

Just what sort of 'open for business' does President Mnangagwa have in mind for his new Zimbabwe? Transport Minister Joram Gumbo seems to think it means telling lies in the national interest.

Talking about the can of worms that is the new national carrier Zimbabwe Airways, Gumbo said the government had decided to mislead people about the ownership of the airline to avoid attachment of its planes by creditors of bankrupt Air Zimbabwe.

'That is when we also came up with the story that the diasporans were buying the (\$70million) aircraft . . . Otherwise we could have lost the money as the country and government.' (See: <https://www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2018/05/12/zim-airways-circus-continues>).

It is not only the government that is given to 'flights of fancy'. Nelson Chamisa's HARDtalk interview this week with the BBC's Stephen Sackur was uncomfortable for MDC wellwishers. Some lessons need to be learned from this if the party is to win confidence abroad.

Agitated comments on social media accuse Sackur of bias. This is nonsense. He is certainly challenging: this is what the programme is about. Anyone who agrees to take part had better be prepared. Chamisa was not.

If you are in the public spotlight you must be expected to be asked about a blue moon promise you made in Bindura of a bullet train from Harare to Bulawayo, or claims that Donald Trump had promised \$15 billion in aid if you won the elections. And suggestions you would be able to fix the country's liquidity problems in two weeks is certain to attract skepticism . . .

Mr Chamisa made a good impression on many people during his trip to the UK but the party leadership would be advised to ensure that he is properly briefed before giving interviews like the HARDtalk one. He has much to say that people in Zimbabwe and abroad are keen to hear. Speaking on several occasions during his visit, he addressed the question of electoral reforms, but they hardly got a look in the HARDtalk interview. You can't blame this on Sackur.

At the Foreign Affairs Institute at Chatham House, Chamisa cautioned against what he perceived to be ‘a bit of a shift on the part of the British government in terms of focusing more on political stability and trade and commerce at the expense of democracy’.

He went on: ‘For a long time, the British government has been emphasising norms, values – let those norms and values of free and fair elections be respected. That is all we want – we’re not asking for money. We’re asking for the solidarity of a global coalition for free and fair elections’. (See: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2018/05/zim-needs-democracy-not-managed-stability-chamisa/>). That’s more like it.

Mr Chamisa ought to have been aware that the bullet train idea was put forward by Zanu PF a few years ago. He certainly should have been alert enough to point out the fantasy of Zanu PF’s new manifesto promise of building 1.5 million houses in the next 5 years . . . like the millions of jobs they promised last time around.

Other points

- Mr Chamisa was accompanied on the trip by former Finance Minister Tendai Biti and the former Education Minister David Coltart, who said they had pointed out there was a gulf between the rhetoric of the Mnangagwa administration and action on the ground. ‘We explained that for all the statements of commitment to a “free, fair and credible election” the reality is that less than 3 months from the election ZEC remains a biased, militarised institution; the opaque process for the printing of the ballots using the same tricks as 2013, the deployment of troops in rural areas, subtly intimidating the electorate and the ongoing use of the ZBC, Herald and Chronicle as propaganda vehicles (in brazen defiance of clear constitutional obligations) all show that this regime is not committed to a fair election. We stated that a fair election cannot solely consist of an election which is relatively violence free.’

- Upcoming events at the Vigil: Saturday 19th May – demonstration for electoral reforms in Zimbabwe and Saturday 9th June – fundraising walk: proceeds to go towards voter education. For more information, check ‘Events and Notices’.

- Thanks to those who came early to help set up the Vigil: Deborah Harry, Jonathan Kariwo, Rosemary Maponga, Patricia Masamba, Cephas Maswoswa, Esther Munyira, Patience Muyeye and Ephraim Tapa. Thanks to Patricia and Rosemary for looking after the front table, to Rosemary and Heather for handing out flyers and to Jonathan, Cephas, Rosemary, Deborah, Patience, Esther, Patricia and Ephraim for putting up the banners and tarpaulin on a very damp day.

For latest Vigil pictures check: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwewigil/> . Please note: Vigil photos can only be downloaded from our Flickr website.

FOR THE RECORD: 18 signed the register.

EVENTS AND NOTICES:

- **Demonstration for electoral reforms and good governance in Zimbabwe.** Saturday 19th May from 2 – 5 pm outside the Zimbabwe Embassy. Join us to demonstrate for free and fair elections and the diaspora vote. For more information, contact the organiser: Patience Muyeye 07512383391.

- **ROHR Central London branch meeting.** Saturday 19th May from 11.30 am – 1.30 pm. Venue: Royal Festival Hall, Contact: Daisy Fabian 07708653640, Maxmus Savanhu 07397809056, Siphon Ndlovu 07400566013.

- **ROHR Reading Fifth Anniversary celebration.** Saturday 26th May from 2 pm till late. Venue: Pakistani Community Hall, London Road, Reading West RG1 3PA. There will be food, drinks, music, games, prizes and raffle and ROHR Reading will be presenting food donations to local food banks. Contact: Nicodimus 07877386792, Josephine 07455166668, Shyllette 07828929806 and Deborah 07578894896.

- **ROHR fundraising walk.** Saturday 9th June. This will be a sponsored fundraising walk ending at the Vigil. Proceeds will go to voter education before the elections by the Zimbabwe Peace Actors' Platform (ZimPAP). More information as plans develop. If you wish to take part or contribute, contact: Daisy Fabian, 07708653640.

- **The Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR)** is the Vigil's partner organization based in Zimbabwe. ROHR grew out of the need for the Vigil to have an organization on the ground in Zimbabwe which reflected the Vigil's mission statement in a practical way. ROHR in the UK actively fundraises through membership subscriptions, events, sales etc to support the activities of ROHR in Zimbabwe. Please note that the official website of ROHR Zimbabwe is <http://www.rohrzimbabwe.org/>

. Any other website claiming to be the official website of ROHR in no way represents us.

- **Save the Zimbabwe elephants protest.** Friday 15th June from 1 noon – 2 pm outside the Zimbabwe Embassy. One of our activists Nomusa Dube is organising a protest about the export of baby elephants from Zimbabwe to China. She asks Vigil activists to join her at this protest.

- **The Vigil's book 'Zimbabwe Emergency'** is based on our weekly diaries. It records how events in Zimbabwe have unfolded over the past 15 years as seen by the diaspora in the UK. It chronicles the economic disintegration, violence, growing oppression and political manoeuvring – and the tragic human cost involved. It is available at the Vigil for £10. All proceeds will go to the Vigil and our sister organisation the Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe's work in Zimbabwe. The book is also available from Amazon.

Open for deceit – Zimbabwe Vigil Diary: 12th May 2018

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 13 May 2018 15:50 - Last Updated Sunday, 13 May 2018 15:50

- **Zimbabwe Action Forum** meets regularly after the Vigil to discuss ways to help those back in Zimbabwe to fight oppression and achieve true democracy.
- **Zimbabwe Yes We Can Movement** holds meetings in London as the political face of ROHR and the Vigil.
- **Facebook pages:** Vigil: <https://www.facebook.com/zimbabwevigil> ROHR: <https://www.facebook.com/Restoration-of-Human-Rights-ROHR-Zimbabwe-International-370825706588551/> ZAF: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Zimbabwe-Action-Forum-ZAF/490257051027515>