RB honours meritorious Simutowe

MONICA MAYUNI reports:

President Banda honoured one of Zambia's greatest performers, Amon Simutowe, with the President's insignia for meritorious achievement.

The President bestowed the achievement on Simutowe yesterday during the Independence Day investiture ceremony that was held at the Lusaka Showgrounds.

Simutowe, the only grandmaster in sub-Saharan Africa and the continent's only black grandmaster, was honoured for his prowess in chess, the game he has played with passion since his childhood.

The 27-year-old chess prodigy was, however, not present to receive the award because he is at school in the United States.

Simutowe's chess journey started in 1994 when he was only 12 years old when he won the Under-21 national championship, two years after joining the sport.

He won the national championship the following year before competing in the Africa Junior Championship where he achieved fifth.

In 1996, he retained both the national championship and junior national championship, sealing his place in an intricate sport.

He then earned his place in African junior chess when he won the African Junior Chess Championship in 1998 and retained the title the following year when he won all the games and earned himself two international master norms.

The soft-spoken Simutowe would later compete at the World Junior Championship where he was second in 2000, the British Championship and the Olympiad.

The 'Zambezi Shark', as he was fondly called because of his aggressive style of play, moved to the US in 2002 to study economics. He embarked on the third and final grandmaster norm in 2006.

He managed to earn the norm in 2007 during the Eulwe Stimulus tournament in the Netherlands and thus became Africa's newest GM.

He is only the third black GM in the world.