

My country will survive, says defiant Mugabe

August 29 2007 at 11:14PM

By Angus Shaw

Harare - President Robert Mugabe, accusing the West of trying to push Zimbabwe into collapse, declared it would survive thanks to its people's resilience and support from Africa, state radio reported on Wednesday.

Mugabe said Britain, the former colonial ruler, and his opponents sought his ousting.

"In spite of their heinous attempts to destroy the country and bring down its democratically elected government, Zimbabwe has not collapsed and will not collapse," the radio quoted him as saying at a state banquet late on Tuesday for visiting President Teodoro Obiang Nguema of the oil-rich West African nation of Equatorial Guinea.

Mugabe thanked Equatorial Guinea and other African nations for their "solidarity". He told Obiang that Zimbabwe would always be grateful for his support against enemies who "sought to demonise the country's leadership at every opportunity and deceive the world about what is happening in my country".

Mugabe said his nation had not come to a standstill because of what he called "the resilience and revolutionary spirit of the Zimbabwean people".

Western countries have imposed a travel ban on Mugabe and ruling party leaders to protest violations of democratic and human rights following the government ordered, often violent seizures of thousands of white-owned commercial farms that began in 2000 and disrupted the agriculture-based economy. Some US enterprises are barred from trading with Zimbabwe.

Foreign loans, development aid and investment have dried up in seven years of political and economic turmoil in the former regional breadbasket.

Zimbabwe is facing the world's highest official inflation of 7 634 percent.

Cornmeal, bread, meat and most staples have disappeared from the shelves since a government edict June 26 to slash prices of all goods and services by about half in efforts to tame inflation.

Acute shortages of gasoline have crippled transport and delivery services. The food shortages have spurred illegal black market trading in scarce goods sold at more than four times the government's fixed prices.

On Wednesday, stores were mostly left with a few canned foodstuffs. Bath soap, toothpaste, biscuits and tea were among the latest goods to disappear.

Equatorial Guinea President Obiang arrived in Harare on Tuesday. He is scheduled to officially open the country's main agriculture show in the capital on Friday.

Officials at the showground said the government allowed pricing controls to be lifted for a single livestock auction that was part of the show. State media have given prominence to this year's show, arguing that farming is being revived.

Amid Zimbabwe's growing international isolation, the government and distant Equatorial Guinea have signed an extradition treaty and a series of trade and cooperation deals since a group of mercenaries plotting to overthrow Obiang were arrested in 2004 when their plane landed in Harare to collect weapons from the Zimbabwe state arms maker. - Sapa-AP