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President Nyusi wants massive campaign against malaria

President Filipe Nyusi on 8 December urged the Ministry of Health to lead a massive campaign against malaria in 2018. Speaking at the ceremony to lay the first stone for a new general hospital in the northern city of Nampula, President Nyusi expressed his concern at the large number of cases of malaria in Nampula province.

“I am worried by the persistent occurrence of malaria and cholera, two diseases that can be avoided”, he said. “Malaria kills and it is the number one cause of hospitalisation. The prevalence of malaria is falling very slowly in Nampula and Zambezia”.

He took the opportunity to criticise those who refuse to sleep under mosquito nets, or refuse to allow their homes to be sprayed with insecticide.

“The best way of fighting malaria is prevention”, said the President. “Secure ways of doing this are using mosquito nets and spraying houses. Let the health professionals spray your houses in order to protect the entire community”.

To illustrate his government’s commitment to the health service, President Nyusi said the government is spending about 100 million meticaís (US\$1.67 million) a year in activities to prevent avoidable diseases.

He stressed the need for decent sanitation, and declared that all Mozambican municipalities should clean up the environment not merely in the wealthy parts of cities and towns, but also on the poorer, semi-rural periphery.

The new general hospital, in the Nampula neighbourhood of Natikiri will have 350 beds, and will make available maternity, paediatric, orthopaedic and surgical services.

President Nyusi also chaired the ceremony marking the start of paving the road from Nampula city to Nametil, capital of Mogovolas district, a distance of 70.6 kilometres. This is part of government plans to improve road connections between districts in the south and east of the province.

President Nyusi said that better roads will ensure the movement of agricultural and fisheries produce between Angoche, Moma, Monapo and Meconta districts and Nampula city.

Roads had already been tarred in the west of the province, he added, linking the city to Ribaué and Malema district. Work was now underway to pave the stretch from Malema to Cuamba, in Niassa province.

This was all part of the government’s plans for a decent network of paved roads from Maputo, through Nampula, all the way to the Niassa provincial capital, Lichinga, and to Metangula, on the shores of Lake Niassa.

The Nampula-Nametil road is being financed by South Korea. “It was a wise decision by our friends in South Korea to bank on the vision of our government for developing these infrastructures”.

The Korean ambassador, Heung Soo Kim, praised the cooperation between the two countries. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1993 up until now, he said, South Korea had invested US\$400 million in 12 projects in Mozambique, the largest of which was the Quelimane Central Hospital, in Zambezia province.

Tarring the road will cost US\$41.5 million, and will take 30 months.

Strategic plan against malaria unveiled

The National Malaria Control Programme (PNCM) in the Ministry of Health plans to reduce the prevalence of malaria in the country from the current figure of 40 per cent to 24 per cent by 2022.

According to the head of the PNCM, Baltazar Candrinho, this means that currently four out of every ten Mozambicans are carrying the malaria parasite in their bloodstream.

Candrinho was speaking in Maputo on 6 December at the annual meeting of the PNCM, which unveiled the Strategic Plan against Malaria for the period 2017-2022. He said the Health Ministry is committed to reducing the prevalence of malaria which remains the largest single cause of death in the country (particularly among children), and the main cause of hospitalisation.

The plan seeks to ensure that all Mozambicans have access to at least one method of preventing malaria (usually either an insecticide-treated bed net, or spraying the house against mosquitoes). The focus, said Candrinho, is on pregnant women and children under the age of five.

Health Minister Nazira Abdula told the meeting that the large number of malaria cases remains a serious concern for the government particularly in the entire central zone (Zambezia, Tete, Manica and Sofala provinces), and the southern provinces of Gaza and Inhambane. These six provinces have recorded an increase in diagnosed cases of malaria this year.

The data from the Ministry show that 7.5 million cases of malaria were recorded in 2016, which was an increase of 18 per cent on the figure for 2015. However, the number of known deaths from the disease has fallen by 32 per cent, from 2,465 in 2015 to 1,685 in 2016.

Former minister released on bail

Ludovina David, a judge on the Maputo City Court, on 7 December authorised the conditional release of former Transport Minister, Paulo Zucula, the former chairperson of Mozambique Airlines (LAM), Jose Viegas, and the former representative of the South African petrochemical company Sasol, Mateus Zimba, against total bail payment of 14.5 million meticaís (US\$242,000).

The three are accused of involvement in a corrupt deal in 2009, whereby LAM acquired two over-invoiced aircraft from the Brazilian company Embraer, after Embraer had paid a bribe of US\$800,000.

The roles of Viegas and Zimba in the scandal are well known, because Embraer's corrupt practices were dragged before the United States and Brazilian courts. The settlement Embraer reached involved paying total fines of around US\$225 million, and giving full details of the bribes paid in several countries, including Mozambique.

From the documents of the Brazilian Federal Prosecutor's Office, we know that it was Viegas who negotiated the size of the bribe and Zimba was the middleman.

The exact role of Zucula, who was Transport Minister at the time, is not yet clear. His name was not mentioned in the Brazilian documents.

President inaugurates Dondo sub-station

President Filipe Nyusi on 7 December inaugurated the rebuilt electricity sub-station at Dondo, in the central province of Sofala, and the 220-kilovolt transmission line running from Chibata, in the neighbouring province of Manica, to Dondo.

The capacity of the sub-station has risen from 20 megawatts to 150 – which is more than double the electricity needs of Beira city and the surrounding area. At peak times, Beira uses 65 megawatts and Dondo uses seven.

Addressing a rally in Dondo, President Nyusi said he hoped to see new industries emerge in Dondo, due to the increased availability of electricity.

The President noted that when Mozambique gained its independence in 1975, less than five per cent of the population had electricity in their homes. In 2015, at the start of Filipe Nyusi's presidency, 25 per cent of Mozambicans had access to electricity, and the estimate today is that the number has risen to 30 per cent.

President Nyusi pledged that the government will continue investing in electricity transmission facilities, with the aim of covering the entire country by 2030.

Work on the sub-station and on the 170-kilometre-long Chibata-Dondo transmission line cost about US\$48 million provided by the African Development Bank (ADB) and by the OPEC Fund. The money also covers improvements to the sub-stations at Mafambisse and Lamego.

MDM re-elects Daviz Simango as its leader

The Second Congress of the opposition Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM), in the city of Nampula on 7 December re-elected Daviz Simango as its leader. Under the MDM statutes, Simango will be the party's candidate in presidential elections scheduled for October 2019.

The ruling Frelimo Party decided at its own Congress in September that it will run incumbent president Filipe Nyusi for a second term of office. It is a near certainty that opposition party Renamo will run its leader, Afonso Dhlakama. Thus, the names on the ballot paper in 2019 will be the same as in the last presidential election in 2014.

ENI reaches financial closure on FLNG

The Italian energy company ENI on 6 December announced the financial closure of its floating liquefied natural gas (FLNG) project in the Rovuma Basin off the coast of the northern Mozambican province of Cabo Delgado.

The total amount of financing obtained is US\$4,675,500,000. This takes the form of covered loans from the following five institutions: BPI Export Credit Agency (France); Kexim Export Credit Agency (South Korea); Ksure Export Credit Agency (South Korea); Sace Export Credit Agency (Italy); Sinosure Export Credit Agency (China); plus two direct commercial bank loans, including one from Kexim.

The FLNG platform will be installed above the Coral South gas field in Rovuma Basin Offshore Area Four. The Coral South final investment decision was announced in June, and the total investment in the project is expected to be around eight billion dollars.

ENI controls a 50 per cent indirect interest in Offshore Area Four, owned through ENI-East Africa, which holds 70 per cent of the concession. The remaining 20 per cent held via ENI-East Africa belongs to the Chinese company CNPC. The other three partners, with ten per cent each, are Galp Energia of Portugal, Kogas of Korea, and Mozambique's National Hydrocarbon Company (ENH).

ENI has now sold half its holding in ENI-East Africa to the American oil and gas giant, ExxonMobil, but ENI remains the operator of Area Four. ENI has stated that it will continue to lead the Coral FLNG project and all upstream operations in Area 4, while ExxonMobil will lead the construction and operation of natural gas liquefaction facilities onshore.

The FLNG platform is due to start production in 2022, with a capacity of 3.4 million tonnes of LNG a year. Under an agreement reached in 2016, all the LNG produced at the floating platform will be sold to British Petroleum (BP).

Government unhappy with tourism revenue

The government is dissatisfied with the revenue generated so far by tourism, declared Prime Minister Carlos Agostinho do Rosario on 4 December. Speaking at the launch in Maputo of the country's first Tourism Forum, Rosario said that revenue should be much higher, given Mozambique's vast and diverse tourism potential.

Currently tourism accounts for about 2.5 per cent of Mozambique's gross domestic product and employs 61,000 workers. The Prime Minister regarded these figures as relatively low and as a challenge that called for greater commitment from tourism businesses. He wanted to see all stakeholders in the tourism industry displaying more dynamism in promoting tourism.

"This GDP percentage is a challenge for all of us", said Rosario, "since the country possesses enormous tourism potential, ranging from its beautiful beaches and coastal attractions, to the distinctive fauna and flora of the Mozambican ecosystem, and the rich history and culture of our people".

He urged tourism companies to design more attractive packages for Mozambican citizens, since domestic tourism has the advantage of taking place throughout the year. Cultivating domestic tourism would bring in more revenue, he argued, and would encourage national unity.

Government cuts privileges to top officials

The Mozambican government has introduced austerity measures to cut expenditure on the perks and privileges of high ranking state officials, the Minister of Economy and Finance, Adriano Maleiane, announced on 5 December.

Speaking to reporters after the weekly meeting of the Council of Ministers (Cabinet), Maleiane said the cuts are expected to result in savings of 7.2 billion meticaís (US\$120 million) in 2018.

One of the largest savings is on rent. Because the government does not have enough houses of its own to accommodate senior officials, up until now it has put them in hotels, or private rented accommodation at enormous cost. The new government decree, Maleiane said, fixes a basic sum per square metre for rented accommodation. This cut will save the state budget 1.1 billion meticaís a year.

Officials can no longer expect that their jobs will entitle them to travel in luxury cars. Maleiane said that the State will now only use cars with an engine capacity of between 1,300 and 1,500 cubic centimetres.

It will also end the long-standing scandal of buying cars with the sole purpose of selling them at a discount to officials for their personal use. Instead when an official takes office he will be granted an allowance. Maleiane did not say how much this allowance will be, but he said the measure will allow the State to buy only the vehicles that it really needs.

Officials will no longer have unlimited access to fuel and communications. A ceiling is set of 5,000 meticaís a month for the fuel allowance, and 10,000 meticaís for communications (essentially on mobile phones). It should be noted that 10,000 meticaís is two and a half times the statutory minimum wage in the public administration (currently 3,996 meticaís a month). The limits on fuel and communications allowances will save the state 245 million meticaís over the year, Maleiane said.

The decree eliminates an irrational "special bonus" granted to officials merely because they have completed a mid-level or higher education courses, regardless of whether the degree they obtain is of any relevance to their work.

Inspections of long-distance buses stepped up

The Transport Ministry, through the National Overland Transport Institute (INATTER), is stepping up inspection of buses making interprovincial and international journeys in order to avoid traffic accidents during the festive season.

Deputy Transport Minister Manuela Rebelo warned of the tighter inspection regime on 4 December when she visited Maputo's main interprovincial and international bus terminal.

In the past, the holidays have also seen an increase in traffic accidents, with their toll of deaths and injuries. "We are instructing INATTER to be stricter in its inspections", said Rebelo. "We do not want our citizens to be carried in vehicles that are not fit for the journey".

INATTER would also be looking at the inspection centres where all vehicles are supposed to be checked once a year. "There are cases of vehicles which pass the inspection, but are not fit to be on the roads", accused Rebelo. "We can't allow this to happen".

She told reporters she was concerned at some of her findings at the terminal. Some vehicles were overcrowded, and in some cases the forms containing the names of the passengers were badly filled out. She also accused the associations of road transport operators of charging their members exorbitant fees.

The minister refused a request by bus companies to lift the ban on 15 seat minibuses carrying passengers on interprovincial routes.

She also turned down a request to allow long-distance buses to travel through the night, since she was sure that night transport increased the risk of accidents. "We are working to reduce the number of traffic accidents", said Rebelo, "and so we cannot take measures which might bring problems. The transport operators need to organise themselves to carry passengers safely, complying scrupulously with the requirements and rules laid down for this activity".

Islamist raids continuing

The new governor of the northern province of Cabo Delgado, Julio Parrique, has confirmed continued sporadic attacks by Islamic fundamentalists in the district of Mocimboa da Praia.

On 5 - 6 October armed Islamists attacked three police positions in the district. In these clashes two policemen and 14 of the raiders were killed. Addressing the country's parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, on 1 November, Justice Minister Isaque Chande said 75 people had been arrested.

Cited in the newsheet "Mediafax" on 4 December, Parrique admitted that smaller scale raids have continued in recent days. On 30 November, a group armed with firearms, machetes and knives attacked the villages of Mutumbati and Megulo, killing two people and injuring a further two.

The raiders also burnt down 25 houses. Terrified villagers have abandoned their homes and sought safety in Mocimboa da Praia town.

Parrique urged them to return, because the situation is now calm, and the defence and security forces are on the ground to protect them.

"Given the seriousness of the situation", said Parrique, "we think it important to take up positions to eliminate this evil definitively, and return tranquillity to our population. This is a challenge that puts us to the test".

Parrique urged local leaders to cooperate fully with the government. He thought it possible to eliminate completely the Islamist group "and we have every interest in ensuring that this happens".

The Mocimboa da Praia district government has identified the two leaders of the group as Nuro Adremaane and Jafi Alawi, who are both Mozambicans and own a mosque in Mocimboa. The current whereabouts of the two men are unknown.

Presenting a report to Parrique on his arrival in Mocimboa da Praia, the district government said the aim of the group is to discredit the government and set up its own administrative region, outside the reach of the provincial and central governments.

The fundamentalists, the report said, had studied religion in Tanzania, Sudan and Saudi Arabia, but outside of the control of any Mozambican institutions. They had also received military training (though it is not clear where this took place).

The local government also expressed disappointment at the behaviour of the Mocimboa da Praia district court, which has released the people detained after the October attacks. The government feared that, once back in their communities, they would create further disturbances.

The report said that the fundamentalist group consists mostly of Mozambicans from Mocimboa da Praia, Palma and Macomia districts, but also includes some Tanzanians and Somalis.

New brewery to create thousands of jobs

The construction of a brewery by the Dutch company Heineken in Marracuene district, about 40 kilometres north of Maputo, will create 200 jobs directly and about 13,000 indirectly, during the construction and operational phases, claimed the Minister of Industry and Trade, Max Tonela, on 4 December.

Speaking at the ceremony at which he laid the first stone for the new brewery, Tonela said construction would take about 18 months, and in the second half of 2019 the first beer from this factory will hit the Mozambican market. Construction of the brewery is costed at US\$100 million.

For the first three years of operation, Heineken will benefit from tax breaks. Currently, breweries pay the Specific Consumption Tax levied on luxuries and superfluous goods at the rate of 40 per cent. But under an amendment to the tax legislation approved last month by the country's parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, the ICE rate charged for new breweries will be 20 per cent in the first year, 25 per cent in the second year and 30 per cent in the third.

The Heineken managing director for east and west Africa, Boudewijn Haarsma, told AIM that initially the brewery will produce 800,000 hectolitres of beer a year, and that its installed capacity will be 3.5 million hectolitres.

Vitamin A added to sugar

Sugar companies are now adding vitamin A to their sugar as part of the food fortification programme promoted by the Ministry of Industry and Trade. The campaign to add vitamin A to sugar was launched on 30 November in the company Acucareira de Mocambique (AM) in Mafambisse, in the central province of Sofala. It will also cover the other three sugar mills – at Marromeu, also in Sofala, and at Maragra and Xinavane, in Maputo province.

The launch ceremony was chaired by Minister of Industry and Trade, Max Tonela, in the presence of representatives of the Mozambican Association of Sugar Producers (APAMO) and of the World Food Programme (WFP).

Tonela said the purpose of adding vitamins and other nutrients to foodstuffs is to reduce chronic malnutrition, particularly among children under five years of age.

Figures from 2013 indicate that 43 per cent of Mozambican under-fives are suffering from chronic malnutrition. One of the means to reduce this is the food fortification campaign, involving the Ministries of Health, Education, Gender, Children and Social Welfare and Industry and Trade.

“The government has undertaken the commitment to reduce the levels of chronic malnutrition from 43 per cent to no more than 35 per cent”, Tonela said. “We hope that the fortification programme will ensure that some foods consumed massively in our country will be made available to the public with the inclusion of micro-nutrients”.

He noted that the addition of vitamin A is already occurring in the Mozambican industries producing maize and wheat flour and vegetable oil.

Vale and Mitsui to invest in Nacala Corridor

The Brazilian mining company Vale and the Japanese company Mitsui on 30 November signed an agreement in Maputo to invest three billion US dollars in the Nacala Corridor.

This rail Corridor runs from the Moatize coal basin in Tete province, where Vale is operating a large open cast coal mine, across southern Malawi and northern Mozambique to the port of Nacala-a-Velha, on the coast of Nampula province. Two billion dollars will be invested in Mozambique and one billion in Malawi.

“This is one of the largest and most ambitious projects that Vale is developing for Mozambique and Malawi because of its potential role in economic growth and in the development of the entire region”, said Vale representative Alexandre Pereira.

Representing the Mozambican government, Transport Minister Carlos Mesquita said the fact that companies are willing to invest such large sums of money “represents their trust in the work the government has been undertaking to make Mozambique a priority destination for foreign direct investment”.

Mesquita was confident that with the new investment the Nacala Corridor “will see significant improvements in the movement of coal”. The government expected to see annual traffic of 22 million tonnes along the corridor. Most of this will be 18 million tonnes of coal from Moatize exported from Nacala-a-Velha.

Vale has now abandoned the central port of Beira, and is now sending all its coal exports to Nacala-a-Velha. It was Vale which largely paid for the new railway across Malawi. Currently five trains a day, each carrying 120 wagons of coal leave from Moatize for Nacala-a-Velha, a journey that takes about 30 hours. Each train carries 7,560 tonnes of coal, which are exported to India, Japan and Brazil, among other markets.

Eleven officials sentenced for embezzlement

The Manica district court in central Mozambique on 6 December sentenced 11 officials of Manica Municipal Council to prison terms of between three months and three years, all converted into fines, for their part in corrupt schemes to steal municipal funds.

The court also ordered the 11 accused to repay the Municipal Council for the funds they had drained from its coffers.

The prosecution showed that the thefts began in 2015, but were only discovered in February this year. The total losses to the Manica City municipality are put at 1.1 million meticais (US\$18,300).

The judge, Efigenio Baptista, had no doubt that the accused were guilty of embezzlement. The lawyer for the Municipal Council, Nelson Pedro, said the sentence was just – particularly because the accused would now have to repay the money they had stolen.

Mozambique News Agency, c/o 26 Withdean Crescent, Brighton BN1 6WH, UK. Tel: +44 (0) 7941890630 - mozambique-news@geo2.poptel.org.uk

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