

17 Ministry of Health staff charged for failure to retire imprest

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LUSAKA

MINISTRY of Health permanent secretary Peter Mwaba yesterday told the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) that 17 officers in four provincial medical offices and nursing schools have been charged for failure to retire imprest worth K400,000.

Dr Mwaba said the 17 officers issued with the charge letters are from Northern, Copperbelt, North Western and Eastern provinces. He said this yesterday when he appeared before the PAC chaired

by Choma Central member of Parliament (MP) Cornelius Mweetwa (UPND) to respond to queries cited in the Auditor General's report.

"All accountable imprest totalling K400,290 issued to 17 officers during the period under review has been retired and charge letters were issued to responsible officers," Dr Mwaba said.

Dr Mwaba also told the committee that his office has issued a circular to stop the procurement of goods and services using accountable imprest and officers abrogating the directive

risk being charged.

This is in the wake of revelations in the Auditor General's report that K58,596 was irregularly issued to 10 officers as accountable imprest to buy goods and services whose values were obtainable on the market.

And Dr Mwaba told the committee that the principal tutor at Mekingwe School of Nursing has been reprimanded for spending K15,000 to buy suits for 10 members of staff who were attending a graduation ceremony. He said the K15,000 is being recovered from the affected

officers.

The Auditor General's report revealed that Mekingwe Nursing School management irregularly procured graduation attire for 10 members of staff.

And Dr Mwaba said he does not take pleasure in appearing before the committee because "I end up looking like a common bandit".

"I know that accountability is very sensitive and I hope these [financial] irregularities will not appear in future.

"We will be rolling out performance contracts to provincial medical officers and

those found wanting with regards to financial irregularities will be charged," he said in response to Mr Mweetwa, who asked what proactive measures he is putting in place to avoid similar irregularities.

Meanwhile, before presenting his submissions to the committee, Dr Mwaba raised a preliminary issue concerning the lead story carried in yesterday's Daily Nation newspaper titled "K13.7million Antiretroviral Drugs expired".

The paper reported that ARVs and other drugs worth

K13,750,821 procured by the Ministry of Health had expired.

But Dr Mwaba said the story was misleading and a misrepresentation of facts.

According to Dr Mwaba's submissions, the drugs in question were only rendered obsolete because of the changes in the treatment regime by the World Health Organisation.

In response, Mr Mweetwa, who later adjourned the session, urged Dr Mwaba to consider formalising his complaint before the clerk of the National Assembly or the chairperson of PAC.

Zambia tipped on power losses

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UNIPOWER Sweden co-founder Johan Adolfsson says Zambia needs to invest more in monitoring its power system to benefit from its limited power supply.

Mr Adolfsson said significant amounts of energy disappear in the electricity grid through losses and that the country can find solutions to the loss if it measured its losses through a monitoring mechanism.

"In Zambia, it is especially important because you have a lack of energy, so why waste energy through losses?" he wondered.

According to Mr Adolfsson, Zambia can save energy by reducing the losses without building any more power generators.

He said this on Thursday during an interview at Kafue George Regional Training Centre (KGRTC) where Unipower was conducting a three-day training workshop for participants from energy companies under the Southern African Power Pool (SAPP).

Unipower transfers knowledge to all the power companies participating in the course which can then start optimising their networks and making changes.

"This particular training is meant to give the fundamentals and understanding of the power system, power quality and energy efficiency," Mr Adolfsson explained.

He said the solution lies in optimising and working with the loads and customers in the electricity grid especially big industries in countries lacking power like Zambia.

Mr Adolfsson also explained that one of the factors that cause power losses is the installation of metres without filters by some industrial companies.

"Most participants under the course are running the electricity grid and need to enhance their knowledge so that they can run it better by avoiding disturbances or interruptions," Mr Adolfsson said.

The course covers the efficient use of electricity which can only be known if it is being measured. It also mainly focuses on how to measure the quality of electricity supply in terms of voltage and current.

KGRTC is a Zesco training centre and transformed into a regional training centre under the auspices of SADC with the sponsorship of the Norwegians and Swedes in 1989. Unipower has worked in collaboration with the KGRTC for two years.

Unipower Sweden are specialists in power quality and energy efficiency that help save significant amounts of electricity costs and avoid production stops and electricity interruptions.

Magufuli invites Lungu

President to undertake several visits to cement ties

STEVEN MUYILA
LUSAKA

PRESIDENT Lungu is scheduled to undertake a number of state visits within Africa aimed at strengthening ties with other countries and attracting investment into Zambia, Minister of Foreign Affairs Harry Kalaba has announced.

Mr Kalaba said at a press briefing in Lusaka yesterday that President Lungu is also expected to host King Mohamed VI of Morocco next month.

He said the President will from November 27 to 29 visit Tanzania at the invitation of that country's leader John Magufuli.

"Zambia is exploring various ways of growing its economy and ways of growing its economy and one of such ways is by forging ties with other countries within and outside Africa," Mr Kalaba said.

The minister said during the Tanzania visit, President Lungu will discuss with his counterpart, among other issues, the Tanzania Zambia Railways and the Tanzania Zambia Mafuta Pipeline.

The two leaders will look at how to make the two entities more efficient.

Mr Kalaba said the two Presidents will further discuss the idea of coming up with a one-stop border post at Nakonde/Tunduma because it is the second busiest border after Chirundu.

He said President Lungu has also been invited by South African President Jacob Zuma between December 7 and 9 to discuss matters of mutual co-operation especially in trade, security, mining and agriculture.

"President Lungu will also attend the International



MINISTER of Foreign Affairs Harry Kalaba addresses journalists at Charter House in Lusaka yesterday. On the right is Ministry of Foreign Affairs director Eunice Luambiya. PICTURE: JACKSON WASAMUNU