



# Anglo-Malagasy Society



Newsletter no. 66 – December 2009

[Society](#) [Politics](#) [Economics](#) [Tourism](#) [Minerals](#) [Wildlife](#) [Events](#)

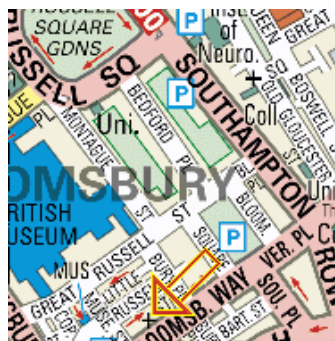
## Society activities

The speakers at the Society's October daytime event were Julia Footnick on an eco-tourism project in Nosy Be, Brian Donaldson on the Small Grants Scheme and Oliver Backhouse on ophthalmology in Madagascar.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> January at 6 for 6.30pm with a talk by Kevin Rushby on his journey to rediscover lost pirate settlements on the islands and atolls of the Indian Ocean. There will be a meal of Malagasy food and a free bar.

Further details of this and other future events can be found on our website at [www.anglo-malagasy-society.co.uk](http://www.anglo-malagasy-society.co.uk), together with much other useful information. The site has been updated with the kind help of Philip Tierney's Foundation Design company and with fine photographs courtesy of Daniel Austin. Please do let us know if you have any suggestions or comments.

The venue for our meetings is the Upper Vestry Hall of St George's Church, Bloomsbury, London WC1A 2HR, two minutes' walk from the British Museum. The entrance to the Hall is from Little Russell Street behind the Hawksmoor-designed church. The nearest tube stations are Tottenham Court Road (Central and Northern Lines), Russell Square and Holborn (both Piccadilly Line); eastbound buses 1, 8, 19, 25, 38, 55, 98 and 242 stop outside.



The next newsletter will be in March 2010; please send any material for inclusion as well as any changes in your contact details to the editor Julian Cooke, whose e-mail address is [juliancooke@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:juliancooke@yahoo.co.uk).

## Politics in Madagascar

### Continuing crisis

There is still no resolution to the political crisis in Madagascar that was first triggered by a contentious broadcast a year ago in December 2008. In particular there has been no agreement on the division of ministerial and other positions between all the protagonists: Andry Rajoelina, the President of the Haute Autorité de la Transition (HAT) and his party Tanora malaGasy Vonona (TGV), supported by the Forces du Changement; the ousted President, Marc Ravalomanana, and his Tiako-i-Madagasikara (TIM) party, backed by the 'legalist' movement; former President Didier Ratsiraka, with his Arema party; and the other former President, Albert Zafy.

In September the pressure to find a solution grew under the threat of the imposition of economic sanctions, liable in early October. Joachim Chissano, the lead mediator from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and Tiébilé Dramé, the UN special emissary, visited Paris for meetings in which France was reported to have proposed a greater role for the Ratsiraka movement.

**United Nations** The Forces du changement to an extent hardened their position after Rajoelina was prevented from addressing the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 24<sup>th</sup> September, at the request of members of the SADC on the procedural objection that he was not internationally recognized as Madagascar's head of state. On a motion to decide whether an earlier decision to authorise Rajoelina to speak was valid or not, the vote was twenty-three against and four in favour, with six abstentions. Angola, Argentina, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nicaragua, the Seychelles, South Africa, Suriname, Swaziland, Tanzania, Venezuela, Zambia and Zimbabwe voted against Rajoelina; Madagascar and three others, Denmark, Ecuador and Jamaica, were in favour. Ali Abdessalam Triki, the President of the Assembly, said later that he was advised that Rajoelina should be allowed to give a speech and that he just implemented the rules of procedure of the UN, although he personally opposed letting Rajoelina speak ("I am not in favour because it was a coup d'état and we in Africa, we do not allow such coups d'état"). The Malagasy Prime Minister Monja Roindefo said that Madagascar might withdraw from the SADC in protest at its treatment, that it had sent letters demanding an explanation to the various embassies ("the instigators of this humiliation")

and that it might refuse to issue visas to SADC members of the International Contact Group (GIC), due for a meeting in Antananarivo on 6<sup>th</sup> October. A spokesman for the DR Congo said that the SADC was acting according to the principles of the organisation and that the fault lay with leaders in Madagascar.

The pro-Ravalomanana movement held a meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> September at the capital's Mahamasina stadium, despite the opposition of the commune urbaine d'Antananarivo (CUA). The subsequent clashes with the security forces, who fired tear gas to disperse the crowds, left eight wounded and led to seventeen arrests.

The prime minister, Monja Roindefo, said in September that he planned to establish a committee of experts to study changes to the constitution. Manassé Esoavelomandroso, the director of Leader Fanilo, proposed an elected transitional congress which Gabriel Rabearimanana, the secretary-general of Monima, supported while rightly questioning the practicability of holding the elections as early as mid-December.

At the end of September Rajoelina spent a number of days in Paris on his way back from New York; little information was forthcoming on the purpose or content of his meetings, which were reported to include ones with President Sarkozy (or his close advisers) and with Ratsiraka, and to relate to the transition, in particular to the prompt holding of elections. He indicated on his return that he had also been in search of financial support, having been thwarted in New York, a visit which he described as a half-success.

The HAT maintained a degree of pressure on members of TiM, refusing bail to a former deputy, Raharinaivo Andrianantoandro, and announcing a search for Denis Andriamandroso and Bary Emmanuel Rafatrolaza, former representatives of Madagascar in South Africa under Ravalomanana.

**October agreement** Against a background of a worsening economic position, a meeting of the GIC scheduled for 6<sup>th</sup> October was intended to finalise the Maputo accords.

Ahead of the meeting some forty senior military officers met with Rajoelina and Roindefo to discuss the situation and to press for a solution, while insisting on their neutrality. Ablassé Ouedraogo, the African Union (AU) emissary, said that the accords signed in Maputo must be the basis of moving forward. The approach of the HAT appeared to be to press for amendments to

the Maputo accords although Rajoelina indicated that he was ready to replace Roindefo with a consensus prime minister.

The GIC arrived in early October to be met by protestors from a range of associations; tear gas was later used to disperse Roindefo's hard-line supporters outside the Hotel Carlton, where the GIC met. Those present besides the GIC included Jean Ping, the head of the AU commission; Alain Joyandet, the French Secretary of State for Co-operation and Francophone countries; Phillip Carter, a senior official at the US department of State; Jean-Claude Boidin, the former European Union ambassador; and the ambassadors of countries with a seat on the UN Security Council – the UK, France, China, Russia, the US and Libya.

Late on 6<sup>th</sup> October an agreement was reached on the key posts in the interim government, missing since Maputo: Rajoelina would remain as President and Emmanuel Rakotovahiny as vice-President, and Eugène Mangalaza was proposed to be Prime Minister, although as often the position did not seem at all clear-cut. Fetison Andrianirina, the head of the Ravalomanana delegation, said that they had agreed to Rajoelina remaining as President of the HAT if he would not stand in the next presidential elections; Rajoelina said soon after in proposing elections as early as April 2010 that he had not decided if he would stand. Ravalomanana himself wrote to Jean Ping to protest against the new triumvirate, initially refusing to sign the agreement and still objecting to the recognition of Rajoelina, whom he criticised for indicating he would claim all the ministries. The ministers said they would stand down, but are still in place. More strikingly, Monja Roindefo refused to stand down.

On 10<sup>th</sup> October Rajoelina replaced Roindefo with Mangalaza, a professor of anthropology at Toamasina then living in Réunion; he was a deputy under the Second Republic and apparently nominated by Ratsiraka. Roindefo refused to cede his post, saying “The government that I lead...continues to operate” and that it needed a signed agreement and not just a press release to dismiss a government. On 12<sup>th</sup> October he appealed to the Conseil d'État (the arbiter on administrative issues), which meant that the decision was suspended while they deliberated, adding to the stasis in the government. Efforts by party leaders in the Forces du changement movement to reconcile the two led to the creation of a committee that proposed that Roindefo take the post of President of the Conseil supérieur de la transition (CST). On 14<sup>th</sup> October the Council of ministers appointed Cécile Manoroahanta as an interim prime minister, while still awaiting the verdict of the Conseil d'État, which on 22<sup>nd</sup> October rejected Roindefo's appeal, on the grounds that it was a legitimate act of government to appoint Mangalaza on which it was not

competent to rule. Roindefo did not give up, and sought to appeal. The Haute Cour Constitutionnelle (HCC) said that it had started on 27<sup>th</sup> October to consider Roindefo's request on 12<sup>th</sup> October for it to opine on the position of Rajoelina. In the meantime the seat of the prime minister was moved to Antaninarenina, in an annex of the building of the President of the transition.

A meeting in Geneva from 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> October was planned to confirm the top three posts, but it was cancelled the day before as Ravalomanana refused to attend, claiming in part that he did not wish to attend a meeting outside Africa and that he would still not accept Rajoelina's unconstitutional position. Rajoelina suggested excluding from negotiations any movement refusing to attend the next meeting. Tiébilé Dramé, the UN representative, called on all the parties to make more concessions and to persevere with the Maputo accords, while saying he had not mastered the intricacy of Malagasy law on the disputed post of prime minister.

The dispute threatened to divide the Forces du changement, with Jean Théodore Ranjivason suggesting that a scission was inevitable; there was talk among supporters of Roindefo of their creating a fifth movement. Although Ablassé Ouedraogo, the AU emissary, rejected the idea, on 28<sup>th</sup> October a fifth movement was indeed declared by eight political groupings, including Monima, Farimbona and Mavana, proclaiming itself as a supporter of national sovereignty rather than Roindefo per se. Ardent supporters of Rajoelina, such as the Parti Socio-démocrate pour l'Union de Madagascar (PSDUM), said that some 29 of the 39 parties and associations in the original movement supported the president of the HAT.

The 'legalist' movement was itself divided: Ambroise Ravonison, a founder of the movement and president of the association called the Conseil supérieur de la démocratie-Madagascar (CSD-M), held his own meetings with supporters and was apparently excluded from the usual venue of the Magro store at Ankorondrano.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> October the trail started of various supporters of Ravalomanana relating to the bomb blast on 26<sup>th</sup> June, although they were supposedly to be released under the Maputo accords.

The next proposed meeting of the various movements, at Addis Abeba in Ethiopia on 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> November, was readily accepted by Ravalomanana and Zafy, although Ratsiraka's movement objected to the possible adverse health effects of the venue's high altitude. On 19<sup>th</sup> October Ravalomanana again indicated that he would soon return to the country when he addressed a

message to his supporters at Toliara, where TIM members criticised the part played by France; supporters of Moindefo also held a rally in the city, where security forces prevented a meeting taking place at the Place de la Démocratie the following weekend.

The positions of the two main parties hardened: Ravalomanana again insisted that he would not accept Rajoelina as President while Rajoelina's government claimed international (or at least the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie's) support for an accelerated timetable of elections. However, the GIC said that the Addis Abeba meeting would deal with allocating the positions outstanding and not review the position of president, a stance supported by Zafy's movement but criticised by Ravalomanana, who also objected to not having a representative in the three most important positions.

In an unrepentant press interview in late October Ravalomanana said he could stay in South Africa, and would return to Madagascar after the formation of an interim government; said it was too early to say if he would stand in Presidential elections, and that he had always kept separate the affairs of state and his own businesses; maintained that while France had not organised the coup d'état, certain Frenchmen were behind it; suggested that the bullets that killed some thirty people on 7<sup>th</sup> February did not come from the Presidential guard; and said his only regret in the crisis was not paying enough attention to the army ("I preferred to buy 40 tractors, not 40 armoured cars"). He also suggested in another interview that an army officer might head the transition alongside a civilian prime minister.

On 26<sup>th</sup> October two technical advisers to the sacked prime minister Roindefo appeared in court under suspicion of planning a coup d'état against Rajoelina, a claim which Roindefo's Monima party disputed.

**Ethiopia** Ablassé Ouedraogo said ahead of the Addis Abeba meeting that he hoped it would put in place the necessary institutions to enable the Malagasy people to restore economic activity and to clarify the route to constitutional change, with June 2010 a realistic date for a new president and a new constitution; and that he hoped it would be the last such meeting, and that the political parties might finally put aside their differences in the national interest. Rajoelina said he was targeting the sovereign ministries, as did Ravalomanana, who chose a delegation full of parliamentarians rather than technicians; Ratsiraka's delegation of twenty was twice as large as the others, and included Tantely Andrianarivo, the last prime minister under his régime.

The talks started on the afternoon of 3<sup>rd</sup> November, with a rendition of the African Union hymn and the Malagasy national anthem. Jean Ping, the head of the AU commission, called on the parties to work towards a fair, effective and promising transition by putting in place the right institutions, and Zafy said an agreement was essential and the responsibility of the politicians present. However, Ravalomanana withdrew until the arrival of Joaquim Chissano in the evening, when the meeting re-convened. Ravalomanana with Ratsiraka proposed a joint presidency and a triumvirate. Ravalomanana was also reported to have proposed as president of the transition first Manandafy Rakotonirina or failing him Raymond Ranjeva, a former judge at the International Court of Justice (and a member of the Society). There appeared to be an agreement on the sharing of ministries, with each movement taking five and then sharing the remaining eight, but Rajoelina walked out of the talks early in the morning of 5<sup>th</sup> November over his demand to be president and to have control of the eight posts.

A representative of the European Union, Jeremy Lester, presented the meeting with a letter as a reminder that the EU's 120-day deadline before imposing economic sanctions would expire on 6<sup>th</sup> November.

The final agreement reached later on 6<sup>th</sup> November stipulated that Rajoelina would retain the presidency but was somehow to share it with two co-presidents in a Conseil présidentiel, with Fetison Andrianirina representing the Ravalomanana movement and Emmanuel Rakotovahiny, the existing vice-president, that of Zafy. There would be a prime minister, still Mangalaza from the Ratsiraka movement, with three vice-prime ministers and a further 31 ministers, with six for each of the four movements and seven for 'other political forces'. Although the number of offices was agreed, the allocation of portfolios was not. The agreement was with some justice called by one of the mediators "providential" but "shaky". There were immediate disagreements between Rajoelina and Ravalomanana over how much power the president would have, and early arguments over who would hold various ministries, including Justice (important on the issue of the charges relating to abuse of office made against Ravalomanana).

Rajoelina called at the signing ceremony the next day for the re-establishment of international relations and said he would put all his effort into organising free and fair elections. Ravalomanana said that while it was hard to call the result a total success, each side had made concessions and he would help the transitional government to achieve its objectives. Ratsiraka called it a good accord and claimed the credit for the collegiate set-up. Mangalaza, who had played no part in the discussions and who had yet to meet his predecessor

Roindefo, hoped that he would have his new government in place within a week, and was anxious to press on with key matters, including the trafficking of rosewood. However, arguments persisted over a number of ministerial portfolios, especially that of Justice, which Rajoelina claimed in spite of an apparent agreement that neither he nor Ravalomanana would control it; the other portfolios disputed were those of Mines, Foreign Affairs, Education and Communication. The minister of the Interior, Cécile Manoroahanta, replaced in the meantime thirty of the chiefs of the country's 119 districts, which she said was normal practice after three years and not politically motivated.

The new government was not agreed by 20<sup>th</sup> November, as envisaged by the Conseil présidentiel, despite a plea by Mangalaza for the parties finally to heed the national interest, in part as the threat of sanctions again loomed. On 21<sup>st</sup> November a new meeting of the leaders of the four movements was proposed, to be held outside of the country in the following week, although the AU suggested that they might arrange one in Antananarivo to avoid logistical and financial issues. Ratsiraka proposed Paris as a venue, but the French ambassador, Jean Marc Châtaigner, thought that might be subject to a negative interpretation. The GIC also emphasised the need for an agreement. A novel proposal on 24<sup>th</sup> November was to draw lots for the ministerial portfolios, after a meeting between Rajoelina, the co-presidents Andrianirina and Rakotovahiny and prime minister Mangalaza failed to find a solution.

**Maputo III** Rajoelina insisted that he was right to persist with his ministers to ensure that the government continued to function. On 25<sup>th</sup> November the heads of the armed forces called for a rapid solution to establish a new government, saying that they were unable to fulfil their various missions by keeping men in urban areas. Various ministers of the HAT, including Julien Razafimanazato, suggested that there might be a renewal of street protests if Rajoelina did not get his way. Neither Mangalaza nor Andrianirina attended a Council of ministers on 26<sup>th</sup> November, at which the other co-president, Rakotovahiny, upbraided those present for their attitude; he later indicated that eleven ministries were still to be decided, which Hery Rakotobe of Grad Iloafo suggested might be given to other political entities, such as his own.

The mediator Joaquim Chissano arranged to visit Madagascar to help to resolve the issue, although he did not go in the end, while a further meeting in Mozambique on 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> December was proposed, which he was to chair. Rajoelina said he would not travel abroad, although he had been ready to go to Paris, and refused to join the other leaders, although he said he might participate by a video link. His stance was criticised by the three other movements at a meeting at the Hotel Carlton on 1<sup>st</sup> December, at which they

suggested that members of the HAT were too entrenched and implicated in the trafficking of rosewood. They also revealed that the disputed ministries were those of Decentralisation (between Ravalomanana and Rajoelina), Mines and Education (between Zafy and Rajoelina), and the Economy (between Ratsiraka and Rajoelina). Rajoelina was firm in not going to Maputo, and spoke of serious consequences, as did leaders of the armed forces. The heads of the other three movements met and reached an agreement on 7<sup>th</sup> December on a timetable to establish the new institutions immediately and on the division of ministerial posts: Ratsiraka ceded Economy and took Finance and Energy; Zafy gained Education as well as the Interior; Ravalomanana took Foreign Affairs and Decentralisation; and Rajoelina was to have Economy and Armed Forces. Seven ministries were declared neutral, including Justice, Communications and Interior Security, with the proposal that Rajoelina should choose a minister from a list drawn up by experts, such as magistrates in the case of Justice.

Rajoelina's response was to decry the agreement as a coup d'état and to say that he was working on the right response; he also accused those in Maputo of high treason, which would carry the death penalty. The HAT banned until March all flights from Mozambique to Madagascar, thus stranding at least temporarily the delegates, including Rajoelina's co-presidents. Zafy in particular condemned Rajoelina's actions and called on him to resign, which he showed no inclination of doing. The army said they were ready to take an increased role in the government, including the position of prime minister.

Rajoelina was also involved in a tussle with his co-Presidents as to whether he should represent Madagascar at the Copenhagen summit on climate change. Moreover, in early December a bullet hit the windscreen of Rajoelina's limousine, although no-one was hurt and there were suspicions that the incident was a set-up.

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## Identity cards

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Cécile Manoroahanta, the minister of the Interior, said in late September that her main role was to head the organisation of credible elections, including a review of the issue of identity cards, if necessary ahead of the creation of an independent electoral commission. She also indicated that the HAT was seeking the best technology to enfranchise the estimated 3.5 million electors they said were missing from the electoral register. She also proclaimed her political independence. In late October it was announced that the identity

cards would contain biometric details; Manorohanta said the issue of encryption was not an insurmountable hurdle, and nor was the cost, although she did not give any figures.

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## Parties

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In October the association Ny Asa vita no ifampitsarana (AVI) held its first congress since its creation in 1997, in which it changed its statute to become a political party. The party pledged unconditional support to Rajoelina during the transition and confirmed Norbert Lala Ratsirahonana as its president, while electing five vice-presidents.

At Arema, in a confusing series of events, Pierrot Rajaonarivelo resigned from his position as secretary-general and called on the party to elect someone in his place who backed Didier Ratsiraka, but this only led to further disputes with Ratsiraka's supporters in the party. The dispute intensified in late November, when Rajaonarivelo attempted to organise an extraordinary congress, designed to enable him to leave to form a new party.

Various parties embarked on an element of electioneering in October, including Jean Théodore Ranjivason's Matsilo and Roland Ratsiraka's Madagasikara tonga saina.

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## Army

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The role of the army remains important if a little unclear, in part because of differing views within the armed forces; ahead of the GIC meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> October three senior officers, including Gen. Rasolomahandry, a former chief of staff, took an independent line.

Nineteen senior officers were promoted on the eve of the Addis Abeba meeting, including three government ministers (Noël Rakotondrasana, minister for the Armed forces, Calixte Randriamiandrisoa, minister of the Environment, and Claude Ravelomanana, secretary of state for the Gendarmerie) as well as the husband of Cécile Manorohanta, Col. Jean Adolphe Dominique.

A group of five young officers held a press conference on 17<sup>th</sup> November at Ambohitsorohitra, prompting a debate on whether they had received prior authorisation and were failing to respect the neutrality of the army.

## Economic and social matters

### Economic pressures

The World Bank reported on a deterioration in the Malagasy economy in September with a noted drop in energy consumption, while in October the number of jobs lost in the country was reported at 228,000, four-fifths in the service sector. Exports were down, in spite of the weakening of the ariary, and the country's financial reserves were declining, although still reasonable.

The Economic Development Board of Madagascar reported in late October that there had been no major new foreign investment to date in 2009 and that twelve planned economic missions had been cancelled, not at all surprisingly given the instability and insecurity in the country. Two major potential investments remain stalled, to the benefit of incumbents – the Nouvelle Brasserie in beer and Life, a fourth mobile phone operator. The EDBM's different strategy for 2010 is to identify some fifty potential projects suitable for local and foreign investment. Only nine new free-trade enterprises were accredited by November compared to thirty-two in 2008, creating just 1,851 jobs against 8,314 the previous year.

The United Nations Development Fund said in October that the majority of developing countries would miss their targets to reduce poverty under the Millennium Development Goals; Madagascar was likely to struggle with the difficult global economy and its own political crisis – the UN estimates that the 2002 crisis set the country's development back by five years.

The smuggling of precious woods was estimated to have cost the state substantial customs revenue. The closing of the port of Vohémar to international trade, to prevent illegal exports, might be expected to have an effect on the local economy.

Customs revenue collection for 2009 is on track to reach its revised target of Ariary 744bn (about £200m), reduced from Ar. 1,050bn previously. Monthly revenue had dropped to only Ar. 20bn per month during the worse of the crisis earlier in the year but was helped in its recovery by the higher price of oil, the major import, and by the benefit of reforms.

An indication of the government's budget for 2010, the Loi de finances, was given in late November, and gave a target of economic growth of 2-3%, which is possible if the private sector in particular recovers; the current rate of

growth was given as 0.6%. There will be a small stimulus from proposed cuts in customs duties and the rate of tax on salaries will reduce from 24% to 23% in 2010 (but not until 2011 on businesses).

The series of elections due in 2010 will have an estimated cost to the state of Ariary 40bn (£12m); the US government has indicated its willingness to help fund the cost of elections, but only once a fully-consensual government is in place.

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## Aid

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USAID's Food for Peace office contributed \$3.5m in October to the World Food Programme, which was expected to cover a third of the anticipated needs in southern Madagascar until March, mainly in supplying sorghum and pulses. The European Union's 10<sup>th</sup> Fonds européens de développement (FED) is expected to reduce in size from the €577m originally allocated, the disbursement of which has been largely suspended. A first group of eleven Peace Corps volunteers returned in November to communes deemed secure in Madagascar, after an absence of eight months.

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## Cyclones

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In November the UNICEF representative in Madagascar, Bruno Maes, reported that the country was ill-prepared for the 2009/10 cyclone season, given an estimated halving of international aid and the looting of stores; the UN has appealed for funds of \$6m to pre-position stocks in the areas of the country judged most vulnerable. Meteorologists have forecast that four to five intense cyclones could strike Madagascar during this season, compared to five in total in the last two years. There have been two near misses to date, Cyclone Anja in mid-November and then Tropical Storm Bongani.

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## Jirama

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The state electricity company has increased production to 180 megawatts per day this year, up from about 130 Mw in 2007. The figure has been boosted by the 25 Mw used by Sherritt at its nickel mine, but there is scope to increase output by a further 20 Mw when the rehabilitation of a generator at Andekaleka is complete. The company believes that it has reduced the risk of power outages but still has some work to do on connecting more people to the network.

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## **AGOA**

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There are still concerns that the political crisis will result in the United States stopping support via the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which allows many African nations to export goods to the US without duty but with conditions on good governance. The decision was first deferred to October and then expected by the end of December. On 10<sup>th</sup> December the US government said that the failure of Madagascar to make concrete progress towards establishing a constitutional democratic government by the date of 15<sup>th</sup> December would seriously threaten its eligibility under the scheme. The uncertainty has already made it difficult to secure export orders. Clothing exports to the US were \$279 million in 2008, representing half of the textile exports of Madagascar, which is the second largest textile exporter through AGOA, after Lesotho.

In November the US Coast Guard tightened the conditions of entry of ships that had recently called at Madagascar, based on its assessment of the country's anti-terrorism measures.

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## **Tobacco**

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Madagascar has started exporting tobacco again after a gap of thirty years, with an initial consignment of 600 tons in October and a further shipment of 400 tons planned before the end of the year. The exports are the result of a joint venture between Sipromad and British American Tobacco, which works with 1,500 farmers.

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## **Mobiles**

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In November Telecom Malagasy announced the launch of a 3G service by Telma Mobile, although an exact date was not given; Telma has about 25% of the market with 1.2m customers, behind Orange and Zain. Consumers and businesses should next year benefit from the arrival of two new underwater fibre-optic networks: France Telecom's Lion, which has reached Toamasina, and that of Eassy, due in March 2010, which Telma will use.

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## **Swine flu**

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The first case of H1N1 flu in Madagascar was discovered in August and the number of cases increased markedly in mid-October, reaching nearly 250 later that month. The first death related to the virus occurred on 16<sup>th</sup> November,

and there had been three deaths reported by 4<sup>th</sup> December, from a total of 770 confirmed cases, 90% of them in the capital.

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## Schools

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The economic crisis was said to be behind a move by parents to switch their children from fee-paying schools to state ones, leading to increased numbers and a degree of overcrowding, offset by a higher level of absenteeism of an estimated 17% against 8% previously. There were also reports of an increase in the level of security at schools in Antananarivo after a number of children disappeared in the capital.

The Ministry of Education convened a meeting in late November to discuss reforms to the method of education, prompting some concerns that the change would be disruptive, as with the abortive efforts to extend primary school education to the age of seven.

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## Social

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In November the Andrew Lees Trust (ALT) launched '**Voices of Change**', a book of selected oral testimonies in collaboration with Panos London, designed to increase the voice of local populations and to improve awareness about the knowledge and experience of the indigenous people of southern Madagascar. *Voices of Change* is the first published account of the lives of the Antanosy people in their own words and is an opportunity for local people to speak directly about their difficulties in the face of climate change, food insecurity and rapid development due to the QMM mining operation. There is more at [www.andrewleestrust.org/hepa](http://www.andrewleestrust.org/hepa).

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## Other

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**Business** The newly-appointed prime minister, Eugène Mangalaza, attempted to reassure business leaders in November on a proposed re-launch of the economy, emphasising the need for a clean-up of business practices and suggesting that bank interest rates were too high.

**Report** Madagascar gained ten places in the World Bank's report on Doing Business 2010, to rank 134th out of 183 countries. The publication was based on a survey in the year to May 2009.

## Tourism

The Office national du tourisme (ONTM) reported in October that trips to Madagascar were no longer being cancelled, while the hotel industry reported that occupancy rates had recovered to 60% from a low of 20% in March, helped by a women's basketball competition. The figures for the number of tourists to Madagascar in 2009 to the end of November show a fall of 56% over the figure for 2008, although a total of 148,387 might be seen as quite impressive in the circumstances. Airlink, the SAA regional airline, announced in September that it would add a Saturday flight on its Antananarivo-Johannesburg route.

## Minerals

### Mining

Rio Tinto's QIT Madagascar Minerals (QMM) said in November that it would face a challenging year in 2010 but expected to see an improvement in 2011. In October QMM won the 2009 Nedbank Environmental Award, in which it was commended for 'its groundbreaking work and commitment in environment and biodiversity especially its net positive impact'.

Sherritt International's revenues and profits fell in the third quarter of 2009, by 19% and 58% respectively, due to the lower prices of cobalt, nickel and steel.

The AIM-listed LP Hill has acquired the Tranomaro investment company, whose 80%-owned Madagascan subsidiary is the sole beneficial owner of certain exploration and commercial mining rights for uranium and thorium in an area known as the Marodambo project, which comprises a number of blocks covering 15 sq km in southern Madagascar.

In November the Australian company Malagasy Minerals reported positive results from its soil and rock chip sampling, confirming the presence of vanadium, used in speciality steels and new battery technologies.

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## Oil

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Madagascar's Office of National Mines and Strategic Industries announced in early November that it had delayed an auction of oil exploration rights until 2010 as a result of the political crisis; two onshore blocks and about 18 offshore blocks will be offered for sale. The agency has also granted a year's extension to prospectors to fulfil the terms of their contracts, including the start of drilling.

Sterling Energy announced in early December the details of a £20m fund-raising, to follow the £63m it sought in September; most of the proceeds of this issue will be spent in Kurdistan, with just £1m on further exploration work in Madagascar and Cameroon.

The Chinese company Sunpec reported positive results in October from the latest drilling on its wells in the Sakahara prospect in the Boeny region.

Gem Biofuels announced in November that it had commenced commercial crude jatropha oil production in Madagascar and expected to make a first small shipment in early December. Paul Benetti, the company's CEO, said that yields higher than expected and a low-cost model pointed to a promising commercial future.

## Wildlife and conservation

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### Wood

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There have been a number of developments on the issue of the illegal harvesting of trees in Madagascar's national parks, especially of rosewood in the reserves of Masoala, Marojejy and Makira in the north of the country.

Recent research from the Missouri Botanical Garden and Derek Schuurman calculated that 598 containers had been exported illegally from Vohémar to China at the end of April and that 314 containers had been exported from Toamasina since March. The government decree in September to allow the export of 25 containers by each of thirteen traders encouraged more people to enter the market, and nine exporters are said to be currently seeking approval. The authorisation of the export of hardwood supposedly related to trees already felled in cyclones and was designed to raise money to fund a security operation to protect the forests. A further 55 containers were exported in

October, when 91 were also seized by the government; and despite a ban on exports in November, 170 containers were exported in early December.

A separate report in November by the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) and Global Witness indicated that some 1,000 cubic meters of high-value hardwoods are estimated to leave Madagascar each month, with 100-200 rare trees cut down each day. The latest figures indicate that some 15,000 hectares of forest have been affected; that between about 30,000 and 60,000 rosewood trees have been felled; and that five times as many other trees may have been cut down to transport the rosewood by raft.

The majority of the trade is for expensive rosewood furniture in China, with smaller amounts sent to Europe and the United States for use in high-end musical instruments. The US House of Representatives passed a motion in early November calling for importing countries to intensify monitoring and inspection processes, for action within Madagascar to stop the illegal activities and for the return of democratic rule to the island. The US company Gibson Guitars was investigated in November for allegedly used the rosewood, under the first use of an amendment to the Lacey Act which prohibits trade in illegally-sourced wood products.

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## Water

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The Malagasy government terminated in November an agreement to export water to Saudi Arabia from the Faraony river. The deal would have taken 1% of the river's flow at its mouth, about 260,000 cubic meters per day, which would have generated daily revenues of \$60,000; it had faced considerable opposition. Madagascar has relatively abundant water resources. The World Resources Institute calculates its surface run-off at 19,925 cubic kilometers per capita, compared to an average for sub-Saharan Africa of 5,705 km<sup>3</sup>/capita and just 111 km<sup>3</sup>/capita in Saudi Arabia.

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## Duck

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A team from the Slimbridge Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and The Peregrine Fund have achieved considerable success with their conservation breeding project for the Madagascar pochard, numbers of which were believed to be limited to twenty or thirty in a single site. Two broods totalling 17 ducklings were found and raised in captivity, while a further clutch of seven eggs were later discovered and incubated. The ducks were raised in a hotel bathroom.

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## Falcon

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Researchers from the Universities of Valencia and Alicante used satellite tracking to follow the migration of the Eleanora's falcon (*Falco eleonora*) for the first time. In total, the bird flies more than 9,500 kilometres across the African continent from the Balearic and Columbretes Islands off Spain before reaching Madagascar. The tracking data show that Eleonora's falcons can migrate by both day and night (a new discovery among birds of prey of their genus) and cross supposed ecological barriers such as the Sahara Desert; on their return from Madagascar in the European spring they fly for more than 1,500km non-stop over the Indian Ocean to Somalia. The falcon is named after a 14<sup>th</sup> century Sardinian princess who drafted early laws to protect birds of prey.

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## Silk

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A tapestry woven with the silk of more than 1 million golden orb spiders went on display at the American Museum of Natural History in New York in October. It took eighty people some four years to make the tapestry, created by Nicholas Godley and Simon Peers after studying the work of the French missionary Jacob Paul Comboe in Madagascar in the 1880s. Sourcing the silk was tricky as the females are cannibalistic, making breeding difficult, so a team of seventy people collected some 3,000 a day from telephone lines in Antananarivo.

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## Lemurs

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The greater bamboo lemur (*prolemur simus*), has been found at eleven sites in an area of forest in the east of Madagascar; the species was thought to be extinct until it was rediscovered in the 1980s, and numbers are now estimated at about 300.

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## Journal

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The latest issue of the open-access journal Madagascar Conservation & Development (MCD) was released on 4th December. The typically wide range of subjects includes erosion, parasite infection in the Gray mouse lemur, fecundity in frogs and the community-based running of biosphere reserves. There is an article on 'The Madagascar rosewood massacre' by Derek Schuurman and Porter Lowry, and 'A letter on politics' by Alison Jolly. The Journal is at [www.mwc-info.net/en/services/journal.htm](http://www.mwc-info.net/en/services/journal.htm).

MCD is also looking for articles, essays, reviews or short notes for Volume 5 | Issue 2 to be published in June 2010. The submission deadline is end December 2009.

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## Photos

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The conservation-themed website Mongabay ([www.mongabay.com](http://www.mongabay.com)) added an extensive gallery of photos of Madagascar in December, for which it has sought some help in identifying species to improve the captioning of the pictures.

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## Tsingy

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The November issue of *National Geographic* had an article entitled 'Living on a Razor's Edge' about Madagascar's Tsingy de Bemahara national park, its geography, wildlife and some of the pressures arising from the political crisis; the article is at <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2009/11/stone-forest/shear-text>. There are some fine photos in the issue, too.



## Events

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### Shakespeare

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Graziella Masindrazana, a PhD student at Antananarivo University, is looking for funding for a new project involving the translation into Malagasy of Shakespearean plays and the production of the translated plays. Her proposal can be found on the Society's website and those who are interested in helping should contact Graziella on [masindrazana\\_graziella@yahoo.fr](mailto:masindrazana_graziella@yahoo.fr) or Mary Ann Jolley via [jolleyma@hotmail.com](mailto:jolleyma@hotmail.com).

### Friends

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The next meeting of the Friends of Madagascar will be held on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2010 in the village of Leek Wootton in Warwickshire. One of the speakers will be the researcher Barry Ferguson, who will talk about various activities he has undertaken over the last eleven years while working with Tandroy communities in the Mandrare Valley. There will be more information in our March newsletter and on the Society website nearer the time.