

Wednesday, December 17, 2008

## **Minister challenges RSZ to invest more**

By Times Reporter

THE Government has challenged shareholders and management of Railway Systems of Zambia (RSZ) to invest more in the railway firm to enhance its operations in Zambia.

Officiating at a graduation ceremony of 25 RSZ protective officers in Kabwe yesterday, Central Province Minister, Ackimson Banda said shareholders of the railway company should invest more to scale up operations.

"I am delighted to learn that RSZ has continued to invest in various operational activities of the company despite the adverse global economic situation which Zambia is also facing and as a result, leading to the retrenchment of workers in some companies in this country.

"I can only encourage RSZ shareholders and its management to continue partnering with Government through continued investments in your operations such as the occasion we are witnessing today," Mr Banda said.

RSZ had continued investments through the procurement of 10 security patrol vehicles, firearms, hand-held radios and fitting of global position satellite devices on locomotives.

Mr Banda said such an approach was the only way to survive the current harsh economic environment.

He hailed the RSZ and the Zambia Police Service security strategic partnership, which resulted in the training of the 25 recruits.

"We all know that the importance of national security and safety cannot be over-emphasised because the social economic development of the country can never take place in its absence.

"I am grateful to note that this training programme will continue with funding worth K95 million already targeted besides the K50 million which has been spent on the first training exercise," Mr Banda said.

The recruits went through a comprehensive training of one month and covered topics on law and police duties, evidence, investigations, Public Order Act, communications skills, Railway Act as well as drill and weapon training.

Mr Banda was confident that, with the training that the officers had acquired, they would be able to police the railway industry professionally and be able to confront dynamic challenges they would encounter.

He said the railway line was a critical national infrastructure and given the number of times the installation had been subjected to costly sabotage, the Government had now treated such crimes under national security rather than isolated criminal incidents.

The minister said the recent amendment of the Railway Act to enable it met out stiffer penalties on criminals vandalising the railway infrastructure and other assets, showed the Government's commitment to safeguarding such property. RSZ chief executive officer (CEO), Benjamin Even assured the Government that his company would continue to invest in its operations despite the economic recession.

"Despite the economic meltdown, RSZ has continued to invest in its operations and we have procured fire arms, control towers as well as other vital equipment

to enhance our operations close to more than K1 billion," Mr Even said. He said vandalism had continued to affect his company negatively but was happy that with the newly recruited protective officers, the vice would be curbed. Central Province police chief Brenda Muntemba was happy that her command had successfully carried out the training of the RSZ protective officers. Ms Muntemba said RSZ was a backbone of the province as it had created several jobs for the locals. She was happy that her office had entered into a training partnership with RSZ, a venture that would help safeguard infrastructure for the railway company.