

# Probe underway into train derailment

By Eric Msikiti

Investigations continue to establish what caused the derailment of a locomotive, which had 19 wagons, at Matindi in Blantyre at the weekend, operator Nacala Logistics has said.

Early reports had indicated that the newly launched Dash 9 derailed at the site, but officials from Nacala Logistics say it was one of the old locomotives that derailed.

"Investigations are still ongoing to find what caused the derailment but it is worth stating that we are facing a lot of vandalism along that section," said Nacala Logistics spokesperson Wezi Kalua.

Nacala Logistics has, of late, complained about the

theft of Pandrol clips which keep locomotives in tracks.

According to officials, the company reports theft of at least 250 clippers per day on railways.

Each clip costs the company about \$12 to replace.

But the derailment of the locomotive and wagons comes at a time reports indicate that the railway was not yet inspected and certified by the Ministry of Transport and Public Works, having undergone upgrading works recently.

The Railways Act provides for an appointed engineer to inspect and certify upgrading of railway infrastructure before use.

But Kalua could not be drawn to comment on whether an appointed engineer had inspected and certified the

works on the railway line.

"With investigations still ongoing, I cannot comment any further on the matter," Kalua said.

Meanwhile, Deputy Minister of Transport and Public Works Nancy Chaola Mdooko has said the ministry is yet to receive a report of the accident.

"At the moment, a team of our engineers is jointly investigating the accident occurrence with engineers from Central East African Railway and, upon submission of their report, we will be able to issue a proper statement," Chaola Mdooko says.

Malawi has had its fair share of train accidents and derailments in recent years.

In February 2017, about 240,000 litres of diesel spilt off after a train derailed in Blantyre.



MDOOKO—A team of engineers is investigating— File photo



KAWALALA—The hospital relies on 17 personnel—Picture by Pemphero Malimba

# Emergency medical services 'life saving'

By Pemphero Malimba, contributor

Amid rising cases of road accidents in Ntcheu District, healthcare providers have challenged stakeholders to embrace the provision of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to save lives.

Ntcheu District Hospital spokesperson Stella Kawalala said the hospital was facing

numerous challenges, ranging from that of inadequate trained EMS personnel to inadequate personal protective equipment.

"For instance, the hospital relies on 17 trained personnel to offer EMS in the district. The hospital needs more than 100 of them because of rising cases of accidents. These challenges can be addressed through collaborative efforts," she said.

Malawi Red Cross Society

Ntcheu District Project Officer Alfred Msaka said the organisation would intensify sensitisation campaigns on the prevention of road accidents in the district.

The Ntcheu-Dedza stretch of the M1 Road is one of the hotspots of road accidents in the country, with 2,000 road accidents out of 12,000 trauma cases being registered between August 2018 and June 2021.

# Optimism grows on Shire Valley transformation Program

By Eric Msikiti

Construction of an intake and the first six kilometres of the main canal in the Shire Valley Transformation Project (SVTP) are at an advanced stage.

Officials say 50 percent of the works have been done on the canal.

Construction of one of the biggest irrigation projects in Africa is being financed by the World Bank, African Development Bank, the Global Environment Facility and the Malawi Government to the tune of \$223 million.

It covers a distance of 135 kilometres on 43, 370 hectares of land in Chikwawa and Nsanje districts and will see water from the Shire River flowing by gravity through the canals to farmland in the area.

Deputy Minister of Agriculture Agness Nkusa Nkhoma, who toured the construction works, expressed

satisfaction with progress being made.

Nkusa Nkhoma said the project would revolutionise irrigation farming in the Shire Valley, one of Malawi's important agricultural sites.

"Once completed, it will help farmers, both small and large, easily access water from the Shire River for irrigation of their crops and, in the end, it will assist in the development of this whole region," Nkusa Nkhoma said.

However, the 223,000 farmers who are to benefit from the project will have to wait until at least December 2023 when the first phase, which covers 22,280 hectares, will have been completed.

Senior consultant at Korea Rural Community Corporation Chitsanzo Kamowatimwa said, although the Covid pandemic negatively affected procurement and transportation of some equipment from abroad, the project was on schedule.



NKUSA NKHOMA— It will assist in the development of this whole region— File photo

"At the rate we are going, we are on course. We are optimistic that all works will be completed on time," Kamowatimwa said.

The SVTP is a 14-year

programme which, having started in 2018, is expected to be completed in 2031.

It will irrigate 43,370 hectares of land by abstracting

water from the Shire River at Kapichira Dam and conveying it by gravity to the irrigable area in Chikwawa and Nsanje through canals.