

# Newsletter

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## Society activities

The Society's next meeting in 2017 will be on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> June as part of the celebration of Independence Day in Madagascar when there will be a talk on the country's national dog, the Coton de Tulear.

Later in the year there will be a daytime gathering on 28<sup>th</sup> October with a range of talks on different topics. The details will be publicised on Facebook and on our website at [www.anglo-malagasy.com](http://www.anglo-malagasy.com), which also 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, two minutes' walk from the British Museum.

The next newsletter will be published in September 2017. 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).

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## Politics in Madagascar

There have been a number of developments in the country since March. As often the main issue related to the next presidential elections at the end of 2018 and the potential participation of the former president Marc Ravalomanana and his rival Andry Rajoelina. Both are expected to stand as will the former prime minister Jean Omer Beriziky, who has the backing of another former president in Albert Zafy and who announced his candidature in mid-March. There was some debate on the merits of holding the elections earlier than the proposed date between 25<sup>th</sup> November and 25<sup>th</sup> December given the rainy season. On 25<sup>th</sup> March representatives of the UN and the EU met members of the Malagasy committee working on the proposed act of national reconciliation to understand the basis for the proposed legislation and how that might affect the main protagonists.

The mayors of Mahajanga, Toamasina and Port Bergé were each suspended in late March by the municipal councils; they were accused of mismanagement but given that they were all from the MAPAR party who adhere to Andry Rajoelina there were suspicions of a political position. The party's political bureau linked the suspensions to the trial of Senator René Lylison inter alia while Marc Ravalomanana warned against any similar moves against his wife Lalao, the mayor of Antananarivo. Ravalomanana also profited from a trip to Europe to press for the re-opening of his radio and television broadcast station MBS.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> April Claudine Razaimamonjy, a businesswoman and special adviser to President Hery Rajaonarimampianina, was arrested in public at a basketball tournament and faced a number of charges relating to the misappropriation of funds. The head of the anti-corruption body BIANCO, Jean-Louis Andriamifidy, said that a number of other people were under investigation in relation to issues in the running of public markets; he had faced calls for his resignation from Razaimamonjy's brother-in-law, the senator Riana Andriamandravy. The Minister of Justice, Charles Andriamisa, took to the radio to say that the detention had been arbitrary and against usual convention while Hanitra Razafimanantsoa, vice-president of the National Assembly and a lawyer, said that the minister had not spoken for the magistrates' union SMM. After four days in detention Razaimamonjy was taken before a closed hearing of the anti-corruption court where she was committed for trial. The independence of BIANCO drew considerable support and there were indications that the affair might implicate others in power up to the prime minister Olivier Solonandrasana, if the authorities did not stop it. Razaimamonjy received the support of the president's party HVM through its leader Rivo Rakotovo, as well as some medical attention which then led to an evacuation to a hospital in Mauritius even though she was under two previous injunctions against leaving the country. The US, French and other ambassadors showed their support for BIANCO in a series of visits; the Mauritian government said it was a private affair; and the Malagasy justice authorities seized the five-star A&C hotel at Ivato belonging to Razaimamonjy. On 23<sup>rd</sup> April she returned from Mauritius and was admitted to the HJRA public hospital, amidst a more fevered debate, which was said to have provoked a boycott of celebrations of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations between Madagascar and the United States.

In early April the rights organization SeFaFi or L'Observatoire de la Vie Publique called for legislative elections to be held jointly with or before the presidential ones planned for 2018 to enable the National Assembly to be in place to pass a budget. SeFaFi also proposed that there should be an electoral cycle with two fixed dates outside of the rainy season, one for a combined presidential, legislative and provincial polls and the other for the *fokontany* or communes, municipal and regional polls. However, in mid-April the electoral commission CENI deferred *sine die* the next provincial and regional elections saying that it would need to concentrate instead on the presidential poll in 2018, for which its priority was to agree a revised electoral list by April that year; this ran counter to the agreement reached with the EU in 2016. The electoral list for 2017 included 9.223m voters which was an increase of 6.3% on the previous year with CENI suggesting a target of 10m voters for 2018 although that would still leave about a fifth of those of voting age disenfranchised.

In a small government re-shuffle later in April there was a surprise appointment in Harry Laurent Rahajason, known as Rolly Mercia, as Minister of Communication a post he had held

in the Transition regime of Rajoelina. He is the head of Mamy Ravatomanga's media group Sodat and was seen as influential in Rajaonarimampianina's move to the presidency in 2013, as well as someone who might look to control the press. Other changes included the removal of the Secretary of State for the Gendarmerie, General Didier Paza, whose replacement Girard Randriamahavalisoa pledged to root out corruption, and from the Ministry of Water of Roland Ravatomanga who was the last representative of Ravalomanana's TIM party. He was replaced by Lantoniaina Rasoloelison, another former minister from the Transition who had also been involved in running JIRAMA, the state utility company.

The opening of the new session of the National Assembly at the beginning of May was notable for a purported motion of censure from TIM. This party, with seventeen deputies, became a more prominent opposition party while others such as MMM faded; Ravalomanana said that the government with its dismissal of Ravatomanga had forced the change.

The Claudine Razaimamonjy affair continued in May with a visit to the hospital by judges and the head of the magistrates' union, who confirmed her presence at the hospital and that she was not gravely ill. President Rajaonarimampianina, while somewhat equivocal, acknowledged the concerns of the magistrates and accepted that a lack of good governance had led to the deplorable situation in the country. On 13<sup>th</sup> May Razaimamonjy's accounts were frozen and the head of BIANCO said that in addition to the two current investigations there were a further four items on corruption, misappropriation of funds and money-laundering. Senator Riana Andriamandavy, who was under investigation by the Gendarmerie, returned from a brief and unexplained visit to China. The tension between the government and the body of magistrates SMM remained high.

On 11<sup>th</sup> May the Council of Ministers nominated nine of the members of the committee who would appoint eleven or half the Conseil du Fampihavanana Malagasy (CFM) part of the drawn-out process of national reconciliation and the council able to arbitrate on amnesties; the President has the right to appoint the other eleven members. An episcopal conference in mid-May condemned the socio-economic and political state of the nation. In particular they criticised a number of ministries: Health for the limited access to hospitals for poor people; Defence and the Gendarmerie for collusion with bandits; Mining for depredation by overseas companies; and Justice for corruption and summary justice.

The president and his entourage on 23<sup>rd</sup> May started a high-profile campaign to distribute food to the country, to a mixed response in the capital. A new opposition grouping called *Dinika ho an'ny Fanavotam-pirenena* (DFP) or the Forces of Change called for a transition to a new Fifth Republic with a constitutional referendum. Rivo Rakotovao, the head of the presidential party HVM, said in response that while not everything had gone well it was not the time to start afresh and that the regime was open to dialogue.

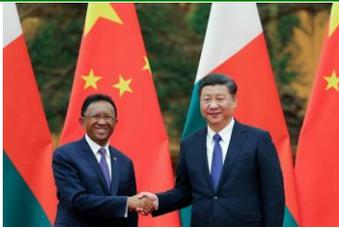


At an event on 23<sup>rd</sup> June at the ambassador's residence to commemorate the Queen's birthday Tim Smart noted that the foundations were in place for more stability, better governance and greater prosperity in the country. Béatrice Atallah, the foreign minister, spoke of a new stage in the long-standing relationship which should lead to the re-opening of the embassy this year.

In June the President made a two-day visit to Zambia and held talks with President Edgar Lungu. On 28<sup>th</sup> June he held a meeting with President Emmanuel Macron of France in Paris in part in his capacity as head of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie.

## Economic and social matters

### Finance, aid and business



An agreement signed by President Hery Rajaonarimampianina on 27<sup>th</sup> March on his official visit to China presaged a series of investments which aspired to link Madagascar into China's One Belt, One Road infrastructure initiative to re-create the dynamics of the earlier Silk Road. The projects will include the building of a new port on the bay of Narinda on Madagascar's north-western coast, the creation of a new Chinese-run Special Economic Zone, a new highway between Antananarivo and the port of Toamasina and a network of CCTV cameras to reduce crime in the capital. In June there was the first of three deliveries of over 4,000 tonnes of rice to help victims of Cyclone Enawo and the drought in the country.

A new head of JIRAMA set out a plan for the utility to reach break-even by 2020 which it might attain by raising tariffs gradually. The German Development bank KfW provided €4m to build five hydropower dams with a total capacity of 13.3MW in the Sava region; the plants' output should help to cut by 80% the amount spent on fuel to generate electricity in the region. The project will officially start in 2018 and the plants should start operating in 2019. Eleven new generators weighing fifty-seven tonnes each were airlifted into Antananarivo in May.

The under-representation of women in Madagascar's decision-making bodies was noted in a report in April that said the female ratio was 19 % in the National Assembly, 21% in the Senate and 17% in regional institutions with only three of the 119 district chiefs being women. The international norm is a ratio in the order of 30%.

In May Saudi Arabia added its support to that of other Arab organisations with a contribution of \$14m to fund improvements to the RN5 linking Soanierana-Ivongo and Vahibe. In late May the World Bank said it expected to provide \$46m later in the year to help to train teachers and to improve the education system.

Foreign Direct Investment into Madagascar increased by 10% in the first quarter of 2017 compared to 2016 with call centres and IT being the main focus. The country ranked in the middle of forty-six African countries in terms of investment attractions according to a report by EY. At an investors' conference in mid-June the President appealed for South African investment into the country especially in energy, infrastructure, tourism and mining.

### Health

On World Water Day in March the NGO WaterAid noted that Madagascar was one of five countries with the hardest access to drinking water and that diarrhoea was the second most

common cause of death in children under five years of age. Their report suggested that an annual budget of €180m not the current €8m would be needed to provide drinking water to the whole population.

A report in May indicated that there had been a notable reduction in the incidence of plague in the country even if it carried a high level of mortality at a quarter of the 326 suspected incidents in 2016. Another report suggested that a further \$2m of funds might help to eradicate open-air defecation in a further 25,000 villages over four years in addition to 16,000 in the previous seven years. This would have also helped in the eradication of polio alongside a vaccination campaign funded by UNICEF and the UNDP, which might enable the country to be declared free of polio in 2018.

The lack of care for mentally-ill patients was emphasised in a report in April that signified that such psychiatric illnesses would be the second most prevalent cause of illness while there was only one psychiatrist for each one million of the population.

Cyclone Enawo, which hit Madagascar hard in March, was estimated to have caused \$415m of damage, half in the agricultural sector and \$168m in the Sava district that bore the brunt of the landfall. The cyclone killed over eighty people. The EU released €6.2m of funds in early May to deal with the effects of the cyclone and the continued drought. James Patrick of HoverAid wrote a piece for *The Guardian* in May on how the village where he worked had responded at <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/may/16/after-cyclone-enawo-madagascar-village-forging-new-life-from-ruins>.

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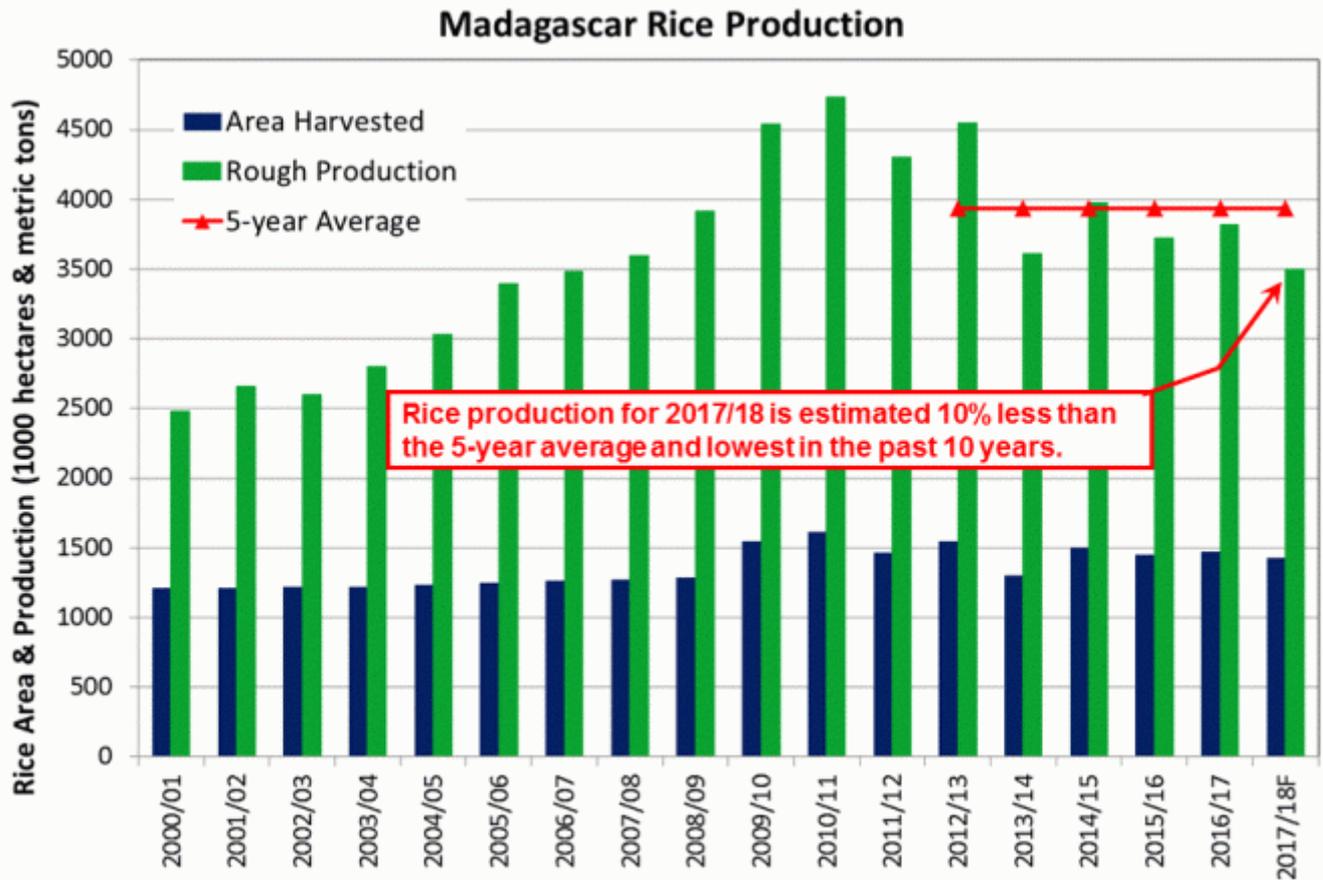
## Education

A study by the World Bank that was released in March showed serious shortcomings in the country's education system given that only 6% of the 2,500 primary school teachers who participated reached the minimum standard in mathematics and none did so in French, while the FRAM teachers, usually paid directly by parents, scored poorly. The study also showed a worrying degree of absenteeism as a third of teachers were not at school when the inspectors visited. The Ministry of Education said its 2018-22 plan would address the concerns. In April the ministry said it would close sixteen Quranic schools at the end of the academic year for not following the official curriculum.

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## Agriculture

A report from the US Department of Agriculture noted that the persistent drought in Madagascar would lead to a further drop in rice production in 2017/18 to 3.5m tonnes which would be down by 0.2m tonnes on the previous year and 0.41m tonnes or 11% on the five-year average. The impact of Cyclone Enawo in March has also been a factor. Madagascar's Ministry of Agriculture is due to carry out a food security assessment in July with assistance from the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organisation and World Food Programme.



Source: USDA's PSD Online-  
<https://apps.fas.usda.gov/psdonline/app/index.html#/app/advQuery>

At the beginning of April the World Bank offered \$83.2m to Madagascar and other Indian Ocean countries to improve their fishing industries; in Madagascar natural harvests and fish farming produce over \$200m of income. The World Bank also offered \$30m towards the costs of a national census and funds for agriculture and the environment.

Following a visit by President Tan Dia Quang of Vietnam to Madagascar in November 2016 a visit by Rivo Rakotovoao to Hanoi in May laid the basis for further co-operation in agriculture, breeding and rural development.

### Insecurity

The problematic insecurity in the country has persisted including clashes between armed forces and bandits or *dahalo* and raids on vanilla plantations. Ten armed men attacked a convent in Antsirabe in April, raped five nuns and stole sums of money; thirty suspects were detained. Later in the month a priest was killed in an attack on a community of monks in Antsohihy that was linked to the attempted robbery of a church bell; members of the armed forces were implicated and the prime minister spoke of the impression of a deliberate attempt to create a conflict between the church and state. There was also continued tension over the incident at Antsakabary earlier in the year when popular justice against two policemen accused of racketeering led to what appeared to be a punitive expedition by police in which five villages were burnt.

As of mid-April there had been a reported twenty-eight cases of summary justice and twenty-two deaths including the two policemen. The French government raised concerns over the safety of its citizens and Malagasy of Indian origin protested against the series of kidnappings that had targeted them and which continued into May, although their privileged position elicited limited sympathy.

There is a short photo essay with some striking images on *The Zebu War* on a website at <https://explorepartsunknown.com/madagascar/zebu-theft/>.

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## Surveys

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In March the *World Happiness Report* published as part of a UN programme placed Madagascar 144<sup>th</sup> out of 155 countries, ahead of Haiti but behind Afghanistan.

In its annual survey on the freedom of the press the organisation Reporters Sans Frontières gave Madagascar a score that ranked it 57<sup>th</sup> of 180 countries, one place lower than in 2016.

In mid-May the US State Department's annual report on human rights around the world emphasised the level of impunity in Madagascar as well as the continued high level of summary justice and arbitrary killings.

## Tourism



There has been considerable publicity including an article in *CN Traveller* about the new Miavana luxury resort on Nosy Ankoala off the north-east coast, which has fourteen private villas. In May the Minister of Tourism Roland Ratsiraka was in France to promote golf tourism to the country.

There has been a delay to the plan for Air Austral of Mauritius to become the strategic partner for Air Madagascar; it is due to inject some \$40m of funds for a minority stake of 49% but the deal is dependent on the clearing of \$88m of debts in the airline.

To commemorate the country's Independence Day *The Telegraph* ran an article on '16 amazing things you probably didn't know about Madagascar'. While our members probably did it is at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/africa/madagascar/articles/facts-about-madagascar>. The *Express* managed to find ten almost completely different facts here: <http://www.express.co.uk/life-style/top10facts/821346/Madagascar-country-facts-Independence-Day-wildlife-animals>.

## Minerals

In June, at an investment conference in South Africa, President Rajaonarimampianina said that there would be no change in the near future to the existing mining code established in 1999 and that any new code would not apply retrospectively to existing projects. The proposed new code was expected to increase royalty rates and to provide a greater share of revenue to the state.

In the first quarter of 2017 the amount of gold exported officially was 835kg compared to 580kg in the whole of 2016, reflecting a move to capture more of the artisanal mining that was reported to employ up to half a million people. Between 1995 and 2008 official exports were recorded at between 39kg and 50kg, a little light of the figure of three tonnes in earlier years.

The Canadian company DNI Metals received a commercial mining permit from the Ministry of Mines in mid-March for its graphite mine at Vohitsara near Toamasina. In June the Australian firm Bass Metals signed an agreement with Possehl Erzkontor to sell 3,000 tonnes of graphite concentrate from its Graphmada project which would equate to half the production in its first stage.

In May Sherritt International reached an agreement with Sumitomo and Korea Resources to reduce its stake in the Ambatovy project from 40% to 12% although it will continue to operate the facility to 2024; this was agreed in exchange for the elimination of some \$1bn of loans it was due to repay. Sherritt's chief executive noted that half of the world's nickel operations were operating at a loss. At the end of May Toliara Sands was reported to have re-activated the process for mining ilmenite which had been suspended given the drop in global mineral prices.

In June a local association including tourist operators called in a press conference for an end to the proposed mining of rare earths by Tantalus AG in the north-west of Madagascar near Nosy Be given the potential impact on the environment. Efforts by a Malagasy farmer to attend the Rio Tinto AGM in London in April were thwarted by his inability to obtain a visa to travel; the Biodiversity Committee at Rio's Malagasy operation QMM resigned in March.

## Wildlife and conservation

### Forests and protected areas

A report by WWF in May maintained that China was the destination for 95% of the illegal rosewood exports from Madagascar. The volume sent to China was calculated at 50,000 tonnes in 2013-16 with an indicative value of \$1.25bn.

At the end of May Madagascar declared five new areas as Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention which took the total to twenty covering more than two million hectares. The new areas are the lakes of Ambondrobe, the lower Onilahy river, the Barren archipelago, the mangroves of Tsiribihina and Lake Sofia.

### Species

On the Red List for endangered species of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Madagascar had the fifth highest number at 96 and the second highest number of mammals, in an assessment in April. Mijoro Rakotoarinivo, a lecturer at the Université d'Antananarivo, wrote a piece on the effect the loss of palm species would have on ecosystems which can be seen here: <https://theconversation.com/the-loss-of-madagascars-unique-palm-trees-will-devastate-ecosystems-78622>.

In May 230 tortoises were seized at Ivato airport en route to Nairobi and in June 320 were found at Kuala Lumpur; it might be surprising that there would be any left in Madagascar.

An article by Dr Maéva Tchr and others in BioMed Central in June looked at a new sub-group of the honey bee *Apis mellifera* in Madagascar and neighbouring islands of the south-west Indian Ocean; the blog is at <https://blogs.biomedcentral.com/bmcseriesblog/2017/06/26/the-south-west-indian-ocean-islands-shelters-a-unique-and-novel-african-sub-lineage-honeybee/>.

## Events

### Concert

The singer and guitarist Hanitra will be playing in concert on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> July at 7.45pm at the Sands Films Studios in Rotherhithe. She will be promoting her new album *Lasa* which is in part a homage to the French-Canadian singer Lhasa de Sela. There are more details at the festival website [www.tunedin.london](http://www.tunedin.london).

### Films and books

A film about Marc Ravalomanana called *Return of the President*, directed by Lotte Mik-Meyer, was an entry on the Copenhagen documentary festival in late March. The former president and his family took the opportunity to attend the launch of the film, which is clearly partial but has some interesting elements. There is a trailer at [www.magichourfilms.dk/roap](http://www.magichourfilms.dk/roap).



A film produced in 2016 by Cesar Paes about the Madagascar All Stars (Dama Mahaleo, Erick Manana, Jaobjoby, Justin Vali, Olombelo Ricky and Régis Gizavo) and their campaign to protect the country's natural resources was released in French cinemas in June. It was made with the support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council at the University of Southampton with Ulrike Meinhof credited for the research.

A new novel by Jean-Christophe Rufin, *Le Tour du monde du roi Zibeline*, was recently published in France, and is available on amazon.co.uk. It is a romanticised account of the life of Count Auguste Maurice Beniowski who set foot in Madagascar in the 18th century and supposedly became king of the country.

### Runs



Hilary Bradt's two 10k runs at age 75 have raised an impressive £1,245 for Money for Madagascar; the website account is still open for any last-minute donations at [www.justgiving.com/Hilary-Bradt2](http://www.justgiving.com/Hilary-Bradt2).