

Mpofu's newspaper struggles to pay salaries

A newspaper owned by a cabinet minister, Obert Mpofu, is on the verge of collapse amid reports it has been failing to pay workers on time for months.



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Mpofu is understood to be seized with the crisis with a way forward expected to be agreed this week.

The Zimbabwe Mail hit the streets 10 months ago becoming the Zimbabwe's fifth daily paper after *The Herald*, *The Chronicle*, *NewsDay* and *Southern Eye*. But since its launch, things have not been going on well for the newspaper with late payments for salaries being the order of the day, according to sources at the paper.

The Mail is not alone however, as other media groups are also facing similar challenges in a difficult economy.

NewZimbabwe.com understands that workers have still not been paid their September salaries.

Asked to keep the matter in-house

The workers said the salaries clerk and acting Human Resources Manager, Sicelukwazi Khumalo, met the workers and pleaded with them to keep the matter in-house while they are working flat out on the issue.

"She called us and pleaded with us not to let the media get wind of what is happening here. She claimed that all was in order and our salaries will be paid soon," said one journalist.

"The late payment of our salaries has been going on and now we can't bear it anymore and we have approached the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ) which promised to come to our offices on Wednesday and talk to management."

Accusations

Some journalists at the paper accused the Editor, Constantine Chimakure, the only person with direct access to the "big man" (Mpofu), of abandoning them.

They accused Chimakure of going on a 21 day junior journalism training programme in China under the Seminar for Zimbabwean Journalists Scheme. Chimakure could not be reached for comment on the matter.

Sources said Mpofu appears to have washed his hands off the paper as it was chewing money from his other businesses.

"The only person who believes in the business for now is the 'Obedient Son' (Mpofu) as it has become a loss making venture. But he seems to also have lost interest since revenue has not been forthcoming and we last saw him some months ago," said a journalist who asked for anonymity.

Asked for comment, Khumalo said: "What has that got to do with you and who told you that this is happening? Go and get more information from your source."

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