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Government promises to mobilise resources in wake of cyclone

The government will continue mobilizing resources internally to rebuild the infrastructure destroyed by Cyclone Dineo when it hit the southern province of Inhambane on 15 February, Prime Minister Carlos Agostinho do Rosario pledged on 20 February.

The latest estimates are that Inhambane provincial government needs more than 900 million meticais (about US\$13 million) to repair what was damaged during the cyclone.

Speaking to reporters at the end of two day visit to Inhambane, Rosario said the government will assess what is needed in addition to the support that can be raised internally, and will then approach international partners.

He stressed that the reconstruction efforts must first involve the mobilization of resources internally (at provincial and central level), with the involvement of the business sector and of civil society organizations, as well as solidarity campaigns among Mozambicans.

“All efforts will be made to ensure that we can act in an appropriate manner, since the damage done is very great”, he added.

The Prime Minister visited Massinga, Morrumbene and Maxixe districts, where he toured places severely damaged by the cyclone, including schools, health units, and other public facilities.

He also left instructions for the provincial government to ensure minimum conditions for the resumption of classes in all schools in the province, to provide seeds to ensure that farmers can plant again, and to take measures to avoid outbreaks of water borne diseases.

The latest figures for damage indicate that around 652,680 people were affected by the cyclone in Inhambane and Maxixe cities, and in the districts of Morrumbene, Massinga, Jangamo, Zavala, Inharrime, Panda, Vilankulo, Funhalouro, Mabote and Homoine. Seven people are known to have died and around fifty injured.

The cyclone blew the roofs off a large number of classrooms, affecting 160,000 pupils and 5,000 teachers. The torrential rain that inundated farmland caused the loss of about 29,000 hectares of crops.

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

Man who blinded Josina Machel sentenced

A Maputo court on 21 February sentenced the man who blinded Josina Machel, daughter of Mozambique’s first President, Samora Machel, to a prison sentence of three years and four months for acts of serious physical and psychological violence.

The man, Rofino Licuco, was Josina’s boyfriend between 2012 and 2015. On 17 October 2015 he beat her on the face so badly that she was blinded in her right eye.

Passing sentence, the Kampfumo urban district court suspended the prison sentence for five years, on the grounds that Licuco is a first offender. However, it ordered him to pay Josina compensation of 200 million meticais (US\$2.9 million) and to reimburse her for all the costs of her medical treatment. If Licuco does not pay the compensation within 30 days, the prison sentence will be executed.

However, matters could be delayed for much longer if Licuco appeals against the sentence. He has five days in which to appeal, and that would suspend the entire sentence including the compensation.

The Machel family was disappointed that the court opted to suspend the sentence. Speaking at a press conference, Josina’s mother, former education minister Graca Machel, said “I am pleased that he was convicted, but I am not pleased that the sentence was suspended. I wanted him to go to prison. The message should be sent out that, if a man assaults a woman, he will go to jail”.

Nonetheless, Josina regarded the verdict as a victory “which should be celebrated by all women who are physically, verbally, financially or sexually abused”. She offered this victory “for all those who suffer in silence and for all those women who die, every day, in domestic violence”.

Josina plans to use the compensation from Licuco to help other abused women. She will give it to the NGO Kuhluka, which she set up to support women who are the victims of gender-based violence, and to give them a voice.

Illegal logging continues in Zambezia

Forestry wardens in the central province of Zambezia have seized five trucks loaded with 118 cubic metres of wood from protected species.

According to the head of the inspection department in the Zambezia Provincial Forestry and Wildlife Services, Pedro Benjamin, the documentation presented by the transporter of this cargo was illegal, and there are strong suspicions that the timber was illegally logged in the Gile National Reserve.

The months of January to March are the closed season for forestry, in which logging and the transport of logs are forbidden. Yet since the start of January seven trucks in all, laden with timber, have been intercepted in Alto Molocue, Mocubela and Nicoadala districts, all of which border on the Gile Reserve.

In the Alto Molocue case, the owner of the truck was fined 540,000 meticais (US\$7,800), and the timber reverted to the state. The Forestry and Wildlife Services are still analysing the Mocubela and Nicoadala seizures.

In the most recent seizures, in Nicoadala, the trees were the precious hardwood umbila. Initially, the logs were being taken to Mocuba, the second largest urban centre in Zambezia, but then the route was changed to take them to the port of Beira, where the prices were higher.

If the logs were headed for a port, the intention must have been to export them, in flagrant violation of the law passed last year by the Mozambican parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, which outlaws all exports of logs, of any species.

Nampula mayor boycotts MDM meeting

The Political Commission of the second largest opposition party, the Mozambique Democratic Party (MDM), completed a two day meeting in the northern city of Nampula on 20 February, with no sign of the city's mayor, Mahamudo Amurane, who is also a member of the Commission.

When Amurane missed the first day of the meeting there were still hopes that he would show up. But he did not do so.

Amurane's boycott was complete. According to the newsheet "Mediafax", he did not take part in the reception for the party's leader, Daviz Simango, when he arrived in Nampula, he did not join an MDM march through the streets of the city, and he did not put in any appearance at the Political Commission meeting.

Amurane received an invitation to meet with Simango, but he did not reply. He was certainly in Nampula, and when a reporter from the daily paper "O Pais" contacted him, he said he had "nothing to explain" about his absence from the MDM meeting.

Amurane's behaviour has opened speculation that he is on the point of leaving the party. His disaffection arises from the alleged involvement of MDM members in corrupt practices. Earlier this month he accused unnamed figures in the MDM of attempting to denigrate him "because I will not do deals with corruption".

The meeting was intended to prepare the MDM's Second Congress, due to be held in December. Also on the agenda were the municipal elections due in late 2018. The MDM currently controls four of the country's 51 municipalities (Nampula, Beira, Quelimane and Gurue).

At the last local elections, in 2013, the MDM benefitted from a boycott by the main opposition party, Renamo. Those elections were thus a straight fight between the ruling Frelimo Party and the MDM. But this time, Renamo has pledged to stand candidates, which may make it difficult for the MDM to hold onto its gains.

President launches rural development project

President Filipe Nyusi declared on 17 February that "Sustenta", the government's integrated agriculture and natural resource project, is unequivocal proof that rural development is at the centre of the government's activity.

Speaking in Ribaue district, in the northern province of Nampula, at the official launch of "Sustenta", President Nyusi explained that "Sustenta" does not replace existing programmes such as the District Development Fund (FDD), or the National Agricultural Development Programme (ProAgri). "Sustenta" was being created "to strengthen the will to speed up rural development".

Budgeted at the equivalent of US\$231 million, "Sustenta" is financed by the World Bank.

One of the specificities of the new project is the access to financial services that will be granted to peasant farmers, small scale emerging commercial farmers and small and medium agricultural companies. President Nyusi said that access to finance is a fundamental factor for development.

"Sustenta" will have a direct impact on the lives of over 125,000 rural households (over 700,000 people) who rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. "It's still not very much, but we have to start somewhere", said President Nyusi.

Police expel illegal miners

The police have removed 796 illegal miners from the Namanhumbir area, in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, reports the newspaper "Noticias".

Namanhumbir is the site of major deposits of rubies and other precious stones. It is estimated to hold 40 per cent of the world's rubies. The ruby concession covers 33,600 hectares, and is operated by Montepuez Ruby Mining (MRM), which is a partnership between the British company Gemfields (with a 75 per cent stake), and the Mozambican company Mwiriti.

Ever since the deposit was discovered in 2009, illegal miners have descended on Montepuez, not only from other parts of Mozambique, but from the rest of Africa.

According to the head of the department for the protection of natural resources and the environment, in the Cabo Delgado police command, Abdul Chaguro, of the 796 illegal miners removed from Namanhumbir, 205 are from Montepuez district, while 346 came from elsewhere in Mozambique. The rest were foreigners. Chaguro said 169 were Tanzanians, while the others came from Guinea-Conakry, Mali, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, Somalia and Thailand. There was even one Belgian among those detained.

He told reporters that some of the Tanzanians have already been repatriated, and preparations are under way to deport the other foreigners. Some of the foreigners had entry visas, but in some cases these had expired. Some had residence permits – but which allowed them to live in a different area. Most of the Tanzanians, however, had no documents at all.

Chaguro said there was one case in which a policeman was accused of seizing goods belonging to a miner: these were returned to their rightful owner. Two members of the local community police council were detained for trying to steal chairs and a generator from the tent of another foreigner.

Chaguro said the miners had been given a deadline to leave Namanhumbir voluntarily, and the police only moved in after they ignored the deadline. No-one was killed or injured in the police operation.

He promised that, in the near future, the crackdown against illegal mining will be expanded to other areas of the country.

PRONASAR has benefited nine million Mozambicans

Since it was launched in 2010, the National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme (PRONASAR) has benefitted about nine million Mozambicans, by improving the water and sanitation conditions in rural communities, according to the Minister of Public Works, Carlos Bonete.

Bonete was speaking on 15 February in Maputo, at the opening of a seminar to launch the 2017-2030 phase of PRONASAR, under the theme "Sharing Experiences on Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene, in the Rural Areas of Mozambique".

Bonete said that to date PRONASAR has installed over 11,000 water sources and 30 small scale water systems across the country. During the six years of implementation, the rural communities have been involved in identifying appropriate solutions and in maintaining the facilities provided.

He noted that, by the cut-off date of 2015 for implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Mozambique had not fully complied with the MDGs concerning water and sanitation. The key MDG target in this area was to halve, between 1990 and 2015 the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

Bonete said the country needs an accelerated and coordinated effort to meet the water supply and sanitation goals, with the support of its cooperation partners. PRONASAR is implemented as a joint effort between the government, its partners, NGOs, private business and the communities themselves.

The MDGs have now been supplanted by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in 2015. These goals are more ambitious and they include access to clean water and decent sanitation for all by 2030.

More border posts issuing visas

The Mozambican government announced on 15 February that, with immediate effect, a further 18 border posts are authorized to issue frontier visas.

They join the 26 border posts that have been issuing frontier visas since 2005. This leaves only 14 border posts that are not authorized to issue visas. This is largely a matter of obtaining the appropriate equipment, since the visas are biometric.

The decision was taken by the Ministry of the Interior, as part of the government's efforts to facilitate the entry of tourists.

It follows a recent meeting chaired by President Filipe Nyusi which discussed the adoption of measures to make Mozambique more appealing to tourists, to attract foreign currency and to create jobs.

Tourism is one of the areas chosen by the government to drive the country's economic development, and it will be much easier for tourists to enter if they can purchase their visas at the border, rather than queuing up at embassies or consulates.

"The border posts that are able to issue the frontier visa are determined by the Minister of the Interior, through a specific legal diploma. Up until yesterday, we had 26 border posts that could issue this visa, distributed among the 11 provinces. Now there are a further 18", Joaquim Bule, advisor to the Minister, told a Maputo press conference.

The frontier visa is the only type of visa that can be issued in Mozambique, rather than at an embassy or consulate. It is valid for 30 days and costs 2,000 meticaís (US\$ 29).

Rain prevents Dhlakama from addressing rally

A planned telephone contact between Afonso Dhlakama, leader of the opposition party Renamo, and members and supporters in the central city of Beira, failed to happen on 11 February due to bad weather.

Renamo had scheduled a rally for a sports field belonging to Beira Municipal Council. A sound system was set up, including large loudspeakers which would have allowed Dhlakama's voice to boom out to his supporters.

But this depended entirely on the phone communication between Beira and Dhlakama's military camp, somewhere in Gorongosa district. Mobile phone communications, however, depend heavily on atmospheric conditions. This was the case, with it raining in both Beira and Gorongosa. After several failed attempts to contact Dhlakama, the Renamo official in charge of the ceremony, parliamentary deputy Manuel Pereira, had to apologise to the crowd, and explain that the rain made telephone contact with Gorongosa impossible.

In the absence of Dhlakama's voice, Renamo used the rally as an opportunity to present several senior figures in the Sofala provincial structures.

Dredging of Maputo Port completed

The Maputo Port Development Company (MPDC) on 10 February announced the conclusion of the dredging of the port access channel, deepening it from 11 to 14.2 metres.

This difference "may not seem much, but it's those additional three metres which allow us today to state proudly that we are a port which can receive Capesize ships", the MPDC chief executive Osorio Lucas told the ceremony.

Capesize ships are the largest dry cargo ships, usually transporting coal, mineral ores and other bulk commodities.

The dredging has given the port great competitive advantages, said Lucas. "This week, a ship, the M/V Diavolezza, with a 12.9 metre draft, let the port, without needing to wait for high tide", he explained. "This meant a gain of 12 hours in transit. That was a record for us". The Diavolezza is a Swiss bulk carrier, of 87,665 deadweight tonnes, built in January 2016.

The dredging was done by the Luxembourg-based company Jan de Nul. It began in May 2016, and was scheduled to take ten months – but in fact Jan de Nul concluded the work in seven months. Using up to three dredges, the Jan de Nul teams operated in the port access channel for 24 hours a day during the seven months of dredging. Almost 14.5 million cubic metres of sediment and rocky material were removed from the channel.

The total cost was US\$84.1 million. The dredging is a key part of the MPDC strategy so that the port can handle 40 million tonnes of cargo a year as from 2020. The largest amount of traffic handled by the port to date was 19.1 million tonnes in 2014.

But in 2015, the last year for which full figures have been published, the amount handled dropped by around 20 per cent to 15.6 million tonnes.

MPDC is a consortium between Mozambique's publicly-owned port and rail company, CFM, with 49 per cent of the shares, and Portus Indico with 51 per cent. Portus Indico is owned by DP World of Dubai, Grindrod of South Africa and the Mozambican company Mozambique Gestores.

The Mozambican government leased the port to MPDC in 2003 for 15 years, and in 2009 the lease was extended for a further 15 years expiring in 2033, by which time MPDC should have implemented the entire Master Plan for the port's development.

Kroll given extra month to complete audit

The US company Kroll, reputedly the foremost forensic audit company in the world, has been granted a further month to complete its audit of the quasi-public companies Proindicus, Ematum (Mozambique Tuna Company) and MAM (Mozambique Asset Management).

When last year the London branch of Kroll was hired to undertake the international, independent audit of the three companies it was given 90 days to complete the task, which meant completing the audit by the end of February.

According to a press release issued on 13 February by the Attorney-General's Office (PGR), which is looking into crimes that may have been committed in setting up, financing and operating the three companies, Kroll submitted a preliminary report in January. This detailed the audit activities undertaken so far, in accordance with the terms of reference, describing the progress made and outlining the steps that still need to be taken.

According to the PGR, the work undertaken by Kroll to date "includes analysis of extensive financial data and other available documentation, visits to the offices of the three companies, visits to facilities and equipment in several parts of the country, and interview with members of the government, public servants, workers of the three companies and other figures".

Kroll has also requested additional information from the suppliers of the three companies, from the banks which lent them huge sums and from other institutions.

Since collecting and processing this information is complex and is still under way, in Mozambique and abroad, Kroll asked for more time. The PGR states that, in collaboration with the International Monetary Fund (which demanded the audit as a condition for resuming normal relations with Mozambique), and with the Swedish embassy (which is financing the audit), it has agreed to grant Kroll a further month. Hence the final audit report should be delivered by 31 March.

The three companies took out loans amounting to more than two billion dollars from European banks (mainly Credit Suisse and VTB of Russia). These loans – US\$850 million for Ematum, US\$622 million for Proindicus, and US\$535 million for MAM – were on commercial terms, with high interest rates and short repayment periods. Since the loans were all guaranteed by the Mozambican government, they added 20 per cent to Mozambique's foreign debt, and pushed it beyond the bounds of sustainability.

ADB pleased with project implementation

The Executive Director of the African Development Bank (ADB), Heinrich Gaomab II, on 2 February expressed satisfaction that Mozambique is implementing to the full

the projects that have been approved and financed by the bank. Speaking to reporters after an audience granted by President Filipe Nyusi, Gaomab said that Mozambican stands out because of its efficiency in reimbursing the credits lent by the ADB. "I am pleased because Mozambique is one of the few African countries which not only implements the projects of our bank, but also reimburses our funds speedily", he said.

Gaomab said the ADB pays particular attention to agriculture, energy, education and infrastructures. In agriculture, he pointed in particular to the Lower Limpopo Irrigation scheme, in Xai-Xai district, in the southern province of Gaza.

Mozambique has been a member of the ADB group since 1977, and the ADB has financed 62 projects in Mozambique since that date, amounting to total funding of US\$1.7 billion. Of this sum, agriculture accounts for US\$568 million, transport US\$300 million, and eater supply and sanitation US\$145 million.

Among the most recent projects where the ADB has authorized financing is the first phase of the road from Mueda to Negomano, in the far northern province of Cabo Delgado, in which the bank will invest US\$75 million.

Xai-Xai airport to cost \$60 million

The government estimates that it will cost US\$60 million to build a brand new airport to serve Xai-Xai, capital of the southern province of Gaza.

Xai-Xai is the only provincial capital that has no airport. The projected site for the new airport is outside the city, in Chonguene district. Transport Minister Carlos Mesquita on 17 February visited the site, which covers an area of about 4,000 hectares.

Mesquita said that the viability study, including the environmental impact study, has already been undertaken. The government is now waiting for the ExIm Bank of China to disburse the money to start work on the airport.

Mesquita added, "all the households affected by the project will be resettled – but it is important to note that there are few people living in the area. What we do have is a large number of graves, and these must be removed to another place, work which will involve the respective families and the local traditional authorities".

Mesquita stated that the airport "is a necessity and a dream for Gaza, and we hope that it will stimulate tourism in the province". There are plans to build a new dam on the Limpopo River, and to exploit titanium bearing heavy mineral sands in the Gaza district of Chibuto. "For these activities we need an airport to facilitate the movement of people involved in the projects", said Mesquita. "Gaza has tourist potential in its beaches and parks, and these factors demand that the government provide highly competitive and attractive services in all areas, including aviation".

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