

Minister Mpofu's newspaper shuts down

Transport Minister Obert Mpofu's short flirtation with the country's media industry has come to an abrupt end.

Insiders late Tuesday confirmed that Wednesday's edition of the *Zimbabwe Mail* would be the last for the paper which hit the streets as a daily in late 2013 before transforming into a weekly in its last four editions beginning last month.



Image via [123RF](#)

"We have been officially informed by the editor Constantine Chimakure that the paper will publish for the last time tomorrow (Wednesday). There has not been any communication as regards terminal benefits. We wait to be addressed on these issues," a staffer told NewZimbabwe.com late Tuesday.

Members of staff were put on half salaries in September even as the minister was reportedly donating \$70,000 to Zanu PF party's congress in December.

The Mail, whose wage bill was said to be \$30,000, failed to pay the half salaries for February although Mpofu still managed to donate \$40,000 to President Robert Mugabe's birthday party.

Mpofu has reportedly complained that he was not getting any return on his investment in the publication, a problem he presumably does not suffer with his financial "investments" in Zanu PF and its leader.

The paper will be remembered for breaking the Salary-gate scandal weeks after its appearance.

But its establishment was linked to the bitter factional fights in the ruling Zanu PF as Mpofu, reportedly an Indian-trained journalist in his own right, targeted a senior party position ahead of the December congress.

However, the publication's association with Mpofu, a controversial figure who is the subject of corruption allegations over his "unexplained" wealth, would prove to be its main undoing.

Advertisers kept well away, with support only coming from parastatals associated with Mpofu's ministry which never paid for the advertisements anyway. A reporter with the paper said; "At one charged meeting with reporters last year the minister was told in no uncertain terms that his name had not made things easy for the paper in the market.

"He was told that his name is soiled but he defended himself and claimed he is a brand adding this has helped his tourism business grow in Victoria Falls".

Mpofu has been linked to a host shady deals, and is accused of looting the country's contentious Marange diamonds although he has denied the charges.

Last week staffers also alleged a rift in Mpofu's family pitting the minister against his wife and children with the latter group pressing for the newspaper's closure saying it was a massive drain on family finances.