



Primary and Secondary Education Minister,  
Cain Mathema

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Govt, teachers in stand-off over schools re-opening
- Mangudya should face his demons
- Zim fails to import forex to buy gold
- Ambitious wheat target in doubt
- Sub-standard sanitisers and PPE flood market

## SCHOOLS RE-OPENING: TEACHERS OPPOSE GOVT'S 'HASTY' PLANS

The Zimbabwe Teachers Association (Zimta), which represents the largest number of teachers in the country, says it is opposed to government plans to re-open schools next month.

Schools ended the first term two weeks prematurely in line with government measures to stop the spread of COVID-19. The start of the second term, which was due on May 5, has also been delayed for the same reason.

### ZIMBABWE COVID-19 STATISTICS FOR MAY 23

					
<b>15 336</b>	<b>21 202</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>PCR TESTS</b>	<b>RAPID TESTS</b>	<b>CONFIRMED CASES</b>	<b>DEATHS</b>	<b>RECOVERIES</b>	<b>NEW CASES</b>

The government this week announced plans to re-open schools in phases, starting with exam classes. The primary and secondary education ministry has said June public exams will be held from June 29 to July 22.

But Zimta, which represents a third of the country's 130,000 teachers, says schools are not ready to re-open.

“Zimbabwean schools are not ready for June examinations. Teachers are not willing.

Scheduling examinations is not a panacea to COVID-19. This is a pandemic that has claimed many lives in the world and continues to do so. A declaration means nothing if the necessary protocols recommended by the World Health Organisation are not followed,” Zimta said in a statement.

“If the authorities go ahead with their plan, we are headed for industrial conflict.”

According to the ministry's plan, the 2020 exam classes will resume lessons in “three to four weeks” from now. Next to resume classes would be the 2021 exam classes two to three weeks after the first group.

Thereafter, Grades Three, Four and Five, as well as Form Ones and Twos would follow after a similar interval. Grades One and Two would be in the fourth phase, while ECD classes would resume last.

Although government says measures such as screening of teachers, routine temperature reading, social distancing and sanitisation will be put in place, it is doubtful that, given the lack of funding, the authorities will be able to make schools safe for re-opening soon.

Teacher unions say ZW\$21 billion is required for PPE and the hiring of an extra 6,000 teachers to reduce the pupil-teacher/class ratio, as well as procurement of additional furniture.

According to the 2018 annual education statistics report, which is the latest available, Zimbabwe has about 4,4 million pupils in school, from ECD to Upper Six.

**Proposed schools re-opening schedule:**

Phase 1: Mid-June	Grade 7, Form 4 and Upper 6
Phase 2: End of June/Early July	Grade 6, Form 3 and Lower 6
Phase 3: Mid-late July	Grades 3,4,5 and Form 1, 2
Phase 4: Early-mid August	Grades 1 and 2
Phase 5: Mid-late August	ECD





RBZ Governor John Mangudya with the Catholic Church's Reverend Kennedy Muguti in June 2016

## MANGUDYA SHOULD FACE HIS DEMONS

Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe governor John Mangudya says he has been praying for Zimbabweans to understand economics. Zimbabweans, in turn, have been making the same prayers – for him.

Testifying this week before Parliament's budget and finance committee, an exasperated Mangudya said: "I pray for Zimbabwe each morning, saying, 'Oh God, help Zimbabweans understand economics'".

Why does he think we all need prayer? In his view, all this economic instability comes down to mysterious demonic powers that, he says, cause Zimbabweans not to trust their own currency.

"There's a demon in this country causing economic instability," Mangudya said. "The rate changes in the minds of people, there is no country that does not have a parallel rate, but the parallel rate in Zimbabwe changes frequently. Why can't it be stable?"

Why? Well, Mr Mangudya, where to begin? Firstly, currencies these days are backed largely by little more than public confidence and trust. This is trust not only in the currency itself, but in those managing it.

For Zimbabweans, how are they to have confidence in a central bank governor that likens the markets to "Sodom and Gomorrah", as Mangudya did, while offering no real plan?

In March, Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube appointed a taskforce to manage the exchange rate. This was a signal that even he himself had no confidence in RBZ doing its job. Yet, the Ministry of Finance, on its part, is into a second year of endless tinkering with the currency.

If the government itself has not made up its mind on what to do with the exchange rate, neither should the streets.

On paper, Zimbabwe's balance of exports and imports should be able to sustain the economy and the currency. But this is only if the currency was being managed by more stable hands that we can be confident in. Those are the demons that Mangudya and Ncube need to face.



# COVID-19: ZIM CAN'T IMPORT FOREX TO BUY GOLD

It's a very Zimbabwean puzzle; Zimbabwe can't import the foreign currency that it needs to generate the exports that it needs to generate forex.

Fidelity Printers & Refiners (FPR), the central bank unit which is the country's sole gold buyer, is struggling to ship in enough US dollars via air due to global travel restrictions. This is causing delays in payments to miners for their gold.

That's according to the Zimbabwe Miners' Federation (ZMF), which represents small scale miners, who produce most of Zimbabwe's gold.

"Pursuant to our meeting with FPR today, kindly be advised that FPR relies mostly on foreign exchange brought in by air transport. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a limited number of flights into the country and this has adversely affected their operations," said Wellington Takavarasha, CEO of ZMF, in a letter to members this week.

"Kindly bear with FPR whilst they are making frantic efforts of ensuring that all the gold deliveries are paid for. By next week, we expect the situation to have normalised."

Gold is Zimbabwe's biggest forex earner.

Flight bans have grounded many airlines and cut the number of flights into Zimbabwe, which has itself restricted flights down to just cargo and selected passenger airlines.

Miners keep 55% of their sales in forex. The remainder is surrendered to RBZ and sold on the official market. Mines had already been suffering from delays by the RBZ to remit the forex portion of gold sales.

The Chamber of Mines expects Zimbabwe to suffer a 60% fall in mineral output this quarter, and lose over US\$400 million in mining revenue due to coronavirus.

Miners in Zimbabwe have continued operations during the lockdown. But they face disruption to critical supplies and a dip in commodity prices. They are also finding it hard to move their output to market due to global freight restrictions.

Zimbabwe's annual gold output fell 16.8% to 27.6 tonnes in 2019, coming off its record highs in 2018, due to power cuts and the currency crisis.



# AMBITIOUS WHEAT PROGRAMME FLOPS?

Mashonaland Central province, the country's number two wheat growing region, has put less than 20% of its targeted wheat hectareage under the crop, going into the final week of planting.

Under the government's ambitious plan to plant 80,000 hectares of wheat this year, the province was projected to produce about 25% of the ambitious forecast of 400,000 tonnes of the key grain, but now looks to produce far less.

A report by provincial agriculture officials in Mashonaland Central this week showed the region had just over 3,000 hectares put under wheat, from the planned 18,000ha, with only a few days remaining until the May 31 planting deadline.

That targeted national hectareage would yield a forecasted 400,000 tonne output of wheat, wiping out the need for imports, according to the government plan. Zimbabwe spends about US\$100 million on wheat imports annually, according to government officials and another poor harvest means more pressure on the country's strained foreign currency resources.

Mashonaland Central which is only second to Mashonaland West in wheat output. The planting statistics for other provinces were not immediately available.

Mashonaland West, the country's number one wheat producing region, was supposed to put 35 000 hectares under the crop, Mashonaland East 12 000ha; Manicaland 7 000 ha; Midlands 4 500ha, Matabeleland North 2 000ha, Masvingo 800ha and Matabeleland South 700ha.

Government cropping programmes continue to miss targets, mainly due to poor planning and late disbursement of inputs. During the last summer cropping season, the maize and soya bean import substitution programme saw 54% and 29% of the planned hectareage being put to maize and soya bean, respectively.

Although poor rains forced many farmers to reduce their hectareage, government has also admitted to inadequate inputs as well as inefficient and late distribution of those that were available.



## **SUB-STANDARD SANITISERS, PPE FLOOD MARKET**

Nearly half of the 52 companies producing hand sanitisers subjected to quality tests have been deemed to be sub-standard by the government, raising fears of a potentially deadly weakness in the fight against the spread of COVID-19.

The Standards Association of Zimbabwe conducted the tests.

Hand sanitisers are a big part of the global response to the pandemic, with households, public institutions and businesses stocking up on the germ-killing liquid.

Poor standards have also been revealed in the manufacture of masks, which are now mandatory for people in public spaces.

Just under half of the 35 companies producing face masks that were subjected to tests were also found to be producing below mandatory standards.

Industry Minister Sekai Nzena this week said government was working with the concerned firms to ensure compliance with mandatory standards.