

Mozambique rebels delay railway improvements

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ANTI-GOVERNMENT rebels in Mozambique are holding up a railway rehabilitation project designed to reduce black southern African states' dependence on South African routes.

The railway runs 540 kilometres north from the capital, Maputo, to the Zimbabwean frontier, and is regarded by member states of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) as vital to efforts to divert trade from South African ports. The line has double the capacity of the other important eastern seaboard route

through Beira, further north.

Money for the rehabilitation, backed with a £10m grant from Britain, became available at the end of 1986. Extensive track renewal on the worst section of the line, near the border, has been contracted out to the National Railways of Zimbabwe, but the Mozambicans themselves have been unable to develop their own upgrading programme.

During the last 15 months operations by the Mozambique National Resistance, the anti-government guerrilla force, have shifted from northern Mozambique to the southern provinces.