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Friday, 01 February 2008

**DAILY PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES FOR THE SECOND SESSION OF
THE TENTH ASSEMBLY**

Tuesday, 29th January, 2008

The House met at 1430 hours

[MR SPEAKER in the Chair]

NATIONAL ANTHEM

PRAYER

ANNOUNCEMENT BY MR SPEAKER

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, in the absence of His Honour the Vice-President who is attending to other national duties, Hon. G. W. Mpombo, MP, Minister of Defence, has been appointed Acting Leader of Government Business in the House from today, Tuesday, 29th January to Friday, 1st February, 2008.

Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN BY THE RAILWAY SYSTEMS OF ZAMBIA

71. Mr Kambwili asked the Minister of Communications and Transport:

(a) what capital projects the Railway Systems of Zambia had undertaken to recapitalise the company from inception to date; and

(b) how much had been spent on the projects at (a) above.

The Minister of Communications and Transport (Ms Sayifwanda): Mr Speaker,

the capital projects that the Railway Systems of Zambia have undertaken to recapitalise the company from inception to date are as follows:

Track Rehabilitation

Mr Speaker, on the mainline, which is from Livingstone to Kitwe, only 9.75 kilometres, has been rehabilitated, leaving a length of 832.25 kilometres because 518 kilometres, which is 62 per cent of the line, was rehabilitated in 2003 before the handover. The other lines, which include Chililabombwe, Mufulira and Masuku, have not been attended to.

In addition, instead of complete re-sleeping, the Railway Systems of Zambia have merely been interlacing at an average of one concrete sleeper for every four wooden sleepers in the sections of the mainline which had not been re-laid prior to the concession.

Sir, on the marshalling yards, most of the worn out components on turnouts in major yards such as Kitwe, Ndola and Livingstone have not been replaced and this has led to a reduction in yard derailments.

Locomotive Maintenance

Mr Speaker, the locomotive holding has increased to fifty-six with the addition of other locomotives which had been sidelined. The current status of the locomotives is as follows:

Type of Loco-Motive	Total	Over-hauled	Overdue	Not Serviceable	Remarks
36GT	12	07	02	Nil	03 stabled
CU MP				unserviceable	
GE U20C	32	06	Nil	Nil	08 stabled and 18
GE U15C	10	02	06	02	
CMI	02	01	Nil	01	
Total	56	16	08	03	

Mr Speaker, there is an apparent improvement in locomotive availability due to reduced rail traffic. Further, eight serviceable U20C locomotives have been

stabled at the workshops. After overhauling a total of sixteen locomotives, in 2007, reliability increased to an average of 83 per cent compared to 78 per cent in 2005. However, it was observed that most locomotives had worn out wheels and all the ten locomotives at the workshops scheduled for overhaul required new sets of wheels.

Wagon Rehabilitation

Sir, a total of 2,000 wagons are reported to have been maintained since 2005 as detailed below:

- (i) Heavy repairs 300;
- (ii) Light repairs 1,450; and
- (iii) Accident repairs 250

Passenger Service

Mr Speaker, the programme to install lighting and running water in the twenty-eight passenger coaches bought from Spoornet has almost been completed, with the third and last which consist of eight coaches, now being painted at the workshops. These are expected to be in use before the end of February, 2008.

The passenger coaches that were taken over from the Zambia Railways Ltd (ZRL) have, however, been sidelined and most of them have been vandalised.

Safety, Health and Environment Management

Mr Speaker, the Railway Systems of Zambia have embarked on Safety, Health and Management programmes. The first phase of these programmes involves the pollution control and environmental mitigation measures which have already commenced, involving the construction of oil separators, including incinerators and dump sites at Kabwe, Livingstone, Ndola and Kitwe.

Communication System Rehabilitation

Sir, the Railway Systems of Zambia are putting up a more modern radio-based signaling system, the Track Warrant System, and the operating rules

have been finalised.

Plant and Equipment rehabilitation

Mr Speaker, a lot of progress has been made in reconditioning and rehabilitation of the overhead cranes and jib cranes. These have been certified by the Government inspectors. On the re-railing equipment front, more than 65 per cent of all hydraulic jacks were rehabilitated, with emphasis on reducing leakages, providing new high pressure hoses and providing motorised pumps. Lighting gensets are being provided to all stations where re-railing teams are.

Station Rehabilitation

A programme of giving face lift to the station facilities at all major railway stations has been embarked on. The stations at Ndola, Livingstone, Lusaka, Kabwe, Kapiri Mposhi, Mazabuka and Kafue are still being rehabilitated.

Mr Speaker, the expenditure, to date, is US \$14.45 million. I would like to explain to this august House that the \$14.45 million is meant for the five years of the concession agreement, from 2004 to 2008. The concession agreement gave a threshold of an expenditure of US \$10 million. According to the RSZ, this is above the given threshold.

I thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Nkombo (Mazabuka): Mr Speaker, going by the lengthy answer given by the hon. Minister, I would like her to confirm whether or not the Railway Systems of Zambia have actually abided by the contractual obligations, especially with regard to the rehabilitation of the railway line. If they have not, what has the Government done about it?

Ms Sayifwanda: Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. Member for that concern.

Sir, the fact is that according to the concession agreement, as I have stated in the last part of the response, the company has done its best. Let me also mention to this august House that through my Ministry, the Government has engaged in fresh discussions with this company. I have already constituted a committee to handle this. I have also given them directives on what this Government would like to see from this company.

I thank you, Mr Speaker.

Ms Phiri indicated.

Mr Mukanga: On a point of order, Sir.

Mr Speaker: A point of order is raised

Mr Mukanga: Mr Speaker, some time last year, the hon. Minister of Health came to this House to explain the problem the country experienced with regard to Viracept. Viracept is an ARV that was alleged to cause cancer.

Is the hon. Minister in order to remain quiet when the people out there are given a contraceptive in the name of Depo-provera which is alleged to transmit HIV/AIDS to people. Is he in order to remain quiet without informing the nation through this House? I need your serious ruling, Sir.

Hon Opposition Members: Hear, hear!

Mr Speaker: Order! In his point of order, the hon. Member for Kantanshi is saying that the hon. Minister of Health has remained quiet on a topical issue regarding the contraceptive that the hon. Member for Kantanshi has mentioned.

The Chair is aware of what sounds, to me, like communication by a cross section of people who have commented on this matter. What I am aware of is what you are also aware of. One school of thought, I don't know whether these are scientists, said this contraceptive has been laced with an HIV substance. The other school of thought, one of who is the hon. Minister of Health, is saying no, that is not true. This school of thought is saying that they have subjected this particular medication to scientific tests both at home and abroad and the result shows that the drug has not been laced with any HIV substance.

In exclusive audience with the hon. Minister of Health, by way of a Ministerial Statement, the Chair will have no objection to grant him ...

Hon. Opposition Members: Hear, hear!

Mr Speaker: ... an opportunity to do so when he is ready.

The hon. Member for Luanshya was raising a Supplementary Question.

Ms Phiri (Luanshya): Mr Speaker, arising from the elaborate answer that the

hon. Minister has given, I would like to know if at all the committee that has been constituted in the Ministry has been given an instruction to also look into the Luanshya railway line because we have a problem relating to the railway line in Luanshya.

Ms Sayifwanda: Mr Speaker, I would say that I have given instructions to the joint committee to look into the whole railway line being operated by the Railway Systems of Zambia. Apart from that, we are negotiating the whole concession agreement.

I thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Mwiimbu (Monze): Mr Speaker, the nation was informed by His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Zambia, Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, SC, that the Government had terminated the contract of the Railway Systems of Zambia. This pronouncement was made in Cape Town, South Africa. Thereafter, the hon. Minister of Finance and National Planning made a statement on the Floor of this House where he indicated that the Government was very unhappy with the performance of this particular company. Is the hon. Minister on the Floor contradicting her hon. Colleagues in the Government by expressing her happiness with the performance of RSZ and without indicating what has now changed from the earlier statements?

Hon. Opposition Members: Hear, hear!

Ms Sayifwanda: Mr Speaker, let me say that the pronouncement that was captured in South Africa was just a rumour.

Hon. Opposition Members: Aah!

Ms Sayifwanda: As a result, the agreement is legal. There is no way we can terminate a contract on which hon. Members and the whole nation have already appended their signatures. It is a legal document. If I remember correctly, the hon. Minister of Finance and National Planning did not just talk about the Railway Systems of Zambia, but the entire railway infrastructure in this nation.

I am agreeable that there is not much that the RSZ have done with regard to infrastructure. This is the reason I am saying that as a Ministry and Minister in charge of railway infrastructure, I have constituted this committee to look into all these issues.

I thank you, Me Speaker.

Hon. Government Members: Hear, hear!

Mr Simama (Kalulushi): Mr Speaker, how many years has it taken the Railway Systems of Zambia to rehabilitate the 9.5 kilometres they have worked on so far and when are they promising to finish the remaining 800 kilometres?

Ms Sayifwanda: Mr Speaker, if the hon. Member was listening, I said that the other part was worked on by the Zambia Railways Ltd at the time the Railways System of Zambia was taking over. Therefore, since the committee is now sitting, they have to discuss all these issues.

I thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr C. K. B. Banda, Sc. (Chasefu): Mr Speaker, vandalism of assets which were left by the Zambia Railways Ltd while in the custody of the Railway Systems of Zambia is definitely evidence that the assets are not secure. What will your Government do to ensure that the vandalised assets are paid for by the Railway Systems of Zambia?

Ms Sayifwanda: Mr Speaker, I have stood on the Floor of this House on several occasions to emphasise the problem of vandalism. I have also encouraged hon. Members to be on the look out for incidents of vandalism. This issue is neither for the company nor for me as Minister in charge of the railway infrastructure, no. it is for all Zambians to ensure that what the infrastructure we put in place lasts long.

I remember last time when I was contributing to a debate I said that vandalism would not build this country at all. If we resort to vandalism, just know that we are taking ourselves backwards, which is not healthy.

To answer the last part of the question, Mr Speaker, I have told the company to ensure that they put security measures in place like the Zambia Railways Ltd did.

I thank you, Sir.