



INSIDE Africa

Africa is now! take a second look

AFRICA
IS NOW!

Zambia: Banda's agenda



Above:
President
Rupiah Banda

By '11, the Movement for Multi Party democracy will have ruled Zambia for 20 years. With less than a year remaining to make a final impression before the elections, the Presidential team is a flurry of activity. State visits and goodwill Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) abound. One has the sense that efforts to make good on promises are now being squashed into the remaining months.

Case in point is the state visit last week, by President Banda and his ministers, to South Africa, which followed quickly on the heels of a similar visit to Brazil. But are MOUs enough to secure the MMD another win next year? It's not yet clear what the theme of President Banda's campaign will be, but he continues to emphasise that the elections will be free, fair, peaceful and transparent.

At a gathering of ex-pats in Pretoria, Banda admitted that the internet portrays an image of political war: "But this is a war of words," he said. "We are not at the point of capsizing the country, we are very much together." He seems to be in support of efforts that will allow for ballots to be cast outside of the country. The MMD made it clear that it is the opposition parties that remain "suspicious and superstitious" of malpractices and manipulations that affect not just the rights of expats to vote, but also dual citizenship. These issues are scheduled to be voted on in February's Parliamentary sessions, having been government gazetted in November.

President Banda's trip to South Africa was essentially to reaffirm and broaden the scope of relations between the two countries, particularly between the private sector and business communities with the focus on economic and trade cooperation. He was particularly buoyant given that foreign investment pledges of \$4.3 billion in '10 have exceeded the goal of \$3-billion.

Most of the pledges have come from the private sector, which bodes well for jobless Zambians. Some 36 000 new employment opportunities have been created with an estimated 19 500 to follow. Whether this is enough to ease poverty and the living standards of the citizens remains to be seen. The problem is of course, that investments take time to materialise and voters may not feel the impact of the 'promises' until after the elections.

The economy is growing however, at 6.6% in 2010. Inflation has reduced from 9.9% in 2009 to 7.3% this year. Minerals exports are the highest earner at \$4.2 billion with other exports bring in \$1.4-billion. So what's on the menu for future investors?

Well there's energy and infrastructure development, oil exploration, agriculture and agro processing, tourism, information and communication technology and manufacturing. Zambia is also strategically located, landlocked as it is by eight countries, with punters insisting that it is the ideal platform to springboard into other sub-Saharan business ventures.

President Zuma is keen to continue to cement relations between the two nations. This is not surprising given that it was Zambia that hosted the ANC headquarters for over 30



Left:
Mr and Mrs
Shrien Dewani,
Picture credit,
Enterprise News
and Pictures

IN BRIEF

da for 2011

years during the liberation struggle, so there is an obligation of sorts assuming that this is what Zuma meant when he commented that "Zambia's economy was greatly sabotaged as a punishment for supporting freedom and justice."

The reward of those close bonds can be evidenced in Zambia's elevation to being one of South Africa's top ten trading partners on the continent. There has been significant progress in the way the two nations, indeed even the two Presidents, cooperate, particularly when it comes to maximising collective natural resources.

Adding to the six MOUs signed last year – energy, agriculture, health, trade, mining diplomatic consultations – a new agreement has now been added to the portfolio for South Africa and Zambia to co-operate in the field of Environmental Management and Natural Resources. South Africa is looking for African friends to help push the continent's agenda at the UN's climate change summit next year, which will be hosted by SA.

Zimbabwe was also highlighted during the state visit to South Africa, with both Presidents in agreement that sanctions were not aiding change in Zimbabwe. Their combined influence however doesn't seem to extend to sorting out the problems that threaten to split the coalition government. Zimbabwe people want change, just as much seemingly, as those in Zambia.

Which brings us back to the 2011 elections. Africa cannot afford to have another election whose results are fraught with doubt. Banda makes it quite clear that he is all for democracy and that he is proud of the unity in Zambia, advocating free choice, but surely he can't absolutely guarantee a free and fair election? The moment elections start Banda will simply be just the MMD leader, and a candidate. He should have little to no control over the Electoral Commission that will, hopefully, be managed by reputable local and international organisations.

Only in this way can a free and credible election be guaranteed and a President considered legitimate. African countries need to adopt fully functioning and constitutionally recognised democracy values. Perhaps Zambia will show us how. *

Ghana:

Commercial oil production in the country is unlikely to fuel inflation, heighten corruption or wreck democratic progress in the short-term, the World Bank said as the West African state turns on the spigot.

Unlike many other oil-producing African nations whose oil sectors dominate the economy making them central to conflict and corruption, Ghana's oil production, which started last week, will be dwarfed by established cocoa and mining industries and be managed by one of the region's most stable governments.

'It's a bit of oil, not a whole lot, so it's not enough to give you the Dutch disease and a curse,' World Bank country director Ishac Diwan told Reuters in an interview referring to a Dutch discovery of gas in the '60s that boosted the currency, undermining other exports.

London:

The husband of a woman murdered on honeymoon in South Africa was granted bail by a High Court Judge here Friday 10th December. Shrien Dewani, 30, was arrested on suspicion of conspiring to murder his wife Anni. South African authorities who wanted him extradited had opposed bail.

Mrs Dewani, 28, was shot when the taxi she and her husband were travelling in was hijacked in Cape Town last month.

Mr Dewani had been held in custody at Wandsworth Prison in south London. Shrien was released on £250,000 bail by judge Mr Justice Ouseley. His conditions include electronic tagging, home curfew and having to report to the police daily.

Lawyers for the South African authorities argued that if Mr Dewani was permitted bail there were substantial grounds for suspecting he would not surrender for an extradition hearing.

Counsel for the South African government, Ben Watson, told the hearing at the Royal Courts of Justice that 'significant new evidence' against Mr Dewani had come to light.

Mr Watson told the court this included new CCTV film and independent evidence that Mr Dewani had allegedly paid for the murder by using money he had acquired on the black market.

Mr Justice Ouseley ruled there was 'strong support' for the submission that 'Dewani genuinely hopes that the investigation will clear him' and would not flee.

He said: 'I have concluded that he has a continuing and realistic interest in making sure that he clears his name. 'He has no criminal convictions, is professionally qualified and his family is of high standing in the local community in Bristol, with no obvious interest in helping him to abscond.'

He said because of the 'tragic and terrible murder of his wife', Mr Dewani's face is well known and it would be difficult for him to leave the UK or 'go underground'.

Representing Mr Dewani, Clare Montgomery said a group of self-confessed robbers and murderers desperate to escape a whole life sentence had accused her client.

They had 'everything to gain, the BBC reports, and nothing to lose' by implicating Mr Dewani in the killing, she said.