



Mines urged to invest more in operations

CHIMWEMWE MWALE

Chililabombwe

MINING companies should invest more in operations and unlock the potential of mineral ore sites in view of the favourable policies and environment Government has created.

Minister of Mines and Mineral Development Paul Kabuswe says mines should step up their activities and ramp up production.

He was speaking yesterday during a tour of Lubambe Copper Mines, after which he met management and staff of the company.

“You need to unlock the potential of Lubambe. The importance of mining to the country’s economy cannot be overemphasised,” Mr Kabuswe said.

Ramping up production

by mines will help Zambia earn more revenue, which is critical to supporting economic development.

The minister said mining companies should intensify efforts to support communities they operate in for people to benefit from the country’s mineral wealth.

“I know what a community should look like when mines are operating at their best because I grew up here (Chililabombwe).

“We attach importance to the social contract for the benefit of our people. This is why we need you to have a predictable environment so that you can plan your activities,” he said.

Mr Kabuswe urged Lubambe Mine management to build houses in Chililabombwe to stop ferrying workers to and from nearby districts where they live.

The minister later met the

workers, who complained about the short-term contracts offered by some contractors, pension funds, disparities in salaries between local workers and expatriates and congestion in the change room, mine entrance, and ablution block, among others.

In response, Mr Kabuswe said Government will resolve the issue of contracts with contractors and urged management to harmonise salaries for Zambian workers and expatriates.

He also urged management to expand the change room and ablution block to decongest existing ones in view of COVID-19.

On terminal benefits, the minister cautioned miners against obtaining their pension in instalments before the actual retirement because they risk becoming destitute after leaving

employment.

He urged management to respect, recognise and honour the workers’ union to create harmony in the workplace.

Lubambe Mine chief executive officer Tim Duffy said management is encouraged by the new government’s accessibility, which he said is refreshing.

“We appreciate your honest feedback even if it’s not what we want to hear sometimes,” he said.

Lubambe Mine plans to extend its lifespan beyond the current 10 years through an extension project and it envisages to create over 2,700 jobs.

The company has also built a laboratory and ablution blocks at Konkola Combined School and sponsored farming activities such as fish farming among members of the community.