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Frelimo promises monument to victims of Homoine massacre

Mozambique's ruling Frelimo Party has promised to erect a monument to the memory of the 424 people murdered in the worst massacre of the war of destabilisation by the apartheid-backed Renamo rebels in 1987 in the town of Homoine, in the southern province of Inhambane. The spokesperson of the Homoine Frelimo District Committee, Admiro Savanguane, said the monument would "make the victims of the massacre live forever".

The Renamo attack took place on 18 July. According to eye-witnesses, a heavily armed unit stormed into the town killing everyone they could find. Some were heard to shout "We've come to finish off the people of Samora Machel".

The total death toll came to 424. Renamo did not dispute that a massacre had occurred – but it tried to thrust the blame onto the Zimbabwean troops who were supporting the Mozambican armed forces. But the Zimbabweans had never operated in Inhambane province, and surviving Homoine residents had no doubt that the attackers were "Matsangas" (the nickname for Renamo fighters, derived from the name of the first Renamo commander, Andre Matsangaissa).

AIM interviewed an American Mennonite missionary and agronomist, Mark van Koevering, who later became a bishop in the American Episcopal Church. At the time, he was in Homoine working for the Mozambique Christian Council on a seed multiplication project.

He had no doubt who was responsible. "This is not a civil war", he said. "These people are not fighting for any ideal. They're fighting to create terror". The claim by right-wing Republican senators in the US that Renamo "is a democratic movement to liberate the people of Mozambique is complete foolishness", added van Koevering.

Survivors still recall the terror they experienced on 18 July 1987. Hussien Algy said, "More than 30 years is not enough for me to wipe away what I saw on that day of massacre". He lost his girlfriend and other members of his family and only survived because he hid in a bathroom.

Perhaps the most shocking aspect of the massacre, was that the raiders killed all the patients they found in the local hospital. AIM photographer Sergio Santimano, one of the first journalists to arrive at Homoine after the massacre, recalled that the death toll at the hospital stood at 80.

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

Passenger trains return to Nacala

Passenger trains linking the port city of Nacala to the rest of the northern province of Nampula began running again on 8 October after an interruption of 32 years.

Transport Minister Mateus Magala witnessed the arrival of the first passenger train at Muchilipo station, about 12 kilometres from Nacala City.

The mixed passenger and freight train will run twice a week between Nacala and the provincial capital, Nampula City, a distance of 180 kilometres.

Magala said the reintroduction of a Nampula-Nacala passenger service was a challenge issued a year ago to the management of the company "Nacala Logistics", which operates the line.

"The reintroduction of passenger rail transport between Nacala and Nampula will provide a regular and safe alternative for transporting people and goods, at a relatively low cost", he said. "This could be reflected in a reduction of the final consumer price of goods transported along this line".

Magala explained that the government is promoting rail passenger transport in recognition of its importance in stimulating economic development and the life of the communities. "For this reason, the government has not hesitated to subsidise it by more than 80 per cent to make it viable", he added.

The Minister stressed that the regularity and efficiency of rail transport will also facilitate the distribution of fisheries produce caught in the Bay of Nacala, which will boost the income of local fishermen, and lower the price of seafood produce sold in Nampula city and other consumer markets.

Magala urged private businesses to use the railway "to make viable the various initiatives that demand logistics services. We expect that the resumption of the Nacala-Nampula train service will encourage further investments and business opportunities in the Nacala Corridor.

For his part, the Chief Executive Officer of Nacala Logistics, Abhay Mishra, pledged to do all in his power so that the trains circulate regularly and efficiently.

President Nyusi inaugurates rehabilitated port

President Filipe Nyusi on 9 October inaugurated the rehabilitated port of Mocimboa da Praia, in the northern province of Cabo Delgado.

Islamist terrorists, associated with the self-styled “Islamic State”, overran Mocimboa da Praia, including its port and aerodrome, in 2020. The following year, the Mozambican armed forces, and their Rwandan allies, drove the jihadists out of Mocimboa da Praia.

Now the port has been rebuilt. Writing on his Facebook page, President Nyusi said that, in the rehabilitated port, “Businesses in Mocimboa da Praia now have a powerful instrument for the renewal of hope, a beacon of progress to support and make viable various development initiatives”.

The port, he added, “is of vital importance to stimulate the national economy, and can serve as a logistical support for the major projects that are flourishing in that part of the country”. (He was referring mainly to the offshore natural gas projects, in the Rovuma Basin).

With the port, alongside the Mocimboa da Praia aerodrome, “opportunities are being born for young people and local businesses”, said President Nyusi.

“At this moment, as we celebrate the re-opening of this port”, President Nyusi declared, “we reiterate our determination to continue creating the necessary environment to attract more investment to this province and the country in general”.

Mocimboa da Praia was the region “worst hit by the terrorist attacks, and retaking it cost us blood”, said the President. “So, we must be more vigilant and ever more united. We don’t want to live in uncertainty”.

President Nyusi challenges INSS to improve social protection

President Filipe Nyusi on 6 October challenged workers of the National Social Security Institute (INSS) to increase their capacities in order to improve social protection, considering that the majority of the country’s workers are in the informal sector.

According to President Nyusi, who was speaking during the inauguration of an INSS office in Malema district, in the northern province of Nampula, “we encourage all workers, particularly the self-employed, to register and channel their contributions regularly”.

President Nyusi acknowledged that the coverage of social security services in Mozambique is still not universal and, for this reason, he considered that an effort is needed to meet the dictates of solidity, robustness and sustainability that should be the motto of the INSS, with the widening of its scope in terms of contributors and territory.

According to President Nyusi, with the social protection system, the government is implementing concrete actions aimed at combating inequalities and poverty. “These instruments aim, on the one hand, to stimulate sustainable and inclusive growth and, on the other, to guarantee that we all have equal rights and for

the most vulnerable, to implement an economic system based on the human person”, he said.

The President stressed that these services cover everyone and not just those who have a job in the formal sector. “Always bear in mind that the owners of the INSS are, in the first instance, the taxpayers and the workers. We encourage the INSS to continue with its expansion strategy, as well as to consolidate the process of modernising the social security system”, he said.

Rafael Age, speaking on behalf of the Malema pensioners, expressed satisfaction, as they will no longer have to travel 102 kilometres to the town of Ribaué to deal with issues relating to their pensions, such as proof of life, given their advanced age.

The INSS assists a total of 239,285 beneficiaries in Nampula. It has offices in the districts of Nacala, Moma, Angoche and Malema, and others are under construction on Ilha de Mocimboa, Moma, Ribaué and Memba.

Japanese food aid for Mozambique

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) on 5 October received a contribution of US\$1.5 million from the Japanese government to provide food aid to 50,000 people in northern Mozambique.

In a press release, the WFP says that thanks to the Japanese contribution, it will provide rice and tinned fish to people affected by the conflict in the northern province of Cabo Delgado “at a critical moment, when more than 3.3 million people are facing acute food insecurity”.

Japanese ambassador Kimura Hajime recalled that, during his visit to Mozambique in May, the Japanese Prime Minister, Kishida Fumio, had described Mozambique as “a crucial partner of Japan within the strategic plan for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific Region”.

“This new food aid, in close partnership with the WFP”, said Hajime, “reflects our strong commitment to the people of Mozambique and our friendship”.

Islamist terrorism in Cabo Delgado has caused massive displacement of the population, as peasant households have fled from their homes and their farms.

“Although about 570,000 people have returned to their homes, more than 850,000 remain internally displaced”, said the WFP release. “Both groups require continual support to rebuild their lives and recover their self-sufficiency”.

“With the increase in food prices and growing operational costs, people affected by the conflict are facing even greater difficulties”, said Antonella D’Aprile, the WFP National Director in Mozambique. “We express our sincere gratitude to the people of Japan who are setting a consistent example by extending their hand to the most vulnerable populations in Mozambique”.

This is the third contribution by Japan this year to the WFP’s work in Mozambique. Since 2019, Japan’s total contribution to the WFP’s activities in Mozambique has amounted to US\$24.7 million.

Pensions for former guerrillas condition for peace says Renamo

Ossufo Momade, the leader of Mozambique's main opposition party, Renamo, warned on 4 October that full compliance with the DDR (Demobilisation, Disarmament, and Reintegration) programme, particularly the granting of pensions to former Renamo guerrillas, is fundamental for preserving peace.

Momade was speaking in the northern port city of Nacala, where he was assisting the campaign for the re-election of Nacala's Renamo mayor, Raul Novinte.

Momade took the opportunity to address Mozambicans on the occasion of "Peace Day", the anniversary of the General Peace Agreement signed in Rome between the government and Renamo on 4 October 1992. "The effects of the DDR", he said, "have opened a new page in the scenario of political cohabitation. So, we expect the full implementation of the decree on fixing pensions, which is a key factor for maintaining peace".

He stated that Renamo had conducted "with determination" its side of the DDR, "in the expectation that the letter and spirit of the agreements reached would be complied with and respected".

He urged the government to ensure that the pensions will be paid speedily to the former guerrillas, to ensure that the country does not slip back into conflict.

5,221 Renamo fighters were demobilised under the DDR, and their pension applications are now being processed. On 4 October, speaking at Heroes Square in Maputo, President Filipe Nyusi said that the pensions of 316 former guerrillas have been fixed. 251 of these pensions have received the go-ahead from the country's Administrative Tribunal. 27 people began to receive their pensions in September.

Although these numbers are small, President Nyusi was confident that the rest of the demobilised guerrillas would start receiving their pensions this month.

Momade pledged that Renamo would never again take up arms. Peace is the only path for the country, he said, despite the persistence of situations that anger Renamo. "Despite attempts to push us into war, we remain firmly committed to peace, social stability, and the welfare of the public", he declared.

Momade added that decentralisation is an irreversible path so that the population can participate in decision-making. "The democracy we favour is the democracy which transforms positively the life of the people. That's why we call for decentralisation", he stressed.

Turning to the current campaign ahead of the municipal elections scheduled for 11 October, Momade called for orderly and peaceful elections. "Our desire is for free, fair and transparent elections. So, we hope that an orderly, peaceful and tolerant environment will characterise the process".

Momade then held an election rally in the Lili 2 neighbourhoods, urging voters to re-elect Novinte as their mayor. He claimed that Renamo is "the only credible and unquestionable alternative" to the ruling Frelimo Party.

ExxonMobil to rehabilitate electricity grid

The US oil and gas giant ExxonMobil is to finance the rehabilitation of the electricity grid in the localities of Quilani, Incularino, Mwa, and Quirinde, in Palma district, in the northern province of Cabo Delgado.

The rehabilitation will benefit 2,000 residents and is budgeted at US\$500,000. This will be disbursed by the Area 4 partners of the Rovuma Basin in Cabo Delgado, represented by ExxonMobil.

Palma is one of the Cabo Delgado districts that came under attack from Islamist terrorists. In March 2021, the jihadists occupied Palma town causing extensive damage and murdering inhabitants who did not flee.

Within a month the Mozambican armed forces, with the support of their allies from Rwanda and SADC (Southern African Development Community), were back in control of the ravaged town. Since then, the residents of Palma have been returning to their homes.

The rehabilitation of the electricity grid in Palma will consist of building eight kilometres of 33 kV transmission and installing three 160 kVA transformers. It will also include the construction of 12 kilometres of low-voltage transmission line and the installation of 150 public lamp-posts.

The work will be carried out in two phases, the first of which is expected to start in early December and last seven months. The second phase is due to begin as soon as the first is completed and will rehabilitate the supply of the Quionga and Pundanhari administrative posts.

The Chair of the Board of Directors of the publicly owned electricity company, EDM, Marcelino Gildo, and the managing director of ExxonMobil-Mozambique, Arne Gibbs, signed a letter of intent at a ceremony held in Maputo on 3 October.

After the signing, Gildon stated, "We expect that the implementation of this project will boost initiatives that will contribute to the social and economic development of Palma and the surrounding areas". He added that EDM continues to focus on bringing energy to all regions, particularly Cabo Delgado.

He stressed that of the 56 administrative posts in Cabo Delgado, only 13 are not yet electrified, pointing to the terrorist attacks as an obstacle.

Arne Gibbs said the project has a powerful message because it shines a light on the residents of Palma. "The people of Cabo Delgado are strong and resilient, and hope and progress will always prevail", he declared. "On behalf of Area 4, I would like to extend our sincere thanks for the continued spirit of collaboration we have experienced in working with EDM".

ExxonMobil is leading the construction and operation of the natural gas liquefaction facilities for the Area 4 deepwater block, operated by Mozambique Rovuma Venture (MRV), a joint venture by ExxonMobil, Italian energy company ENI, and CNPC of China.

MRV holds a 70 per cent participation interest in the Area 4 concession contract. Its partners, with ten per cent each, are Kogas of South Korea, GALP of Portugal, and Mozambique's own National Hydrocarbon Company (ENH).

Cashew reference price set

The Mozambican government has set the reference price for raw cashew nuts at 35 meticaïs (around 54 US cents) per kilo for the 2023/24 agricultural campaign.

This is lower than the 37 meticaïs a kilo reference price used in the 2022/2023 marketing year.

The price was the consensus reached among the producers and the buyers when weighing up all the production costs and the profit margin, set at 15 per cent in accordance with Mozambican law.

In the 2021/2022 agricultural campaign, according to government data, cashew growers received a gross income of 5.7 billion meticaïs (US\$90 million). Revenue from the export of processed cashew kernels plus unprocessed nuts was US\$107 million.

According to Ilidio Dias, representing the cashew nut producers, although the new price does not satisfy the producers, it was accepted after considering the dynamics of the market. "At first there was no consensus, but the producers ended up accepting the fall from 37 to 35 meticaïs a kilo. So, I wouldn't say that we're satisfied, because even 37 meticaïs didn't correspond to the real cost of the product", Dias said, adding that the price was set by the government based on international market conditions.

He noted that when the campaign actually begins, the market will be able to better assess whether or not the price set is effective.

Currently, India and Vietnam are the main destinations for cashew nuts purchased in Mozambique and hence they exert a great deal of influence on market prices.

In Mozambique, cashew production is considered strategic for the economy as it is a source of income for more than 1.4 million smallholder farmers as well as generating other types of services, such as spraying.

In May, the Mozambican parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, passed the first reading of a government bill on the cashew industry, reversing policies imposed by the World Bank which, in the late 1990s, came close to destroying the industry.

At that time, the Bank, as one of its conditions for loans, insisted that the government end all forms of protection for the industry, and concentrate instead on exporting raw, unprocessed nuts (mainly to India).

Before the World Bank's interference, Mozambique was processing around 50,000 tonnes of cashew nuts a year. After the Bank's diktat, the figure fell to 8,000 tonnes. All the large processing factories closed, and thousands of cashew workers lost their jobs.

World Bank funds urban water security

A new Urban Water Security Programme, financed by the World Bank, should provide improved water supply and better service delivery to over 1.3 million people in southern Mozambique.

"Access to clean water is a basic human right and essential for Mozambique's resilient and inclusive development," said the World Bank country director,

Idah Z. Pswarayi-Riddihough, cited in a World Bank release on the new programme.

"Through this programme, the World Bank supports the government's vision of ensuring that every person in Mozambique benefits from a high-quality water supply service", she said.

The programme is financed by a grant of US\$150 million from the International Development Association (IDA). According to the release, it "aims to enhance the enabling environment for private sector participation in the country's water provision, promote sustainable and climate-resilient service delivery, and foster better and more efficient water distribution services".

"The programme will combine investments in infrastructure development and an expansion of services with investments and incentives to improve service performance," according to Pierre Francois-Xavier Boulenger, World Bank Senior Water Supply and Sanitation Specialist.

Mozambique's southern region is semi-arid at the best of times. Nowadays, frequent droughts, exacerbated by climate change, "reduce water availability and lead to water supply restrictions", said the release. "To address this challenge, the project will support investments to mobilise and treat additional water from complementary sources, reducing the dependency on single sources and increasing the climate resilience of water supply operations in selected cities".

The programme is part of the Mozambican government's US\$3.1 billion Investment Programme for Sustainable, Inclusive, and Resilient Urban Water Services in Mozambique (2022–2032).

Brazil to resume funding Moamba-Major dam

The Brazilian government intends to resume funding the Moamba-Major dam, on the Incomati River, in Moamba district, in Maputo province, which has been put on hold for almost seven years.

The reservoir behind the dam will provide 760 million cubic meters of water, supplying the Greater Maputo Metropolitan Region. It is budgeted at US\$700 million and it was once funded by the Brazilian National Social and Economic Development Bank (BNDES).

The Greater Maputo Metropolitan Area covers Maputo, the adjacent city of Matola and the neighbouring districts of Boane and Marracuene.

According to Brazilian ambassador, Ademar da Cruz, cited in the Maputo daily newspaper "Noticias" on 5 October, on the sidelines of a business meeting between Mozambique and Brazil, "It is a matter of time. The resumption of funding is already being discussed and it is all at an advanced level".

The Mozambican government and its Brazilian counterpart, said the diplomat, have been in discussions to create an instrument that may help quickly unblock the funding. "There are significant developments in the discussion between high-level authorities. We are optimistic that the funding will be unblocked", he said, adding that there are specific details that must be observed before the funding is resumed.

TotalEnergies reiterates commitment to oil and gas

The French oil and gas company, TotalEnergies, has reiterated its commitment to work in Mozambique, taking into account that over the last 15 years the government has created effective regulations that are attractive to private investment.

According to the company's Chairperson and Managing Director in Mozambique, Maxime Rabilloud, who was speaking on 27 September, during a high-level panel entitled "Overview of Global Markets - Attracting Investment in the Next Phase of Energy Projects", at the 8th Mozambican Gas and Energy Summit and Exhibition, a two-day event taking place in Maputo, the commitment of the Mozambican state ensures investment for the long term.

The TotalEnergies project, in Palma district, in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, is budgeted at US\$23 billion, easily the largest foreign investment in Mozambique to date. However, it was interrupted in 2021 when Islamist terrorists attacked Palma town.

The French company declared "force majeure", and withdrew all its staff from Palma, but in recent months it has repeatedly stressed that it intends to resume the project.

"I would like to recognise the government's commitment to effective and favourable regulation that enables investment", Rabilloud said, adding that this package of regulations is generally overlooked in other contexts.

Rabilloud also expressed his appreciation of how "the government is focussed on creating champions in the area of energy, in order to be able to 'play' together with international investors", he added.

He also recognised that Mozambique has the necessary resources in a context where energy security is the name of the global "game". For this reason, Mozambique is currently presenting itself as a real national, regional, and global player on the world energy map.

For his part, the Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, Carlos Zacarias, said that Mozambique could, through its natural and renewable energy resources, position itself to ensure the energy transition of southern African countries, as well as promote green industrialisation.

"As a country, we want to consolidate our strategic role on the regional and global map as a producer and exporter of clean energy that guarantees the environmental, social and economic sustainability of Mozambique, the region and the world", he said.

Meanwhile, in Paris, TotalEnergies Chief Executive Officer, Patrick Pouyanne, went much further, declaring that the company aims to restart work on its LNG project by the end of this year. According to the Zitamar news agency, Pouyanne showed a group of analysts a presentation, under which the project, known simply as "Mozambique LNG" will become operational by 2028.

The key determinant in the calculations by TotalEnergies is the security situation in and around Palma. "The situation has clearly improved because the governmental forces, supported by other countries, particularly Rwanda, have taken back control", Pouyanne said. The company had undertaken audits "which are satisfactory and the objective is to restart the project before year-end".

He added that "some of the contractors would like to benefit from the situation to increase their costs. We disagree, so we have some negotiations, including re-tendering some of the packages in order to control the costs of the project. But we will have clarity on that in the coming months".

South Africa to buy electricity from Matola gas-to-power project

The French oil and gas company, TotalEnergies, aims to supply up to 1,000 megawatts of electricity to South Africa from its proposed liquefied natural gas (LNG)-to-power project in the southern Mozambican city of Matola, according to a report from the Zitamar News Service.

The project director, Antoine Mezin, made the announcement at the Mozambique Energy and Gas Summit in Maputo on 28 September. Discussions are underway regarding power purchase agreements but 1,000 megawatts is targeted in the "mid-term", Mezin explained.

The company had talks with South African electricity minister Kgosiensho Ramokgopa in May and July. TotalEnergies has also held meetings with South African mining and industrial companies, a number of which have expressed interest in buying electricity from the Matola LNG project.

TotalEnergies is developing the Matola project with South African energy company Gigajoule International, with a view to making a final investment decision in 2024. The project will involve importing LNG to a regasification terminal at the Beluluane industrial park in Matola, where it will be turned back into gas by the Beluluane Gas Company and used to generate electricity at the 2,000-megawatt Beluluane power plant.

The Beluluane plant is due to be operational by 2026 and will be the largest gas-fired power plant in Mozambique. This electricity could be sold to South African state-owned electric utility Eskom and to power-intensive industrial users.

South Africa represents a promising market for Mozambican power, as the country has experienced rolling blackouts of up to sixteen hours a day in recent months due to the catastrophic state of its aged coal-fired power plants, and Eskom's refusal to buy more hydropower from other southern African countries, particularly Mozambique.

Mozambique to produce 30,000 tonnes of cooking gas per year

The Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, Carlos Zacarias, has announced that the country expects to produce, as of 2024, about 30,000 tonnes of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG - cooking gas) per year.

According to the Minister, who was speaking on 27 September at the opening of the 8th Mozambique Gas and Energy Summit and Exhibition, a two-day event taking place in Maputo, this amount will permit a reduction of around 60 per cent in imports of cooking gas, thus allowing financial resources to be used in other priority areas for the national economy.

“It is important to highlight the allocation of gas from the PSA [Natural Gas Sharing and Production Project] and to reaffirm that, as of 2024, Mozambique will be producing around 30,000 tonnes of LPG a year”, Zacarias said.

Taking into account the progress that the country is making in the energy sector, the minister said, the government is already adopting mechanisms to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the effects of climate change.

“Natural gas, in particular, provides a safe energy transition alternative, due to its advantages as a less polluting energy source”, Zacarias said, adding “It’s also important to say that a large percentage of our electricity matrix is clean. In fact, Mozambique contributes very little to global emissions”.

According to the minister, Mozambique has an installed electricity generation capacity of around 3,000 megawatts, of which 62 per cent comes from hydroelectric sources. Natural gas provides 15 per cent of the total, solar power three per cent, while the remainder comes from other sources such as biomass.

Mozambique Airlines to increase fleet

Mozambique Airlines (LAM) will more than double its fleet of aircraft to at least 22 by 2027, according to the company’s director of operations, Hilario Tembe.

The director, cited by the Portuguese news agency LUSA, was speaking on the sidelines of the ceremony marking the resumption of direct flights between Johannesburg and the southern Mozambican city of Inhambane. He stated that “in the next few years the influx of aircraft will be massive”.

According to Tembe, the airline has a total of nine aircraft and plans to acquire three more this year to respond to the resumption of connections with neighbouring countries and the introduction of new routes.

“This year, we will probably end up with 12 aircraft and then the plan is to have another 10 aircraft by the end of 2027,” said Tembe.

The director explained that Mozambique resumed flights to Zimbabwe’s capital, Harare, and to Johannesburg in South Africa last year. Flights from Maputo to Lisbon are expected to resume in November.

He also announced that a new route from Maputo to Cape Town will be introduced this year. In addition, “we are also introducing the Maputo – Lusaka route” added Tembe.

Theunis Crous, the executive director of Fly Modern Ark (FMA), the South African company contracted by the Mozambican government to rescue LAM from technical bankruptcy and bring it into profitability, said that the company had already negotiated the lease of a Boeing 737 freighter, to handle cargo transport within the country and abroad.

“It’s an opportunity that could make the company profitable. Cargo transport is a very profitable business”, Crous said.

Fly Modern Ark has a one-year contract with the government for the restructuring of LAM to make it profitable through debt reduction, the introduction of new aircraft, and an increase in passengers. Among recent improvements are the reduction in LAM fares of more than 30 per cent on some routes and an increase in the size of the LAM fleet with the acquisition of two Bombardier JRC 900 aircraft.

President Nyusi inaugurates Mozambique-China Cultural Centre

President Filipe Nyusi on 28 September in Maputo inaugurated a Mozambique-China Cultural Centre, budgeted at US\$70 million.

The construction of the Cultural Centre, located on the Campus of Maputo’s Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM), began in May 2018 and was funded by the Chinese government. It is said to be one of the largest centres of this kind built by Chinese contractors on the African continent, covering an area of around 20,000 square metres.

According to the President, “This Centre represents the dreams and ambition of all of us, which is to see our culture flourish”.

Equipped with state-of-the-art technology, the imposing building includes an amphitheatre with a capacity for 1,500 people, a 500-seat theatre, a 412-seat multipurpose hall, as well as rooms and spaces for exhibitions.

According to President Nyusi, the centre will provide an important and permanent space for exhibiting Mozambican cultural products and creations, for artists and the public, educating them in folklore and contributing to national unity.

For his part, the Chinese ambassador, Wang Hejun, believes that the centre will help to promote friendship between Mozambique and China. “This centre is one of the most complete projects implemented by China in Africa. It will deepen bilateral relations between both nations. Culture is the blood of any nation and home of the people’s spirit”, said the ambassador.

The centre also includes a lecture room, offices, a rehearsal room and classrooms.

Millennium Challenge Corporation compact signed

President Filipe Nyusi on 21 September called for careful and transparent management of the funds granted to Mozambique by the United States Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC).

The President was speaking in Washington after witnessing the signing of an aid package (known as a “compact”) between his government and the MCC. Signing the document were the Minister of Economy and Finance, Max Tonela, and the executive chairperson of the MCC, Alice Albright.

The compact is valued at US\$537.5 million – US\$500 million is a grant from the US government and the remaining US\$37.5 million will be provided by Mozambique.

The compact concentrates its effort on just one province, Zambezia, in the central part of the country. It covers three main areas – the promotion of investment in commercial agriculture; connectivity and rural transport; and climate change and coastal development.

It envisages the construction of a new bridge over the Licungo River, in Mocuba district, and a ring road that will provide an alternative to the current bridge that carries the country’s main north-south highway (EN1) across the river. This is intended to provide greater safety and mobility for road users.

A further 200 kilometres of national, regional, and rural roads will be built in Zambezia to ensure better distribution of agricultural produce. According to the MCC, the compact will also protect the coastline from the effects of climate change and over-fishing.

The President stressed “The areas defined as priorities for this programme are fundamental for attaining the desired economic growth and for reducing poverty”.

To reach these goals, efficiency and effectiveness from a cost-benefit perspective are required, he stressed.

The components of the compact, President Nyusi said, must be implemented with rigour, good governance, transparency, accountability, and independent audits.

The compact, he added, resulted from “the growing trust” between the US and Mozambique, “and we must never betray this trust that we have deserved”.

Tonela declared that the compact would speed up the country’s development, create jobs, and boost productivity. Although the compact is focused on Zambezia, he was convinced that it would have an enormous impact on the entire country.

Alice Albright said the new compact will bring MCC’s total investment in Mozambique to over one billion dollars – this is because it is the second MCC compact. Over a decade and a half ago, the first five-year compact was signed, for about US\$507 million.

“In 2008, we partnered to rehabilitate roads, build water and sanitation systems, improve crop yields, and secure land tenure”, recalled Albright. “This compact will build on these prior successes and invest in some of Mozambique’s biggest priorities, unlocking the country’s vast economic potential and helping Mozambicans gain access to opportunities”.

The new Connectivity and Coastal Resilience Compact, to give the programme its full name, will improve the lives of Mozambicans through sustainable and inclusive economic growth, MCC claims. The funds will be managed by the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) Mozambique Office, comprised of government, civil society, and private sector representatives.

The compact has been divided into three projects: the Connectivity and Rural Transport Project (CTR), the Promoting Reform and Investment in Agriculture Project (PRIA), and the Coastal Livelihoods and Climate Resilience Project (CLCR).

TRAC postpones conclusion of key stretch of motorway

The widening of the section of the Maputo-South Africa N4 motorway road between the Tchumene Junction and Novare, in the city of Matola, budgeted at US\$27 million, will no longer be concluded in October, according to the Director General of the National Roads Administration (ANE), Elias Paulo.

According to Paulo, cited in the newsheet “Carta de Moçambique” on 22 September, the South African company responsible for the motorway, Trans Africans Concessions (TRAC), has now promised to deliver the four-lane highway by December. This is the third time that the conclusion of the N4 has been delayed. TRAC hired Inyatsi, a company from Eswatini, with links to the Eswatini royal family, to do the job.

TRAC managers were summoned to Maputo by the Minister of Public Works, Carlos Mesquita, who was angered at the repeated delays in widening the N4. The road is suffering from traffic jams caused by trucks laden with minerals taking their cargo from the South African province of Mpumalanga to the port of Maputo.

Paulo said that only the basics will be ready by December. Everything else must be done later – including two service roads, one on each side of the motorway, and two feeder roads taking local traffic onto the N4. TRAC has also promised to install two footbridges over the motorway.

When asked about the delays back in June, TRAC replied “Although this process is lengthy and suffered setbacks in February 2023, due to heavy rains and flooding, when it was not possible to work a single day, there is light at the end of the tunnel, since once the work is completed, the permanent congestion will be resolved”.

“We reiterate that together with the police authorities we are doing our utmost to minimise the suffering”, TRAC claimed then. “According to the latest work programme, the paved road will be finished by the second week of September, with the erection of signs and other finishing touches remaining for the end of October 2023, and the utilities for a later stage”.

This has proved a wildly optimistic forecast, and chaotic traffic along the N4 will continue for at least another two months.

The government’s contract awarding the N4 concession to TRAC ends in 2027.

Maputo province to receive new water systems

President Filipe Nyusi has announced that Maputo province will soon benefit from eight new water supply systems to meet growing demand.

According to President Nyusi, who was speaking on 27 September during the inauguration of the Chitsavane water supply system, in Boane district, “we are sure that these systems will make a difference to the population's quality of life”. However, he added, “There is still a lot to be done to meet water needs in Maputo province in particular and in the country in general, in order to guarantee access to water for everyone and everywhere in our country”.

The Chitsavane water supply system will provide water to 5,800 people initially and will reach a maximum of 15,000 people.

The President stressed that “the availability of drinking water in our homes is not just a convenience, but a human need and a fundamental right. Without access to drinking water, we cannot talk about the enjoyment of human rights. Drinking unsafe or contaminated water causes a range of diseases”.

“For us, this moment is also a source of satisfaction. That's why, step by step, we are fulfilling one of the objectives of extending access to drinking water in line with the United Nations' 2030 agenda”, he added.

The construction of the system is part of the National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme (PRONASAR), a joint effort between the Government of Mozambique (GoM) and development partners, in this case, the United States and the United Kingdom.

Economy may grow by seven per cent

The Mozambican economy, boosted by the liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects, may grow by seven per cent for the first time in eight years, according to the Minister of Economy and Finance, Max Tonela.

Cited in the Maputo daily newspaper “Noticias” on 27 September, Tonela revised upwards the initial growth forecast for this year from five to seven per cent. He noted that without the LNG projects, economic growth would reach 4.2 per cent, one per cent above the projection forecast in 2022.

These numbers, he said, show that the economy is recovering positively. Tonela believed that, in the short term, it would continue to grow at an average of five to seven per cent a year.

According to Tonela, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will be supported by sectors including agriculture, the extractive industry, the hotel business, and transport and communications. However, investment in LNG projects will play a fundamental role.

The Minister stated that inflation is under control and was optimistic that annual inflation will not exceed eight per cent this year, compared with 10.3 per cent in 2022. “A stable exchange rate and falling prices on the international market, especially for fuel, may contribute to the positive tendency of the economy”, he said.

President calls for greater involvement of courts in biodiversity protection

President Filipe Nyusi has called for greater interaction between the courts and communities in the protection of biodiversity in Zumbo district, in the western province of Tete. According to President Nyusi, who was speaking on 26 September at the inauguration of the new Zumbo district court, the interaction arises from the fact that the district is located in a region rich in mineral resources, including coal, copper, gold, and graphite as well as mineralised water springs.

“The district is also rich in wildlife species, such as elephants, buffalo, hippos, crocodiles, hyenas, leopards, zebras, lions, and warthogs”, President Nyusi said.

The construction of a courthouse in that district is the result of an initiative entitled “One district, one decent courthouse”, in order to respond to the concerns of the population and expand the network of courts. Work on the courthouse, budgeted at 60 million meticaís (US\$940,000), began in July 2021.

President Nyusi also guaranteed that the government will submit a budget proposal for paving the road linking the Bene region, in Chifunde district, to Zumbo town. He stressed the importance of the road, saying that it aims to ensure that Mozambique is effectively connected from the Rovuma River to the Maputo River and from Zumbo to the Indian Ocean. (The Rovuma and the Maputo rivers mark the northern and southern boundaries of the country, while Zumbo is its westernmost point).

Government to hire independent entity to inspect mineral exports

The Mozambican government is to hire an independent entity to inspect the quantities of minerals exported overseas, to stop under-invoicing and tax evasion in the mineral sector, according to the director general of the National Mining Institute (INAMI), Elias Daude.

The entity, according to Daude, cited in the Maputo newspaper “Noticias” on 2 October, may start working within the current year. The director general said that the entity, chosen by public tender, should have started working but it was noted that there were conflicts of interest as it used to advise companies that are possibly involved in tax evasion.

At the moment, he said, the state has been inspecting the quantities of minerals through a multi-sector team that involves staff from the Ministries of Mineral Resources and Energy, and of Economy and Finance, as well as from the Mozambican Tax Authority.

According to the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the under-invoicing of mineral goods obtained in Mozambique, without the proper assessment, has been causing losses of many millions of dollars every year.

The government's Economic Acceleration Package, under implementation over the past year, points out that the country has suffered an average annual loss over the past decade of US\$1.6 billion due to under-invoicing and other mechanisms of tax evasion.