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Presidents Nyusi and Lungu inaugurate power station

The Mozambican and Zambian Presidents, Filipe Nyusi and Edgar Lungu, on 19 March inaugurated a 100 megawatt floating power station in Nacala in the northern province of Nampula. The Turkish vessel containing the power station has been docked at Nacala port since 18 February. 110 kilovolt cables were connected, linking the ship to two special reception pylons, 65 and 85 metres tall.

According to the chairperson of EDM (the publicly-owned electricity company) Mateus Magala, the electricity produced by the floating power station will be injected into the national grid at the Nacala sub-station.

The purpose of the power station, he said, is to guarantee the power supply to northern Mozambique for the next two years. In addition, the supply from this station allows EDM to sell power to Zambia.

Magala said a new source of power was needed for the northern provinces because of the limited capacity of the centre-north line, which carries power from the Cahora Bassa dam on the Zambezi to the north of the country.

That limited capacity was cruelly exposed in January 2015, when major flooding on the Licungo River, in Zambezia province swept away ten pylons on the line, and cut power supplies to the three northern provinces of Nampula, Niassa and Cabo Delgado, and to the northern districts of Zambezia. It took a month before normal power was restored to the north.

Zambia has long had a serious electricity deficit. Recently matters have been made much worse by critically low levels of water in the Kariba dam, a major source of power for both Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The ship carrying the power station is owned by Karpowership, a subsidiary of the Turkish company Karadeniz Holding.

President Nyusi declared that the floating power station is “an example of energy cooperation to the benefit of the citizens and the economies of Mozambique and Zambia”.

The Mozambican government, he recalled, has defined electricity as a priority, and recently the supply of power has been growing at an average rate of 12 per cent a year, contributing significantly to the country’s Gross Domestic Product.

He noted that the SADC (Southern African Development Community) region currently faces an electricity deficit of 7.9 gigawatts at peak hours. This, plus the drive to industrialise the region, provided opportunities for Mozambique to become a centre for the generation and transmission of energy for the entire region.

Already, the major source of power in Mozambique, the Cahora Bassa dam, sells most of the power it generates to South Africa (and a smaller amount to Zimbabwe). The

country has enormous hydro-power potential, plus coal and natural gas deposits, most of which are so far untapped.

President Nyusi added that bringing the floating power station into operation results from a long experience of partnership between the Mozambican and Zambian electricity companies, and the need to provide more electricity of good quality.

President Lungu was on a three day state visit to Mozambique, during which a memorandum of understanding on electricity was signed. President Nyusi said that a coal fired power station will be built in Tete province, plus a new transmission line interconnecting the Mozambican and Zambian grids.

“We are hopeful that, in the future, with an increase in good quality energy, we shall have greater and better productivity in agriculture, in agro-processing, and a greater guarantee of food and nutritional security”, declared President Nyusi. Other benefits would include the emergence of new tourism projects, the development of the fisheries sector, and improvement in the supply of electricity for schools, health units and water supply.

Municipal Council suspends market fees

The Municipal Council in the town of Nhamayabwe in the western province of Tete, on 15 March decided to suspend the collection of market fees from sellers of maize, vegetables, firewood and other products, due to the drought hitting this part of Tete.

The suspension is intended to alleviate the plight of the vendors, allowing them to spend on the subsistence of their household’s money that would otherwise go to the municipality.

Speaking to reporters, the mayor of Nhamayabwe, Alberto Amade, said the council believed it should not take money which the vendors need to feed themselves in this time of drought-induced food shortages.

In Tete, the drought affects not only Mutarara district (of which Nhamayabwe is the capital), but also the districts of Changara, Magoe, Cahora Bassa, Marara, Moatize and part of Chiuta. More than 63,000 Tete households are suffering from the drought, according to figures announced recently by the agriculture and food security authorities.

Two die as police interrupt kidnapping

Two people died on 18 March during a clash between the police and a gang of kidnapers in Patrice Lumumba neighbourhood, in the southern city of Matola. One of the kidnap gang was shot dead in the shootout, but the other person who died was a passer-by struck by a stray bullet.

The drama began when a gang of six people kidnapped a woman named Felizarda Cohote, as she was opening the gate to her home in the Maputo neighbourhood of Mahotas. Two of the kidnapers took control of Cohote's vehicle and drove it towards Patrice Lumumba.

But the car was fitted with an electronic tracking device of the company Cartrack. When members of Cohote's family alerted the police, a police unit and Cartrack agents were able to follow the kidnapers.

Near the Patrice Lumumba market the criminals realised that they were being followed. They opened fire against the police, and in the exchange of shots one of the kidnapers and a bystander were killed.

According to the spokesperson for the Maputo Provincial Police Command, Juarce Martins, another member of the kidnap gang was seriously injured and is now in police custody, while the other four criminals, some of whom may also be injured, fled and are still at large. The kidnapers left behind them two pistols and 14 bullets.

Cohote was unharmed and the police returned her to her family later that evening.

Five arrested for theft of hospital equipment

Prosecutors in the central province of Sofala have ordered the arrest of five health officials in connection with the theft of medical equipment donated in February 2015 by the Rotary Club of Australia to Beira Central Hospital. Those detained include officials from the Beira hospital and from the Sofala Provincial Health Directorate.

Some of the stolen equipment was found at the "Sorridente" private clinic in Beira. The Sofala Provincial Attorney's office also ordered the seizure of the surgical beds and other material found at this clinic. The search will be extended to other Beira private clinics where it is believed that the equipment donated by the Rotary Club was diverted.

Renamo boasts of impending coup

Although so far there is no sign of the parallel government which Afonso Dhlakama, leader of the opposition party Renamo, promised to establish in six northern and central provinces in March, a prominent Renamo parliamentary deputy, Jose Manteigas, on 16 March insisted that "Renamo will govern in the provinces where it won".

Speaking in parliament Manteigas declared "Renamo governance is coming". He pledged the takeover would be "a peaceful transfer without violence", and urged Frelimo to cooperate. Despite the threats, Manteigas insisted "Renamo has no plan to divide the country".

His speech was met with rapturous applause from the Renamo benches, but the Frelimo deputies regarded it as an assault against the Mozambican state.

The spokesperson for the Frelimo parliamentary group, Edmundo Galiza-Matos Junior, told AIM "we feel indignant. We feel this is a provocation against a democratically established state. All Mozambicans should be indignant".

But Galiza-Matos said Frelimo has no plans to ask for Manteigas's parliamentary immunity to be lifted, so that he can be prosecuted for incitement to rebellion.

Mozambique confiscates illegal fishing boat

Maritime authorities have decided to confiscate the "Nessa 7", a longline tuna fishing boat flying the Panamanian flag, which was seized in December when it was caught fishing illegally in Mozambican waters.

The boat and all the fishing gear on board revert to the Mozambican state. In addition, the owner must pay a fine of 4.5 million meticaís (US\$94,000), and the captain is banned from fishing in Mozambican waters for 36 months.

The national director of operations in the Ministry of the Sea, Inland Waters and Fisheries, Leonild Chimarizene, showed the confiscated boat to reporters on 16 March.

The owner of the "Nessa 7" has been named as Anthony Rowan Pentz, with a professional address in the South African city of Durban. The captain is Anthony Clement, from Myanmar. He and eight crew members were on board when the boat was seized. Clement is awaiting deportation.

The authorities intend to turn the "Nessa 7" from poacher into gamekeeper. It will join the vessels used by the maritime authorities to patrol the country's waters – just as the "Antillas Reefer", seized for illegal fishing in 2008, was converted into a patrol vessel, equipped with high technology surveillance equipment. Indeed, it was inspectors on the "Antillas Reefer" who in December seized the "Nessa 7".

The "Antillas Reefer" was flying the Namibian flag when it was caught, but its crew consisted mainly of Spaniards. It was fishing illegally for sharks when it was seized.

Foreign workers must possess relevant qualifications

Labour Minister Vitoria Diogo declared on 11 March that foreign workers must possess the relevant academic and professional qualifications if they are to work in Mozambique.

Speaking in Maputo at a seminar on "Chinese companies and labour questions in Mozambique", Diogo stressed that foreigners can only be admitted to work places when there are no Mozambicans with the required qualifications, or there are not enough of them.

Data from the Labour Ministry indicate that during 2015 inspectors found that 1,182 foreigners were being employed illegally, and they were suspended from their posts.

Diogo stressed that when recruiting workers, employers must establish the conditions for including skilled Mozambicans in jobs of the greatest technical complexity, and in administrative positions in the company.

They must also guarantee that expatriates work with Mozambicans to transmit their knowledge and experience.

For his part, Chinese ambassador, Sun Jian, stressed that in recent years, cooperation between Mozambique and China has greatly increased, and consequently there has been a flow of Chinese companies into Mozambique.

He recognized the difficulties Chinese companies face in interpreting Mozambican labour legislation, but claimed "we are overcoming the various difficulties of language and culture. We believe that in this seminar we shall increase still further knowledge about labour laws and issues".

Sun declared that the Chinese companies operating in Mozambique are helping to create a good business environment.

The ambassador said the main foci of Chinese interest in Mozambique were infrastructures, the training of human resources, and financial support. Of these, "the most essential in our cooperation is the training of human resources", he stressed.

Deserters attempt to claim military pensions

Among those who have attempted to claim military pensions are men who deserted from the Mozambican armed forces during the war of destabilization that raged between 1977 and 1992.

According to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Eusebio Lambo, giving a report to President Filipe Nyusi on 14 March, the deserters have been coming forward now, decades later, attempting to obtain pensions. He warned that those who deserted from the army have no right to any pension.

There were 1,170 deserters from Tete province now claiming pensions, said Lambo. From Sofala province, 220 deserters had fled into Malawi, while in Manica an entire battalion of 429 men were informally and illegally demobilized by their commander.

Mistakenly, the daily newspaper "O Pais" reported these desertions as something recent, in the context of the current clashes between the defence and security forces and gunmen of the opposition party Renamo.

Clarifying the matter, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs, Horacio Massangai, said the deserters were not from the current armed forces, the FADM, set up in 1994, under the peace agreement between the government and Renamo, but from the old government army, the FAM/FPLM, which had been disbanded to make way for the FADM.

"Yes, there were desertions", said Massangai, "but the numbers mentioned refer to the period before 1992 (the year of the peace agreement)".

There were two separate situations – soldiers who had deserted and now claim pensions to which they are not entitled, and soldiers who were irregularly demobilized. In the latter case, the fault may well lie with their commanders.

As for the procedures that should now be followed, Massangai said the guideline laid down by President Nyusi was that the requests for pensions should be dealt with on a case by case basis.

Lambo's report claimed that there are 189,687 veterans. Of these, 95,743 are veterans from the national liberation struggle of 1964-1974, while the remaining 93,944 fought during the war of destabilization, on both the government and the Renamo sides.

One problem is that some of the Renamo demobilized fighters have not yet registered, apparently due to the Renamo leadership's distrust of anything organized by the government.

Police seize rhino horn at airport

The police have seized over 76 kilos of rhinoceros horn at Maputo International Airport. Announcing the seizure at a press conference on 14 March, the spokesperson for the Maputo City Police Command, Orlando Mudumane, said the horns were discovered in two suitcases, as they were being put on a flight to Kenya.

"The Mozambican police, in coordination with customs, seized two suitcases containing 76.6 kilos of rhinoceros horn and six kilos of lion claws and teeth", said Mudumane. The owner of the suitcases and their illicit contents has not yet been identified.

Since both African species of rhinoceros, the white and the black, are believed to be extinct in southern Mozambique, it is more than likely that the rhinos from which these horns were taken were poached in the Kruger National Park in South Africa.

The final destination of the horns is most unlikely to have been Kenya. The main market for rhino horn is the Far East, particularly Vietnam, where the powdered horn is believed to have near miraculous healing powers, curing everything from hangovers to cancer. Such claims are entirely bogus since rhino horn consists mostly of keratin, the same protein found in human hair and fingernails.

The Asian demand for rhino horn has turned it into a more expensive substance than gold or cocaine. The price quoted last year was US\$60,000 for a kilo of horn. So last week's haul at the airport was worth about US\$4.6 million on the illegal market.

Forestry Services abort timber smuggling in Zambezia

An anonymous tip-off allowed the Forestry and Wildlife Services in the central province of Zambezia on 12 March to abort an attempt to smuggle large amounts of illegally logged timber out of the Muaquiua area, in Mocuba district.

Forestry wardens, accompanied by members of the environmental police unit, followed the tip-off and found a man named Agostinho Madembe loading over 20 logs of a precious hardwood known as chanfuta onto the truck he was driving.

The wardens warned him that, under Mozambican environmental legislation, equipment used in illegal logging can be seized – which means that his truck will be forfeit to the state. Madembe paid little attention to the warning. He managed to lock the cab of the truck and slip away into the bush. The authorities reacted by emptying all the tyres of air, so that the truck cannot be moved.

The wardens found that the local community was collaborating with the illegal loggers. A community leader said the loggers had promised them 70,000 meticaís (US\$1,430) for their cooperation.

But, if properly marketed, the 20 chanfuta logs could sell for around a million meticaís. So not only were members of the community participating in the destruction of their own environment, but they were also being swindled out of large sums.

Fearing that the community leader was about to be arrested, local peasants barricaded the road to prevent the wardens and police from leaving. Eventually the removal of the barricades was negotiated – but not before the vehicles leaving the area were inspected to make sure that the community leader was not a prisoner inside them.

Eugenio Manhica, head of the Zambezia forestry and wild life department, said that, regardless of the attitude of the local community, the authorities would pursue the case "so that the authors of the crime are held responsible for their acts".

The illegal logging took place inside a legally granted timber concession. A representative of the concession, Erasmo Valente, said he had every intention of taking the case to court, so that the illegal loggers and their accomplices in the community would learn that they cannot cut down trees however and wherever they like.

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

President Nyusi invites Vietnamese businessmen to invest

President Filipe Nyusi on 12 March invited Vietnamese businesses to invest in Mozambique.

He was speaking in Maputo at a Mozambique/Vietnam Business Forum, which was also attended by the Vietnamese President, Truong Tan Sang, on the second day of a three day state visit to Mozambique.

“I am addressing a special invitation to those Vietnamese business people here today, and to those who did not have the opportunity to be here, to come and invest in Mozambique, alongside Mozambican partners”, urged President Nyusi.

This invitation arose in recognition of Vietnam’s experience in producing such goods as rice, clothing, footwear, electrical appliances, and fishing gear.

President Nyusi challenged Vietnamese companies to include in their business initiatives projects to process locally Mozambican natural resources, thus creating jobs and increasing household income.

He added that the government is also interested in learning from Vietnam’s experience in reviving coastal shipping. The Mozambican coast is over two and a half thousand kilometres and would be a cheap transport option for moving goods from one end of the country to the other.

President Nyusi said that, in order to attract investment and establish strategic partnerships, the government is committed to speeding up reforms that will improve the competitiveness of the national economy.

“These reforms are intended to simplify the bureaucratic circuits in the services provided by the state which affect companies”, he said. “They are reforms which seek to increase the viability and sustainability of all types of companies, but particularly the small and medium enterprises, which can create jobs, involve young entrepreneurs and improve the living conditions of many Mozambicans”.

For his part, President Truong described Mozambique as a great partner in Africa, a potential market, with many business opportunities. President Truong was sure that trade between the two countries would rise from US\$100 million to US\$500 million in the near future.

President Nyusi swears in members of Mass Media Council

President Filipe Nyusi on 11 March stressed that the task of the Higher Mass Media Council (CSCS) is to defend press freedom and the right of citizens to information.

He was speaking after swearing into office four members of the CSCS – these were the representative of media companies, Jose Guerra, and members chosen by the country’s parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, Carmen dos Santos, Sauzande Jequé and Florentina Escova. The first two were appointed by the parliamentary group of Frelimo, and the third by the main opposition party Renamo.

The CSCS is a watchdog body set up under the Mozambican constitution. The constitution states that it must

“ensure the independence of the mass media, in the exercise of the right to information and freedom of the press”. It also ensures respect for the right or reply, and broadcasting time for political parties.

The CSCS should also be consulted before the government appoints directors of the publicly owned media, and before private television and radio channels are licensed.

This body has 11 members – two appointed by the President, four elected by the Assembly, three representatives of journalists, one representative of media companies, and a judge appointed by the Supreme Council of the Judicial Magistracy (CSMJ).

At the ceremony, President Nyusi urged the CSCS to ensure that journalists and media companies can freely collect, process and disseminate information of public interest. The fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in the constitution, he said, “will only be fully exercised with truly balanced information, which includes currents of opinions from all the relevant parties”.

The media should, however, respect the right of citizens to their privacy, to their honour and to their good name, as stipulated in the relevant legislation, he added.

Abandoned health units affect a million people

About a million people in the northern province of Nampula have been deprived of health care because dishonest contractors have taken the money for building eight health units, but have then abandoned them unfinished.

The provincial health director, Munira Abubakar, told a press conference in Nampula city on 9 March that the building work on these eight health units cost around 70 million meticais (US\$1.43 million).

The abandonment of these jobs by contractors, she said, has compromised the government’s effort to expand the Nampula health network and to reduce the distance citizens must walk to reach the nearest health unit. Currently the average distance is more than ten kilometres.

When the health authorities looked into the matter they found that in none of the eight cases were the health units as much as 50 per cent complete.

“We have taken certain measures”, said Abubakar. “We have notified the contractors. Some have promised to resume the work. We have given them a short time to complete the jobs, since some of them date from 2012.

Nampula is the most populous province in Mozambique with over four million inhabitants, many of whom face serious problems in access to medical care. For this year, the provincial government had hoped to build 11 new health units, “but we are not going to be able to build all of them because of our budget”, said the director.

“So we have to study strategies of how to complete the jobs that are unfinished, for they too compromise our budget”, added Abubakar,

The abandoned jobs were financed by the World Bank and the Mozambican government. They particularly affect residents in the districts of Mogovolas, Moma, Ribaué, Memba and Rapale.

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