

Madagascar minister swims for 12 hours after helicopter crash

27th December, 2021



A minister in Madagascar's government has beaten the odds to survive a helicopter crash and a marathon survival swim. Serge Gelle, the country's secretary of state for police, swam to the mainland on Tuesday after the

helicopter he was a passenger in crashed into the Indian Ocean off the island's north-east coast. Mr Gelle was one of two passengers known to have survived the crash. They both swam for 12 hours to reach the shore. Gelle told reporters that he used one of the helicopter's seats as a flotation device. News agencies are reporting that at least 39 people perished in the disaster. A police spokesperson said rescue workers had retrieved 18 bodies. He lamented that the death toll could increase over the next few days.

Mr Gelle, 57, was in high spirits after his rescue, despite looking totally exhausted. He managed to muster up the energy to recount his ordeal to reporters. He spoke to journalists while slumped in a deck chair and still wearing his camouflage uniform. He said he ejected himself from the aircraft when he knew it was in trouble. He became police chief earlier this year after serving in the police force for three decades. His colleague offered a reason as to why he survived the crash. He said: "Gelle has always had great stamina in sport, and he's kept up this rhythm as minister, just like a 30-year-old. He has nerves of steel." Mr Gelle said: "My time to die hasn't come yet." The cause of the crash is currently under investigation.

Sources: theguardian.com / cbsnews.com / dw.com

Writing

Everyone needs to be taught survival skills. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

Madagascar / beat the odds / helicopter / marathon / coast / device / police / rescue / high spirits / exhausted / energy / camouflage / uniform / trouble / stamina / nerves

True / False

- 1) A Madagascar minister defied odds of 10-1 to survive a helicopter crash. T / F
- 2) The minister was the head of Madagascar's police force. T / F
- 3) The minister used a helicopter wheel as a float. T / F
- 4) A police spokesman said more people could be found dead. T / F
- 5) The minister looked exhausted and in low spirits. T / F
- 6) The minister was still wearing his uniform when being interviewed. T / F
- 7) The minister's colleague said he was an elite sportsman. T / F
- 8) Investigators are now trying to find the cause of the crash. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. odds | a. tell |
| 2. survived | b. died |
| 3. reach | c. cheerful |
| 4. perished | d. count |
| 5. toll | e. examination |
| 6. in high spirits | f. get to |
| 7. recount | g. source |
| 8. stamina | h. probability |
| 9. cause | i. endurance |
| 10. investigation | j. pulled through |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) What do you think of helicopters?
- c) When was the last time you were in high spirits?
- d) How much stamina do you have?
- e) Do you have nerves of steel?
- f) Have you ever been in a very dangerous situation?
- g) What day-to-day things in life are like survival?
- h) What questions would you like to ask Mr Gelle?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| 1. beaten the odds | a. uniform |
| 2. the country's secretary of | b. toll could increase |
| 3. one | c. under investigation |
| 4. at least 39 people | d. of two passengers |
| 5. the death | e. state for police |
| 6. Mr Gelle, 57, was in | f. up the energy |
| 7. He managed to muster | g. high spirits |
| 8. still wearing his camouflage | h. stamina in sport |
| 9. Gelle has always had great | i. to survive |
| 10. The cause of the crash is currently | j. perished |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you know about Madagascar?
- Would you like to travel in a helicopter?
- What would you do if you were stranded in the ocean?
- What are your survival skills like?
- How good are you at swimming?
- Should we all learn survival skills?
- What three adjectives best describe this story, and why?
- What advice do you have for Mr Gelle?

Spelling

- swam to the nimlanad
- reach the ohsre
- a loafitton device
- 39 people rpsiehed
- rescue workers had tireerevd 18 bodies
- He amentled that the death toll could increase
- Mr Gelle, 57, was in high prisits
- mfoualacge uniform
- His ellcagoue offered a reason as to why
- Gelle has always had great asimtna
- He has evrnes of steel
- currently under tsiinteogaivn

Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. j	3. f	4. b	5. d
6. c	7. a	8. i	9. g	10. e

Role Play

Role A – Thinking Straight

You think thinking straight is the most useful survival skill. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their skills. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): making fires, fighting or hunting.

Role B – Making Fires

You think making fires is the most useful survival skill. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their skills. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): thinking straight, fighting or hunting.

Role C – Fighting

You think fighting is the most useful survival skill. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their skills. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): making fires, thinking straight or hunting.

Role D – Hunting

You think hunting is the most useful survival skill. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their skills. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): making fires, fighting or thinking straight.

Speaking – Skills

Rank these with your partner. Put the best survival skills at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| • Map reading | • Thinking straight |
| • Finding shelter | • Making fires |
| • Swimming | • Hunting |
| • Fighting | • Telling jokes |

Answers – True False

1 F	2 T	3 F	4 T	5 F	6 T	7 F	8 T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.