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Cyclone death toll rises

The known death toll from cyclone Freddy, which struck the central Mozambican coast on 11 March, now stands at 21, according to Antonio Beleza, the deputy director of the National Emergency Operational Centre (CENOE). Giving an update on the effects of the cyclone at a meeting on 14 March in Quelimane, capital of Zambezia province, Beleza said the number of people injured in the cyclone and now receiving treatment in Mozambican health units has risen to 53. The cyclone destroyed 6,604 houses and damaged a further 9,873. In addition, 519 classrooms and 39 health units had also been affected. About 200,000 hectares of crops had been inundated.

According to Cesar Tembe, the National Director for Prevention and Mitigation in the Mozambican relief agency, the National Disaster Management Institute (INGD), 87 accommodation centres had been set up in the provinces menaced by the cyclone. They sheltered about 38,000 people. 226 tonnes of food and mineral water had been pre-positioned in the centres, as well as hygiene products, domestic utensils, clothing and blankets. “These products are sufficient to assist all the people who are in the accommodation centres”, said Tembe, “and other goods are continuing to arrive in the provinces. Right now, we are continuing to raise more funds, because the number of people in need may increase”.

The publicly-owned electricity company, EDM, said on 13 March that the number of people deprived of electricity in Zambezia, Manica and Sofala provinces has risen to 116,000. EDM stressed that it has teams on the ground working to restore the electricity supply as quickly as possible.

The major obstacle faced by the EDM teams is the flooding caused by Cyclone Freddy, which has made parts of Quelimane inaccessible.

Visa waiver announced for 28 countries

The Mozambican government has approved a waiver on entry visas for tourism and business purposes. Speaking to reporters on 14 March, after the weekly meeting of the Council of Ministers (Cabinet), the official government spokesperson, Deputy Justice Minister Filimao Suaze, said the measure is intended to stimulate the tourism and business environment. He added that it forms part

of the implementation of the package of Economic Acceleration Measures (PAE), launched by President Filipe Nyusi in August 2022. The visa waiver, Suaze added, covers “particular countries with a low risk of illegal immigration”.

The PAE states that the government will grant “investment visas” for longer periods for foreign citizens with investments in Mozambique, and will transform short-term tourism visas into mixed tourism and business visas.

The list Suaze announced covers 28 countries, including the United States, China, Japan, Russia and ten member states of the European Union. These countries are in addition to those which already have bilateral visa arrangements with Mozambique, such as members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Any citizen of these countries wishing to take advantage of the visa waiver must register on a pre-selection electronic platform at least 48 hours before travelling and pay a US\$10 processing fee.

Suaze said that electronic visas will be introduced for those countries not covered by the visa waiver.

The full list of countries given by Suaze is as follows: Belgium, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Holland, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Japan, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, UK, and USA.

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

Can AI help solve mystery of Samora Machel crash? By John Hughes – AIM London

The latest sensation in artificial intelligence is the advanced online language model ChatGPT which, it is claimed, can not only analyse data but actually create new content. You simply type in your question and within seconds the chatbot provides the answer.

I thought that I would give ChatGPT the opportunity to solve the mystery of the plane crash on the night of 19 October 1986 in which Mozambique's first president Samora Machel and 33 others met their deaths. I asked ChatGPT to write 100 words on the death of Machel and it instantly replied "Samora Machel was a Mozambican revolutionary and politician who served as the country's first president from 1975 until his death in 1986. Machel was a key figure in the struggle for Mozambique's independence from Portuguese colonial rule and led the country's socialist government after independence. On October 19, 1986, Machel died in a plane crash while returning to Mozambique from a meeting in Zambia. His death was a major blow to Mozambique and the wider liberation movement in Africa. Machel was widely mourned across the continent and his legacy as a revolutionary and champion of social justice continues to inspire people around the world".

I pushed further, asking what was the cause of the crash. "One theory that gained traction in the aftermath of the crash was that it was a deliberate act of sabotage by the South African government, which was deeply hostile to Machel and his socialist government. At the time, South Africa was engaged in a brutal and protracted conflict with anti-apartheid forces in neighbouring countries, including Mozambique. The South African government had reportedly launched a number of covert operations against Machel's government, including support for armed opposition groups and the use of hit squads to assassinate key figures in the government".

It added, "supporters of the sabotage theory point to a number of suspicious details surrounding the crash, including the fact that the plane's navigational equipment was not working properly and that it was flying off course. Some have also pointed to the presence of a mysterious white aircraft near the crash site, which some witnesses claim was seen in the vicinity of the Tupolev just before it crashed. The South African government has denied any involvement in the crash and no concrete evidence has been presented to support the sabotage theory".

As someone who has followed the story closely, I was surprised to read of a "mysterious white aircraft". This has never been mentioned in anything that I have read. So, I asked for more information to which the chatbot replied: "the presence of a mysterious white aircraft near the crash site of Samora Machel's plane has been a subject of controversy and speculation since the incident occurred in 1986. According to some eyewitness accounts, a white aircraft was seen in the vicinity of the Tupolev Tu-134 just before it crashed in the Lebombo Mountains, near the Mozambique-South Africa border".

It added: "supporters of the theory that the crash was a deliberate act of sabotage by the South African government have pointed to the presence of the white aircraft as evidence of their involvement. They have suggested that the aircraft may have been a South African military plane, which was monitoring the Tupolev and possibly even interfering with its navigation equipment. This theory has been fuelled by allegations of South African involvement in other acts of sabotage and assassination against anti-apartheid leaders and governments in neighbouring countries. However, there are also some doubts and inconsistencies surrounding the eyewitness accounts of the white aircraft. Some witnesses have described it as a military plane with markings on the tail, while others have simply described it as a white aircraft with no markings. The South African government has denied any involvement in the crash and has dismissed the idea of a white aircraft as a 'figment of people's imagination'.

I asked ChatGPT for its sources and it gave, among others, William Minter's book "Apartheid's Contras: An Inquiry into the Roots of War in Angola and Mozambique" which it states, "also discusses the presence of the white aircraft and the controversy surrounding it". Now, I have Bill's book and I can say for a fact that it does not discuss the air crash and in particular does not mention a "white aircraft".

As for the other sources, it is impossible to trace them. For example, 'The Life and Death of Samora Machel,' a book by the well-known academic Professor Bernard Magubane, is said to include "an account of the white aircraft from one of the eyewitnesses". I cannot find any information on the existence of this book, and ChatGPT gives false International Standard Book Numbers.

I tried another of ChatGPT's sources, asking "where can I find 'The Assassination of Samora Machel: Who Benefits? - a report by the Mozambican government's inquiry commission into the crash'". Bizarrely, the first source mentioned is AIM Reports, a fortnightly publication that I have edited since 1994 and I can assure the reader that this has never been mentioned on our website. In addition, the link to our website is not in a format that has ever existed. The rest of the sources given have web links that are all either redundant or have never existed.

I can only conclude that for all the hype ChatGPT resembles a schoolchild bluffing their way through an essay set for homework. Perhaps it has got the wrong end of the stick. A mysterious white aircraft was spotted by witnesses of an alleged assassination – but it was not connected with Samora Machel's death but that of UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld in a plane crash in 1961. Either that or the chatbot made up the information and the sources that back up its "research".

This is a salutary experience that shows the weakness of those who urge others to "DO YOUR OWN RESEARCH". Yes, we should not accept everything we read but we should base our independent research on verified expert sources.

The mystery surrounding the death of Samora Machel remains unsolved.

President Nyusi and Momade pledge to complete DDR

President Filipe Nyusi and the leader of the main opposition party, Renamo, Ossufo Momade, pledged on 8 March in Maputo that they will complete the Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) of the remaining members of the Renamo militia.

The promise was made at a meeting between the two men in President Nyusi's office, during which they discussed the latest developments in the country, including whether it is viable to hold elections for district assemblies in 2024.

Speaking at a joint press conference shortly after the meeting, President Nyusi guaranteed that everything will be done to conclude the DDR this month, although he recognised that important aspects remain to be discussed between the government and Renamo over the next four days.

Momade said he had received guarantees from President Nyusi that the government will create conditions for concluding the DDR, including the payment of pensions to the former Renamo guerrillas.

The last Renamo military base, in the central district of Gorongosa, should have been closed in December. But the issue of pensions proved a stumbling block.

Momade claimed the peace agreement he had signed with President Nyusi in August 2019 envisaged the payment of pensions, but the government says it did not. Since the agreement had never been published, it is difficult to check who is right.

As for the district elections, President Nyusi said he thought it would be possible to reach a consensus "based on dialogue between Mozambicans".

The constitutional amendments of 2019 include an article which imposes holding the first elections for district assemblies in 2024. But Nyusi has called repeatedly for this to be reconsidered, and on 8 March, in the country's parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, deputies from the ruling Frelimo Party insisted that the elections cannot be held in 2024.

"We are not afraid of the district elections", said President Nyusi. "Mozambicans will find the best solution through dialogue".

Momade said Renamo is interested in concluding the DDR as quickly as possible. "We have already dismantled 15 bases", he said, "and this is proof that Renamo is interested. We hope that, with the guarantee we received today, we can conclude dismantling the final base".

As for the district elections, he insisted that they should be held in 2024 since that date is in the Constitution, which should be respected.

"We were hoping that we could hold the district elections since they are already in the Constitution", said Momade. "I would not like to see the country change the law to delay the elections".

He promised to discuss the matter with the rest of the Renamo leadership and then transmit their opinion to President Nyusi.

GDP to grow in real terms by 6.5 per cent

The growth in Mozambique's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is forecast to accelerate from an estimated 4.1 per cent in 2022 to 6.5 per cent in 2023, largely as a result of activity in the new liquified natural gas sector, according to Fitch Solutions, a consultancy agency in the financial field.

"We see government and private consumption supporting economic growth in 2023, although high inflation will cap improvement in consumer demand", reads the document.

According to Fitch Solutions, Mozambique's current account deficit will narrow from an estimated 22.2 per cent of GDP in 2022 to 4.9 per cent in 2023 due to output from liquified natural gas (LNG).

"We forecast that the [growth in] real GDP of Mozambique will reach 6.5 per cent in 2023, as the natural gas sector will flourish, and we also foresee that government and private consumption will grow although the gains are limited by inflexion", says Fitch.

Fitch also expects that the Bank of Mozambique will hold its benchmark interest rate at the current 17.25 per cent for the rest of the year and that the exchange rate of about 64 meticaïs to the US dollar will remain stable.

The report also says that the armed conflict in the northern province of Cabo Delgado is the major political risk to Mozambique "but we believe that the legislation recently approved, giving power to local militia to fight the terrorists may increase marginally the counter-insurgency in the coming months."

Annual inflation over 10 per cent

Mozambique's annual rate of inflation reached 10.3 per cent in February, according to the figures compiled by the National Statistics Institute (INE), drawing on the consumer price indices from all the main urban areas.

Inflation in February alone was 0.97 per cent, and in the first two months of the year, it was 1.96 per cent. This pushed annual inflation (1 March 2022 to 28 February 2023) to 10.3 per cent. This compares with the 9.78 per cent annual inflation calculated in January.

The products that contributed most to the February inflation rate were cabbage (up by 16.5 per cent), unprocessed maize (9.1 per cent), tomatoes (11.7 per cent), and lettuce (10 per cent).

However, the average prices for some key products fell over the month – butane cooking gas by 3.4 per cent, coconuts (2.6 per cent), live chickens (2.4 per cent), unshelled rice (1.2 per cent), vegetable oil (0.8 per cent), and dried fish (0.5 per cent).

Of all the cities covered by the INE, Inhambane had the highest annual inflation, of 13.61 per cent, followed by Quelimane (12.76 per cent), and Chimoio (10.91 per cent). The lowest rates were in Maputo (eight per cent) and Beira (9.86 per cent).

US\$600 million for infrastructure hit by cyclones

The director of the Post Cyclone Reconstruction Office (GREPOC), Luis Mandlate, has revealed that US\$600 million has been invested in the reconstruction of various infrastructures hit by the two cyclones, Idai and Kenneth, in 2019.

“We also rebuilt 3,162 classrooms and we rehabilitated 33 health units. A further 57 health units have been partially rehabilitated in all the regions affected by these cyclones”, Mandlate told reporters on 14 March in Beira during the ceremony marking the 4th anniversary of the two cyclones.

The director gave as examples the reconstruction of the Central Hospital of Beira, the Macurungo secondary school, and the complete restoration of the city’s radar system.

Mandlate also said that basic services have been re-established in all the zones affected by the cyclones and “for the recovery of the private sector, we have US\$15 million available from the World Bank”.

After the cyclones, the authorities carried out a survey of losses estimated at US\$3.2 billion but the strategic partners only disbursed US\$1.2 billion, corresponding to 38 per cent of the needs.

World Bank to fund repair of EN1

The Mozambican government and the World Bank on 10 March in Maputo signed an agreement to formalise a grant of US\$400 million to support the rehabilitation of 508 kilometres of the country’s main north-south highway (EN1).

The agreement was signed by the World Bank Regional Vice President for Eastern and Southern Africa, Victoria Kwakwa, and the Mozambican Minister of Economy and Finance, Max Tonela.

The project aims to improve the connectivity, safety and climate resilience of the road system, and develop social inclusion, in addition to making roads safe for better economic integration in Mozambique.

According to the Public Works Minister, Carlos Mesquita, who witnessed the ceremony, the section of EN1 in the worst condition is about 1,050 kilometres long, out of a total length of 2,600 kilometres.

“The project will last 10 years, with two years of construction and eight years of maintenance. According to the identification of critical sections registered along the entire length of the EN1, each section has its respective cost and duration”, the minister said.

In phase 1, the intervention will focus on 508 kilometres, of the 1,050 kilometres regarded as critical. This includes the stretches Inchope-Gorongosa, in the central province of Sofala, Chimuara-Nicoadala (in Zambézia) and Metoro-Pemba (in Cabo Delgado).

“After finishing phase 1, phase 2 will immediately follow, which includes the Lúrio river-Metoro section (Cabo Delgado); the stretch from the Save river to Muchungwè and Muchungwe to Inchope (both in

Sofala). Phase 3, includes the Pambara to Save river section (in Inhambane province)”, he said.

For her part, Kwakwa stated that the programme is aimed at rehabilitating critical stretches to speed up the connectivity between Mozambican provinces, from the north to the south.

Over the next ten years, the World Bank, according to Kwakwa, will inject about US\$850 million to finance the rehabilitation of the 1,053-kilometer stretch of the EN1, as a way to support the government’s vision.

“Ultimately, it’s about the benefits that provide aid to the people of Mozambique, and the EN1 will promote economic activity, as well as the inclusion of the many who depend on it. But we also know that with climate change we have to build better, ensuring resilience to the next disasters that are sure to come”, she said.

Rebuilding Mocimboa da Praia port to cost US\$30 million

The rehabilitation of the port of Mocimboa da Praia, in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, which was recaptured from Islamist terrorists in 2021, is expected to cost US\$30 million.

“In this first phase we are talking about an investment of about six million dollars, but at the end of the entire development programme we have calculated a total of US\$30 million”, the port administrator, Helenio Turzao, told the Portuguese news agency, Lusa.

On the night of 12 August 2020, armed jihadist groups attacked the Mocimboa da Praia port. According to Turzao, the terrorists who occupied Mocimboa da Praia for several months devastated the entire port infrastructure along with the cargo of several customers that was on site.

Work on the port infrastructure, which includes the construction of a new quay and the rehabilitation of the container yard, began in August 2022 and is expected to end in July this year.

The work is reasonably secure, as the district is gradually reviving as a result of the joint operations of the Mozambican defence and security forces, and their allies from Rwanda and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

“The commercial and industrial fabric is already returning with some force, which means that there is already economic activity for the populations, who have been returning at a good pace”, concluded Helenio Turzao.

After months in the hands of terrorists, Mocimboa da Praia was looted and almost all public and private infrastructure was destroyed, as well as power, water, communications and hospital systems. Almost the entire pre-war population of 62,000 fled from the town in the wake of terrorist attacks, although in recent months many of the displaced people have returned.

Mocimboa da Praia, located 70 kilometres south of the construction area of the natural gas liquefaction project in Afungi, Palma, led by the French company Total Energies, was the first district to suffer jihadist raids, in October 2017.

Sweden to disburse US\$19 million for climate change adaptation

The Swedish government will disburse over five years US\$19 million for climate change adaptation in Mozambique. The amount, according to the Beira daily "Diario de Mocambique", will be applied with the support of the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), taking into account that "Mozambique is one of the nations vulnerable to climate change."

The program, which is called Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility, will invest in health, education, water and sanitation, as well as in other essential services "selected by the communities in a participatory process including the local governments."

"Taking into account the positive results achieved in the first phase of the programme, the Mozambican and Swedish governments have started a reflection on the continuity and the expansion of the programme in other geographical areas of the country", said Luisa Fumo, deputy head of Swedish cooperation in Maputo.

According to Fumo, for example, in Chigubo district, in the southern province of Gaza, the Swedish funds have already financed the construction of a new market "robust enough to resist the bad weather that always hits the area aggressively."

"These funds follow the previous commitment of about US\$13.8 million delivered between July 2018 and December 2022", she said.

Bank of Mozambique concerned at proliferation of pyramid schemes

The Bank of Mozambique has warned of the proliferation on the domestic market of entities aimed at attracting deposits from individuals without being licensed for this purpose.

"Generally, institutions acting illegally in the financial field are involved in financial pyramid schemes. Financial pyramids are fraudulent business schemes that are characterised by the promise of making money in the short term, usually in the form of interest on deposited amounts. These interest rates are often much higher than the average practised on the market and increase with the recruitment of more depositors by the people involved", reads the central bank's alert.

According to the document, the new deposits appear to offer income to all those involved. However, as the pyramid grows, as a result of the trust of the depositors in the scheme, there is not enough money to pay everyone, and in the end, most people lose out.

"Therefore, resorting to these entities represents a high risk and can result in serious losses for those involved, since they are not subject to the information duties and prudential limits that safeguard the interests of the consumer and the stability of the financial system", the Central Bank warns.

The collapse is mathematically inevitable. A pyramid scheme recruits members via a promise of payment for enrolling others into the scheme, rather than any investment or sale of goods. This is clearly

unsustainable since the scheme quickly runs out of recruits.

So that citizens will not fall for these schemes, the Bank of Mozambique warns that illegal financing entities can be detected through characteristics such as "lack of licensing; demand for money without exchange of a financial asset, product or provision of services; the promise of payment of excessively high interest, in a short period of time and apparently at low risk".

The bank advises members of the public to consult its list of duly licensed financial agencies before taking any decision on joining any financial scheme or buying any financial product. Any institution that is not on the central bank's list "is taking deposits from the public illegally, which is a crime".

Over 2,000 artisanal mines in Mozambique

Over 2,160 artisanal mining sites have been identified in Mozambique as part of the Artisanal Mining Census.

The results have been published by the Ministry of Mineral Resources and Energy, in coordination with the National Statistics Institute (INE).

According to the Maputo daily newspaper "Noticias" on 9 March, the data show that, of the total sites, 1,577 are active with 31 per cent dedicated to gold mining.

In 2021, artisanal mining involved 806,957 people, corresponding to 2.6 per cent of the country's population. Three-quarters of the miners have this activity as their main source of income. Most of them are men (88.3 per cent), and of these 68 per cent are 15-34-year-olds.

The results also showed that 53 per cent of the artisanal miners are self-employed. More than 50 per cent are involved in gold mining and about 30 per cent in mining construction materials (stone, sand and clay).

The Artisanal Mining Census was launched in August 2021 and results from the Government's recognition of the role of this segment of mining activity (even though much of it is illegal and highly dangerous). The main minerals historically extracted are gold, precious and semi-precious stones, and, more recently, construction stone, limestone, sand, clay, tantalite and coal.

In conducting the census the Government's main objectives were to provide indicators on artisanal mining for planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating policies for the development of the sector. The census covered all artisanal mining foci, mine owners, associated miners, wage earners, as well as mining traders and mining service providers on a sample basis. Data collection was carried out from August to November 2021 in the southern, central and northern regions of the country, followed by data validation and analysis from December 2021 to June 2022.

The data will allow the various sectors of the Government to improve their technical assistance to the artisanal mining sub-sector. This should lead to increased formalisation of the activity, and the adoption of environmentally responsible and safe techniques. The Mozambican Artisanal Mining Census is the first in the country and in the southern region of Africa.

Mozambique to join Africa50

Mozambique is in the process of joining the Africa50 platform, to facilitate access to funding for infrastructure projects.

Headquartered in Casablanca, Morocco, the Africa50 platform was established by the African Development Bank and African states with the aim of supporting and facilitating the development of infrastructure projects on the continent, by mobilising public and private sector funding.

The intention to join was revealed in the Maputo daily newspaper “Noticias” by a source in the Ministry of Economy and Finance, who explained that, in a context of tax restrictions and infrastructure gaps that persist in the country, Africa50 is an appropriate catalyst to meet the country’s development challenges.

According to the source, Mozambique’s entry into this platform will allow the country to monetise existing infrastructure assets by farming them out to the private sector with funds received to be reinvested in other priority projects.

Currently, Africa50’s investor base consists of 30 African countries, two African central banks and the African Development Bank, which is also the manager.

Mozambique, the government source said, intends to use this opportunity to obtain a financial return on its investment, since the platform is strongly committed to advancing and complying with the guiding principles of combating climate change, aligned with the energy transition priorities in the country.

The country needs to continue to improve the supply of infrastructure and for this it has to maintain high rates of economic growth, reduce poverty and make development sustainable.

The source noted that one of the biggest challenges that Mozambique is expected to face is the weak ability to develop adequate infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, and the biggest reason for this deficit is limited access to adequate financing solutions.

Passenger train to link Mozambique and Malawi

Mozambique’s publicly owned Ports and Railway company, CFM, will soon introduce a passenger service linking Cuamba in the northern province of Niassa to Liwonde in southern Malawi.

To this end, studies are underway to determine the profitability of the new route which will not only facilitate the movement of people and goods but also trade between the two countries.

The conditions for the introduction of passenger transport already exist as the two countries are already connected by rail with freight trains circulating.

According to Miguel Matabel, the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of CFM, the introduction of passenger trains on the Nacala-Malawi line is also under study. However, Matabel stated that the possibility of introducing a passenger train connecting Moatize, in the central province of Tete to Malawi, through the Nacala line, is remote.

Mozambique mourns its best rap artist

One of the most influential Mozambican rap artists, Edson da Luz, commonly known by his stage name of Azagaia, died at his home in the southern city of Matola on 9 March at the tragically early age of 38.

He was well known for criticising the Mozambican political system and rapping about the most vulnerable social groups, including the former migrant workers in East Germany (known colloquially as “madgermanes”) and the veterans of the civil war.

Azagaia was once accused by the Mozambican Attorney-General’s Office (PGR) of inciting violence through his polemical tracks, such as Mentiras da Verdade (Lies of the Truth), and Combatentes da Fortuna (Combatants of Fortune).

He recorded two studio albums, Babalaze (hangover) and Kubaliwa (birth), and many other singles on which he performed with other prominent artists such as Stewart Sukuma, Dama do Bling, Deltino Guerreiro and the influential Portuguese rappers Valete and Jimmy P.

According to the minister of culture and tourism, Eldevina Materula, Azagaia was an emblematic rapper. “I was surprised and shocked by his death”, she said.

Tax authority seizes 2,300 boxes of drinks

The Tax Authority of Mozambique (AT) on 9 March announced the seizure of over 2,300 boxes of alcoholic drinks, at Zona Verde, on the outskirts of Maputo.

According to the AT spokesperson, Fernando Tinga, the goods were seized because they had not been sealed with fiscal stamps and lacked any legitimate documentation, which raised suspicions that the merchandise had been smuggled into the country.

Without the AT intervention, said Tinga, the Mozambican state would have lost revenue of about 24.5 million meticaís (US\$380,000).

Tinga said this sum does not include the fines that will be imposed in the event that smuggling or other tax offences are proven.

“The owner of the goods can also use his right of defence. Naturally, after the procedure has been examined, he will be referred to the customs court”, explained Tinga.

SERNIC seizes cannabis and cocaine in Manica

The National Criminal Investigation Service (SERNIC), in the central province of Manica, has incinerated 100 kilograms of cannabis and five kilos of cocaine among other illicit drugs.

According to the SERNIC spokesperson in Manica, Paulo Candeeiro, cited in the Beira daily newspaper “Diário de Mocambique” on 6 March, the drugs were being transported along the Beira Corridor, which is the national highway from Beira port to Zimbabwe.

“We are working to dismantle the drug dealers, as well as other carriers of illegal products in the province”, Candeeiro said, adding that the drugs were seized in Manica district, which borders on Zimbabwe.

New Deputy Minister of science and technology

President Filipe Nyusi on 10 March urged the new Deputy Minister for Science, Technology and Higher Education, Edson Macuacua, to encourage Mozambicans to work to build a society of scientific solutions.

The President was speaking at a ceremony in Maputo where he swore Macuacua into office. Previously, Macuacua was Secretary of State for the central province of Manica.

“We encourage you to continue encouraging research, guaranteeing that the administration of higher education in the country makes advances”, said President Nyusi.

He urged Macuacua to use all his academic and working experience “to achieve the long-term goals inherent to the position to which you have been appointed”.

President Nyusi added that Macuacua has the task of inciting Mozambicans to seek scientific solutions. “You also have the added task of motivating men and women to work for the construction of a society of scientific solutions”, he said.

For his part, Macuacua promised to work for the development of higher education, science and technology, to make a contribution to implementing the government’s programme, and to putting higher education at the service of the people, of the development of communities, and of improving living conditions.

Government to send technical team to Saudi Arabia

The Mozambican government will, over the next fortnight, send a mission from the Investment and Export Promotion Agency (APIEX) to Riyadh to begin the implementation of the agreements reached during the working visit to Saudi Arabia of President Filipe Nyusi.

Speaking in Riyadh on 5 March at the end of his three-day visit, President Nyusi said Saudi businesses are interested in investing in several areas in Mozambique including hydropower, natural gas and renewable energies, civil aviation, tourism, telecommunications, and ports. Other areas discussed, he said, included the construction of sports complexes, and the production of fertiliser. In agriculture, Saudi concerns are interested in the production of beans and soya.

President Nyusi also stressed the construction in Mozambique of an Islamic Cultural Centre which would harmonise cooperation between the two countries.

“We made it clear that, within 15 days, we shall send a mission from APIEX to Riyadh to introduce the matters. The Saudis want to go to Mozambique, but only after knowing what they are going to do and who they are going to speak with”, said President Nyusi.

“Saudi Arabia wants to enter Africa, particularly southern Africa, and it sees Mozambique as a window through which it can enter”, he added.

MCC to expand sale of agricultural products

The Mozambican Chamber of Commerce (MCC) intends to sell national products to international buyers through online selling platforms.

To this end, an agreement has been signed by the Mozambican Chamber of Commerce and the Chinese platform “Alibaba.com”.

After the signing ceremony, Alvaro Massingue, the chairperson of the MCC, explained that the agreement will streamline the exposure of Mozambican products and increase exports, since “the world will know what is being produced in Mozambique”.

According to Massingue, the MCC plays an important role in certifying goods and will exercise the necessary control

He said the MCC will work with small producers in selling and exporting their goods. “We also want to help the producers that have difficulty in selling their products abroad”, he added.

Mozambique aims to be middle-income country

Mozambique intends to become a middle-income country by 2030, leaving behind the indicators that characterise the least developed countries.

Prime Minister Adriano Maleiane announced this intention at the end of the 5th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, which took place in Doha, the capital of Qatar.

“The transition will not be fast. It is going to be gradual so that our new system can develop with security”, Maleiane said, explaining that the transition to another level carries consequences because international support to Mozambique, as a least developed country, will cease.

Right now, according to the Prime Minister, Mozambique is included in the group of 46 least developed countries but it is trying to rise to the next level, that of medium-income countries.

“In the past, US\$500 per capita was enough to think about becoming a medium-income country, but now Mozambique needs to reach, at least, US\$1000 per capita”, said Maleiane, cited by the Maputo daily “Noticias”.

“In 2015, our income was US\$648 per capita but in 2022 it was US\$548 per capita. Therefore, we have to work to raise this level of income”, he said,

“Our goal is to move to the next level”, he said. But of the 46 least developed countries, only 16 are thought able to graduate to middle-income status.
