

Mozambique News Agency

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President Guebuza addresses Games' closing ceremony

President Armando Guebuza on 18 September formally closed the 10th All Africa Games, and praised the Mozambican public for the “spirit of civic behaviour” they had shown throughout the two weeks of competitions. President Guebuza recalled that Mozambique had only two years to organise the event, after Zambia had announced that it was unable for financial reasons to host the games. Despite the race against time, the Mozambican organizing committee had done all in its power to ensure that the games were crowned with success.

President Guebuza challenged all African athletes to prepare for the next major events – which will be the 2012 Olympic Games in London, and the 11th All African Games, scheduled for Brazzaville in 2015.

For his part, the Chairperson of the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa (SCSA), Jacques Ndoulou, declared the games a success, and claimed that they had made a significant contribution to unity among Africans.

He expressed his satisfaction at a new member joining the African sports family – the newly independent republic of South Sudan.

The closing ceremony was marked by a parade of athletes, cultural events and a fireworks display.

The country that emerged from the games with most medals was South Africa, with 156 (61 gold, 55 silver and 40 bronze), followed by Nigeria, with 98 medals (31 gold, 28 silver and 39 bronze).

Mozambique ended the games with 12 medals (four silver and eight bronze), won in athletics, swimming, boxing, basketball, karate, canoeing, taekwondo, sailing and chess.

Contract signed to double Nampula water supply

The Mozambican branch of the United States aid programme, the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), on 5 September signed a contract with a consortium formed by the building companies CMC and CETA to rehabilitate and expand the water supply system in the northern Mozambican city of Nampula.

Under this project the amount of drinking water available in Nampula should double by February 2013, the date for conclusion of the work. The theoretical capacity of the existing system is 20,000 cubic metres a day – though in reality only 16,000 cubic metres a day is available.

The work is budgeted at \$37 million, and is divided into two phases. Under the first phase, costing \$23.9 million, the existing pumping station and water treatment station will be rehabilitated and expanded, so as to restore the nominal capacity of providing 20,000 cubic metres a day.

In addition a new treatment station will be built, also with a capacity to treat 20,000 cubic metres a day. Thus total capacity should rise to 40,000 cubic metres a day.

The first phase also includes building a new reservoir with a capacity of 1,500 cubic metres, and a new distribution centre with its own dedicated pumping station

In the second phase, two new water mains will be built, each 600 millimetres in diameter, running for a total of 16 kilometres, along with a new distributor consisting of a reservoir with a 5,000 cubic metre capacity, intended to supply critical areas. When this is completed, water should be available for Nampula consumers 24 hours a day.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, the Minister of Planning and Development, Aiuba Cuereneia, urged all those involved, particularly the contractors, to do all in their power to comply with the deadlines laid down in the contract.

US ambassador Leslie Rowe, who also witnessed the signing, said the Nampula project was very significant “for reliable access to drinking water”

“This is an ambitious, but necessary intervention”, she said. She hoped that the final result will be in line with high construction standards,

The MCC is a US foreign aid agency set up by the US Congress in 2003, with bipartisan support which provides grants to developing countries which meet US criteria on good governance and “economic freedom”.

The MCC signed an agreement (known as a compact) with Mozambique that took effect in September 2008, under which Mozambique receives a five year grant of \$506.9 million for water supply and sanitation, roads, land tenure services and farmer income support, mostly in the north of the country.

Poachers kill elephants in Quirimbas National Park

Poachers have killed at least 12 elephants in the space of a week in the Quirimbas National Park (PNQ), in the northern province of Cabo Delgado.

The PNQ is a fully protected area covering around 7,500 square kilometres. It consists of the islands of the Quirimbas archipelago, and a large stretch of mainland bush and forest.

According to the park management, a group of four men, wearing military uniform and armed with assault rifles, are killing elephants in the districts of Ancuabe and Meluco. They have press-ganged local peasants into carrying the tusks, and threaten to kill anyone who does not cooperate.

Both Mozambican and foreign poachers have been active in the park recently. Some poachers have been detained in recent months, but the park authorities warn that the PNQ does not have enough wardens, particularly in light of the increasingly sophisticated equipment used by the criminals.

The park authorities have organised joint operations with the police and with local community leaderships, in order to identify and arrest poachers, sometimes with satisfactory results.

Six cases of poachers, accused of killing elephants, using toxic products to poison animals and illegal possession of firearms have been sent to the provincial capital, Pemba. But the lethargy of the provincial prosecution service and the courts means that none of these cases has yet come to trial.

The PNQ release says that the ivory is eventually taken out of the park by helicopter. The PNG have not yet been able to identify the origin of this helicopter.

More than 800,000 military items collected

Over 800,000 guns and other items of military equipment have been collected since 1995 under the programme "Transforming Guns into Hoes" (TAE), an initiative of the Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM).

TAE, an updating of the biblical injunction to "turn swords into ploughshares", consists in collecting weaponry, no questions asked, compensating the person who delivers the items, and then destroying them. In many cases, sculptors have worked on the guns, ammunition clips and other items, turning them into works of art.

Interviewed by Radio Mozambique on 16 September, the TAE National Coordinator, Boaventura Zitha, said that the churches have been working with communities to locate arms caches that were buried at the end of the war of destabilisation, and to persuade people in illicit possession of firearms to come forward and deliver them voluntarily.

In addition to the statues wrought out of the weapons, TAE is also preparing the construction of memorials to the war dead, based on the armaments collected. Zitha said the communities will then have something to remind them that the instruments recently used to kill and main can also be used to erect things of artistic beauty.

Elections Commission meets political parties

Mozambique's National Elections Commission (CNE) on 15 September met with representatives of the country's political parties to discuss the procedures for presenting candidates for the municipal by-elections scheduled for 7 December.

The by-elections are for the mayors of Quelimane, Pemba and Cuamba municipalities, and have been precipitated by the resignation of three mayors elected in 2008, namely Pio

Matos, Sidiq Yacub and Arnaldo Maloa, all from the ruling Frelimo Party.

Although there are dozens of political parties registered in Mozambique, only Frelimo, the Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM), which holds eight seats in parliament, and seven small extra-parliamentary parties turned up.

There was no sign of the main opposition party, Renamo, whose leader Afonso Dhlakama has announced that it will boycott the by-elections.

CNE chairperson Joao Leopoldo da Costa confirmed to AIM that Renamo has made no attempt to contact the CNE.

New bank inaugurates head office

Prime Minister Aires Ali on 14 September urged the country's financial sector to channel the savings it obtains from the public into productive activities, thus contributing to wealth creation and the development of the Mozambican economy.

Ali was speaking at the inauguration of the Maputo head office of the latest bank authorised to operate in Mozambique, the Banco Unico.

This bank is dominated by Portuguese capital – the Portuguese concerns Corticeira Amorim and the VisaBeira Group hold 51 per cent of the shares. The Mozambican shareholders include the National Social Security Institute (INSS), and the National Hydrocarbon Company (ENH).

Corticeira Amorim is part of the Amorim group, and claims to be the world leader in the cork industry. 50 per cent of Corticeira Amorim is owned by Americo Amorim, often considered the richest man in Portugal, and ranked by Forbes as the 212th richest person in the world in 2010.

Ali said that the Mozambican government recognises the importance of the financial sector for the country's development, and so has been paying particular attention to it, notably by providing incentives for the expansion of banking services into the rural areas.

The formation of Banco Unico, he said, expresses the vitality of the Mozambican financial market, and reflects the countless investment possibilities this sector presents for Mozambican and foreign businesses. He urged Mozambican companies to take advantage of all the opportunities resulting from the entry of new financial services onto the market.

The chairperson of the Banco Unico board of directors, Joao Figueiredo, who until recently was Chief Executive Officer of Mozambique's largest commercial bank, the Millennium BIM, said that inaugurating the head office closes one stage in the bank's history, but opens another – that of initiating banking activity.

Up until now, the bank's main efforts have been to set up an organisational and functional structure in line with best international practices, he said.

"We have guided our efforts and much of our energy so that we can guarantee that our activity rests on a technological infrastructure that is up to the highest world standards", added Figueiredo.

Five branches have been set up in Maputo and the neighbouring city of Matola, plus a separate office for dealings with corporate clients.

The bank's initial capital is \$20 million, but it hopes to double this by the end of the year. The medium term ambition of Banco Unico is to become one of the "banks of reference" on the Mozambican market, and to contribute towards channelling savings into the banking system.

Figueiredo stressed that Banco Unico is a universal, retail bank, but which will provide its clients with "personalised and innovative services".

Vale exports first consignment of coal

The first coal exports from the open cast mine in Moatize district, in the western province of Tete, operated by the Brazilian mining giant Vale, has left the port of Beira.

The first shipment consists of 35,000 tonnes of thermal coal, which was carried on several trains from Moatize along the 575 kilometres of the rehabilitated Sena railway line.

The coal exports were loaded onto the ship "Orion Express", and are headed for the port of Tripoli in Lebanon.

According to Vale, over 9,000 people - 90 per cent of them Mozambican - have been involved in opening the mine, which began in 2008. Vale expects the mine's production to reach 11 million tonnes a year of coking and thermal coal.

Vale states that, via the Vale Foundation, it has invested over \$90 million in projects in Tete covering health, agriculture, infrastructure, sport and education, including the resettlement of 1,353 households to make way for the mine.

Government promotes aquaculture

The Mozambican government on 13 September approved a decree establishing the "marine aquaculture reserve", a measure intended to promote marine fish farming.

Speaking to reporters after a meeting of the Council of Ministers (Cabinet), the government spokesperson, Deputy Justice Minister Alberto Nkutumula, stressed the importance of aquaculture for food security and for generating income.

Aquaculture would create job opportunities for many households, and could play an important role in poverty reduction. "That is why the Fisheries Ministry, through the National Aquaculture Development Institute (INAQUA), has held a study in 39 districts of the seven coastal provinces - Maputo, Gaza, Inhambane, Sofala, Zambezia, Nampula and Cabo Delgado", Nkutumula said.

"It was found that the country has a potential for 77,600 hectares of aquaculture on land, 32,100 hectares of aquaculture in cages at sea, and 10,600 hectares for seaweed aquaculture".

The estimated potential production of fish, he continued, was 560,000 tonnes in tanks on land, and 231,000 tonnes in cages at sea. More significant in terms of revenue is the potential for farmed prawn production - which Nkutumula put at 465,000 tonnes in tanks on land, and 77,000 tonnes in cages at sea. In addition, 641,000 tonnes of seaweed could be farmed.

To develop aquaculture at sea, the government had therefore established the Marine Aquaculture Reserve, which would cover areas already demarcated through the study. Other social and economic activities may be undertaken in the reserve, as long as they complement aquaculture, or present comparative advantages.

The Council of Ministers also authorised two new private universities, bringing to 39 the total number of institutions of higher education in the country. One is the Adventist University of Mozambique, which will be based in Beira, and is owned by the Mozambican Union of Seventh Day Adventists.

The second university-level body authorised is the Higher Business Management Institute (ISGN), owned by the company SPM-Consultants. It will be based at Macuacua, in Manjacaze district, in the southern province of Gaza.

This is a condensed version of the AIM daily news service - for details contact aim@aim.org.mz

Mozambique to test HIV vaccine

Health Minister Alexandre Manguela announced on 14 September that clinical trials of a vaccine against HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, will begin this month and last for about a year and a half.

A combination of vaccines, known as ADN-MVA, will be used, ADN is a primary stimulus intended to unleash an immune response, while MVA is used to strengthen the immune response caused by ADN.

Manguela said that the ADN-MVA combination has already been tested scientifically in Tanzania and Sweden, with encouraging results.

"The study that will now be held in Mozambique is known as a 'Phase I/II clinical trial' and seeks to assess the safety and immunogenicity of the primary intradermal vaccination with ADN and the intramuscular strengthening with MVA", said the Minister. The trial subjects will be "young and healthy volunteers in Mozambique".

In layman's terms, the trial is intended to see whether the vaccine has any harmful effects, and whether it produces any immune response against HIV.

This research is being undertaken as part of the TaMoVac consortium which, in addition to Mozambique, also includes Tanzania, Germany, the USA, Britain and Sweden.

Research into HIV vaccines began in Mozambique in 2008, with funding of \$1.9 million from the Europe-Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP).

From 2008 onwards, Mozambique undertook a series of preparatory activities, including staff training, and acquiring and assembling the equipment necessary for the trials.

The trials will be carried out by the National Health Institute (INS) and by Maputo Central Hospital (HCM). Dr Ilesh Jani, Director of the INS, told the press conference that Mozambique has the capacity, in terms of human resources and equipment, to perform the trial.

He stressed the importance of undertaking studies in Mozambique, because there are various types of the HIV virus in different parts of the world - with the attendant risk that a vaccine developed for particular countries might not work in others.

Jani said there is no risk to the health of the 24 young volunteers. They are all HIV-negative, with a very low probability of contracting HIV. They were selected from people attending the HCM's special clinic for young people and adolescents.

Factory to produce ethanol from cassava

A factory producing ethanol from cassava should be operational by March 2012, in the town of Dondo, in the central Mozambican province of Sofala, reports the Beira daily paper "Diario de Mocambique".

The factory has been designed by the Beira-based company Clean Star Mozambique Ltd and, according to the Mayor of Dondo, Manuel Cambezo, the ethanol will be used to produce kerosene for domestic lighting.

It will depend on a large supply of cassava, which will be purchased from farmers in Dondo and the neighbouring districts of Muanza and Nhamatanda.

"For us, it is an added value to have this kind of project, because it stimulates the peasants to increase the area cultivated with cassava", said Cambezo.

Cambezo also announced that on October a new factory, owned by the Balagi Group Africa, will begin production in Dondo of mineral water and spirits. Tests carried out on the products so far were "positive", he said.

New equipment to double cement production

The company Cimentos de Mocambique (CM – Cements of Mozambique) on 8 September inaugurated a new grinding mill at its factory in the southern city of Matola. With the new equipment, production at the Matola factory should rise from the current 700,000 tonnes to 1.3 million tonnes a year.

The new mill is an investment of €18 million (about \$25 million), and is part of the company's expansion and modernization plans.

These plans also include operational rehabilitation of the clinker line, switching the main fuel used from coal to natural gas, installing new filters, modernizing the electrical circuits, and replacing the bagging equipment.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Francisco de Lacerda, chairman of the Portuguese giant Cimpor, which is the main shareholder in CM, declared that Mozambique is of enormous strategic importance for Cimpor.

"Mozambique is a speedily developing market, in which we have a very strong presence", said Lacerda. "We are totally committed to the development of Mozambique".

After the international decline in demand for cement in 2009, there had been a clear recovery in Mozambique, he said "where we recorded a 12.7 per cent growth in our sales of cement in 2010".

He stated that CM now has a market share of over 80 per cent in Mozambique. In addition to the Matola plant, CM also operates factories in the central town of Dondo, and the northern port of Nacala.

Lacerda said that a new mill will shortly be installed in the Dondo factory, and studies are under way for a new furnace in Dondo. These investments will allow the Dondo factory to triple its production by 2013, and by 2018 it should be able to supply all the cement requirements of central Mozambique.

All districts to be on national grid by 2014

Minister of Energy Salvador Namburete has reaffirmed the government's intention to connect all 128 districts in the country to the national electricity grid by 2014.

He told AIM that to date 102 district capitals are on the national grid, which is based on power from the Cahora Bassa dam on the Zambezi River.

"By the end of 2011, we shall have 109 districts connected to the grid, and in 2014 all 128 districts will benefit from Cahora Bassa power", he added.

For areas that are not on the grid, the government is expanding the provision of solar power. "In 2005, we had about 51,000 beneficiaries of electricity from solar panels", said Namburete. "In 2011, we have 2.1 million".

The publicly owned electricity company, EDM, in the first half of 2011 invested about two billion meticaís (about \$74 million) on expanding and improving the grid. This allowed the electrification of a further seven district capitals, and the supply of power to 67,000 new consumers.

Minister denies sale of land to Brazilians

Agriculture Minister Jose Pacheco has dismissed as a "false alarm" media claims that the government is preparing to sell six million hectares of arable land to Brazilian farmers.

Speaking to reporters on 6 September, immediately after a meeting of the Council of Ministers (Cabinet), Pacheco said there are no plans for any sale of land to Brazilians (in fact, any land sales would be illegal and unconstitutional, since the Mozambican constitution states that all property in land vests in the state).

"There is no sale of land", stressed Pacheco. "What exists is a trilateral agreement between Mozambique, Brazil and Japan to promote the development of agriculture".

Under this tripartite agreement, Mozambican farmers will be empowered to increase their production capacity, he added.

Asked about the claims of land sales made in the Brazilian press, Pacheco said the reporters concerned had not understood the nature of the agreement.

It was, however, true that six million hectares of arable land that can be used for agricultural development projects had been identified along the Nacala Corridor, which links the northern port of Nacala to Malawi. But anyone acquiring this land would have to do so in terms of Mozambican law – which clearly states that land cannot be sold or otherwise alienated.

The normal practice with land concessions is that they are granted in the form of a lease or a specific period, which could be as long as 50 years. Small allocations of land, of up to 1,000 hectares, can be granted by provincial authorities. Projects that require between 1,000 and 10,000 hectares must be approved by the Minister of Agriculture, while anything in excess of 10,000 hectares can only be granted by the Council of Ministers.

At the Cabinet meeting, Pacheco presented the results of the 2011 harvest. He described the 2010-2011 agricultural campaign as positive. 96.5 per cent of the production targets had been met – even before taking into account all the second sowings.

"We are complying with the plan, since there are still second sowing harvests to be included in the figures", he said. "The indicators are positive".

Pacheco announced that the official launch of the 2011-2012 agricultural campaign will be held on 16 October, in Barue, in the central province of Manica. The government's target for the 2012 harvest is an increase of 10.9 per cent in food crops.

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