

Chiredzi Town Council, residents clash over footbridge

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CHIREDDZI residents have protested against the local authority's decision to construct a \$19 000 footbridge without seeking approval from councillors or going to tender.

The 11-metre bridge, which links Makondo and Vhurumuku suburbs, was set to be commissioned last week, but the event was deferred after residents protested demanding to know how the contractor, Concord Construction, was awarded the contract.

Council chairman Francis Moyo, however, blamed town engineer Wesley Kauma, whom he accused of unilaterally awarding the project to a private company without seeking councillors' approval.

Moyo admitted that the contractor never produced a quotation and a bill of quantities as was required by council by-laws.

According to council rules, any project awarded to external contractors must go to tender and at least three quotations must be obtained from different companies.

An engineer with a local private construction company, who preferred anonymity, said that ideally such a small bridge should have cost less than \$3 000 considering that council supplied some pipes for the project.

"We were told that the pipes which were used at the bridge were bought by council," the engineer said. "So such a project must cost less than \$3 000 because there was no surfacing required."

But Kauma said that everything was done above board because the project had been approved by the previous council.

He denied that cost of constructing the footbridge had been inflated.

"We are still working on the bridge. We are going to instruct council security to stop motorists from using that bridge because it is still under construction," Kauma said. "You can come to my office and I can show you the breakdown of the money used."

Australian ship homes in on possible debris

SYDNEY/PERTH — An Australian navy ship was close to finding possible debris from a missing Malaysia Airlines jetliner yesterday as a mounting number of sightings of floating objects raised hopes wreckage of the plane might soon be found.

The *HMAS Success* should reach two objects spotted by Australian military aircraft by this morning at the latest, Malaysia's government said, offering the first chance of picking up suspected debris from the plane. So far, ships in the international search effort have been unable to locate several "suspicious" objects spotted by satellites in grainy images or by fast-flying aircraft over a vast search area in the remote southern Indian Ocean.

"*HMAS Success* is on scene and is attempting to locate and recover these objects," Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott, who called his Malaysia counterpart Najib Razak to inform him of the sighting, said in a statement to Parliament.

The objects, described as a "grey or green circular object" and an "orange rectangular object", were spotted about 2 500km west of Perth yesterday afternoon, said Abbott, adding that three planes were also en route to the area.

Neither Malaysia nor Australia gave details on the objects' size. Flight MH370 vanished from civilian radar screens less than an hour after taking off from Kuala Lumpur for Beijing with 239 people on board on March 8.

No confirmed sighting of the plane has been made since and there is no clue what went wrong. Attention in the search for the plane have shifted from an initial focus north of the Equator to a narrowed stretch of rough sea in the southern Indian Ocean, thousands of miles from the original flight path. — Reuters

'Mkoba voters roll in shambles'

OWN CORRESPONDENT

THE voters' roll to be used in the Mkoba Ward 12 by-election scheduled for April 12 contains a lot of irregularities, an MDC-T official has claimed.

Mkoba MP and MDC-T national executive committee member Amos Chibaya yesterday told a Press briefing that the voters' roll was flawed as it contained names of dead people as well as those residing outside the ward.

"We have people like Landeni Banda of 2433 Mkoba 7 who died in 1998, Mbano Ruth of 2647 Mkoba 7 who passed away in 1997, Grace Solani Mashizha of 1964 Mkoba 6 who died in 2006 and Calisto Fidelis Makore of 2809/2 Mkoba 7 who also died the same year yet they still appear on the roll," Chibaya said.

Chibaya said other people were also registered twice with the same national identification number, but different sexes.

"Ellen Nyaradzo Nduna from Mkoba Teachers' College is registered twice with the same national ID number, but as both a female and male," Chibaya said.

He said it was disturbing that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (Zec) was failing to clean up the voters' roll, adding that the country was "miles away" in terms of holding free and democratic elections.

The MDC-T legislator said his party would raise the issue with the district elections officer and Zec chairperson Justice Rita Makarau.

The by-election would be contested by Charles Simbi (Zanu PF), Richard Ndlovu of the National Constitutional Assembly and



Amos Chibaya

Fortunate Chiokoyo of MDC-T.



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