

MOZAMBIQUE

● EEC plans to spend up to ECU 10 million (\$9.7 million) on new sleepers for phase two of the Cuamba-Nacala railway have hit a problem over patents, EEC officials in Brussels have revealed. Since offering ECU 25 million (\$23.2 million) for the scheme which is due to start early next year – officials have been looking for supplies obtainable by open tender to all EEC member states, as is required by the Lome Convention. They have discovered, however, that sleepers used on the almost complete phase one Nacala-Nampula stretch were protected by a US patent. The EEC is now considering providing compatible sleepers without patent requirements which would damage open competition. The manufacture of a slightly different sleeper is possible, officials say. Companies are likely to be asked to supply cement and steel bars only, with the sleepers being made on site using local gravel. Tenders could be issued late this year. A list of the necessary supplies has been presented to the EEC by project consultant **Soferail** of France. EEC officials say some of the money could be used to buy lorries, cars, tyres and graders, and the supply of signalling equipment is also being considered.

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