what it considers a fair contribution from mining while building a broader local revenue base that is less dependent on a single industry.

MakanDay asked the council whether it has assessed the long-term risks associated with its dependence on mining revenue and whether it has a strategy to diversify its revenue base. It had not responded by the time of publication.

Year	Ratable Value	Infrastructure	Rates Paid in Cash	Additional Works 'Donated'	Roads Completed
2021	K63.98m	K8.5m	K55.48m	—	Kankankwa Road
2022	K63.98m	K10m	K53.98m	—	Signal Road Zambezi Road Urban Road Messenger's Road
2023	K82.31m	K10m	K72.31m	—	ABSA Road Police Road Bishop Potani Road
2024	K82.31m	K16m	K66.31m	K3.04m	Market Road United Church Road Medical Road
2025	K125.16m	K29.86m	K95.3m	—	Chisomo Road Magrade Road Golf Road

EDITORIAL

Our Politics of Eating Is Hurting the Civil Service

It does not take a genius to figure out one of Zambia's biggest problems right now. It is our politics.

The elections are over, but many Zambians are still nursing the election hangover.

Those who won are rejoicing, while some are probably sweating over whether victory will earn them a seat at the dinner table with those who wield power. For those who lost, it could mean waiting another five years for another chance at that same table.

And therein lies the problem.

Ours has increasingly become a politics not primarily about solving the country's problems, but about access — to jobs, contracts, appointments, influence and the privileges that come with proximity to power.

When Honourable Daniel Munkombwe, of happy memory, famously spoke about the "politics of the belly", many condemned him. Perhaps his words were uncomfortable, but the underlying observation deserves reflection.

Too often, politics in Zambia is treated as an investment from which supporters expect a return once their party wins.

Unfortunately, this mentality has seeped into the civil service.

A Zambian should not have to belong to, support or be connected to a political party to qualify for a government job. Being suitably qualified should be enough.

During the just-ended election campaign, President Hakainde Hichilema publicly directed that volunteer nurses and teachers attending some of his campaign engagements be employed. Whatever the intention, recruitment associated with political gatherings risks creating the perception that proximity to political power provides a route into public employment.

And there lies the danger. When someone believes they owe a government job to a political leader or party, where does their loyalty lie when power changes hands?

The problem extends to the top of the civil service. Permanent Secretaries sit at the administrative heart of ministries. Yet Zambia needs to ask whether its public service is sufficiently insulated from partisan politics to survive changes of government without its professionalism being questioned.

Some leaders in the ruling UPND have complained about partisanship in the civil service. Where there is evidence of misconduct, it should be addressed.

But the problem cannot be solved through a witch-hunt or by replacing people perceived to belong to one political camp with those perceived to belong to another.

That merely changes the beneficiaries while preserving the disease.

The answer is to strengthen institutions. Recruitment and promotion should be transparent, competitive and based on merit. Career civil servants should have a genuine pathway to senior positions based on competence, experience and performance rather than perceived political loyalty.

Governments come and go. The civil service remains.

A civil servant does not work for UPND, PF or any other political party. A civil servant works for the Republic of Zambia and must professionally implement the lawful policies of whichever government Zambians elect.

Politics should determine who governs Zambia. It should not determine who qualifies to serve Zambia.

Until we draw that line clearly, every change of government risks becoming another struggle over who gets a seat at the dinner table.

And Zambia has far more important problems to solve than deciding who gets to eat.

Nurses at President Hichilema's campaign rally in Luanshya

Tribute to Fr. Pete Henriot

"He (Fr. Henriot) contributed immensely to our parish and touched the lives of many people. We will always remember him for his kindness, humility and dedicated service to others.

May Almighty God receive him into His eternal kingdom and grant him eternal rest. Amen."

— **Thompson Malasha**

Reactions to Hon. Patrick Mucheleka's Election as Member of Parliament

- *"He worked very hard towards the 2021 elections alongside our beloved President, Hakainde Hichilema. He campaigned across the country and stood with the UPND in the trenches at a time when, for people from the Chambeshi region, it was not fashionable to associate with the party. He is intelligent and sharp. All things being equal, he qualifies for appointment to Cabinet or as Northern Province Minister."* — ***William Kampandi***
- *"I once worked with this man. He is very hardworking and intelligent. I'm sure he will be happy to know that I am with him in politics."* — ***Bernard Nkambule***
- *"Congratulations, Honourable, on bouncing back to Parliament. We need development-oriented Members of Parliament like you."* — ***Maxwell Kafwimbi***

FEATURE STORIES

Minister may benefit from Lesotho's R100-billion AI and hydropower deal

Public works minister Matjato Moteane is a shareholder in a local firm the government plans to invite to participate

By Motsamai Mokotjo

- **Lesotho has signed a US$6.2-billion agreement with US-based Convalt Energy to build a hydropower plant and AI data centre.**
- **Sekhametsi Investment Consortium is among the local firms the energy minister has named as potential local partners in the project.**
- **Public Works Minister Matjato Moteane, who has faced previous allegations of conflict of interest, is a shareholder in Sekhametsi Investment Consortium.**
- **Moteane says he will recuse himself from cabinet discussions about the Kobong Project.**

Lesotho has signed the largest foreign investment deal in its history: a US$6.2-billion (about M100-billion) agreement with US-based Convalt Energy to build a hydropower plant and AI data centre. The Kobong Project promises to turn the country into a regional power exporter.

However, a potential conflict of interest has surfaced, raising questions about political influence for private gain and casting doubt on promises that citizens will benefit without bearing any costs.

Convalt will be completing a feasibility study over the next year, which will be followed by implementation agreements, including water-use plans. Construction will then go ahead.

Lesotho's energy minister Lejone Mpotjoane confirmed in an August interview with the MNN Centre for Investigative Journalism that a binding agreement had been signed, and the government would invite local partners to participate.

Mpotjoane also revealed that one of these local firms is Sekhametsi Investment Consortium, of which Minister of Public Works Matjato Moteane is a co-founder, former chairperson and shareholder.

Last year, three parliamentary committees called for Moteane's removal over a conflict-of-interest and criminality investigation (see further down).

According to the Sekhametsi company's register, Moteane holds 1,817 shares. Each share is worth M15,000 (M1=R1), making Moteane's holding about M27-million at the current value.

When MNN asked Mpotjoane whether inviting Sekhametsi to participate in the Kobong Project would create a conflict of interest because of its political connections, he said, "I said Sekhametsi and others. Why do you keep asking about Sekhametsi?" Mpotjoane then ended the call and blocked this reporter on WhatsApp.

We asked Moteane about his potential conflict of interest. He said he had declared his interest in Sekhametsi to the cabinet.

We were unable to verify this. We could also not verify whether he had declared his interests to the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences as required by law. Declarations to this body are kept confidential.

Moteane said he would recuse himself when the cabinet discussed the Convalt Energy deal. He said that he had done so in other matters.

Sekhametsi CEO Thuso Green said the has not yet been approached to participate.

Although the Kobong Project has been presented as a privately financed initiative led by Convalt, the government's intention to invite local firms to participate raises questions about how the government will select these investors and structure the project.

Mpotjoane has said previously that Lesotho was not putting any money into the project, and Convalt CEO Hari Achuthan told MNN that Lesotho faced no financial risk.

He said the Kobong Project would be privately financed without government guarantees and with Convalt taking on the risk. Financing arrangements would be formalised and disclosed once the feasibility study had been completed.

It remains unclear what equity local firms will get in the project.

Asked whether the government intends to hold an equity stake in Kobong, despite previous assurances that it would not, government spokesperson Boitelo Rabele said he was not yet in a position to answer on this or on the government's role in facilitating and selecting local companies.

"After completion of the feasibility study, the government will advise itself on the implementation agreement," said Rabele.

Previous conflict of interest

Last year, Moteane was at the centre of a parliamentary investigation into the M184-million refurbishment of Moshoeshoe I International Airport.

Moteane had previously been a shareholder in Khatleli Tomane Moteane Architects, which was included in LSP Construction's winning bid for the airport contract.

He claimed that he had relinquished his shareholding before becoming a minister, but the committees raised concerns about his continuing association with the firm, noting that his name still appeared on some of its tender documents and that the company was involved in the airport project.

Three parliamentary committees had recommended that Moteane be removed as a minister and called for an investigation into the conflict of interest and possible criminality. However, the report was never adopted by Parliament.

"The House dismissed our report based on the fact that it involved the Natural Resource Committee members. They argued that signatures of the members [of the other two committees as well as the Natural Resources, Tourism and Land Cluster committee] need to be there," said Public Accounts Committee chairperson Machabana Lemphane-Letsie. "We can't hold Moteane accountable."

Convalt's track record

Questions about the structure of the Kobong deal follow an earlier investigation by MNN, which raised concerns about the government's due diligence before it signed the agreement with Convalt.

In July, MNN reported that Convalt's flagship solar-panel manufacturing project in New York never materialised despite the company receiving a US$1.05-million public loan. The matter eventually ended in a settlement.

We also reported that Convalt Energy and Achuthan had been named in a 2022 US civil lawsuit in which two bitcoin-mining companies alleged there had been fraud and misappropriation of funds. The allegations were never tested in court.

Mpotjoane previously told MNN: "We noted that Convalt was involved in some litigations in the USA. This is not abnormal in businesses, and we asked him. He explained what transpired and that the issue is now closed.

Zimbabwe ferry disaster: Why did the Mbuya Nehanda sail that day?

There were warnings long before the boat tragedy in which 97 people died

By Brenna Matendere and Ruvimbo Muchenje

- **A month ago, the Mbuya Nehanda ferry capsized on Lake Kariba, killing at least 97 people.**
- **Authorities have blamed the captain, who died in the tragedy, and one official has been arrested.**
- **But an investigation by news agency Pachena reveals senior political figures and officials were warned several times that the vessel was in poor condition.**

A month ago, on 11 August, the Mbuya Nehanda ferry capsized on Lake Kariba, killing at least 97 people. An investigation by news agency Pachena reveals that the boat should never have sailed that day.

Engineers who service the vessel had repeatedly warned authorities that it needed structural work to improve stability. This was acknowledged by Lake Kariba Captain Adam Nyekete at a closed-door meeting with Transport and Infrastructural Development Minister Felix Mhona on 16 August, five days after the disaster.

Lameck Chitenga, Nyekete's boss and Director of Inland Waters Control, was at the meeting and confirmed to Pachena on record that he found out about the engineers' letters during the meeting. Nyekete, he claims, had not informed him about them before.

Yet some politicians and officials continue to blame the captain, Sign Patsikadova, who they say should never have gone out on the lake in rough weather. At a post-cabinet briefing on 18 August, two days after the engineers' warnings were disclosed in the meeting, Minister Daniel Garwe, who was not in the meeting, publicly blamed Patsikadova. He said the Transport and Infrastructural Development Ministry had cleared the vessel for service in June.

Patsikadova died in the tragedy.

Cabinet has announced a commission of inquiry into the disaster, which was Zimbabwe's deadliest transport disaster since the 1991 Nyanga bus crash, in which 89 people died.

Boat operators have confirmed that Nyekete advised them to stay off the lake that day because of strong winds and other bad weather.

But an investigation into the ferry disaster revealed that the vessel had longstanding problems which were known to officials, operators and regular passengers, and that it was severely overcrowded that day.

Overloaded

The Mbuya Nehanda was operated by the state-owned Rural Infrastructure Development Agency (RIDA) which reports directly to the Office of the President and Cabinet. It carried villagers, fishermen, traders, teachers and nurses from remote communities around Kariba. The water route is far cheaper and quicker than travelling by road. For example, the ferry crossing from Kariba to Mola takes six to seven hours and costs about US$15 compared to two days and US$30 by road.

The government has said that the boat was allowed to carry 95 passengers, including crew. After the disaster, police initially stated that the ferry was carrying 90 passengers and five crew. But, after the rescue and salvage operation, police confirmed that 97 bodies had been recovered and 77 people rescued. While the exact number of passengers on board that day is unknown, there were at least 174, as well as cargo.

On 22 July, the RIDA issued a notice on a WhatsApp group instructing passengers to provide their correct names when buying tickets so they could be traced in an emergency. But the Mbuya Nehanda's ticket list for its final voyage does not have details for the children onboard. These tickets were left blank.

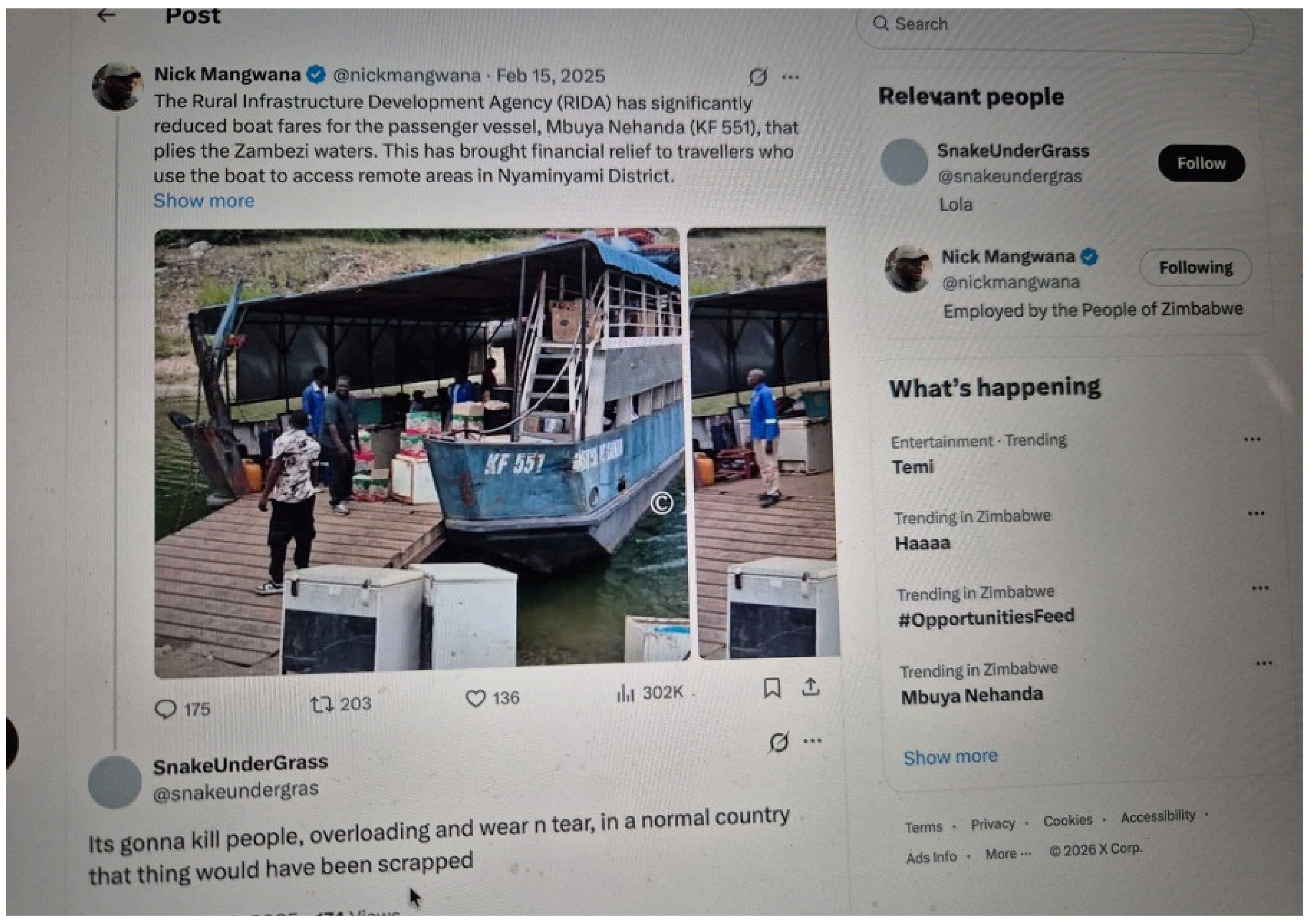
Engineers warned about stability

KB Engineering, the firm that serviced the ferry, is a member of the Kariba Business and Tourism Indaba, an association of 141 tourism companies operating from Kariba to Binga and Kanyemba. Through the association, the engineers issued warning letters to the Lake Captain outlining work to improve the vessel's stability, including fitting two additional pontoons.

News of these warnings emerged at the closed-door meeting on 16 August when the administrator of the Kariba Business and Tourism Indaba, Cephas Shonhiwa, explained that the ferry was not fit for purpose. Shonhiwa confirmed to Pachena that the engineers' warnings had been sent to the Lake Captain and RIDA several times.

The state alleges that administrative failures, overloading of the vessel and breaches of operational safety procedures contributed to the disaster.

Director of Inland Waters Control Chitenga, who oversees vessel safety, regulation, and administration on Zimbabwe's navigable waters, including inspections and safety surveys, said he disagreed with the engineers' assessment.



Contacted for comment, Nyekete said he was a junior civil servant and had been instructed to refer questions to his director.

As Lake Captain, Nyekete is responsible for ensuring all vessels comply with laws governing seaworthiness, life jackets, fire extinguishers, and communication equipment.

Keith Valentine, director of KB Engineering, declined to comment, citing the government's planned commission of inquiry. Transport minister Felix Mhona also declined to comment.

Acting RIDA district head for Kariba, Ignitius Chiome, who attended the meeting, also declined to comment. He has since been arrested on culpable homicide charges and was released on bail after appearing in court on 26 August. He has not pleaded, and the matter is before the court.

"During the meeting, Mr Shonhiwa said that the engineers who refurbished the Mbuya Nehanda vessel recommended that two additional pontoons were supposed to be fixed on the vessel to improve its flotation. However, I want to point out that I do not agree with this version. I say so because the vessel, even up to now, it has not sunk completely in the lake. It is still floating," he said.

He said the vessel had been operating since 1985 and has never encountered a problem, suggesting that the ferry capsized because of the captain's navigational error.

RIDA Director General Christopher Shumba also insisted that the ferry was seaworthy and dismissed the engineers' recommendations as "speculation".

He said the ferry had undergone regular servicing, and the engines had been replaced.

Zimbabwe ferry disaster: Why did the Mbuya Nehanda sail that day? cont...

A vessel with a history

The Mbuya Nehanda was one of three ferries bought from Denmark in 1985.

In December 2024, the Mbuya Nehanda nearly capsized after its engines failed. It came close to capsizing again in January 2026, when, two hours into the journey, its boarding ramp broke away and fell into the lake, affecting the engines. Passengers then discovered there were not enough life jackets for everyone aboard.

This incident promoted the MP for Kariba, Shine Gwangwaba, to call a meeting with RIDA and to try and secure rescue boats for the ferry and at least two speedboats so rescuers could respond if vessels got into trouble.

Gwangwaba said RIDA had told the meeting it did not have the money to address all the problems at once but would consider the recommendations. But RIDA now disputes the need for smaller rescue boats, saying there was no legal requirement for them.

Shumba questioned Gwangwaba's ability to assess the ferry's mechanical condition because he was not an engineer and told Pachena that: "If the authorities have not seen fit that we should do that, we have no obligation of having tender boats on big vessels."

Gwangwaba would later lose 16 relatives, including his sister, in the disaster.

On 15 February 2025, electrical engineer Norman Sianjeme warned Information Secretary Nick Mangwana on X that the Mbuya Nehanda and other RIDA vessels were old and needed major repairs. Otherwise, he wrote, "it's a disaster waiting to happen".

Mangwana had been promoting reduced ferry fares for travellers dependent on the service to reach remote parts of Nyaminyami District. Several users responded with similar warnings, saying an accident and loss of life were inevitable.

After the August disaster, some returned to social media to accuse Mangwana and the government of ignoring the warnings.

Life jackets

Survivors said the Mbuya Nehanda had routinely been overcrowded, particularly at the start and end of school terms. Seats were added around the cargo area, leaving passengers among fish, ice, cement and vehicles. A roof that had been added blocked the captain's view of the deck below, making it harder to monitor the vessel's stability.

Life jackets, passengers said, were difficult to reach and there weren't enough.

There were no safety briefings or life-jacket demonstrations. Survivors said the only safety instruction was to get in and sit down.

Those on board on 11 August as the ferry started its six-hour journey across the lake to Chalala would later describe what happened as the water rose.

Current Siakaluma, an experienced fisherman, said he watched water enter the ferry for about three hours until it reached his knees. He climbed to the upper deck to alert the captain but said nothing was done.

Tendai Machamacha, another survivor, said he had no life jacket when the ferry capsized but found one floating beside him.

Taiwona Kamuto, who was the first person to respond to the disaster, said 15 of the people he pulled from the water had no life jackets.

But Shumba maintained that the vessel had enough life jackets, saying some may have been lost during the stampede. Passengers confirmed that there was a scramble for life jackets when the ferry got into trouble.

"There was obviously commotion which disturbed orderly distribution of the life jackets," Shumba said. The commission of inquiry would establish the facts, he said.

This story was produced by Pachena and syndicated by the IJ Hub on behalf of its member centre network in Southern Africa.

Concerns over the number of people the ferry was carrying are compounded by evidence that its original capacity of 95 had been reduced to 50 after an incident in December 2024, when its engines failed shortly after leaving Peters Point and the vessel nearly capsized. When the wreck was pulled ashore on 25 August 2026, it was clearly marked "50 PAX".

Zambia's nominated MPs — and why do they matter?

Five MPs have entered Zambia's new National Assembly through presidential nomination rather than election. Three are now Cabinet ministers. House Business looks at what that means and what to watch as they begin work in parliament.

By MakanDay

This week President Hakainde Hichilema nominated five people to serve as Members of Parliament - Professor Roma Chilengi, Dr Gilbert Siame, Mulambo Haimbe, Mubita Anakoka and Noel Nkhoma.

None of the five represents a constituency through these nominations. Instead, they enter parliament through a constitutional power that allows the President to nominate MPs.

Three have already moved from presidential nomination into another powerful institution - Cabinet.

Chilengi has been appointed Minister of Health, Siame Minister of Green Economy and Environment, and Haimbe Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

The President has separately appointed Situmbeko Musokotwane, the elected MP for Liuwa, who has retained his position as Minister of Finance and National Planning — a portfolio he held during the UPND's first five years in government.

Parliament is where MPs make laws, question ministers, scrutinise government spending and put the Executive's decisions and promises on the public record. Understanding the institution also means understanding who gets to sit in it — and how they got there.

Unlike an elected constituency MP, a nominated MP does not enter the National Assembly after winning the votes of people in a particular geographical constituency. The Constitution instead gives the President the power to nominate up to 11 MPs for specified purposes.

That raises an important question for citizens following parliament: what are nominated MPs there to contribute?

And with three of the five going directly into cabinet, there is another question: what does their appointment tell us about the relationship between Parliament and the Executive?

From nomination to Cabinet

The appointments of Chilengi, Siame and Haimbe add another dimension to their entry into Parliament.

Their nomination made them MPs before they were appointed ministers, illustrating one way in which Zambia's constitutional system connects the legislature and the executive.

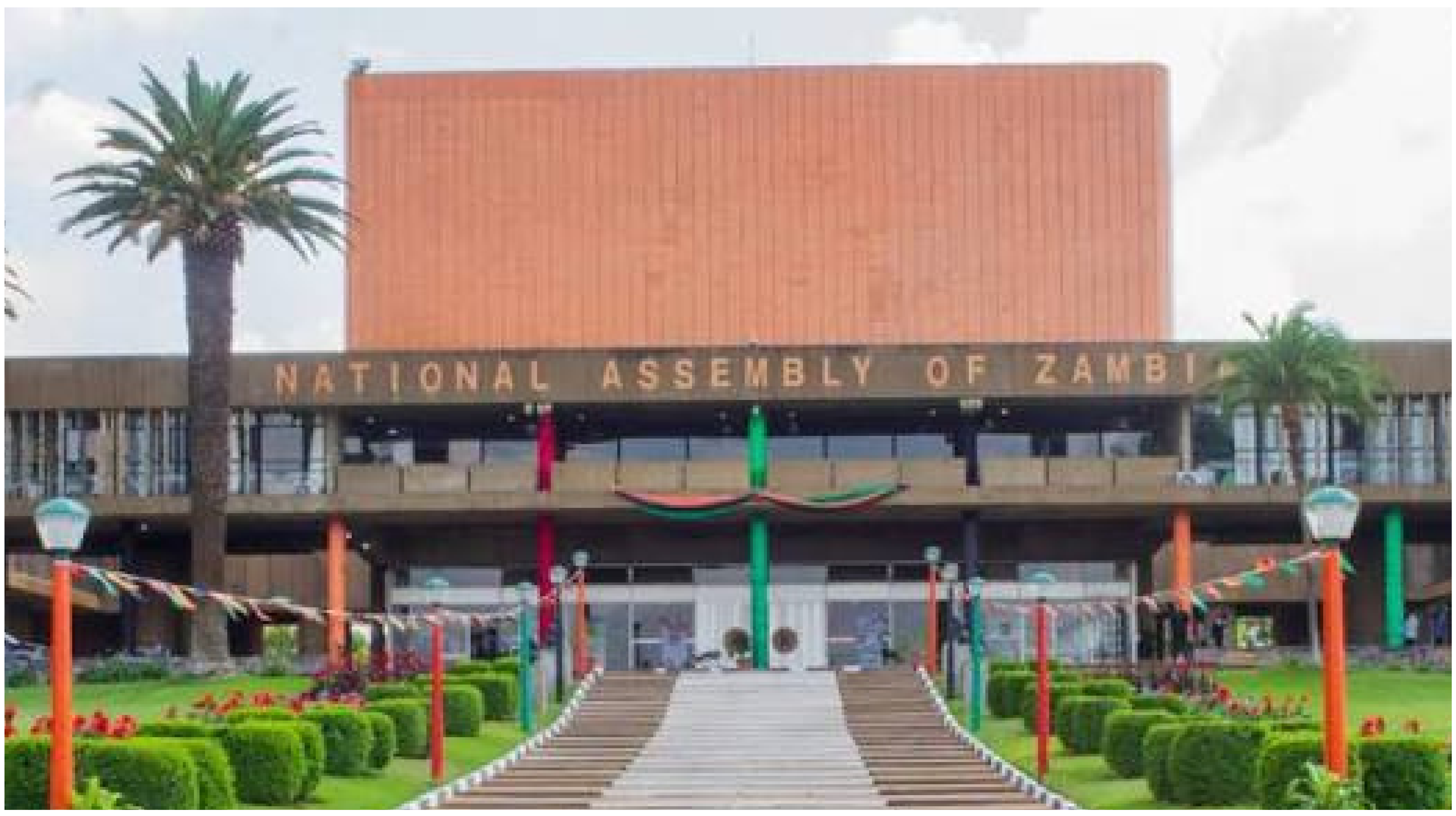
Cabinet ministers are not separate from parliament. They sit in the national assembly and are required to account for government business there.

They answer MPs' questions, explain government policy and bring government legislation before the house. They can also be called upon to account for decisions and expenditure within their ministries.

That scrutiny will matter as the new administration begins implementing its agenda.

After appointing the ministers, President Hichilema set out what he expects from his renewed administration. He said every ministry should become an engine of the government's Grow Zambia agenda, driving investment, production and job creation, strengthening public services and translating economic growth into improved livelihoods.

Following the first cabinet meeting, he also said cabinet should deliver jobs, revenue for the Treasury and business opportunities across the country. Those are commitments from the executive. Parliament is one of the places where their implementation can be examined.



When ministers appear before the national assembly, MPs have an opportunity to interrogate what government says it is doing. Parliamentary questions, ministerial statements, committee proceedings and debates create a public record of what was asked, what was answered and what commitments were made.

This week in the Bulletin & Record

Nevers Mumba — the presidency that never came

After decades in public life, Dr Nevers Mumba has announced his retirement from active politics and relinquished the leadership of the New Nation, former Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD), bringing to a close a political journey that once carried ambitions of reaching State House.

More than a decade ago, Mumba sat down with the Bulletin & Record to explain the ideas driving that ambition. He spoke of an Africa led by men and women of “morality and integrity”, of strengthening democratic institutions, fighting corruption and using education to lift Zambians out of poverty.

His confidence about his own political destination was striking. During the interview, he spoke not of “if” he became president, but “when” he became president.

That presidency never came.

As Mumba now steps away from the leadership of the New Nation and active politics, MakanDay Weekly returns to this revealing interview from our archives — a conversation with a politician looking towards the future, setting out what he believed Zambia needed and the kind of president he intended to become.

Read today, the interview offers more than a record of Mumba's political ambitions. It provides an opportunity to measure the convictions and promises of an earlier Nevers Mumba against the political journey that followed.

Originally published in the August 2014 edition of the Bulletin & Record Magazine.

Nevers Mumba seeks an Africa whose leaders have “morality and integrity”

The election of 2011 was the first time in the 20-year history of the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) that the race for the republican presidency was lost. In 2012, Dr Nevers Mumba was elected MMD president. Thus far he is the only MMD president who has not been the president of the country. Will he manage to change that in the 2016 election? He talks to Johan Rahm

Mumba sits in a chair on the lawn of his residential garden in Kabulonga, Lusaka. He finishes a phone call, instructing one of his co-workers not to respond to a question from media, but rather wait until the press conference the following day. Then he leaves two of his phones to another party official. His third phone he keeps in its case in his belt.

“My interest in politics emanates from the moment when I was watching the Rwandan genocide on TV. I saw a little boy, about seven years, who was crying. He was beating on the body of what appeared to be his dead mother. The cameras showed the horror in his face and in his eyes. I was deeply touched. That little boy looked like he could be one of my sons, I found myself weeping in front of the TV and the thought came to me that what happened in Rwanda could be happening in my country and my people could be the ones running away. From that day I came to believe in the importance of Africa having leaders with morality and integrity, and by that I mean that they could be men of their word.“

Nevers Mumba has his mind set on taking back the office of republican president for the MMD. During our interview, he does not once say “if I become president”, only “when I become president”.

What would be his first priority, should he be elected? Dr Mumba leans forward and starts talking:

“The reason I joined politics was to introduce morality and integrity into the political process. I believe in the combination of someone who has a proven record of morality and integrity and of strong institutions on the ground. I would make sure we put in place legislation that makes it extremely significant to bring strong democratic institutions so that the goodness or badness of a leader can be managed by the institutions. The institutions should have the authority to stop a president from doing what is not right and that they allow the president to further goodness. “

What type of institutions are you referring to?

“I am talking about governance institutions, for example media, Zambian Law Association and church associations. Those are the institutions that are important in a democracy. If they are removed it becomes very complicated and you would make a president a dictator. Nobody can challenge him, nobody can petition him, nobody can demonstrate.”

Do you think these organisations are weak today?

“Yes, they are very weak in our country today. Because most of them are terrified to operate under this regime and I would not like to see that under my government. I would like them to have the freedom so that they can execute their constitutional obligations. I would like it to be a total separation of power between the legislator, the executive power and the judiciary. This does not exist much anymore. That is important for a functioning democracy and that will instill confidence in to our democracy.”

Throughout the interview with Dr. Mumba, he returns to the concept of morality as an important factor to bring success to the political leadership. What does this word mean to him?

“Morality speaks to your conscious to make you take decisions on what is valuable to not just you, but to others. Morality is a consciousness of the welfare of others, being fair, a man of your word. If you are a moral man you find yourself bound to stay with your promise and to lift up the ones that are disadvantaged over the ones that have everything.”

Before Dr Mumba entered politics, he was a preacher. He travelled the world to spread the gospel and was followed by many people. How has this affected his career as a politician and how does he look upon the relation between Government and church?

“I see no conflict between state and religion. The crises come when you eliminate morality and godliness from the politics. What I bring to politics is an asset of good that will guarantee the people that the president will not wake up one day to be unjust to someone just because he feels like it or go and steal from government coffers. I think that politics needs godly values. Zambia is 89 per cent a Christian country, so we would like to build on that.”

Nevers Mumba speaks with a low voice, leaning forward in the garden armchair in which he is sitting. He starts talking about the issue he thinks is the most important to the development of Zambia and the empowerment of its people.

“Our people are taken advantage of because of their level of education. The less educated they are, the poorer they are and the more abused they are by the small elite that is educated. We need to educate our people to such levels that they can make intelligent decisions. Poverty has taken away their ability to decide

- **Nevers Mumba seeks an Africa whose leaders have "morality and integrity" cont...**

what is right for them. How do I mitigate this? Education will become compulsory for every child, so that no child is left behind in our country. It will be illegal to keep a child at home who is supposed to be in school. The reason I will take such an aggressive approach is that we are at a level now where if we are going to deal with poverty and ignorance we have to make sure education becomes a major factor."

Already today there are problems with over full classrooms and not sufficient teachers. How will you finance a costly reform like this?

"Every reform comes with prior planning. We are also looking at the price we have to pay 10 to 15 years down the line if we do not invest more in education. It is costly to do what I am talking about, but we are spending money on things today that are more costly that will not leave a legacy to the nation in terms of investing in human lives and in human resources. To me this will be a priority sector."

Dr Mumba's take on empowering the people of Zambia is, besides the focus on education, to rely on a liberalised market economy. Zambia's statistics on poverty are depressing. Even though the economic growth rate has been high for the last decade or so, poverty levels are relatively unchanged. But change will come if the economy is allowed to continue being liberalized, according to Dr. Mumba.

"The economic indicators are good. So why then are our people not benefiting? It takes time to trickle down to the last person in the line. We have to keep the interest rates low so that people can borrow money from the bank. This will make small and medium businesses start to employ people. Then you cut down unemployment. This will make interest rates improve even more and you will create a situation where even a small businessman can go to the bank and take a loan. If you stay on course, in a few years we will have this trickling down to the last guy in the line."

A crucial way of keeping the economic indicators on track is to continue attracting foreign capital and foreign investors to Zambia, according to Dr. Mumba.

"My position is based on a private sector-driven, liberalised economy, a market where anyone can come and participate, using equitable laws for everybody, where there is a win-win situation for the investor and for Zambia. In the value addition industries, for example manufacturing and mining, where there is a need for a lot of capital we opened up doors to the international community to come and work amongst us. Not as charity, but for them to make a profit. They are not here because they love some Zambians that much, they come to make a profit. We will make sure they will make a profit. But we will also make sure that the laws allow them to reinvest in this country to improve the quality of life of Zambians. For me, that is extremely significant that we have a win-win situation with investors. My government will continue to have a strong relationship with the investor community."

Some are accusing big companies of not being of benefit to Zambians, but only to make profit and move that profit out of Zambia.

"There was an argument before, when we were in government, that we were giving too much space to the Chinese, that the Chinese abused the workers or didn't pay them well. My take is that it is not the responsibility of foreign firms to set up the ground rules on how they are going to operate. We set the ground rules, they dance to the rules. So if our workers are not being paid well it's not the problem of that firm, they are here for profit and they will make sure they will squeeze the blood out of our people to get that profit. It's our responsibility to ensure that the regulations set in place are respected by all players, both local and foreign. If we fail, we can't blame a foreign firm."

A critical question for any person who assumes the highest political office of Zambia is access to health services. Many Zambians, especially those in rural areas, have limited access to health care and many are questioning the quality of care given to the majority of the population that cannot afford to pay for private care.

"Again, like education, the goal of government is to make sure that all citizens have access to some form of health care. This is one area in our country where a lot of governments have failed, because we carry this issue without a stipulated programme or plan.

"Our plan will be three tiered in terms of health care. Firstly, we are going to welcome the private sector to provide health care services for those that can afford it and for those who would like that kind of attention. Secondly, we are going to encourage the public--private sector partnership. These are health institutions that will run in partnership with government in order to reduce costs on means and services, for example when it comes to hospitalisation and specialised procedures. Through a public private partnership we are able to make sure that we can reduce the cost, by government taking some kind of responsibility on certain areas of specialisation that will be too expensive for ordinary Zambians.

"Thirdly, government is going to provide health care for the very poor in our society. But even then, each and everyone one will have a type of insurance card they can use to identify which kind of grouping they belong to. This three-tier policy is going to cater for the very poor, the middle class and the rich. All of them are going to have access to medical care at their level and feel responsible to pay for their services at the level where they have the ability. That will help so that Government can concentrate to provide health care to those who really don't have means to contribute."

Dr. Mumba says that one of the reasons he was recruited as vice president under Levy Mwanawasa was his commitment to fight corruption. This is a fight he claims he will continue to fight vigorously if he wins the election.

"To run a democracy you have to allow democratic institutions to be independent. The watchdogs that hold government to account, for example the Anti-Corruption Commission and other commissions that exist to protect us from the vice of corruption, have to be strengthened. That is the first thing. Corruption is very selfish behavior that must be dealt with. I am going to fight it in a practical manner. I have put in place a plan which distances the president from being the judge and the jury. It will not be coming from state house to say arrest this person because I don't like him, I suspect that he stole something. That type of witch hunting that is being done now has got a measure of success, but it is really not comprehensive."

Dr Mumba has a very concrete idea of how people in the public service should be monitored.

"I would like to put in place a system where public servants declare their assets as they join the public service. If in five to 10 years' time what they initially had does not measure up with what they have eventually become, the red lights should begin to go off.

And it is important to state that the red lights should go off in the system, not in state house! The system should show that there is something here that needs to be checked. Hong Kong has used this system with good results. It has worked well because it is not a human being who is following another human being just to be spiteful or just because he doesn't like him."

Dr. Mumba leans back and takes a zip of his coffee. In the distance a lawn mower starts to roar, as if it had been waiting for him to finish.

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