

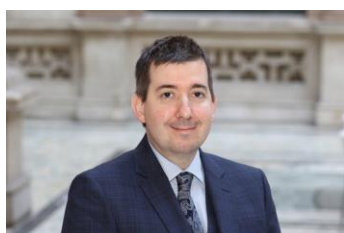
## Society and diplomatic activities

The latest Society meeting was on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> June, which was an opportunity to celebrate Independence Day and to hear from Dr Brian Klaas on the Mirage of Democracy in Madagascar. There will be a daytime event on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> October from 11am to 5pm.

Details of the events will be on our website at [www.anglo-malagasysociety.co.uk](http://www.anglo-malagasysociety.co.uk) and on Facebook. The website has a summary of some of the previous talks for those unable to attend, together with much other useful information. This includes directions to the venue for our meetings, which is the Upper Vestry Hall of St George's Church, Bloomsbury, London WC1A 2HR, which is two minutes' walk from the British Museum.

The next newsletter will be published in September 2019. 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).

We have had only a limited response so far (in fact no-one) to our request for help in finding the missing issues of this newsletter, which are numbers 1, 3, 4, 7-11, 13-21, 58-60, 65 and 66 for the years between 1977 and 2009, so please excuse a further mention. As before if you can help please contact Daniel Austin, whose email address is [da@danielaustin.co.uk](mailto:da@danielaustin.co.uk), and with some more planning we shall provide an insight into the fascinating earlier editions with the next newsletter.



On 3<sup>rd</sup> June the UK's ambassador to Madagascar, Phil Boyle, held an inaugural Queen's Birthday Party to celebrate the monarch's 93<sup>rd</sup> year. In his speech he focussed on initiatives related to the environment; you can read the full text at <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/queens-birthday-celebration-2019-in-madagascar-phil-boyles-speech>.

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## Politics in Madagascar

Madagascar has held its legislative elections in which the President, Andry Rajoelina, was able to consolidate his position.

Rajoelina had proposed a reduction in the number of deputies and when obliged to keep it at 151 proposed instead to address the cost of the National Assembly by reviewing the allowances paid to members. He had also proposed an amendment to the constitution to follow up on his electoral promise to abolish the Senate and to introduce new governors to the regions; the Haute Cour Constitutionnelle (HCC) ruled against Rajoelina.

The HCC and CENI, the electoral commission, warned candidates against campaigning before the official start date of 6<sup>th</sup> May; they also criticised the use of government resources. Only 126 of the 810 candidates were women. 515 stood as independents, which reflected the fragmented nature of politics and the search for self-benefit, according to the civil rights body SeFaFi.

In a report broadcast on 8<sup>th</sup> April the BBC claimed that six of the candidates in the presidential elections in 2018 had received financial support from Russia, including Pastor Mailhol, who said that the payments had included covering the deposit required to stand. The former prime minister, Jean Omer Beriziky, said he had been offered some \$2m with suggestions of more to come. The BBC's report is at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-africa-47830161/did-russia-meddle-in-magadascar-s-election>. A week later the Commission de Contrôle du Financement de la Vie Politique (CCFVP) said it would investigate the finances of those involved.

The official works to restore the Rova at Manjakamiadana started on 11<sup>th</sup> April. The building was burnt down in November 1995 and is due to be re-built by the date of the sixtieth anniversary of the country's independence on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2020. Andry Rajoelina noted that the building was a symbol of national sovereignty, national unity and patriotism; his family was reported to be covering part of the cost, with the rest from the state or future appeals. There was as often a political aspect, as restoration works had run from 2006-09 until Rajoelina's coup d'état.

On 12<sup>th</sup> April twelve entities who together comprised a sort of committee for good conduct set out a charter called *Toky Nomena* or Given Word to encourage best practice similar to that in the presidential election. By mid-May some two-thirds of candidates had signed. On 16<sup>th</sup> April a majority of the Senate called for a special sitting amid expected proposals to dismiss its president, Rivo Rakotovoao.

The former president and unsuccessful candidate Marc Ravalomanana decried on 19<sup>th</sup> April the first hundred days of the new regime; he called on the president to negotiate better with foreign donors and to prioritise works that serve the common interest. Rajoelina held a meeting at the Mahamasina stadium to celebrate the event. He said he still intended to pursue the idea of a referendum and noted the measures he had taken to improve security as well as the increase in the minimum wage to 200,000 ariary (c. £40).

There was a call on 19<sup>th</sup> April to combine at short notice the legislative elections with a referendum on the constitution as per Rajoelina's campaign, as well as changing how the members of the National Assembly might contribute to choosing a prime minister. Ravalomanana called on the international community to intervene to reintroduce dialogue. On 25<sup>th</sup> April the HCC opined that not all the legal prerequisites were in place for the referendum and Rajoelina said he would postpone the plans for new governors, leaving in place interim heads of the twenty-two regions.

On 24<sup>th</sup> April the EU provided its final report on the November 2018 presidential elections, in which it praised Ravalomanana's acceptance of the result as part of an overall positive outcome. It proposed *inter alia* a more formal opposition structure in the National Assembly and greater clarity on campaign finances, as well as making the status of the electoral commission CENI more formal too with responsibility for setting the calendar of elections and for helping to establish the use of identity cards for the electorate. The ambassador for the EU, Giovanni di Girolamo, noted that the proposed referendum was an internal affair.

On 7<sup>th</sup> May Rivo Rakotovaio, the head of the Senate, deplored the campaign against him and the upper house whose tenure runs until 2021 and which had been dominated by HVM. On 23<sup>rd</sup> May the presidency announced plans to reduce the number of senators to eighteen of whom twelve would be elected (two per province) and six appointed by the President, a move which the HCC said was constitutional. The HCC also reiterated the ban on opinion polls for the next elections and dealt with a petition from CENI to deal with illegal posters for candidates. Andry Rajoelina denied that he was infringing the constitution by appearing with candidates for the party (IRD) *Isika rehetra distrika miaraka amin'ny prezida Andry Rajoelina* supporting him and his *Initiative pour l'émergence de Madagascar* (IED). Traditional practices remained: in 48 districts where there were 5,000 observers on behalf of the electoral observer Safidy 32% of candidates were reported to have handed out sums of money. Safidy had received €520,000 from the EU to help its work.



The elections on 27<sup>th</sup> May passed peacefully if with a low level of turnout and with several claims of fraud. Once they were over Andry Rajoelina visited France. On 29<sup>th</sup> May in his meeting with President Macron he discussed the issue of the Iles Eparses or Scattered Islands, agreeing to set up a joint commission to resolve the issue by June 2020 being the sixtieth anniversary of the independence

There were at least twenty candidates in mid-May for the role of Director-General of the anti-corruption body Bianco, to replace Jean-Louis Andriamifidy. In May there were two notable allegations of corruption, the first involving the theft of 618m ariary (some £125m) from the vaccination programme at the Ministry of Health, in which the senator Bertin Andriamihaingo was implicated, and the second a sum of 1,000m ariary at the embassy to the UN in New York. Bianco had also started legal proceedings against 79 MPs who were accused of taking bribes of up to 50m ariary in return for voting for the controversial bill under the regime of the former president Hery Rajaonarimampianina.

A conference of Catholic bishops in May gave a sombre assessment of the position in the country ahead of the visit of Pope Francis in September. It noted *inter alia* that life was expensive, corruption the norm and insecurity still an issue.

The electoral mission of the Southern African Development Commission (SADC) reported on 29<sup>th</sup> May that in a generally peaceful environment CENI had fulfilled its mandate while there had been an increase in the electorate to over 10m. It noted, however, a low level of voter education, particularly given that the country had reintroduced in February a mixed electoral model (incorporating the first-past-the-post system and proportional representation) as well as the low turnout.

As part of the continuing dispute Rivo Rakotovoao complained that the Senate had not been consulted over the revised budget or Loi des Finances in June, which was passed by decree in the absence of the National Assembly. The sum allocated to the Senate was reduced from 18m ariary to 5m.

CENI announced on 14<sup>th</sup> June the final results of the legislative elections, which gave Rajoelina's IRD coalition 84 of the seats while Ravalomanana's party took only 16; the HVM party of former president Rajaonarimampianina had fielded no candidates and the balance of 51 went to independents. The level of turnout was low at 31%. The HCC received nearly 700 immediate formal objections to the results.

On 19<sup>th</sup> June, on her departure as French ambassador, Véronique Vouland gave a positive view on the opportunities in the country and relations with France.

The celebration of Madagascar's Independence Day was severely marred by the death of sixteen people, mostly young, killed in a crush at the Mahamasina stadium ahead of the concert that followed the military parade; a further hundred were injured.

The president of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, was a guest of honour at the official event and Andry Rajoelina spoke of that country being a model to follow; he planned a reciprocal visit.

The Vatican has confirmed the agenda for the visit by Pope Francis to Madagascar, Mauritius and Mozambique from 4<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> September. He will celebrate a mass on 8<sup>th</sup> September at Androhibe.

Christian Ntsay, the prime minister, has indicated that municipal elections should take place in 2019, as expected by CENI and probably in October after the mandate expires in September; the budget for elections has largely been spent on those in May.



# Economic and social matters

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## Finance and aid

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The Malagasy economy has been expanding at over 5% per annum, ahead of the rate of growth in the population at an estimated 2.7%, although an estimated three-quarters of the population still live on \$1.90 or less per day.

In April the World Bank announced financing of \$392m for Madagascar. This comprised \$150m for improved access to electricity, \$90m as aid for bereft families, \$52m for improving property rights and \$100m as budgetary aid, the last the first time it had provided such an amount to the country. David Malpass, the Bank's president, said he had held discussions with Andry Rajoelina on the potential release of a further \$450m of aid. China announced finance of \$155m for the rehabilitation of the Route Nationale between Ambilobe and Vohémar.

In May the presidency announced details of a new town project Tanamasoandro intended to account for a tenth of the growth in the capital over ten years in a site of 1,000 hectares in Atsimondrano. In a revised budget later in the month the Ministry of Finance proposed the construction of four new universities and thirteen hospitals as well as funds for railway lines from the capital and the rehabilitation of various roads (RN 44, 5, 5a, 9 and 13). The budget forecast a drop of 20% in administration costs and required €572 m of external finance to complete the projects.

On 24<sup>th</sup> May Phil Boyle, the ambassador to Madagascar, announced plans for the UK to strengthen its bilateral relationship to include the appointment of new positions in development and the environment, as part of a policy to do more in francophone Africa.

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## Health

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In April USAID announced a \$90-m project with the acronym Access (Accessible Continuum of care and essential services sustained) to help 16 million people in 13 regions. In May the government announced plans to invest €12m to provide water in 16 districts of Madagascar (Mitsinjo, Ambalavao, Ambanja, Ambato-Boeny, Ambatolampy, Ambilobe, Antalaha, Belo sur Tsiribihina, Mahabo, Mahanoro, Mananjary, Marovoay, Moramanga, Nosy Be, Sainte-Marie and Vohémar) which should help to improve the rate of access to drinking water from the current 13.5%.

In May the Ministry of Health provided revised numbers for the outbreak of measles which was reported to have seen 142,995 cases between 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2018 and 4<sup>th</sup> May 2019 of whom 909 had died in hospitals; 340 other reported deaths had not been certified. The World Health Organisation and African Development Bank provided \$500,000 of funds in June.

At an event in late May to event when the United Nations published its report *State of World Population 2019* and on the 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) President Rajoelina announced that condoms would no longer be taxed.

In June the UN reported that a campaign through the WSSCC (Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council) with the support of the Global Sanitation Fund had as of December 2018 seen over 17,000 villages declared free from open defecation free while some 3.74m people used improved latrines; it is at <https://europeansting.com/2019/06/28/madagascar-villagers-learn-dangers-of-outdoor-defecation/>.

An article in the *Telegraph* reported how a project in the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) school programme was using a powder from crickets in koba snacks to help to alleviate the child malnutrition prevalent in Madagascar: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/0/cricket-powder-unusual-ingredient-added-school-dinners-madagascar/>.

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## Indices

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Madagascar has been ranked 161<sup>st</sup> out of 180 countries in the latest UNDP survey on human development, compared to 158<sup>th</sup> out of 188 countries in 2018.

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## Agriculture

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Madagascar is estimated to need \$12.4m to undertake a general census of its agricultural position, according to the UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO). The survey is due to run from July 2019 to December 2022; the previous one was back in 2004/05.

One of the accords President Rajoelina signed in Paris in May was with the ATOS group to provide a degree of digitalisation in agriculture, particularly in rice production.

In June the UN said that immediate humanitarian assistance was needed to save the lives of 366,000 people that are in emergency levels of food insecurity, one step away from famine, in the south of Madagascar.

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## Insecurity

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The incidents of bandit attacks, summary justice and kidnappings continued through the second quarter of the year. The prime minister held a meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> April with ambassadors of various countries as well as the UN and African Union to address the issue of insecurity. The government made various deployments of up to 2,000 troops into four zones designated as priorities for rural security. The Minister of Defence, General Richard Rakotonirina, claimed in May that there had been considerable success in his first three months of tenure. He announced in June plans to reform the army to help it in its efforts while that month the military took possession of new aircraft, helicopters and all-terrain vehicles. An incident in June in which three bodies were found in a river at Ampitatafika led to the arrest of 27 military personnel.

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## Prisons

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In May the government agreed a new diet for inmates, to improve on the former one based on manioc that had received criticism from the likes of Amnesty International. In May also the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) provided €5m to help to improve administration of justice in the country.

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## Energy

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During President Rajoelina's visit to France the Minister of Energy, Water and Hydrocarbons, Vonjy Andriamanga, signed an agreement with the New Onive Hydroelectric Energy Consortium (NEHO) on the Sahofika hydroelectric project. The consortium comprises the French company Eiffage, the Moroccan company Themis and Eranove, a Franco-African company. The project has an estimated cost of €797m with support from the African Development Bank (AfDB) and work is due to start in December on a 60-metre dam on the Onive River. The scheme has a proposed capacity of 200 MW of electricity per day, equivalent to half the current installed base. Another hydroelectric project at Volobe near Toamasina which will be commissioned in 2022 will supply 120 MW of electricity.



In June the Ministry of Energy, Water and Hydrocarbons announced that it would build two solar power plants in the Analamanga region and one in the Vakinankaratra region in 2019, each with a capacity of 5MW; this compares to an installed base of 33MW at the end of 2018. A German agency announced that Madagascar would be the sixth African country to receive financial aid to develop renewable energy, and the government announced plans to distribute 110,000 portable solar power kits.

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## Education

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A report by UNICEF in April on education globally indicated that in Madagascar there were 1.3 million children of pre-school age who were not benefitting from any instruction.

## Tourism

In April Emirates was reported to have applied for a licence for a route between Dubai and Antananarivo, which might prove a challenge to Air Madagascar whose head, Eric Koller, said in June that the airline still lacked \$25m of the \$40m it needed to restore its viability. Qatar Airways was reported to be interested in a route as well. In June Air Madagascar re-started its flights to Johannesburg which had been suspended in 2015.

In June President Rajoelina announced that he would complete within five years his predecessor's plans to restore the Pangalanes Canal, to which the Moroccan government had pledged support in 2016 and which is expected to boost tourism on the east coast.

National Geographic included lemurs in Madagascar, in particular the indri in Andasibe, in its list of the best ten ways to watch wildlife:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/lists/unforgettable-animal-watching-adventures/>.

## Minerals and mining

The opposition to the Australian firm Base Resources' project for mineral sands project at Toliara came to a head in April when nearby villagers ransacked the site. Thirty people from local communities were arrested in May; nine faced prosecution and in June were given suspended prison sentences.

In May Diamond Fields Resources signed a cooperation agreement the Denham Mining Fund to develop the Beravina zircon project in the west of Madagascar, which covers 625ha some 220km east of the port of Maintirano. The company acquired Beravina from Pala Investments and Austral Resources in 2016.

In June a unit of China Nonferrous Metal Mining Group (CNMC) said it had signed a non-binding memorandum with Singapore-listed ISR Capital that could see the Chinese firm work as a contractor on the Tantalus rare earths project in Madagascar, with rights to purchase products.

Tirupati Graphite, a flake-graphite company with primary mining and processing projects in Madagascar, announced in June a private placement of up to £3m in Convertible Loan Notes to fund its development which includes downstream processing facilities in India. The Australian company Bass Metals announced plans to extend its own graphite operations at Graphmada. The increased demand for graphite is driven in part by its use in anodes for electric vehicle and energy storage batteries.

In April Rio Tinto acknowledged that the ilmenite mine of its subsidiary, QIT Minerals Madagascar (QMM) had encroached onto vulnerable land and threatened to pollute drinking water, as first reported by the Andrew Lees Trust in September 2018.

## Wildlife and conservation

### Forests and protected areas

In April Singapore's highest court acquitted Wong Wee Keong and his Singapore-based company, Kong Hoo, over the shipment of 30,000 Malagasy rosewood logs valued at \$50m which was seized in 2014; the verdict reversed a previous judgment that entailed a prison sentence and \$1m fine.

In April Madagascar National Parks (MNP) warned of the impact of migration into the Ankarafantsika national park where it calculated in June that 67 hectares of forest had been lost to cultivation in 2019. The rainforest of Vohibola near Ambinaninony-Brickaville in the east of the country was also reported to face considerable pressure with up to a thousand people having entered illegally; members of local government and the Ministry of the Environment were implicated in the issue.

In May a number of experts called on President Andry Rajoelina to undertake five actions to preserve Madagascar's biodiversity for the benefit of people and nature: tackle corruption and



environmental crime; invest in protected areas and support local people in doing the same; ensure major infrastructure projects have limited impact on biodiversity; strengthen local rights of tenure; and address the crisis of wood used for fuel. The appeal from the experts, who included Julia Jones, Jonah Ratsimbazafy, Herizo Andrianandrasana, Frank Hawkins, Lucienne Wilmé and Patricia Wright, is at <https://www.nature.com/articles>.

A BBC article in May reported on the efforts of Malagasy teenagers to protect the forests near their community of Mangabe; it is at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-48113501>.

Mongabay reported in June of the four-year journey around Madagascar by foot and ox-cart that the writer Alexandre Poussin undertook with his family during which they visited a range of reserves and worked on a number of projects. There are more details at <https://news.mongabay.com/2019/06/a-four-year-ox-cart-ride-around-madagascar-qa-with-alexandre-poussin/>.

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## Species

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An appeal court in Madagascar upheld sentences of six years in prison for three people convicted of dealing in 10,000 rare tortoises.

Madagascar is one country to benefit from £4.6m that the UK government is putting towards countering illicit trade; there are details at <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2200314-uk-government-directs-4-6-million-to-tackling-illegal-wildlife-trade/>.

Two new species of stick insect have been identified, *Achrioptera maroloko* and *Achrioptera manga*, named for their brightness; there are details in *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*, [doi.org/c4nv](https://doi.org/10.3389/fecol.2019.00041).

## Charities and NGOs

An organisation set up and run by Robert MacGregor and Lili runs a number of teacher training courses across Madagascar with local trainers based in Toamasina and Antananarivo, where he teaches at the British school. There is more information at <http://www.mada-enseignants.org>.



Three brothers who will participate in the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge in December, hope to raise £25,000 for Feedback Madagascar and Children 1<sup>st</sup>. Lachlan, Ewan and Jamie MacLean will be rowing from the Canary Islands to the West Indies.

## Events



Theresa Haine and Hilary Bradt are walking the length of Hadrian's Wall from 26<sup>th</sup> June to 6<sup>th</sup> July to help to celebrate Theresa's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and to raise funds for Money for Madagascar. Theresa has a donation site at <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Theresa-Haine> or you can send a cheque to the charity to her at Llwyncelyn Isaf, Llangadog SA19 9BY.

The charity will hold an event on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> July at 7.30pm with drinks and nibbles where people can learn more about Madagascar and the work of MfM. The venue is the William Stout Room of the Lancaster Quaker Meeting House. If you wish to attend please contact them via [admin@moneyformadagascar.org](mailto:admin@moneyformadagascar.org).

There are more details in an article in the local press which also covers the congratulations from Sir David Attenborough and the award of the Malagasy equivalent of a knighthood (or damehood) to Irenée Rajaona-Horne:

<https://www.lancasterguardian.co.uk/education/lancaster-charity-praised-by-sir-david-attenborough-for-madagascar-rainforest-project-1-9830673>.

There will be a screening of *Songs for Madagascar* at the funky Depot cinema in Lewes on 17<sup>th</sup> July at 6pm.

The annual meeting of Friends of Madagascar will be held next year on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> April at Kenilworth in Warwickshire. If you would like any further information please contact them via [friendsofmadagascar@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:friendsofmadagascar@hotmail.co.uk).

Madagascar has a national pavilion for the first time at Venice's Biennale, the 58<sup>th</sup>, if with the work of just one artist.

In their debut in the Africa Cup of Nations football competition Madagascar have finished top of their qualifying group after a draw with Guinea then wins over Burundi and Nigeria.