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Train service grinds to a halt

Predicament. A source within RVR said since July 26 when workers went on strike demanding for their June salary, the trains have been grounded.

BY STEPHEN OTAGE
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KAMPALA. The operation of the Kampala City passenger train services has been halted because Rift Valley Railways (RVR), the company contracted to manage it, has failed to insure the trains and fuel them, Uganda Railways Corporation (URC) says.

Mr Charles Kateeba, the managing director of URC, indicated to *Saturday Monitor* in a telephone interview that he is locked in a misunderstanding with RVR, which he said has failed to run the concession but still insists it can.

"Of course the concession has not yet been terminated but they have failed to insure the trains and they cannot fuel them. The issues are many," he said.

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CHARLES KATEEBA, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF URC

A source within RVR said since July 26 when workers went on strike demanding for their June salary, the trains have been grounded and during the course of the strike, the company contracted to supply the railway company fuel slapped it



Stopped. A passenger train in Kampala recently. Operation of the Kampala City passenger train services has been halted.

PHOTO BY STEPHEN OTAGE

with a bill of \$1 million (Shs3,6b) for fuel that they have been using.

According to the source, the locomotives are too old and they consume an average of 10,000 litres of diesel every day. On July 31, the Kenyan government terminated the concession with RVR Railways Kenya over failure to deliver.

Mr Darlington Muwonge, the RVR commercial manager, told this newspaper on Thursday that the passenger train service is the responsibility of Uganda Railways

Corporation and Kampala Capital City Authority.

"Even in Kenya where the concession was terminated, the operations are still going on and even here we are still running the cargo business but passenger business is for URC and KCCA," Mr Muwonge said.

Mr Kateeba said KCCA pays them for the service and they pay RVR. "We pay them Shs320 million every quarter and we have already paid them," Mr Kateeba said.

Mr Kateeba said they served

RVR the notice to terminate their contract on September 4, but the lawyers representing the company in Kampala are opting for arbitration because they think they can still run the business and yet they have reportedly failed to maintain the properties which they inherited.

The passenger train service has been active for just over a year between the city centre and Namamnye on Jinja highway, with plans being mooted to extend it to Luzira and Kyengera.