
Re:ZAMBIAN PRESIDENT MWANAWASA DEAD.

Posted by JeenaJulia - 2008/08/19 21:05

Zambian President Levy Mwanawasa died yesterday at a Paris hospital, Vice President Rupiah Banda told Zambians in a televised speech. Mwanawasa, 59, was evacuated to France after he collapsed with a mild stroke in late June on the eve of an African Union summit in Egypt. He was taken to France on July 1 after initially being treated in Cairo.

"Fellow countrymen, with deep sorrow and grief, I would like to inform the people of Zambia that our president Dr Levy Patrick Mwanawasa died this morning at 1030 hours (0830 GMT)," Mr Banda, who has acted as interim head of state of the southern African nation since then, said in a televised speech.

Mwanawasa, leader of Zambia since January 2002, on Monday underwent urgent surgery in the intensive care unit at the Percy Military Hospital after a rapid deterioration in his health. Vice President Banda said on state television; "The operation had been hailed as a success by doctors but the president's condition remained serious".

His health was an issue during his presidency. In April 2006 he suffered a minor stroke four months before general elections.

According to the Constitution of Zambia, Banda will replace Mr. Mwanawasa until the country's next general elections. Mwanawasa was chairman of the South African Development Community (SADC) when he was taken ill in June.

In that role, he had been critical of the controversial election in Zimbabwe and had said he sympathised with Zimbabwean opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai when he withdrew from the run-off because of attacks on his supporters.

Mr Mwanawasa won a second term in 2006, having campaigned on his economic record which won him acclaim from Western donors. When he was vice-president in the 1990s he was involved in a near-fatal road accident which left him with slurred speech.

Mr Mwanawasa famously fell out with his predecessor, Frederick Chiluba, who had handpicked him to lead the ruling Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD). He pressed for Mr Chiluba's immunity from prosecution to be lifted and the former president was charged with stealing money during his time in office.

His critics accused Mr Mwanawasa of persecuting his political rivals under the guise of fighting corruption. He was married and had six children. He had been a practicing lawyer since 1973. In his most famous case, he defended former Vice-President Lt-Gen Christon Tembo and others, who were charged in 1989 with plotting against the government of Kenneth Kaunda.

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