

# ZIMBABWE SEEKS AID AFTER FLOODS KILL OVER 240 IN THREE MONTHS

**HARARE:** At least 246 people have been killed by floods in Zimbabwe since December, state media reported yesterday, as the government launched an appeal for foreign aid. The Herald newspaper said at least 128 people had been injured, 2,000 left homeless, 74 schools damaged and 70 dams had burst in floods across the country that followed a prolonged drought. "There is an inadequate supply of tents, foodstuffs and drugs for the affected people," Local Government Minister Saviour Kasukuwere told the paper.

"There is a need for blankets and clothing for the affected families and they are at risk of contracting pneumonia and acute respiratory infections." He appealed for emergency funding from international donors, private companies and the public. "After working hard responding to the effects of drought, the same people are now suffering because of excessive floods," Bishow Parajuli, of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), told The Herald.

Kasukuwere said rainfall levels had been above normal in most parts of Zimbabwe in recent months. Government officials were not immediately able to comment to AFP. Among the worst affected areas were

south-western districts including Tsholotsho, where at least 859 people were living in a makeshift camp after their homes were destroyed by heavy rains. State television on Thursday showed images of marooned villagers in Tsholotsho being rescued by airforce helicopters.

The meteorological department has warned of further heavy rains, cautioning people against crossing flooded rivers and bridges. The floods came as Zimbabwe was hoping to recover from a severe drought which ravaged most of the southern African country and destroyed many food crops. The country now faces more food shortages following the floods and an outbreak of the fall armyworm caterpillar that devours crops, according to the agriculture ministry.

A former regional bread basket, Zimbabwe has relied on imports in recent years to top up local harvests. Critics blame the perennial shortages on President Robert Mugabe's controversial land reforms which saw the seizure of white-owned farms for redistribution to landless blacks, most of whom lacked the means to farm. Mugabe, 93, has blamed the poor yields on erratic rains due to climate change.—AFP

## DEPORTED GRANDMOTHER FROM SINGAPORE FIGHTS FOR UK RETURN

**SINGAPORE:** Twenty-seven years of marriage, two British sons and a granddaughter could not protect Singaporean Irene Clennell from deportation, but now the feisty grandma is fighting to get back to her family. Clennell, 52, was deported to Singapore Sunday, despite being the primary caregiver for her sickly British husband John, who she said has sunk into a mire of depression since she left. "He was crying," she told AFP in an interview at her sister's cramped suburban home in the Southeast Asian city state, where she is sleeping on the sofa as she tries to find a legal way back to her family in Britain.

John had femoral artery bypass in his leg last year and suffered a subsequent hernia. Since then, she said, he has struggled to walk far and needed help dressing himself. "Before, it was different because he was fit and well—he was able to look after himself. But now he can't because of his condition," she said, adding that she had been his sole caregiver at their County Durham home. Clennell has been holed-up at her sister's Singapore flat, talking to the media and trying to coordinate her legal fight to be

allowed back into Britain since she was deported Feb 26.

Her British sister-in-law has hired an immigration lawyer and set up a crowd funding campaign to cover her legal fees, which had raised more than £53,000 (\$65,000) yesterday. Her husband is so desperate for them to be reunited he has written to a French minister asking whether they could live in France as a family, said Clennell, who arrived in Singapore with hardly any money or possessions after a period in UK immigration detention.

### My mistake

Clennell first arrived in Britain in 1988 and worked as a receptionist at a London hotel where she met her husband, a construction worker. She was subsequently granted indefinite leave to remain in the country. But she lost this right after spending long periods of time in Singapore, initially to have help from her family raising her young children, and then to care for her elderly parents before their deaths. Clennell said she now regrets leaving for so long as she didn't realize it would create so many problems.—AFP



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