

Malawi's newspaper companies trying to out-do each other

Malawi's two major newspaper companies are set to revolutionise the newspaper industry as both have announced acquisition of new printing machines.



By Gregory Gondwe: @Kalipochi 13 Jul 2012

While Nation Publications Limited (NPL) announced earlier this week that they are installing a multi-million kwacha modern printing press bought in Taiwan, in Capital Lilongwe, the announcement by their rival Blantyre Newspapers Limited (BNL) currently undergoing rebranding process to become Blantyre Print and Publishing Times Group (BPP Times Group) has a more uneventful manner of making their announcement.

UK based online publication Nyasa Times, on Wednesday 11 July 2012, [reported](#) that the company's managing director Leonard Chikadya and the general manager Tikhala Chibwana were duped of K60 million when they used a 'middleman' who was going to help them purchase a printing machine in Italy.

According to the report, the two men travelled to Italy recently to have a look at the machine and engaged the middle man to finalise the deal on their behalf and paid him the K60 million.

"But the middleman has disappeared, he is nowhere to be seen, they cannot reach him on the phone, he is not even responding to emails and the bosses are panicking now," the report quotes what it says an inside source.

"They have to think of what they will tell the shareholders of what they have done with the K60 million. Because out of the K60 million, they borrowed K50 million from National Bank of Malawi and they are just praying that the middleman resurfaces," reports Nyasa Times.

The two officials issued a statement condemning the story and in the process made an announcement of their acquisition one day after NPL captured consultants installing their new machine.

The statement titled "BPP Times Machine Coming August 2012" states that it becomes necessary to make the statement to correct the misinformation and distortions that have appeared in Nyasa Times regarding their acquisition of news web machine.

"Firstly, no journalist from Nyasa Times or indeed from any other credible media house has spoken to either the managing director or the general manager of BPP Times Group regarding the acquisition of the equipment. Therefore the comments attributed to them on Nyasa Times are a total fabrication and very unfortunate," the statement reads in part before conceding:

"While it is true that BPP Times are in the process of acquiring a news web machine, they are not doing so through any middleman, Robert Graphics of the UK are supplying the equipment."

BPP Times Group disclosed in the statement that indeed part payment of the machine has already been done through normal transactions through the banks and that contrary to the online story that they got a loan from the bank; the money used came from internally generated resources.

"...[This] was not borrowed from any bank as purported by Nyasa Times," it reads, "the suggestion therefore that the company has been swindled is therefore false and out of malice as there is no factual element in it."

BPP Times Group disclosed further that the agreed delivery date of the machine as per contract is August 2012 and that to the best of their knowledge, that delivery time is on schedule.

"Nyasa Times are welcome to attend the commissioning if they so wish," the statement says.

BPP Times Group management say it must be understood that the acquisition of the news web machine is a completion of an exercise of machine replacement that started some two years ago.

"To date the company has acquired a five colour machine for commercial jobs and two computers to plate (CTP) equipment one for commercial jobs and another for newspapers," the management states.

The statement says the company said goodbye to the technology of processing films for newspaper production almost a year ago as it embraced the CTP technology.

"And the machine which is being acquired is not just another newspaper web machine. It will further transform the way BPP Times does business beyond media," it says.

The company publishes *The Daily Times* and four other titles that include *Malawi News*, *Weekend Times*, *Business Times*, *The Sunday Times* and a magazine *Times Lifestyle*.

While BPP Times Group is fighting its wars over the events that led to the acquisition of the machine, NPL stated that a media revolution has taken place at Nation Publications Limited and customers should expect dramatic improvement in quality and delivery time.

It was reported that NPL's acquisition of a new state-of-the-art printing press will not only benefit clients through timely and quality productions but also offer several colour options.

"The machine being planted in Lilongwe next to National Construction Industry offices along the M1 Road from Blantyre is the first brand new printing press in the history of publishing in the country," declared the newspaper company.

Mac Donald Kadewa, NPL spokesperson and head of sales and bureaus, says that printing press will enable the company to serve customers from a central point.

"As usual we aim at serving our clients better; hence as such we are installing this machine in Lilongwe so that we can continue to efficiently and effectively give them (customers) a better service," he is quoted as saying.

NPL publishes *The Nation*, *Weekend Nation*, *Nation on Sunday*, *Nation online* and *Fuko*.

Kadewa says the machine will increase NPL's printed products because it will be a one stop printing shop.

"With the machine, we can also print calendars en masse, exercise books, posters, and flyers among others. In fact people can save money by way of printing locally, but getting same quality. The printing press is expected to be commissioned in a month's time," he said. Adding that NPL's old printing press which is in Blantyre will be a backup before disposal.

"The new printing press has a lot of specifications, but some of the key features that our clients will enjoy include processing speed where many copies are printed in few hours, good quality products printed on few hours, good quality products printed back to back, as well as varied choice in terms of colour combinations," he said.

ABOUT GREGORY GONDWE: @KALIPOCHI

Gregory Gondwe is a Malawian journalist who started writing in 1993. He is also a media consultant assisting several international journalists pursuing assignments in Malawi. He holds a Diploma and an Intermediate Certificate in Journalism among other media-related certificates. He can be contacted on gregorygondwe@gmail.com. Follow him on Twitter at @Kalipochi. View my profile and articles...