

India donates \$1m, 500t rice

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Senior Reporter

RELATIONS between Zimbabwe and India reached a new high yesterday after the New Delhi administration donated \$1 million and 500 tonnes of rice to Harare for drought relief purposes.

The donation was handed over by India's ambassador to Zimbabwe, Mr Masakui Rungungu.

Chief Secretary to the President and Cabinet Dr Misheck Sibanda received the donation on behalf of Zimbabwe.

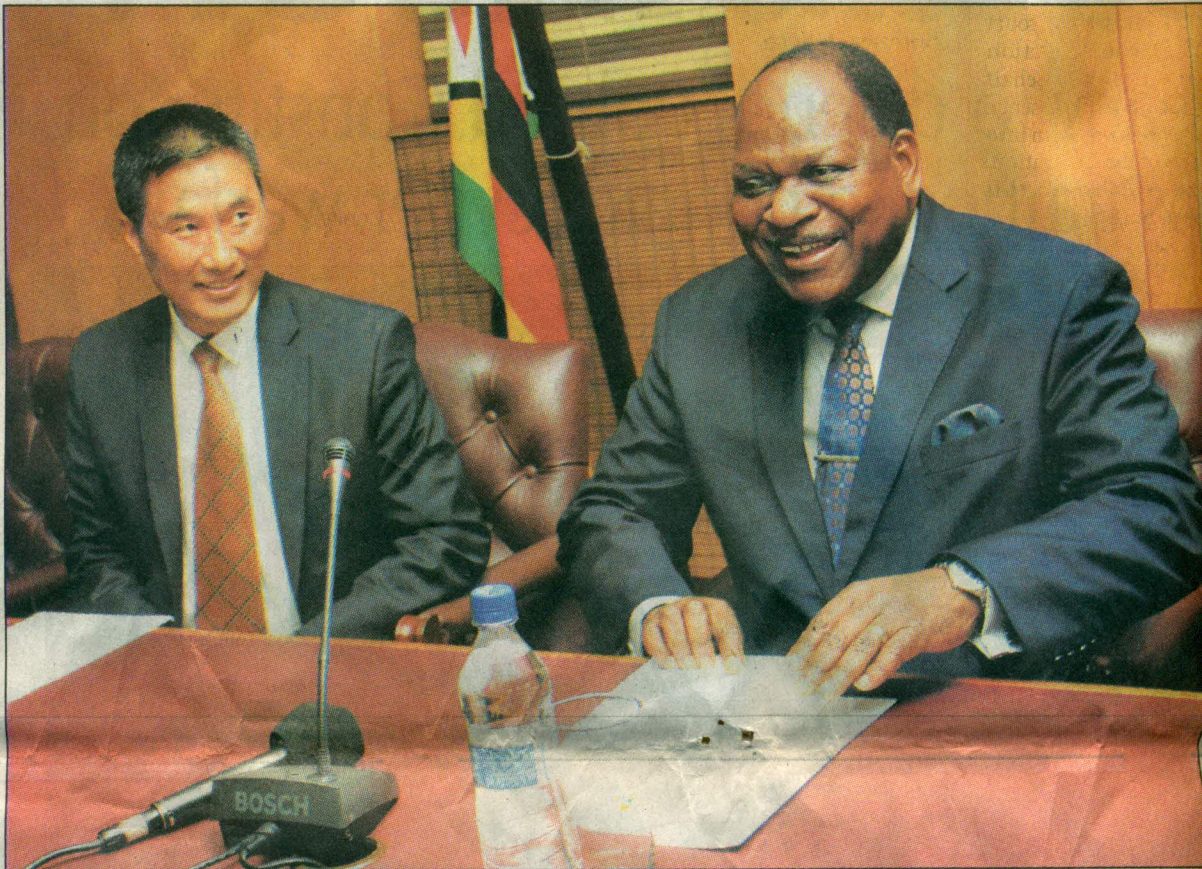
Dr Sibanda thanked India for its quick response to an international appeal made by Zimbabwe on food relief following the El Nino-induced drought that affected most parts of the country.

"It will be recalled that in February this year, Zimbabwe launched a global appeal for drought relief assistance following the effects of the El Nino induced drought which resulted in massive crop failure in the country," he said.

"The Government and people of Zimbabwe are humbled by the speed with which the Government of India responded to the appeal. Allow me on behalf of the Government and people of Zimbabwe, to thank the Government and people of India for their generosity in donating us\$1 million towards drought relief efforts in Zimbabwe. Indeed the 2015/16 cropping season witnessed massive crop failure to the extent that the country needs to import 1,8 million tonnes of grain to see the nation to the next harvest in 2017."

Zimbabwe, Dr Sibanda said, was not only happy with the excellent relations with India in the context of South-South cooperation but also with regards to Zimbabwe's Look East Policy.

Dr Sibanda also highlighted the high profile visit by President Mugabe to India in October last year during the 3rd India-Africa Summit as another indicator to the close ties between the



Chief Secretary to the President and Cabinet Dr Misheck Sibanda and Indian Ambassador to Zimbabwe Mr Masakui Rungungu share a lighter moment during the handover of a \$1 million drought relief grant and food aid from the government of India to Zimbabwe in Harare yesterday. — (Picture by Munyaradzi Chamalimba)

two countries.

"What was most important for us during that (India-Africa) summit is that the only bilateral agreement signed during the Summit was the us\$89 million line of credit for the refurbishment of Hwange Thermal Power Station. The agreement was signed between our two countries. The signing of that agreement was indeed testimony to the special bilateral relations that we enjoy."

Dr Sibanda said Zimbabwe was happy with the sound relationship that exists between Harare and New Delhi in other critical sectors of the economy such as the Small to Medium Enter-

prise sector, ICT, energy, education and pharmaceuticals.

"Equally vibrant is the economic cooperation which is underpinned by the extension of several lines of credit which include the us\$25 million for the refurbishment of Parirenyatwa Group of Hospitals, the us\$428,6 million for the upgrading of the Deka Pumping Station and us\$119 million for the development of Gairezi Power Station in the Eastern Highlands which is at the tendering stage," he said.

In his remarks after handing over the donation, Ambassador Rungungu said: "In response to the appeal made by the Government of the Republic of

Zimbabwe for assistance in the wake of national drought disaster declared on 04 February, 2016 by His Excellency President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Government of India, in recognition of the strong bilateral ties between the two countries, in the first phase of assistance, extended a grant of us\$1 million to the Government of Zimbabwe."

Government has since declared that no-one will die because of hunger and efforts have been intensified to source grain from friendly countries.

Logistical modalities are also being worked out to ensure that grain reaches those in need on time.