

Eight die in stampede for free food in Lusaka



Eight people died and 28 were injured in a stampede at the Olympic Youth Development Centre on the northern outskirts of Lusaka.

The stampede was triggered by a promise of free food. Details were confusing, but the food was allegedly being distributed by Lesedi Seven, a subsidiary of the Church of Christ, ei-

ther of the US or Philippines, and definitely not to be confused with the Church of Christ in Zambia, as the latter was quick to point out. People had apparently been enticed to show up for prayers with a promise of getting 10 kg of mealie meal and other food items, such as sugar, soya pieces, beans, cooking oil and cabbage, depending on reports. According to the police, about 35,000 people showed up.

Government reacted by immediately suspending the operations of the church to pave the way for investigations. Minister for Religious Affairs and National Guidance Godfridah Sumaili stated that the church's leaders had failed to comply with the Public Order Act, and Minister of Home Affairs Stephen Kampyongo explained that their travel documents had been confiscated.

Opposition UPND president Hakainde Hichilema had his own explanation for the accident: "These deaths were avoidable in the sense that our people died as they were looking for food, which has become a luxury under the current government. This is totally unacceptable and we should bow our heads in shame," he said.

The Council of Churches in Zambia agreed, arguing that the accident "should serve as an eye opener to government that poverty levels in the country have reached alarming levels".

However, ruling PF party secretary general Davis Mwila explained that the party would not stop mourning to respond to Hichilema's allegations.

One of the victims, Joyce Mwanza, 67, allegedly left behind 20 orphaned grandchildren.

Beware at roundabouts in Lusaka!

One or more gangs are apparently targeting motorists at the south-end (Kafue) roundabout, but also at the north-end (Kabwe) roundabout. The ruse goes something like this: the gang breaks one of your car windows, which gets you to stop, after which they loot your car of valuables. The police have intensified patrols, and are implementing "certain measures" to capture the gang.

Mass arrests in Solwezi

Police arrested over 300 people in one night in Solwezi with the aim of stemming an increase in burglaries in the last few weeks. Northwestern Police Chief Auxensio Daka explained that the police had intensified night patrols, and had recovered stolen items such as TVs, refrigerators, music systems, electricity and copper cables, grinding machines and hammers.

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Government has listened to local councillors' complaints over being given an allowance rather than a salary

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Editor's note

I couldn't agree more! Zambia definitely needs to allocate more resources to gender, just as President Lungu said on International Women's Day, as women are key to this country's economic development. However, I find it worrying that our president is using the day to direct his finance minister to "ensure that adequate resources are allocated to the Ministry of Gender for implementing the PF manifesto's vision of gender and women's empowerment programmes", accusing the minister of treating it as a "Cinderella ministry". This is the exact cause of Zambia's economic morass: an executive meddling in the economic affairs of the country! Had it not been for President Sata's interference – directing money to anything from infrastructure to the civil service – Zambia would not have plummeted to the depths it did. Right now, Zambia is trying to prove to the rest of the world that it is capable of sticking to a national budget – after years of setting records in budget deficits – and Lungu's utterances are rather unfortunate in this context. In addition, Lungu is himself giving the Cinderella treatment to the Ministry of Gender, having appointed Victoria Kalima to head it. With a background in the former ruling MMD party, Kalima is a typical swing-door politician, who joined the PF ahead of the general elections in 2016, having reportedly announced that being in the opposition is a "waste of time". She has no prior ministerial experience, and she has failed to stand out since her appointment in October 2016. More money is not the solution to everything.

Bereaved family sues Mopani

The bereaved family of the late Royd Meleki has dragged Mopani Copper Mines and its subsidiary, Rig Resources Limited, to court, demanding about K165,000 in compensation. Meleki, 46, an employee of Rig Resources, was killed in an explosion accident in Mufulira in October 2016. The family believes the accident was caused by negligence. Details were unclear, but the family is arguing that the explosion site was unsafe, and that Meleki was blasting more ends than is common practice.

35 street vendors arrested

Police have arrested 35 street vendors in Kitwe for riotous behaviour. The vendors were trying to return to the city corridors after being removed by the Kitwe City Council two months ago. Many towns on the Copperbelt have recently clamped down on street vending, but the vendors in Kitwe do not want to trade from Chisokone Market. They want to stay close to their customers on the streets, and claim that the market is in a "deplorable state".

Construction of solar plants about to commence



One of the developers of Zambia's first large-scale solar plant, Neoen of France, has completed negotiations on taxation, land provision and equity financing, reportedly allowing the company to sign a power purchase agreement with ZESCO last week. This "milestone (...) sets solid ground for reaching financial closure on the project", Finance Minister Felix Mutati stated. Government is currently on a mission to develop several solar power plants in Zambia under

the World Bank's Scaling Solar programme. The first round has been awarded, while the tendering process for the second round is expected to take off within a month.

Projects awarded so far:

The West Lunga Power Plant: 47.5 MW to be developed by Neoen of France and First Solar of the US. When Neoen won the tender in June 2016, it was reported that it was with a tariff of 6.02 US cents/kWh, the lowest in sub-Saharan Africa. The power plant, consisting of about 450,000 high-performance First Solar modules, will cover an area of almost 129 acres (approximately 73 football pitches). Neoen was founded in 2008. It has several major projects across the world under its belt.

Mosi-oa-Tunya Power Plant: 28 or 34 MW, depending on reports, to be developed, financed, constructed, owned and operated by Enel Green Power of Italy. Enel won the tender with a tariff of 7.84 US cents/kWh. No technical details about the plant are publically available. Enel ventured into solar power in 2011, and is currently constructing several plants, including in South Africa.

Both solar plants will be located in the Lusaka South Multi-Facility Economic Zone, and government's Industrial Development Corporation will retain a 20% stake in both of them. The electricity generated will be supplied to ZESCO through 25-year power purchase agreements. Construction was scheduled to commence this month, with some reports saying it would take 8 months to complete the plants, while others reported that the construction would be completed by mid-2017.

Two new interconnectors to be constructed

The NEPAD Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility (IPPF) has approved \$3.88 million in grants to the DR Congo, Mozambique and Zambia to finance the completion of two regional interconnectors. Kolwezi-Solwezi received \$1.98 million and Zambia-Mozambique \$1.9 million, excluding US Trade and Development Agency co-financing worth \$0.8 million. The grants will fund feasibility studies, including detailed design and tender documents for the proposed high-voltage direct current (HVDC) 330/400 kV transmission lines within two years. The two interconnectors are vital to connect the north-south and east-west Southern African Development Community (SADC) power grid.

NEPAD-IPPF is a multi-donor special fund that supports African countries to translate major continental initiatives such as the African Union's Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, as well as regional infrastructure master plans of the power pools, into bankable, investment-ready projects. The special fund is currently supported by the African Development Bank as host institution, Canada, Germany, the UK, Denmark, Norway and Spain. NEPAD is the technical body of the African Union.

Pay for your water!

Government intends to introduce a tariff for the use of raw water sometime next year, after consulting all stakeholders, ZNBC reported. Water, Sanitation and Environmental Protection Permanent Secretary Ed Chomba explained that the consultative period will result in a pricing structure for various purposes, such as environmental, agricultural, municipal and industrial usage. Government hopes that the new system will help it to manage water resource in Zambia efficiently, sustainably and beneficially. Currently, users of raw water do not pay anything for the volume they consume, apart from an annual water right fee.