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Agro in \$80m boost

Inputs scheme hatched to support 250,000 farmers

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FROM left: Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops president George Lungu, Mongu Diocese Bishop Evans Chinyemba and Kabwe Diocese Bishop Clement Mulonga after Mass at Cathedral of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ in Kabwe yesterday. PICTURE: CHAMBO NG'UNI

Inside



FOREIGN/8
DRC probes death of army spy chief

INSPIRATIONAL NOTE

"THE strength of a nation derives from the integrity of the home." - CONFUCIUS

3 siblings held over mum's death

PRISCILLA MWILA, MELODY MUPETA
Lusaka, Kitwe

THREE siblings in Nchelenge district have been arrested for allegedly killing their mother after suspecting her of bewitching her granddaughter who died some weeks ago.

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Diaspora prays against gassing

IN A show of patriotism, Zambians living in South Africa have held a special church service to pray for peace, unity and love in Zambia in the wake of instant justice mobs and gassing of people's homes.

The special inter-denominational prayer service was held at Bread of Life Church International in Midrand.

The congregants prayed for peace, love and unity in Zambia where over 45 people have died at the hands

of instant justice mobs on suspicion of being gassers.

During the prayers, Zambia's High Commissioner to South Africa Jackson Miti said it is important that Zambia is committed in God's hands.

This is contained in a statement by first secretary for press and public relations at the Zambian High Commission in South Africa, Naomi Nyawali.

CHOMBA MUSIKA
Lusaka

Man in seditious practices charge

A BUSINESSMAN of Ndola has been arrested for allegedly engaging in seditious practices.

Owen Kamasumba, 38, is alleged to have made a recording in which he said the Patriotic Front sponsored him and other people to undergo training so that they could rig next year's general elections.

Copperbelt Commissioner of Police Charity Katanga said in an interview yesterday that Kamasumba was arrested after his business partner, Joseph Chifunda, whom he

mentioned as being among the people allegedly sponsored for training, reported him to the police.

Mrs Katanga said Kamasumba circulated the recording on various social media platforms announcing that his business partners and himself were sponsored to undergo training in election rigging.

She said upon investigations, police arrested and charged him with seditious practices.

PRISCILLA CHIPULU
Ndola

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Nakacinda adds wisdom to Bill 10

PRISCILLA MWILA
Lusaka

NOMINATED Member of Parliament (MP) Raphael Nakacinda has appealed to patriotic MPs to support Constitution Amendment Bill number 10 because it is in the interest of Zambians.

Mr Nakacinda said during the Patriotic Front (PF) media interactive forum yesterday that MPs should debate Bill 10 above partisan interests.

He said lawmakers should be objective and put interests of Zambians first because their allegiance is to the people who voted for them.

Mr Nakacinda said Bill 10 is not a PF product because its contents were proposals from various stakeholders, including political parties.

Bill 10 will be tabled in Parliament for the second reading during the current sitting.

And Mr Nakacinda urged MMD president Nevers Mumba to come out in the open about his interest to work with the PF.

But Dr Mumba refused to comment, saying it is cheap politics.

Mr Nakacinda wondered why Dr Mumba wrote to President Edgar Lungu and Speaker of the National Assembly Patrick Matibini about his (Mr Nakacinda's) continued stay in Parliament when the issue of his appeal against the ruling that Dr Mumba is MMD president is still active in court.

He said the MMD and PF alliance has nothing to do with

the two political parties' internal issues.

Mr Nakacinda said the MMD is proudly working with the ruling party but their relations do not affect their independence.

But Dr Mumba said his decision to write to President Lungu and Dr Matibini was to re-affirm that Mr Nakacinda was no longer a member of the MMD and, therefore, could not continue to stay in the House on its ticket.

"The response from the Speaker was that Mr Nakacinda still remains an MP because he was not expelled but suspended from the MMD.

"But the court's ruling was very clear, whether suspended or expelled, those people (Nakacinda faction) are not supposed to parade themselves as MMD members," he said.

Dr Mumba said he is waiting for a response from President Lungu before finding a way forward.

Meanwhile, Mr Nakacinda said the spate of gassing incidents in some parts of the country should not be politicised because it has affected innocent people.

He said it is disappointing that some political party leaders have taken advantage of the situation to start issuing statements inciting Zambians to rise against Government.

PF media director Sunday Chanda urged Lusaka lawyer John Sangwa to officially join politics instead of hiding behind his profession while allegedly promoting agendas for some political parties.

Banker in court over K1m theft

Suspect alleged to have manipulated card management system

CHOMBA MUSIKA
Lusaka

A BANKER at Atlas Mara has been taken to court for allegedly stealing over K1 million by making false entries in the bank's card management system to purport that different amounts of money were deposited in various accounts.

The alleged stolen amounts of money were in British pound and United States dollar.

This is in a case Regis Phiri, 30, of Makeni in Lusaka, is facing 12 counts of theft by

servant and fraudulent false accounting.

In the first count, it is alleged that on July 5, 2019, being a banker employed by Atlas Mara, Phiri made eight false entries in the Atlas Mara card management system.

He allegedly used bank officers' credentials to falsely show that a payment of £12,000 was authorised and deposited into account 45939700.

In the second count, it is alleged that on the same date, Phiri stole £12,000 from Atlas Mara.

In the third count, on the same date, Phiri allegedly made 11 false entries in Atlas Mara's card management system.

He allegedly used bank workers' credentials to fraudulently show that a payment of £16,500 was authorised and deposited into account 48544800.

In the fourth count, Phiri allegedly stole £16,500 from Atlas Mara.

It is further alleged in the fifth count that on the same date, Phiri made 10 false entries in the bank's card management system.

He allegedly used bank workers' documents to show that a payment of US\$15,000 was authorised and deposited into account 48559200, when in fact not.

In the sixth count, Phiri allegedly stole US\$15,000 from

Atlas Mara. It is alleged in the seventh count that on June 29 last year, Phiri made 11 false entries in the bank's card management system.

He allegedly used bank workers' details to show that a payment of £16,500 was authorised and deposited into account 48544800, when in fact not.

In the eighth count, Phiri is accused of having stolen £16,500 from Atlas Mara.

In the ninth count, Phiri allegedly made six false entries in the bank's card management system.

He allegedly used bank workers' details to purport that a

£9,000 payment was authorised and deposited into account 45939700.

In the 10th count, Phiri allegedly stole £9,000.

Phiri also allegedly made 16 false entries in the bank's card management system using fellow workers' details to purport that a payment of US\$23,500 was authorised and deposited into account 48559200.

In the last count, Phiri allegedly stole US\$23,000.

On Friday, Phiri appeared before Lusaka chief resident magistrate Lameck Mwale and denied all the charges.

The case was adjourned to April 2 for trial.

3 siblings held over mum's death

From page 1

Police spokesperson Esther Katongo said in a statement yesterday that Levy Kabwe, 65, Vera Chongo, 63, and Simon Nshikokola, 20, allegedly killed Catherine Pule, 86, of Mutono village in Chief Kambwali's area.

"Details of the report are that on Friday around 07:00 hours, Ms Pule was dragged to a witch finder, identified as Musonda, who forcibly made her to drink a dosage of poisonous herbs commonly known as kalola.

"Ms Pule was later escorted back to her house where she died two hours later. Her funeral was not announced and she was secretly buried without a coffin around 19:00 hours at a graveyard near Nchelele Airstrip by few family members," she said.

Ms Katongo said some alert members of the public tipped police about it and showed them the grave.

Kabwe, Chongo, and Nshikokola will be jointly charged with murder and will appear in court soon.

And police in Mwenze have arrested a 36-year-old radiographer at Mambilima Hospital for allegedly stealing a chemical used for developing X-ray films.

Ms Katongo said William Chima transported the chemical to Mansa with a view to selling it to his client, John Kasanda, in Senama.

Meanwhile, eight people have been arrested in Isoka district for allegedly being part

of a mob that killed two men they suspected to be behind the gassing of homes.

Last Thursday, Sansamweje villagers allegedly beat to death Henry Shombe, 35, a Tanzanian, and another person only identified as Simwina, 30, after accusing them of gassing people's homes.

Muchinga Province Commissioner of Police Joel Njase said in an interview that officers from Nakonde and Isoka conducted an operation on Saturday around 22:00 hours, during which the eight suspects were arrested.

The suspects are Moses Silungwe, 20, Joseph Simukoko, 46, Chalwe Simwina, 25, Eneshle Sichula, 22, Sunday Silwimba, 42, Chrispin Siame, 35, Kanurela Sinusya, 68, and Gershom Siame, 35, all of Mphangala village.

"The suspects were arrested for allegedly being part of the mob that beat to death two people who sustained multiple cuts and died," he said.

Mr Njase said the suspects are in police custody and have been jointly charged with murder.

This brings the number of suspects arrested in connection with the murder of people accused of being gassers in Muchinga Province to 26.

Sixteen were picked up in Mafinga on Thursday last week for allegedly murdering two people while two others were arrested in Nakonde last Wednesday for allegedly killing a man of the same area.



THE Agri-Options Limited milling plant in Mkushi.

Agriculture sector in \$80 million inputs scheme boost

YANDE SYAMPEYO
Lusaka

TO ENHANCE national food security and support Government's economic diversification agenda, an US\$81 million private sector-led input support scheme has been launched to benefit 120 commercial and 250,000 small-scale farmers in Zambia.

African Green Resources (AGR) and its partners will provide farm inputs and modern technology to wheat and soya bean Zambian farmers in exchange for grain.

About US\$55 million will be channelled to fertiliser while US\$26 million will be invested in value addition (of wheat and soya bean), stock feed and expansion of silos.

The programme is part of a broader plan by AGR and several local, African and global partners to invest US\$150 million in Zambia to develop an irrigation dam, a 50 megawatt solar farm, expansion of existing silo capacity at a farming complex by 80,000 tonnes, and establishment of a value addition

food complex. AGR chairman Zuneid Yousuf said the company has entered into a partnership with Mkushi-based Agri-Options Limited (AOL), a local consortium of commercial farmers, and Praconil Group of the United States of America (USA), which intends to finance the farm input scheme.

He said the company and its partners will provide Zambian farmers with certified seed, fertiliser and agro-chemicals. AGR will also test soil samples for farmers with an agreement for them to pay through the crop they will store in grain silos at AOL.

"Finances will be arranged for the entire production line from farm inputs until the last stage of processing within the value chain.

"The plan is to give them (farmers) a fair market price and obviously some inputs. And as recovery, we will take the crop but the rest they can sell on the open market.

"We will provide 60,000 tonnes of fertiliser for wheat and soya farming. This will be

done according to the timelines discussed and guided by AOL," Mr Yousuf said.

He said AGR anticipates receiving 44,000 tonnes of wheat per season of which 36,000 tonnes will be processed using the current processing plant at AOL, with an extraction rate of 80 percent.

The 20 percent bran will be sold at US\$100 per tonne.

"The flour will be sold on the local and international markets with the export market fetching prices of between US\$688 and US\$700 per tonne of flour," he said.

Mr Yousuf said the scheme will help small, medium and commercial farmers targeted in the first batch to grow their businesses through access to markets, value addition and credit finance.

"The funding is available for phase one and we are quite advanced in stages of negotiations with phase two, and that's why we are negotiating with other regional funding firms.

"This year, I think we are ready to build on what

we started already in 2019, including the value addition process," Mr Yousuf said.

Financiers of the project also intend to set up a centre for eight major value addition projects for agro processing of soya into texturalised soya protein for meat extenders' chain, glucose and maize corn snacks factory, cereals and biscuit-making facilities in Mkushi.

He said AGR has engaged the African Fertiliser and Agri-business Partnership of USA, Dutch Good Growth Fund, World Food Programme, Afrexim Bank, Canadian Commercial Corporation, Korea International Cooperation Agency, USAID and other European banks which provide equity and disaster finance.

Other partners are the African Development Bank, the Protein Research Foundation, African Union, and Sace Italy and AGI, which has guaranteed some of the funding.

"We will repay the loan from sales of wheat flour, soya processing plant products and silo revenue," Mr Yousuf said.

Chief executive officer Jason Scarpone said the organisation, which facilitated deals in excess of US\$680 million in fertiliser trade over the last few years, wants to see more competition to stimulate efficiency.

Mr Scarpone said small and medium enterprises need to compete in the market to create a vibrant private sector.

"It's an exciting initiative with many investment opportunities which we think our partners will be interested in," he said.

AGR and its partners have agreed to use South Africa-based Global Collateral Control (GCC) as collateral managers for the grain which farmers will use to pay for the inputs.

GCC chief operating officer Dennis Naicker said the company has managed grain silos and warehouses in 11 countries in Africa, including Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique, for the last 14 years.

Mr Naicker said the company has qualified and certified graders who assess the quality and quantity of the grain to determine its value.

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