

Zimbabwe's sole newsprint plant remains closed

By [Dumisani Ndlela](#)

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Zimbabwe's sole newsprint producer, Mutare Board and Paper Mills (MBPM) will remain inactive due to the low prices of paper, forcing newspaper publishers to import from South Africa.



Richard Zirebwa, chief executive officer (CEO) of MBPM's holding company, ART Corporation, said the decision to close the MBPM newsprint plant in November 2009 had been sustained by the board. MBPM would be re-engineered "to focus on timber not paper," Zirebwa said.

"Imported newsprint is landing cheaper than we can produce," said Zirebwa, insisting that their operations were weighed down by exorbitant utility costs in Zimbabwe.

The company's mill and estates are energy intensive, requiring large supplies of coal, fuel and electricity. ART closed the MBPM's newsprint plant in November last year after prices of newsprint in the market continued to fall, putting pressure on margins.

MBPM has one of the biggest timber plantations in the country and this represents a significant asset in the parent firm.

The company started manufacturing paper board in 1953 and production of newsprint started in 1962. Since then, MBPM has remained the sole producer of newsprint products in Zimbabwe and enjoys a presence in other regional countries.

ABOUT DUMISANI NDLELA

Dumisani Ndlela is a Zimbabwean journalist specialising in business and financial reporting, with experience reporting on commodities, stock and financial markets, advertising, marketing and the media. He has previously reported from a number of regional countries as well as from the UK and Germany on commodities and regional integration. He can be contacted on dndlela@yahoo.co.uk.

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