

Business journos challenged to be relevant

By Gregory Gondwe: @Kalipochi

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The National Bank of Malawi (NBM) has challenged Malawi's business journalists to be relevant as Malawi is undergoing economic hardships.

"As you continue with your job, I would say this is the best time and the worst time if you happen to be a journalist, especially if you are a business journalist," said Anne Magola, NBM's corporate affairs manager.

Journalists to report on the financial situation



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The bank says this is the best time for media journalists because their profession can best be judged now because it is an opportunity for them to report, analyze and comment on the financial situation with so many developments affecting the economy.

"The time can also be considered the worst because the business news is so much in demand," said Magola, when she met members of the Association of Business Journalists (ABJ) on Wednesday in Blantyre.

Magola says one commendable thing is that the media are able to analyze the bank services tariffs thereby making people have informed choices on where to keep their money especially with the print media when it comes to banking services.

The bank relies on business journalists

"The bank has partnered with the Business Journalists for some years now - in fact I will not be wrong to say National Bank is one of the organisations that helped the formation of this Association," she said.

The association's secretary general, Henry Mchazime said the ABJ was born when the bank came out of its way to invite practicing business reporters, drawn from almost all media houses in the country, on a media tour to South Africa.

"This is where an initial meeting was held in Pretoria and an interim executive was elected there, for this we will always be grateful to 'The Bank of the Nation'," said Mchazime.

He said that the bank assisted in sponsoring part of the association's annual national conference budget and only cements the partnership between ABJ and the bank.

Magola said the bank has relied on the business journalists in its quest to remain the most competitive bank and most sought bank on the market.

"You have helped the Bank market its products, especially new innovations which has made more and more people seek our products and services," continuing to add, "The customer base of National Bank has also grown through your reporting," disclosed Magola.

Magola observed that most people are getting news on the internet as this is a faster means of accessing information, compared to printed news.

"Therefore let us be very innovative in the way we write and report so that your customers, us the business still buy and listen to your news. I am sure you know the consequences of losing this business. I will not go into detail, it is common

sense," she said.

"Encouraging Malawi's Economic Independence"

Mchazime says the association's second annual national conference to be held during the last weekend of October has the theme "Encouraging Malawi's Economic Independence", which is in a way to show how relevant business journalists are.

"The reason for coming with this theme is that the scenario Malawi finds itself in is not only challenging to those who have been entrusted with power to govern but to business journalists as well," added Mchazime.

This is because it is the public's expectation that whatever economic challenges and progress the country goes through, the causes for such occurrences be well articulated by business journalists in their respective print and electronic media.

"This is why we would like to call upon all entities, directly and indirectly involved in management of our economy, to come forward and shed more light on what must be done to lay foundations of Malawi's economic independence," insisted Mchazime.

The sooner citizens realise their great role to contribute to national development, the better and he says it is up to the journalists to ensure that people really achieve this.

"But as we rethink our economic future as a country, we need to appreciate that it is not a question of reinventing the wheel. Malawi needs to learn from the best on how they achieved economic independence. This is where we need technical expertise from western capitals," says Mchazime who hopes the journalists' conference will have such expert input to achieve this.

"This is the precise forum where information must be shared with the public through the press so that everyone knows what is happening and what their role is to grow the economy," he said.

"We believe if organisations and individuals are to make the right decisions, the right information must always be available hence our call for players in every sector of the economy to come forward and directly interact with the business journalists at the conference in line with the theme."

ABOUT GREGORY GONDWE: @KALIPOCHI

Gregory Gondwe is a Malawian journalist who started writing in 1993. He is also a media consultant assisting several international journalists pursuing assignments in Malawi. He holds a Diploma and an Intermediate Certificate in Journalism among other media-related certificates. He can be contacted on gregorygondwe@gmail.com. Follow him on Twitter at @Kalipochi.

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