

Railroader Digital Newsletter

feedback: pubreoffice@nrz.co.zw; amutemi@nrz.co.zw
Tel: 09-363794

2/2018

New Era for NRZ

Friday 21 February 2018 was a special day for the Railways family with the first step being taken towards the long awaited recapitalisation of the National Railways of Zimbabwe. On that day, President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa received Interim Solution equipment from Diaspora Infrastructure Development Group (DIDG)/Transnet on lease to the National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ) pending the finalisation of the agreement to recapitalise the organisation, in front of a huge appreciative audience which included Vice President Kembo Mohadi, Government Ministers, NRZ Board members and management, customers, suppliers as well as members of the public. Although recapitalisation of NRZ has been talked about for more than a decade, this is the first time such a stage has been reached. In the past, talk of recapitalisation ended on the drawing board. With President Mnangagwa receiving the interim solution equipment, he has set the tone for a new NRZ and showed that the Government is serious this time about the recapitalisation of the NRZ. The equipment received by Cde Mnangagwa comprised seven locomotives, 150 high sided wagons and seven coaches. The equipment is being leased from South African rail utility, Transnet, under a clause in the



President Mnangagwa cuts a ribbon to mark official reception of Interim Solution Equipment

Framework Agreement between the NRZ and DIDG/Transnet Consortium.

Under that clause, DIDG/Transnet will hire out equipment for use by the NRZ while negotiations on the recapitalisation deal are being finalised.

In his speech before receiving the equipment, President Mnangagwa said the event was historic for the NRZ and should mark a change of fortunes for the organisation.

"I am certain that this marks a turning point for our rail infrastructure as we endeavour to provide enablers to fully re-

industrialise our economy," he said.

The President said the reception of the equipment was in line with his government's desire to grow the economy while ensuring that Bulawayo, headquarters of the NRZ, regained its status as the country's industrial hub.

"The rail system is essential in the transportation of bulk and heavy goods in strategic sectors such as mining, agriculture and manufacturing industries.

"To this end, the significance of an effective and efficient rail system cannot be over-emphasised, more so in a landlocked economy like ours, as it enhances our ability to compete and integrate ourselves

into regional and international markets," he said.

The President said downstream industries would also benefit from investment in the railways.

Meanwhile, the President said Government was aware of the NRZ workers' plight and was working on measures to ameliorate them.

He paid tribute to workers for continuing to be steadfast despite challenges of late payment of salaries.

"May I take this opportunity to appreciate the practice, perseverance and resilience of NRZ employees and management throughout the difficult phases of the parastatal.

"I assure the NRZ workers and stakeholders that Government, together with NRZ board will put in place strategies to make your business and working conditions change for the better.

"Do not despair or grow weary, but work, work and work, to make our national railways the pride of the nation yet again," he said.

The Minister of Transport and Infrastructure Development, Dr Joram Gumbo, said the recapitalisation of the NRZ was long overdue.

"The organisation is operating infrastructure that has gone way beyond its economic life. This, Your Excellency, has seen the performance of NRZ deteriorating over the years in terms of productivity, efficiency and general service standards," he said.

He said although the road to finding a recapitalisation partner had been long, he was confident that the interim solution equipment would bring positive results.

NRZ Board Chairman Mr Larry Mavima said the arrival of the interim equipment was testimony of the hard work, willingness and persistence to see the NRZ get back on track. He said the reception of the interim equipment was the start of a long journey and evidence of the government's rallying call that "Zimbabwe is Open for Business".

"We expect that our efforts will begin in earnest in May this year and will take about three years before the full recapitalisation of the NRZ at a cost of \$400 million sets in and the rail company returns to its former glory," he said.

He said the event marked a new era for the organisation which was once described by Minister Gumbo as a problem child of the ministry.

"WE can unashamedly announce to the Minister, Honourable Dr Joram Gumbo, that the NRZ ceases to be a problem child and is instead the favoured child of the ministry," Mr Mavima said.

The recapitalization project will involve the rehabilitation and renewal of Plant, Equipment, Rolling Stock, Signalling and Telecommunications Infrastructure and the supporting Information Technology (IT) systems.

The recapitalisation project will also see the repair and rehabilitation of infrastructure and equipment such as locomotives, wagons and coaches as well as phased modernization of the train control system in the country.



President Mnangagwa watches as representatives of Transnet, NRZ and DIDG sign documents

Minister Gumbo tours NRZ prior to Recap

The Minister of Transport and Infrastructural Development Dr Joram Gumbo recently undertook a line tour of National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ) infrastructure to familiarise himself with railway operations in the face of the much anticipated recapitalisation project. The Minister's six-day long line tour across all the three NRZ Areas started in Harare with visits to Harare Station, the Lochnivar Diesel Motive Power Depot (MPD) and the Centralised Train Control System on 15 January 2018. From Harare, the Minister, who was accompanied by NRZ board chairman Mr Larry David Mavima and senior managers went to Kwekwe where he was taken on a tour of Kwekwe Station and Zimbabwe Mining and Smelting Company (Zimasco) operations in the city. Zimasco is one of the major clients of NRZ.

Dr Gumbo later took his tour to Gweru where he had a whistle stop at Gweru station before going to Dabuka.

On 17 January, the Minister and his entourage were in Bulawayo where they visited Mechanical Engineer's Workshops, the main station and yard before proceeding to Mpopoma Motive Power Depot (MPD). His next call was Mutare where he toured operations at the MEs

Workshops in the Eastern Highlands as well as repair work on the organisation's locomotives. From the Eastern Highlands, Dr Gumbo toured Nyazura and Rusape before winding his familiarisation tour at the Marondera Train Station. The Minister said the purpose of his line tour was to ascertain the

"It was not easy to convince people to recapitalise (the NRZ). Many were waiting for its demise. We cannot dig a grave for NRZ because it is the backbone of the economy," he said. The Minister said if the NRZ was to restore its capacity to that of years ago, there would be tremendous benefits to the country.

The NRZ has a design capacity to ferry at least 18 million tonnes of freight a year and it reached its peak in the 1999 when it clocked 18 million tonnes. 'You know how the NRZ was when it was fully operational. If the NRZ is operational, roads would be protected', he said. Dr Gumbo said NRZ should never be used as a political football because of its impact on people's



Minister Gumbo (in hat) poses with NRZ board chairman Mr Larry David Mavima, General Manager Engineer Lewis Mukwada , management and workers at Marondera Station at the end of his line tour

condition, level of activity and state of NRZ infrastructure. The trip also allowed him to get an appreciation of NRZ requirements ahead of the implementation of the agreement signed between the parastatal and the Diaspora Investment Development Group/Transnet Consortium under the \$400 million Recapitalisation Project.

Dr Gumbo said the NRZ was the backbone of the economy and will never be allowed to collapse. He said the road to seeking partners to recapitalise the NRZ was not easy and at one time he almost gave up.

lives.

The Minister's line tour was meant to give him a first-hand appreciation of the challenges facing the NRZ including aging rolling stock, vandalism of key signalling equipment and a general shortage of wagons and locomotives.,

It is expected that the challenges facing the organisation will be overcome once the 400 million dollar recapitalisation deal is implemented. NRZ had previously embarked on this recapitalisation terrain many a time without success.

NRZ donates to Robert Tredgold

By Birthwell Sibanda

THE National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ) recently donated sporting equipment to Robert Tredgold Primary School as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme.

The handover ceremony took place at Robert Tredgold on 28 February.

The donation was in appreciation of the school's role in the NRZ's programmes including the Reception ceremony of Interim Solution Equipment under the NRZ Recapitalisation Programme which was officiated by President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa. The school provided two pupils who churned out breath-taking poems before the President at the ceremony.

The sports equipment donated by NRZ consisted two soccer balls and mattresses for physical education.

Speaking at the handover of the equipment at the school, NRZ Public Relations Manager Mr Nyasha Maravanyika said the organisation was keen to work with schools around the city as school children were the future of the country.

"Tredgold School has always been a great friend to us hence we saw it fit to make this gesture. Not all of us are gifted in academics, but some are good in sport and that is why we want to help in every way we can.

"We want to continue to support schools in the little ways we can. Our desire is that this equipment will go a long way in helping the school and the Bulawayo community at large," said Mr Maravanyika.

Robert Tredgold headmistress Ms Carol Moyo thanked NRZ for its kind gesture.

"I would like to thank NRZ for this donation, we will use this donation to develop our sport as a school. We have created a bond with NRZ and we hope to maintain it as a community of Bulawayo.

"This donation will help us improve our sport most importantly with the new curriculum that has been introduced.

"We are extremely grateful as a school I am certain even the parents would be happy to have more gestures like this one from the corporate world as it would help our children in a big way" said Ms Moyo.

This is not the first time NRZ has donated to the school. In 2017 it gave cricket equipment after the same two pupils impressed with their poems at the commissioning of the high-sided-wagons acquired from China.



Mr Maravanyika hands over mattresses to Robert Tradgold School Head, Ms Moyo Carol

“Sis Sheila” calls it a day



Work Study Manager Mr VG Nyathi hands over a present to Ms Sheila Ncube while her daughter and ZARWU president Mr Kamurayi Moyo look on

By Birthwell Sibanda

Work Study section recently bade farewell to Sheila Ncube, a long serving Forms Design Assistant who retired on 9 February 2018.

Ms Ncube, or Sheila, as she was affectionately known by her colleagues, was responsible for producing and sending the General Manager's Weekly and Special Notices.

Ms Ncube joined the NRZ in 1980 as a Typist. She was promoted to Composing Machine Typist in 1996, from where she rose through the ranks to become Forms Design Assistant in June 2008.

She was also a respected unionist who headed the Zimbabwe Amalgamated Railway Workers Union (ZARWU) Women's Desk.

A farewell party was organised for her on the 6th floor at New

Headquarters where colleagues had a chance to say farewell to someone they worked with well for a long time.

Many described Ms Ncube as a likeable person who always wore a smile on her face.

"Now that you have retired we will miss the hallmark of your good humour, your willingness to listen to us – especially when we were facing some obstacles, but most of all we will miss your good work," Work Study Manager Mr VG Nyathi said.

ZARWU president Kamurayi Moyo said he had to travel from Harare overnight to make sure he made it to Ms Ncube's farewell. He described her as a hard working woman who always gave 100 percent effort to her work. "This woman who is sitting in front

of us is a hard working woman and a unionist. We voted Sheila as the Women Chairperson of ZARWU in March 2011 and due to her dedication and hard work, we re-voted her in 2014.

"I want to thank NRZ staff members for staying with Sheila this long. Not even a single day have I heard her complain for going to work, so I thank you."

"As ZARWU President I would like to say Sheila this is not the end but the beginning of a new journey."

In their testimonies, fellow workers said Ms Ncube was a dedicated employee who never complained about being overworked when situations required her to stay behind after knocking off time.

Ms Ncube retired on pension after serving the organisation for 37 years and 7 months.

NRZ DARTS IN AGONISING NEAR-BULL'S EYE MISS

By Washington Chikwariro

THE National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ) darts team, Railstars, have shown that they are a force to reckon with on the national stage after clinching a silver medal at a Champions of Champions darts tournament at Munyati.

Mabikire, a work study practitioner, said other teams under-rated them because they were missing key players.

"We defied the odds by becoming champions in 2015 and with that record there was nothing for us to fear.

"Many teams who saw our line-up

against opponents who had it all.

Mr Mabikire thanked the NRZ for facilitating their way to the tourney, and also appealed to the parastatal for more help and sponsorship in areas of finance, kit and new dart boards as the club is self funding.

Mr Mabikire urged all NRZ workers to join sports as they help enhance physical and mental strength.



Members of the NRZ Darts Team pose with their medals

Despite facing challenges with the club missing regular players and financial constraints, Raylstars gave an impressive display before falling to eventual winners- A-Team - who were also the defending champions.

The 16-team tournament which was held on 3 February saw Darts teams from around the country coming together to hit the bull's eye.

Railstars Club chairperson Mr Clive

and realized that we had some of our talisman missing thought that we were a depleted side and with that no one took us seriously as they regarded us as underdogs," he said.

Despite this, the team progressed from group stages to the finals. As the rail stars went into the game which would decide their fate, it was a challenging exercise as they were faced with dart arrow shortages

He said in a bid to promote the sport, they had started recruiting players from in and outside the NRZ and would like to see more women shooting forward.

Raylstars Darts Club are found at Bulawayo Raylton sports club every Tuesday at 1700hrs and any interested parties can also contact Mr. Mabikire 0776 101 864 extension 3333 or contact the Secretary Mr. Witness Mutemera on Extension 3497.

MY VIEW

...I'm adamant, NRZ is no dinosaur

Welcome to this new column, which I hope, in a light hearted way, will prescribe medicine for any ailment facing this organisation.

Don't be alarmed about the email address —nrzjuicybits@gmail.com — we won't be going into private lives of workers sniffing out who is doing what with who where and when.

We also hope the prescribed medicine won't be a bitter pill to swallow for the chefs.

This month's column is about dinosaurs.

Dinosaurs became extinct because they failed to adapt to changing environment. Is NRZ going to suffer the same fate?

NRZ becoming extinct might be farfetched considering all the talk about recapitalisation. While failure to adapt to a changing environment might not kill off the NRZ, it will cost it thousands of much needed dollars.

It's an open secret the NRZ needs every single bond coin it can save.

Then why is it spending more when it can save just because there is a Procedural Order that says that things have to be done in a certain way.

The procedure book was written by a person born of man and woman unlike the Decalogue which mere mortals cannot challenge.

Is the company prepared to continue bleeding tens of thousands of dollars a year because it has to follow

procedure written by someone who lived more than 60 years ago when conditions were different?

I am referring to this issue of refusing to do business with companies not on the NRZ Suppliers List.

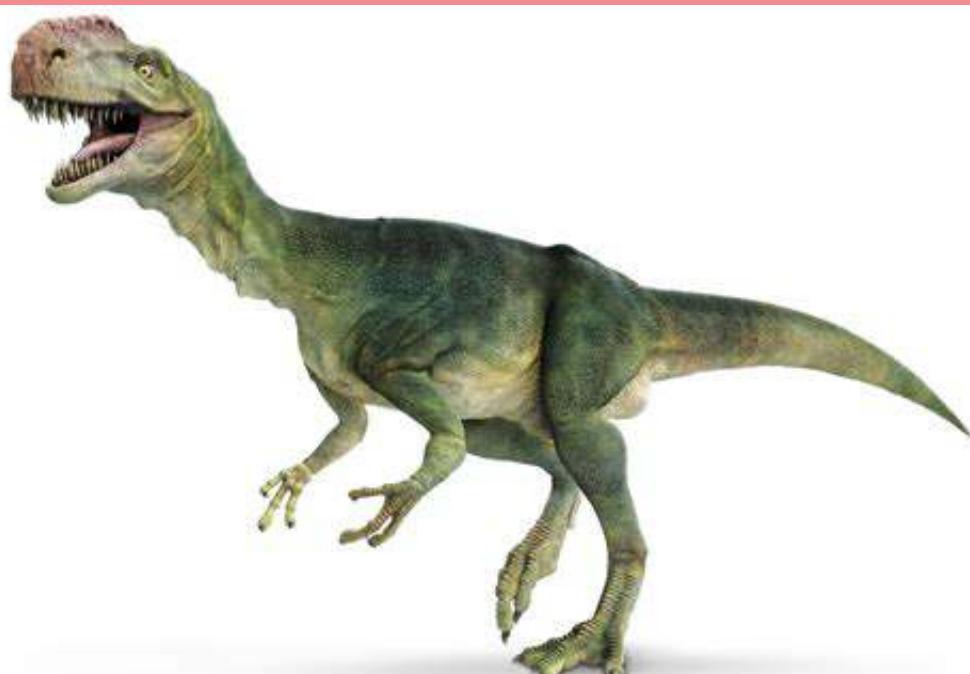
What is surprising is most of the so-called registered suppliers are brief case businesses without machinery to do the job.

Let's not enrich the pockets of businesses whose only qualification is that they are on the NRZ Suppliers List and nothing else.

Also what's this business of requiring three quotations to buy the smallest of items? How much fuel are branches burning to seek quotations from three companies for a bulb that costs \$1?

If you feel there are issues to discuss

please email
nrzjuicybits@gmail.com.



Once awarded the contract, they will seek out the same unregistered suppliers rejected by NRZ, subcontract them and put a massive mark-up to be borne by NRZ.

In the spirit of the new dispensation, NRZ should promote ease of doing business and not stifle it. If a company has proper documents and is registered with relevant Statutory bodies, it should be allowed to do business with NRZ.

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Reception of Interim Equipment in Pictures



Members of NRZ Management Executive wait their turn to be introduced to President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa.



NRZ board members are introduced to the President and members of the public



President Mnangagwa is shown the interior of one of the coaches being leased from Transnet



President Mnangagwa with two pupils from Robert Tredgold Primary school who presented poems at the function



Invited guests follow proceedings at the Reception ceremony



President Mnangagwa greets “the Superstar” Oliver Mtukudzi