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Flood death toll reaches 150

The number of deaths so far this year from the storms and floods in central and northern Mozambique has reached 150, according to Casimiro Abreu, deputy director of the country's relief agency, the National Disasters Management Institute (INGC).

However, Abreu warned that the death toll could rise in the coming days, since more lifeless bodies are being discovered as the flood waters recede.

Abreu was speaking on 2 February at a ceremony where the INGC received a donation from the Japanese embassy.

He said that the province worst hit was Zambezia where 68 bodies have been recovered. Abreu put the number of people affected by the floods at about 150,000.

The Japanese donation consisted of tents and tarpaulins valued at US\$130,000. The ambassador, Akira Mizutani declared "the Japanese government took prompt and immediate action, and decided to donate emergency humanitarian assistance to the Mozambican people".

Abreu stressed that "the Japanese have always been our partners in various sectors of activity and particularly in disaster management".

The representative of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Katsuyoshi Sudo, said that Japan has experienced similar situations and is well aware of the pain and suffering caused by natural disasters.

China donates rice to flood victims

China has donated ten tonnes of rice to the victims of the floods. The grant was made via the China-Mozambique Chamber of Commerce and was symbolically delivered on 29 January by the chairperson of the Chamber, Ma Shiyu, and the Economic Consul of the Chinese embassy in Maputo, Wang Lipei, representing the ambassador.

On receiving the gift, Casimiro Abreu, said "this is further support to kill hunger, bring health, and overcome the suffering of the people affected by the floods".

He promised the rice will be channelled to the people in need in Zambezia, Niassa and Nampula provinces.

Abreu also called for financial assistance, which would be used to repair the roads and other infrastructures swept away by the floods. "There has been serious damage, and financial support would help greatly in the recovery and rapid normalization of the lives of those affected, so that they can plan for their future", he said.

Abreu said that INGC teams are on the ground in the flood-stricken areas, marking out plots of land in safe areas to resettle people who are currently housed in temporary accommodation centres. He urged people to

abandon flood-prone areas, and use them only for agricultural purposes. "We should build our houses on higher and safer ground", he said.

Abreu and the Chamber of Commerce were both interested in improving the country's early warning systems, by setting up state-of-the-art technological flood warning and control systems along the main river basins.

EU funds Zambezia road repairs

The Mozambican government and the Maputo delegation of the European Union have decided to mobilise resources of up to €10 million (US\$11.4 million) from the European Development Fund, to respond to the crisis caused by massive flooding in the central province of Zambezia.

According to a press release from the European Union delegation, the money is being taken from funds which were initially allotted for the Milange-Mocuba Integrated Development Corridor in Zambezia. This project began in 2010 and entered its second phase in 2014. It was budgeted at €81 million. The area covered by the Corridor coincides with some of the zones worst hit by the floods.

The money will go to Mozambique's National Roads Administration (ANE) for urgent repairs to the main north-south highway (EN1), which has been cut in five places in Zambezia. The repairs include the bridge over the Licungo River at Mocuba town, bridges over the Muluavi River and Namilate River, the Nampevo culvert, and the stretch of road between Mocuba and Nampevo.

"With this action", the release says, "the European Union and the Mozambican government intend to rebuild with better quality the infrastructures that have been destroyed so as to give a lasting response to the crisis and avoid future damage".

The head of cooperation of the European Union in Mozambique, Enrico Strampelli, declared "the purpose of our intervention is to respond to the suffering of the population whose lives have been turned upside down by the floods. However, it is not just an emergency response. Our intention is to bring modern and sustainable engineering solutions that can meet the challenges brought by climate changes to vulnerable countries such as Mozambique. Yes, we shall rebuild, but above all we shall rebuild better".

Rain frustrates efforts to restore power to north

Continued rain in the central province of Zambezia has thwarted the hopes of the publicly owned electricity company, EDM, that power could be restored to the north of the country by 3 February.

Catastrophic flooding on 12 January knocked down ten pylons on the transmission line carrying electricity from the Cahora Bassa dam on the Zambezi to northern Mozambique. Since then no power from the national grid has reached Nampula, Cabo Delgado and Niassa provinces, and the northern districts of Zambezia.

Only those with generators have been able to use electricity. Crucial public services, such as Nampula Central Hospital, have kept running due to generators, but at an enormous cost in diesel consumption.

EDM is installing an alternative power line relying largely on wooden pylons, which have been dropped into place by a South African cargo helicopter. The main task remaining is to string the cables across the Licungo River at Mocuba town.

Since 13 January, two hundred people have been working on installing the alternative transmission line.

Triton Minerals finds more graphite

The Australian mining company Triton Minerals on 4 December announced that it has found more graphite in its Ancuabe project in the northern province of Cabo Delgado.

In particular, it noted that it has found jumbo flakes of graphite (the market price increases with flake size).

The company has sent a 100 kilo sample from Ancuabe to specialists in Johannesburg for analysis and to determine optimum graphite recovery methods.

According to the company's Managing Director, Brad Boyle, "these latest results are another positive step forward for Triton in our goal of producing a large quantity of high grade graphite concentrates, in a wide range of flake sizes".

However, Boyle stressed that "our focus for 2015 remains on the continued rapid development of the Nicanda Hill resource".

Nicanda Hill is said to be the world's largest known deposit of graphite and vanadium. It is located about 150 kilometres to the west of Ancuabe, and the company is reviewing various development options to incorporate the two projects.

Boyle commented, "should Triton be able to integrate the Ancuabe and Nicanda Hill projects, this would place the Company in a unique position with respect to the size of its resources (hence life of mine), with low production costs, and the ability to provide the full range of graphite flake sizes".

Graphite is a form of carbon that is highly valued due to its properties as a conductor of electricity. It is used in batteries and fuel cells and is the basis for the "miracle material" graphene, which is the strongest material ever measured, with vast potential for use in the electronics industries.

Vanadium is mainly used as an additive to strengthen steel. However, it is now being used in a new generation of rechargeable batteries.

Health Ministry yet to determine cause of poisoning

The Health Ministry is collecting further samples from the town of Chitima, capital of Cahora Bassa district, in the western province of Tete, to determine what caused the mass poisoning in January, in which 75 people died and more than 100 others were hospitalised, Health Minister Nazira Abdula told reporters in Maputo on 4 February.

The victims were poisoned when they drank a home-brewed alcoholic drink, known as "pombe", for which the main ingredients are sorghum, maize bran and sugar. It is believed that a toxic substance was added, but laboratories in Mozambique have been unable to identify it.

Samples of what was left of the drink, plus urine, faeces, stomach contents and tissues from victims have been analysed, testing them against 200 known toxic substances. But the results have all come up negative, as have the results of samples sent for analysis in Portugal.

Ministry of Health staff plus foreign toxicology experts are continuing to collect other samples in Chitima in effort to identify the poisoning agent.

"We're continuing to work and we're not stopped", declared Abdula. "We are still looking for the cause of the tragedy to avoid anything similar happening in the future".

The teams are also looking at the plants that grow in the Chitima area and further south on the border with Zimbabwe. Abdula said that since the people known delicately as "practitioners of traditional medicine" use plants, it is important to study what kind of plants are believed to have medicinal qualities in Chitima.

No evidence of ceasefire violations

A report from the military team observing the agreement on the cessation of hostilities between the Mozambican government and Renamo has concluded that there is no evidence to support the Renamo accusation that the government is violating the agreement.

Renamo has claimed that actions by the armed forces (FADM) in setting up new positions in the southern province of Inhambane, and the central provinces of Sofala, Manica and Tete constituted violations of the agreement – although there is no clause in the agreement forbidding the FADM from setting up new positions.

The observer team, known by the acronym EMOHCM, consists of 23 foreign military experts, and 70 Mozambicans, 35 appointed by the government and 35 appointed by Renamo. It undertook patrols in the provinces mentioned by Renamo, and could find no evidence supporting the Renamo accusations.

Each EMOCHM patrol contains at least one foreign observer, one government observer and one Renamo observer.

EMOCHM's main task is to monitor the integration of members of the Renamo militia into the FADM and the police. However, this will only be possible when Renamo hands over the list of men it wishes to see recruited into the defence and security forces.

This is a condensed version of the AIM daily news service – for details contact pfauvet@live.com

President Nyusi willing to speak with Dhlakama

President Filipe Nyusi declared in Maputo on 3 February that he is willing to speak with Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama following the latter's threats to set up a separatist "Republic of Central and Northern Mozambique".

President Nyusi was speaking to reporters after laying a wreath at the Monument to the Mozambican Heroes, in honour of Heroes' Day, which commemorates the assassination on 3 February 1969 of Eduardo Mondlane, the founder and first president of the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO).

Dhlakama has made a string of inflammatory speeches promising to carve out "within days" a separate republic in six northern and central provinces, of which he would be president. However, President Nyusi said that the only weapon the government would use against these belligerent declarations is dialogue.

"I am ready, right now I am prepared", he said, "because the people must be certain that we are going to live in peace. I have given a sign of my willingness to talk – right now, if possible. Only by talking are we going to reach an understanding".

President Nyusi declared that he would respect the Constitution, since he had sworn to defend the Constitution when he took the oath of office in January.

As he had first stressed in his inauguration speech, he insisted that his governance would be one of inclusion, by which he meant giving opportunities to all Mozambicans to participate in the creation and distribution of wealth.

President Nyusi called on all to value the legacy of Eduardo Mondlane and all the other heroes who sacrificed their lives for an independent and sovereign Mozambique.

President Nyusi's predecessor, Armando Guebuza, did not mince his words when reporters asked him what he thought of Dhlakama's promises of a "Republic of the Centre and North" – he described them as "disastrous".

"When the entire people is speaking about construction, when the people are trying to solve the problems of those who are suffering because of natural disasters, he (Dhlakama) is persisting with a destructive discourse", said Guebuza. "He doesn't want to make a contribution for our country to live in peace".

Guebuza stressed that Mozambique is "one and indivisible", with no place for speeches that encourage violence and instability.

The chairperson of the Mozambican parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, Veronica Macamo, told reporters that despite the Renamo boycott ordered by Dhlakama, the Assembly was functioning,

The deputies elected from Frelimo and from the Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM), had taken their seats and so there was no problem of meeting the quorum of half the elected deputies plus one (126).

"The Assembly has the majority necessary to function", said Macamo. "We must just urge our colleagues from Renamo to take their seats. They made promises to the Mozambican people and they can only keep those promises if they are inside the Assembly".

Members of Frelimo and of the MDM attended the ceremony and paid tribute to Mondlane and other fallen heroes, but, as usual with commemorative dates, Renamo boycotted the event.

President Nyusi makes new appointments

President Filipe Nyusi on 29 January appointed the former Deputy Interior Minister, Jose Mandra, as Vice-Chancellor of the Academy of Police Sciences (ACIPOL).

Mandra was the number two in the Interior Ministry throughout the ten years in which Armando Guebuza was President. He now replaces Jose Samuel Nhatave at the helm of ACIPOL.

Nyusi also appointed Salimo Vala, Antonio da Costa Gaspar and Catarina Dimande as advisors in the President's Office.

Vala is an agricultural economist who has held the posts of National Director of Rural Development, and Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Planning and Development. Gaspar is a well-known academic, who lectures at the Higher Institute of International Relations (ISRI).

Catarina Dimande is a former television presenter who was responsible for relations with the media in Nyusi's presidential campaign last year. She was elected to the Central Committee of the ruling Frelimo Party at its Tenth Congress in 2012.

These appointments follow the earlier appointment of former Justice Minister Benvinda Levi as his adviser on legal matters. Levi replaces Neuza de Matos, who served for 15 years, under both Armando Guebuza and his predecessor, Joaquim Chissano.

President Nyusi also appointed Fernanda Teixeira as director of the office of the First Lady, Isaura Nyusi. Teixeira is a former general secretary of the Mozambique Red Cross. From 1994 to 1999 she was a member of the first multi-party Mozambican parliament, elected on the lists of the ruling Frelimo Party.

Constitutional Council validates by-election results

The Constitutional Council, Mozambique's highest body in matters of constitutional and electoral law, on 2 February validated and proclaimed the results from the mayoral by-election in the northern municipality of Cuamba, held on 17 December.

The Council confirmed the victory of Frelimo's Zacarias Filipe and proclaimed him mayor.

The results as contained in the Council ruling on the Cuamba by-election are as follows:

Total electorate	44,055	
Turnout	10,767	(24.44 per cent)
Abstentions	33,288	(75.56 per cent)
Valid votes	10,463	(97.18 per cent)
Invalid votes	137	(1.27 per cent)
Blank ballots	167	(1.55 per cent)

Candidates (percentages of valid votes)

Zacarias Filipe (Frelimo)	6,158	(58.86 per cent)
Tito Crimildo (MDM)	2,660	(25.42 per cent)
Leovilgildo Buanancasso (Renamo)	1,645	(15.72 per cent)

There were no appeals against the result, and no claims of fraud.

Cancer awareness campaign launched

Health Minister Nazira Abdula on 4 February urged citizens to be vigilant for the early symptoms of the onset of cancer and to seek medical care in good time.

She was speaking at the launch in Maputo of a Cancer Awareness and Mobilisation Campaign, timed to coincide with World Cancer Day.

About 2,000 new cases of cancer are diagnosed every year at Maputo Central Hospital, and of these 120 occur in children.

Abdula said the most frequent cancers among Mozambican women are cervical cancer (30 per cent), breast cancer (11.9 per cent) and Kaposi's sarcoma (11.7 per cent). In men, the leading cancer is Kaposi's sarcoma (20 per cent), followed by prostate cancer (18 per cent) and liver cancer (10.7 per cent). Kaposi's sarcoma is strongly correlated with HIV/AIDS.

Childhood cancers, Abdula said, are responsible for six per cent of all diagnosed cancers. The most common are leukaemia (20 per cent), Burkitt's lymphoma, which is a cancer of the lymphatic system (18 per cent), Hodgkin's lymphoma (13 per cent) and Kaposi's sarcoma (13 per cent).

Abdula pointed out that the survival rates are very low because patients tend to seek medical help very late, by which time the cancer has become impossible to remove.

"In this campaign, we want to alert the entire community to the forms of prevention, early detection, expression and treatment of the most common cancers", she said.

During this month lectures and debates about cancer will be held, and specialists will be interviewed in the media. A "Health Fair" concentrating on cancer awareness will be held on 21 February in Maputo's Peace Park. As well as cancer advice, other health services will be offered free of charge, including HIV tests, blood pressure tests and screening for eyesight and oral health problems.

As for the cancer situation in the other provinces, Abdula said her Ministry is building up a data base, which will provide all available information on cancer throughout the country.

Seven deaths from cholera in Niassa

Seven people have died of cholera in Lago district, in the northern province of Niassa.

The health authorities have said that laboratory tests confirmed that acute diarrhoea which the victims had suffered from was caused by the cholera bacterium.

The Lago district administrator, Moura Jorge, said that 126 people displaying cholera symptoms had been treated at the health centre in the district capital, Metangula, and three of them had died. The other four deaths occurred outside of health units.

It is feared that other people may have died of cholera in outlying villages and the information has yet to reach the district or provincial authorities.

Niassa provincial governor Arlindo Chilundo visited Metangula on 29 January to learn of the situation at first hand and to express his solidarity with the families of the victims. He found that most of those admitted to the health centre had been speedily treated, and made a full recovery. There were now only three people still hospitalized.

This was the second cholera outbreak in January in northern Mozambique. 544 cases of the disease have been confirmed in Nampula province, but with only one known death. Most of the cases occurred in Nampula city, but there were also some in the town of Namialo.

Human Rights League split

The Mozambican Human Rights League (LDH), one of the most prominent bodies of Mozambican civil society, appears to have split, with its chairperson, Alice Mabota, changing her mind about resigning.

Mabota, who has been at the helm of the LDH ever since it was set up over twenty years ago, was prevailed upon to resign in December following accusations of serious mismanagement. For the previous seven months, the LDH had been unable to pay wages to its staff and the foreign donors, on whom the LDH had relied, cut off funding.

In mid-December other League members called a meeting at which Mabota resigned, and a "Commission to Restructure the LDH" was set up, chaired by the jurist Amilcar Andela.

But Mabota subsequently withdrew her resignation, and, according to the weekly paper "Savana", she called a meeting of the Management Council of the League to discuss dissolving the Restructuring Commission.

The Restructuring Commission said it had no knowledge of such a meeting and, in any case, the Management Council could not dissolve a Commission which it had not set up.

The Commission is working out of the new LDH offices, but Mabota has set up a parallel team which is occupying the League's previous offices in the inner Maputo suburb of Alto-Mae.

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