



society • Politics • Economics • Tourism • Minerals • Wildlife • Events • Society • Politics • Economics • Tourism • Minerals • Wildlife • Event

Society and diplomatic activities

The last Society meeting for 2019 was the daytime event on 19th October with talks by entomologist Ashley Leftwich linking the flora and fauna of India with Madagascar, by the Chevening scholars Miora Rakotoarimanana on the promotion of an inclusive agricultural value chain and Lovatiana Rakotoniaina on her study of improving diabetes care on the island, and by Tiffany Coates on her three-month motorcycle tour of the country.

The proposed dates for the meetings in 2020 are the Wednesday evenings of 2nd April and 24th June then a daytime event on Saturday 31st October.

Details of this event and other are on our website at 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 December 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.

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Politics in Madagascar

Madagascar is preparing for its next round of elections, this time municipal and communal, which will be held on 27th November.

In early July the Haute Cour Constitutionnelle (HCC) confirmed the definitive results from the previous legislative elections which gave President Andry Rajoelina's IRD platform (*Isika*

rehetra distrika miaraka amin'ny prezida Andry Rajoelina) clear control with 84 seats out of 151 in the chamber. While holding a majority Rajoelina remained short of the three-quarters of deputies needed to dissolve the Senate, as he had proposed, or the 100 votes needed to prosecute former ministers. Jean Eric Rakotoarisoa, the head of the HCC, called on the new parliamentarians to act responsibly to regain the confidence of the population in the National Assembly. Two of them were in jail, however, and only 95 signed the *Toky Nomena* (or given word), a fourteen-point charter of good conduct that included a commitment to declare all personal wealth and not to be bribed to vote. On another measure there was a dip in the number of female deputies, the twenty-four of whom now constitute 15% of the Assembly compared to 19% in the preceding one.

The HCC rejected the vast majority of 640 objections to the results. A group led by an unsuccessful candidate in Toamasina, Henri Rakotomalala, challenged the judgment, criticised the apparent impunity of those involved and called for better supervision in the forthcoming municipal polls.

A special parliamentary session as of 16th July meant that the interim period in which the president had governed by decree came to an end. Christine Razanamahasoa, a member of IRD and a former justice minister under the Transition, was selected unanimously and unopposed as president of the National Assembly, supported by former president Marc Ravalomanana's TIM party on the basis that she would respect the opposition, which TIM was recognised as constituting. The new president was under immediate pressure to provide all of the deputies with a new 4x4 vehicle, although the potential cost of 25bn ariary (c£5.3m) would consume a substantial portion of the Assembly's budget of 38.5bn, already reduced by a third from 60bn. Separate to TIM twenty-one deputies formed a centrist group known as the Groupe des Parlementaires Républicains (GPR).

Ravalomanana looked to rally his TIM party at its annual congress in mid-July, ready for the municipal elections and after the disappointment of those for the legislative in which it took only 16 of the 151 seats. He still claimed a role as leader of the opposition, which he said need not be on the assumption of planning a coup d'état, and promised training for his deputies on how to fulfil their role. Later in the month he toured Europe where he said he had received an offer of help from SAP with technology to help good governance.

Mid-July also saw the Senate mark sixty years in existence, if with the threat to its future from the potential dissolution Rajoelina had proposed, or at least a reduction in its numbers due to a restricted budget.

The government of prime minister Christian Ntsay offered its resignation and he was asked to form a new one. A week later, on 25th July, he announced a cabinet of twenty-two ministers, with the only change from the outgoing one being in the minister for higher education; none of the candidates proposed by deputies was appointed.

Rajoelina chose Laza Andrianirina from a short-list of three on 27th July to be the new Director-General of the anti-corruption body Bianco, to replace Jean-Louis Andriamifidy; he had worked for the organisation previously in Mahajanga as well as serving in the Gendarmerie

and as a civil servant. Earlier in the month on a notable case of corruption, ten members of the Malagasy Red Cross, including its former president and secretary-general, were convicted of misappropriating €1m of a €3m grant from its Norwegian counterparty and sentenced to four years in jail.

In late July the government looked to postpone indefinitely the communal elections due in November with the rationale being the need to revise the electoral list; there were also political considerations in the wish to promote decentralisation and the scope to replace outgoing mayors with centrally-appointed special deputies when their mandate expired in September.

In mid-August a government council agreed with the electoral commission CENI's proposal that the municipal elections should be held on 27th November, with the campaign set to open on the 5th of the month. The timetable would not allow for a full revision of the electoral list and CENI explained that their priority was to enfranchise the 500,000 voters who had participated in the 2018 presidential elections but had been excluded from the legislative lists, as well as to remove the 115,000 who had been double-counted. At the end of August 21bn ariary in finance was made available which would go a long way towards covering the cost of the polls.

By 19th August a new opposition group was taking shape in the RMDM (*Rodoben'ny Mpanohitra ho an'ny Demokrasia eto Madagasikara*, or Group of Opposition Parties for Democracy), which chose Ravalomanana as its head although he faced a challenge from some other opposition factions and from a proposed new law which would stipulate that the leader of the opposition would need to be serving as a deputy. This was duly passed by the National Assembly on 22nd August, which would have thwarted Ravalomanana's plans, although two days later the Senate declined to approve the act. The body promoting reconciliation in the country, the Conseil du Fampihavanana Malagasy (CFM), called for politicians to show a more conciliatory approach.

On 23rd August Rajoelina increased the pressure on government ministers in a letter to them that set out the need he saw to produce rapid and concrete results. He explained his impatience to make up for five lost years and the need for a new way of thinking, working and governing.

The businesswoman Claudine Razaimamonjy, a special adviser to former president Hery Rajaonarimampianina, was sentenced on 21st August to seven years of hard labour and a fine of 100m ariary, in one of the first cases handled by the country's new court, the Pôle Anti-Corruption (PAC), which had finally come into force the day before. The court considered thirteen cases involving sixty people, some third of whom were sentenced.

A continuing conflict between the government and Lalao Ravalomanana, the mayor of the capital Antananarivo, centred on issues such as rubbish collection and a planned refurbishment of the Mahamasina stadium; two journalists were fined heavily for their reporting of an incident in which an army helicopter flew over the ground.

In late August Rajoelina attended an Indian Ocean conference in Japan where he signed a number of co-operation agreements and declared that self-sufficiency in food a priority.

There was a late rush in early September for the registration of candidates standing in the November elections. Three days before the list closed a third of communes still had no-one registered but as of the day itself there was a candidate for each of the 1,965 seats (if only one in 48 places) and 6,061 in total. Marc Ravalomanana was chosen by RDRM as the opposition candidate for mayor of Antananarivo, a position he had held once before, but he declined the proposal and his party chose instead Tahiry Randriamasinoro, a 36-year old secretary-general. His opponent from Rajoelina's IRD platform will be the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Naina Andriantsitohaina. The HVM party of Hery Rajaonarimampianina presented no candidates and so would forfeit its seats in the senate, which were selected by the elected mayors and by the president. Madagascar's international partners agreed to provide \$2m of funding for the polls which would normally be outside of their broader agreement on financing elections.

In September the HCC was busy adjudicating on a number of matters, saying that Rajoelina was able to establish a foundation in his name but that it need to be managed carefully, that the continued right of deputies to diplomatic passports was a matter for the executive, and that deputies needed to limit their number of assistants.



Pope Francis visited Madagascar in September as part of a wider tour that took in Mauritius and Mozambique. The planning for the visit was under the direction of a former minister, Yvette Sylla, and entailed a substantial security effort with 10,000 police and military deployed. Rajoelina hosted the pontiff at the presidential palace, where he committed to rebuilding the country and made a number of biblical allusions

as well as a promise to cultivate justice, equity, love and hope. The Pope celebrated a mass on 8th September at the Soamandrakizay stadium in Androhibe, which an estimated million people attended; in a homily he criticised a culture of privilege and corruption that favoured a privileged few and condemned a majority to poverty. He visited the Akamasoa project, also known as the City of Friendship, which since being set up by the Argentine priest Pédro Opeka (a former pupil of Francis) thirty years ago has helped to create housing with stone from the Mahatazana stone quarry, where he held a mass. During his tour to the region the Pope also spoke of threats to the environment.

On 19th September Rajoelina announced the appointment of certain new ambassadors, an arguably neglected area and a move made eight months after he assumed office, when he had promptly dismissed nine of them. He selected Olivier Hugues Rajohnson to serve in France, former prime ministers in the Transition in Camille Vital and Omer Beriziky for Mauritius and Belgium respectively and Yvette Sylla to take responsibility at UNESCO in Paris. There remain vacancies in the US, Japan, China and Russia as well as at the African Union, *inter alia*.

At end September the government appointed interim governors in eleven of the twenty-three regions and granted each a budget of 1bn ariary to carry out essential works over a three-month period. The move generated some controversy, both in the constitutional approach as well as in the appointment of the senator Lylison Rolland as one of the governors.

In a speech to the Assembly of the United Nations the Malagasy prime minister Christian Ntsay spoke of Madagascar's ambitions as an emerging economy, the fight against corruption and insecurity, and plans for inclusive economic growth. He also noted that Madagascar was having to cope with the challenges of climate change while itself accounting for only 1% of gas emissions; he called on other signatories to the Paris Accord to fulfil their responsibilities.

Economic and social matters

Finance and aid

In late July the IMF released \$44m under a long-term arrangement intended to support growth and to control inflation, taking the total provided to date to \$305m. In its latest update on Madagascar the Fund noted that in spite of some uncertainties related to recent elections the favourable economic conditions in 2018 had continued into the first months of 2019; spending had been strictly contained within budget limits and stable public institutions had allowed for continued implementation of an economic reform programme. The IMF called as before for an improved level of tax collection and for improvements in the utility Jirama.

In August at the 7th Tokyo International Conference on African Development Japan committed to help to fund a number of programmes, including the campaign to provide improved drinking water, the Blue Growth Initiative for fisheries and combatting piracy. The Japanese also offered 90bn ariary to help to rehabilitate the RN2 on the Antananarivo-Toamasina axis.

The preliminary results from the population census carried out in 2018 were made available in August. The number of inhabitants, a fifth of whom were now urban, increased to 25.7m from 12.2m when the survey was last carried out in 1993, an annual rate of increase of 3.01% which if maintained would see a further doubling of the population by 2040.

In mid-August the government dismissed Olivier Jaomiary, the head of Jirama, which had been struggling with continued outages and the fall-out from a scandal over misappropriated funds. A study by Castalia and Mazars for the World Bank in September noted that it would need to raise charges from an average €0.12 per kilowatt hour sold given its production costs were twice that; the report noted that some large customers paid less than half the average. The company has accumulated losses of some 1600 billion ariary (c. £340m) as at the end of June 2019; it lost 290bn ariary in 2018 in spite of a subsidy of 315bn ariary.

In September the prime minister noted that customs fraud might have cost the country 600bn ariary in the period 2014-18; the head of the customs authority from 2015 to 2019, Eric Rabenja, was jailed.

The tax take in the country remains low, with only 320,000 of the 26m inhabitants paying any. The World Bank in September discussed ways to improve registration and the tax authorities noted an ambition to improve tax collection from 11.3% to 15% of budget by 2023.

Health

The Guardian had an article in August on the work of WaterAid in Madagascar and the positive impact that good sanitation can have, as well as some of the challenges faced; the details are at <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/aug/10/burying-10-children-year-toilets-saving-lives-madagascar>.



A team including Dr. Simon Grandjean-Lapierre, a Canadian expert in infectious diseases, has been working on a pilot project using drones to improve the data for diagnoses and the delivery of medicine in remote parts of Madagascar; there are details at

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/madagascar-drones-tuberculosis-montreal-researcher-1.5243649>.

By mid-August there had already been a number of incidents of plague as the new season started, with fears that crowded *taxi-brousses* would again compound the problem.

Reports

Madagascar was judged to have made little progress in the annual US survey of human rights notably on a shortfall of freedom of expression and freedom of the press.

Agriculture

The June/July issue of the Economist's 1843 magazine had an article on the vanilla trade in Madagascar and some of its darker elements. There is a link to the article at <https://www.economist.com/news/2019/7/05/the-murky-world-of-madagascars-roaring-vanilla-trade> (for which you would need to sign up).

In July Reuters had an article with a short film on a similar topic including the increased level of theft in the Sava region and the increased tendency to harvest beans prematurely to avoid this, leading to a drop in the level of the vanillin compound in them by half to 1.2-1.3% over the last five years. There are more details at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-madagascar-vanilla/madagascar-vanilla-crop-quality-suffers-as-thieves-spark-violence-idUSKCN1UD12N>.

The ReliefWeb update on conditions in Madagascar in August noted that the main rice harvest which ended in June had seen greater production than a year earlier particularly in the southern highlands, a factor in both imported and local rice prices being similar to the previous year if above the five-year average in the south.

Insecurity

The incidents of bandit attacks, summary justice and kidnappings continued through the third quarter of the year. In August, when six people stealing vanilla were lynched at Vohémar, the president visited two towns in a high-risk zone, Tsaratanana and Maevatanana, where new special operations bases will be set up. At the end of the month a policeman was placed in custody for shooting a burglar he had arrested in Ampefiloha, a district of the capital. In September the second session of the new anti-corruption court sentenced six of the twelve

people accused of kidnapping the managing director of Conforama in November 2018 to between five and seven years' hard labour.

Prisons

A protest in July by inmates at the Ambalatavoahangy prison in Toamasina in which a prison officer was held hostage has prompted further debate on the issue of overcrowding in Madagascar's prisons, which has a jail population of 25,000 in a system designed for less than half that number. The prime minister, Christian Ntsay, committed to improve the position in a visit to the port soon afterwards. At end September the president attended the foundation of a new prison in Fianarantsoa with a capacity for 900 inmates and set to meet international standards; he also announced a proposed extensive pardon which would reduce numbers of inmates, over half of whom have yet to face a trial.

Energy

A final framework agreement in September confirmed that work on the new Sahofika hydroelectric project run by the Onive Hydroelectric Energy Consortium would start in early 2020.

The website Mongabay reviewed in July the growing protests against plans for a hydroelectric plant on the Sahanivotry river, which Tozzi Green intended to improve the energy supply to its power plant downstream and to sell more widely. The article is at <https://news.mongabay.com/2019/07/in-madagascar-villagers-oppose-plans-for-a-dam-that-would-inundate-their-land/>.

Food



Madagascar was reported to be capable of producing its own caviar from sturgeon in Lake Mantsoa east of Antananarivo where Rova Caviar employs 300 people. The first sale came in 2007 after eggs were imported from the Caspian in 2013, and the current retail price is €100 per 100g. The company has plans to produce five tonnes a year which compares to a total world market of 340 tonnes. There are more details at

<https://phys.org/news/2019-07-lake-high-madagascar-africa-caviar.html>.

Tourism

Joël Randriamandranto, the Minister of Tourism, announced at the opening of a first international forum on investment in tourism and transport an objective of reaching first a level of 500,000 tourists to Madagascar by 2023 (and eventually 800,000) which would double the sector's contribution to GDP to 15%. There are particular plans to open several five-star hotels, to privatise a number of national parks and to refurbish airports.

In mid-September Andry Rajoelina launched the start of drainage and other works on the Pangalanes canal, perhaps for the first time since it was created in 1908. The intention is to

boost tourism with new hotels and tourism facilities along the 654-kilometre length of the waterway. The president said that the state would cover the full cost as the financial support the Moroccan government had promised had not as yet materialised.

Minerals and mining

In August Madagascar's Ministry of Mines closed several gold mines including a Chinese one on the perimeter of the Kraoma chromite mine.

The Guardian carried an extensive article in September on the increased global demand for crystals, including those with an apparent healing purpose, and the implications for artisanal mining in Madagascar with its resources in rose quartz and amethyst; the full details are at <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/sep/17/healing-crystals-wellness-mining-madagascar>.

In August BlackEarth Minerals raised A\$1.7m for its wholly-owned Maniry and Ianapera graphite projects in Madagascar. In September NextSource materials provided an updated feasibility study on its Molo graphite project which envisaged higher overall costs at \$21m for a mine set to produce some 17,000 tonnes of flake annually in its first phase.

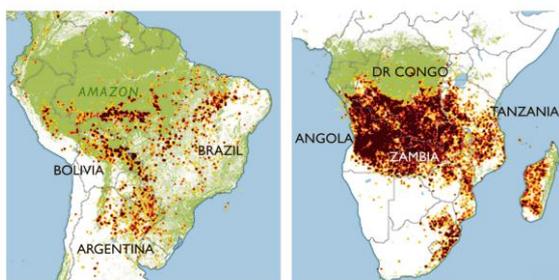
Wildlife and conservation

Forests and protected areas

Lala Ranaivomanana, the secretary-general of Madagascar's Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, told the CITES summit in Geneva in August that the country would defer previous plans to sell its stockpile of illegal rosewood until it had resolved issues surrounding inventory management and control. In its 56th annual convention the Association for Biology and Tropical Conservation warned that Madagascar had only five years to save its natural resources and called on the president to take a personal interest. Alexandre Georget, the Minister of the Environment, said in September that there had been success in reducing by a fifth the amount of forest lost to fire in the first eight months of the year compared to 2018, while acknowledging that the amount of 12,898 ha (and ten times as much in bush fires) was too high. The Ankarafantsika National Park suffered a resurgence in fire damage in the month of September.

Fires in past 24 hours

■ Fire intensity ■ Tree cover



An article in the *Times* in August highlighted the fact that while the fires in the Amazon forest had been dominating headlines, with good reason, there was a greater incidence of them across Africa according to Weather Source and Bloomberg. This was in part seasonal but also attributable to shorter rainy seasons and probably global warming.

A study published in July calculated the loss in surface area of mangroves in Madagascar at 58,000 hectares in twenty years, from 294,387 ha in 2000 to some 236,400 ha in 2018. The report (from WWF, the German Ministry for Co-operation and the IUCN) did note that the loss had been usefully lower in protected areas, while several million mangrove trees have been planted. Madagascar was one of six African countries identified in a report in July with the greatest potential for rainforest restoration and in the year to July 38,500 hectares out of a target of 40,000 ha were restored.

In September the brewer STAR, maker of the iconic Three Horses Beer and owned by the French Castel group, agreed to support an independent study led by the NGO Association Fanamby to investigate whether the maize in its supply chain was linked to deforestation in the Menabe Antimena protected area, where an estimated fifth of the dry deciduous forest was lost between 2006 and 2016.

Seas



The August edition of Geographical had a profile of Vatosoa Rakotondrazafy, a recent winner of a Whitley award, and her work for the MIHARI network in managing local marine areas in Madagascar. The full article is available at http://geographical.co.uk/people/i-m-a-geographer/item/3316-vatosoa-rakotondrazafy?awt_l=KTFrs&awt_m=3ha1cSYVPsPJO6Q.

In September the Malagasy Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) signed an agreement on a three-year project costing \$4.4m to combat illegal fishing and to promote the conservation of coral reefs and mangrove ecosystems.

The BBC had a picture story on fishing for sea cucumbers in Tampolove in south-west Madagascar, where villagers have benefitted from working with Blue Ventures. The article is at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/in-pictures-49192775>.

Charities and NGOs

TASC Madagascar, which has built four primary schools in recent years amongst other contributions to education in the country, has launched a new initiative to help university students from very poor families in the area around Fianarantsoa where they have worked Feedback Madagascar to support eleven students through their first and second years at university, studying a wide range of subjects from law to politics and medicine. They are now looking for support for the funding of the students' third and final year of studies, which costs £450 or £1.25 a day. Any donation would be welcome and please contact the Society if you would like more details or visit their website at <http://www.tascmadagascar.org>.



Theresa Haine successfully completed her walk along Hadrian's Wall from Wallsend to Bowness-on-Solway in her 80th year.

She raised over £6,500 for Money for Madagascar.

The parents of Alana Cutland, the Cambridge University student who died after falling from a light aircraft in Madagascar in July, have raised some £25,000 in funds to help the village school at Anjajay and to set up a bursary in her memory.

The HoverAid Trust is advertising for three trustees, a fund-raising officer and an accountant/book-keeper. If you are interested you can send an email to Pierre Deludet via p.deludet@hoveraid.co.uk for further details or you are able to apply at the website <https://reachvolunteering.org.uk/org/hoveraid-trust>. HoverAid is a relief and development charity, based in the UK, working on four different river systems in Madagascar. They use hovercraft and other vehicles to reach isolated communities that are off the road systems and simply too difficult, or too expensive, for others to reach, taking aid, clean water, medical care and preventative education. Their own website at <https://uk.hoveraid.org/> has more details including on how to donate.

Events



In the Africa Cup of Nations football competition Madagascar's team became only the second to reach the knockout stages on their debut. Having finished top of their qualifying group they then beat the Congo 4-2 on penalties to reach the quarter-finals, only to lose to Tunisia 3-0. The squad were awarded honours on their return as Knights of the Malagasy National Order and shared a financial bonus.