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Natural gas enters the Rovuma Basin floating platform

The Ministry of Mineral Resources and Energy announced on 18 June that the Coral South project has begun pumping natural gas into its floating platform in Area Four of the Rovuma Basin, off the coast of the northern province of Cabo Delgado, thus paving the way for the first export of liquefied natural gas (LNG) later this year.

The Coral South floating platform was built in a South Korean shipyard and towed to Mozambican waters in March 2022. Six undersea natural gas wells were connected to the platform in May. On board the platform the gas will be liquefied and then pumped into the vessels that will ship it to the consumer markets.

Cited in his Ministry's statement, the Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, Carlos Zacarias, said that achieving this latest landmark puts Mozambique on the map of countries producing LNG. "This will have a significant impact on revenue, and is a contribution to global energy security", he added. "It shows that the conditions established by the government for the development of this project have allowed it to be implemented within the deadlines".

Now that the gas is entering the floating platform, it is expected that the first shipment of Mozambican LNG will take place in the second half of 2022.

Work on building the platform began in the Korean shipyard in September 2018, and it was concluded, on schedule, in 38 months, allowing the platform to set off for Mozambique in November 2021.

The platform has the capacity to liquefy 3.4 million tonnes of natural gas a year. British Petroleum (BP) has signed a contract to purchase the entire production from the platform. The gas comes from the Coral reservoir where there are estimated reserves of 450 billion cubic metres.

The platform is 432 meters long and 66 meters wide. It weighs around 220,000 tonnes and has the capacity to accommodate up to 350 people in its eight-story Living Quarter module. The platform is moored at a water depth of around 2,000 meters and is kept in position by means of 20 mooring lines that in total weigh 9,000 tonnes. It is the first floating LNG facility ever deployed in Africa.

The operator of the Coral South project is the Italian energy company, ENI. It is at the head of a consortium which also includes the American oil and gas giant ExxonMobil, the Chinese National Petroleum Company (CNPC), the Portuguese company Galp, Kogas of South Korea, and Mozambique's own National Hydrocarbons Company (ENH).

Prime Minister wants better supervision of natural gas projects

Prime Minister Adriano Maleiane on 4 July challenged the National Petroleum Institute (INP) to improve the inspection of the natural gas exploration and production projects currently underway.

With the discovery of huge gas reserves in the Rovuma Basin, off the coast of the northern province of Cabo Delgado, together with the beginning of the production and sale of liquefied natural gas (LNG), from the Coral Sul floating platform, the country, the Prime Minister said, has become a relevant player in regional, continental, and world energy security.

The Prime Minister was speaking in Maputo during the ceremony to swear into office the new Chairperson of the INP, Nazario Balangane, the new general director of the National Mining Institute (INAMI), Elias Daudi, and the new deputy director of INAMI, Gracio Cune.

Maleiane urged Balangane to ensure that companies involved in the exploration of energy resources fully comply with the local content plans, especially regarding the creation of more jobs. "The INP should continue to improve the mechanisms for the inspection of gas research and production projects that are underway and those that may be approved", said the Prime Minister. Maleiane also instructed Balangane to "proceed with the institutional strengthening of INP, investing in training and capacity building of the institution's staff, in teamwork, and in judicious and transparent management".

Addressing the new director-general of INAMI, Maleiane said he must guide the improvement of policies and measures that contribute to the increase and optimisation of mining production in a sustainable way. He added that "mining production has to be developed with the use of efficient technologies that ensure the protection and preservation of the environment".

Taking into account the important role of artisanal mining, Maleiane said that INAMI should continue to promote the transformation of mining associations into cooperatives, to combat the smuggling of minerals and increase revenue for the state.

Call for national reflection on extractive industry

The Institute for Multi-Party Democracy (IMD) has called for the holding of a national reflection on how the exploitation of mineral resources is proceeding in Mozambique, to improve the definition of adequate policies for the challenges that the country faces.

This position was presented on 27 June in the southern province of Inhambane during a dialogue between members of the Mozambican Parliament (Assembly of the Republic) and members of the Provincial Assemblies, who for two days reflected on the current dynamics and challenges of the extractive industry.

“We are talking about more than 20 years since we started with the first extractive resource exploration project, more specifically in the district of Inhassoro, where natural gas is being exploited. It is important that we reflect on how these resources are exploited, the gains that the country has achieved, the lessons, the challenges, and all the issues that we need to improve in order to align the policies to better respond to the expectations of our citizens”, said the IMD Programme Director, Dercio Alfazema.

According to Alfazema, there is a need to carry out a deep and urgent reflection, as communities are already beginning to show signs of frustration regarding the lack of benefits. He added that it is also pertinent to look at the lessons learned over more than 20 years of resource exploitation, in particular in relation to the urgent need to define a revenue management policy for the sector to ensure greater transparency.

Alfazema stressed that “we also need to reflect on the 2.75 per cent that is allocated to communities where resource exploitation occurs. We need to reflect on transparency, and how this 2.75 per cent is allocated and managed. There is also a need to consider raising the tax to a percentage that allows visible and unquestionable investments to be made in the communities”.

Alfazema also argued that the reflection should happen urgently since Mozambique is moving towards the start of new projects at a time when communities are already beginning to question the real benefits of exploiting the resources.

The Secretary of State for Inhambane province, Ludmila Maguni, praised the IMD initiative to improve the issue of local content. She acknowledged that “although the extractive sector has contributed to the Mozambican economy, there are several negative impacts caused by the exploitation of these resources, ranging from environmental damage, including water and air pollution, to destruction of the cultural heritage of families, and failure to provide fair compensation, among others”.

For his part, the Rapporteur of the parliamentary Commission on Agriculture, Economy, and the Environment, Alfredo Magumisse, called for permanent dialogue between parliament and the Provincial Assemblies to allow methods of analysis to be found to better define policies and supervision of the extractive industry, as a vector of economic development.

Government stresses civil society involvement in bill on Sovereign Wealth Fund

The Mozambican government has stressed its commitment to the involvement of all parts of society in analysing the bill to set up the country’s Sovereign Wealth Fund, to draw up the best model for the benefit of the country, according to a spokesperson for the Ministry of Economy and Finance, Angelo Ferreira.

Speaking on 22 June, at an event in Maputo organised by the Civic Movement on the Sovereign Wealth Fund (MCFS), Ferreira said the bill will be shared with all parties and later submitted for consideration to the Mozambican Parliament, the Assembly of the Republic.

“The government will continue to give importance to the involvement of all segments of society in this process, in an inclusive way, in order to obtain the best possible results in terms of a model for Mozambique”, he explained.

According to Ferreira, with the discovery of huge natural gas deposits in the Rovuma Basin, in the north of the country, growth in state revenues is expected, which will improve the fiscal balance and human development indices.

To avoid abuse of increasing wealth, institutions must be created to control and distribute the wealth from natural resources, he added.

Mechanisms for the distribution of wealth are needed, said Ferreira, in order to avoid mismanagement of resources, and a lack of diversification of the economy based on concentration on the exploitation of raw materials, that is, an economy that reinforces poverty and violence.

The Bank of Mozambique, said Ferreira, has a mandate to conduct the process of drafting a concept note that will serve as the basis for the whole process of listening to and collecting contributions on the Sovereign Wealth Fund, from the various segments of society.

“This process will culminate in the proposal of the model to be adopted in Mozambique, how to ensure the best model of governance and transparency for the country, and how to ensure that all Mozambicans enjoy the benefits resulting from the exploitation of natural resources”, he said.

Ferreira also revealed that delegations from the Bank of Mozambique have visited a range of countries to find out how the sovereign wealth funds function. It visited sovereign wealth funds of Alaska in the United States of America, Trinidad and Tobago, East Timor, Botswana, Angola, and Norges Bank of Norway.

The creation of the Sovereign Fund, Ferreira stressed, aims to define deposit and withdrawal rules ensuring that the allocations to the State Budget are relatively stable over time and prevent price volatility in the international commodities market from being transmitted to the national economy. “It also aims to promote investments in assets in Mozambique and abroad, to form public savings, to foster projects of strategic interest to the country, and to mitigate the effects of economic cycles”, he stated.

Maputo passenger transport paralysed

The operators of minibuses, colloquially known as “chapas”, which provide much of the passenger transport in Maputo, went on strike on 4 July for several hours, demanding the right to increase their fares in response to the latest rise in fuel prices which, they claim, makes their business unsustainable.

“We want a readjustment of the fares because the price of fuel keeps going up. This business has become unsustainable, it is like we are working for nothing”, said one chapa driver, on condition of anonymity. Without higher fares “there are no conditions to work”, he claimed.

“We have lost the ability to fuel the buses and we are being forced to park the vehicles”, said another driver, also speaking anonymously.

The latest fuel rise was announced on 1 July by the National Energy Regulatory Authority (ARENE). The price of a litre of diesel rose by 11.4 per cent from 78.97 to 87.97 meticaís. For petrol, the increase was 4.4 per cent, from 83.3 to 86.97 meticaís a litre. This is the first time that diesel has become more expensive than petrol at Mozambican filling stations.

The chapa owners did not warn the public that they intended to take their vehicles off the roads. Huge queues built up at the main bus stops as people tried desperately to find ways of getting to work. “There is no transport. They say they can't take us because the price of fuel has risen”, declared a woman at one of the city's main bus terminals.

“Everything is unsustainable. To eat is already a problem, and to make matters worse, the price of transport goes up every day”, declared a man who identified himself only as Mario.

Shopkeepers closed their stores, fearing looting. “We are prepared for anything. We know that there are many opportunists in these crises, so we have not opened our stores”, said one shopkeeper, who sells beauty products. “In times of crisis, shopkeepers are the main victims. We have been vandalised all the time.”

The government went into immediate negotiations with the Mozambican Federation of Road Transport Operators (Fematro) and reached an agreement which should lead to the immediate suspension of the chapa strike.

According to a report in the independent newsheet “Carta de Mocambique”, Fematro accepted a proposal made by the government under which the operators will be allowed to increase their fares up to a certain point. The government will not subsidise the operators but the passengers themselves. However, it seems that these allowances will only be paid to passengers using the “Famba” electronic ticketing system.

For the next few days, the chapas will continue to use the old fares and the government promises to compensate the operators for the days spent with the old fares.

Nothing like this new system has been tried before, and it is not at all clear how it will work in practice.

President Nyusi asks China to help rebuild main north-south road

The Mozambican government has requested assistance from China for the rehabilitation of the country's main north-south highway (EN1). President Filipe Nyusi made the request during a meeting in Maputo on 4 July with Yang Jiechi, a member of the Political Bureau of the Chinese Communist Party, and the director of its Foreign Affairs Commission.

Speaking to reporters at the end of the meeting, Foreign Minister Veronica Macamo said that the total rehabilitation of EN1 was one of the matters discussed between President Nyusi and Yang. “The question was put on the table, and the two governments will discuss it and find a solution”, she said.

Much of EN1 is in a sorry state, with deep ruts and potholes compromising the transport of people and goods between the north, centre and south of the country. The road runs for over 2,000 kilometres from Maputo in the far south to Cabo Delgado province in the far north. A recent report by the independent television station STV showed the shocking condition of what should be the backbone of the Mozambican road network.

Parts of the road, such as the stretch between the Inchope crossroads in Manica province to Caia on the south bank of the Zambezi, were rehabilitated in the late 1990s, but soon deteriorated because the government never implemented its policy of making the users pay for the roads. So far, no tollgates have been installed between Inchope and Caia.

It is not known whether any deal with the Chinese to rehabilitate EN1 will include toll gates, or whether the motoring lobby will be triumphant again in refusing to pay for the damage it causes. But without toll gates, any repairs to EN1 will be merely cosmetic.

Portugal to invest €80 million in Mozambique

Portugal intends to strengthen its cooperation with Mozambique by investing over €80 million (about US\$85 million), an increase of 18 per cent over the previous Strategic Cooperation programme, revealed the Portuguese Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Francisco Andre, on 20 June in Maputo.

“We have decided to increase the capacity to invest in our strategic cooperation programme in key areas such as education, health, and defence”, said Gonçalves, speaking to the press after a meeting with the Mozambican Deputy Foreign Minister, Manuel Goncalves.

The programme, which will be signed in July, will also strengthen experiences mainly in military training, taking into account the terrorism that has been plaguing parts of northern Cabo Delgado Province.

“The evaluation that is transmitted to us by both Mozambican and Portuguese parties is that it has been a cooperation project with many positive points”, said Goncalves.

District election chairs take office

The chairperson of the Maputo City Provincial Elections Commission, Ana Chemane, on 5 July urged the chairpersons of the city's seven district elections commissions (CDEs) to refrain from party political activities.

Speaking at a ceremony where the seven chairpersons took office, she said that by refusing to take part in any party political disputes, these officials would help prevent conflicts and bring credibility to the municipal elections due to be held in October 2023, and the general elections scheduled for 2024.

Chemane urged the CDE chairpersons to work as a team and to value the experience and capacity of each member of the commissions. "You should work together for the success of the elections, in an environment of peace, harmony, tolerance, professionalism, and patriotism so as to strengthen the credibility of the elections", she urged.

Their responsibilities, she said, included creating a working environment with equal opportunities for the competing parties and candidates. It was the Mozambican people who had the right to exercise their sovereignty, and freely choose the members of the municipal bodies to be elected.

The CDEs, Chemane insisted, must work in strict obedience to the law. "Election management is based on the Constitution and other laws of the Republic of Mozambique, and on the decisions, instructions, and dispatches of the National Elections Commission (CNE). That means you must act based on the law".

This ceremony concludes the establishment of the CNE's support bodies in the Maputo City municipal districts, thus laying the ground for next year's elections.

Direct flights to Kigali to begin in August

The Rwandan national airline, RwandAir, will start operating direct flights between Maputo and Kigali, in August. According to the Rwandan High Commissioner in Mozambique, Claude Nikobisanzwe, the service will aim to stimulate business between the two countries which have recently been strengthening cooperation in the political and commercial fields.

Along with this air link, Rwanda wants to see more simplified procedures for the entry of its citizens into Mozambique, taking into account that Mozambicans do not need a visa to enter Rwanda.

The High Commissioner also revealed that discussions are continuing over the possibility of Rwanda using Nacala Port, in the northern Mozambican province of Nampula, noting "we believe that Nacala Port, with its deep waters, can help with this cooperation. We believe that trade between African countries can generate employment for African people, particularly Mozambicans".

Mozambique currently exports sugar and minerals to Rwanda and, according to Nikobisanzwe, recently a delegation of 120 Rwandan businessmen attended the

Mozambique-Rwanda Business Forum to look at investment opportunities.

Hotel owner kidnapped in Maputo

Unknown assailants on 30 June kidnapped Ahmed Anwar, owner of the Royal Hotel in central Maputo, according to a report in the newsheet "Carta de Mocambique".

He was snatched from outside his house in the neighbourhood of Sommerschild II. The house lies between the official residences of the General Commander of the Mozambican police, Bernadino Rafael, and of the General Director of the State Information and Security Service (SISE), Bernardo Lidimba. Hence the area is full of policemen and SISE agents, not to mention private security guards.

According to "Carta de Mocambique", in the days before Anwar's kidnapping, eye-witnesses noted strangers in the vicinity. But it was assumed that these were members of the Rapid Intervention Unit (UIR – the Mozambican riot police).

In February, Attorney-General Beatriz Buchili, delivering her annual report on the State of Justice to the Mozambican parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, said that some of those who should be on the front line combatting the kidnapers are in league with them. "The involvement of some members of the police, lawyers, magistrates and other figures in the judiciary creates fragilities in investigating these cases", said Buchili, "and endangers the safety of those public servants who are committed to fighting against crime".

At the opening session of a meeting of the Consultative Council of the Ministry of the Interior, President Filipe Nyusi himself declared "I cannot accept that police stations become nests of kidnapers, and the commander of the station has top responsibility on the matter. If he does not know the life of his staff, he should resign from his post".

Following these strong statements, in early May the Criminal Investigation Service (Sernic) announced the arrest of two police officers and a Sernic agent, suspected of working for kidnap gangs.

Police intelligence sources told "Carta de Mocambique" that both the kidnap gangs and the assassins referred to as "death squads" are now being controlled from within the UIR.

One suspect, Lenine Macamo, the head of reconnaissance in the Maputo branch of UIR, is a wanted man and is currently on the run. He is accused of plotting the murder, inside the Maputo top security prison (known as the "BO"), of Momade Assife Abdul Satar, better known as Nini Satar.

Satar is serving a 24 year jail sentence for his role in the assassination, in November 2000, of Mozambique's top investigative journalist, Carlos Cardoso. But he is also suspected of involvement in the kidnappings of businesspeople, and doubtless many of his colleagues in the world of organised crime would like to shut his mouth forever.

Over 300 police officers expelled for involvement in crimes

At least 326 officers of the Mozambican Police force (PRM) were expelled from the corporation in 2020 for being involved in crimes, including actions of excessive force and violence against citizens.

In its 2020/2021 report on Human Rights in Mozambique, the Mozambican Bar Association (OAM) pointed out that some of the officers were punished for their crimes. It states that “four police officers, for example, were sentenced to the maximum penalty of 23 and 24 years in prison, for their involvement, on 7 October 2019, in the murder of the executive director of the Forum of Non-Governmental Organisations of Gaza (FONGA), Anastacio Matavel”.

In 2020, according to the report, many arbitrary detentions persisted, including situations of people being locked up for more than 48 hours in cells and detainees being taken to prison without any magistrate validating their detention. Among various abuses, stressed the document, the violence practised by the police also included physical assault, arbitrary detention and sometimes even murder. Therefore, the OAM recommends the strengthening of measures to prevent violence, including the implementation of training courses for PRM agents on human rights issues.

The organisation also recommended exemplary disciplinary, administrative, and criminal accountability of those police officers involved in violence against citizens, as well as modification of the requirements for admission of candidates for a police career, ensuring that only persons who show a commitment to the cause of law and order and public security are admitted.

The OAM also called for the dissemination of information on crimes of violence committed by the police, including the names of the officers involved and the disciplinary measures taken.

Since 2016, the OAM has been publishing reports on human rights, as part of its mandate to defend the democratic rule of law and fundamental rights and freedoms, which it regards as the foundations of the Mozambican state.

Nine injured in train accident in Matola Gare

Nine people were injured in a train accident that occurred on 27 June between a passenger train heading towards Ressano Garcia on the border with South Africa, and a locomotive that was doing manoeuvres in Matola Gare Station, just outside Maputo.

The injured people, including passengers, were immediately rescued and taken to hospital according to a press release from the Mozambican Ports and Rail company (CFM).

Preliminary data from CFM suggests that the accident was caused by a failure in the points. However, the company has created a commission of inquiry to confirm the cause of the incident.

Trains are now running normally along the section where the accident occurred.

Voluntary repatriation of Mozambicans from Malawi

Voluntary repatriation will begin this month of about 1,600 Mozambican families from Nsanje in Malawi, where they fled from tropical cyclone Ana in January.

For this purpose, the Nsanje district government is finalising the list of all the displaced people in eight accommodation centres and will send this to Mozambique by 8 July.

The national director of the prevention and mitigation division at the Mozambican relief agency, the National Disaster Management Institute (INGD), Cesar Tembe, talking to the independent daily "O País", said that several stakeholders will be involved in returning the Mozambicans to Morrumbala district, in Zambezia province.

In a meeting between Mozambican and Malawian officials on 29 June, it was agreed that the Malawian lists should contain all the information about the heads of households, their dependents, place of origin, and other data deemed important. According to Tembe, “the data will facilitate the process of organising all the necessary logistics so that people can be repatriated”.

Civil society calls for regulation of hospital fees

The civil society organization, the Citizen Observatory for Health (OCS), has called for regulation and standardisation of user fees in Mozambican hospitals, arguing that the fees constitute a barrier to access to healthcare, especially for the poorest strata of society.

According to Jorge Matine, executive director of OCS, many health facilities privilege those who pay the fees which jeopardises the health of those who cannot afford to pay for treatment. “There is a lack of a sensitive policy for low-income people”, stated Matine on 30 June during the opening ceremony of a National Conference on Access to Health, in Maputo.

Matine argued that “the fees that are charged in hospitals should be regulated, because when they are not, they create spaces for corruption and, consequently, a barrier to access to health services”. He stressed that fees, before they are applied, should first be subject to debate with the participation of service users on their ability to pay.

“The fees start at 200 meticaís (US\$3.2 at the current exchange rate), reaching a little over 1,500 meticaís, harming the Mozambican population that survives on less than one dollar a day, in a context where they are forced to give up other essential expenditure to access certain health services”, he explained.

He stressed that these fees are charged without any regulation, and each hospital sets the amount it wants without clarity on how they are determined.

“This fact also leads us to conclude that the stipulation of fees for access to health care is not transparent, that is, everything indicates that the health units simply set the fees without following a logic or standard norm at the level of the National Health System (SNS)”, he accused.

Civil society demands greater inclusion of women

The prominent Mozambican civil society body, the Institute for Multi-Party Democracy (IMD), through the Women's Political Academy, has demanded greater inclusion of women as candidates in the lists for the forthcoming municipal and general elections.

The demand was expressed on 28 June in Maputo by IMD representative Lorena Mazive during a round table on the subject "Towards Elections from a Gender Perspective: Opportunities and Challenges".

According to Mazive, the objective is to expand the political space for women in the context of municipal elections, towards gender parity. "In the studies carried out by the academy, we conclude that in the political parties' lists women are in the last positions. We divide the lists into four parts and women are placed in the last two parts. This scenario must change", stated Mazive.

"If we, as a society, want women effectively represented in these elected governing institutions, aware of effective governance, if we want quality democracy, this only happens when it is inclusive and participatory. Therefore, the presence of women is essential to be able to respect the human rights of this group", she stressed.

According to the IMD representative, 42.3 per cent of the deputies in the current Mozambican parliament are women - which is very positive when compared to the previous parliament when only 37 per cent of the deputies were women. Nonetheless, she insisted on the need for gender parity, just as exists in the Mozambican government, where 50 per cent of the members are men and 50 per cent are women.

Ana Rita Sithole, a member of the Standing Commission of the country's parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, said that "from each parliament to the next we want to increase our numbers". Sithole said that the concern is also in the localities, where the gender issue is affected by socio-cultural aspects. "We are an African country where the role of community activities and traditional leadership still has a great influence. There are areas where it is possible to see that women, in order to rise to certain levels, still have this problem, still face this difficulty, but they are fighting. The best way for them to fight is to study, and we see that they have a greater capacity to argue, to fight, and to present themselves as the most suitable people to be elected".

Amurrane murder: trial begins in Nampula

The trial of two people accused of murdering Mahamudo Amurrane, the mayor of the northern city of Nampula in 2017, began on 22 June before the Nampula Provincial Court.

The accused are Saide Abdulremane, who was Nampula municipal councillor for markets and fairs at the time of the murder, and businessman Zainal Satar who was the contractor for building work on Amurrane's house.

According to the report of the trial in the Maputo daily "Noticias", the prosecutor, Cristovao Mueleca, said that Abdulremane, without the knowledge or consent of the mayor, signed a memorandum of understanding with Satar under which Satar was granted a space for his business in the centre of the city. Abdulremane attempted to seal this agreement by bribing Amurrane. He transferred €2,000 (about US\$2,100 at the current exchange rate) to the Mayor's personal bank account. But when Amurrane became aware of this, he returned the money.

In August 2017, Amurrane removed Abdulremane's power to sign memorandums of understanding. According to the prosecution, Abdulremane and Satar then drew up a plan to assassinate the mayor, which they put into practice on 4 October 2017. On that date, Amurrane arrived home and found Satar inspecting the building work. A few minutes later Abdulremane arrived and the three men spoke outside the house. All three then left Amurrane's private house and walked to his official residence, where the mayor was shot dead.

Both suspects deny firing the fatal shot. They claimed that an unknown gunman appeared in front of them. But the prosecution argues that Satar and Abdulremane were the only people anywhere near Amurrane, and at the same distance from which the shot was fired. In addition, an examination of the body showed that Amurrane was shot from behind.

The prosecution noted that the two suspects did not try to save Amurrane, nor did they immediately inform the authorities of the crime. This delay, the prosecutor argued, gave them time to dispose of the murder weapon. The prosecution thus does not doubt that Abdulremane and Satar are "the moral and material authors of the murder".

Amurrane was elected mayor of Nampula in the 2013 municipal elections, on the ticket of the Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM), the country's second largest opposition party. But he then fell out with the MDM leadership, and it was suspected that he planned to run as an independent in the next mayoral elections, scheduled for 2018.

53 new cases of Covid-19

The Mozambican health authorities on 3 July reported a further 53 new cases of the Covid-19 respiratory disease. According to the Ministry of Health, 34 of the new cases were women and 19 were men. Six of them were children under 15 years of age, including an infant under one year old. The oldest case was 76 years old.

28 of the new cases were from Gaza province and 13 were from Maputo city. There were also four cases from Sofala, two each from Maputo province, Niassa and Nampula, one from Inhambane and one from Cabo Delgado.

Since the start of the pandemic, the total number of positive cases diagnosed in Mozambique is 228,183. The total Covid-19 death toll in Mozambique remains at 2,212.

Chissano calls for education to fight terrorism

Former President Joaquim Chissano believes that education and raising awareness constitute the best ways to fight the terrorism that has been plaguing parts of the northern province of Cabo Delgado since 2017.

Chissano, who was speaking to reporters on 25 June on the sidelines of the celebrations of the 47th anniversary of Mozambican independence in Maputo's Heroes' Square, also pointed to extreme poverty, exacerbated by other social and economic phenomena, as a factor that terrorists use to deceive innocent young people and children into joining their ranks. "The secret to ending this phenomenon is education and raising the awareness of our people", he said. According to Chissano, it is not poverty in itself that causes terrorism, but "the terrorists take advantage of poverty. When terrorists see a poor person, it is easier to recruit him than a person who enjoys basic living conditions".

The terrorists, said the former President, preferentially recruit children and young people and therefore is urgent to prepare these social groups so that they cannot be deceived by terrorists.

Since October 2017, terrorist attacks have caused the deaths of more than two thousand people in parts of Cabo Delgado and more than 850,000 people have been displaced, triggering a humanitarian crisis.

Commonwealth supports fight against terrorism

Mozambican Prime Minister Adriano Maleiane declared in the Rwandan capital, Kigali, on 25 June, that the member countries of the Commonwealth agreed on the need to make available support for Mozambique's fight against terrorism. He was speaking to reporters after the close of the Commonwealth summit of heads of state and government.

Maleiane said the Commonwealth stressed the importance of fighting terrorism globally and noted that "we have an integrated approach on how to attack terrorism" He said the two day summit boosted the idea that peace and stability are indispensable conditions for guaranteeing sustainable development and economic growth. He cited the Russian conflict with Ukraine which has contributed to drastic increases in the price of fuel, grain, and fertiliser around the globe. "This entire question of logistics and foreign trade was analysed, and it was agreed that all the necessary conditions must be created for economic recovery and resilience, or for mitigating this type of global phenomenon", he said.

Asked how to deal with the price rises provoked by the conflict in Ukraine, Maleiane said the situation differs from country to country, and each country must find the solutions most appropriate to its own case. "This is a problem that disorganises international trade", Maleiane added. "The costs of transport become expensive and the prices of foodstuffs rise. Each country must find a mechanism to mitigate these impacts". "But the best solution is to have no wars", he stressed.

Suspected terrorist recruiters detained

The police in the central city of Beira have detained three Somalis and two Kenyans who are accused of recruiting young Mozambicans to join the Islamist terrorist groups operating in the northern province of Cabo Delgado.

According to the spokesperson for the National Criminal Investigation Service (Sernic), Alfeu Siteo, cited in the Maputo daily "Noticias" on 23 June, the members of the group, consisting of four men and one woman, supposedly led by a Somali named Ahmed Agjar, are facing charges of terrorism, people trafficking, possession of drugs, assisting illegal immigration, and forgery.

During the arrests, the police seized six Kenyan and five Somali passports, four other travel documents, four Kenyan and Somali identity cards, and 13 requests for asylum in Mozambique. Sernic suspects that all the identity documents are fake. Siteo said they will all be analysed to check their authenticity. All five suspects appear to have entered Mozambique illegally.

The authorities also seized a Honda Freed light vehicle, which Sernic believes was used to transport the terrorist recruits.

Siteo said that a team including members of the police, the immigration service (SENAMI), and the State Security Service (SISE) has been working on the case, assessing the level of involvement of each of the five suspects.

31 health units destroyed by terrorists

Islamist terrorists have destroyed 31 of the 130 health units in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, according to Health Minister Armindo Tiago, cited in the daily newspaper "O Pais" on 30 June.

Speaking at a meeting of his Ministry's Coordinating Council, held in Gondola, in the central province of Manica, Tiago said the terrorist onslaught had left the residents of Mocimboa da Praia, Quissanga, Macomia and Meluco districts without access to basic health care.

A further 95 health units were destroyed by the extreme climatic events that have struck Mozambique in recent years, notably Cyclones Ana, Dumako and Gombe, which all hit the country this year.

Tiago also stressed the achievements of his Ministry, notably the mass vaccination of Mozambican adults against the Covid-19 respiratory disease. More than 15.5 million Mozambicans have received at least one dose of the Covid-19 vaccine, while over 14.5 million are fully vaccinated - this is more than 95 per cent of all Mozambicans aged 18 and above.

Tiago added that about seven million children under five years of age will be vaccinated against polio in the next phase of the anti-polio campaign, due to start on 7 July. This is the third round of polio vaccination after cases of the disease were detected in northern Mozambique and Malawi.

New water pumping station for Beira and Dondo

President Filipe Nyusi on 30 June urged residents of the central cities of Beira and Dondo to consume water rationally and to protect the new pumping station for the two cities.

The President was speaking at the inauguration of the pumping station at Mutua, and its associated water supply network, an investment budgeted at around US\$5 million. This is part of the government's Water for Life Programme (Pravida) and will benefit about 35,000 inhabitants in the two cities.

"We have to save water, we have to use it rationally, recalling that until recently we didn't have water in our houses", said President Nyusi. The fact that good quality drinking water is now available 24 hours a day "does not mean that the taps should be turned on all day. Water is a resource that is finite and we need to save it".

"We have to preserve and conserve the investments that have been made", he continued. "Our country is large and Sofala province has many needs and priorities. There are still many people who have no access to clean drinking water". Clean water, he added, meant better health for the public, better school performance by children, and greater production and productivity.

"The investments we have just inaugurated result from the efforts of our government in the tireless search for solutions to improve the quality of life and the welfare of the Mozambican people", declared the President. He added that the government regards the provision of safe water and sanitation as a fundamental condition for social and economic advance.

Pravida is a presidential initiative coordinated by the Ministry of Public Works. It aims to speed up the construction or rehabilitation of water supply and sanitation systems and water storage facilities.

Police dismantle amphetamine factory in Katembe

The Mozambican police on 29 June announced the dismantling of a drugs factory in the Maputo municipal district of Katembe. Working with agents of the National Criminal Investigation Service (SERNIC), the police found the clandestine factory inside a residence in the Katembe neighbourhood of Inguide.

The police detained four people – two drivers and their assistants of the two trucks that were carrying reagents from the port of Maputo to the factory. They also seized an unspecified quantity of the drugs which, according to Maputo city police spokesperson Leonel Muchina, are believed to be methamphetamine.

"You can also see here various reagents, and weighing machines", Muchina told reporters who visited the clandestine factory.

The police found a network of tunnels under the house, believed to have been dug to provide the means for a quick getaway. But none of the factory workers, much less its owners, were on the premises. It is

suspected that they received a tip-off about the impending police raid.

Muchina admitted that so far the police do not have much information about how the factory functioned or how much methamphetamine it produced. He said it was run by a trafficking network that included Mozambican and Nigerian citizens. "Dismantling the factory is not enough", he said. "We have to undertake a profound follow-up to find who is responsible for this".

According to police sources, a few days ago a man died, apparently from poisoning after inhaling gases produced in the factory laboratory.

To disguise the smell of the factory, the traffickers installed a poultry pavilion, so that the smell of chicken excrement would mask industrial smells from the laboratory.

This is the second drug factory dismantled this month. The first, in the southern city of Matola was producing mandrax. During that operation four people were arrested, two Mozambicans and two Chinese citizens.

Funds mobilised for coastal monitoring

According to the Minister of the Sea, Inland Waters and Fisheries, Lidia Cardoso, the Mozambican government has received guarantees from the World Bank that it will finance the construction of a monitoring centre to assess the risks of piracy, illegal fishing and other crimes that occur along the Mozambican coast.

Speaking to AIM in Lisbon, where she was attending the United Nations Oceans Conference, Cardoso said the government is now waiting for confirmation from other southern African countries that will also use the monitoring centre. "With our neighbours in southern Africa and the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) we have various agreements which are facilitating the collection of signatures", she said. She was confident that the World Bank will disburse the funds and construction of the centre should begin within a year.

Cardoso also said that Mozambique is carrying out a fishing census, to ascertain how many Mozambicans are working in artisanal fishing and aquaculture – these are the activities which account for 90 per cent of Mozambican fisheries production. "Our artisanal fishermen catch fish up to three miles from the coast", she said. "This survey will also allow us to see how they are affected by the closed season (which lasts from three and five months, depending on the species). The closed season is a necessary measure to avoid the extinction of some species and allow their reproduction".

A considerable part of the Mozambican population depends on fishing for their livelihood. The government, said Cardoso, "intends to guarantee, through aquaculture that the fishermen can produce and catch fish, even during the closed season".

Illegal fishing remains a major challenge for the government. It has a damaging effect on the economy and is estimated to cost the country about US\$60 million a year.

World Bank funds agri-food innovation and systems research

The World Bank has announced that Mozambique will be one of the beneficiaries of a US\$70 million grant to finance the Eastern and Southern Africa Higher Education Centres of Excellence Project.

According to a World Bank statement, Mozambique will receive US\$30 million to establish its first Centre of Excellence in Agro-Food Systems and Innovation, to create high quality technical and research capacity for agricultural development.

“By strengthening research and training in agri-food systems in Mozambique, and by collaboratively expanding knowledge production and dissemination, this project can help broaden the skills base and innovation systems needed for more sustained economic development in Mozambique and the region”, stated Emre Ozaltin, Programme Leader for Human Development at the World Bank in Mozambique.

International Development Association (IDA) funding, says Ozaltin, will continue to strengthen the capacity of selected higher education institutions in the region, including Mozambique, to deliver quality graduate training and increase the capacity to conduct research in priority areas.

In the first phase of the project, Mozambique was one of the beneficiary countries and it established the Centre for Oil and Gas Engineering and Technology Studies, located at the Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM), which currently runs four master's degree programmes in oil and gas related areas.

This second phase of the Africa Centres of Excellence project will foster cooperation between Mozambique and Malawi, and the East African Inter-University Council for Agriculture, to further strengthen the region's capacity to provide high quality training and applied research in agriculture.

The agricultural sector is one of the most important in many Sub-Saharan African countries, including Mozambique, accounting for up to 14 per cent of the continent's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Almost 50 per cent of the sub-Saharan African population is employed in agriculture. The sector is also important for food security, improved nutrition and health, inclusive growth, and better management of the environment.

US\$300 million mobilised for second phase of Pro-Energia

Mozambique's publicly owned electricity company, EDM, has mobilised about US\$300 million for the implementation of the second phase of the programme “Energy for All” (ProEnergia), which envisages adding more than 320,000 new connections a year to the national grid between now and 2024.

According to a report in the Maputo daily “Noticias” on 22 June, the funds are contributions from the World Bank and the Norwegian and Swiss governments.

EDM board member, Joaquim Ou-chim, stated that the second phase of “ProEnergia” will shortly be launched. “Right now, procurement is underway, through which we intend to select the contractor, and find a company that will be responsible for guaranteeing the supply of electrical equipment”, he said.

Ou-chim added that EDM expects to start the work as soon as the selection has been concluded. New consumers will be connected to the national grid continually, to meet the goal of guaranteeing universal access to electricity by 2030.

The first phase of ProEnergia will end within the next three months and has allowed the connection of many households living near the grid. “In this second phase”, said Ou-Chim, “we shall step up connections, but also focus on expanding the grid”.

In the first phase of ProEnergia, about 307,000 households benefitted from access to electricity from the grid, and 3,000 households from isolated systems outside the grid. To date, about 39 per cent of the population has access to electricity from the EDM grid.

Gemfields ruby auction raises record US\$95.6 million

The London-based mining company Gemfields on 20 June announced that it had raised a record US\$95.6 million from a series of mini auctions of rubies from its mine in the northern Mozambican district of Montepuez.

The auctions took place online between 30 May and 17 June through an online platform which enabled customers from around the world to participate in the sealed-bid process.

Of the 199 lots offered, 112 were sold with an average price of US\$246.69 per carat – a new record price for any mixed quality ruby auction.

MRM has held sixteen auctions of rubies from Montepuez Ruby Mining Ltd (MRM) since June 2014, which have in total raised US\$827.1 million.

According to Adrian Banks, Gemfields' Managing Director of Product & Sales, “our first auction of rubies in 2022 has delivered truly glittering results, setting a new revenue record for any Gemfields auction at UD\$95.6 million”. He added that “today's auction results again underscore the extent of the step-change being experienced in the market”.

Montepuez Ruby Mining (MRM) holds a 25 year concession on an area of 340 square kilometres in Montepuez, in Cabo Delgado province. Gemfields holds a 75 per cent stake in the company with the other 25 per cent owned by the Mozambican company Mwiriti.

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

Preventable diseases kill over 300 children a day

Curable and preventable diseases such as malaria, respiratory infections, and diarrhoea kill daily around 320 children under the age of five in Mozambique.

The data were advanced on 16 June by the Minister of Health, Armindo Tiago, during the 2nd Global Health Symposium of the Manhica Foundation, in Maputo Province.

According to the minister, the high number of deaths occurs despite the reduction in poverty rates in Mozambique, which fell from 63 per cent of the population in 2003 to 48 per cent in 2015.

“The causes are linked to poverty, and to lack of financial and of qualified human resources for the development of scientific research”, he explained.

“In Mozambique, every day, 320 children die under the age of five, victims of preventable and curable diseases such as malaria, diarrhoea and infectious diseases. Despite the gradual easing of penury and the role of research for evidence-based policy making, challenges still persist at the sector level to provide adequate treatment to control child mortality, especially in vulnerable populations”, stated the minister.

According to Tiago, a major challenge is the lack of qualified human and financial resources and adequate infrastructure to carry out a research agenda to respond to local problems and transform the results of these investigations into practice.

For his part, the Spanish ambassador to Mozambique, Alberto Cerezo, considers infectious and transmissible diseases as the main cause of poverty in the world, adding that his government is available to aid Mozambique in the development of research in the Centre for Health Research in Manhica (CISM).

“When we talk about health in Mozambique and Africa it is necessary to talk about global justice and inequality of access to health in the world. In developing countries, infectious diseases are the biggest cause of poverty. The poor biomedical knowledge of the main diseases that cause mortality is due to a serious lack of investment in neglected diseases”, he said.

“Spain has been cooperating with Mozambique for 40 years, in various sectors, including health and the fight against terrorism”, he stressed.

Last year, he recalled, the Spanish government signed an agreement for new strategies, for the next four years, for support in the northern region of the country.

“We are participating in the training of marines with the European Union,” he stated, congratulating Mozambique for its recent election as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, underlining that “the country will have the opportunity to gather experiences in dealing with difficult issues in the world.”

Spain has been the largest partner of the CISM since its foundation 26 years ago.

Cotton company pulling out of Cabo Delgado

The British company Plexus, which had a commitment to purchase cotton from 50,000 peasant farmers in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, has suddenly announced that it is pulling out, alleging security reasons, although it is known to be in deep financial trouble, reports the newsheet “Carta de Mocambique”.

The Plexus Chief Executive Office, Nick Earham, speaking in London on 28 June, claimed “our intelligence suggests that the problems in Cabo Delgado will continue to worsen”, and that no bank will advance money to Plexus to buy cotton because of the security situation.

Earham added that 50,000 farmers are expecting Plexus to buy their cotton and, if this does not happen “they will be furious”. He said that the energy sector in Cabo Delgado (that is, the natural gas projects) “should become a partner of agriculture to win the confidence of local farmers and bring peace”.

Some have questioned these statements, pointing out that most of the cotton in Cabo Delgado is grown in the province’s southern districts (Montepuez, Balama, Namuno and Chiure), which are those least affected by islamist terrorism. In addition, it is pointed out that Plexus is in serious financial difficulties for reasons which have nothing to do with security. Plexus is the only company which has the concession to buy cotton from Cabo Delgado farmers. But in 2020, it proved unable to pay the farmers for the cotton it bought. It was US\$1.5 million in debt with its own 100 strong workforce going on strike arguing that they had not been paid for four months.

In February 2020, Agriculture Minister Celso Correia promised to find a solution. According to “Carta de Mocambique”, Correia found US\$2 million which the government gave to Plexus so that it could pay its debts to the peasant producers.

In 2020, Plexus said it needed US\$10 million to overcome a financial crisis blamed on mismanagement. The US\$2 million from the Mozambican government was seemingly not enough to fill the gap.

The Plexus website says it buys from 165,000 farmers which would make it the largest cotton company in Mozambique.

It is not yet clear whether any other company can be persuaded to take over from Plexus and buy the Cabo Delgado cotton.