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Voting opens in Nacala

High turnouts in suburban neighbourhoods and lower turnouts in the centre of the city marked the opening of voting in Nacala today, Wednesday 11 February. Voters are having to queue in the rain, and heavy rain over the past few days has caused some problems with access to polling stations on the edge of the city.

This is the second round contest for mayor after no candidate gained more than half the vote in the 19 November election. Frelimo candidate Chalé Ossufo received 49.8% against 47.8% for the present mayor and Renamo candidate Manuel dos Santos.

An incident in the strongly Renamo Murrupulane neighbourhood delayed opening there. Renamo party representatives in polling stations in the local school insisted that the cardboard cabins where voters mark their ballot papers face in such a way that polling station staff and observers can see people while the vote. This is as shown in the manual for polling station staff, but many polling station presidents and observers feel this compromises the secrecy of the vote, and turn the cabin around the other way, with the opening facing a wall. Eventually one Renamo party delegate was expelled by the police, which caused protests by the 600 people waiting to vote. Other Renamo delegates calmed the crowd, the police withdrew, and voting began.

Our correspondent also noted a Frelimo flag flying, illegally, at the school.

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