

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

Madagascar Monthly Briefing March 2020

Madagascar Summary 18 March 2020

Madagascar moves quickly to prevent spread of coronavirus COVID-19. At time of writing, there are no cases of the virus reported on the island but Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Anosiala quarantine centre is monitoring 19 travellers with symptoms. Flights connecting Madagascar and Europe are suspended for 30 days. Air Madagascar extends its suspension of flights between Antananarivo and Guangzhou (China) until 30 June. The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), the World Health Organisation (WHO), the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US CDC), and the National Public Health Institutes (NPHIs) unite to help the African continent fight the outbreak. The World Bank offers Madagascar \$3.7m in assistance. Commission Électorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI) (independent national electoral commission) vice-president Thierry Rakotonarivo resigns after further electoral anomalies surface. India delivers 600 tonnes of rice to Madagascar as the country braces for Cyclone Harold.

Madagascar moves quickly to prevent spread of COVID-19

President **Andry Rajoelina** (2019-present) announced his government's plans during an emergency meeting on 14 March for protecting **Madagascar** from an outbreak of the **coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)**.¹ At time of writing, there were no confirmed cases of the virus on the island but the quarantine centre at **Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Anosiala** has been monitoring 19 travellers with symptoms and the government remains vigilant.

Control measures include bans on public gatherings, halting flights, and closing schools and universities.² Flights connecting Madagascar to **Europe** are suspended from 20 March for 30 days.³ Air travel to the nearby islands of **La Reunion** and **Mayotte** has also been suspended, along with the immediate banning of all cruise ships.⁴ The stricter measures came after **Kenya, Namibia, Equatorial Guinea, Mauritania, Rwanda, Seychelles** and **Central African Republic** confirmed their first coronavirus cases, bringing the total number of **African** countries that have reported positive tests for the virus to 23.⁵ To date, **South Africa** has the highest number of coronavirus infections in **sub-Saharan Africa** at 62 cases on 18 March, followed by 27 in **Senegal**.⁶ Although the spread of the virus is declining in **China**, where it originated, it continues to increase globally. The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** on 11 March characterised COVID-19 a "pandemic".⁷

Health checks are being conducted at all ports of entry into Madagascar and preventive measures include the spraying of disinfectant on passengers from countries affected by COVID-19.⁸ Before the European travel ban came into effect, focus had been on flights from **France**, which see at least 200 passengers disembark from each of the three weekly flights to Madagascar. **Air Madagascar**

¹ Reuters, 14 Mar 2020

² Financial Post, 14 Mar 2020

³ New Vision, 15 Mar 2020

⁴ The New York Times, 14 Mar 2020

⁵ Financial Post, 15 Mar 2020

⁶ WHO, 15 Mar 2020

⁷ WHO, 11 Mar 2020

⁸ Madagascar Tribune, 13 Mar 2020

announced on 12 March that it would extend the suspension of flights between **Antananarivo** and the Chinese city of **Guangzhou** until 30 June.⁹

Addressing the **Assemblée Nationale** (national assembly) on 12 March, minister of transport, tourism and meteorology **Joël Randriamandranto** indicated that supplying Madagascar with food and basic necessities is the government's major concern if it becomes necessary to close all borders. Health minister **Ahmad Ahmad** said that the **World Bank** had offered \$3.7m, which the government would use to help monitor all ports and airports, along with improving communication and public awareness.

The government has also made provision for travellers needing to isolate. The Mahamasina Stadium in Antananarivo has been serving as an observation space for 17 Chinese citizens who arrived at Antananarivo's **Ivato International Airport** on 10 March with a special exemption to enter Madagascar.¹⁰ They are members of a team that is responsible for the rehabilitation of the stadium, and had been quarantined in China before coming to Madagascar.

The WHO has emphasised a multi-pronged approach of thermal screening along with symptom checks and interviewing passengers with known high-risk exposure in order to collect data that can be stored and traced if need be. Confirming cases presents a challenge with only five laboratories existing on the African continent at the start of the outbreak in China.¹¹ The **Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC)** has partnered with the WHO, the **US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US CDC)**, the **National Public Health Institutes (NPHIs)** and equivalent government agencies, and health ministries to prepare **African Union (AU)** member states for the outbreak in their countries.¹² Africa CDC director **John Nkengasong** has reassured that the centre has trained hundreds of experts from AU member states in different aspects of COVID-19 prevention and control, including laboratory diagnosis, enhanced surveillance and point of entry screening, infection prevention and control, risk communication, and case management, with 43 laboratories from 43 African countries having participated in training organised by Africa CDC, as of 7 March. Representatives of those laboratories have been trained to isolate and transport the virus and test for it in the laboratory. Each laboratory has received kits containing reagents to conduct at least 200 tests during the training. Africa CDC also provides additional kits for 1,000 tests to any country that reports cases. The WHO and US CDC have provided additional test kits to some of these countries to strengthen their capacity to test for the virus.

Impact of COVID-19 on Madagascar's economy

Although the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have an economic impact on Madagascar, the extent is not yet clear. Madagascar shipped \$2.6 billion worth of goods around the world in 2019.¹³ Ten of Madagascar's top 15 trading partners (France, US, China, **Japan, Germany, South Korea, Netherlands, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom (UK) and Spain**) are among the 20 countries with the most confirmed cases of COVID-19. Madagascar's top trading bloc in 2019 in terms of export sales was **Europe** (39.1% of total Malagasy exports), while 29.6% of its exports went to **Asia**.¹⁴ **North America** is Madagascar's next largest trading bloc partner (22.9% of total exports), while 7.8% of 2019 exports went to fellow African countries, 0.4% to **Oceania** led by **Australia**, and 0.1% to **Latin America** excluding **Mexico** but including the **Caribbean**.¹⁵

Madagascar's imports totalled \$3.9 billion in 2019, with 62.2% of total imports by value in 2019 purchased from Asian countries. European trade partners supplied 21.2% of Madagascar's imports

⁹ Madagascar Tribune, 13 Mar 2020

¹⁰ Madagascar Tribune, 14 Mar 2020

¹¹ The Guardian, 4 Feb 2020

¹² Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) Press Release, 7 Mar 2020

¹³ World's Top Exports, 1 Jan 2020

¹⁴ World's Top Exports, 1 Jan 2020

¹⁵ World's Top Exports, 1 Jan 2020

while 11.7% worth of goods originated from fellow African traders. A smaller percentage came from North America (2.6%), Latin America (1.8%) excluding Mexico but including the Caribbean, and Oceania (0.4%) led by Australia and **New Zealand**.

Madagascar's Top 15 Trading Partners 2019: exports¹⁶		
	\$m	% of exports
France	526.4	20.5
United States	514.4	20.1
China	167	6.5
Japan	165.9	6.5
Germany	143.1	5.6
South Korea	123.2	4.8
Netherlands	115.3	4.5
United Arab Emirates	95.2	3.7
South Africa	86.1	3.4
India	73.7	2.9
Canada	73.2	2.9
Taiwan	47	1.8
United Kingdom	45.2	1.8
Spain	43.9	1.7
Mauritius	41.2	1.6%

Electoral commission vice-president resigns

Commission Eléctorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI) (independent national electoral commission) president **Hery Rakotomanana** announced on 11 March that CENI vice-president **Thierry Rakotonarivo** had resigned from his position.¹⁷ This follows revelations that Rakotonarivo was aware of the existence of more than a million national identity cards with identical numbers in the electoral list, as well as around 110,000 other duplicates during the 2019 municipal elections.¹⁸ The findings have mobilised Madagascar's opposition groups. **L'alliance des partis de l'opposition (RMDM)**, the alliance of opposition parties, met on 14 March at the headquarters of **Tiako i Madagasikara (TIM)** in **Ampandrana**.¹⁹ TIM national secretary **Rina Randriamasinoro** said the political party is closely monitoring the national political situation and will contemplate its next steps.²⁰

The CENI has said little barring the brief statement on Rakotonarivo's resignation but has indicated that these admissions should put an end to the controversies engendered in this case.²¹ However, CENI maintains that the anomalies noted with regard to identity card duplicates in the 2019 elections

¹⁶ World's Top Exports, 1 Jan 2020

¹⁷ Madagascar Tribune, 14 Mar 2020

¹⁸ RFI, 13 Mar 2020

¹⁹ RFI, 13 Mar 2020

²⁰ RFI, 13 Mar 2020

²¹ Madagascar Tribune, 14 Mar 2020

are not substantial enough to have impacted the various polls held and the final results.²² The RMDM says it will continue to advocate for the establishment of a tripartite committee of the opposition parties, civil society, and government representatives to ensure an in-depth and objective study that will provide solutions to prevent future electoral system issues.²³

India delivers rice to Madagascar amid cyclone relief efforts

Indian warship **INS Shardul** arrived at **Port Antsiranana** on 10 March with over 600 tonnes of rice as part of “**Operation Vanilla**”, relief efforts for Madagascar affected by **Cyclone Diane**, which hit Madagascar at the end of January.²⁴ India’s envoy, **Anhay Kumar**, handed over the rice to Madagascar’s foreign minister, **Tehindrazanarivelo Djacoba Liva**, after the ship had arrived.²⁵ This is the second shipment that India has sent and constitutes the largest humanitarian aid from India along with the biggest load of relief materials ever carried by an Indian warship.²⁶ The rice will be distributed amongst the nearly 92,000 people affected by the floods.²⁷

India’s efforts highlight strengthening ties between India and Madagascar and a continuation of Indian prime minister **Narendra Modi’s** (2014 - present) vision of “**Security and Growth for all in the Region**” (**SAGAR**).²⁸ Modi first outlined the SAGAR vision in a speech delivered in March 2015, describing India’s vision for the **Indian Ocean Region** with a focus on an agenda of security and growth for the maritime region.²⁹ In the past India has been criticised for its often slow delivery on its promises of maritime and navy diplomacy.³⁰ Indian naval ships on overseas deployment have now been mandated to carry additional **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)** kits.³¹ Operation Vanilla has provided an example of how the country is challenging these critiques and strengthening its strategic action capabilities.³²

Additional humanitarian aid from India may be needed in the coming months as tropical cyclone **Harold** forms off the coast of Madagascar bringing damaging winds and torrential rains.³³ As of 15 March, parts of Madagascar had already been hit, with **Samabava** in the northeast of the island recording 95mm (3.7 inches) of rainfall, which is expected to rise to 300mm (11.9 inches).³⁴ Widespread disruption including the prospect of floods and mudslides is likely.³⁵

²² Madagascar Tribune, 14 Mar 2020

²³ Afrique ActuDaily, 13 Mar 2020

²⁴ Financial Express, 14 Mar 2020

²⁵ The New Indian Express, 13 Mar 2020

²⁶ Hindustan Times, 12 Mar 2020

²⁷ Financial Express, 14 Mar 2020

²⁸ Financial Express, 14 Mar 2020

²⁹ Observer Research Foundation, 3 Feb 2020

³⁰ India Review Journal, 27 Jan 2020

³¹ Observer Research Foundation, 3 Feb 2020

³² Source, university professor, Johannesburg

³³ Imas Press Réunion, 15 Mar 2020

³⁴ Imas Press Réunion, 15 Mar 2020

³⁵ Aljazeera, 14 Mar 2020

Planner

19-23 Apr 2020 **Gaborone (Botswana)** United States-based business magazine **Forbes** to host the first **Under 30 Africa Summit**;³⁶

21-25 April 2020 **Bulawayo (Zimbabwe)** Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF);³⁷

26 Jun 2020 (**Madagascar**) Independence Day;

28-30 September **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** L'AviaDev Africa 2020 (Aeronautical Conference of Africa)³⁸

2023 (**Madagascar**) Potential presidential elections

Chronology

16 Mar 2020 **Sainte-Marie (Réunion)** *Centre for Aviation*. **Air Austral** (airline of **French** overseas department of **Réunion**) suspends **Madagascar** operations until April 2020;

13 Mar 2020 **Manakara (Madagascar)** *Madagascar Tribune*. A **French** couple who tested negative for **COVID-19** but were required to remain under observation for 14 days at **Anosiola University Hospital Center** leave the hospital without informing authorities;

11 Mar 2020 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Madagascar Oil press release*. **Madagascar Oil** developer of the **Tsimiroro** oil field announces the appointment of **Kemrajsing Sewnundun** as commercial director;

11 Mar 2020 **Moramanga (Madagascar)** *Resource World*. **Toronto-based-Sherritt International Inc.** announces exit from the joint nickel and cobalt **Ambatovy** mine venture;

10 Feb 2020 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Xinhua*. **International Monetary Fund** deputy managing director **Zhang Tao** says **Mozambique** is recovering well from the devastating impact of cyclones **Idai** and **Kenneth** that damaged the country last year;

7 Mar 2020 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Madagascar Tribune*. **L'Assemblée nationale**, Madagascar's national assembly, ratifies the creation of a road authority and a road maintenance fund;

5 Mar 2020 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *Engineering News*. **African** equity capital market declined in value by 44% and in volume by 29% in 2019, and **PwC** projects that this volatile trend will continue in the 2020 financial year;

5 Mar 2020 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *New Age Bangladesh*. **Bangladesh** ambassador to **Mauritius**, **Rezina Ahmed**, presents a letter of credence to **Madagascar's** President **Andry Rajoelina**;

3 Mar 2020 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Madagascar Oil press release*. **Madagascar Oil** developer of the **Tsimiroro** oil field announces the appointment of **Philip Wolfe** as CFO;

10 Feb 2020 **Antananarivo (Madagascar)** *Xinhua*. **International Monetary Fund** deputy managing director **Zhang Tao** says **Mozambique** is recovering well from the devastating impact of cyclones **Idai** and **Kenneth** that damaged the country last year;

³⁶ The government announced on 10 March that it would monitor COVID-19 developments before deciding to continue or cancel the event.

³⁷ ZITF organisers say they will make an announcement on 13 March as to whether the trade show will go ahead.

³⁸ The conference has been postponed from its original dates (6 May-8 May)

About Africa Risk Consulting:

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