

BNL launches *The Business Times*

 By Gregory Gondwe: @Kalipochi

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[Blantyre Newspapers Limited](#) (BNL) has launched a fifth title after the first issue of an exclusively business newspaper called *The Business Times* hit the streets last week.

The Times Group

BNL which also trades as Times Group already publishes *The Daily Times*, and three weeklies: *The Malawi News*, *The Weekend Times* and *The Sunday Times*.

The Business Times newspaper, which has several parts, will carry graphs on the front page of inflation rates, exchange rates against the US dollar, Malawi Stock Exchange All Share Index (MASI) as well as Treasury bill yields for 91 day tender. This section will be titled 'Vital statistics'.

Initially *The Business Times* has been *The Daily Times*' Wednesday supplement, but as the maiden newspaper's editorial team declared 'time has come for that child to be weaned and stand alone as a newspaper'.

In keeping with the company's pioneering spirit in the newspaper industry since 1895 when it started, the company has challenged those saying a purely business newspaper in the Malawi newspaper industry cannot survive.

Multitude of opportunities

"At the Times Group, our motto as 'Leading is Our Way of Life' and in keeping with this philosophy, we are pleased to pioneer the first Malawi's truly serious economic and business weekly," declared the newspaper through its editorial in the first issue.

The newspaper whose editor is Daniel Nyirenda, and deputy editor for *The Daily Times*, is deputized by business journalist Thom Khanje, says there is fertile ground in the country where a business newspaper can flourish.

"We at *The Business Times* strongly believe that in an economic situation especially like ours, there are multitude of opportunities to explore," says Nyirenda in the editorial, adding that as a newspaper company, they need to have a platform for information sharing and quipping the decision makers with relevant and timely analysis.

The newspaper says this is why it has even started coming out when Malawi is currently experiencing economic hardships.

News people want and need

"*The Business Times*...takes the pulse of Malawi's private sector and the public sector and brings to them the business intelligence, information and news that they want and need in order to improve performance," says Nyirenda.

He says as a newspaper, they want to tap the knowledge of their abundant experts, award-winning contributors, sources and policy makers who breathe life into the businesses and industries of Malawi's private and public sectors.

The maiden issue also pledged: "...Every issue of *The Business Times* shall bring to you [readers] latest news, features, opinions on the national and the global economy, small scale and large businesses, technology, health, automobiles, tourism, business personalities, you name it!"

The newspaper also declared that it has an experienced editorial team that is ready to execute its mission and interact with its niche premium environment and satisfy readers' divergent business interest and tastes.

"We even have something that will arouse the entrepreneur in you," the editorial declared.

Business related topics

Although just new, the newspaper has started with 10 columns tackling entrepreneurship, money market, insurance, marketing, business ICT, motoring, management, workplace, and business sports.

To show a complete departure on how the newspapers in Malawi cover sports news, *The Business Times* is covering sports stories that have a business ring to it, with its main leading story exposing lack of guidelines at the country's football managing body, Football Association of Malawi on football commercialisation.

Another article on the sports page looked at why the corporate sector is in love with golf more than any other sports disciplines.

A feeling of doubt

A Malawian correspondent for foreign media however said he had misgivings with the addition to the BNL stable.

"While congratulations are very much in order for the new title on its stable, I wish BNL had spent more time on designing the new kid on the block. It might be my compromised eye-sight but, you see, *The Business Times* looks not too different from the business section of *The Daily Times*. It's like the business supplement has fallen out of *The Daily Times*," said the media practitioner who opted for anonymity.

He said we must not lose sight on the fact that business news is thick for the eye - meaning they are hard to read for many.

"So architects of the paper should have spent time on making it a little more attractive; if truth be told for a casual reader there was nothing in the inaugural edition that could compel them to buy," he said.

He added that the columns have been designed the same way, and that the news stories have also been laid down the same manner.

The journalist says even in the US/SA/UK where there are vibrant newspaper markets papers like *The Wall Street Journal* or *Business Day* or *Financial Times* are not for every Jack and Jill.

"Our market is already narrow and shrinking. If I have to buy three papers on a Wednesday I need to be convinced I'm buying my K600's worth," he said.

He said if this were a zero edition he would have advised it goes back inside *The Daily Times* where it belongs, but since this was the break out edition, as it were, he expects Nyirenda and his team to rouse their creative genes so that next issue should give readers a 'wow' edition.

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