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Zimbabwe Summary 10 July 2026

Zimbabwe enters a new and potentially volatile political phase after President Emmerson Mnangagwa (2017-present) signs the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 3) Act into law, cementing sweeping constitutional changes that will keep him in office until 2030 and fundamentally reshape the country's electoral system. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reaches a staff-level agreement with Zimbabwe on the first review of its 10-month Staff-Monitored Programme (SMP), marking a significant step in the country's efforts to clear arrears and re-engage with international creditors. Zimbabwe explores resource-backed financing arrangements with China that could see future revenues from the country's vast mineral wealth used to fund an estimated $34 billion overhaul of its aging road and railway infrastructure.

Political uncertainty as Mnangagwa signs law to extend his tenure

Zimbabwe has entered a new and potentially volatile political phase after President **Emmerson Mnangagwa** (2017-present) signed the **Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 3) Act** into law, cementing sweeping constitutional changes that will keep him in office until 2030 and fundamentally reshape the country's electoral system.

The legislation, which both the **National Assembly** and **Senate** recently approved with the required two-thirds majority, extends the presidential and parliamentary term from five years to seven years. As a result, the general elections that were due in 2028 will now be held in 2030, effectively granting Mnangagwa an additional two years in office while maintaining the constitutional two-term limit.

Beyond extending the electoral cycle, the amendment introduces far-reaching institutional reforms. Future presidents will no longer be elected by direct popular vote but by Parliament, sitting as an electoral college, after general elections. The law also transfers voter registration responsibilities from the **Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC**) to the **Registrar-General**, establishes an independent **Delimitation Commission** to oversee constituency boundaries, restructures the leadership of the superior courts, removes public interviews for certain judicial appointments, and expands the President's powers to appoint additional senators.

The government has defended the reforms as part of broader constitutional and governance improvements aimed at strengthening state institutions, improving administrative efficiency and ensuring continuity in national development programmes. State media and ruling **ZANU-PF** officials have described the legislation as a milestone in Zimbabwe's constitutional evolution achieved through parliamentary debate and public consultations.

However, the constitutional changes have generated fierce opposition from civil society organisations, constitutional lawyers and opposition parties, who argue that the amendment undermines democratic principles by allowing an incumbent president to benefit from changes made during his tenure.

Critics contend that the constitution explicitly discourages office holders from benefiting from amendments affecting their tenure and argue that such fundamental changes to Zimbabwe's electoral system required approval through a national referendum rather than parliamentary votes alone. They have also objected to abolishing direct presidential elections, arguing that the move would remove citizens' constitutional right to elect the country's leader.

The law has therefore set the stage for what could become a prolonged constitutional and political battle. An opposition party, the **Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)**, an urgent constitutional court application on 9 July seeking to have the act declared unconstitutional, arguing that Mnangagwa was obliged to subject the law to a national referendum before signing it, and failed to do so. The application cites the president, Parliament, the justice minister, **Ziyambi Ziyambi**, and the attorney general as respondents.

Several other opposition groups and civil society organisations have already indicated that they will challenge the amendment before the constitutional court while simultaneously mobilising public demonstrations against what they describe as an unconstitutional extension of executive power. Legal experts expect the courts will now be asked to determine whether Parliament had the authority to enact such sweeping constitutional changes without seeking direct public approval.

Should the legal challenges fail, attention is likely to shift to the streets. Calls for peaceful mass protests have already begun emerging from sections of the opposition, raising concerns that Zimbabwe could experience heightened political tensions in the coming months. The government has in recent months faced criticism from human rights organisations over restrictions on opposition activities and public gatherings, increasing fears that any demonstrations could trigger confrontations between protesters and security forces.

The constitutional amendment also carries wider implications for Zimbabwe's international standing. At a time when Harare is seeking to rebuild relations with Western creditors, normalise ties with international financial institutions and attract foreign investment, prolonged political instability could undermine investor confidence and complicate ongoing economic reform efforts.

While supporters argue the amendments provide policy continuity needed to implement Vision 2030 and long-term development programmes, opponents see them as a significant setback for constitutional democracy. The coming months will determine whether Zimbabwe's courts uphold the changes and whether the political contest over Amendment No. 3 remains confined to legal proceedings or spills into broader public unrest, potentially shaping the country's political and economic trajectory well beyond 2030.

Zimbabwe clears first IMF review of Staff Monitored Programme

Zimbabwe has achieved a significant milestone in its campaign to restore economic stability and re-engage with international financial institutions after reaching a staff-level agreement with the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** on the first review of its **Staff Monitored Programme (SMP)**. The positive assessment confirms that the government has met key reform benchmarks under the programme, reinforcing confidence in its macroeconomic policies and bringing the country a step closer to resolving its long-standing debt arrears and regaining access to international credit markets.

Although the 10-month SMP does not provide Zimbabwe with direct IMF financing, it is widely regarded as a critical step towards rebuilding credibility with multilateral lenders and international investors. A successful implementation of the programme could support ongoing efforts to restructure more than $20 billion in external debt, improve prospects for concessional financing from institutions such as the IMF and **World Bank,** and create conditions for increased foreign investment needed to support long-term economic growth.

The agreement, announced after an IMF mission to **Harare** from 9 June to 18 June, follows an assessment of the country's economic reform programme covering implementation through the end of March 2026. IMF staff concluded that Zimbabwe's performance under the programme had been broadly satisfactory, with the authorities meeting all quantitative targets and structural benchmarks while observing most indicative targets. The agreement is now subject to approval by IMF management.

Zimbabwe's programme focuses on maintaining fiscal discipline, strengthening public financial management, improving expenditure controls, preserving tight monetary policy, enhancing transparency and governance, and protecting vulnerable households through targeted social spending.

According to the IMF, authorities successfully met all the programme's quantitative targets and structural reform benchmarks during the review period. These included maintaining prudent fiscal management, strengthening expenditure controls and continuing reforms aimed at improving governance and reducing fiscal risks. Most indicative targets were also achieved, demonstrating progress in implementing the country's economic stabilisation agenda.

Zimbabwe's **Treasury** has described the outcome as evidence that economic reforms are beginning to gain traction, with officials arguing that policy consistency has helped stabilise inflation, improve exchange rate management and strengthen confidence in the country's new gold-backed ZiG currency.

However, completing an SMP review does not signal the end of Zimbabwe's economic challenges as the country remains burdened by significant external debt arrears that prevent access to concessional financing from the IMF, the World Bank and other multilateral lenders.

Zimbabwe to mortgage minerals to rebuild rail as China deepens grip on lithium

Zimbabwe is exploring resource-backed financing arrangements with **China** that could see future revenues from the country's vast mineral wealth used to fund an estimated $34 billion overhaul of its aging road and railway infrastructure, marking a significant shift in how the country intends to finance critical development projects amid constrained access to international capital markets.

Finance minister **Mthuli Ncube** confirmed on 23 June that discussions are underway with Chinese partners, including **China Railway**, on infrastructure financing models backed by Zimbabwe's mineral resources. Under the proposed arrangement, Chinese financiers would provide capital for transport infrastructure, with repayment secured against future income generated from mining projects rather than conventional sovereign borrowing.

The initiative comes as China further consolidates its dominance in Zimbabwe's lithium industry. Chinese companies have invested more than $2 billion in Zimbabwe's lithium sector since 2021 through acquisitions and new processing facilities, giving them control of an estimated 80% of the country's lithium production. The country has become Africa's largest producer of lithium, a strategic mineral that is essential for electric vehicle batteries and energy storage technologies.

Zimbabwe is simultaneously pushing ahead with plans to ban the export of lithium concentrates from January 2027 to promote local beneficiation and capture greater value from its mineral resources. Chinese mining firms are responding by investing in lithium sulphate plants and other downstream processing facilities, aligning their long-term interests with the country's industrialisation agenda.

For Zimbabwe, the proposed minerals-backed infrastructure model presents several attractive opportunities as years of economic instability, sanctions, high sovereign debt and limited access to concessional financing have left the country's transport infrastructure in poor condition.

Dilapidated roads and an underperforming **National Railways of Zimbabwe** continue to increase logistics costs for exporters and undermine the competitiveness of key sectors such as mining and agriculture. A successful financing arrangement could unlock billions of dollars for urgently needed infrastructure without placing immediate pressure on the national budget.

Improved rail infrastructure would also directly benefit Zimbabwe's expanding mining sector. Efficient rail links would lower transportation costs for bulk commodities, including lithium, platinum, coal, and chrome, while easing pressure on the country's road network.

However, the strategy also carries significant risks. Resource-backed financing agreements have historically attracted criticism for their lack of transparency, particularly regarding contract terms, repayment structures and mineral valuation. Should commodity prices fall, or mining output disappoint, Zimbabwe could face difficulties meeting repayment obligations, potentially placing additional pressure on strategic national assets.

Critics also warn that growing Chinese control over Zimbabwe's lithium industry could reduce the country's bargaining power over future investments and pricing. With Chinese firms already dominating extraction and increasingly expanding into processing, concerns remain that Zimbabwe could become overly dependent on a single foreign partner for one of its most valuable strategic resources.

Zimbabwe would not be the first African nation to pursue resource-backed infrastructure financing. **Angola** previously secured billions of dollars in Chinese loans backed by future oil exports following its civil war, enabling the rapid reconstruction of roads, hospitals, and public infrastructure. In 2023, the **Democratic Republic of Congo** signed the landmark **Sicomines** agreement with Chinese investors, exchanging access to copper and cobalt reserves for large-scale infrastructure development.

Planner

Jul 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** 2026 national budget midterm review

Sep 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe) Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ)** (central bank) **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** decision

28 May 2027 **(South Africa)** Expiry of special residence permits for **Zimbabweans** living in South Africa

Chronology

9 Jul 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Herald.* Central bank data shows Zimbabwe's gold reserves have surpassed 4.5 tonnes, while foreign currency receipts reached a record $10,72 billion during the first six months of this year;

8 Jul 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Zimlive.* Information minister **Zhemu Soda** says the government has repatriated 21,291 of its nationals from **South Africa** through state-assisted arrangements since the exercise began on 28 May, while a further 56,832 have returned independently, bringing the total number of returnees to more than 78,000;

7 Jul 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Zimlive.* Information minister **Zhemu Soda** says national carrier **Air Zimbabwe** will resume direct flights between Harare and **London (United**

Kingdom) by the end of this month, with the airline utilising a leased **Airbus A330-300** aircraft from **Spanish** carrier **Plus Ultra**;

7 Jul 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Herald.* **Australian** firm **Invictus Energy** says it will start drilling its third oil and gas exploration well, the **Musuma-1** prospect in the **Cabora Bassa Basin** in northern Zimbabwe before the end of this year;

7 Jul 2026, **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Zimbabwe Mail.* Zimbabwe's ruling party, **ZANU PF**, calls for dialogue and constructive engagement to address growing anti-immigrant tensions in **South Africa**, saying a diplomatic approach remains the best way of resolving concerns affecting foreign nationals living in the neighbouring country;

7 Jul 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Zimlive.* Zimbabwe exports its first-ever shipment of blueberries to **China,** following a market access agreement signed between the two countries in September 2025;

7 Jul 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Reuters.* State power utility, **ZESA Holdings**, says it has restored power to most of the country after a fault on a key transmission line caused a nationwide blackout, while work continued to bring remaining generation units back online;

3 Jul 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Herald.* **ZimStat** data shows Zimbabwe's economy maintained its growth in the first quarter of 2026, registering a 6.8% expansion compared to 4.4% in the same period last year;

1 Jul 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Newsday.* **Lithium Producers Association of Zimbabwe** chairman **Innocent Rukweza** says **Chinese** investors now control more than 80% of Zimbabwe's lithium production, cementing China's dominance over one of the country's most strategic mineral sectors;

1 Jul 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Club of Mozambique*. The **ZimTrade**-organised outward trade mission to **Beira (Mozambique)** begins, aimed at helping Zimbabwean companies tap into a market projected to grow by 5%;

30 Jun 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Herald*. **Unki Platinum Mine**, owned by **South Africa**'s **Valterra Platinum**, announces it will commission its 10MW solar power plant in August this year;

30 Jun 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Herald.* The **Tobacco Industry and Marketing Board (TIMB)** says the tobacco sector has generated $859.6m from sales during the 2026 marketing season despite facing subdued global prices that resulted in a 20% decline in export earnings compared to the previous year;

29 Jun 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Newzwire.* Finance minister **Mthuli Ncube** says Zimbabwe will stick to the 2027 deadline for lithium producers to set up beneficiation plants, with those unable to do so encouraged to sign tolling agreements with companies that have the processing capacity;

26 Jun 2026 **Harare(Zimbabwe)** *Newsday.* Zimbabwe remains resilient to global cost pressures after its ZiG annual inflation rate climbed by a marginal 0.3% to 4.7% in June, from the May figure of 4.4%;

25 Jun 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Reuters*. Government confirms it is exploring resource-backed financing deals with **China** to leverage its mineral reserves to fund an estimated $34 billion overhaul of its dilapidated road and rail infrastructure;

24 Jun 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Herald*. **Dairibord Holdings** plans to voluntarily move its listing from the **Zimbabwe Stock Exchange (ZSE)** to the **Victoria Falls Stock Exchange**

(VFEX), becoming the latest major company to migrate to the **United States** dollar-denominated bourse;

23 Jun 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Mining Zimbabwe.* Mines and mining development minister, **Polite Kambamura**, vows to intensify the fight against the illicit export of gold, lithium and diamonds, warning that the government will relentlessly pursue individuals and syndicates involved in smuggling the country's mineral wealth;

18 Jun 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Zimbabwe Mail.* Beverage manufacturing giant **Delta Corporation** says Zimbabwe's improved macroeconomic stability under the ZiG currency regime is strengthening corporate planning, investment appetite and long-term industrial expansion;

16 Jun 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *The Herald.* The government approves a substantial increase in minimum wages, lifting the wage floor for workers in unclassified sectors by 80% and introducing a new graded pay structure for domestic workers;

15 Jun 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Zimbabwe Mail.* **Redwing Mine**, the historic gold mining operation owned by **Cayman Islands**-headquartered **Namib Minerals**, has been reconnected to the national electricity grid in a significant milestone for the company's efforts to revive one of the country's most promising brownfield gold assets;

12 Jun 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Newzwire.* **Mutapa Gold**, part of the **Mutapa Investment Fund**, says it has raised $90m from local banks to fund expansion projects, with its $152m plan to develop an opencast mine at **Shamva Hill** set to start in August 2026;

11 Jun 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Newzwire.* Finance minister **Mthuli Ncube** says Zimbabwe is in talks with the **African Development Bank (AfDB)** for a $150m loan as part of efforts to clear billions of dollars of debt arrears;

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