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President Nyusi in Namibia for investiture of Hage Geingob

The exercise of democracy is a reality in southern Africa and represents a victory for the region, declared Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi, on his arrival in Windhoek, where he attended the investiture of the new Namibian President Hage Geingob on 21 March.

Speaking to reporters after landing in Windhoek, President Nyusi said “the Namibian people, in a peaceful and orderly manner, held elections and elected their new President, and this brings us great pride because we are a brother people”.

The investiture of Geingob coincides with celebrations of the 25th anniversary of Namibian independence. “In 25 years a great deal has evolved”, said President Nyusi. “They have proved that this is a nation, this is a sovereign people”.

He recalled that he had met with Geingob, then Namibian Prime Minister, last year. “We talked and we said we will impress greater dynamism on our cooperation in the economic area, because there is a lot that our two countries can do together”, said President Nyusi.

The Namibian authorities expected more than 800 dignitaries from all over the world for the celebrations. Other southern African leaders present included President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos of Angola, President Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania and King Mswati III of Swaziland. South African President Jacob Zuma was represented by Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa.

Contrary to the practice in many parts of the world, Geingob has already announced the composition of his government. The names of the ministers and deputy ministers in the new Namibian government were announced 48 hours before Geingob’s own investiture.

This visit to Namibia is President Nyusi’s first trip abroad since he was sworn in as President in January.

Fully bilingual primary education from 2017

The Ministry of Education and Human Development announced in Maputo on 18 March that, as from 2017, primary education will become fully bilingual, with children in the initial years of schooling being taught in 16 Mozambican languages.

The National Director of Primary Education, Antuia Soverano, announced the measure at a seminar on linguistic revision of the plans for bilingual education.

In the early years of Mozambican independence, primary education was exclusively in the official language, Portuguese. This caused enormous difficulties for children in rural areas who had never encountered Portuguese before, and for whom it was entirely alien.

The language problem is widely regarded as one of the main factors contributing to the high repetition and drop-out rates in Mozambican primary schools.

According to Soverano, learning in the child’s mother tongue has a huge impact. When the same language is used at home and in the classroom it creates greater confidence among the children. When they already know the medium of instruction, the pupils are much more communicative. They then learn Portuguese as what it is, a foreign language.

Opening the seminar, Deputy Education Minister Armindo Ngunga, who is one of the country’s most prominent linguists, noted that a pilot programme in bilingual education has been under way for the past ten years. This programme covered some schools in all Mozambican provinces except Maputo City.

The pilot programme, Ngunga said, had given results favourable to expanding bilingual education across the country. It had also produced a wealth of written material, and a good number of teachers trained in mother tongue education.

Nonetheless, teacher training for a bilingual system had to be improved in both the number of teachers, and their skills, added Ngunga.

In the bilingual system, Soverano said, children would begin to learn in their mother tongue, and only after they had consolidated knowledge and skills in their own language, would they be taught Portuguese.

She added that the Ministry is now preparing the manuals and other educational materials that will support teachers working in Mozambican languages.

US\$30 million a year spent on medicines

The Ministry of Health spends over US\$30 million a year on medicines according to Minister Nazaira Abdula.

The largest slice of this is US\$17 million to buy medicines for the country's hospitals and other fixed health units. But the network of fixed health units does not cover the entire country. Medicines must also be supplied for other health providers, most notably for the kits used by the village health workers. This pushes the total bill up to around US\$30 million.

Speaking in Maputo on 23 March at the opening of a meeting on revising the National List of Essential Medicines, Abdula said her ministry is concerned to rationalize its expenditure and maximize resources.

Revising the list was important, she said, since the current list, drawn up in 2010, is out of date. New drugs were now available – but it was not just a question of adding to the list.

“We need to condense the list of medicines, so that we buy what the public really needs”, she said. This would cut costs and make it easier to control stocks.

Abdula stressed that the medicines on the current list are available with sufficient stocks.

Mozambican plant could be key to new cancer treatment

A rare southern African bush has been shown to be effective in eliminating renal cancer cells.

The plant, *Phyllanthus engleri*, which is also known as spurred phyllanthus, is only found in Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe.

Researchers at the University of Leeds, in northern England, have found that a compound from the *Phyllanthus engleri* plant activates proteins in the human body that in turn destroy the cancerous cells.

The team, led by Professor David Beech, have discovered that the chemical, Englerin A, activates the TRPC4 protein and its close relative TRPC5. This triggers changes in the renal cancer cell which kills it.

According to Professor Beech, “Englerin A is particularly interesting because it is selective – it only kills renal cancer cells and a few other types of cancer cell. Other cell types are resistant to it, so we think Englerin A has a great deal of potential”.

However, Professor Beech warns that the research has only taken place in the laboratory and that it would take several years to develop a drug.

The researcher was carried out in collaboration with the Max Planck Institute of Molecular Physiology in Dortmund and Freie Universität in Berlin, Germany.

There are around ten thousand cases of renal cancer diagnosed in Britain every year, with only half living ten years after diagnosis.

The fruit of *Phyllanthus engleri* is edible and other parts of the plant are used in traditional medicines. However, some parts are highly toxic and there are reports that people have committed suicide by smoking the roots.

Outbreak of dengue fever in Nampula

The Health Ministry on 16 March confirmed an outbreak of dengue fever in the northern province of Nampula.

Dengue fever, also known as breakbone fever, is a disease caused by the dengue virus which is carried by mosquitoes of the *aedes* genus, mainly the species *aedes aegypti* (different from the *anopheles* mosquito which carries malaria).

The disease causes fever, headaches, muscle and joint pains and a skin rash. It is not normally fatal, unless it develops into dengue haemorrhagic fever.

Currently there is no vaccine against dengue fever, and treatment relies on rehydration and, in severe cases, blood transfusions.

Speaking at a Maputo press conference, the deputy national director of public health, Benigna Matsinhe, said that so far 110 cases of dengue have been diagnosed in Nampula. There have been no deaths.

Matsinhe said that protective measures against the disease are similar to those taken against malaria. The key to stopping the spread of the disease was mosquito control.

The last Mozambican outbreak was in 2014 in the neighbouring province of Cabo Delgado. Here the disease was contained, and Matsinhe said those who worked on fighting dengue in Cabo Delgado are assisting the Nampula health authorities in dealing with the disease.

Dengue fever is found on all continents except Europe, and between 50 and 100 million people are infected every year.

Matsinhe also addressed the country's cholera outbreak, revealing that the number of new cases is declining in Nampula, Niassa and Tete provinces.

However, in the fourth province affected, Zambezia, where the outbreak started later, there has been a slight increase with 20 to 30 new cases diagnosed per day. On the positive side, the outbreak in Zambezia has not spread beyond the provincial capital, Quelimane.

Matsinhe said that a total of 6,205 cholera cases have been notified, and 49 of these patients have died. This is a lethality rate of 0.8 per cent.

She also announced that the number of malaria cases and of deaths from this disease have declined in comparison with last year's figures.

In 2014, from the start of the year until mid-March there were 1,091,408 cases of malaria identified, leading to 448 deaths. But in the same period this year there were only 906,368 notified cases of malaria and 273 deaths.

That is a reduction of 16 per cent in the number of cases, and of 39 per cent in the number of deaths.

Matsinhe attributed this success partly to the home spraying campaigns against mosquito. She also stressed the importance of sleeping under mosquito nets. Last year, the health authorities distributed three million bed nets during ante-natal consultations and in civic education campaigns.

Japan donates 10,000 tonnes of rice

The Mozambican and Japanese governments signed an agreement in Maputo on 19 March under which Japan will donate 10,000 tonnes of rice, valued at US\$6.2 million.

The rice is commercial food aid. The money raised by selling the rice will be channelled into the building of infrastructures.

The programme will be coordinated by the Mozambican Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

According to Mozambique's Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade, Oscar Mitha, 60 per cent of the rice will be sold in the central and northern provinces severely affected by flooding earlier this year.

The rice will arrive from November, and will help reduce the pressures on the market at this time of year. Mozambique always has a deficit in rice – the gap between production and consumption is about 200,000 tonnes a year.

The deficit is particularly pressing in the last quarter of the year and the entry of a large donation at this time will ease the pressure for increased rice prices.

Japanese consul Jiro Marumashi stressed the problems caused by the floods, and added "We hope that this year's food aid will minimize the suffering of Mozambicans and will provide an opportunity for development programmes".

Overloaded trucks damage to EN4 motorway

Trans-African Concessions (TRAC), the South African company which operates the EN4 motorway from Maputo to the South African town of Witbank, has promised to invest 370 million meticaïs (US\$10.9 million) in rehabilitating a seven kilometre stretch of the motorway in the municipality of Matola.

This stretch is in very poor condition, much to the annoyance of motorists who have to pay tolls for using it. TRAC blames the problem on overloaded trucks.

TRAC spokesperson Fenias Mazive said that while trucks continue to disrespect weight limits, the roads they use will suffer early deterioration.

The police should put a stop to this. But somehow the practice of overloading continues.

Mazive added that there are trucks carrying building materials which are uncovered. As a result, sand and small stones are blown off the trucks and onto the road, adding to the damage to the surface of the motorway.

Although the stretch of road to be repaired is only seven kilometres long, the work will take until December.

Mazive recognized that the road works will cause added congestion, and so TRAC is insisting that the contractor must work day and night to complete the task.

The motorway is one of the main access routes into Maputo, and every day around 48,000 vehicles pass through the toll gate at the Maputo end.

Analyst warns low oil prices could hit bidding round

The London based analysis company GlobalData has warned that Mozambique's fifth hydrocarbon licensing round may be affected by the low world prices for oil and natural gas.

However, the company's "Mozambique Upstream Fiscal and Regulatory Report" highlights the positive effects of revisions to Mozambique's upstream fiscal and regulatory regime, including the new Petroleum and Petroleum Tax Laws passed in 2014 and the renegotiation of the fiscal terms for the Rovuma Areas 1 and 4 Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) projects.

The report states that "the country will be hoping that recent discoveries and its revised fiscal environment will create an investment boost during its latest bid round".

The fifth bidding round was launched simultaneously in Maputo and London on 23 October, and is now due to be closed on 30 April.

Fifteen blocks are on offer in this tender, and they cover a total area of 76,800 square kilometres. Three of the blocks in the new tender are in the Rovuma Basin, where the American company Anadarko and ENI of Italy have discovered huge reserves (about 200 trillion cubic feet so far) of natural gas off the coast of the northern province of Cabo Delgado.

The remaining 12 blocks are in the Mozambique Basin, eight offshore and four onshore. The Mozambique Basin covers an area of half a million square kilometres, stretching from the Zambezi Delta to the border with South Africa.

According to Reece Straker, GlobalData's Upstream Fiscal Analyst, "by providing fiscal stability to new and existing license holders, as well as the influential Rovuma projects, Mozambique has increased investor confidence. Not only will this stability directly encourage potential bidders, it will provide greater belief in the future development of LNG facilities associated with the huge Rovuma fields".

However, Straker warned that "the recent decline in oil and LNG prices is a substantial obstacle to investment and will have tempered expectations. Potential bidders are likely to be much more cautious with new investments, not least because many of the blocks on offer in this licensing round are in high-cost, ultra-deepwater areas".

Straker concluded "if the current challenges to ultra-deepwater development prove too large for investors in this round, Mozambique may need to further amend its fiscal terms to kick-start development in promising areas. However, the government will be hoping to achieve some moderate success by providing a variety of areas as part of the round."

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

HCB to protect pylons against floods

Hydroelétrica de Cahora Bassa (HCB), the company that operates the Cahora Bassa dam on the Zambezi river, has announced that it will spend 480 million meticaís (US\$14 million) on protecting HCB transmission lines from the effects of flooding.

This protection will involve strengthening the pylons on or near river banks. Broader and deeper foundations for the pylons will be built, which will be able to withstand the force of the waters during peak moments of a flood.

On 12 January a massive flood on the Licungo River, in the central province of Zambezia, swept away ten pylons on the transmission lines carrying Cahora Bassa power to the north of the country. This deprived the northern provinces of Nampula, Niassa and Cabo Delgado, and the northern districts of Zambezia, of electricity for four weeks. HCB seems determined to ensure that this shall not happen again.

The first of these strengthened pylons will be installed on the line carrying electricity from Cahora Bassa to South Africa. Pylons where the lines cross the Save, Limpopo and Nuanetsi rivers are being replaced and the route of the line will also be altered. HCB guarantees that there will be no interruption in the supply of electricity while this work is being done.

The new towers are designed in such a way that the solid detritus carried by flood waters will not accumulate at the base of pylons, putting pressure on them.

Severe flooding in the Limpopo valley in 2000 interrupted the flow of HCB power to South Africa for five months. There was a partial interruption in 2013, which reduced the flow of electricity to South Africa to 65 per cent of the normal supply.

HCB power is carried to South Africa along two high voltage direct current lines each running for about 1,400 kilometres and with a total of 2,000 pylons. Some of this power is then re-exported from South Africa, along a line rented from the South African power utility Eskom, to supply Maputo and the rest of southern Mozambique.

In addition, HCB has two high voltage alternating current lines that take electricity to the centre and north of the country, and a third which carries power to Zimbabwe.

IFC invests in steel industry

The International Finance Corporation (IFC), the member of the World Bank Group that focuses on the private sector in developing countries, has announced that it is to invest in a steel mill in northern Mozambique.

MM Integrated Steel Mills Mozambique will be situated in the Special Economic Zone in the northern port

city of Nacala. Its parent company is the Tanzanian conglomerate, the Motisun Group. The project will manufacture galvanized roofing sheets and other products used in low-cost housing.

According to IFC, “MMI Steel will be the first roofing sheet manufacturing plant in Mozambique with integrated facilities from cold rolling to profiling”.

The steel plant has been given approval by the Mozambican government’s Office for Areas of Accelerated Development (GAZEDA) and will create about 250 jobs.

The founder of Motisun, Subhash Patel, explained that “Mozambique is a fast growing market that will require local building materials to meet expanding housing needs. Our integrated facilities at Nacala will enable us to provide customized roofing sheets of various thickness, colour and sizes at a competitive price”.

The Motisun Group has manufacturing operations in Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. It also plans to expand into Ghana to serve West Africa.

Total investment in the Nacala facility will be around US\$39 million. IFC proposes to invest and/or mobilize up to US\$20 million to part finance the project. However, the initial loan is for US\$13.5 million.

Kenmare operations hit by flooding

The Irish company Kenmare Resources on 11 March announced that the link with the electricity grid had been cut near its dredge mine in Moma district, on the coast of the northern province of Nampula.

According to the company, recent flooding in Nampula province has resulted in damage to the power line between the Moma mine and the city of Nampula. The power failure took place when the Meluli River burst its banks. Kenmare is now working with the publicly owned electricity company EDM to carry out the necessary repairs.

As a result, the company turned to its diesel generators to run its operations at a reduced capacity.

The company stated that the negative effect of the power cut will be mitigated by the fact that it has “significant levels of ilmenite product inventories on hand”.

The mine at Moma extracts ilmenite, rutile and zircon from titanium-bearing heavy mineral sands. Ilmenite (iron titanium oxide) and rutile (titanium dioxide) are used to make white pigments for paints, paper and plastic. Titanium can be extracted from these ores and used to manufacture metallic parts where light weight and high strength are needed. Zircon (zirconium silicate) is used for abrasive and insulating purposes.

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