

ELECTION UPDATE TWO: 25 Feb to 3 March 2008

This is the second election update from the Solidarity Peace Trust, summarising into general categories the notable events and quotes of the last week to ten days, as Zimbabwe heads into a now highly fluid and unpredictable election. Sources are media articles from both government and independent media published within the dates of the summary, as well as statements from civic groups.

WHAT THEY SAID

TSVANGIRAI ON POVERTY: Zimbabwe's main opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai on Wednesday said only an opposition victory in next month's general election would end the country's crippling economic crisis. "We've come here to give all these people hope that the change that is coming is one they can trust, one that will make a difference in the face of massive unemployment, hunger and unprecedented poverty we have all witnessed. The bankrupt Mugabe regime has no solutions to offer," Tsvangirai said. (Business Day, 27th Feb)

CHINAMASA ON MDC-T: "Everybody in Zimbabwe is aware they will lose the elections because they are a puppet party and that they also called for economic sanctions and sold out on the land issue and time has come for them to pay the heavy price...We thank Chamisa for forewarning us of their intentions and what they are planning with their sponsors and taking every step to forearm ourselves against any eventuality they are planning against the people of Zimbabwe. The state will not take kindly to such threats." (News24, 1 March)

MAKONI ON ALLIANCES: Zimbabwean presidential hopeful Simba Makoni said on Monday he would not form a coalition with the main opposition party because it would alienate dissenters in President Robert Mugabe's ruling party. "There are a large number of people in Zanu-PF who share my proper vision. I don't want to alienate those people by forming a coalition with one entity," Makoni said in an interview with South Africa's Talk Radio 702. "I am in a coalition with the people of Zimbabwe." (Mail and Guardian, 25 Feb)

MDC-T ON ALLIANCES: Ian Makone, spokesperson for MDC-T said Tsvangirai was not interested in meeting Makoni. The MDC said it would be easier for Makoni to fly to the moon than meet Tsvangirai in the present circumstances. (Zim Independent, 29th Feb)

CHAMISA ON ALLIANCES: "A whole party cannot join an individual. Makoni is an individual not a party. He is not just an ordinary individual, but one who has embraced Zanu PF," Nelson Chamisa said. "Mixing donkeys and cattle does not make the cattle herd bigger." (Zim Independent, 29th Feb).

THERE MUST BE A COALITION – ZIM INDEPENDENT: The key issue is that we must recognise both Simba Makoni and Morgan Tsvangirai as true and dedicated politicians who somehow emerged from the same Zanu PF monster. Makoni's history is one of struggle from within - don't despise him. Let's be careful not to throw out the baby with the bathwater. We know President Robert Mugabe's methods and why fall into the trap open-eyed? We all know the problem and what must be done - and Makoni and Tsvangirai must do it for our sake if they are genuine. The complications are naked for all to see. If Makoni and Tsvangirai contest separately it would be hard to get the requisite majority and the confusion would make rigging easier with the rigger claiming that he took advantage of their confusion. In that case, Makoni and Tsvangirai must know that they will be doomed and our woes will continue to escalate. If they unite with Makoni at the helm, then Tsvangirai will obviously be either vice president or prime minister or any such vital post, rather than running all these years without fruits. Let us form a united front and push out the tyrant. (Comment, Zim Independent, 29th Feb).

ZANU NOT POPULAR, SAYS ZANU CANDIDATE: Tshinga Dube has launched a scathing attack on Industry and Trade Minister Obert Mpofu for being "irresponsible" and denting Zanu PF's electoral chances by causing shortages of basic commodities through his prices slashes last year. Dube, who is standing on a Zanu PF ticket in Makokoba, was addressing members of the Bulawayo Press Club on Friday. Col. Dube said: "When I went out in my constituency (Makokoba), I realised that the name Zanu PF is not very popular." (New Zimbabwe 25 Feb).

MUGABE ON MAKONI: "Being challenged by a person in such state, without even a tiny party, is a complete display of disdain for me," Mugabe said. "He thinks people will fall over each other while trying to align with him. The likes of (Joseph) Msika, (Joice) Mujuru and Mugabe will be forsaken by all the people for rushing to join Makoni because he is 'a magnet'. This is hopeless ambition," said Mugabe. (Zim Independent, 29th Feb).

MUGABE ON HIS FELLOW POLITICIANS: "You who are here with us, I hope I trust you, all of you. Some politicians are sell outs, political prostitutes, political charlatans and two-headed political creatures." (Zim Independent, 29th Feb).

SADC DIPLOMAT ON ZIMBABWE: "Zimbabwe is contagious and it could affect its neighbours." (Zimbabwean, 28th Feb).

TSVANGIRAI ON HIS MANIFESTO: "Be part of this movement whose proud legacy is that it is the face of change in the country. We remain the legitimate drivers of the democratisation of this country. The dictatorship has a programme, of course - Poverty, exile, starvation, disease - that has been the programme of the dictatorship for the past five years." (Zim Independent, 29th Feb)

CONSIDER ME A WAITER: Tsvangirai said his lack of a degreed education would not preclude him from being a successful leader as parroted by the government. "Well, one successful political leader worked as a waiter in a restaurant. He said that politics is a lot like being a waiter - you listen to the people - and you bring them what they want. That is not a bad definition of democracy," he said. (Zim Independent, 29th Feb).

BITI ONMUGABE: "There is no government in this world which can win an election when inflation is over 100 000%, 80% unemployment and three million of its people living abroad," Tendai Biti said. "Mugabe you cannot and you will not do the impossible. Victory is certain for us." (Zim Independent, 29th Feb).

VOTE MUGABE OR GO TO HELL: one of Zimbabwe's top defence forces chiefs says he will not salute former finance minister Simba Makoni or opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai if either wins the March 29 presidential poll. Retired Major-General Paradzayi Zimond, the Commissioner of Prisons, ordered his officers and staff to vote for Mugabe, who has been in power in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980. "I am giving you an order to vote for the President. We shall not let it go. If you let the country go, God will not help you anymore; and when you die, you will go to hell for failing to defend your land against your enemies," Zimondi told senior army officers at a ceremony in Harare on Thursday. (Monsters and Critics, 29th Feb)

GO TO JAIL: Zimbabwean presidential candidate Simba Makoni, in an interview aired Friday, said if elected leader he would not stand in the way of any future attempt to bring President Robert Mugabe before the International Criminal Court (ICC) for atrocities committed under his rule. Asked in a BBC interview whether he would oppose the principle of sending Mugabe to The Hague court, former finance minister Makoni said: 'No. We will be a full member of the international community and we will act in accordance with the normal standards of international justice.' (Monsters and Critics, 29th Feb).

ON VOTING FOR THE OLD MAN: "Corruption is rife at the doorstep of his homestead," M says. But M has voted for Mugabe since independence. "Election to us here is like a ritual," he says. "We have to vote for the old man or Zanu-PF. To some of us Zanu-PF is our totem." It is a sentiment unemployed TC, 23, collecting water at a nearby borehole, understands — even if he does not agree with it. "The old man has had his time," he says. "He must go, but our elders here are afraid to tell him, because this is his home area and there are a lot of soldiers, spies and policemen who are quick to get angry on behalf of Gushungo (Mugabe)." (The Times, 26 Feb)

STAY CALM PLEASE: "Kenya is currently on fire sparked by a disputed election and really, we do not want to see that same situation obtaining here. We urge tolerance and calm. Political parties should shun violence. And this can only be achieved if government puts in place a mechanism ensuring a free and fair election," a western diplomat urged. (Ohmynews, 26 Feb)

NOT FREE AND FAIR – BUT VOTE ANYWAY: US Ambassador to Zimbabwe James McGee warned Monday that 'ominous signs' of cheating by President Robert Mugabe's government were already present ahead of next month's elections in Zimbabwe. In a letter published in the state-controlled daily Herald, McGee referred to 'a growing chorus of voices expressing doubt about the coming poll.' 'Past experience may engender skepticism. Despite these ominous signs, we urge all Zimbabweans to vote. While Zimbabwean people do not have the power to ensure that democracy prevails, it will surely not prevail unless they play their part. This was to be expected. I anticipate the same problem with the voting.' (Monsters and Critics, 25 Feb)

UNCLE SAM PUT IN HIS PLACE: The government has not officially responded to US Ambassador McGee, but the state Herald newspaper, a government mouthpiece, on Tuesday described his remarks as "an unwarranted" and unwanted lecture. Zimbabweans "do not need Uncle Sam's supervision. The days of master and slave are long gone, or hadn't you noticed," said the paper. (International Herald Tribune, 26 Feb)

CHIPFUNDE-VAVA ON VOTING: the director of ZESN said the voting procedure was unknown. "It is not clear ... if voters will receive one ballot paper at a time, or all four papers at once, which would require extensive voter education," she said. (IRIN, 28th Feb)

(REV) MUSINDO ON MONEY: Pro-Robert Mugabe and Zanu (PF) church leader, Revered Obadiah Musindo, dished out part of the money he was given to campaign for the geriatric leader and told the electorate here that if they wanted more, they should vote for Mugabe and Zanu (PF) candidates in next month's elections. "You have to vote for President Mugabe and Zanu (PF) if you want to get more money because that is the only way you will get it," Musindo told the crowd. (Zimbabwean, 27th Feb)

DAVID COLTART ON DIVISIONS IN MDC-T: "Aside from the failure to field councillors in many Wards throughout Matabeleland, the emergence of the Kombayi/Matibenga faction within the MDC (MT), and the nomination of its own candidates in some 22 constituencies mainly in the Midlands (but also in Matabeleland North, Mashonaland West, Central and East, Harare and Masvingo Provinces) will seriously undermine Morgan Tsvangirai's ability to attract the same support he enjoyed in Matabeleland and the Midlands in the 2002 Presidential elections." (Newsletter, Feb)

ROY BENNETT ON MAKONI: *Violet (SWRadio)*: In your view who is the Diplomatic Community trying to impose? *Bennett*: They are trying to impose Simba Makoni right now. (23rd Feb)

COMMENT ON BENNETT'S COMMENT: There is here the irony of a so-called stooge now turning and calling another a stooge on precisely the same basis. That being the case, it seems to be one of those rare instances when the MDC and Zanu PF seem to be in agreement. It simply provides further ammunition to Zanu's arsenal, arguing perhaps that the MDC is simply acting like the petulant child who cries on seeing his slice of the cake being given to a new sibling. (Magaisa, Zim Independent, 29th Feb)

THE ELECTORAL PLAYING FIELD

FREE AND FAIR – ZIM AMBASSADOR: In neighbouring South Africa, the Zimbabwean ambassador accused critics of his government, especially the U.S. and the United Kingdom, of funding the opposition and crippling the country with sanctions. "From the West's point of view, the electoral process in Zimbabwe can only be free and fair if and as when President Mugabe and his ZANU-PF have been removed from office," Ambassador Simon Khaya Moyo told journalists and diplomats in Pretoria, South Africa. "They cannot be free and fair unless London or Washington says so." Moyo gave the assurance that the ruling party would accept the outcome of the elections even if it lost. Asked whether the country would erupt into violence should the ruling party lose, he said: "If Zimbabwe catches fire, everyone will burn," (International Herald Tribune, 26 Feb)

NOT FREE AND FAIR- SACP: The South African Communist Party (SACP) on Thursday said last week's assault of Zimbabwe teachers' union leaders did not bode well for the holding of free and fair elections in the country next month. Speaking at a workshop organised by the Zimbabwe Solidarity Forum civic group in Johannesburg yesterday, SACP spokesman Solly Mapaila said the party was concerned about the rising cases of political violence in Zimbabwe. (Zim Online, 29th Feb).

NOT FREE AND FAIR- BISHOP BAKARE: Lawlessness and violence perpetrated by those entrusted with ensuring law and order are destroying Zimbabwe, a prominent bishop told church, civic and opposition leaders who gathered in Harare on Monday to pray for peaceful elections next month. Acting Anglican Bishop of Harare Sebastian Bakare said chaos in the run-up to the polls was promoting anarchy in the country and called on Zimbabweans to pray for an end to the violence and lawlessness. "The country has no respect for individuals. Those who are supposed to bring peace to the country are the ones perpetrating violence . . . we as Christians should pray for an end to all this." (Zim online, 26 Feb)

HOUSES BURNT, CANDIDATES ARRESTED: in Muzarabani on Monday the houses of several MDC activists were burnt down. Exact numbers have not yet been determined. However, it is believed 2 ZANU-PF youths were arrested in the incident. On Sunday, also in Muzarabani, ward election agent Muchemwa Chihota and MDC activist Munyaradzi Nyama were arrested. It is not clear what they are being charged with but it is believed they held a meeting to discuss election strategies. Dozens of MDC officials have been arrested around the country for engaging in activities related to the March elections. This includes activities such as conducting private meetings, putting up posters, trying to obtain voter registration details and singing on a MDC campaign music album, all of which are all legal activities. (SWRadio, 27th Feb)

CAM PAIGNING ILLEGAL: Two opposition election candidates were on Monday being held by police after their weekend arrest in Karoi town, more than 200km north-west of Harare, for allegedly meeting supporters without permission from the police. The two, Godfrey Gumbo and Maireva Gudo Nziramasanga, who belong to the faction of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party led by academic Arthur Mutambara, were on Tuesday released on free bail after spending four nights in police custody. (Zim Online, 28th Feb)

MOB ATTACK ON CANDIDATE: the bitter election battle in Manicaland has once again spilled over into violence after the MDC spokesman in the province, Pishai Muchauraya, was attacked by a mob on Wednesday. Muchauraya, the MDC parliamentary candidate for Makoni South in next month's elections, was travelling to the constituency with his driver and an aide when they stopped at a roadside store to buy some refreshments at 9am. A mob travelling in a trailer drawn by a tractor approached the trio outside Lamour supermarket, close to the Africa University in Old Mutare. The driver of the tractor blocked Muchauraya's truck, a Mazda B2500, and the mob of over 45 youths set upon the trio and ripped off the MDC t-shirts they were wearing. 'It was a vicious and callous attack and I'm lucky I didn't sustain serious injuries. But we suspect my driver Michael Murapa could have sustained a fractured hand, while my aide Tendai Chimonya was also injured in the attack,' (SWRadio, 27th Feb)

VIOLENCE IN MASH CENTRAL: Tensions over Makoni's candidacy in next month's presidential election degenerated into violent factional clashes in Mashonaland Central last week, during which

police made a number of arrests. Among those arrested was Jana Ngwerume, a provincial ZANU-PF youth leader. Dougmore Chimukoko, another party official said to be aligned to Mount Darwin South member of parliament Saviour Kasukuwere, was also picked up after he brandished a gun at a Central Intelligence Organisation operative, whose name was only given as Chagwambara, during a heated exchange about Makoni. (FinGaz, 29th Feb)

TORTURE WIDESPREAD: the use of torture in Zimbabwe, mainly by the state, is widespread, Professor Manfred Nowak, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, told The Zimbabwean in an exclusive interview this week. Nowak, who was a special guest at the 10th anniversary of pro-democracy group Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum in Harare this week, said the nature and level of organized violence and torture was widespread and was perpetrated mainly, but not exclusively, by state agents. He urged Government to ban torture through an Act of Parliament and said that was the only way to criminalize torture and bring perpetrators to justice. Nowak decried the fact that no one had so far been convicted by criminal courts for torture, yet the practice was so widespread. (Zimbabwean, 27th Feb)

TORTURED – BY MISTAKE: a Bulawayo man, mistakenly suspected to be an army deserter and an MDC supporter, spend three days in leg irons at a military camp in Kwekwe, where he was tortured. Tendai Masakara (30), a computer engineer visiting his relative in Kwekwe was arrested on February 18 by military police after they mistakenly identified him as army deserter who had run away from the army two years ago and was now a MDC activist. He was taken to 5 Brigade barracks in Battlefields. Masakara, shivering and in pain, told The Zimbabwean this week the two military police in army gear accused him of being army deserter. He has never been in the army or tried to get into the army. He now has difficulty walking and has deep scars on both legs. He was only released after the commander of 5 Brigade barracks intervened, and found out that he has never been in the army. (Zimbabwean 27th Feb).

CRIMINAL NUISANCES: Five officials and members of the Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe who were beaten last week by militants of the ruling ZANU-PF party then arrested by police were booked Tuesday on charges of creating a criminal nuisance, then released again. Those five trade unionists, with four others, were alleged to have tossed flyers at the Harare Province headquarters of the ruling party in central Harare, provoking their alleged seizure and severe beating by irate members of the ruling party. (VOA, 27th Feb)

WHERE IS VOTER EDUCATION? Useni Sibanda, the national coordinator of Christian Alliance, an organisation of church leaders advocating for the return of democracy, told IRIN: "We have structures throughout the country, including rural areas, and our members say there is nothing to indicate that we are almost 30 days away from the elections." As a result, few people were aware that elections were taking place. "Many say they have not received any voter education from the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission [ZEC]." There are fears that the ZEC does not have the capacity to conduct such elections. Reports of glitches in the electoral process have begun to emerge: aspiring candidates submitted their nomination papers on 15 February, but the commission only released the list of candidates on 24 February; some candidates' names have been misspelt, some have been identified with the wrong political party. (IRIN, 28th Feb)

POLLING STATION CHAOS: There is mounting concern that there will be delays and serious errors unless urgent corrective measures are taken with regard to ballot boxes, polling officers, polling agents, polling stations, voter education and the voters' roll. The law says that each polling station should have at least three voting compartments, each containing at least one ballot box, allocated for the use of voters whose surnames begin with the letters A to L, M, and N to Z. But, with just 27 days to go, it is still unclear if there will, in fact, be three booths for each set of the four-tier election, the council, parliamentary, senate and presidential -a total of 12 polling booths. This means each candidate would need to have four election agents, three inside and one outside. Government says two agents per candidate would suffice. "How can one person deal with 12 copies of the voters' roll, 12

polling booths, four queues of voters and counting of ballots from 12 booths at the same time?" asked political commentator Ronald Shumba. (Zimbabwean, 29th Feb)

ONLY THE FRIENDLY TO OBSERVE: George Charamba, Mugabe's spokesman, made it clear on Friday that, once again, only countries or organisations that had not criticised past elections would be invited. This included South Africa and all other Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries. Charamba said the South African government would be especially welcome as it would want to observe the results of its mediation. He said SADC itself would also be invited as well as the East and West African regional blocs, the African Union, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and certain developing world countries such as China. Zimbabwe would not - "and I repeat, not" - invite the European Union (EU), although, intriguingly, Charamba suggested that one or two specific but unnamed European states would be invited. But the SADC parliamentary forum is not invited - which includes not only ruling parties but also opposition political parties from the region - because it did not approve the 2002 election. (Sunday Independent, 24 Feb)

CHINA TO OBSERVE: Election observers, mainly from China and other countries in the Far East, are expected to start arriving soon after being invited and accredited by government. The Zanu (PF) government has reportedly requested the government of China to send a huge delegation. Patrick Chinamasa confirmed that, "Yes observers are already being accredited and we invited from across the whole world including China because we want to prove that these elections will be free and fair." (Zimbabwean, 27th Feb).

CURFEWS ON CAMPAIGNING: Police have imposed unofficial curfews in some parts of the country, illegally restricting movement of people in the evenings, the Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights) said at the weekend. ZimRights said the police forced people to stay indoors after dusk reportedly in order to stop them from using the night to campaign for the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party as next months' key elections loom closer. The rights group cited the suburbs of Manyame Park, Zengeza and St Mary's all in the opposition stronghold of Chitungwiza city where it said it had received the most reports of police imposing unofficial curfew, especially on youths. (Zim Online 25 Feb)

MDC-T have reported the arrests of at least 40 of their candidates/supporters since 11 Feb in fifteen different instances across the country. In many of these instances, arrests were accompanied by violence against arrestees. (SWRadio, 29th Feb).

VOTE ZANU OR STARVE - A senior ruling ZANU PF party politician has directed a state grain company in the town of Karoi to sell maize-meal through councillors - all members of his party - in what the opposition says is a blatant vote-buying scheme. John Mafa, who is chairman of ZANU PF in Mashonaland West province under which Karoi falls and is also provincial manager of the government's Grain Marketing Board (GMB), confirmed this: "Councillors have well known structures so that undeserving elements in the wards cannot take advantage of our sincerity. We have many people who are just cropping up in these wards but councillors know who is who there and who deserves." (Zim Online 25 Feb)

VOTE ZANU FOR MALAWI MAIZE: About 300 000 tonnes of maize imported from Malawi have been hoarded by Zanu (PF) at Grain Marketing Board (GMB) depots around the country for vote buying. "Maize sold by the Malawi government to Zimbabwe has not helped the people of the country fairly. It is being abused by distributing to the electorate in Mashonaland... As opposition, if we take over power, we will have difficulties to pay the Malawi government because they have played part in the political aggression by Mugabe and ZANU-PF," said Tendai Biti of the MDC. A Malawian commentator added – "President Mutharika will be remembered for his bizarre ability to starve Malawians by donating and selling our maize to Zimbabwe and other countries. If he had listened to the national pleas for caution and patience, Mutharika and his government would not be panicking now." (Nyasa Times, Malawi, 25 FEB)

NO KID GLOVES: Police Commissioner General Augustine Chihuri said police officers will not hesitate to use "full force" to stop politically motivated violence, the state Herald newspaper said.

"Police will never treat perpetrators of political violence with kid gloves. Please be warned," the paper quoted him as saying. "There has been talk from some opposition circles and civil organisations of street protests or Kenya-style riots if the ballot does not go in favour of one's political party ... It is time for political parties to own up if they lose," he said. (Mail and Guardian, 27th Feb).

NOT FREE AND FAIR: The International Bar Association (IBA) is concerned at statements by Police Commissioner Augustine Chihuri on 25 February stating that the Zimbabwean police force would not hesitate to use full force, including firearms, when confronting any incidents of politically motivated violence during the country's election period. It would be more appropriate, in the tense atmosphere that exists in Zimbabwe at present, for the police and security forces to reassure voters that they will be protected and their right to vote freely ensured. (29th Feb).

ENFORCING HIS OWN LAW: The police chief for KweKwe district in the Midlands, Chief Superintendent Charles Chagonda, has said he doesn't recognise changes made to POSA and AIPPA. At a meeting with all candidates for the parliamentary, senatorial and council elections in the Midlands town recently, the police chief reportedly told them he had the power to dictate what laws should be used in KweKwe. MDC legislator for the town, Blessing Chebundo, said, 'It's a mockery of parliament that a police officer, whose job is to make sure people follow the rules, breaks them wantonly.' He has unilaterally banned all gatherings in the town and how do you meet your supporters?' The police chief went further and warned the candidates that whoever broke his strict code would rot in prison. And true to his word, on Tuesday seven MDC officials were arrested in the town after holding peaceful door-to-door campaigns. (SWRadio 1 March)

GHOST VOTERS: MDC (Tsvangirai) candidate for Harare North, Theresa Makone alleges electoral fraud in the constituency through the manipulation of the voter registration process. Makone, who is the MDC House of Assembly candidate for Harare North, says she has established that the ruling party has been bussing voters from outside of the constituency and ensured they were all registered to vote, in addition to having many names of dead people still appearing on the voters' roll. (Zimbabwean, 28th)

SECRET BUT TRANSPARENT: the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) has called on the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) to make voting by security forces and diplomats transparent. Previously this has been shrouded in secrecy. Speaking at a Transparency International workshop here last week under the theme "Guarding against Corruption in Elections" ZESN coordinator Jack Zaba said in all previous elections the security forces secretly cast their votes days before polling day and they were doing it secretly. "This used to give room to Zanu (PF) to rig every election. So what we are calling for is that security forces and diplomats vote in the presence of election observers," he said. (Zimbabwean, 27th Feb)

ZEC CAMPAIGNING: Residents of Queenspark suburb have accused some ZEC voter educators of campaigning for Zanu (PF). The uniformed advisers told them last week to vote wisely by voting for President Mugabe in March elections as he has the people of Zimbabwe at heart. (Zimbabwean, 27th Feb)

LIGHTS AND WATER FOR ELECTION: President Robert Mugabe reportedly summoned top officials at power and water utilities and put them under pressure to ensure improved supplies of electricity and water ahead of the elections. A ZINWA source told this paper that after the meeting with Mugabe, management at the beleaguered parastatal were ordered to "fix the water situation in Harare, Bulawayo and other major urban centres as a matter of urgency". Our source added, "Mugabe said the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe would be ordered to make funds available for the procurement of vital chemicals that are lacking in water treatment and that this would be done soon. He wants the water supply situation to improve within two weeks." (Zimbabwean, 27th Feb).

SUBVERSIVE WATER METER MEN: Police in Zimbabwe's eastern city of Mutare have arrested two water meter readers for allegedly inflating meter readings to discredit the government ahead of next month's polls, reports said Wednesday. The state-run ZINWA water authority was forced to issue a public apology on national radio last week after residents of Harare, Mutare and smaller towns received huge water bills for January. ZINWA blamed meter readers, saying they were trying to discredit the authority of President Robert Mugabe's government ahead of national elections on March 29. (Earth Times, 27th Feb)

PARASTATALS FORCED TO CAMPAIGN: in a development that smacks of flagrant abuse of state institutions, the ruling ZANU-PF is forcing cash-strapped parastatals and public companies to fund some of its programmes and projects at a time when the companies can least afford such unbudgeted expenditures. The Financial Gazette can reveal that over a dozen parastatals and several Zimbabwe Stock Exchange-listed companies were or have been requested to donate in cash or kind towards the recently held 21st February celebrations, the production of the ZANU-PF manifesto and the launch of the party's election campaign scheduled for tomorrow. And this week, ZANU-PF spread its tentacles even further to encompass hotels, which have been asked to provide free accommodation for party guests who will be attending tomorrow's function. (FinGaz, 29th Feb)

LET US VOTE - OR ELSE: over 200 members of the Revolutionary Youth Movement of Zimbabwe demonstrated outside the embassy in Pretoria where they handed over a petition demanding the right of those in the Diaspora to vote. The South African police acted as mediators. The leader of the youths, Simon Mudekwa, told us Khaya-Moyo signed three copies acknowledging receipt and promised to look into their grievances. 'There is a deadline for our demands and if they are not met we will storm the embassy and take over. This time we are not going to back down, they have trampled over our basic human rights for a long time,' Mudekwa said. (SWRadio, 29th Feb).

CAMPAIGN FOR ME - OR ELSE: Zimbabwe's ruling ZANU PF party has directed its election candidates to first deliver a message from President Robert Mugabe at every campaign meeting, a move insiders said was meant to ensure the candidates do not campaign for former finance minister Simba Makoni. Sources said there were fears some party candidates in the parliamentary and council elections suspected of being sympathetic to Makoni could use their campaign rallies to drum up support for the former minister. Alternatively, they could undermine Mugabe by simply avoiding mentioning his name at political rallies. "It was feared we could end up with a situation where Mugabe might lose, while ZANU PF candidates would go on to win parliamentary and council seats," said a party official, who spoke on condition he was not named. "But now it is mandatory that every party candidate begins by campaigning for Mugabe before they can campaign for themselves," said the source. (Zim Online, 29th Feb)

UNDER SURVEILLANCE – NGOs AND EMBASSIES: The Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) is stepping up surveillance of Harare-based Western embassies and aid agencies it suspects of coordinating funding for the opposition, top security officials told The Zimbabwean. They said the notorious spy agency was also stalking leaders of NGOs. The umbrella National Association for Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO) - a coalition of more than 350 organisations operating in Zimbabwe - has issued an alert warning its members of the surveillance operation and urging them to remain vigilant. The Zimbabwean can reveal that the CIO is working on a dossier accusing the NGOs of embezzling funds amounting to US\$88,7 million in aid money mobilised by the UNDP for Zimbabwe's consolidated aid appeal in 2003. Fixed telephone lines at virtually all the suspected aid agencies and embassies have been bugged, the sources disclosed. They said the CIO was even establishing and recording the identities and frequencies of movements of people who visit these aid agencies and embassies, in addition to opening mail directed to these organisations, including e-mails. According to an official document shown to The Zimbabwean this week, top on the list of the aid agencies being targeted by the CIO are Germany's humanitarian foundations Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) and Friedrich Naumann Foundation. Also on the list is ZLHR, ZDHR, LSA, NCA, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, ZINASU, Hivos, CIDA, SIDA, DANIDA, MSO and Norad. Also under the CIO microscope is USAID, WFP and DfID. All Western embassies in Zimbabwe but particularly the

United States, the British, Swedish and the German embassies had also been put under strict surveillance, the sources said. The movement of diplomats was also being monitored as part of efforts to prove who they associated with. (Zimbabwean, 1 March)

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

JOURNALIST BANNED – BY NON EXISTENT COMMISSION: In a shocking development, the state-controlled Media and Information Commission (MIC) which ceased to exist in January 2008 following the signing into law of amendments to the repressive Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) has banned senior Zimbabwean journalist Brian Hungwe from practicing journalism in the country. Hungwe, a former correspondent with the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), on 27 February 2008 confirmed to MISA-Zimbabwe that the MIC had imposed a one-year ban against him backdated to 20 August 2007 following his appeal against its earlier decision banning him from working as a freelance journalist in Zimbabwe. The MIC's illegal ban will be in force until 19 August 2008. The MIC ceased to exist on 11 January 2008 when President Robert Mugabe signed the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Amendment Act No. 20 of 2007. (MISA-Zimbabwe, 27th Feb).

HUNGWE ON BEING BANNED: "I was born in Zimbabwe and this is where I will die. Journalism is my source of livelihood and I cannot understand why this country would want to ban journalists from reporting in their own countries. I have been patient with the MIC for more than a year now because I did not want to be seen as being confrontational, but this latest development leaves me with no option but to seek recourse through the courts."

NON EXISTENT MIC TAKEN TO COURT: MISA-Zimbabwe has engaged prominent Zimbabwean lawyer Selby Hwacha under its Media Defence Fund facility to challenge the illegal ban imposed by the Media and Information Commission (MIC) against senior journalist Brian Hungwe. Several other journalists are likely to be similarly victimised ahead of the elections thereby limiting access to diverse views, opinions and ideas throwing into serious doubt the freeness and fairness of the March polls. (MISA-Zimbabwe, 29th Feb)

STATE MEDIA FAVOURITE: independent Langton Towungana, who few had ever heard of before nomination courts sat earlier this month, has emerged in favourable reports in the state media which are traditionally hostile to opposition candidates. Towunga, who is from the western tourist resort of Victoria Falls and who has already been interviewed on prime-time TV, said in an interview Thursday with the state-controlled Herald that Zimbabwe had to engage the international community if it wanted to turn around the economy. He said he was standing because God had directed him to do so, although he would not reveal his precise faith for security reasons. (Earth Times, 28th Feb)

LESS FAVOURED: The Herald, which is the only daily left in Zimbabwe since armed police shut down the popular Daily News in 2003, carried a much shorter report on a tour of high-density suburbs by Tsvangirai. The paper said the MDC leader had commiserated with Harare residents for the suffering they were going through. But, the Herald added, the sufferings were "ironically caused by the MDC which urged the West to impose economic sanctions against Zimbabwe." (Earth Times, 28th Feb)

VOTER EDUCATION BANNED: Zimbabwe's state broadcasting establishment has stopped airing radio and television public service spots created by the Zimbabwe Election Support Network, a civil society group which deployed thousands of election monitors in the 2005 general elections. The move was said to have come at the orders of Ministry of Information Permanent Secretary George Charamba. Sources cited a memorandum, subsequently leaked, from Charamba to management of the state broadcasting entity, ordering it to stop running the public service spots explaining procedures for national elections to take place on March 29. (VOA 26th Feb)

ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

WHO'S WHO IN THE POLL?? Voters in Zimbabwe's elections due in five weeks will have to puzzle through a blur of alliances, divisions and sub-divisions among the political parties before they can decide who is really the parliamentary candidate they want to vote for. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, the official election administrator, published Sunday a list of 779 candidates for the 210 seats in the lower house of assembly, and 197 aspirants for the 60 elected seats in the upper house, the senate, from **12 political parties and 116 independents**. The choice is narrowed by the fact that three of those parties have clear national support. The clarity ends there. Thereafter, voters are faced with numerous candidates claiming to represent the same party, others purporting to represent the genuine faction of one of the mainstream parties but in fact using the name and symbol of a different faction, and independent candidates who are not really independent but allied to factions of other parties....In eight of the constituencies for the two chambers of parliament, the ruling party appears to have registered two candidates under its name. (Monsters and critics 25 Feb)

DEATH OF MDC CANDIDATE: The Mutambara faction of the MDC was dealt a blow on Tuesday when their parliamentary candidate for Gwanda South, Glory Mukwati, died after suffering a massive stroke. Party spokesman Paul Themba Nyathi said Mukwati showed no signs of ill-health and that his sudden death has come as a shock to many people who knew him. He suffered the stroke when he was driving to Gwanda to deliver campaign materials to the constituency. 'His death is tragic for Zimbabwe for the simple reason that he was a professional man who is known to have promoted education not only in the region but all over the country. He is somebody who established a number of teaching aids to the extent that he was very prominent in the education system,' Themba Nyathi said. 'What this means is that we expect the elections in Gwanda South to be postponed in accordance with the electoral act to allow us to submit nomination papers for another candidate. When this is done, we expect ZEC to call for a by-election,' Themba Nyathi added. (SWRadio, 28th Feb)

DEATH OF SECOND MDC CANDIDATE: on Friday 29th, the sitting MP for Pumula in Bulawayo, Milton Gwetu, died. He was aligned to the Mutambara faction. He was in hospital and was aged 78. This will force a second by-election in the region, after the death of Gwanda candidate Glory Mukwati two days ago.

NO PROTECTION FOR MAKONI: Zimbabwe's police don't think Makoni is worth protecting - and they've told him so. Simba Makoni has had his request for routine protection turned down by the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP). Makoni reportedly said his life and that of his allies were in danger because CIO officers were monitoring his movements. The state spies have been attending Makoni's press conferences and filming proceedings, which the former Finance minister argues constitute a threat to his physical security. He received an immediate reply from Deputy Commissioner Innocent Matibiri, who runs the VIP Protection Unit. "Please be advised accordingly Dr. Makoni that police protection is only awarded to individuals with VIP status. Regrettably you do not hold such status." (Zim Independent, 29th Feb)

CIO DISRUPTS MAKONI CAMPAIGN: the CIO and other state security agents are reportedly disrupting presidential election candidate Simba Makoni's campaign ahead of its launch tomorrow in the opposition stronghold of Bulawayo. Sources said the CIO were disrupting Makoni's preparations to undermine his campaign which they fear might trigger a tidal wave of support in his favour. They said the state security agents had blocked the supply of paper for the printing of posters and flyers, as well as other promotional material from Harare-based company, Paroan Vista. The sources said CIO agents had told the firm to stop or delay the printing of material which is now a week behind schedule. (Zim Independent, 29th Feb)

DABENGWA AND NDEBELE BACK MAKONI: Two political heavyweights endorsed former minister Simba Makoni as he launched his bid for the Zimbabwean presidency Saturday, including a serving official with President Robert Mugabe's party. Dumiso Dabengwa, a former home affairs minister and a member of the ruling ZANU-PF party's key decision-making body, became the first party heavyweight to come out in support of Makoni. Makoni, himself a former key member of

ZANU-PF, was also backed by Cyril Ndebele, a former speaker of parliament and a highly respected lawyer. Both men joined Makoni to declare their support at a press conference in Zimbabwe's second city of Bulawayo, where he launched his campaign to challenge Mugabe in the March 29 elections. "It's not about Makoni's capability or strength," Dabengwa said. "It's about the people of Zimbabwe being enabled to chart the manner in which they want the challenges facing the country to be solved". (AFP, 1 March)

MAKONI LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN IN BULAWAYO: Speaking to a crowd of thousands at a stadium in Bulawayo on Saturday, Makoni blamed 84-year-old veteran leader Mugabe for Zimbabwe's economic crisis which has seen inflation rise above 100,000 percent. "Right now we are begging for food and waiting to be given (it) by those who sympathise with us," he said. "Factories that used to work day and night are no longer functioning. Those in leadership are now seeking medical attention outside and the rest of the people in the country are not being attended to. "Our condition today is primarily from the failure of national leadership." Makoni said his campaign was "a movement for renewal, revival and rededication to service", telling the cheering crowds: "We are saying, let's get Zimbabwe working again. Let's get Zimbabwe back on track." (AFP, 1 March 2008)

MAKONI'S SUPPORTERS DUCK FOR COVER: Many ruling party members are seemingly too scared to declare support for presidential challenger. The ZANU (PF) heavyweights expected to back Simba Makoni's presidential bid in next month's election in Zimbabwe have failed to come out in support of him because they fear President Robert Mugabe will turn on them. Although 73 candidates have so far joined Makoni's camp and nominated themselves as independent candidates in next month's elections, most of them are political lightweights. Analysts say that fear of reprisals by the ruling party machinery has deterred those ZANU (PF) stalwarts who were reported to be contemplating standing with their expelled colleague as independents. The party is known for punishing defectors. Sources in his camp said although the heavyweights will not come out in the open, they will continue to campaign for him behind the scenes. (Zimbabwean, 27th Feb)

WHO WILL DEFECT? The Financial Gazette reported in its February 7, 2008 issue that retired Zimbabwe Defence Forces commander, Vitalis Zvinavashe, as well as former Masvingo provincial chairman, Dzikamai Mavhaire, backed Makoni. Mavhaire defiantly registered to stand as a ZANU-PF candidate in the elections despite opposition from President Mugabe. President Mugabe is increasingly worried by suggestions about private deals between Makoni and his two Vice Presidents, Joseph Msika and Joice Mujuru, as well as party chairman John Nkomo, despite public pledges of loyalty by the triumvirate. (FinGaz, 29th Feb)

PARTY FAITHFULS: President Mugabe is said to be now working with a cabal of close allies to isolate those he sees as Makoni allies. The President is now said to have formed an inner circle that includes secretary for legal affairs Emmerson Mnangagwa, Labour Minister Nicholas Goche, Didymus Mutasa, the party's secretary for administration, as well as Elliot Manyika, ZANU-PF's national commissar, Patrick Chinamasa, the Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs, Joseph Made, the Minister of Farm Mechanisation, and Oppah Muchinguri, the Women's League head. The President is said to suspect that a number of candidates standing as ruling party candidates will eventually announce their allegiance to Makoni. (FinGaz, 29th Feb)

MUJURU UNDER RESTRICTIONS: Retired army commander, General Solomon Mujuru, is under 24-hour surveillance. So is Simba Makoni, John Nkomo, Dumiso Dabengwa, Joice Mujuru and Sydney Sekeramai. Their phones are tapped and they are followed everywhere. This has been corroborated by several independent sources within the three services. "I am a senior member of the army, and have actually been hoping to get hold of your reporters to give them more information. Mujuru is not only under house arrest but he survived an assassination attempt in January by CIOs sent by Bob. Perhaps you do not understand these things. What is happening with Mujuru is all his movements are followed by CIO and army personnel assigned to him and they guard him at home 24 hours. That does not mean he is not able to move around but everything he does is tracked. (Zimbabwean, 27th Feb)

MDC-M CAMPAIGN FOR MAKONI: the Arthur Mutambara faction of the divided Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) has started a full-scale campaign for independent presidential aspirant, Simba Makoni. Yesterday, Paul Themba-Nyathi, the faction's director of elections said its campaign for its candidate and Makoni is at full throttle. He said while Morgan Tsvangirai who heads the mainstream faction of the MDC has chided Makoni as "old wine in a new bottle" his formation viewed Makoni as a promising candidate. (Zimbabwean, 27th Feb).

MAKONI CAMPAIGNS: a former ally challenging President Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe's election next month took his campaign to a ruling party stronghold on Thursday, promising to arrest the country's economic slide. The former finance minister was mobbed as he moved around Nyamapanda, a small rural settlement on the border with Mozambique, 240 km (150 miles) to the east of Harare. People jostled each other to catch a glimpse of him at a sleepy shopping centre, which briefly sprang to life after the arrival of a convoy of sports utility vehicles accompanying the candidate. "My name is Simba Makoni, I've come to introduce myself to you and to confirm that I've entered the presidential race," Makoni said, shaking hands of curious villagers. "We need your support so we can return power to you, the people, and so we can reclaim our country which is being destroyed by a minority." At Mutoko -- a major rural business centre 140 km outside Harare -- scores gathered around his convoy, chanting his name. "It's great, it's uplifting," Makoni told journalists after his tour. "The mood is good, the people are ready for this campaign." (Reuters, 28th Feb)

THE ECONOMIST ON MAKONI: Untainted by corruption, he is appealing to ruling-party and opposition supporters alike, especially the urban middle class and the young. His detractors admit he is competent. His surprise candidacy has breathed life into a poll that most observers presumed would be a shoo-in for Mr Mugabe. Immediately after Mr Makoni's declaration, thousands of people rushed to register. Eager volunteers throng his leafy campaign headquarters in the centre of Harare, the capital. Businessmen and people from Zimbabwe's 3m-strong diaspora are said to be opening their wallets. Scarce fuel has been organised and scores of rallies and events scheduled across the country before polling day. (Economist, 28th Feb).

NO LEADERSHIP: "Zimbabwe is in the condition it is in because of a failure of leadership," said Mr Makoni, in an interview with The Daily Telegraph. Mr Makoni, who will run as an independent candidate after he was expelled from Zanu-PF for daring to challenge the president, said that this realisation had come to him over several years. "There was not a 'St Paul on the road to Damascus' awakening," he said. "It wasn't an event, it didn't just happen, it was going on as the situation evolved - that this is not the correct way for our people." With an estimated four million Zimbabweans needing food aid, and with inflation officially running at more than 100,000 per cent, Mr Makoni predicted he would win by a landslide. "We will win resoundingly, by 70 per cent plus," he said. "The people who are supporting me in Zanu-PF and in other quarters, agree with me that the country is ripe for change at the highest level, that the country needs to take a different direction, a positive direction." (Telegraph, 28th Feb)

NO TO RACISM: Mr Makoni is calling for an end to race-based policies. "What we had in Zimbabwe in 1980 was a national government, we had people from different parties and different ethnic groups. We offered the African continent, if not the world, national reconciliation, so I am merely reactivating those values." "I wish and hope and expect this election will be free and fair," Mr Makoni said. He added, however, that he had no access to the state television broadcaster or to the national daily newspapers. So what of the comments Mr Mugabe has made since then, comparing him to a prostitute and a frog? "I am puzzled," replied Mr Makoni. "You had best ask him about that." (Telegraph, 28th Feb).

COLTART ON WHETHER MAKONI IS GENUINE OR A SET UP: It is illogical for Mugabe to put forward a candidate who will take away much of his own vote. Mugabe must have known about the provision in the Electoral Act which states that a Presidential candidate has to get an absolute majority (over 50%) to win the Presidential election. All that Simba Makoni has to do to deny Mugabe that

clear majority is to take away just 10% of the vote Mugabe got from Zanu PF supporters in 2002. If Mugabe does not get a clear majority in the first round he then will have to face off again in a rerun against the opposition candidate who came second. That rerun has to be within 21 days of the 29th March and will be a straight fight with no danger of the opposition vote being divided - Mugabe's worst nightmare. It would just be sheer lunacy for Mugabe to have concocted a plan that could backfire so badly in this way. (Newsletter, Feb)

COLTART ON THE PAST: I do not think that a person's past should automatically bar him from a role in government. I am more concerned about where he stands NOW and in the FUTURE. All of us have done things in the past we are not so happy about. Many of the current MDC leadership were members of Zanu PF during the Gukurahundi and did not speak out. There are others in the MDC (MT) leadership who are now critical of Simba Makoni who were given senior appointments by Mugabe during the Gukurahundi period and never spoke out publicly against what was happening. There are others who are now in senior leadership positions in the opposition who were either members of Zanu PF or who considered standing for Zanu PF right up to the 2000 referendum. But that is all in the PAST and I do not believe that anyone should be automatically disqualified because of positions they have held in the past. If a person shows genuine repentance - a turning away from the past - that person should be eligible for support. (Newsletter, Feb)

ZANU LAUNCH CAMPAIGN: at least 4 000 Zimbabwe ruling party delegates were expected to arrive in the capital Harare on Thursday ahead of the official launch of Zanu-PF's election campaign and manifesto, reports said. War veterans are among those attending the launch by long-time president Robert Mugabe on Friday. The event will be held at the Harare International Conference Centre, at a glitzy city hotel. The ruling party is running election messages in state media with the words: "Do not sign away your beautiful Zimbabwe." Zanu-PF maintains a vote for anyone but Mugabe is a vote for Zimbabwe's former coloniser, Britain and its Western allies. Large posters of Mugabe have been stuck on lamp-posts and even inside bus windscreens. (Zim Independent, 29th Feb)

REBELS REFUSE TO WITHDRAW: the ruling Zanu PF's efforts to conceal divisions in the party collapsed this week as bigwigs who defied President Robert Mugabe and filed their papers to stand as Zanu PF candidates along with official candidates refused to withdraw from the elections. This week the party's leadership sent out high-powered delegations to provinces to convince a number of seasoned Zanu PF politicians who filed their nomination papers to stand as candidates in the parliamentary and senatorial polls to withdraw their candidacies. A number of the candidates who spoke to the Zimbabwe Independent confirmed that they either received a letter or were approached by senior Zanu PF officials and told to withdraw their candidacy. They said they were not going to withdraw because the electorate wanted them to contest the elections. (Zim Independent, 29th Feb)

BIRTHDAY ABUSE: Disturbing reports came from Beitbridge on Saturday, where many villagers flocked to Mugabe's birthday party when they heard there was free food. Nkathazo said he saw youth militia forcing people who were selling wares to stop doing business and get onto buses headed for the birthday bash. Many were local vendors and foreign currency dealers. He said those who refused were beaten. (SW Radio 25 Feb)

THE ECONOMY

PRINTING TO STAY IN POWER: money that is being used to prop up President Robert Mugabe's brutal regime, keep his military onside and win over voters in the run-up to Zimbabwe's elections this month is being printed by a German company. With inflation topping 100,000% and the highest value 10m Zimbabwe dollar note worth just 20p, heavily guarded planeloads of banknotes are flying into Harare almost every day to keep up with the demand. Documents obtained by The Sunday Times show the Munich company Giesecke & Devrient (G&D) is receiving more than €500,000 (£382,000) a week for delivering bank notes at the astonishing rate of Z\$170 trillion a week. "These notes are being used to buy votes, to purchase foreign exchange to import electricity and vehicles to keep their

regime going, and to fund the import of Chinese water cannons and police equipment to keep us intimidated," said a local banker. (Sunday Times, 2 March)

SIX QUADRILLION (OR US\$ 300,000) IN TAX: Zimbabwe's revenue authority hopes to collect Z\$6 quadrillion in tax this year, an enormous figure that is however really more useful as an illustration of the extent of the rot in what was once one of Africa's most brilliant economies. The Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) said it could even surpass the figure and boasted it had exceeded its target for 2007 by more than \$50 trillion. But ZIMRA was fairly honest about the secret behind its unusual success - the country's world record inflation of more than 100 000 percent that has forced firms to frequently hike salaries which of course means more dollars for the revenue collector. \$6 quadrillion is equal to about US\$200 million at the official exchange rate of \$30 000 to one American dollar or just about US\$300 000 at the widely used parallel market rate of about \$20 million to one greenback. (FinGaz, 29th Feb)

DOMESTIC DEBT TREBLES: Zimbabwe's domestic debt increased 200% inside one month to \$60,8 trillion from \$21,1 trillion as government continued to borrow from financial institutions to fund operations, figures released by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) this week say. (Zim Independent, 29th Feb).

ILLEGAL TO CARRY EQUIVALENT OF US\$ 25: a statutory instrument released by government last week says it is now illegal for companies and individuals to do cash transactions worth more than \$250 million. Under Statutory Instrument 21/2008 of the Bank Use Promotion and Suppression of Money Laundering Act released last Friday, it is also illegal for traders and parastatals to hold cash in excess of \$500 million for more than 24 hours from the last trading hour. It also prohibits companies from settling trade debts above \$250 million in cash. The Statutory Instrument defines holding cash in excess of \$500 million (US\$ 25) as "unlawful hoarding of cash". Licensed money lenders are also not allowed to keep more than \$500 million. Analysts have said the new law shows that the government is still in denial about the real situation in the economy. Using the prices for this week \$250 million can only buy a two-litre bottle of cooking oil (\$100 million), a 20kg bag of mealie-meal (\$110 million) and a bar of soap (\$30 million). For companies the amount is not enough to buy stationery. The Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce (ZNCC) has described the Statutory Instrument as a futile attempt by the government to control the liquidity position of business. "I don't know why government overburdens itself by creating extra work for themselves," said ZNCC president Marah Hativagone. "It is like a dog chasing its tail," she said. (Zimbabwe Independent, 29th Feb).

NO DIAMOND SMUGGLING: Zimbabwe has been cleared of any illegal activity in the trade of diamonds, after a probe by the Kimberley Process (KP), the global standard for the diamond industry. In a summary of a report after a visit by its investigators to Zimbabwe between May and June last year, KP said it had found no "substantial proof" of smuggling. The team, however, acknowledged that the situation regarding illegal diamond production by panners in the Marange area was "extremely difficult" in the second half of 2006. The government had, however, brought the area under control. (FinGaz, 29th Feb).

DIAMONDS DOWN: Zimbabwe's Murowa diamond mine recorded a 40-percent decline in production in 2007, hurt by frequent power cuts, equipment failures and a delayed expansion programme, Rio Tinto Zimbabwe said on Wednesday. The mine, which is 78-percent owned by London-based mining firm Rio Tinto produced 145,000 carats in 2007, compared to 240,000 carats in the previous year, the company said in a statement to shareholders. While a decline in the grade of diamonds had been expected, the company said it had not anticipated the extensive impact of electricity outages, which have been increasingly common in the economically devastated southern African nation. (Reuters, 27 Feb)

CHINESE IN GOLD AND PLATINUM: Chinese investors who were part of a recent visiting delegation are eyeing significant investments within Zimbabwe's gold and platinum sectors, the Herald Business has gathered. While no figures could be obtained, this paper understands that the Chinese are admirers of Zimbabwe's mining industry, and were keen to pour in money. The 22-

member delegation, which consisted of mining, exploration and trade experts, is said to have held meetings with Mines Minister, Mr Amos Midzi on their intentions. (Harare Herald, 27 Feb)

CHINESE IN FERROCROME: Recently, Sinosteel Group, a giant Chinese mining concern, acquired 67 percent of Zimasco Consolidated Enterprises, the country's largest ferrochrome producer. Zimasco, which produces nearly 4 percent of the world ferrochrome, churns out at least 210 000 tonnes of high carbon ferrochrome yearly. There has been serious lack of capital expenditure in the mining sector while rampant smuggling has also stolen more than US\$400 million from the industry in 2007. Regular power cuts have also combined forces with other factors to bring mineral production on the floor. Last year, Zimbabwe produced about 8 tonnes of gold, down from a peak of 29 tonnes produced in 1916. Around 5 000kg of platinum were produced. Over the past decade, the gold production graph has routinely trended downwards. (Harare Herald, 27th Feb)

CHINESE LOANS: a desperate Robert Mugabe has asked China for a £25 billion loan to help repair Zimbabwe's shattered economy. The state-controlled Herald newspaper said industry and trade minister Obert Mpofu had confirmed the request by the Zimbabwean government. Mr Mpofu said the grant would help the Zimbabwe authorities "to take care of our immediate and future long-term requirements". It would also help stabilise the economy, he said. (Scotsman, 25th Feb)

TAKE THE MINES NEXT: "We will now go for what comes after the farms, the minerals," President Mugabe said amid thunderous applause from his supporters. "Whose are the minerals? Do they belong to the adventurers who come, invest, use our people, pay poor wages and say the rest is mine? Why should we accept that?" he said in the televised statement. (FinGaz, 28th Feb)

NEW PLANES: government has paid a deposit for three Ilyushin planes from Russia's Voronezh Aircraft Construction Company (Vaco). The planes, which are Ilyushin-96 models, are for cargo and passenger use. The deal is worth US\$228 million and government recently paid a 30% deposit of US\$68,4 million to show commitment. Delivery of the planes will be done mid-2010. Aviation experts have however criticised the deal saying Ilyushin planes were expensive to maintain. A technical report done by Air Zimbabwe engineers also criticised the decision to buy the planes from Russia. The report said the planes had serious "technical shortcomings" that have been reported by other users in the past. They are also heavy on fuel and will involve Air Zimbabwe engineers in extensive retraining. (Zim Independent, 29th Feb)

WHERE IS OUR FOREX? exporters and gold mining companies are on the verge of collapse because they cannot access their foreign currency which is held by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ). The RBZ has failed to release the funds into foreign currency accounts (FCAs) on time since November last year forcing major exporting companies and gold miners to scale down operations. Gold production is at its lowest level since 2000. Exporting companies have reduced production because they don't have working capital. Non-government organisations and civic organisations are also battling to get their forex from the RBZ. Some NGOs have applications dating back to as far as December last year. Exporters are required by the RBZ to keep 65% of their export proceeds in their FCAs and are forced to liquidate 35% of their export proceeds at US\$1:\$525 000. Sources said there was a strong belief in the market that the foreign currency was used for other things. "We believe there is nothing in our accounts. All efforts by holders of FCAs to get their funds released have been in vain. There is despair in industry as there are no signs they will get their forex anytime soon," said one source. (Zim Independent, 28th Feb).

NO FOREX FOR GOLD MINES: Information gathered this week shows that some mines have not been paid for their gold deliveries to the RBZ since October last year. Production for 2008 is already threatened with mining experts saying it could be as low as three tonnes. The sector is operating at less than 15% of capacity due to working capital problems caused by the late payments from the RBZ. For example Metallon's How Mine in Bulawayo which normally produces more than 150kg per month only managed 25kg in January. The target for February is 18kg. (Zim Independent, 29th Feb)

NO FUEL: a massive fuel shortage is looming in the country amid revelations that government has started stocking diesel and petrol for the election campaign. Sources said the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe (Noczim), the sole importer of fuel in the country, has been directed to hold on to the fuel that they have imported on behalf of private fuel companies. A source said government, which is currently thin on resources, plans to divert some of the fuel for use during the elections. The government does not have the foreign currency to import its own fuel. There were reports this week that the government was buying foreign currency on the parallel market to import fuel. The prices of fuel on the black market jumped to around \$28 million a litre as the few companies that have the product try to cash in on the temporary shortages. Fuel prices have also been increasing in United States dollar terms. (Zim Independent, 29th Feb)

NO INFLATION FIGURES → NO CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNTS: Zimbabwe Stock Exchange (ZSE) is analysing proposals submitted by listed companies to report their accounts in United States dollar terms as a means of getting around the delays in the release of inflation figures. The CSO has failed to publish year-on-year inflation figures on time for the past seven months. Foreign-owned companies have been hardest hit by the CSO's delays. The majority are required to prepare their audited and inflation adjusted financial statements well before the 90-day year-end deadline to allow the holding companies to consolidate their accounts into the group statements before deadline, which is an international standard, lapses. Munyukwi said there were fears that some local companies could fail to submit their audited statements on time. (Zim Independent, 29th Feb)

UNHAPPY WORKERS: most workers in Zimbabwe are unhappy with their current employers and would prefer to leave if they get an alternative job, a recent human resources survey conducted by a local labour consultancy reveals. The survey done by Organisational Excellence Consultancy whose results were released two weeks ago shows that the majority of workers are desperate to leave their current jobs because they are not happy with their salaries. The survey revealed that given a choice, 87,5% of workers in Zimbabwe would leave their current employers with the remaining 12,5% saying they would rather stay put. However, the reason for those who would rather remain with their current employers has little to do with the salaries but the relationship that they enjoy with colleagues at the workplace. (Zim Independent, 29th Feb).

ONE BILLION DOLLAR LET DOWN: Norman Nerwande (34) was one of the soldiers who received a billion-dollar salary last week but instead of being happy he is depressed. The reason is that the amount is barely enough to buy the basics for his family of three. Nerwande's billion-dollar pay cheque is only enough to buy two litres of cooking oil (\$60 million), a loaf of bread per day for the rest of the month (\$120 million) and a packet of meali-meal (\$20million). It will also pay rent for his three rooms in Budiriro (\$80 million per room), four kilogrammes of meat (\$40 million per kilogramme) and provide enough bus fare (\$205 million per month). He will also be able to pay the city council rates, water and power charges which now require \$250 million per month. The amount is finished before Nerwande can cater for other basic commodities, clothing and school fees. Nerwande's problem is that these calculations are based on the prices that are valid for a week and in some cases a day. (Zim Independent, 29th Feb).

TEACHERS STRIKE GROWS: The Zimbabwe Teachers Association said Thursday that its members have joined their colleagues from the rival Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe in a strike to enforce their demand that salaries be pegged to the national poverty line. The association said its 55,000 members are participating in the strike, effectively paralyzing the education system. The rival PTUZ went on strike in January. (VOA, 29th Feb)

CIVIL SERVANTS TO STRIKE: Things are rapidly falling apart under the world of the Zanu (PF) regime as by Friday operations in government departments were either on a go-slow or in some cases a virtual halt as civil servants took first steps towards joining teachers in a full-blown strike. In Harare it was compounded by a strike by council workers who downed tools on Wednesday. Nurses and doctors joined the strike set to paralyse operations across the whole country. The Public Service

Association (PSA), which represents all civil servants, said its members were disgruntled and forced to resort to industrial action after having given the Mugabe regime until end of February to review their salaries. (Zimbabwean, 1 March)

PRICES UP AND UP: Last Tuesday, the Zimbabwe dollar was trading at 10,168,387.69:1 US dollar on the Old Mutual Implied Rate, financial reports said. Seven days later the rate stood at 19,573,700.46. Prices in shops and supermarkets shot up this week as traders struggle to make money to cover replacement costs. In one store, sardines, which were trading at 15 million Zimbabwe dollars per can on Tuesday sold at 30 million on Wednesday, dog food rose from 60 million dollars to 240 million per 5 kilogram bag and the cost of a single toilet roll 5 million to 8 million. (Zimbabwean)

DAILY LIFE

NO FREE MOVEMENT IN SADC REGION – THANKS TO ZIM REFUGEES: The goal of Southern African regional integration is being set back by the outflow of Zimbabwean migrants to neighbouring countries, according to researchers. An estimated three million Zimbabweans have emigrated as a result of the country's economic and political crisis, many of them heading to neighbouring South Africa and Botswana. Their arrival has triggered a rise in xenophobia as locals complain about competition for jobs and rising crime rates. "The movement of Zimbabweans - not only into South Africa but into Botswana and elsewhere - has effectively, if temporarily, removed the issue of free movement from the table," Loren Landau, Director of the Forced Migration Studies Programme at the University of the Witwatersrand, told IRIN. (IRIN, 27th Feb)

NO FOOD: A severe shortage of the Zimbabwean staple maize meal has obliged some villagers in the provinces of Matabeleland North and South to spend weeks camping in queues at millers and supermarkets awaiting a chance to buy a few bags. Villagers in the districts of Binga, Lupane, Tsholotsho, Hwange and Mangwe have been obliged to travel long distances to find maize meal, local sources said. Villagers thronged a Lupane miller which is under contract to the state monopoly Grain Marketing Board, but the miller was said to have been unable to meet demand. Flooding in the wake of heavy rains in January cut off many parts of Matabeleland and the GMB has stated that it has not been able to deliver in certain areas. Mangwe lawmaker Edward Mkhosi of the MDC Mutambara told reporter Jonga Kandemiiri of VOA's Studio 7 for Zimbabwe that maize hoarding by ruling party officials intending to use it to influence voters before March 29 national elections has made things worse. (VOA, 26th Feb)

NO AMBULANCES: Health services in Bulawayo have been disrupted and drug shortages were evident at most of the council clinics IRIN visited. "Patients come here for diagnosis only, and are then referred to private clinics, while those without money and medical aid schemes are told to go back home," said a nurse at Mzilikazi clinic, in one of the city's high-density suburbs. A shortage of ambulances is also impairing medical services: only two out of 40 are in use because the spares needed to repair the others are either unobtainable or unaffordable. (IRIN 25 Feb)

NO CLEAN WATER: Council spokesman Phathisa Nyathi said the cash crunch had forced the city to suspend all capital projects. "Council is completely broke, and unless and until the NIPC approves the council budget and allows us to review rates periodically, then services will continue to deteriorate, as the hyperinflationary environment does not allow us to complete projects." The council has recently introduced a water levy to help cover the high cost of water-purification chemicals. Residents will be expected to pay a levy of Z\$1,621,000 (US\$0.10) per month, while non-domestic users will fork out Z\$24 million (about US\$1.60) per month. (IRIN 25 Feb)

NO FIRE FIGHTERS: The Bulawayo council has been hit by staff shortages as skilled employees make their way to neighbouring countries in search of better salaries. Bulawayo's fire prevention division recently shut down two of its substations because it no longer had the staff to man them. Chief fire officer Edward Mpofu said the service had also been curtailed by the lack of foreign exchange to procure fuel and buy spares to maintain the fleet of fire engines. (IRIN 25 Feb)

POTHLES AND REFUSE GALORE: 25 February 2008 (IRIN) - Service delivery has collapsed in Zimbabwe's second largest city, Bulawayo, after local authorities recently announced that the municipality was insolvent and unable to cater to the needs of its almost two million residents. The council could not pay salaries in January and employees have been on a go-slow since then. Refuse collection and maintenance have come to a halt: repairs to potholes and burst sewers have been affected, as has the procurement of medicines for council clinics. The situation has been compounded by the central government's failure to approve the council's supplementary budget since September 2007, and local authorities cannot increase tariffs without this approval. (25th Feb)

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE – NOR ANY DROP TO DRINK: As you approach the settlement of Mabvuko near Harare, there is an overpowering stench of excreta wafting out of burst sewer pipes and toilets that have not been flushed for days due to the lack of running water. "As you can see, we are in a mess. One wonders where the hell is the water when Lake Chivero is said to be filled to capacity and newspaper front pages always show pictures of it spilling," said a resident. Lake Chivero is the largest water supply dam for Harare. The Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA) has just released statistics showing that Lake Chivero was at 103.8 percent of its capacity in January. Figures nationwide indicate that Zimbabwe's major dams were at 94.5 percent of their combined capacity. (IPS News, 28th Feb).

FIGHTING FOR WATER: water shortages in Gweru, the Midlands, worsened over the weekend to the extent that police had to be called in to restore order as residents of the high-density suburb of Mkoba fought over access to a water borehole. (VOA 26th)

70% WITHOUT MEDICATION: The UK Government today announced £5 million to buy much needed medicines and supplies to help prevent the collapse of basic health services in Zimbabwe. Douglas Alexander, Secretary of State for International Development, explained that the Emergency Vital Medicines Support programme will benefit the most vulnerable Zimbabweans, including the elderly, pregnant women and children. Douglas Alexander said: "Currently, 70% of medicines needed to provide district health services in Zimbabwe are out of stock, and within a few weeks, this figure could increase to 90%. The UK is providing £5 million emergency support to ensure that the poorest and most vulnerable Zimbabweans are able to access the vital medicines that they require. (United Kingdom Department for International Development, 27th Feb).

ALMOST NO BLOOD: Zimbabwe's blood bank has just one third of the supplies it required the latest statistic that reveals a deepening crisis in the national health sector, reports said Saturday. The National Blood Transfusion Service (NBTS) has just 1,000 units of blood instead of the requisite 3,000 units, spokesman Emmanuel Masvikieni told the state-controlled Herald newspaper. "In case of any crisis, the blood is not adequate," said Masvikieni. He said the situation would worsen when school pupils, who contribute 75 per cent of blood to the blood bank, go on holiday ahead of elections on March 29. (Earth Times, 1 March)

NO CERTIFICATES: The Zimbabwe School Examinations Council (ZIMSEC), which administers public examinations in the country, does not have foreign currency to have certificates printed out of the country. Students who sat for their final public examinations in 2005 and 2006 have not been given their certificates. This has had a telling impact on the pupils' education careers as institutions of higher education such as universities and colleges are refusing to enrol them. (Zim Journalists, 27th Feb)

NO LECTURERS: in a graphic illustration of the critical state of lecturer staffing levels at the University of Zimbabwe, the institution has advertised 120 vacant posts in the state-controlled Sunday paper, The Sunday Mail. The advert on the numerous posts - printed in a small font - took out an entire page of the broadsheet. The worst affected department is that of medicine, where 18 lecturers are required at under and postgraduate level for disciplines ranging from cardiology to dermatology and tropical medicine. The Department of Anaesthesia and Critical Care Medicine is not much better, with 12 posts vacant, neither is the department of physiology with 10 posts which need filling. Other

departments that require lectures include the Department of Biological Sciences (9 posts), the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (8), the Department of Clinical Veterinary Studies (8), the Department of Business Studies (8) and the Department of History (7). (Zim Guardian, 29th Feb).

NO FUN FOR STUDENTS: "Students life has become hell at the UZ," said one student. "Everything continues to crumble and, above all, the shortage of lecturers has reached crisis levels. It is no exaggeration to say the varsity is now producing half- baked graduates as we miss so many lessons owing to the non-availability of lecturers." Last September when the UZ opened, it was estimated that only a quarter of the then about 11 000 students turned up in the first week for the new semester as acute accommodation and financial problems kept thousands away. (Zimbabwe Guardian, 29th Feb).

AIR ZIMBABWE AVERTS CRASH: an air disaster was averted on Monday when an Air Zimbabwe plane aborted a flight to Singapore and made a U-turn a few hours after take-off from Harare, The Financial Gazette can reveal. The incident occurred when the aircraft developed a technical fault four hours after taking off from Harare International Airport. Sources told The Financial Gazette that the plane, which had taken off at 10:15 pm landed safely back at Harare International Airport on Tuesday morning after abandoning the long haul flight to Singapore. (FinGaz, 29th Feb).

ROBBERS ARRESTED: Two suspected armed robbers who are alleged to have robbed MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai at gunpoint in South Africa earlier this month, have been arrested. George Sibochiwe, Tsvangirai' spokesman, confirmed the arrests Thursday, adding that the MDC leader had to fly back to Johannesburg for an identification parade. However that might have to wait until April because of Tsvangirai's hectic campaign schedule. (SWRadio, 29th Feb)

RAPE INCREASING: Child rape has increased 42 percent in Zimbabwe, the United Nations children's agency said Wednesday, linking worsening child abuse and domestic violence to family tensions caused by the nation's economic meltdown. The U.N. Children's Fund launched a new "Stand Up and Speak Out" campaign calling on children, relatives and church and other groups to fight what it called the "staggering statistics on the unspeakable evils of child abuse." UNICEF said the number of cases of rape of minors reported to police surged from 2,192 in 2003 to 3,112 in 2006. Many other cases likely went unreported in a climate of secrecy and denial, it said. (UNICEF, 29th Feb)

INTOLERABLE PRESSURE ON KIDS: Dr. Festo Kavishe, UNICEF's chief representative in Zimbabwe, said, "There is a tendency for people to take out their frustrations on children when they are unable to provide necessary care. Child rape, that most abhorrent of crime, is just one type of abuse. Zimbabwe's current economic challenges have meant an increase in verbal abuse, neglect and physical violence," He said the children were victims of "intolerable economic pressures" suffered by parents unable to provide adequate food, education or medical care faced futures that could include more violence, poverty, joblessness, early pregnancy and prostitution in girls and alcohol and substance abuse. The nation's 1 million children orphaned by HIV/AIDS were particularly vulnerable to abuse by relatives and those in authority, even in schools and care institutions, he said. (International Herald Tribune, 26 Feb)

DIASPORA ORPHANS: The worst economic crisis in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980 also created a category of children known as "diaspora orphans," the children of economic fugitives living and working in neighbouring South Africa and in Europe, the United States and Australia. A UNICEF cartoon clip to be aired on peak time evening viewing on state television depicts a mother working abroad whose husband takes in a new lover who squanders money sent home and neglects the child, locking the child outside the home without food or shelter. An estimated 4 million Zimbabweans - one-fourth the population - have left the country to find work abroad, splitting up families. Kavishe said cases of domestic violence and assault soared in families where the remaining breadwinner was unable to put food on the table and fulfil a traditional role as head of the family. (International Herald Tribune, 26 Feb)

