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“There is readiness to adopt the digital format, starting with individual patients to the community level

To avoid medical errors that are the seventh leading cause of death worldwide, the Zanzibar government is working on adopting appropriate digital changes in the health sector to achieve success, in collaboration with stakeholders.

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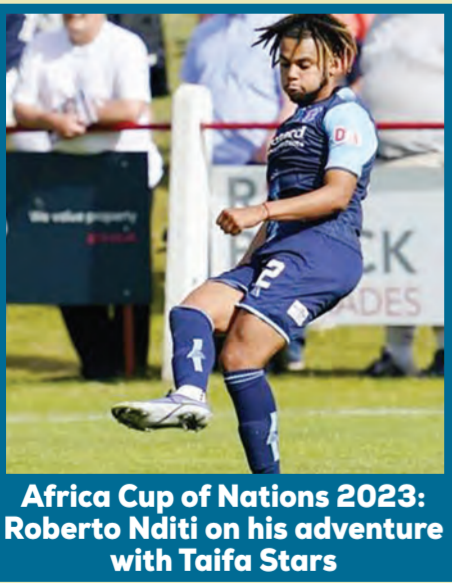
Dar es Salaam rapid bus transport passengers line up to wait for buses at the Mbezi terminal yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Sabato Kasika

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Mkulazi factory starting sugar production, set for 50,000 tns

By Guardian Correspondent, Morogoro

MKULAZI sugar factory in Kilosa District, Morogoro Region has commenced initial production, aiming to add 50,000 tonnes to the market annually.

Mwamini Juma, the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) board chairperson, said when addressing journalists soon after board members toured the factory premises that the factory output will help to reduce the pressure on the price of sugar for the public.

NSSF and the Prison Service Corporation run the factory on a joint venture basis, where NSSF holds a dominant 96 percent stake. In his remarks, he said that the joint venture is a big step assuring NSSF members the safety of their money.

All investment expenses will come back on time, she affirmed, noting that starting production will cut imports of sugar, to which is attached providing market outlets for farmers.

Over 5000 farmers are involved in sup-



A traffic police officer uses a breath alcohol testing device to provide an accurate equivalent blood alcohol level for a lorry driver in Rufiji District, Coast Region on Thursday. Looking on is Ramadhan Ng'azi, the traffic police commander. The exercise is geared to curb road accidents during this festive season. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

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Treasury agrees to improve procurement staff pay level

STORY ON PAGE 2

Treasury agrees to improve procurement staff pay level

By Correspondent Valentine Oforo

FINANCE minister Dr Mwigulu Nchemba has directed the Procurement and Supplies Professionals and Technicians Board (PSPTB) to hand in a draft proposal to initiate a review for pay scales for the professionals.

In his address to open the 4th edition of the procurement and supply professionals' annual general conference, he said that when the proposal lands on his desk he "will endorse it on the spot."

He explained the position from explanation by the chairman of the PSPTB board of directors, Jacob Kibona that despite playing a vital role in helping to improve the country's procurement and supply chain management, the said experts are not paid the deserved salaries.

In response, the minister set out government intention to give the procurement and supply sector priority status as it touches upwards of 70 percent of the country's annual budget.

He said he will work to assure the professionals start receiving encouraging payments and be treated with hand gloves by their respective institutions, chiefly in the public sector.

He asserted that in the law and accountant sectors "those who hold high certificates are respected and paid accordingly," so it should be the same situation for procurement and supply sector professionals.

Coordinated by PSPTB, the event at the Arusha International Conference Center (AICC) is attended by procurement and supply practitioners of all sorts.

They include tender board members, accounting officers, auditors, engineers, architects, quantity surveyors, pharmacists, academicians, consultants, researchers, policy makers, business executives, entrepreneurs, suppliers, contractors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It was convened under the theme "digital transformation for improving procurement and supply chain management towards sustainable development," shouldered by the Zanzibar Insurance Corporation (ZIC) and a range of public and private firms.

They were listed as including Dynatech Solutions, Shades of Green Safaris, the Tanzania Telecommunications Corporation (TTCL), Bravado Solutions, Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF), Bisech Tour Co., Nekira Co. Ltd, Haier (T), e-Government Authority (e-GA), Tanzania Standard Newspapers (TSN), Soft Tech Consultants and UTT AMIS, a stock exchange fund holder.

Others are the Business Registrations and Licensing Agency (BRELA), National Insurance Corporation (NIC), Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA), Universal Communications Services Access Fund (UCSAF), the Fair Competition Commission (FCC), the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), the National Housing Corporation (NHC) as well as the Workers Compensation Fund (WCF).



Zanzibar President Dr Hussein Ali Mwinyi exchanges greetings with India's High Commissioner to Tanzania Binaya Srikanta Pradhan who arrived at State House for talks after his tenure of office yesterday. Photo: State House

Land disputes: Top officials to solve 'chronic' problems

By Correspondent Joseph Mwendopole

TOP ministerial officials will be required to attend zonal and regional land clinics to hear complaints from residents in various areas and find solutions to those contentions on the spot.

Jerry Silaa, the Lands, Housing and Human Settlements minister, made this affirmation when inaugurating the land clinic format at the ministry's city offices yesterday.

Zonal assistant land commissioners along with regional land officers will prepare land clinic schedules to ensure the presence of the minister or deputy minister, he stated.

All those with land problems can submit their complaints and get solutions to the issues from top government officials, he said when reviewing achievements of his 100

days in office since being appointed by President Samia Suluhu Hassan back in August.

Affirming that "land problems in the country are very serious" he was of the view that setting up one stop land clinics in all regions at the start of the new year will help sort out many such problems.

He was convinced that the open clinics will be a great help to solve problems of many people in a short time, so long as the clinics are attended by government officials all the time "so that all citizens can hear how problems are solved."

Land clinics throughout the country must be held in open areas like tents to avoid any semblance of secrecy, he said, emphasizing that the government wants citizens to meet the relevant government officials in one place.

This will help to eliminate the loopholes of corruption and inconveniences of going back and forth,

he said, urging zonal assistant land commissioners to prepare a schedule of land clinics to listen to the concerns of citizens.

The clinics need the presence of top ministerial officials to be present at the clinics, if not the minister then the deputy minister or the permanent secretary will have to be present, "so that the people can find solutions to their problems there."

He said that this structure is vital as often the problem lies with land officials, so the top leaders of the ministry need to be there for them to make decisions on such situations.

Improvements will be made in ministerial offices to install cameras showing the length of stay in office in order to eliminate the culture of government employees neglecting their duties.

"I want to see that when a leader comes and asks where the land

officers are, they can see them by their faces and names through electronic devices. If this happens it will raise accountability levels for land officers," he said.

Improvements in policy, legislation and regulations as well as revisiting the current land laws are in the offing, to amend the laws and have laws and regulations that can provide answers to the current land problems.

Improvements will be made to ensure that all areas in the country are surveyed, in collaboration with verified private companies, he said, noting that earlier many land surveying companies did not meet the criteria required.

They took people's money and failed to complete the work, but the ministry has conducted screening and deregistered them, he affirmed, noting that rapid growth of cities is not compatible with the government's speed of surveying areas.

"So we have seen that we must have a strategy to control the situation and to begin with, I direct our experts from the whole country to start conducting preliminary surveys," he specified.

The minister said that within 100 days he has visited 975 villages to implement cabinet orders and he is satisfied with the speed of regional commissioners to solve concerns regarding land.

To make it easier to solve chronic land disputes, especially in the city of Dar es Salaam, the ministry was looking into converting administrative districts in the city into land regions.

"To show that we are serious, we have suspended 13 land officers, we should fire them but we have suspended them for investigation because the law requires us to do so," he stated. But for all purposes they are not supposed to be government officers anymore, he added.

'Cut medical errors by using digital data'

By Guardian Reporter, Zanzibar

TO avoid medical errors that are the seventh leading cause of death worldwide, the Zanzibar government is working on adopting appropriate digital changes in the health sector to achieve success, in collaboration with stakeholders.

President Dr Hussein Ali Mwinyi made this affirmation at an event to launch the Community Initiative for Development Organization (CIDO) here yesterday, in a speech delivered by Riziki Pembe Juma, the Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children minister.

The minister said for a long time the government in collaboration with international stakeholders has been collecting data at a high cost, so time has come for each health unit to see how it can use the data.

A lot of money is spent on reducing deaths from diseases such as AIDS, TB and malaria, with investments on minimizing mistakes that occur during treatment, the remarks affirmed, noting that it is important for health sector workers to improve their capacities in their workplaces.

They need to advance themselves in education to

change the direction of using health information, to improve performance in line with the digital age, where the Ministry of Health, and other experts can develop recommendations on the training of employees to channel such information.

African countries lag behind in experience with technology in health services but there is an increase in innovation and technology which brings hope, the minister remarks.

"There is readiness to adopt the digital format, starting with individual patients to the community level," she said, elaborating that many people spend a lot of time on social networks without getting formal training to do so.

The time used this way each day can be used to monitor one's health, to protect oneself from infectious and non-infectious diseases, the remarks declared.

In order to measure any planned success, there is need for data science and research capabilities to be accessible in the health sector, explaining that the government measures the results of the activities carried out each year, and adjust according to research findings.

Cooperation is needed with

educational institutions to answer questions that need research or questions that come up after research is done, she stated.

The Zanzibar government has built modern hospitals which need better systems and has computer centres to teach young people about digital health procedures. They can assist in various

government positions and private sector jobs after attaining the required skills, she said.

Hodari Institute director Zeyana Abdallah said the institute is ready to join forces in the research programme for health information in a digital way and to provide solutions to community health matters.

The institute is looking at digital health as an important product that is in line with current developments in science and technology, so it will use knowledge and expertise to spread the broad interests of the people.

Khalid Ahmed, the registrar of civil societies, said they saw the need to register the institution to help the

government especially in health systems, noting that it will bring changes in the health systems.

In 2022, a total of 49bn/- was obtained from the implementation of various civil society projects in Zanzibar, with 27.5bn/- being projects directed to the health sector, he added.



Chadema Secretary General John Mnyika speaks to journalists at the party's headquarters in Dar es Salaam yesterday, claiming that there was yet a response to the letter of Criminal Law amendment bills he wrote in July, this year to the Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala

Mkulazi factory starts sugar production, plans 50,000 tonnes

FROM PAGE 1

plying the factory with raw materials, with the factory focusing on producing industrial sugar that is so far wholly imported, she said.

Dr Heldelitha Msita, board chairperson for Mkulazi Holding Co. commended the social security entity and the Prisons commercial wing for their determination in ensuring that the project is completed.

Mkulazi factory CEO Selestine Some, said that the enterprise is a unique factory, being the first in the country to produce industrial sugar. Its commissioning will increase sugar production while providing much-needed jobs for the youth, he said.

"Our strategic plan is to plant sugarcane in 4000 hectare of land, setting up installation of irrigation systems and purchasing modern agricultural equipment," he stated.

Expressing gratitude to President Samia Suluhu Hassan for disbursing funds to facilitate the project, he praised NSSF for deciding to invest in the industrial sector, "initiating a revolution in the sugar sector."

Data from the Sugar Board of Tanzania shows that during fiscal 2022/23 sugar demand surged to 721,000 tonnes, with 481,000 tonnes of brown sugar for household consumption and 240,000 tonnes for industrial purposes.

Household sugar consumption reached 458,799 tonnes for brown sugar, with no local output for industrial sugar, he added.

UNFPA donates to victims of mudflow in Hanang District, Manyara Region

By Correspondent Sabata Kasika

THE United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Tanzania, has donated sanitary materials to women and girls who are victims of the mudslide in Hanang District, Manyara Region recently.

Among the materials included sanitary pads, soaps, tooth pastes and clothes. The country representative Mark Bryan Schreiner said women and girls are among 5,600 people who were affected by the mudflow.

Speaking in Dar es Salaam yesterday after returning from Hanang, Schreiner said the support was important to the victims.

"UNFPA has donated the items which were received by Col. Selestine Masalamado who is the assistant director for operations and coordination in the Prime Minister's Office disaster management department," he said.

Schreiner said apart from the need to provide them with security, there is need also for the women and girls to access quality healthcare, saying this was the reason they have donated the items.

"As Tanzania was facing above average rains in various areas in the country, UNFPA promises that it will continue to collaborate with stakeholders and the government to provide humanitarian support," he said.

He said UNFPA Tanzania is engaged in humanitarian services, reproductive health, and the fight against sexual violence in various areas including Kigoma based refugee camps.

"UNFPA is also working on humanitarian services in more

than 60 countries in the world and has been cooperating closely with the governments of the respective countries," he said.



"UNFPA has donated the items which were received by Col. Selestine Masalamado who is the assistant director for operations and coordination in the Prime Minister's Office disaster management department"



Industries and Trade minister Ashatu Kijaji (L) presents sponsorship certificate to SBC Tanzania Limited head of commercial department, Foti Gwebe -Nyirenda at the 17th President's Manufacturer of the Year Awards (PMAYA) organised by CTI in Dar es Salaam recently. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala

Be creative, ethical when securing jobs in factories, Dr Kijaji tells youth

By Guardian Reporter

INDUSTRY and Trade minister Dr Ashatu Kijaji has challenged Tanzanian youth to be creative and ethical when securing jobs in factories in order for them to benefit from the employment by improving their incomes.

Dr Kijaji threw the challenge in Dar es Salaam yesterday when she toured the Chemicotex factory to witness its production and operations

as well as hear challenges they are facing.

According to her, young people have got a chance to work in factories to ensure that they always work hard, have good morals and be creative in order to last long and improve their economic status.

"President Samia Suluhu Hassan has made a great measure to improve conducive investment and business environment thus attracting more investment in the industrial sector, this

has also resulted in an increase of employment opportunities," she said.

She explained Tanzania Development Vision 2025 aspirations and the new ones which are under preparation provides light to industrialists to continue flowing in the country as it is a safe place to put up investment projects.

Chemicotex factory chair, Yogesh Manek said the factory has been producing various products including toothpaste, cosmetics and others.

"We have employed a total of 1000 people, of which 550 this is an opportunity for anyone who wants to work," Manek said.

He commended the government for its efforts as the current business environment is good and the factory has the opportunity to produce and sell locally as well as send their products to six countries including Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Burundi and Congo.

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Michenzami Mall is developed by Zanzibar Social Security Fund, a public institution that provides social security services to the people of Zanzibar. The mall is managed by Terranova, a reputable property management company that has over 10 years of experience in the real estate industry. Terranova ensures that the mall is well-maintained, secure, and customer-friendly.

Michenzami Mall is located on the most vibrant and densely populated neighborhood in Zanzibar, Michenzami. Michenzami is a historical street that was built during the era of the first president of Zanzibar after the revolution. It is surrounded by residential flats that house thousands of families. Opposite Michenzami Mall, there is a revolution square that hosts various festivals and events on almost weekly basis. Michenzami Mall is also closer to stone town, airport, port, and other major landmarks in Zanzibar.

Michenzami Mall boasts big names such as Max, Sketchers, Little More, Zan Fresh, CRDB, PBZ Bank Shoe Express, and many more. The mall

attracts a large number of customers every day who come to shop, dine, relax, and have fun. The mall has a lettable space of about 50,000 square metres that can accommodate different types of businesses. The space available can be ideally used for diagnostic center, children and adults games, gift shops, hardware, spa, etc.

The rent at Michenzami Mall is affordable and competitive. It starts from just TZS 26,910 per square metre, payable on monthly basis. The mall also offers a range of amenities including a standby generator, air conditioning, ample parking, 24-hour security, professional cleaning services, fibre optic internet connection, etc.

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**THE REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT OF ZANZIBAR
PRESIDENT'S OFFICE, FINANCE AND PLANNING**

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (CONSULTING SERVICES-FIRM SELECTION)

COUNTRY: UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
NAME OF PROJECT: BOOSTING INCLUSIVE GROWTH FOR ZANZIBAR (BIG-Z)
Loan No: IDA - 69140 - TZ
Assignment Title: Consultancy Services for Development of Zanzibar Building Code
Reference No: TZ-POFP-390052-CS-QCBS

This request for expression of interest follows the General Procurement Notice for the Boosting of Inclusive Growth for Zanzibar Project (BIG-Z) that appeared in the UN Development Business online No. WB-P811333-8 of 08-12-2023.

The United Republic of Tanzania has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the Boosting Inclusive Growth for Zanzibar Project (BIG-Z), and intends to apply part of the proceeds for consulting services.

The Consultancy Services ("the Services") includes: to engage a qualified and experienced consulting firm to develop the Zanzibar Building Code (ZBC) that will respond to the current and evolving construction needs, including provision for improving resilience through design in relation to flooding and other disasters.

The expected duration of the service is 15 months.

The President's Office Finance and Planning now invites eligible consulting firms ("Consultants") to indicate their interest in providing the services. Interested Consultants should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the services. The shortlisting criteria are:

A: Relevant similar experience as specified below

- At least 10 years prior experience in consulting works in the building design and/or construction field, developing building codes and the related a guidelines/system for maintenance, compliance, approval, and awareness building.
- Experience in the development of conservation and maintenance manuals for historical heritage buildings, particularly stone masonry buildings.
- Experience in successful redevelopment of historical sites
- Relevant experience in island states and/or developing countries with similar climates or building typologies of Zanzibar

B: Technical and managerial capability of the firm (Provide only the structure of the organization, general qualifications, and number of key staff). Do not provide

CV of the key staff. Key Experts will not be evaluated at the shortlisting stage.

The attention of interested consultants is drawn to section III, paragraph 3.14, 3.16, and 3.17 of the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers" Fourth Edition, November 2020 ("Procurement Regulations"), setting forth the World Bank's Policy on conflict of interest.

Consultants may associate with other firms to enhance their qualifications but should indicate clearly whether the association is in the form of a joint venture and/or a sub consultancy. In the case of a joint venture, all the partners in the joint venture shall be jointly and severally liable for the entire contract, if selected. Therefore, each member of JV shall independently meet the requirements of the evaluation criteria.

A Consultant will be selected in accordance with the Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS) method set out in the Procurement Regulations.

Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours i.e. 07.30 am to 03.30 pm EAT (GMT + 3) excluding public holidays.

Expressions of Interest must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person or by mail) by **05th January, 2024** the firms that will submit their REOI via e-mail must get confirmation of the receipt of their documents from the Project Coordinator, BIG - Z Project. In case the firm does not receive an acknowledgement within two days after sending the documents via email they should call +255 777 429269 for follow-up.

The address referred above is:

**President's Office Finance and Planning
Attn: Project Coordinator, BIG -Z Project
P.O. BOX 1154
First Floor, Sea View-Wing, Vuga Street
Zanzibar - Tanzania
Email: bigzpm@gmail.com**

**The Principal Secretary,
President's Office Finance and Planning**

Over 100 public institutions linked to digital portal system

By Correspondent Valentine Oforo, Dodoma

A TOTAL of 109 public institutions have successfully been connected to the 'Government Enterprises Service Bus' (GovESB), the new digital portal system tailored for enabling the institutions' systems to read each other and exchange information.

The new digital system which is projected to fast-track and improve services delivery in the public service sector has been developed by the E-Government Authority (e-GA) in accordance with section 48 (2) of the Internet Government Law no.10 of 2019, which requires e-GA to establish and operate a system that enables IT systems in the government to communicate and exchange information.

Speaking at a press conference in Dodoma yesterday over the development, the Director General of e-GA, Eng. Benedict Ndomba expressed that apart from fulfilling the set legal requirements, construction of the GovESB system is to implement directives from President Samia Suluhu Hassan.

"President Samia tasked us, eGA, to come up with a helpful digital system which will ensure IT systems in public institutions are connected and exchange information," he said.

According to him, the clouds-connected system, GovESB will enable public institutions to exchange information digitally and safely, the vital development which among others will reduce duplication of systems in the public institutions.

"The development will also increase operational efficiency, reduce operating costs as well as save time as information will now be available on proper time," he insisted.

He unveiled some of the institutions that have so far affiliated with system as the National Identity Authority (NIDA), Business Licensing Agency (BRELLA), National Examinations Council (NECTA), courts, police force, the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau

(PCCB) and the National Prosecution Services (NPS).

"In the case of the judiciary institutions, the system will help to cement transparency and the equity provision of justice to the public," he observed.

The eGA head, Eng Ndomba said that the state-owned authority was continuing with strategies to ensure all public institutions across the country were connected to the useful portal in order to improve performance of the government.

He insisted that the system has been tailored in an advanced digital manner to help curtailing the long-standing challenges that have been haunting the IT systems at public institutions.

Eng Ndomba also noted that e-GA in collaboration with other public institutions including Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA), Tanzania Ports Authority (TPA) and the Ministry of Finance are designing a joint electronic system for cargo clearance at customs points, dubbed: 'Tanzania Electronic Single Window System' (TeSWS).

He unveiled that, the TeSWS system is part of the implementation of the plan to improve the business environment in the country's (blueprint).

The TeSWS system allows business stakeholders and shippers to submit only once to the system customs information and shipments entering and leaving the country, as well as those passing through the country to neighboring countries where each relevant stakeholder will see them and work on them in the system" explained.



President Samia tasked us, eGA, to come up with a helpful digital system which will ensure IT systems in public institutions are connected and exchange information



Deputy minister in the Prime Minister's Office Labour, Youths and People with Disabilities who is also Shinyanga Urban MP Patrobas Katambi speaks with entrepreneurs in Shinyanga urging them to access loans from their councils to reduce poverty. Photo: Correspondent Marco Maduhu.

About 60,000 residents in Masoko, Kivinje set to benefit from clean, safe reliable water

By Guardian Reporter

ABOUT 60,000 residents in Masoko and Kivinje towns and five neighbouring villages in Kilwa District, Lindi Region are set to benefit from clean and reliable water services following the launch of a special project.

This is after the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (Ruwasa) commenced implementation of the 28 Cities Water Project which will

cost \$18.98 (44bn/-).

Ruwasa acting manager for Kilwa District, Eng Lunyilija Msomi said the project which will fetch water from Mavuji River will greatly bring relief to the thousands of residents (59,983) who have been grappling with steady water services for years.

He further said that the authority has been allocated with 2.54bn/- for the year 2023/24 in order to complete construction of six water projects in the villages of Hotelitatu,

Nakiu, Kipindimbi, Kinjumbi, Marendego and Kilwa Kisiwani.

"The government has also issued 1,036,451,050/- which will be used to implement five new water projects in the villages of Kisimamkika, Zingakibaoni, Mbwemkuru, Nainokwe and Pandeplot-Mtangashari-Nang'ookiwa," he added.

The acting manager further said that in the 2022/23 fiscal year, the authority received a total of

2,981,502,492.69/- which were used to implement water 9 water projects in the villages of Nakiu, Chumo, Chapita, Likawage, Hotelitatu, Kinjumbi, Marendego, Kilwa Kisiwani, Kipindimbi and Masoko town.

According to him, some projects in the villages have been completed and others are working and some of them are in various stages of construction where upon completion, will greatly help

increase water access from 63.7 percent to 72 percent.

"Some of the projects include the Marendego which its implementation has reached 95 percent and is already working supplying clean water to 2,151 residents.

He said that the authority has also constructed a water tank of 50,000 litres capacity, water pumping house, 10 water fetching centres as well as connecting the pump with power.

Hadija Ali, a Marendego resident thanked the government for completing a water project at the village thus bringing joy to the villagers who for over 40 years have lived a difficult life of waking up early in the morning to search for water miles away from home.

"We were forced to walk up to 2km every day searching for water which is also not safe, this greatly affected our daily economic activities and family relations as well," she added.

Village chairman, Mohamed Mpongo said the project has greatly helped women who were the major victims of waking up during night to seek for the precious liquid and later producing conflict with their husbands.



Mara Regional Commissioner Said Mtanda speaks at the Road Board's meeting. The discussion was aimed at various aspects of road improvement in the region on Thursday. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Govt urges entrepreneurs grab loans opportunities

By Guardian Correspondent, Shinyanga

PATROBAS Katambi, Deputy Minister, in the Prime Minister's Office Labour, Youth, Employment and Persons with Disabilities has urged entrepreneurs to grab opportunities in the 10 per cent loans that are issued by local government councils for special groups.

Katambi made the sentiments when addressing entrepreneurs in Shinyanga municipality where he said the loans will start being issued next year through a special system which has been introduced by the government.

The 10 per cent loans derive from internal revenue, where 4 per cent is given for youth and women, while 2 per cent is given to people with disabilities, the issuance of the loans were suspended for improvements.

"The government stopped issuance of these loans but the improvements have now been finalised and we expect that by January next year, will start issuing them again to facilitate business growth" said Katambi.

The deputy minister also urged the citizens to choose hardworking representatives in the coming

local government elections who will transform their areas and get rid of some of the challenges facing them.

"Your vote is your development, let's stop selling development for money, choose people who will represent you well," said Katambi.

Shinyanga District Commissioner Johari Samizi urged women to work hard and grab opportunities of loans which will be issued to grow their businesses but also transform their lives.

The entrepreneurs hailed Katambi who is also the legislator for the area for organising the conference for entrepreneurship education but also opening their eyes on existing opportunities, which they can use and get rid of poverty.



The govt stopped issuance of these loans but the improvements have now been finalised and we expect that by January next year ...



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We Thank you and Value your continued Patronage.



Deputy Minister in the President's Office Public Service Management and Good Governance Ridhiwani Kikwete speaks at the training of Public Employee's Performance Management Information System (PIP MIS) and HR Assessment Systems in Dodoma yesterday. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Malawi bans maize imports from Kenya, Tanzania amid disease concerns

LILONGWE

MALAWI, which already is suffering from food shortages, this week banned the import of unprocessed maize from Kenya and Tanzania over concerns that the spread of maize lethal necrosis disease could wipe out the staple food.

The Ministry of Agriculture announced the ban in a statement that said the disease has no treatment and can cause up to 100 percent yield loss. The statement said maize can be imported only after it is milled, either as flour or grit.

Henry Kamkwamba, an agriculture expert with the International Food Policy Research Institute, told VOA that if the disease were introduced into the country, it would be difficult to contain. He used the banana bunchy top virus as an example of the potential danger.

"Think of how we lost all of our traditional bananas in the past and now Malawi is a net importer of bananas ... due to our lax policies in terms of imports," he said.

"There are these similar concerns with maize," he said, with maize being the nation's main food crop.

Kamkwamba predicted the ban would help Malawi prevent the disease from spreading.

Kenya and Tanzania have long been primary sources of maize for Malawi during periods of food shortage.

Malawi is facing shortages largely because Cyclone Freddy destroyed thousands of hectares of maize

last March. The World Food Program (WFP) in Malawi and the Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee estimate that 4.4 million people – around a quarter of the population – would face food shortages until March 2024.

Grace Mijiga Mhango, the president of the Grain Traders Association of Malawi, said that while she understands the severity of the impact of the maize disease, banning imports at a time of need would likely result in higher costs.

"If we really don't have enough food, then we are creating another unnecessary maize [price] increase," she said.

The next alternative for maize imports is South Africa, she said.

"South Africa is quite a distance," she said, "and they don't have enough. ... It will be expensive."

Malawi's government said the ban will be temporary as it explores other preventive measures to combat the spread of maize lethal necrosis disease.

Think of how we lost all of our traditional bananas in the past and now Malawi is a net importer of bananas ... due to our lax policies in terms of imports

Machali urges DEDs to ponder strategies to improve education

By Guardian Correspondent, Mkalama

MKALAMA District Commissioner Moses Machali has called upon District Education Officers to sit down with teachers and strategize on how to improve education in the district.

He made the directives yesterday when addressing teachers and

education officers during a meeting to strategize on the recent pass rate of the just released standard seven examinations.

Machali said if every one of them can execute their duties effectively, the district can turn things around and improve education in the area.

"Go and manage your responsibilities, if all education Officers, Ward education coordinators and

teachers can work on issues that there are supposed to do, the level of education in our district will increase compared to now and thus put ourselves in a good place in the region," he said.

Mkalama District Council Executive Director, Asia Messos, said the council has put in place strategies to strengthen and improve the management of monitoring systems as well as providing in-

centives to students and teachers who do well in the profession.

Messos said that in the strategy, students who do poorly in exams will also be recognized by giving them gifts that will make them self-motivated and increase their efforts.

The DC instructed the officials to take legal action against parents who fail to manage their children's attendance at school in order to

deal with the problem of absenteeism which causes the deterioration of education

Acting Primary School Education Officer, Amina Iumba, said the council has increased the pass rate by 2.7 percent in which this year, the district got 68.30 percent in 2023 compared to the year 2022 where the pass rate was 65.52 percent.



Boys and girls scouts off-loading various items from a vehicle donated by United Nations Population Fund to Hanang mudslide victims in Manyara region on Thursday. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Go and manage your responsibilities, if all education Officers, Ward education coordinators and teachers can work on issues that there are supposed to do, the level of education in our district will increase compared to now and thus ...

Major solar project to take off in Kenya

NAIROBI

AN investment of US\$2 million on a ground-mounted solar plant is to contribute to the growth of a low-carbon economy and foster a greener future for the manufacturing industry in Kenya.

Abyssinia Iron and Steel has signed a power purchase agreement with Norway's solar power financier, Empower New Energy, for the 25-year contract that will result in the construction and operation of the facility by Spenomatic Group, a

leading renewable engineering, procurement and construction company in East Africa.

The 2.5 MWp solar project is Empower New Energy's first investment in Kenya and marks a significant step in Abyssinia's journey towards becoming 100-percent powered by renewable energy.

By harnessing the abundant solar resources in Kenya, the project will generate about 4.8 GWh of clean electricity per year, saving about 2 500 tons metric tonnes of carbon emissions annually.

Ground-mounted solar options have the advantage of easy access for maintenance and cleaning, as well as increased air flow for more efficient energy production.

"We are thrilled to partner with Abyssinia Steel and Spenomatic to bring cost-saving and clean energy solutions to Kenya," said Terje Osmundsen, CEO of Empower New Energy. Spenomatic will provide engineering, procurement and construction support for the project.

Berjeesh Surty, Managing Director of Spenomatic, described this as

a transformative solar project.

"Together, we set a benchmark for clean energy adoption in the industrial sector," Surty said.

Members of the Norwegian diplomatic corps and representatives from Norfund East Africa attended the signing event at the Norwegian Embassy in Nairobi.

"It is through such partnerships that we can pave the way towards a greener and more prosperous future for all," William Nyaoke, Norfund regional director for East Africa, said.



Recently CHINA COMMUNICATIONS CONSTRUCTION COMPANY LIMITED (CCCC) TANZANIA BRANCH officially released "2023 Social Responsibility Report of China Communications Construction Co., Ltd. Tanzania Branch" (Hereinafter referred to as "Social Responsibility Report") And "Research Report on the Impact of China Standards and China Culture on the Foreign Construction Industry under the Background of the Belt and Road Initiative"(Hereinafter referred to as the "Research Report").

"Social Responsibility Report" is the first annual social responsibility report released by the branch since it entered the Tanzania market. The branch summarizes the local engineering projects it has participated in and will soon participate in, and has contributed CCCC's strength to Tanzania's infrastructure construction. Secondly, on November 6, 2022, when Tanzania flight PW494 crashed into the lake, Zhang Lin saved the life of a baby and the happiness of a family; until this year, the Confucius Institute's cultural exchange signing ceremony in August, September The "Mid-Autumn Festival" celebrations were held at Baobab Middle School and the "That's China" building activities in November. The branch has always stayed true to its original aspirations and actively participated in the development of the Tanzania community. It has established close cooperative relationships with local institutions and residents and steadily promoted the enterprise. construction and strive to promote the deepening and development of China-Tanzania friendship.

"Research Report" mainly introduces the application of China standards in foreign construction industries, discusses the spread and influence of China culture in foreign construction industries, and puts forward strategic suggestions for win-win cooperation. At the same time, the report received valuable revision comments from Dr. John Makunza, School of Civil Engineering, University of Dar es Salaam.

Next year, China and Tanzania will celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. At that time, the Tanzania branch will definitely respond to the call and continue to make efforts in social responsibility fulfillment, cultural dissemination, infrastructure construction and other aspects, and contribute to the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Tanzania to a higher level.

IFC supports fund to cut infrastructure gaps, curb carbon emissions across Asia and Africa

By Special Correspondent

A NEW IFC investment will help address critical infrastructure gaps, facilitate trade, and boost access to renewable energy in Asia and Africa, helping support job creation, foster GDP growth and tackle significant challenges such as food poverty, supply chain disruptions, and climate change.

IFC is investing \$50 million in equity to bolster A.P. Moller Capital's \$1 billion Emerging Markets Infrastructure Fund II (EMIF II), joining forces with a consortium of global partners.

Approximately 50 percent of the fund will be invested in each of Africa and South and Southeast Asia. Approximately 60 percent of the fund will focus on onshore transport infrastructure (ports and storage, roads and rail, warehouses and distribution), promoting job creation and improving competitiveness. The remaining 40 percent will be directed towards renewable energy, as well as distribution infrastructure.

"This partnership is an excellent opportunity to further our ethos of 'doing well while doing good' as we look to increase sustainable investments in green energy and transport in high growth markets in Asia and Africa," said Kim Fejfer, Managing Partner and CEO at A.P. Moller Capital.

"We have made it a priority to work with partners who are as invested as we are to build sustainable businesses that seek to support society through economic and social development."

The fund is also committed to mitigating climate change, with a target to

reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 25 percent in its transport infrastructure assets.

Transport contributed approximately 25% of global energy-related greenhouse gas emissions in 2022 and is one of the fastest-growing sources of emissions. Meanwhile, a recent report by IFC and the International Energy Agency underscored the need for emerging markets to commit \$2.8 trillion annually to clean energy by the early 2030s—tripling current investment levels—to align with the Paris Agreement.

Emerging economies have typically suffered from chronic underinvestment in their transport networks, hampering their socio-economic development. Meanwhile, persistent underinvestment means that despite accommodating more than half of the world's population in 2022, Africa, Southeast Asia and South Asia together represent only 16 percent of the world's total primary energy consumption.

Over the last decade, IFC has committed and mobilized over \$10 billion to finance sustainable transport projects spanning ports, shipping, rail, logistics, and urban transit in emerging markets. Since 2010, IFC also deployed \$12 billion from its own account and mobilized an additional \$20 billion for energy projects in these markets. In addition, IFC has financed over 22 gigawatts of renewable energy, pioneering commercially viable business models in the process. The agreement is also aligned with the World Bank Green, Resilient and Inclusive Development (GRID) agenda.



Minister of State in the Vice President's Office (Union and Environment) Dr Selemani Jafo inspects various tree seedlings nurseries belonging to Tanzania Forest Services Agency Maili Mbili in Dodoma on Thursday. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

NBS calls for effective disaster management strategies

By Guardian Correspondent, Mwanza

THE National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has urged the general public to be transparent to enable the government to prepare for disaster management and response.

NBS Director General Dr Albina Chuwa made the appeal during the bureau's third council meeting which went concurrently with a signing of a customer care contract meant to satisfy clients who use statistics from NBS.

He said the aim behind the signing of the contract was to increase availability of statistics with quality to facilitate proper decision making in government, the private sector and the international community.

"Through the contract, a customer has rights to be served including being given true information which will facilitate availability of better plans," she said.

He said the contract was the third from the second which was signed

in 2014 and the first one which was signed in 2009 where the contracts have identified key indications for a proper customer service.

Commissioner for the 2022, Population and Housing Census, 2022 Anne Makinda said unity, trust and discipline are the key to the success of the institution, thus asking the staff of the statistics office to focus on excellence in their work in order to provide the best and most effective services benefits for society and the nation.

Mwanza Regional Administrative Secretary Balandya Elikana, said that statistics are important in making policies and plans for the country, asking NBS to continue producing better statistics to stimulate development.

"Use these meetings to produce accurate statistics for the benefit of the nation, as NBS has the primary responsibility of ensuring that the statistics produced in the country are better for the benefit of the efficiency of work in the government," said Elikana.



Motorbike riders popularly known as 'Oboche' group in Rorya District, Mara Region on display. Azania Bank has launched a new loans scheme that specifically targets small-scale traders. Dubbed 'Jikwamue' Photo: Guardian Correspondent

30 smallholder farmers in Mkuranga drilled on ways to curb plant diseases

By Beatrice Philemon

THIRTY smallholder farmers in Mkuranga District, Coast Region are set to benefit from training on how to detect plant diseases using Artificial Intelligence (AI), thanks to the initiatives made by Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA).

The training is through a one year project dubbed: 'Crop Health Project' with funding from Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH).

Dr Michael Mahenge, lecturer, department of informatics and information technology (DIIT) at SUA said yesterday that 30 farmers engaged in maize and cassava production have been trained on AI for crop health.

SUA has decided to provide training after identified that plant diseases have disastrous consequences for smallholder farmers whose livelihoods depend on healthy crops.

"Identifying a disease early and correctly when it first appears in your plant is a crucial step for effective disease management," he said.

Currently the project is being implemented by SUA in collaboration with Research, Community and Organizational Development (RECODA) and Tanzania Plant Health and Pesticides Authority (TPHPA).

The project has been de-

signed to solve crop disease by utilizing different technologies including AI technology.

So far, SUA has been able to develop Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Crop Health system to help farmers identify crop diseases and take timely action, preventing widespread damage and minimizing yield losses.

Through the knowledge and skills gained from SUA, farmers will be able to detect the crop leaf diseases, make follow-up for what they grow, predict and recommend best ways to prevent and manage diseases that affects plants/crops.

Farmers will utilize plant leaf image to collect data for detecting crop leaf infections and translate it through Artificial Intelligence system to obtain proper data that will help farmers to curb the diseases.

While in Mkuranga, SUA experts will collect data from different farms by using drones, Smartphone and digital camera ranging from 3 acre to 100 acres of farmland to feed into the AI system.

Dr Mahenge lauded COSTECH to continue supporting different projects including agriculture sector.

According to him, AI for crop health system will help farmers to make follow-up

on crop health from planting seed to harvesting stage and collect data in his/her farms per day/ week in accordance with her/his plan.

AI targets to bringing together stakeholders engaged in agriculture sector to ensure the farming activities that will be conducted in farms boost farm productivity of smallholder, medium and large scale farmers.

AI focuses on strategic crops that include beans, paddy, maize, cassava in Mkuranga District while in Mkuranga District, SUA experts will use AI system to detect crop diseases in maize and cassava crops.

Beatrice Lyimo, National Fund for Advancement of Science, Technology and Innovation (NFASTI)'s manager said that COSTECH has supported seven projects that utilize AI system for research purpose.

She named seven projects received funds from COSTECH as health, education, agriculture and decision making issues and the main goal is to solve challenges in those areas, noting that crop health project is among seven projects that were supported by COSTECH in collaboration with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

"COSTECH and IDRC have injected a total of 150m/- for the implementation of the project." She said.

More efforts needed to improve smart climate agriculture - expert

By Correspondent Felix Andrew

CLIMATE Change expert has said more efforts are required to improve smart climate agriculture for the livelihood of farmers and the economy.

Vicky Msamba, climate change focal person at Agricultural Markets Development Trust (AMDT) made the suggestion recently when briefing journalists on when the trust was estab-

lished to smart climate agriculture in Tanzania.

She said the stakeholders should also increase demonstration plots for climate smart agriculture.

"Extension workers should be increased to many areas in order to offer practical coaching and support to farmers," she said.

Msamba who is also a market development analyst said AMDT in collaboration with some partners have started to sensitise farmers in smart climate agriculture.

"We have done interventions to raise farmers' awareness in climate smart agriculture to increase their adaptation and mitigation capacity in Dodoma, Singida, Manyara, Lindi, Mtwara, Njombe, Ruvuma, Songwe and Rukwa regions," she said.

Regarding response, she said farmers have taken seriously the sensitisation campaign and now they see some changes

"They are demanding improved seed varieties with

short term maturity, adopting conservation practices to conserve moisture and farm inputs," she said.

Msamba said that farmers are irrigating during off-season to increase their farming scope and output, others have drilled small dams to have water for farming, while the rest are producing qualified seeds to ensure seed availability, plant timely, and buy planting technology that does not disturb soil.

She also encouraged

farmers to use soil test kits before engaging in farming activities in order to get high yields, urging farmers to understand the type of soil before farming.

She said soil test plays a crucial role for the best harvest of the crops and AMDT has been sensitizing farmers to test the health of soil in various areas.

Farmers in Manyara and Singida regions are champions of using soil test kits, and we urge others to emulate them, she said.

Drought kills exhausted elephants in Zimbabwe

HARARE

STORM clouds are finally gathering over Hwange National Park, but it's too late for more than a hundred elephants who have succumbed to a prolonged drought at the start of the austral summer.

Simba Marozva and other rangers in the Zimbabwean reserve now only have to cut the tusks off the decomposing corpses to prevent poachers from finding them.

The 14,600 km² park is home to more than 45,000 savannah elephants, so numerous that they are considered a threat to the environment.

The scene is heartbreaking: blackened corpses mark a landscape where the rains are more than six weeks late and temperatures regularly reach 40 degrees.

Some have fallen into dried-up potholes, others have spent their last hours in the shade of a tree. Many are baby elephants: all that remains is their shriveled skin over their bones, giving off a tenacious odour.

The intact tusk is a sign of natural death. In recent weeks, Simba Marozva and his colleagues have been on daily patrol in search of the corpses.

On average, an elephant drinks over 200 litres of water and eats 140 kilos of food a day.

More than 200

pachyderms had died from the drought by 2019. Rangers believe that the current situation is even more critical.

The quest for water is putting the elephants at risk, as they come dangerously close to inhabited areas on the outskirts of the park. Thirsty, they draw from the pools of houses or hotels or drink from water points contaminated by animal corpses.

Hwange Park is part of a vast transboundary conservation area encompassing the Okavango Delta and the majestic Zambezi River.

An aerial census in 2022 estimated that there were more than 225,000 elephants in the area.

While tens of thousands have been slaughtered throughout Africa by poachers and hunters since the 1970s, this conservation area is considered a success, with elephant numbers on the rise.

Almost too many, as the pressure on the park's resources is becoming untenable. And climate change is an added risk. According to environmentalists, there are twice as many elephants in Zimbabwe's nature parks as their capacity allows.

For Tinashe Farawo, spokesperson for the Zimbabwean parks, the death of elephants in Hwange has become a "big problem" but is not surprising

given the size of the population.

"We're expecting it because it's hot and there's been very little rain so far," he told AFP.

"They suffer this stress and die".

Between September and the end of November, "we lost 112 elephants", he says, mainly "the old, the young and the sick".

"They die 50 or 60 metres from a water source because they can't stand the distance they have to travel to find food and water", he adds, relieved by the "few rains" that have fallen in recent days.

Global warming, which is pushing up temperatures and increasing the threat of longer droughts, is of course affecting other animals. But "we are paying more attention to the elephants, given the size of their carcasses", points out the spokesman.

Hwange Park, which is covered in dry grass, leafless trees and open semi-desert areas, has 104 solar-powered water boreholes to reach the water tables, whose water levels drop regularly.

This year, the drought has been exacerbated by the El Niño phenomenon. Dry waterholes are forcing elephants and other wild animals to travel long distances to drink. Some have crossed into Botswana and other neighbouring countries, where many deaths have been reported.



Deputy Permanent Secretary in the President's Office Public Service Management and Good Governance Xavier Daudi speaks to Kilosa council officials and public servants to see the progress of Public Employee's Performance Management Information System, PIPMIS and HR Assessment Systems Training for Morogoro Region. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

AU-led peace support operations get major financial boost

ADDIS ABABA

THE Security Council has unanimously adopted a resolution on the financing of the African Union-led peace support operations (AUPSOS).

Resolution 2719(2023) was authored by the A3 group made up of Gabon, Ghana, and Mozambique.

Peace, security and stability have been key objectives of the AU, as part of efforts to facilitate the regional integration agenda but its Achilles heel remains the lack of adequate resources to support and sustain these operations.

Also addressing the Council in New York, Ambassador of Mozambique

Pedro Comissário Afonso said, "this framework resolution, just adopted, translates our objective to address the concerns of Africa that have been pending for many years."

"Challenges that comprise conflicts, insurgency, progressive Africanisation of terrorism and the proliferation of extremist armed groups," he added.

The AU chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat hailed Friday (Dec.22) a historic development "that demonstrates the growing partnership between the African Union and the UN."

What's at stake?

Also addressing the Council, Ambassador of Mozambique Pedro Co-

missário Afonso said, "this framework resolution, just adopted, translates our objective to address the concerns of Africa that have been pending for many years."

According to the 1 October 2019 version of the draft African Union doctrine on peace support operations.

Among the critical mission success factors, was listed "matching resources to mandate."

The section read: "appropriate and adequate capacities and capabilities should be provided and availed by the AU and its Member States to guarantee effective and successful implementation of AU PSO mandates

issued by the AU PSC and/or the AU Assembly."

In the financing section: "AU PSO should be adequately resourced and sufficiently financed. This is a fundamental prerequisite for effectiveness and successful achievement of the mandate. The financing of AU mandated PSO is the responsibility of the AU. Funding of AU PSO shall also be sourced from other AU partners. The AU force Common Cost AU PSO (2018) indicates the areas for the financing of AU mandated PSO. Financial and/or other support provided by the AU to PSO that it authorises, endorses or recognises, shall be determined on a case by case basis."



Prof. Kitila Mkumbo Planning and Investment Minister speaks to the new Tanzania Investment Centre (TIC) Board members in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Right is the board Chairperson, Dr Benelieth Mahenge. Photo: Correspondent Joseph Mwendapole

Angola quits OPEC over lower production quotas

LUANDA

ANGOLA has announced that it's leaving the OPEC oil producers cartel, coming after it battled with the group over lower production quotas this year.

Diamantino de Azevedo, the African nation's oil minister, said Angola "does not gain anything by remaining in the organization," according to state news agency Angop. The country joined OPEC in 2007.

Disagreements over lower oil quotas for some African countries, including Angola, led to an usual day's long delay to OPEC's November meeting, where the group, along with allied producers led by Russia, decide how much oil to send to the world.

At the meeting, Angola's production level was dropped to 1.11 million barrels per month after an assessment by the three independent sources, the organization said.

OPEC, led by Saudi Arabia, has been trying to bolster oil prices that have fallen in recent months over concerns about too much

crude circulating in a weakening global economy, which could weigh on the thirst for oil for travel and industry.

The lower prices have been a good thing for U.S. drivers, who have been able to fill their gas tanks for less money in recent months but have hurt the bottom line of OPEC oil producers. The price of U.S. benchmark crude has fallen 8 percent this year.

Oil prices have gotten a boost in recent days as Yemen's Houthi rebels have escalated attacks on ships in the Red Sea and companies have diverted vessels from traveling through the area, where huge amounts of the world's energy supplies transit between the Middle East, Asia and Europe.

While losing Angola, OPEC announced at its meeting last month that it was bringing Brazil into the fold, a major oil producer that has been producing record amounts of crude this year, according to the International Energy Agency.

An OPEC spokesman didn't immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

Ships rerouted by Red Sea crisis face overwhelmed African ports

CAPE TOWN

SHIPPING companies sailing around the Cape of Good Hope to avoid Houthi attacks on the Red Sea face tough choices over where to refuel and restock, as African ports struggle with red tape, congestion and poor facilities, companies and analysts say.

Hundreds of large vessels are rerouting around the southern tip of Africa, a longer route adding 10-14 days of travel, to escape

drone and missile attacks by Yemeni Houthis that have pushed up oil prices and freight rates.

The attacks by Iranian-backed militants have disrupted international trade through the Suez Canal, the shortest shipping route between Europe and Asia, which accounts for about a sixth of global traffic.

South Africa's major ports, including Durban, one of Africa's largest in terms of container volumes handled, as well as Cape Town and

Ngqura ports are among the worst performing globally, a World Bank 2022 index released in May found.

"Even the state that Durban is in now, it is still the most advanced and largest port in Africa, so ships rerouting around the continent have very limited choices for berthing for replenishment," Alessio Lencioni, a logistics and supply chain consultant told Reuters.

Other large African deep-water ports along

the Cape route, such as Mombasa in Kenya and Dar es Salaam in Tanzania are too ill-equipped to handle the expected traffic over the next couple of weeks, Lencioni said.

Maersk said vessels routed around the Cape will as far as possible try to fuel at origin or destination.

"In case there is a need for bunkering en route, it would be decided on a case by case basis with Walvis Bay (Namibia) or Port Louis (Mauritius) being the top

options," a spokesperson said.

Attacks by Yemen's Houthi militants on ships in the Red Sea are disrupting maritime trade through the Suez Canal, with some vessels re-routing to a much longer East-West route via the southern tip of Africa.

Rough weather with high seas, common at the 'Cape of Storms' as well as the cyclone-prone Mozambique Channel, mean ships could burn through their fuel quicker, making refuelling

services crucial, shippers said.

"In Singapore, we're delivering larger bunker volumes to vessels that will now be sailing longer voyages," a spokesperson for TFG Marine, a unit of energy trader Trafigura, said.

Bureaucracy is a concern. In September, South Africa's national revenue service detained five bunkering vessels in Algoa Bay on suspicion of contravening the Customs and Excise Act.

BP, Trafigura and Mercuria have all been hit by suspensions pending audits.

Since South Africa's first ship-to-ship offshore bunkering started in Algoa Bay in 2016, there has been a sharp rise in fuel volumes and vessels using it.

A spokesperson for Heron Marine, the TFG Marine affiliate operating in Algoa Bay, said the company is working with customers to manage their bunkering requirements. Mercuria and BP (BPL) did not

immediately respond to questions.

In anticipation of more marine fuel being needed, imports are expected to rise to around 230 kilotonnes in December, analysts say.

"South Africa is expecting a record high of fuel oil imports for December," because of demand for refuelling linked to the Houthi crisis, Younes Azzouzi, market analyst at data and analytics specialist Kpler said.

SATURDAY 23 DECEMBER, 2023

Taking A New Look
At The News
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Public procurement systems, monitoring, work in progress

ONE of the most complicated areas in seeking to foster good governance in civil and government activity as a whole is public procurement, owing to the breadth of interests involved, the sums of money figured, and readiness to compromise in regulations, or even the complexity of regulations. The Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) has been conducting a training session for members of civil society organisations (CSOs) and what to many are look-alikes, non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The topic was operations of the new National e-Procurement System (NeST), clearly of interest to all.

PPRA officials said that the initiative was designed to strengthen NGOs' oversight role in public procurement processes, where the focus was on training participants in the mechanisms of e-procurement and engaging in discussions on its various aspects. CSOs and NGOs would sharpen their tools for monitoring government procurement to satisfy themselves of the probity of the process. Procurement has been at issue all the time, and technological improvements make the process more transparent, by lowering time use in documents access.

When all interested parties know most of what is there to be known at the same time, as this is what electronic procurement envisages, this shuts out alterations or initiatives changing the broad format of what is to be done, as doubt would be noticed across the board. But when document access is physical, no common perception of what is being done at a particular moment will be assured, in which case gaps of perception facilitate a minimum of wrong doing. PPRA was seeking to impress on the non-state actors how corruption is being weeded out.

That is often easier said than done, as there are ways of disturbing e-controls wherever they are, such that e-governance is not beyond the reach of data disturbance or system mismanagement. Chances of system failure as such are low, but there are options available to operators at various stages, and when one looks at recent reports of the Controller and Auditor General, that situation is fairly well pronounced. There was a case in a southern highlands region where local government officials created an alternative channel of revenue collection.

So there are likely to be ways in which NeST may enhance transparency and accountability, providing insights into accessing information for monitoring and whistleblowing. Trouble against comes up at that point, namely the systemic inability at whistleblowing in the government expenditure or project monitoring and control procedures. It is rare that open contention arises inside municipal or district councils, or with regional officials, on quality of project implementation.

Increased awareness among stakeholders and the general public to make the public procurement system more widely known is evidently a positive contribution, despite that more needs to be done, or is unlikely to actually realise, the goal of effectively addressing corruption gateways, displaying red flags to prompt timely interventions. While it is entirely that such a proactive approach enhances the regulator's ability to safeguard public funds, it also raises the issue of creation of earning opportunities among the parties. Instead of raising a red flag, communications are conducted to spread out the gains over a wider stretch of stakeholders, those privy to that information, at that moment.

Crowding on fabled export crops invites sharply pronounced boom, burst cycles

REPORTS that authorities in Njombe Region are expecting to set out 87,000 hectares for extensive cultivation of avocados in particular, plus other quixotic crops for export shows a growing tendency countrywide, to ditch this or that traditional crop for highly valued export products. As the market is just starting to open up for Tanzania, there is an impression that the sky is the limit, whether it is for spices or multipurpose products like vanilla, the way it was for cloves earlier. Avocado is another market bombshell, likely to be over-cultivated soon.

The reports indicated that at least 60,000 hectares will specifically be used for the cultivation of avocado, and up to 20,000 hectares be tied to horticulture band a dairy farm. Officials say that work for preparations of the project was at an advanced stage, but the issue is whether it is administrative entities who are conducting the projects, or these initiatives are within the private sector. There is a mixed projection where the region makes all preparations and then it will advertise the farm to the public to get serious investors taking up some hectares. How far might the rent link, or preliminary costs for infrastructure, dispel them?

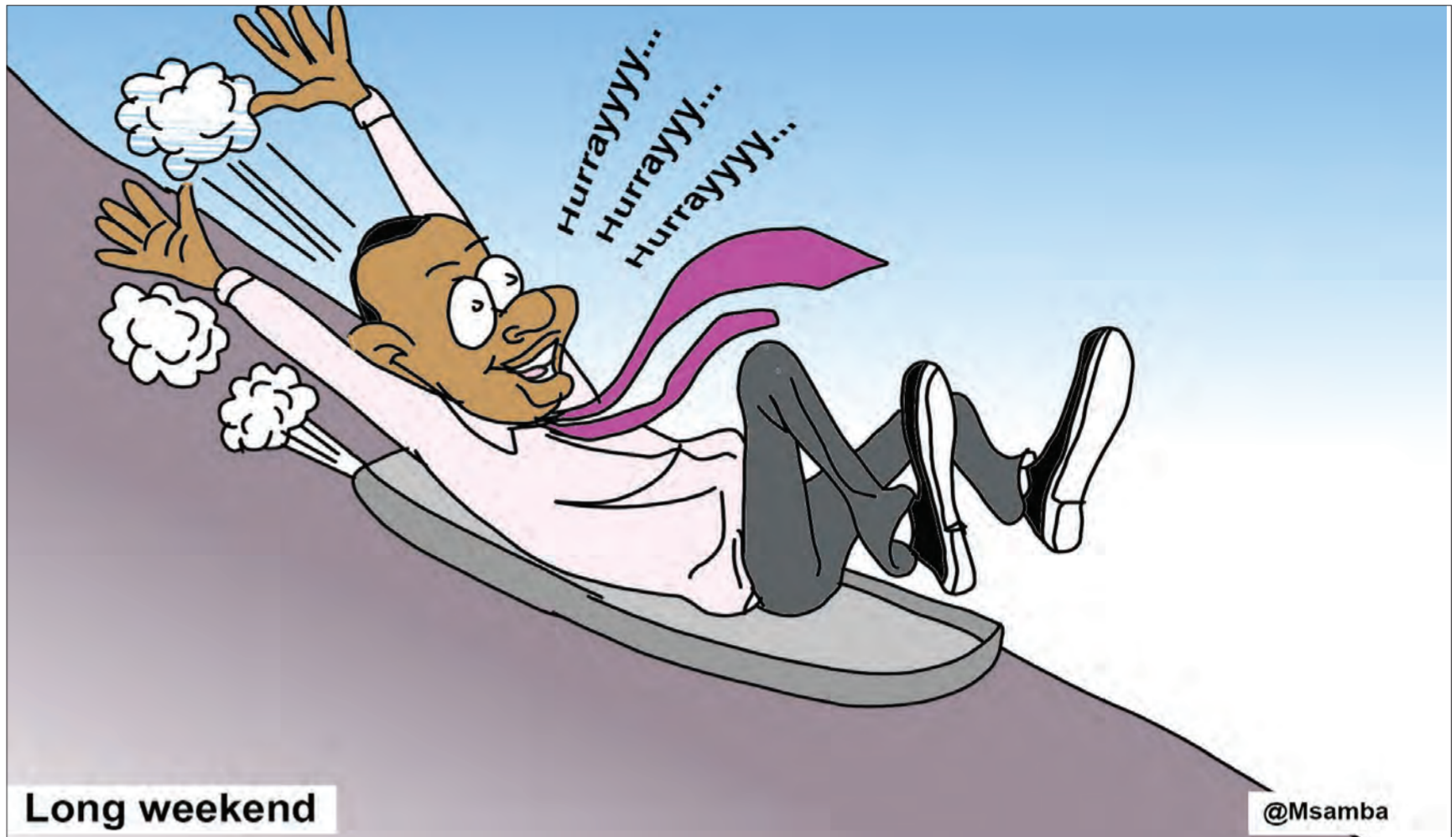
It looks like the region is preparing an avocado, dairy and horticulture export processing zone, which is fine as an idea but when it is taken up by a public agency, the costing structure will be affected. This is what stymied the Dar export processing zone at times identified with third phase president Benjamin Mkapa, where industrialists did not turn up as envisaged. As current reforms touch various areas, and there are many areas still being fingered by

the World Bank in particular, being in condominium of a project with the public authorities is to fail an investment drive. They want land, and especially land upon which they can use to borrow funds, not where the government has all the documents, etc.

So this project has clay feet first in crowding for planting avocado, whereas the fad is spreading for farmers around the world, and soon avocado like other special farm products before it, will be selling at fairly ordinary prices. That is partly why anything that sounds like a large investment ought to be left to individual initiative where someone will have a keen awareness of market mechanisms. Public sector investments are tied with communication fads operating at a particular moment, often falling prey to prestige projects or fancy gains imagined to be sustainable or durable, whatever. It is risk taking that could lead to people pointing fingers at one another if it fails, but chances it may just be stalled.

If the region wishes to be an investment hub, there are still plenty of choices it has to make, and some of them are not within its reach. Inviting investors to horticulture on land that is provided by local government authorities is a recipe for failure, for residents living nearby often consider that undeveloped patch of land to be clan land, for future expansion, and often sooner than local authorities expected. When an investor buys land from villagers, he will be respected as everyone will know who benefited from the transaction, not when land is handed by district authorities as villagers take it that those authorities were bribed to hand their land to a foreign investor or even a local fellow, an unending conflict.

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Long weekend

Sudan's conflict needs civil society solutions

By Andrew Firmin

IT'S recently been reported that the two main protagonists of Sudan's current conflict - leaders of the armed forces and militia at war since April - have agreed to face-to-face talks. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), an East African body, announced the potential breakthrough - although Sudan's foreign ministry has since claimed IGAD's statement is inaccurate, creating further uncertainty.

There's no question that an end to the violence is urgently needed. The conflict has created a humanitarian and human rights crisis. But the two leaders involved, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Mohamad Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemeti, of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militia, have provided ample evidence to doubt whether they're really interested in peace, or in accountability for atrocities.

Human rights crimes on all sides. Al-Burhan and Hemeti were partners in the October 2021 coup that ousted the civilian government that followed the 2019 revolution. Their conflict began at a crunch moment for a supposed return to civilian rule and amid a plan to absorb the RSF into the SAF. As much as anything, it appears to be a personal power battle between the two leaders.

The conflict initially played out on the streets of the capital, Khartoum, and its neighbouring city of Omdurman. It has since spread to other regions. Other rebel groups are active, some acting independently of the two main forces.

All sides are targeting civilians, with clear evidence that war crimes and crimes against humanity are being committed. Over 12,190 people have been killed since the conflict began. The UN also estimates that 6.6 million people have now been displaced, the world's highest number of displaced people.

The conflict has been brought to Darfur, the site of a genocide against local ethnic groups committed by the RSF and other Arab militias that began in 2003. Twenty years on, people are again being killed solely because of their ethnicity. The RSF now controls much of the region. In November, in response to the RSF's ethnic cleansing, key Darfur militia groups joined the SAF's side, signalling a further escalation of conflict.

The chaos of conflict has caused a cholera outbreak, with the health system collapsing and medical workers under attack. The World Food Programme has recently warned of a



deepening hunger crisis.

In Chad, a low-income country home to around a million displaced people before the conflict began, refugee centres are struggling to cope with arrivals from Sudan and people live in crowded and insanitary conditions, exposed to continuing insecurity.

Humanitarian workers are being targeted. In December, two people were killed in an attack on a Red Cross convoy in Khartoum. Journalists are also being targeted, making it harder to get accurate and independent news from the ground. In Khartoum, the RSF has turned media buildings into detention centres.

And yet the response from the international community has been wholly inadequate. Recently the UN announced it had received only 38.6 per cent of the US\$2.6 billion needed for humanitarian response in 2023. It's only been able to help a fraction of those in need.

In another blow, at the start of December, the mandate of the UN Integrated Assistance Mission in Sudan was terminated at the request of the SAF-led government. Its job had been to support a democratic transition. The move offered a troubling sign that the government wants less rather than more international oversight.

A history of wishful thinking. With other conflicts dominating global headlines - first Ukraine, now Gaza - the world isn't paying atten-

tion. But that doesn't mean states have stopped taking sides. Sudan's size, mineral wealth and geographical position give it strategic significance. Foreign states have long made self-interested calculations. Before the conflict, most states, as well as the UN, placed faith in the military as a source of stability. With that idea blown, states are now deciding which side is their best bet.

The United Arab Emirates is reportedly supplying arms to the RSF, and recently several of its diplomats were expelled by the foreign ministry. Russia is also on the RSF's side. Both countries have an interest in Sudan's gold. On the other side, Egypt has always been strongly behind the military establishment and the USA is said to be sliding towards the SAF as the perceived lesser of two evils.

Even when apparently well-intentioned, states and international organisations have consistently been guilty of wishful thinking. Before the conflict they put their faith in the promises of a military-led transition plan. Every process attempted since the coup has only further empowered the leaders now at war.

Need to enable civil society. It's time Sudan's civil society was heard and enabled to help pave the road to peace.

Sudan's civil society is complex and layered. There's an elite tier that broadly backed the supposedly transitional administration that emerged after the

coup. There are established civil society organisations that work to provide essential services and advocate for rights. But the biggest source of opposition to armed rule has come from resistance committees: informal neighbourhood-level groups that played a crucial role in the 2019 revolution.

The committees are democratic and make decisions by consensus. They call for civilian rule and reject the calculations of the outside world about which form of military government can best guarantee stability, which for the resistance committees means continuing oppression. They've also become a key source of humanitarian response, including by providing food, water and healthcare.

Diverse resistance committees have worked together to develop a plan for transition to democracy. But the outside world seems perplexed, struggling to engage with a leaderless movement and rejecting demands for democratic civilian rule as somehow too ambitious.

But everything else has failed. There should be no route for either of the warring military leaders to retain power. When peace comes, so must accountability for human rights crimes. And neither will materialise unless democracy does - which means an enabled and empowered civil society.

Andrew Firmin is CIVICUS Editor-in-Chief, co-director and writer for CIVICUS Lens and co-author of the State of Civil Society Report.

Season's greetings from the US ambassador to Tanzania

By Michael Battle

MY wife Linda and I happily arrived in Tanzania in early 2023 to begin my second ambassadorial posting. From the moment I presented my credentials to President Samia Suluhu Hassan, I have been committed to collaborate with the Government of Tanzania to continue to strengthen our bilateral relationship to advance peace, prosperity, security, and the health of our citizens. As we celebrate the holidays with family and loved ones, I wanted to take the opportunity to reflect on our shared accomplishments this year as we prepare for the work ahead in 2024.

Increasing trade and investment between the U.S. and Tanzania is one of my top priorities as Ambassador. Following the historic meeting between President Samia and Vice President Kamala Harris earlier this year, we rolled up our sleeves and finalized the Commercial Dialogue with our Tanzanian counterparts. The Dialogue is a commitment by our governments to increase two-way trade and investment, to improve the ease of doing business through technology, transparency, and regulatory reforms. The Commercial Dialogue will work hand in hand with USAID's economic growth strategy. As I travel throughout this beautiful country from Zanzibar to Kigoma or Arusha to Mbeya, I meet with government representatives, civil society leaders, alumni, and private sector representatives with a focus on generating business opportunities for Americans to work with Tanzanians.

Take for example the USAID agricultural portfolio, which in 2023 allocated over \$30 million to priority areas identified by the Tanzanian government. These include laying the groundwork for the develop-



US Ambassador to Tanzania, Michael Battle

ment of a fertilizer production hub, increasing agricultural productivity, promoting climate smart agricultural technologies, and catalyzing private sector investments in agriculture. This assistance is designed to increase trade and investment, in direct support of the U.S. Africa Leaders' Summit goals. Further, USAID has improved protection for almost two million hectares

of land while simultaneously helping 64,000 people to increase their incomes through the preservation of Tanzania's rich natural heritage. With a steadily increasing stream of tourists and international students coming to Tanzania, I know the best is yet to come.

Global health security remains an important area of focus in our partnership, and our

largest U.S. investment supports the health of Tanzanian citizens. Since 2003, PEPFAR has provided \$7 billion of support for HIV prevention, care and treatment, and health systems strengthening in Tanzania. In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, PEPFAR currently supports over 1.4 million people living with HIV on life-saving antiretroviral drugs.

On World AIDS Day, I was pleased to see Prime Minister Majaliwa announce results from the national 2022 - 2023 Tanzania HIV Impact Survey showing that Tanzania is on the cusp of controlling the HIV epidemic. The Prime Minister was spot on when he called for young people and men to go and test for HIV. Tanzania is incredibly close to reaching the UNAIDS 95-95-95

objectives, and HIV testing is the key to reaching that goal.

When the Marburg Virus Disease was first identified in Tanzania in March, the health sector reached out to international partners and responsibly and transparently addressed the challenge.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) proudly partnered with the Government of Tanzania to assist with surveillance, epidemiology, and data management to contain the outbreak, which was declared officially over on June 2, 2023. As Ambassador, I appreciate the President's articulation of the pillars for multiparty democracy in Tanzania being Reconciliation, Resilience, Reform and Rebuild, and encouraged our embassy team to work within this framework to encourage Tanzania to take important and meaningful steps toward democratic reforms.

From safe communities to healthy families, to a better future for Tanzanian youth, it is vital to continue to expand space for citizen participation. The Tanzanian people are this country's greatest asset, and we are proud to collaborate to support Tanzania's ambitious reforms. We close 2023 on a high note, as the Millennium Challenge Corporation selected Tanzania for a threshold program which will support Tanzania's economic and reform goals while paving the way for increased investment and the potential for a full MCC compact.

Few countries in the world prioritize peace and stability in the way that Tanzanians uphold this core universal value. We are grateful for our continued military cooperation as evidenced through Joint Combined Exchange Trainings with the Tanzania People's Defence Force and the commencement of construction of new barracks at the Tanzania Defence Intelligence College.

Tanzania's grace and hospitality inspires all of us at the embassy to execute strategic and effective programs which will deepen our nation's long-standing friendship far into the future. As the holiday season begins and we look forward to a new year, we at the Embassy wish all Tanzanians the peace and blessings of the holiday, together with good health and prosperity.

Registration of customary union as evidence of valid marriage

By Telesphor Magobe

IN the previous article we briefly looked at the evidence of the offences of rape and incest. We then said sometimes a girl or woman could be raped, but because she is unfamiliar with what the law says and court proceedings the evidence she provides in court may not convince the court to deliver its judgment in her favour. In this case, the judgment may favour the accused person for lack of reliable evidence and when this happens it is to the detriment of the victim of rape.

The advice was that it is important to familiarise oneself with the laws one is subject to and court proceedings and even seek legal aid when one intends to seek court relief or when one is summoned to testify in court or is aggrieved by a court decision and wants to appeal. There is no miracle the court can perform to help a person who seeks court relief except where he or she provides reliable evidence which the court can rely on to deliver its judgement on the issue complained of.

Today, I invite you to briefly look at a marriage contracted in accordance with customary rites. One of the issues this column does is to link real life experience with what the law says. There is an example of the spouses who do not have religious or civil marriage according to the Marriage Act, 1970 (R.E 2019), but they have been living together as husband and wife for more than seven years now and they have two children.

I remember having heard that they are not just living together as husband and wife, but actually the husband paid the bride price to the family of his wife. Therefore, their marriage can rightly be referred to as the one contracted in accordance with the customary law rites (section 25). A marriage contracted in accordance with customary law rites and is registered [section 43(5)] is a valid marriage in Tanzania.

Section 43(5) of the Marriage Act



states that "When a marriage is contracted according to customary law rites...it shall be the duty of the parties to apply for registration, within thirty days after the marriage, to the registrar or registration officer to whom they gave notice of intention to marry."

Registration of marriage contracted in accordance with customary law rites is stressed in the case of Joyce Peter (appellant) v Leon-

ard Faustine (respondent) (2020), which is an appeal to the High Court of Tanzania.

It arose from a matrimonial appeal No 5 of 2020 in Kwimba District Court and originated from a civil case No 10 of 2020 at Kwimba Primary Court. In this appeal, the High Court of Tanzania, referring to section 43(5) held that "a valid marriage must be registered. In the instant appeal, the parties were

required to register their marriage within 30 days after their marriage, but this requirement was not fulfilled."

"The law is clear that it is the duty of parties to register the customary marriage within 30 days. Therefore, the Sukuma customary law rites should be registered according to the law so that they may be termed or known as spouses."

Furthermore, the High Court of

Tanzania said although the parties had contracted their marriage under Sukuma customary law rites, their lack of registering it rendered their marriage invalid. It is good to comply with legal requirements all the time because (1) this is our legal obligation and (2) in case one day we feel a need to seek court relief we will have all that we need for it.

With the story I am talking about, the husband seems to be secretly

planning to leave his wife and marry another one and to be able to do so effectively he may frustrate his current wife so that she leaves him and once she does so, the man will get a loophole to marry another woman who apparently he already has a child with. The man still keeps it as a secret, but he has confided it to his close relative and asked her to keep it secret lest his wife knows it.

He seems to have entertained the second relationship with another woman for a long time because his prospective wife has just given birth to a baby, which implies their relationship is more than a year. I am not sure whether the spouses registered their customary marriage because it is essential for marriage validation. Yet, it is an aspect which is often overlooked because of ignorance or indifference.

We always seem to start marriage well (happily), but somewhere on the way we feel a vacuum which needs to be filled by something else. I have come across some unhappy marriages because one spouse cheats on the other or both spouses cheat on each other. Once spouses who have been living happily start cheating on each other there is often a bad ending and each of them gets hurt, including their children.

Spouses often share a lot of things in their lives and there are things they keep to themselves, but when each spouse goes their own way it means all that they have shared and kept secret may start spreading to other people. Yet, no spouse would like all that he or she has shared to be known to unintended people. But, of course, when people no longer live together as husband and wife each one of them will feel unbound to disclose what the two kept as a secret.

Today's proverb: "Words are wind, but blows are unkind."

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The opaque chain of electric cars that are being assembled in Mexico



By Emilio Godoy

THE city of Austin, Texas, on the U.S.-Mexico border, had 945,000 residents in 2021 and on average each household owned two cars, hundreds of them electric. Among the manufacturers of these electric vehicles are companies such as the US Tesla, Ford and General Motors (GM).

From Tesla's plant in Travis County, one of the automaker's eight global facilities, there is a virtually invisible line to its future subsidiary in Santa Catarina, in the northeastern Mexican state of Nuevo Leon, two locations separated by about 600 kilometers.

The company produced the largest number of electric vehicles (EVs) and plug-in hybrids in the second quarter of 2023, followed by the Chinese company Build Your Dreams (BYD).

Tesla has attracted Mexican engineers trained in Nuevo Leon and from Austin supervises the construction of the new plant, whose investment is around 5 billion dollars.

Hundreds of these rolling steel beetles, many of them electric (even from other brands), fill the parking lot of the facility, where Tesla manufactures its Model Y and a cybertruck, and will soon make batteries and cathodes, one of its main parts and which is the electrode that transports the positive electrical charge.

In the morning hours, these vehicles crowd Tesla Street, so rechristened for obvious reasons.

The process involves an issue that is becoming more and more relevant: the transparency of the supply chain. The number of parts in an EV battery varies by model, but in total it's less than an internal combustion unit.

But, according to specialists interviewed, this chain has different levels of transparency, depending on the company in question. U.S. and European brands are leading the way, while Chinese brands are lagging.

But under pressure from governments, non-governmental organizations and consumers, the situation is showing signs of change.

The supply chain involves the phases of extracting the raw materials for the product, processing and refining them for the preparation of the commodity materials, their coupling for use in the final good, and the end of their useful life, which includes reuse or recycling.

This scaffolding is made up of hundreds of actors, generally disconnected from each other, and involves an enormous effort to trace them and which makes

Outside its Austin plant, Tesla has charging stations for electric vehicles (EVs), which are already common in the United States. But the supply chain of materials for the manufacture of EVs has transfer flaws on the part of Tesla and other companies: they do not detail the origin of the raw materials for their production or their components, as well as environmental impact or respect for human rights. Credit: Emilio Godoy / IPS

it difficult to clarify who provides which component.

In the research for this report, IPS found that the EV supply chain in Mexico is opaque, which has environmental and human rights repercussions.

In 2021, during the climate summit in the Scottish city of Glasgow, Mexico assumed the voluntary goal of selling only non-polluting cars by 2035. In addition, the U.S. administration of Democrat Joe Biden wants 50% of new cars sold by 2030 to be electric.

Global player

Yong Kwon, the non-governmental Sierra Club's senior policy adviser, noted that the focus has traditionally been on the greenhouse gas emissions caused by the manufacture of EVs, from the extraction of the minerals needed for the production of batteries and other components to the manufacturing itself.

However, there is increasing pressure to consider other aspects, such as respect for human rights and the presence of child labour.

"We are in the early stages of understanding the full impact of the chain. We don't know which plants supply steel, for example, to the assembly plants. By having transparency about the environmental impact, you can send signals on other issues. We want to draw attention to them," he told IPS from Washington.

Mexico is the world's fourth-largest exporter of light-duty vehicles and the fifth-largest seller of auto parts, but it has yet to weigh in on the global EV market. The automotive sector has about 600 suppliers of original parts, who in turn outsource to another 600 vendors of components or basic services.

In 2021, Mexico was the sixth-largest seller of EVs, with destinations such as the United States, Belgium, and Norway, while importing a low volume of units from the United States, Germany, and China.

It also exported the equivalent of 2% of global electric batteries, while China dominated the sector, with 35%. The main destinations were the United States, Canada and France. Meanwhile, it imported 2.86% of all components, contributed by Poland, the United States and China.

The Asian powerhouse controls almost half of the EV value chain and Contemporary Amperex Technology Company Ltd. (Catl), with its parent company in that country, produces one in three batteries in the whole world.

Mass failure

The international platform Lead the Charge, made up of several environmental organizations in the United States (including the Sierra Club), virtually failed all EV producers.

Its objective is to evaluate the automotive industry on the respect for human rights of workers, communities, and Indigenous Peoples, in a sustainable way and without the consumption of fossil fuels.

This assessment is relevant for Mexico, due to its production plant link with the United States, although there is no evaluation of manufacturing in Mexico.

Ford was the highest rated in the examination, with a total score of 33%. In the area of respect for human rights and responsible sourcing, it received 51% and, on the environment, 15%.

GM scored 15 percent overall, with 25 percent on human rights and responsible sourcing and 5 percent on the environment.

Meanwhile, the platform assigned 14% to Tesla, 21% on human rights and responsible sourcing and 7% on the environment.

Another Lead the Charge's subject was the German BMW Group, to which it gave a total score of 22%, with 26% in environmental aspects and 17% in human rights and responsible sourcing.

The group is investing about \$872 million in its plant in the municipality of Villa de Reyes, in the north-central Mexican state of San Luis Potosí, which will manufacture electric models and batteries.

For Cecilia Mattea, Battery and Value Chain Policies manager at the non-governmental network European Federation for Transport and Environment (T&E), increasing transparency in value chains offers benefits to stakeholders, such as local communities affected by mining.

"Some automakers are taking significant steps to make their operations more transparent, but others are still lagging behind, especially on sustainability commitments, not to mention increasing transparency," she told IPS from Brussels.

In 2021, Ford began mapping and auditing the EV and battery supply chain to uncover the source of raw materials such as nickel, lithium, cobalt, and graphite.

In its 2022 sustainability report, Ford, whose global headquarters are located in the U.S. city of Detroit, listed 30 appraisals to its suppliers from these four chains and reviews of its nickel, lithium and cobalt due diligence management systems. But the company has not given details about these measures.

At its plant placed in the municipality of Tutitlán, located in the central state of Mexico (adjacent to Mexico City), the U.S. multinational assembles the Mustang Mach-E electric model, aimed mainly at the U.S. market.

Customs data from Mexico and Comtrade, the United Nations' trade statistics system, reveal that Ford imports lithium-ion batteries

from companies such as LG Chem and Samsung SDI, which have plants in South Korea and China.

It also acquires electronic components, such as sensors and communication systems, from Germany, the United States and China.

Meanwhile, GM is much more succinct with its information and only indicates its plans to get cobalt from the Democratic Republic of Congo through a multi-year agreement with Australian miner Glencore, as well as lithium from Argentina.

GM assembles batteries and EVs at its factory in the municipality of Ramos Arizpe, in the northern Mexican state of Coahuila, for which it imports lithium batteries from LG Chem, which has suppliers in China and Japan.

The case of Tesla is extremely relevant, due to its ambitious EV production goals, its global expansion, including its future plant in Mexico, and its dependence on China, an aspect linked to the level of transparency of its supply.

This manufacturer sources batteries mainly from Japan's Panasonic and China's Catl. In addition, it uses battery cells from LG Chem and BYD.

In the case of batteries, its suppliers include Catl, South Korea's LG Energy Solution, BYD, Panasonic, South Korea's SK On, Samsung SDI and China's China Aviation Lithium Battery Co. (Calb), Guoxuan High-tech Co., Sunwoda Electronic Co. and Svolt Energy Technology Co.

Regarding raw materials, Tesla buys lithium from the US-based Albemarle Corporation, which owns a mine in Australia and a refinery in China; Livent, also from the United States; and China's Ganfeng Lithium Co. and Yahua Industrial Group.

It also purchases cobalt and nickel from China's CNGR Advanced Material Co. and Huayou, which mines cobalt from Congo, the same case as Glencore Kamoto Copper Company, which owns a cobalt mine in that African nation.

Japan's Nikkei news agency concluded that nearly 40 percent of the suppliers of materials used in Tesla's EV batteries are Chinese companies, accounting for 39 percent of the 61 corporations in the battery segment. The report identified more than 13 428 companies that would supply components to Tesla.

China accounted for 40% of the 42 non-ferrous metal smelting companies, excluding aluminum.

These data are relevant for the future plant in Nuevo León, as the same value chain could be repeated.

For Isabel Studer, an academic at the Riverside School of Public Policy at the University of California, the greater participation of the United States and the European Union (EU) means that issues such as human rights and the environment become more relevant.

"There is more robust civil society and laws, and there is growing concern. Critical minerals are sourced from conflict countries and that makes it difficult to have traceability and respect for human rights. As the U.S. develops this industry further, there is going to be more demand for these minerals to come from sources that have no impacts", she told IPS from Mexico City.

But the expert warned that such a large demand causes a lack of incentives for manufacturers or refiners to check whether the mining companies are complying with basic standards and asked about the timeframe for these requirements to have a positive impact on the supply chain.

GM and Tesla did not respond to IPS's inquiry, while Ford de Mexico said it did not have a spokesperson available on these issues.

Mining fever

Although the electrification of as many activities as possible is desirable to abandon fossil fuel consumption and reduce polluting emissions, the deployment of electric cars poses major challenges.

In his 2022 book *Volt Rush*, journalist Henry Sanderson recounts that Elon Musk, Tesla's flamboyant owner, acknowledged that his firm would need to increase battery production a hundredfold by 2030, enough to make around twenty million cars a year.

But these goals would require four times the amount of lithium the world currently produces. The Paris-based International Energy Agency, which groups the largest consumers of hydrocarbons, predicted that demand for this mineral would grow thirtyfold by 2030 and more than 100 times by 2050.

An EV contains 83 kilograms of copper, triple the amount of a conventional vehicle, as it is present in the battery, electric motor, inverter, and wiring.

The requirement for copper and nickel would grow two- to three-fold to meet the needs of clean cars and clean power grids by 2050, posing environmental and social risks, according to the "2050 Net Zero Roadmap for Copper and Nickel Value Chains."

If each of the 1 billion cars currently on the road were replaced by a Tesla model, the demand for cobalt would be equivalent to fourteen million tons, twice the size of the world's identified reserves.

For this reason, the electrification of public and private transport already has serious climate, environmental and social impacts, as evidenced by well-documented cases in Congo (cobalt), Argentina (lithium) and Indonesia (nickel), to mention just a few cases.

Make-up or depth?

Faced with the maze of supply chains and the impacts observed,

several initiatives are emerging to promote transparency and accountability.

In Germany, the law on corporate due diligence obligations, aimed at the prevention of human rights violations in supply chains -applicable to the automotive sector- and specifying obligations to address environmental and human rights risks, came into force in January.

In addition, the implementation of the so-called "battery passport", developed by the Global Battery Alliance (GBA), the multi-stakeholder entity that emerged in 2017 to establish a sustainable battery value chain by 2030, is underway.

This instrument, backed by companies such as BMW, Catl, LG Chem, Samsung SDI, Sunwoda and Tesla, will be a mandatory requirement in the EU in 2026 and it is not ruled out that other jurisdictions will adopt it as well.

The passport will provide transparency on battery practices and impact across the value chain to all relevant stakeholders, create a framework for comparing those devices based on the criteria for a sustainable and responsible battery, as well as to validate and track progress towards sustainable, responsible, and resource-efficient components.

Three pilots carried out by Germany's Audi and Tesla reveal the vicissitudes of the initiative, as they were only able to track a portion of the lithium and cobalt used in the battery, thus showing gaps in the monitoring.

In addition, the EU is also debating the draft Law on Critical Raw Materials, which aims to strengthen the security of the supply of these ingredients, by defining 34 fundamental elements and 17 strategic ones, as well as actions for regional supply, national research, and diversification of imports.

In the United States, the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 incentivizes the purchase of EVs under the condition that at least half of the battery's components are manufactured in North America and 40% of the minerals used in them comes from domestic sources or countries with which the United States has trade agreements -not China or Russia-. Both percentages will rise from 2029.

For these incentives, cheap labor (compared to the United States), lax permits and logistics route, Tesla chose Nuevo León for its new plant, with capacity for one million EVs and which will be in operation in 2026.

A time that is considered very slow because in Shanghai (China), the construction of a similar plant took 10 months and in Austin, just over a year, plus the expansion process throughout 2023.

But one unknown is the execution of these frameworks, given the magnitude of the challenge.

Although Studer, from the University of California, questioned the record of the United States and the EU in the traceability of products, she considered that they can now exert greater influence.

The U.S. "could have a greater impact in introducing traceability standards, to ensure that the chain has better practices. There are going to be certifications (of batteries). To the extent that it imposes these standards, exporters must comply with them. There should be diversification of supply, because as long as China has a virtual monopoly in the stages, it's not going to happen overnight", she said.

According to the Sierra Club's Kwon, the achievement of the standards is linked to improving authorities' capacities in the United States, Mexico or the EU.

"We hope that international markets will provide tools for producers to comply with the requirements, for Chinese companies, for example, to disclose aspects of the chain. The emerging requirements will be chaotic at first, but they will push players to be more transparent. They can have a positive impact," he said.

T&E's Mattea recommended that Mexico and other countries also introduce oversight mechanisms.

Table mountain aerial cableway

JOHANNESBURG

STATISTICS South Africa's recent release of international arrival figures for January to November 2023, shows the South African tourism sector's rising momentum. International tourist arrivals totalled 7.6 million representing a remarkable 51.8 percent increase when compared with same period in 2022. While recovery towards pre-COVID-19 numbers is encouraging, this performance is 17.6 per cent lower compared to the same period in 2019.

SA tourism thrives with 51.8 per cent increase in international arrivals. "The numbers show that the tourism sector is successfully driving travel to South Africa while shaping cultural exchanges and contributing to inclusive economic growth.

Africa continues to lead the way

During the first eleven months of 2023, South Africa welcomed 5.8 million visitors from the rest of the African continent marking a significant 75.5 per cent of all arrivals, compared to the same period in 2022. Within the African region, Zimbabwe and Kenya stood out for their remarkable growth. Zimbabwe saw an exceptional 77.5 percent increase in tourist arrivals, totalling 1.9 million, while Kenya recorded a 94.2 percent surge, reaching 37,414 arrivals for January to November 2023 compared to the same period last year.

"I am so pleased by these numbers from the rest of the African continent. We view the region as significant. Kenya's remarkable performance can be attributed to the strategic decision by government to simplify the visa regime earlier this year as well as targeted and effective insights-driven marketing campaigns.

"Overall, through focused marketing, various collaborations and leveraging various strategic opportunities by The Department of Tourism, South African Tourism and the broader tourism sector, we have been able to achieve these very impressive results on the continent," says Patricia De Lille, Minister of Tourism.

The Americas exhibit strong momentum

Tourist arrivals from the Americas between January and November this year registered at 411,254 reflecting a 44.1 percent growth compared to the same period in 2022. The United States of America contributed the most, with 320,948 arrivals, marking a 39.5 per cent increase compared to the same period in 2022.

"The US remains a top international source market for South Africa and has been recording robust steady growth in arrivals in 2023. Based on our December projections we anticipate recording our 2019 pre-pandemic arrivals well ahead of the forecasted recovery mooted for the 2024/2025 financial year.

"We are proud of the work done by the team working collaboratively alongside our stakeholders in the public and private sector to deliver exciting consumer and trade-facing projects to drive brand affinity and distribution channel initiatives to reignite this market," adds minister De Lille.

European markets show strength

With 1.1 million tourist arrivals, Europe contributed to 14.6 percent of the total arrivals, during the first eleven months of 2023. This marks a 43.2 per cent increase when compared to the same period last year. The United Kingdom remains the top



European source market with 315 054 tourists choosing South Africa marking a 30.4 per cent growth. Germany experienced a 47.9 percent increase in arrivals, amounting to 219,971 tourists.

This was followed by the Netherlands which saw an increase of 48.4 percent amounting to 117,948 tourist arrivals from this country. Russia exhibited a dramatic growth of 83.9 percent, contributing 25,116 arrivals.

"Europe continues to show strong growth and recovery when compared to the same period in 2022. Notably, the Netherlands has achieved 90 per

cent of 2019 arrivals, solidifying its position as the fourth largest international market behind the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Germany. This recovery can be attributed to consistent efforts to showcase South Africa as a welcoming, responsible tourism destination, highlighting experiences that align with intrepid, green economy-conscious travellers," Minister De Lille adds.

Noteworthy growth from the Asia markets

During the first eleven months of

2023 Asian markets also showed significant growth with a total of 182,497 arrivals from the region representing an astounding 72.6 percent when compared to the same period last year. In this region, India led the way with 73,037 tourists, a 46.3 per cent growth, closely followed by China, which saw a massive 215.7 per cent surge, amounting to 34,669 arrivals.

"The performance highlights South Africa's charm as well as magnetism as a tourism destination for tourists coming from this region. The rich and varied cultural heritage, historical

connections, natural beauty and diversity continue to make our country very attractive to travellers coming from this region.

"The re-opening of the Chinese market and the initiation of direct flight routes have catalysed a resurgence in arrivals, highlighting the vast potential and significance of this market to South African tourism," Minister De Lille says.

Middle East registers solid gains

The Middle East saw a robust increase with 51,779 arrivals in the January to November 2023 period, a 37.5 percent growth when compared to the same period in 2022. South Africa received 15,507 arrivals from Saudi Arabia marking an increase of 40.9 per cent. The United Arab Emirates showed a remarkable 114.2 percent growth, accounting for 6,360 arrivals.

More to be done to unlock even more growth

"It is evident that our country remains attractive and that more can be unlocked with more policy and regulation revisions. I am committed to working with all partners and government colleagues to unlock barriers such as visa regulations, safety concerns and limited air access and air lift, so that we can grow our sector and meaningfully contribute to our country's economy.

"I look forward to continue working with the rest of my colleagues in government in this regard so that we can all attain mutual benefits of our collaborative initiatives. Our country offers unique and undeniable breath taking landscapes and tourism products and experiences.

"We also thank all the South Africans for their continuous hospitality and extending a warm welcome to all our visitors. Here's to South Africa's sustained charm, attractiveness and relentless tourism growth," concludes minister De Lille.

US alarmed as the Sudanese rebels seize more territory and escalate violence

KHARTOUM

The US government is expressing concern about Sudan after the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) continued to attack villages as it expanded its territory beyond Khartoum.

The RSF, once a paramilitary force allied to the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), expanded its violence into Jezira state on Sunday night after attacking the Wad Madani area, some 230 kilometres south of the capital Khartoum.

US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller had earlier said that Washington was urging the RSF to halt their advance into Jezira state immediately.

"Troubling reports indicate that elite RSF units have travelled to reinforce attacks in the direction of Wad Medani, actions that threaten vulnerable civilians in a manner inconsistent with RSF's stated claims that it is fighting to protect Sudan's people.

"We also urge against Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) clashes with the RSF and other actions that are endangering civilians".

Wad Medani had become a safe haven for displaced civilians and an important hub for international humanitarian relief efforts, acting as a corridor outside Khartoum. A continued RSF advance now risks mass civilian casualties and significant disruption to humanitarian relief efforts. The RSF advance has already caused large-scale displacement of civilians from Jezira state, rights and aid groups warned on Monday.

RSF also attacked the north-eastern suburbs of El Fasher on December 16. Like Wad Medani, El Fasher had become a safe haven for civilians displaced by the fighting.

"Such advances undermine confidence in efforts to reach a lasting ceasefire and a negotiated end to the conflict. They gravely threaten vulnerable civilians," the statement said.

UN Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths said, "Sudan's Al-Jezira State clashes threaten the lives of tens of thousands of displaced people."

Following the outbreak of violence, the United Nations suspended its work and field missions in the state from Saturday.

Workneh Gebeyehu, Executive Secretary of the regional bloc Intergovernmental Authority on Development (Igad), said he was "extremely concerned by the resurgence of conflict in Gezira State & El Fasher in Sudan."

"Violence endangers lives & hinders the search for lasting peace," he added in a message on X, formerly known as twitter.

"I call on both SAF & RSF to heed the call of the 41st Extraordinary Igad Assembly for a cessation of hostilities & resolution of the conflict through dialogue," he added.

The said summit on December 9 in Djibouti indicated that both sides had agreed to hold future face-to-face meetings, a ceasefire and the creation of humanitarian corridors. But the junta in Khartoum, led by the chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, later said there had been no agreement on such a meeting until the RSF laid down its arms and surrendered.

Sudan has both sought international support against the RSF and rejected international mechanisms to check the excesses of the warring parties.



SANA'A

EAST African ports should expect slower business in the coming days after Yemen's Houthi rebels stepped up attacks on ships travelling through the Red Sea to the western end of the Indian Ocean.

That means traders using the ports of Mombasa and Dar es Salaam, for example, could face higher costs as shipping lines avoid the shorter route to avoid attacks by the Iran-backed Yemeni rebels.

The uncertainties have emerged at a sensitive time for car dealers in Kenya, who have until December 31 to import vehicles whose year of manufacture is older than 2016.

Sources said that two ships carrying some of the Kenyan vehicles have been diverted to take a longer route, which could take an extra 13-14 days.

Major shipping companies have been forced to divert ships from the Red Sea and Suez Canal to the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa instead, increasing the cost of cargo on board.

Gilbert Lagat, CEO of the Shippers Council for Eastern Africa (SCEA), said members expect cargo destined for the region's ports to be affected because they rely on transshipment.

"The return of containers and our exports will be delayed. But for imports, the supply chain will be affected for transshipment since most of the mother ships pass through the channel (in Yemen) to other ports where medium vessels pick cargo to

Rough waters: Yemen rebel attacks affect East African shippers - sources

Mombasa and Dar es Salaam ports," he said.

For car dealers, any delay in arrivals means old cars will be shipped out of the country as the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) has already issued warnings and guidelines under the eight-year rule that bars older cars from entering Kenya.

The Car Importers Association of Kenya (CIAK) confirmed that they are in a race against time to beat the eight-year rule window. Traditionally, end-of-year festivities drive up car imports.

"We have many importers bringing in more cars this month of December to comply with the eight-year-rule. We hope they will arrive on time," said CIAK chairman Peter Otieno.

"We are racing against time so that traders with 2016 registered vehicles are not locked out, leading to losses [running into] millions of shillings."

The eight-year rule already caught up with importers in 2014, when more than 2,000 used cars registered beyond eight years were banned from entering the country. For newer cars, buyers may still pay more to cover the cost of longer routes.

The war between Israel and Hamas, which began on October 7, has already sent shockwaves through the region and threatened to spark a

wider conflict. The Houthis, backed by Iran, which also supports Hamas, say they are supporting Palestinians under siege by Israel in the Gaza Strip. They have waded into the Israel-Hamas conflict by attacking ships in vital shipping lanes and even firing drones and rockets at Israel.

Most of the Houthi attacks have targeted ships with links to Israel, including several with ownership links to the Ofer family, one of the world's most powerful shipping dynasties.

On Monday, US Defence Secretary Lloyd J Austin III announced Operation Prosperity Guardian, a naval operation to defend ships.

"This is an international challenge that demands collective action," he said of the Houthi attacks.

"Operation Prosperity Guardian is bringing together multiple countries, including the United Kingdom, Bahrain, Canada, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Seychelles and Spain, to jointly address security challenges in the southern Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, with the goal of ensuring freedom of navigation for all countries and bolstering regional security and prosperity."

Maritime piracy is not a new problem for the countries of the western Indian Ocean. A decade ago, ships ply-

ing these waters were required to take out insurance as Somali pirates carried out attacks for ransom. A multinational naval operation led by the European Union helped end the threat.

But with Yemen, major shippers including Hapag Lloyd (HLA.GE), MSC and Maersk (MAERSK.CO), oil major BP (B.P.L) and tanker group Frontline (FRO.L) have said they will bypass the Red Sea route and reroute through southern Africa's Cape of Good Hope.

About 15 per cent of the world's shipping passes through the Suez Canal, the shortest route between Europe and Asia and other African countries in the western Indian Ocean belt.

This week, Denmark's Maersk suspended all container shipments through the Red Sea after a "near-miss" involving its vessel Maersk Gibraltar.

Data from shipping apps showed that at least 11 container ships that had passed through Suez were now anchored in the Red Sea between Sudan and Saudi Arabia. They were approaching Yemen with consumer goods and grain bound for countries including Singapore, Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates. Ships usually pay a fee to pass through the Suez Canal.

AGENCIES

Next year's elections should be postponed, says former S. African Statistician-General

By Chris Makhaye

SOUTH Africans should consider postponing next year's general elections and instead hold "frank talks" involving all stakeholders to determine what kind of country they want to live in.

This is the view of Dr Pali Lehohla, academic and retired former Statistics SA chief, during a wide-ranging interview with Daily Maverick.

He said if the elections went ahead, South Africans could find themselves in even worse circumstances as wily politicians divided up positions, perks and spoils and forgot about society at large.

"South Africans of all races and creeds should wake up from the tormenting nightmare characterised by an unending darkness. As far as I am concerned, the 2024 elections should be postponed so that South Africans can have frank conversations about the country they want to build and live in.

"We have to reset the horse so that it will be able to carry on its back the double load brought about and precipitated by accelerated failure in the latter half of our democracy. If we don't, the elections will bring an outcome that will be nothing but calamity to all South Africans.

"The Chinese professor [Zhang] Weiwei defines the elections in free market democracies as a disease of 'elect and regret'. This is the menu we have been served in the last 15 years. So a pause [is necessary] to ensure that leadership is not left to chance of 'elect and regret' and a hopeless wish for another market correction of 'elect and regret' in another five years," he said.

Building the horse to fit the jockey

He said that towards the end of apartheid, when South Africa was faced with racial, ethnic and ideological civil strife, its salvation came in the form of the Codesa (Convention for a Democratic South Africa) talks, which ushered in the Constitution.

"Perhaps it is time we consider a similar intervention. We have to consider whether it would not be worthwhile to hold wide-ranging talks involving all stakeholders, including communities, civic groups, politicians, business and religious organisations to determine the future of the country we all love.

"The leaders of the '90s did this and it produced the South Africa and the Constitution under which we live today," he said.

Every 10 years, South Africa conducts a census which helps provide data to support decision-making and future planning. Lehohla said the reach of the census was "geographically extensive and engenders the basis for equity and judicious decision-making at all levels in space



Retired Statistician-General Pali Lehohla. (Photo by Gallo Images / Sowetan / Sandile Ndlovu)

and time".

Lehohla joined Statistics SA at its inception in the mid-90s and was head of the agency for 17 years, from 2000 until his retirement in 2017. He has held multiple international positions, including chairing the UN Statistical Commission and the African Symposium on Statistical Development.

He defines the 30 years of SA's democracy as, first, 15 fat years, characterised by social progress and economic growth, and then 15 lean years, characterised by regressive economic downturn, social and family degeneration and institutionalised corruption.

"In the first 15 years of democracy, there had been observable and definitive progress in the delivery of services and living conditions of South Africans.

"The following 15 years have been marked by a clear reversal of the gains of democracy.

"This reversal is more clear or acute in the municipalities across the country. The first 15 years of democracy showed progress in the delivery of services for all municipalities. But since 2011, a third of the municipalities have regressed. This is a clear contrast, similar to the biblical Genesis story of seven fat cows and seven lean cows," Lehohla said.

He pointed to the instability

of coalition governments in major cities and municipalities like Johannesburg and Pretoria as a harbinger of what is to come.

"Opinion polls predict that there would be one form of coalition or another at the national level. This outcome will further alienate communities, as politicians will be focusing on dishing out positions and other perks to each other and satisfying coalition partners and forgetting about society," he said.

An insult to Madiba's legacy

Things are getting worse, he said.

"We now live in an era known as the Gwara-Gwara phenomenon era, where everyone is for himself or herself. The state of Madiba's house in Houghton says it all. We need to pause and clean the algae, cut the overgrown grass, paint the walls and make Madiba's home of last breath to be a South Africa we are all proud of. We cannot go into an election and an affirmation of our democracy in a Madiba's house that is full of filth.

"Only filth and deeper filth will be an outcome should we take that gory step without cleaning and cleansing ourselves. Madiba's home symbolises how low we have gone. Uncaring. Madiba's place of last breath in Houghton captures that we as a

people are now fit only for a pigsty," he said.

Lehohla believes the post-apartheid government – in which the ruling ANC has been in power, although there was a Government of National Unity from 1994 to 1999 – has not only failed the black majority through corruption, poor service delivery, nepotism, misguided, indiscriminate and uninformed deployment of cadres, and mismanagement of the economy in the latter 15 years, but has also failed the whole of Africa and Africans in the diaspora who looked up to South Africa as the barometer of the continent's progress.

"There is nowhere in the world where a black government had so much goodwill from the world, the vast infrastructure, the natural resources, the skilled human capital to succeed, but they have squandered all these opportunities.

"When you speak to African leaders, academics and thinkers, they say, 'You guys had so much time to learn from our mistakes and ensure that you don't repeat them, yet you went ahead and made even worse mistakes.'

'We need to construct our horse'

"They say, 'We had expected you to lead, to help Africa to

prosper and take its rightful place in the world of nations, yet you went ahead and failed us.' When the Pharaoh has no Joseph, when politics are devoid of technocracy, are devoid of a horse built by the people and not by the jockey, then society suffers a jeopardy of a horse and a jockey that owns the horse. We need a moment to pause and construct our horse.

"The RDP [Reconstruction and Development Programme] and the NDP [National Development Plan] and the Constitution form the base for such a conversation. Our performance to date, especially the last 15 years, tells us of an anti-RDP, anti-NDP and anti-Constitution experience.

"It was Madiba (upon receiving the results of Census '96) who said South Africans are regarded highly by the world for managing a difficult transition and coming out successfully. He went further, to say South Africans are feted like kings: 'Ordinary citizens are accorded such important treatment reserved for kings. Let us not disappoint those who pinned so much hope on us'.

"I experienced this royal treatment. On a trip to Abidjan in 2007 we transited through Ouagadougou. They wanted a visa for non-diplomatic passport holders. My deputy, who was not travelling on a diplomatic

passport, was to be denied entry. But as the official looked at the passport carefully where it is written in French – he went into a frenzy of a war cry: 'Afrique de Sud, Bafana Bafana, Mandela, Mandela!'

"The passport was stamped and we slept in Ouagadougou and by the crack of dawn we were back at migration where the Mandela, Mandela, Bafana Bafana mantra guaranteed our passage to Abidjan," Lehohla recalled.

Mbeki 'best president' so far

Lehohla said although the Mandela years focused on stabilising the country and building racial harmony, it was during Thabo Mbeki's watch that the post-apartheid South Africa made the most economic and social strides.

"During Mandela's years, there was stability, but the economy did not grow that much. The biggest economic strides ever recorded in apartheid and the post-apartheid era happened between 2001 and 2007," he said.

This view is backed by statistics. An Industrial Development Corporation report stated: "The South African economy recorded its fastest growth rates since the 1960s over the period 2004 to 2007, with real GDP growth averaging 5.2% per annum. From a global perspective, this period was characterised by a strong bull market and booming commodities markets."

An OECD report on South Africa stated: "In 2005, the South African economy experienced GDP growth of 5%, its highest since the end of apartheid, and strong GDP growth, estimated at 4.8%, is forecast for 2006. Although this good performance is due in part to a favourable international environment, it also reflects the sound economic policies that have been carried out since 1996 in accordance with the Growth and Employment and Redistribution strategy."

Lehohla says it has been downhill from this peak.

Things started to go wrong during the era of Mbeki's successor, Jacob Zuma, when corruption reached unprecedented levels.

"During the era of the current president, Cyril Ramaphosa, everything that went wrong during the Zuma years has got worse. Corruption at all levels is growing, we have relentless load shedding, criminals and crime syndicates are on the loose, and politicians and civil servants at all levels are using their positions to amass wealth for themselves and their families.

"These are all symbols that we are well and truly in the Gwara-Gwara era ... things are getting worse and, if nothing is done to arrest this slide, South Africa could reach a point of no return," said Lehohla.

DM

RADIO One

RATIBA YA VIPINDI

JUMATATU - JUMAPILI

MONDAY TIME PROGRAMME	TUESDAY TIME PROGRAMME	WEDNESDAY TIME PROGRAMME	THURSDAY TIME PROGRAMME	FRIDAY TIME PROGRAMME	SATURDAY TIME PROGRAMME	SUNDAY TIME PROGRAMME
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Tembelea mitandao ya kijamii ya Radio One

Radio One

BUSINESS

Dr Adesina wins Obafemi Awolowo leadership prize

Mbeya gets 400kgs of cashew nut seedlings given free to farmers

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbeya

MBEYA regional authorities have received 400 kilograms of cashew seedlings to be distributed free to farmers in the areas where the crop can thrive.

Handing over the seeds on Wednesday here, CCM regional chairman Patrick Mwalunenge said the provision of the seeds was an implementation of his promise to the people to revive some commercial crops in the region.

"The agriculture sector employs 80 percent of Tanzanians, so the party has been looking at the sector with a very close eye, we will continue supporting efforts to improve production and investments in various crops including cashew," he said.

He named other crops which the party expects to give much intention in supporting farmers as coffee, cacao, pyrethrum and other commercial crops.

Mandela Chikawe, representative from the Cashew Board of Tanzania (CBT) said that the 400 seeds which have been handed, if well grown and taken care are able to produce 56,000 seedlings which will be planted to farms totalling 2000 acres.

"We will continue cooperating with the regional government to bring more cashew seeds in order

to expand production of the crop in more areas thus boosting incomes of people and the nation at large," he said.

He said apart from distributing the seeds, they also intend to cooperate with the Mbeya regional government to facilitate proper production of the seedlings as well as the planting procedures so that the citizens have sufficient understanding.

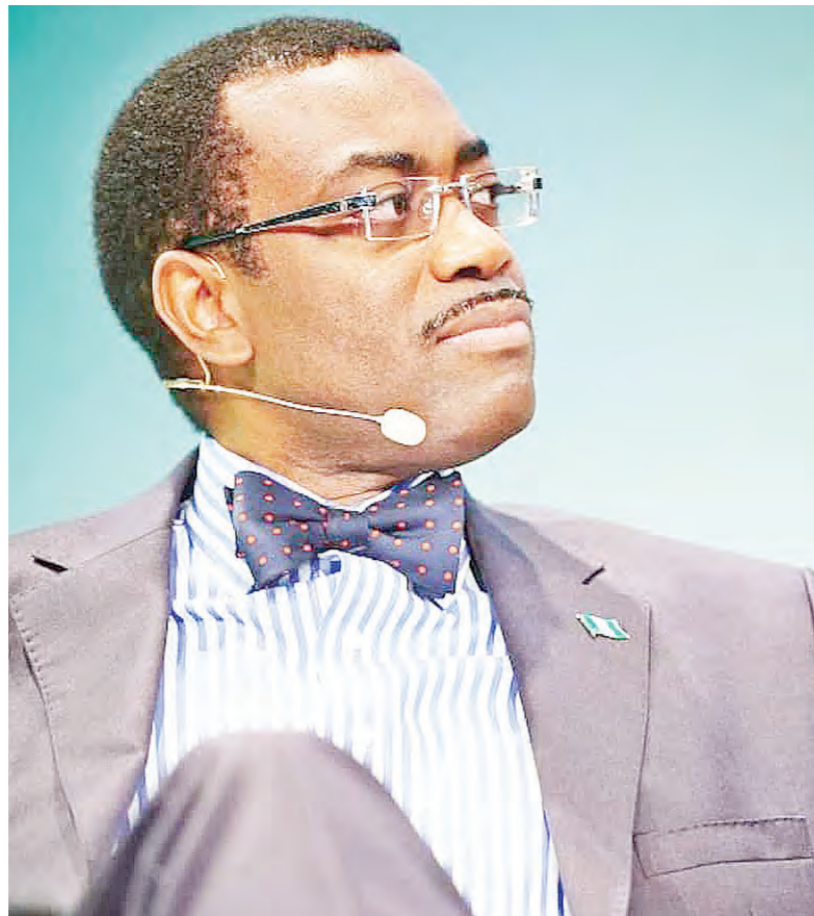
"Cashews are one of the strategic crops, so these seeds are only a start, we will continue to bring more so that all areas where it has been identified to grow the crop to have enough seedlings," Chikawe said.

Felix Lyaniva, one of the farmers, said that cashew farming can be used as a pension for retirees because they are among the best paying crops which can be harvested for many years.

He urged the farmers in the region to seize the opportunity by preparing farms and embark in the cultivation of the crop to improve their income.

Beno Malisa, Mbeya district commissioner said the seeds will be distributed to farmers as per size of the areas of production.

A research conducted by the Cashew Board found Kyela, Rungwe, Mbarali and Chunya as among the districts which support cashew growing.



By Special Correspondent

THE African Development Bank Group president Dr Akinwumi Adesina (pictured) has been awarded the prestigious Obafemi Awolowo Prize for Leadership.

The award which promotes the legacy and democratic ideals of the late Nigerian nationalist and federalist leader Chief Obafemi Awolowo, also "recognises and celebrates excellence in leadership."

The Foundation's Executive Director, Ambassador Dr Tokunbo Awolowo-Dosunmu said: "Dr Adesina was the unanimous choice of the Foundation's Selection Committee, which described Adesina as possessing the attributes for the award to the highest degree."

Tokunbo Awolowo-Dosunmu: "Dr Adesina was the unanimous choice of the Foundation's Selection Committee, which described Adesina as possessing the attributes for the award to the highest degree."

According to Ambassador Awolowo-Dosunmu, "The attributes considered to have characterised Chief Awolowo's excellent leadership, include integrity, credibility, discipline, courage, selflessness, accountability, tenacity of purpose, visionary and people-centred leadership."

The former Nigerian President, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan was one of several world leaders who nominated Adesina.

"He epitomises and combines qualities of extraordinary leadership that are often rare to find: great visionary, incredible courage, the ability to take on huge and difficult challenges, extraordinary dedication and commitment to deliver programmes and policies that transform the lives of millions of people," Jonathan said.

Goodluck Ebele Jonathan: "Adesina epitomises and combines qualities of extraordinary leadership that are often rare to find."

Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair also praised Adesina's leadership. "His contributions to the African continent and global leadership have been exceptional. Under his leadership the African Development Bank has delivered bold interventions to address some of the greatest challenges of our time," he said.

Tony Blair: "Under his leadership the African Development Bank has delivered bold interventions to address some of the greatest challenges of our time"

Ambassador Kenneth Quinn, President Emeritus of the World Food Prize Foundation, saluted

Adesina's commitment to food security: "President Adesina has traversed the African continent evangelising his profound vision to end childhood stunting through enhanced nutrition; uplifting smallholder farmers, the great majority of them women; providing critical financing for a broad array of infrastructure projects so critical to development and modernisation."

Kenneth Quinn: "President Adesina has traversed the African continent evangelising his profound vision to end childhood stunting through enhanced nutrition."

Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Global Center on Adaptation CEO Prof. Dr Patrick Verkooijen, jointly said, "We can think of no person more highly qualified or deserving of this prestigious award. Dr Adesina is forged in the same mould as Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a shining example of leadership."

Ban Ki-moon and Patrick Verkooijen: "Dr Adesina is forged in the same mould as Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a shining example of leadership."

Dr Akinwumi Adesina is the third recipient of the Award. Others include Nigerian writer and Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka and the former South African President Thabo Mbeki.

An award ceremony is scheduled for 6 March 2024, and will include keynote lecture by the honouree.

The Obafemi Awolowo Foundation, founded in 1992, is a non-profit non-partisan organisation.

IMF issues \$187millionb Zambia payout, says restructuring proposal being revised

By Special Correspondent

THE International Monetary Fund's board on Wednesday approved an immediate \$187 million loan payout to Zambia and said the country was revising a restructuring proposal for \$3 billion of bonds that official creditors had rejected last month.

It will be the third payout under the southern African country's \$1.3 billion Extended Credit Facility arrangement approved in August 2022.

One of the African continent's largest copper producers, Zambia defaulted on its debts three years ago during the COVID-19 pandemic, and its restructuring efforts have been beset by delays.

Zambia suffered a major setback in November when its official creditors rejected a preliminary restructuring deal with bondholders over whether it offered comparable debt relief to what they had agreed to.

The IMF's mission chief for Zambia, Mercedes Vera Martin, told reporters on a conference call that the conditions under which "comparability of treatment" would be met were still under deliberation by Zambia's Official Creditor Committee (OCC).

In a question-and-answer document posted on its website, the

IMF said Zambian authorities were further revising their Eurobond restructuring proposal to meet comparability of treatment requirements, which are defined by official creditors.

"While significant progress has been achieved, some adjustments still need to be made until both program parameters and comparability of treatment, as required by official bilateral creditors, are met," the IMF said in the document.

Western officials in the past have accused China of holding up the restructuring process, something Beijing consistently denied, while international bondholders complained about being shut out of negotiations.

"It is good that the OCC can voice their concerns about meeting comparability of treatment," said the IMF's Martin.

But, she said, the protracted restructuring negotiations were taking a toll on Zambia's economic recovery, after it was hit by the pandemic and the default. Its kwacha currency has depreciated sharply against the dollar and inflation (ZMCPIY=ECD) has risen in recent months.

Zambia's government said the IMF board approval of the next loan payout was an endorsement of its reforms and said it would boost investor confidence.



Kenya Airways leases aircraft to enhance efficiency in operations

NAIROBI

Kenya Airways (KQ) has announced it will add a 299-passenger aircraft into its fleet to address capacity challenges and in preparation for possible high traffic following a move by the government to open borders starting January.

In a statement Wednesday, the national carrier said it acquired the A330 Airbus plane in a short-term agreement with Hi Fly, a global lease and charter specialist airlines, to enhance operational efficiency during the peak festive season. The newly introduced aircraft was expected to begin operations on Thursday.

"With the current capacity constraints on the back of the growing demand for airline travel, we need to balance our customers' immediate needs by bringing more capacity into the market," said KQ's chief executive Allan Kilavuka.

He explained that the airline was taking practical steps in the short term to support the airline's operational efficiency, and address "the pertinent challenges in the market."

"The arrival of the aircraft will also support the anticipated increased number of travellers following the recent announcement by His Excellency President William Ruto on ending visa requirements for all visitors to Kenya starting in January 2024 making Kenya a visa-free country," the airline stated.

Kilavuka said the addition of the aircraft was the quickest way to immediately deal with capacity challenges and added that being a wide-body aircraft provided additional belly capacity to augment the airline's existing cargo space.

The aircraft has a capacity for 299 passengers, split into 24 in the business cabin and 275 in the economy class, KQ said in the statement.

"With the arrival of the aircraft, we expect to see improved operational stability and efficiency, as well as enhanced capacity for the convenience of our passengers," Mr Kilavuka said.



A Kenya Airways plane at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport.

A statement to the airline's customers noted that the aircraft would also enhance its flexibility for the peak travel season.

Last week the National Treasury paid a further Sh2.7 billion in Kenya Airways (KQ) guaranteed debt in the three months to the end of September after inheriting the burden from the national carrier.

The repayments in the quarter include Sh2.37 billion for principal repayments and Sh351.29 million for interest payments, according to data from the Controller of Budget (COB).

The fresh instalment brings cumulative exchequer payments on the KQ guaranteed debt to Sh13.35 billion with the first payment having been done in the quarter ending in December 2022.

"The total amount paid on guaranteed loans during the first three months of FY 2023/24 amounted to Sh2.72 billion, which was payment for Kenya Airways loan comprising of Sh2.37 billion for principal repayment and Sh351.29 million for interest payments," the COB report noted.

Last year, the Treasury told the IMF it would take over the debt contracted in 2017 from the USA Export-Import Bank (Exim) as facilitation to the better management of risk for the national carrier including the potential call-up of the guarantee.

In February, Treasury Principal Secretary Chris Kiptoo told MPs that the Exim Bank USA had handed in a default notice after the delayed payment of the guaranteed loan by KQ.

Despite paying down more than Sh13 billion, KQ's guaranteed debt has soared by 13.4 percent since September last year to Sh87.36 billion from Sh76.97 billion, mainly from the sharp depreciation of the Kenyan Shilling.

KQ's debt takeover by the exchequer, also known as debt novation, is part of a wider restructuring of KQ operations, seeking to support the carrier at the least cost to the government.

The plan is set to further incorporate additional capital injection by the State, cost cuts, among other plans, cost cuts, network optimisation, and the development of key performance indicators for KQ senior executives.

The entire stock of State guaranteed debt closed the quarter ended September at Sh170.94 billion including Sh31.45 billion in guarantees to KenGen and Sh52.07 billion in guarantees to the Kenya Ports Authority (KPA). The two institutions' loans constitute 48.9 percent of total State guaranteed loans by the end of September, meaning that KQ's guaranteed loans alone surpass them combined.

The State also guaranteed a Sh52 billion loan for Kenya Power.

Guarantees to KPA and KenGen cover loans for key projects including the Sondu Miriu Hydropower Project, the rehabilitation and expansion of the Hydropower Plant Kindaruma, and the Mombasa Port Development Programme.

Both KenGen and KPA are however currently servicing their guaranteed debts with the only exchequer payments on the arrears covering loan facilities by KQ.

KenGen's guaranteed loans by the end of September were Sh31.49 billion, having grown slightly from Sh31.1 billion by the end of June 2023.

On the other hand, Kenya Power's guaranteed loans hit Sh52 billion from Sh50.5 billion by the end of June 2023, marking a three percent growth during the three months.

Across the 2023/24 fiscal year, the National Treasury has allocated Sh18.79 billion towards the payment of guaranteed debt.

What hosting new BioNTech manufacturing plant means

KIGALI

GERMAN biotechnology giant BioNTech on Monday, December 18, inaugurated its first Africa site in Rwanda, in a move that was aimed at strengthening vaccine production capabilities, enhancing health security, and improving access to life-saving vaccines across the continent.

President Paul Kagame and First Lady Jeannette Kagame attended the event, which was also attended by several Heads of State and Government, as well as world leaders.

The event took place at the 350,000 square metre facility located in the Kigali Special Economic Zone, a designated area for biopharma manufacturing in the country's capital.

While full commercial production is still slated for 2025, BioNTech said it was on track to complete the construction of all buildings at the Kigali site in 2024, citing plans to begin local training for specialised personnel and hiring about 100 staff, once fully operational.

At the launch, the new plant was described as a "crucial milestone" towards "Africa's vaccine sovereignty".

For context, Africa is the second most populous continent and carries 25 per cent of the global disease burden.

However, the continent imports 99 per cent of its vaccines and 95 per cent of its medicines.

Africa also consumes nearly 25 per cent of globally produced vaccines, which percentage will rise due to the expected 2.5 per cent yearly population growth.

But what makes Rwanda's BioNTech plant a crucial milestone?

The new BioNTech plant stretches across eight acres, but the heart is a concrete hall containing the modular lab, commonly known as the BioNTainer.

The first unit, made of six containers stacked three on three, will create the mRNA active ingredient.



A view of the newly launched BioNTech's first Africa site in Rwanda

Another unit, expected to be assembled alongside another eight containers early next year, will wrap the mRNA molecule in a protective lipid shell. The formulation will then have to be filled in vials elsewhere.

The units, BioNTech officials explained, are airtight and kept at a higher pressure than the surroundings to make sure no contamination gets in.

They may be sealed, but they are not self-contained. Just how many doses could be produced when the labs are up and running depends on the specifics of the vaccine, but it was highlighted that the initial production is estimated at 50 million jabs per year.

However, production is still some way off. BioNTech is embarking on finishing and installing the other containers. The first batches, expected, in 2025 will then need to be used to check quality control.

As it stands, BioNTech is developing preventive mRNA vaccines for illnesses such as tuberculosis, malaria, HIV, and diseases with epidemic and

pandemic potential.

Clinical trials for tuberculosis and malaria vaccines are now underway, and the intention is to perform trials in Africa for malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV vaccine candidates in 2024.

According to Rose Leke, a professor of immunology at the University of Yaoundé, scientists have long pushed for local production of vaccines, but it wasn't until Covid-19 gripped the world that biopharma companies began to more seriously consider partnerships with African countries.

"The pandemic gave us a rude wake-up call," Leke stressed following the launch, adding that the borders were closed, and air transport was temporarily put on a halt, making international assistance even harder to come by. "Sometimes we cooperate in good times but in a crisis, people tend to look at their interests first."

Leke reiterated that there are advantages to making vaccines in Africa specifically.

For example, she said, such vaccines may work better for

local populations compared to imported ones due to differences in genetic makeup.

"And with 1.3 billion people on the African continent, there is a ready market. By manufacturing vaccines in three different African countries, BioNTech will establish economies of scale."

Prof. Rose Leke recently won the award for 'Achievement in Global Health Leadership'.

One partner BioNTech is working with is the African Bio-manufacturing Institute (ABI), launched in June 2022 to train the workforce which currently boasts 20 staff.

"The institute's purpose is to meet the growing demand for highly skilled individuals and attract local talent in STEM areas as well as those without exposure to academia in Rwanda and the African Union as a whole," BioNTech officials said.

For San Bilal, an associate director of Sustainable Economies and Climate Action at the think tank Centre for Africa-Europe Relations, diversifying sources of vaccine manufacturing and moving towards strategic auton-

omy is critical for Africa's industrialisation and the strengthening of its health sector.

Bilal argues that while importing medicines and vaccines will remain critical for Africa, it also limits the scope of the continent's development of production capacity and technology transfer, which are important both for strengthening its health systems and economic development.

"Facilitating access to finance and investment for both African and international actors, ensuring an open African market, developing effective manufacturing and distribution logistics, and harmonising regulatory settings across African countries will be key to the African production of medical products," he added; "It should also be accompanied by more comprehensive policies to strengthen Africa's health systems."

Under the development, BioNTech retains its intellectual property (IP) but the host country polices distribution and export, according to the firm.

That would mean that in another pandemic-like crisis, Rwanda could use its export controls to have the final say on what was to be done with the vaccines, potentially prioritising its citizens and the region.

Pedro Alonso, BioNTech's head of global health, said in an earlier interview: "When you export, it's the country that gives you a license to export and where you are exporting to, so they do have control."

He pointed out that it is also likely to give Rwanda a say on the vaccines produced.

Public health officials argue that vaccine sovereignty also needs more than a factory. They say that for a country to stand on its own two feet in vaccine production, it needs a whole ecosystem of different parts.

"That ranges from qualified scientific staff and a research base, to robust national regulatory systems, to readily available medical and chemical supplies."

Illegal mining now threatens Ghana's cocoa industry

ACCRA

GHANA, the world's second-largest cocoa producer, is facing increasing risks to its bean crop from illegal miners and smugglers, according to industry officials, farmers and environmentalists.

At a time when Ghana is going through one of the worst economic crises in its history, with inflation reaching 26.4 per cent in November, illegal mining, known locally as "galamsey", is posing a major problem for cocoa cultivation, one of the pillars of the national economy alongside gold and oil.

"Over the past five years, we have seen serious destruction on cocoa farms due to the activities of illegal miners," said Michael Kwarteng, director of anti-illegal mining activities at the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD). "This has reached an alarming proportion", he insisted.

Faced with the economic crisis, a growing number of farmers are selling their land to illegal miners, like Rita Abena Koranteng, 45, a cocoa farmer in Suhum, in the eastern region of Ghana, who has sold two of her plots to her uncle so that he can mine the subsoil.

"Every month, he pays me 500 dollars and I'm happy, because I could never have earned so much money from my cocoa-growing business", she explains.

"I know that some of my fellow cocoa farmers in the western region and other places have switched to planting rubber trees because they don't earn enough from cocoa," she maintains.

Ghanaian government, which buys the country's entire production before selling it on to private companies, has agreed a 63 per cent increase in the price paid to producers this year, but this is not enough to dissuade them from selling their land for undeclared mining. At present, it buys a tonne of cocoa from producers for \$1,822 (€1,670).

"So far, the land lost to illegal mining represents 2 per cent of the total area under cocoa cultivation in Ghana. We can no longer allow this to continue", worries Michael Kwarteng.

According to COCOBOD, Ghana is set to harvest 1 million tonnes of cocoa between 2020 and 2021. But this figure has fallen to 750,000 tonnes for the 2022-2023 harvest, and its forecast for 2023-2024 is between 650,000 and 700,000 tonnes due to the impact of illicit activities.



Ghana's cocoa industry threatened by illegal mining

Groundwork laid for better China-US ties

BEIJING

Editor's note: Head-of-state diplomacy leads the way in which China pursues peaceful development and advances the building of a community with a shared future for mankind. China Daily presents a series of stories about interactions between China and the rest of the world, recollecting the country's diplomatic endeavors led by President Xi Jinping over the year.

Analysts are optimistically regarding the prospects next year for the world's most important bilateral relationship, when Beijing and Washington celebrate the upcoming 45th anniversary of diplomatic ties, which falls on Jan 1, following the China-US summit meeting in San Francisco in mid-November.

The summit raised hopes that the two countries could reverse the downward spiral of their relations.

Despite the challenges that remain ahead, the resumption of dialogue and engagement between China and the United States at various levels and in different sectors could pave the way for the two countries to turn "co-evolution", a concept coined by former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger, into a reality, they said.

During the summit meeting, President Xi Jinping told US President Joe Biden that "for two large countries like China and the United States, turning their backs on each other is not an option. Planet Earth is big enough for the two countries to succeed."



President Xi Jinping meets with US President Joe Biden at Filoli Estate in the US state of California.

He reaffirmed China's commitment to having a stable, healthy and sustainable relationship with the US, and emphasized that "China has interests that must be safeguarded, principles that must be upheld, and red lines that must not be crossed". He called on both countries to advance mutually beneficial cooperation while jointly managing their disagreements effectively.

The Xi-Biden meeting took place amid concerns over the growing risks of the two major countries' economic decoupling and even military confrontation, as Washington defined Beijing as a "strategic competitor", which China has rejected.

As the US seeks to compete with China, it has, unfortunately, been peddling narratives such as "China replacing the US", "China rewriting the global rules" and "China exporting models", all of which sow the seeds of nationalism and racism at home and aggravate the already strained relationship.

The US fanning up of the "balloon" incident, in which the US military shot down a Chinese civilian airship that had drifted into US airspace earlier this year, inflated tensions between the two nations.

The positive momentum in the relationship started in May, when the world witnessed a discernible acceleration in high-level

exchanges between China and the US. China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi held a meeting with US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on May 10-11 in Vienna.

Following that meeting, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo successively visited China. Wang and Sullivan met again in Malta in September.

Meanwhile, the first meeting of the China-US Economic Working Group, conducted via video link on Oct 24, helped to strengthen economic and trade ties, as well as minimize macro-economic and financial policy miscommunications. To restart

military contacts with China, the Pentagon sent delegates to the Beijing Xiangshan Forum, a high-level security and defense platform for international exchanges, which was held from Oct 29 to 31.

California Governor Gavin Newsom made a weeklong visit to China starting on Oct 18, focusing on topics such as climate change and economic cooperation. His visit followed US Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer's trips to Shanghai and Beijing earlier in October, further underscoring the increased engagement between the two nations.

Wang visited the US at the end of October, and Vice-Premier

He Lifeng visited the country in early November.

The intensive high-level engagements between Beijing and Washington raised expectations in the international community about the stabilization of relations between the two countries.

Against such a backdrop, the Xi-Biden meeting in San Francisco was significant in terms of enhancing trust, removing suspicion, managing differences and expanding cooperation between the two countries, observers said. It was also significant for injecting certainty and stability into a world of turbulence and transformation.

"Under the stewardship of the two presidents, the giant ship of China-US relations has navigated hidden rocks and dangerous shoals," Wang said after the summit meeting.

The two sides reached a series of important consensus on issues including climate change, artificial intelligence, counter-narcotics cooperation and people-to-people exchanges.

"From San Francisco onward, the two sides should foster a new vision, further consolidate the foundation of their relations, build pillars for peaceful coexistence, and move their relationship in the direction of healthy, stable and sustainable development," Wang said.

There is a prevailing view among analysts that an improved China-US relationship is in the best interests of both countries and the global community at large.

Jeffrey Sachs, an economics professor and director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University, said that in economics, there is no such thing as China's gains

being the US' losses.

"China is not a threat to the US economy. China is not a threat to US prosperity. China is not a threat to the US political system. So there is nothing that has happened that gives me any worry about China," Sachs said when addressing a forum organized by the China Institute in the US on Nov 15.

Rorry Daniels, managing director of the Asia Society Policy Institute and Senior Fellow at the Center for China Analysis in the US, said that it's critically important for the US and China to manage their relationship responsibly as the world faces existential crises, including the climate crisis and crises emanating from food insecurity and energy insecurity.

"The countries of the world don't want to have to choose between the US and China. It's not useful for them to feel as though this is a divided world where the US leads one side and China leads another," she said.

Sun Chenghao, a fellow at Tsinghua University's Center for International Security and Strategy, said that the US needs a clearer understanding of the nature of US-China relations, and should make greater efforts to expand cooperation with China rather than gradually fall into the trap of great power competition.

Sun warned of the immediate challenge that might arise from the US election year in 2024, which could bring more uncertainties and risks to China-US relations. "Politicians from both parties will more aggressively play the China card, demonstrating a tough stance against China to gain political support," he said.

Africa needs a surge in entrepreneurship

By Hippolyte Fofack

FOR decades, Africa has been the world's most commodity-dependent continent. At the same time, it has become overly reliant on imports from the rest of the world: intercontinental trade accounts for only 15 per cent of total African trade, compared to 60 per cent in Asia and 70 per cent in the European Union. Worryingly, imports of manufactured goods into African countries have grown by more than 25 per cent over the decade ending in 2022.

The continent's import dependency can be explained primarily by the dearth of African industrial entrepreneurs. And Africa's projected population growth and burgeoning middle class suggests that this dependency will only grow in the medium term, with significant implications for macroeconomic stability, unless local actors begin driving innovation and creating new products and services to meet the needs and desires of domestic consumers.

The problem, however, is not sustained import growth per se, especially when the rise of global value chains and increasing fragmentation of production have reduced the power of exports as a driver of short-term demand.

Instead, the main issue is that African countries are participating in global value chains largely through backward activities, systematically exporting natural resources and primary commodities and importing manufactured goods, an imbalance that drains wealth away from the continent.

For African fossil fuel-producing countries, the carbon-intensive "round-tripping" model of exporting crude oil and importing refined petroleum has been costly, resulting in immense deadweight losses and foreign-exchange leakages. In Nigeria, for example, the opening of a much-anticipated oil refinery could save the country \$26bn annually.

Moreover, in an era of hyper-globalisation when intermediate goods account for 50 per cent of global trade, African countries' high level of forward participation in global value chains has scuttled prospects for structural transformation and shrunk the continent's share of global trade to around 3 per cent. It has also perpetuated the unhealthy correlation between growth and commodity-price cycles, resulting in increased exposure to global volatility and persistent structural current-account deficits.

While limited access to finance has been cited as a binding constraint on African economic development, what if the chronic deficit of entrepreneurs is equally limiting?

After all, entrepreneurship, which improves competitiveness and business efficiency to lower prices for consumers, has become a leading driver of innovation and growth in many countries in recent decades.

And Africa lags behind in this area: in the latest edition of US News and World Report's Best Countries for Entrepreneurship, the continent's highest-ranked country, South Africa, places only 44th.

One top-ranking country on that list, which includes some of the world's wealthiest and most complex economies, is Singapore.

Recently, companies based in the city-state have pursued major growth opportunities across myriad sectors and industries in Africa, highlighting the continent's entrepreneurship deficit.

The Tolaram Group, for example, created the instant-noodle market in Nigeria, producing 4.5bn packets annually and generating almost \$1bn in annual revenue.

Compared to more diversified and higher-ranking countries like Singapore, where tight labour markets have pushed unemployment to natural rates, a shortage of industrial entrepreneurs may be doubly costly for Africa, where persistent widespread poverty and high unemployment fuel insecurity and migration pressures.

For example, the unemployment rate is at Great Depression-era levels - above 30 per cent in two of the continent's largest economies, Nigeria and South Africa. In other countries, economic informality - think of street vendors hawking imported toothpicks, candles, cell phones, and



batteries - has become a form of disguised unemployment.

An increase in entrepreneurship on the continent would generate wealth more sustainably, expand employment, and reduce migration flows.

In many African countries, industrial entrepreneurs, in particular, could help diversify sources of growth, improve the current-account balance, and broaden the tax base. This, in turn, would expand countries' fiscal space, improve debt sustainability, and gradually ease the constraints associated with capital scarcity.

Moreover, when the rules of origin for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) are finalised, they will serve as an "industrialization passport" enabling made-in-Africa goods to circulate duty-free. This would provide local entrepreneurs with a much-needed boost to operationalise continental trade integration and enhance Africa's economic dynamism.

But to take full advantage of the economies of scale and the growth opportunities provided by the AfCFTA - most notably the drastic reduction of risk associated with investing in smaller markets - African entrepreneurs need the support of entrepreneurial states.

Fostering business environments that ensure a level playing field for all participants, together with policy coordination at the regional and continental level, would go a long way toward increasing Africa direct investment and stimulating the development of robust regional value chains.

African policymakers must also implement financial reforms to eliminate the credit rationing that has long undermined entrepreneurship. Finance is the lifeblood of business; yet, expressed as a percentage of GDP, domestic credit to the private sector has remained very low across Africa, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, where it averaged 37.1 per cent of GDP in 2022.

By contrast, the GDP share of domestic credit to the private sector in the ten countries that US News and World Report ranked as being the best for entrepreneurship ranges from 83.6 per cent in Germany and 129.5 per cent in Singapore to 175.9 per cent in South Korea and a whopping 216 per cent in the United States.

In addition to providing easy access to capital, the most successful and enterprising countries share other important attributes: technological expertise, highly skilled labour, well-developed infrastructure (both physical and digital), transparent business practices, and comprehensive legal frameworks.

They are also globally connected and fully integrated into value chains, often as manufacturing powerhouses.

According to an African proverb, it takes a village to raise a child. Likewise, it will take a host of industrial entrepreneurs and proactive entrepreneurial governments to transform African economies and improve their global engagement with the rest of the world. Supporting local entrepreneurship is the surest path to a more self-reliant and prosperous continent.

Hippolyte Fofack, a former chief economist and director of research at the African Export-Import Bank, is a former World Bank economist, a research associate at the Harvard University Centre for African Studies, and a fellow at the African Academy of Sciences.



MONDAY - WEDNESDAY FROM 10:30 PM

ITV	mon	13:00	SATURDAY 30 Dec
SATURDAY 23 Dec	20:00 Habari	Kipindi maalum rpt: BOT	5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi
5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi	21:05 Kipindi Maalum: Maisha ni Nyumba	Jungu kuu rpt	6:00 HABARI
6:00 HABARI	21:30 Kipindi Maalum:	14:00 Shamsham za pwani rpt	6:40 Kumekucha
6:40 Kumekucha	21:45 Chetu ni chetu	15:00 Meza huru	7:00 Habari
7:00 Habari	22:30 Soap: Uzalo	16:30 Watoto wetu	8:00 Al Jazeera
8:00 Al Jazeera	23:00 Music: The Base	17:00 The Base	9:00 Watoto wetu
9:00 Watoto wetu	00:00 Al Jazeera	18:00 Jiji Letu	10:05 Shika Bamba 5
10:05 Shika Bamba 5	WEDNESDAY 27 Dec	18:15 Mapishi	10:35 Mjue Zaidi rpt
10:35 Mjue Zaidi rpt	5:00 Soap rpt: Uzalo	18:30 Jagina	11:15 Chetu ni chetu rpt
11:15 Chetu ni chetu rpt	5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi	19:00 Usafiri wako	11:50 Hawavumi lakini wamo
11:50 Hawavumi lakini wamo	6:00 HABARI	19:30 Soap: In Love with Ramon	12:50 Art and lifestyle
12:50 Art and lifestyle	6:40 Kumekucha	20:00 Habari	13:20 Shamba lulu
13:20 Shamba lulu	7:30 HABARI	21:05 Malumbano ya hoja	13:50 Soap: In Love with Ramon rpt
13:50 Soap: In Love with Ramon rpt	8:00 Al Jazeera	23:00 Music: The Base	15:45 Igizo: Mizengwe
15:45 Igizo: Mizengwe	9:30 Soap: In Love with Ramon	00:00 Al Jazeera	16:10 Igizo: Slay Queen
16:10 Igizo: Slay Queen	10:00 Watoto wetu	FRIDAY 29 Dec	17:00 Shamsham za Pwani
17:00 Shamsham za Pwani	10:25 Igizo: Filimbi rpt	5:00 Soap rpt: Uzalo	18:00 Jiji Letu
18:00 Jiji Letu	11:00 Hawavumi lakini wamo rpt	5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi	18:15 ITV Top 10 rpt
18:15 ITV Top 10 rpt	12:00 Al Jazeera	6:00 HABARI	19:00 Jungu kuu
19:00 Jungu kuu	12:30 Bundesliga na DW rpt	6:40 Kumekucha	19:30 Shika Bamba
19:30 Shika Bamba	13:00 Dakika 45 rpt	7:30 HABARI	20:00 Habari
20:00 Habari	14:00 Kipindi maalum: NSSF rpt	8:00 Al Jazeera	21:05 Igizo: Slay Queen
21:05 Igizo: Slay Queen	14:15 Chetu ni chetu rpt	9:30 Soap rpt: In Love with Ramon	21:40 Art and Lifestyle
21:40 Art and Lifestyle	15:00 Meza huru	10:00 Watoto wetu	22:10 ITV Top 10
22:10 ITV Top 10	16:30 Watoto Wetu	10:30 Usafiri wako	22:50 Hawavumi lakini wamo
22:50 Hawavumi lakini wamo	17:00 Music: The Base	11:00 Kipindi maalum rpt: Watumishi housing	23:40 Soap: Uzalo rpt
23:40 Soap: Uzalo rpt	00:00 Al Jazeera	11:20 Jagina	00:30 Al Jazeera
00:30 Al Jazeera	TUESDAY 26 Dec	11:55 Habari za saa 12:00 Al Jazeera	SUNDAY 31 Dec
SUNDAY 24 Dec	5:00 Soap rpt: Uzalo	12:30 Kipindi maalum rpt: Tanesco	5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi
5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi	5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi	13:00 Kipindi Maalum: Maisha ni Nyumba rpt	6:00 HABARI
6:00 HABARI	6:00 HABARI	13:30 Kipindi Maalum rpt: Sema na Mahakama	6:40 Kumekucha
6:40 Kumekucha	6:40 Kumekucha	14:30 DW: Afrimax rpt	7:00 Habari
7:00 Habari	7:30 HABARI	15:00 Meza huru	8:00 Al Jazeera
8:00 Al Jazeera	8:00 Al Jazeera	16:30 Watoto Wetu	09:00 Watoto Wetu
9:00 Watoto Wetu	9:30 Soap: In Love with Ramon	17:00 The Base (DJ Show)	10:00 Soap: In Love with Ramon rpt
10:00 Soap: In Love with Ramon rpt	10:00 Watoto wetu	17:30 Kiislam	11:45 Hawavumi lakini wamo rpt
11:45 Hawavumi lakini wamo rpt	10:25 Jagina	18:00 Jiji Letu	12:45 Mjue zaidi
12:45 Mjue zaidi	11:00 Chetu ni chetu	18:15 Top ten	13:30 Usafiri wako
13:30 Usafiri wako	11:40 Igizo: Mizengwe	19:00 Shamba lulu	14:00 Tamasha la Michezo
14:00 Tamasha la Michezo	12:00 Al Jazeera	19:30 Soap: In Love with Ramon	15:30 Mwangaza
15:30 Mwangaza	12:30 Afya ya jamii	20:00 Habari	16:30 ITV Top 10 rpt
16:30 ITV Top 10 rpt	13:00 Jungu Kuu	21:05 Kipindi maalum: Biko	17:20 Kipindi cha kikristo
17:20 Kipindi cha kikristo	13:30 Shikabamba	21:10 Igizo: Mizengwe	18:00 Jiji Letu
18:00 Jiji Letu	14:00 Igizo rpt: Slay Queen	21:35 Kipindi maalum: Mch-ezo Supa Jackpot	18:15 Mapishi
18:15 Mapishi	15:00 Meza Huru	21:40 Mjue Zaidi	18:30 Matukio ya wiki
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21:45 Mjue Zaidi	19:30 Soap: In Love with Ra-	5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi	21:40 Mjue Zaidi
22:30 Soap: Uzalo rpt		6:00 HABARI	22:20 Kipindi maalum: ITV
23:15 Al Jazeera		6:40 Kumekucha	Mwisho wa mwaka 2023
		7:30 HABARI	00:30 Al Jazeera
		8:00 Al Jazeera	
		9:30 Soap rpt: In Love with Ramon	
		10:00 Watoto wetu	
		10:30 Shamba lulu	
		11:00 Ripoti maalum rpt	
		12:00 Al Jazeera	
		12:30 Jarida la wanawake rpt	

WORLD

Defamation case: Giuliani seeks bankruptcy after \$148m verdict

NEW YORK

RUDY Giuliani filed for bankruptcy on Thursday, just days after he was ordered to pay \$148 million to two former Georgia election workers he falsely accused of fraud following Donald Trump's 2020 presidential election loss.

Giuliani, who was known as "America's mayor" for his leadership of New York after the Sept 11, 2001, attacks, faces a crush of debts stemming from his work as a lawyer on former President Trump's behalf. He also faces criminal charges in Georgia.

In a filing in US Bankruptcy Court in New York, Giuliani said he had between \$100 million and \$500 million in liabilities and \$1 million to \$10 million in assets.

A spokesperson for Giuliani, who no longer works as Trump's lawyer, said the bankruptcy filing will give him time to appeal the \$148 million penalty and ensure that other creditors are treated fairly.

"No person could have reasonably believed that Mayor Rudy Giuliani would be able to pay such a high punitive amount," spokesperson Ted Goodman said.

US bankruptcy proceedings can enable people and companies to wipe

away or reorganize their debts, and Giuliani's filing will pause all of the pending civil lawsuits against him.

However, it may not allow him to duck the money he owes the election workers, as judges have ruled that defamation penalties cannot be discharged if a debtor has engaged in "willful and malicious" conduct.

The two former election workers, Wandrea "Shaye" Moss and her mother Ruby Freeman, faced a deluge of threats after Giuliani falsely claimed they were engaged in voting fraud.

Giuliani has repeated those claims following the Dec 15 verdict even though he has admitted in court that they were defamatory, prompting the two workers to file a second lawsuit.

A federal judge on Wednesday ruled that Giuliani must immediately begin paying the two women, concluding there was a risk he may attempt to conceal his assets. A lawyer for the two women said bankruptcy would not discharge his debt to them.

Giuliani was named Time magazine's Person of the Year following the 2001 attacks, and he mounted an unsuccessful bid for the 2008 Republican presidential nomination.

As Trump's personal lawyer, he led efforts to keep Trump in the White House following his 2020 defeat, filing

cities in central Israel, indicating the group's retained capability despite the 76-day Israeli relentless strikes.

A senior Israeli official told reporters in a briefing that Israeli negotiators have met with Qatari mediators, expressing their "willingness to reach a new deal."

Israel insists on continuing the previous ceasefire deal, focusing on the release of 17 women and children who were supposed to be freed during the truce in late November, according to the official.

In the meantime, an unnamed Palestinian source told Xinhua that Israel proposed the release of around 40 Israeli hostages through Qatari and Egyptian mediators in exchange for a one-week ceasefire.

Later, Israel's state-owned Kan TV news reported that Israel is considering "improving" its offer to Hamas by extending the proposed ceasefire period to two weeks.

The spokesman of Hamas' military wing, Abu Ubaida, declared in a statement that the hostages held by the group would be released only if Israel "stops the aggression and the war."

This statement echoed an earlier announcement by Osama Hamdan,



Former Mayor of New York Rudy Giuliani leaves the federal courthouse in Washington, Dec 15, 2023. AP

unsuccessful lawsuits to challenge the results and falsely claiming in public testimony that he had evidence proving election fraud.

His seat-of-the-pants effort often drew ridicule. He scheduled a press conference at a "Four Seasons" in Philadelphia that turned out to be a landscaping company, not a luxury hotel. At another news conference, a dark substance, possibly hair dye, dripped down his face.

He called for "trial by combat" at a rally for Trump supporters on Jan. 6, 2021, shortly before thousands of them attacked the US Capitol in an effort to prevent Congress from certifying Trump's defeat.

Giuliani faces criminal charges of election subversion in Georgia, along with Trump and more than a dozen other co-defendants. He has pleaded not guilty.

His law license has been suspended in New York and he faces disbarment in Washington.

Giuliani listed President Joe Biden's son, Hunt-

er Biden, and a former employee, Noelle Dunphy, as creditors on the bankruptcy filing.

Hunter Biden has sued Giuliani for violating his privacy over data allegedly taken from his laptop, while Dunphy has sued him for sexual assault, harassment and wage theft. Giuliani has denied the allegations.

Dunphy's lawyer Justin Kelton said they would not be deterred from pursuing the case.

Other creditors include Smartmatic and an employee of Dominion Voting Systems. He faces lawsuits for claiming both voting-machine companies flipped votes from Trump to Biden in the 2020 election.

The two companies did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Giuliani also said he owed nearly \$1 million to the US and New York state governments and nearly \$2 million in legal fees.

Two law firms that formerly represented him have sued for unpaid bills.

Russian diplomat warns against letting Israeli-Palestinian conflict spill over to Syria

UNITED NATIONS

DMITRY Polyansky, Russia's first deputy envoy to the UN, cautioned against allowing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to spill over to Syria.

"The escalation in the zone of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which is unprecedented by the number of casualties, is provoking additional tension in our friendly nation of Syria.

Against the background of Israel's bloody operation in the Gaza Strip and incessant raids in the West Bank, there has been a noticeable surge in activity of various forces and formations across the region," the diplomat said at a meeting of the UN Security Council.

"The ever more frequent Israeli air raids on Syrian sites as well as the intensifying exchanges of strikes across the Blue Line between Lebanon and Israel risk dragging Syria into a full-scale regional confrontation. There can't be allowed to happen by any means."

He added that "existing difficulties persist and are worsening" in Syria, including terrorist activity, clashes between Kurds and pro-Turkish militias, and instability in the south of the country.

The situation in the Middle East sharply escalated following an incursion of Hamas militants from the Gaza Strip into Israel on October 7.

Hamas has cast the attack as a response to Israeli actions against the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Israel has declared a complete siege of the Gaza Strip and started a military operation there. Israel also strikes parts of Lebanon and Syria in retaliation for bombardments originating from these countries. Clashes are also taking place in the West Bank.

INDIA bloc leaders brace for nationwide protest against bulk suspension of opposition MPs

NEW DELHI

LEADERS of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc are scheduled to hold a protest against the suspension of 146 opposition MPs here in the national capital yesterday.

The Members of Parliament, suspended from the Parliament's Winter Session, which was adjourned sine die on Thursday, will protest at the Jantar Mantar at 11 am.

Also, a nationwide protest has also been scheduled at all district headquarters by the Congress Party today.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, who was among the suspended lawmakers, on Thursday said that the Friday protest of the INDIA bloc will be staged in all the states.

"It's appropriate to protest and all of us will be at Jantar Mantar in Delhi. The INDIA alliance protest will happen everywhere tomorrow (Friday) morning in all the states because we want to show the public that if they'd run Parliament like this and won't listen to the opposition then they are ruining the democracy," he had said.

Aam Aadmi Party MPs including ND Gupta, Sandeep Pathak, Sant Balbir Seechwal, and Sanjeev Arora will join the INDIA bloc protest today.

A total of 146 MPs -- 100 from Lok Sabha and 46 from Rajya Sabha -- are currently suspended so far for creating a ruckus and disrupting proceedings in both Houses, while they were demanding a statement from Union Minister Amit Shah about the Parliament security breach incident.

Earlier on Thursday, after the conclusion of the 262nd Session of the Rajya Sabha, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar said that he is pained to state that nearly 22 hours of the Upper House were lost due to avoidable disruptions.

"I am pained to state that nearly 22 hours were lost due to avoidable disruptions adversely impacting our overall productivity that finally stood at 79 percent. Weaponizing disruptions and disturbance as a political strategy doesn't resonate with our constitutional obligation of keeping the interest of people at large above any other political considerations," the Rajya Sabha Chairman said.

Earlier on Thursday, while the proceedings of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha were underway, the suspended MPs took out a march from the Parliament building to Vijay Chowk to protest against the bulk suspension of opposition lawmakers.

Taking part in the protest march, John Brittas of CPI(M), said, the Centre should now amend the Constitution to say that India is a monarchy.

"We are protesting against the brutal killing of the democracy; the democracy has been massacred. You could see the Union Home Minister unilaterally; this is Opposition-Mukt Parliament.

They (the Centre) should now amend the Constitution to say that India is a monarchy," he said while speaking to ANI.

ANI

Israel vows to continue fighting in Gaza amid ceasefire talks

JERUSALEM/GAZA

ISRAEL announced on Thursday its determination to continue its military operations in the Gaza Strip, effectively rejecting Hamas' statement that the release of hostages would only occur if Israel agrees to end the war.

Despite ongoing ceasefire talks, the deadly conflict between the two parties escalated on Thursday, with heavy explosions heard and huge black plumes in Gaza visible from the Israeli side of the fence during the day.

At night, huge orange flashes were seen in Gaza City as the Israeli army said it destroyed a key network of tunnels under the neighborhood of Rimal.

Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesman Daniel Hagari said in a press briefing that over the past day, Israeli forces "have operated from the air, sea, and land throughout the Gaza Strip."

He said that since the beginning of the war on Oct. 7, Israeli forces have killed more than 2,000 militants. In the early afternoon, Hamas militants fired about 30 rockets at the Israeli city Tel Aviv and other

cities in central Israel, indicating the group's retained capability despite the 76-day Israeli relentless strikes.

A senior Israeli official told reporters in a briefing that Israeli negotiators have met with Qatari mediators, expressing their "willingness to reach a new deal."

Israel insists on continuing the previous ceasefire deal, focusing on the release of 17 women and children who were supposed to be freed during the truce in late November, according to the official.

In the meantime, an unnamed Palestinian source told Xinhua that Israel proposed the release of around 40 Israeli hostages through Qatari and Egyptian mediators in exchange for a one-week ceasefire.

Later, Israel's state-owned Kan TV news reported that Israel is considering "improving" its offer to Hamas by extending the proposed ceasefire period to two weeks.

The spokesman of Hamas' military wing, Abu Ubaida, declared in a statement that the hostages held by the group would be released only if Israel "stops the aggression and the war."

This statement echoed an earlier announcement by Osama Hamdan,



People are seen among the rubble of a building destroyed in an Israeli strike in the southern Gaza Strip city of Rafah, on Dec 7, 2023. XINHUA

a Hamas politburo member, who asserted that "all parties" in the talks had been informed that there would be "no negotiation" for hostage release unless Israel ends its strikes in Gaza.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected these statements, vowing that Israel "will not stop the war until we achieve all of its goals: Completing the elimination of Hamas and releasing all of our hostages." Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, a humanitarian

organization backed by the United Nations, issued a new report on Thursday, warning that Gaza's entire 2.3 million population is at risk of famine due to the shortage of food caused by the Israeli siege.

The risk of famine "is increasing each day that the current situation of intense hostilities and restricted humanitarian access persists or worsens," the report read.

The World Health Organization stated that there are no fully functioning hospitals left in Gaza.

Due to Israeli strikes, 23 hospitals in Gaza are entirely non-functional, nine are partially functioning, and four are operating at minimum capacity, according to the WHO.

The Gaza-based Health Ministry has said that the Palestinian death toll from the relentless Israeli bombardments had reached 20,000, while the death toll in Israel has reached about 1,300, most of them killed in the initial Hamas attack on Oct. 7, according to official Israeli figures.

Ukraine legalises use of Marijuana to help treat trauma of war

KYIV

THE Ukraine's parliament adopted a new law legalising medical marijuana to help treat post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and oncological diseases acquired as a result of war, The Hill reported, quoting the official website of Ukraine's parliament, the Verkhovna Rada.

It reported on Thursday that the law was adopted with 248 votes in favour, 16 votes against, 33 abstentions and 40 members not voting. The new law will come into effect after six months.

Access to medical marijuana as treatment for war-related conditions has garnered momentum recently, as the country approaches nearly two years since Russia

launched its invasion of the country.

The law would regulate "the circulation of hemp plants (Cannabis) for medical, industrial purposes, scientific and scientific-technical activities to create conditions for expanding patient access to the necessary treatment of oncological diseases and post-traumatic stress disorders, received as a result of the

war," according to the final version of the bill.

The parliament's chair, Ruslan Stefanchuk, said, "The list of conditions and ways of using cannabis medicines will be determined by the Ministry of Health."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has pushed for greater access to medical marijuana as a treatment for war-related condi-

tions. In June 2023, he addressed his country's parliament, calling for the drug's legalisation.

"We must finally fairly legalise cannabis-based medicines for all those who need them, with appropriate scientific research and controlled Ukrainian production," Zelensky said, according to a translation from the local press, The Hill reported.

ANI

China's economic recovery boosts confidence in global growth - experts

THE central economic work conference was recently held in Beijing. The conference comprehensively summarized China's economic work in 2023, analyzed the current economic situation and made arrangements for 2024.

International experts interviewed by People's Daily highly evaluated China's achievements in economic development, stating that the overall trend of economic recovery and long-term improvement remains unchanged.

They believe that China's efforts to promote high-quality development will inject more stability and momentum into the

global economic recovery.

Confronted with a complex and challenging international situation this year, China's macroeconomy has logged a continuous and steady recovery against the backdrop of the weakening momentum of global economic recovery, and its high-quality development has been steadily advancing.

In the first three quarters, China's gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 5.2 percent year-on-year, marking the strongest performance among the world's major economies.

As the world economy faces downward

pressure, it was no easy feat for China to achieve a 5.2 percent GDP growth in the first three quarters, said Enrique Dussel Peters, director of the Center for Chinese-Mexican Studies at the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

He further emphasized that China has led the construction of a modern industrial system through scientific and technological innovation, vigorously promoted new industrialization, and actively nurtured strategic emerging industries such as electronic information, and these efforts have provided new impetus for the country's economic growth.

Marsela Musabelliu, executive director of the Albanian Institute for Globalization Studies, recently visited China and was deeply impressed by the country's economic development.

She said that China boasts a super-large market and the most complete industrial system in the world. Currently, China is accelerating scientific and technological innovation and constructing a modern infrastructure system, including advanced transportation and logistics networks as well as the development of smart cities.

These efforts have facilitated the flow of personnel, goods, and services, further

unleashing productivity, she added.

International institutions have recently raised their expectations for China's economic growth, saying its growth in 2024 is expected to surpass this year's and China still remains a key engine of global economic growth.

The International Monetary Fund predicted that China's contribution to global economic growth will exceed 30 percent this year. Hsia Hua Sheng, a financial expert with Brazil's Getulio Vargas Foundation, noted that China is accelerating the creation of a new development pattern, promoting high-quality development and

expanding high-level opening up.

"China has made remarkable achievements in the fields of green energy, artificial intelligence, and e-commerce. These industries driven by scientific and technological innovation have played a positive role in promoting the sustained and stable growth of the Chinese economy," the expert explained.

China's economy has not only achieved surprising growth but also steadily improved in terms of its quality, said Eduardo Regalado, a researcher at the International Policy Research Center of Cuba.

People's Daily

Niger coup leaders expel French, but not US, troops fighting jihadists

BY PAUL MELLY

LESS than five months after Niger's President Mohamed Bazoum was deposed in a coup, former colonial power France is pulling out the last remaining troops it had deployed to the West African state to fight militant Islamists threatening stability across the region.

Relations with Paris are at rock-bottom - French ambassador Sylvain Itté departed in September at the military junta's insistence - while the European Union (EU) has also been snubbed.

The junta, led by Gen Abdourahmane Tchiani, has unilaterally scrapped the accords under which EU specialists have for many years trained Niger's security forces.

Mr Bazoum regarded France as a crucial military partner. When French troops and other European special forces withdrew from Mali in 2022, he asked them to redeploy into Niger's fragile western border areas plagued by jihadist attacks, where they then operated under Nigérien command.

But after President Emmanuel Macron's vocal condemnation of the 26 July coup and his public support for Mr Bazoum, still detained in his presidential residence, Niger's new military rulers opted for a radical change of policy, demanding that the French pull out.

Most of the 1,500 troops have since left and the remaining 157 will depart by Saturday.

The junta has opted to rely on a new defence alliance with neighbouring Burkina Faso and Mali. They are also both under military rule and resisting demands, including from the West Af-

rican regional bloc Ecowas, for a rapid restoration of civilian-led democracy.

Yet while France and the EU are cold-shouldered, with Paris blamed for problems and crises of almost any kind and even accused of supporting a 2007 rebellion by Tuareg separatists, the US retains a significant presence, sending a new ambassador to Niamey in August.

And the junta has not demanded the shutdown of the two US military bases in Niger, where more than 600 American troops remain stationed. These are important for Washington as Russian mercenaries from the Wagner group are just over the border in Mali to help the junta there fight jihadists.

There is no doubt that France, and Mr Macron personally, are the object of widespread resentment among young urban populations across West Africa, and not just the states in the semi-arid Sahel strip just south of the Sahara Desert.

Perceived as high-handed and over-assertive, he is resented to a degree that was not true of previous French heads of state, even Nicolas Sarkozy, who had the gall to tell a Senegalese audience that Africa had not sufficiently entered into history.

The priority that Mr Macron has given to West Africa, whether in military efforts to fight jihadist groups, the return of looted cultural treasures or an impressively expanded development budget, has blown back on him.

The soldiers who have seized power in Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali over the past three years have all opportunistically played the anti-French card to boost their popularity.

As their countries feel the pressure of increased economic isolation, and



The US has trained troops from Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali - all now under military rule

reduced development and security support, the former colonial power is a useful scapegoat.

Paris, and indeed Brussels, have also paid a price for their strong support for Ecowas.

The bloc's 2001 democracy and good governance protocol is the foundation for its uncompromising stance towards the coup leaders and its efforts to pressure them into taking steps towards the re-establishment of elected government, with Niger in particular targeted by a trade blockade and the threat of military intervention.

Yet Ecowas itself is widely unpopular, often portrayed as a presidents' club that has turned a blind eye to election rigging and constitutional manipulations as heads of state seek to extend their stays in power.

In this polarised context, where Gen Tchiani and his Malian and Burkinabé counterparts, Col Assimi Goita and Capt Ibrahim Traoré, are tapping into powerful nationalistic resentment, the US has played a softer-toned public game.

this path.

After the coup the US suspended its military co-operation with Niger's security forces, but Ms Phee said Washington intended to resume collaboration and development support "in phases", reciprocating actions taken by the junta towards the restoration of democracy.

Besides long-running programmes of training with Nigérien forces, the US has drone bases in Niamey and in Agadez on the edge of the Sahara, that it regards as crucial for monitoring the activity of jihadist groups across the region and Wagner mercenaries in Mali and Libya.

So Gen Tchiani's regime feels in a strong bargaining position. Setting an assertive tone, Prime Minister Mahaman Lamine Zeine said on Wednesday: "If the Americans want to stay here with their forces they should tell us what they want to do."

Mr Zeine was not shy to hint that Niger has other suitors and alternative friends if the US does not play ball. Russia's Deputy Defence Minister Gen Yunus-Bek Evkurov visited Niamey earlier this month.

Moreover, the Sahel could well be a priority testing ground for the reintegration of Wagner forces into a more conventional structure under tighter control by the official Russian defence establishment. That more orthodox model might have some appeal for Niger, which has strong official military traditions.

Moscow is also trying to broaden its "offer" to the Sahelian states beyond the security sphere, even though it is not equipped to match the development donor clout of the EU, the US, Germany or France.

No more functioning hospitals in Northern Gaza, says WHO

GENEVA

WORLD Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has said that Northern Gaza has no more functioning hospitals, The New York Times reported.

The WHO Director-General described scenes of horror witnessed by aid workers in the ruins of two partially destroyed medical facilities.

In a statement posted on X, the WHO chief said that aid workers who visited Al-Ahli and Al-Shifa hospitals on Wednesday during a rare humanitarian mission to deliver supplies "struggled to describe the immense impact recent attacks have had on these health facilities."

At Al-Ahli, the aid workers found rows of dead bodies lined up outside the hospital, while severely injured civilians writhed in pain on the floor and the pews of the chapel inside of it, he said, as per The New York Times.

A video posted by Tedros shows a member of the medical mission standing inside the chapel, with injured people and crucifixes on the wall visible behind him.

The aid worker in the video, Sean Casey, says: "There are patients here who have been injured for more than a month and have had no surgery; there are patients who have been operated on and are now getting post-operative infections because the hospital doesn't have sufficient antibiotics."

"They are suffering enormously here," he adds. "This is a completely unacceptable situation."

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs took part in the mission, which it said was only the third humanitarian convoy to reach northern Gaza since a pause in fighting ended on December 1 because of "the ongoing hostilities." **ANI**

JN.1 Covid variant: WHO charts its rapid global spread

By Philippa Roxby

A sub-variant of the Omicron strain of coronavirus has been classified as a "variant of interest" by the World Health Organization, because of "its rapidly increasing spread".

JN.1 has been found in many countries around the world, including India, China, UK and the United States.

The risk to the public is currently low and current vaccines continue to offer protection, the WHO says.

But it warns Covid and other infections could rise this winter.

Respiratory viruses such as flu, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and childhood pneumonia are also on the rise in the northern hemisphere.

Nobel Prize goes to scientists behind mRNA Covid vaccines'

The virus which causes Covid is constantly changing over time and sometimes this leads to new variants developing.

Omicron has been the globally dominant variant for some time.



The World Health Organization (WHO) is currently tracking a number of variants of interest linked to Omicron - including JN.1 - although none of them are deemed to be concerning.

But JN.1 is spreading quickly in many corners of the world.

It is currently the fastest-growing variant in the United States, according to the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, accounting for 15-29% of infections.

The UK Health Security Agen-

cy says JN.1 currently makes up around 7% of positive Covid tests analysed in a lab. It said it would continue to monitor all available data on this and other variants.

Winter surge

JN.1 is spreading fast in all regions, probably because it has an additional mutation in the spike protein compared to the BA.2.86 variant from which it's descended.

"It is anticipated that this variant may cause an increase in

Sars-Cov-2 [coronavirus] cases amid a surge of infections of other viral and bacterial infections, especially in countries entering the winter season," the WHO's risk assessment says.

There is still limited evidence on how capable JN.1 is of getting round the immunity offered by vaccines, the WHO says.

There are no reports of people becoming more ill with this variant than previous ones.

But more studies are needed to work out the health impact, the WHO says, as the number of countries reporting data on people admitted to hospital with Covid has dramatically reduced.

To prevent infections and severe disease, the WHO advises: wear a mask in crowded, enclosed areas

cover up coughs and sneezes clean your hands regularly stay up to date with Covid and flu vaccinations, especially if vulnerable stay home if ill get tested if you have symptoms

Lavrov slams 'klepto' German authorities for plans to seize Russian assets

TUNISIA

RUSSIAN Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has described the German authorities as "kleptomaniacs" while commenting on the German Prosecutor General's Office's call to seize Russian assets.

"They are kleptos. We realized this a long time ago. They have been duplicitous all along in political terms, you know: in the sense of defaulting on agreements and trying to deceive someone.

Now they have turned out to be kleptocratic in the literal sense of this word," Lavrov told a news conference following his visit to Tunisia.

He noted that the US in its clandestine contacts was explaining to Europeans "how best to change laws" to grab and steal Russian assets.

"They [the West] are now laser-focused on the idea of finding some legal way to confiscate Russia's assets, or, as I understand it, as a first step, to use the profit they make from these assets to send to Ukraine.

The Europeans still have some rudimentary respect for their own laws, so they are delaying these decisions.

But according to our sources, the Americans in closed contacts are explaining to them how to change these laws to take and finally steal everything," he said.

We'll see. Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov today, I think, commented on a similar issue. He said that in case such confiscation physically takes place, we also have some-



thing to confiscate in response."

Earlier, the German Prosecutor General's Office said it had sent a request to the court to seize Russian assets worth more than 720 million euros, thus replenishing the state budget.

A spokeswoman for the Frankfurt-on-the-Main court has told TASS that the motion was still under preliminary consideration, and there was no decision yet whether to start considering it on its merits.

Israel President Herzog tells Christian leaders Hamas attack was against Christianity

TELAVIV

ISRAEL'S President Isaac Herzog on Thursday hosted leaders of different Christian communities ahead of the Christmas holiday. In place of the traditional reception, under the shadow of the ongoing war against Hamas in Gaza, the President spoke with the leaders of the community about the situation, about the State

of Israel's commitment to the well-being of the different faith communities of the Holy Land, and about the shared hope for peace in the new year.

Among those attending the meeting were His Beatitude Theophilos III Giannopoulos, Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem; His Beatitude Nourhan Manougian, Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem; His Beatitude Cardinal

Battista Pietro Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and many more.

President Herzog spoke about the terrible attack Hamas had carried out on October 7 saying "Evil forces of the worst kind carried out a barbaric, sadistic attack, killing innocent women, children, old people, young people, people from 40 nationalities, taking hostages, raping, chopping heads, burning people, and

more." "Nothing of this is compatible with the Gospels, with the writing of the Gospels, with the teaching of Jesus Christ, and the teachings of course of the Jewish faith, and also with moderate Islam," said Herzog.

The President noted how in the last year he has taken "clear steps to defend and to protect Christian communities in the Holy Land." **ANI**

China's construction industry makes new progress in transformation, upgrading

THE construction industry is one of the pillar industries of China's national economy, with a total output value exceeding 31 trillion yuan (\$4.34 trillion) in 2022, providing employment for over 52 million people.

However, the construction industry, as it continues to embrace rapid development, still needs to further enhance its quality despite its huge size.

In recent years, the Chinese construction industry has seized the opportunities brought by the new round of technological revolution and industrial transformation, striving to improve efficiency and reduce energy consumption. As a result, it has achieved continuous transformation and upgrading.

Near Muztagh Ata on the Pamir Plateau in the west of Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, there stand a row of container-style

houses - the first "zero-altitude astronomical observation station" of China, which was officially delivered in 2023.

Although situated at an altitude of over 4,500 meters with an outdoor oxygen concentration of only about 55 percent compared to the plains, people inside the facility would not experience symptoms of altitude sickness such as headaches or insomnia.

The astronomical observation station uses pressurization and other technologies, which means improving the airtightness of the building and injecting air into the interior, to adjust the indoor key human settlement environment indicators to the low altitude level in the plain area, said Wang Kaiqiang, head of the China Construction Institute of Advanced

Technology.

To build this facility, the project team has overcome the challenge of high pressure, Wang noted. "While a regular building needs to withstand a few hundred kilograms of pressure per square meter, the number has to reach over 4 tons for 'zero-altitude' buildings," he explained.

"Zero-altitude' buildings can ensure healthy conditions for people living on the plateau. Currently, the technology has been applied in various scenarios such as hotels and residential buildings, with a cumulative application area of over 2,000 square meters. In the future, with customized and one-stop design services, the market will become even bigger," Wang told People's Daily.

In Shenyang, capital of north-east China's Liaoning province, a 300-meter-high office building is currently under way. Positioning and measurement technicians working on the top floor of the structure are equipped with a "mighty tool" in the size of a stationery box - a high-precision positioning receiver enabled by the BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (BDS) for ultra-high-rise buildings, which is capable of achieving accurate positioning at a height of 600 meters with an error margin of only 2 millimeters.

The accuracy of the positioning measurement in construction is crucial for the overall quality and safety of buildings. In the past, this part of work often relied on instruments such as laser plumb bobs and steel rulers. However,

buildings above 300 meters are more likely to be affected by strong winds, turbulence and other influences, and violent building oscillations would lead to cumulative errors.

"In previous years, we have successfully overcome the challenge of high-precision measurement of ultra-high-rise buildings through independent research and development. This year, our third-generation equipment has improved its anti-interference capability and stability, enabling precision measurement at an altitude of over 1,000 meters," said Zhang Shengliang, a surveying and mapping expert with China Construction First Group.

According to Zhang, this device has been exported and applied in the construction of over 50 ultra-

high-rise projects worldwide.

In recent years, China's construction industry has accelerated its deep integration with advanced manufacturing and new-generation information technology, leading to the emergence of new equipment and continuous breakthroughs in new technologies. By adhering to innovation-driven development, construction companies have constantly expanded the market and improved quality and efficiency.

Another important direction for the transformation and upgrading of the industry is the accelerated development of green buildings and construction methods, which aim to achieve green and low-carbon development of structures throughout

their entire lifecycle.

At the construction site of the composite modular construction global R&D center of China Construction Science and Technology Group in Shenzhen, south China's Guangdong province, structures are built like building blocks without supporting templates, and tying steel bars. Electromechanical devices, tubes, wires, and curtain walls have all been prefabricated at factories.

"The workload of on-site construction has been reduced to 20 percent of the original, cutting the construction period by half. Additionally, there has been a 70 percent decrease in the emissions of construction waste. The overall cost still remains the same," said Fan Zesen, deputy general manager of China Construction Science and Technology Group. **People's Daily**

Clatous Chama needs to understand Simba fans rally behind Benchikha

By Correspondent Nassir Nchimbi

FOOTBALL fans, particularly the ones in Tanzania, are very unpredictable. They might go from loving a player when he/she is at his/her best and tend to ignore him during his/her struggles on the pitch and it is, thus, upon the particular player to work hard to regain his/her prowess.

Simba SC's Zambian midfielder, Clatous Chama, is regarded as one of the best foreign players to grace Mainland Tanzania's NBC Premier League.

Coaches come and go at Simba SC and, when a new head coach is appointed, the club's fans will rally behind him but under one condition. The head coach should find a way to accommodate himself on how to use Chama, instead of Chama working his way into the squad and into the coach's system and that is according to the club's fans.

Recently though there have been drastic changes at the club, given Simba SC fans have seen their club struggle for two and half seasons and have been calling on players to work hard to have the club post better results.

Under Algerian head coach Abelhak Benchikha, Chama has yet to start a game and now has fallen in the pecking order.

The club's Burundian midfielder Saidi Ntibazonkiza has lately been playing behind the striker and Cameroonian winger, Willy Onana, has broken into the team's starting XI, playing on the left wing where Chama used to play.

When Simba SC took on Botswana's Jwaneng Galaxy in a 2023/24 CAF Champions League Group B in Francistown on December 2, the Zambian midfielder hardly featured in the club's starting lineup.

The same could be said of the club's other fixtures in the premier continental club showpiece against Morocco's Wydad Casablanca at Stade de Marrakech on December 9 and the clash between Simba SC and Ivory Coast's ASEC Mimosas in Dar es Salaam on November 25.

Chama did not start the encounters after many years of being the star player at Simba SC.

Soccer fanatics hardly know what Benchikha has seen in Onana to the extent of playing him twice ahead of Chama.



Simba SC's Zambian midfielder, Clatous Chama. PHOTO: COURTESY OF SIMBA SC

The soccer followers saw Onana's impact not being top-notch when Simba SC came up against Jwaneng Galaxy in Botswana yet the Algerian coach played the Cameroonian winger in the duel against Wydad Casablanca, while Chama was restricted to the bench.

Coming off the bench is not strange for players. It happens several times when a player either comes from an injury layoff or is out of form, coaches tend to reduce such a player's game time for him to mentally build his rhythm.

Even though Chama is still regarded as one of the best Simba SC players of all time, the club's fans no longer voice their concerns about the Zambian midfielder sitting on the bench.

If Chama was at the top of the game, the outfit's fans and, even leaders, would have rallied behind him and perhaps the coach would be fired after some time.

At the moment, what is

going on at the Msimbazi Street outfit is that its fans and leaders have endorsed the head coach's decision to bench Chama for the benefit of the outfit, letting the player come off the bench in some fixtures.

It is not that they are happy with out-of-form Onana playing but they are yet to react to Chama sitting on the bench with other players like Mozambican midfielder, Luis Miquissioine.

I think there are changes in perception between Simba SC fans and Chama and Simba SC leaders towards Chama.

The Msimbazi Street side's 5-1 loss to long-time rivals, Yanga, in a recent Premier League tie deteriorated the relationship between Chama and Simba SC.

Some of the club's fans believe Chama sabotaged the outfit in the clash against Yanga considering he underperformed.

The midfielder is said to have been playing below

par whenever plays against Simba SC in either league fixtures or other matches bringing together the two domestic rivals.

Chama is facing backlash from his outfit's fans whenever he posts a picture on his social media accounts, the club's supporters flood the comments section and hurl criticism at him because of his recent poor displays.

He might post personal issues on the accounts but Simba SC fans will attack him, demanding better performance from him.

A section of Simba SC fans have lost trust in the midfielder due to his close relationship with some of Yanga's top officials.

The supporters believe his heart is no longer with Simba SC, referring to his decision to delay attending the outfit's pre-season camp in Turkey as he demanded his terms to be met by the club before leaving for Turkey for the camp.

Some fans feel they have been betrayed by Chama, there is no wonder they are backing Benchikha as the midfielder sits on the bench.

They are the same fans that were disappointed by the decision by the then head coach Roberto Oliveira, alias 'Robertinho', when he substituted Chama just 30 minutes into a Premier League game during the coach's first game.

Apart from a section of the club's fans not being happy with Chama's recent performance, Benchikha is not pleased with Chama's displays.

The Algerian coach believes Chama is surplus to requirements when the team is not in possession.

Known for his strict tactical discipline, Benchikha believes Chama is slow and lacks contribution when the team is not in possession.

The ball is in Chama's court to show the head coach that he still belongs to Simba SC's starting XI and pick his moments, and score some important goals that will repair his relationship with Simba SC fans.

The problem is a section of Simba SC leaders have shown a sense of weakness and Chama feels he is an important player in the club even when he is not playing.

The officials have failed to build a team by bringing in more competent players, at the end of the day, they only have one Chama.

Everything rests in Chama's hands... with his talent, he can decide to upgrade his game, score important goals, and change the minds of Simba SC fans.

If he does not change his attitude and adhere to the head coach's needs, he will find himself at the exit door once he is replaced by an active player of his caliber.

Simba SC fans and members now believe Kibu Denis is the club's most important player, and Chama needs to work hard.

The Msimbazi Street squad's top officials believe in Benchikha's prowess, with his CV that he holds, he has the ultimate power to decide which players to be axed and the ones who should remain for next season.

Simba SC officials will back the coach when he decides to offload any player that is out of his plans for next season, even if Chama's name and other top players appear on the cards.

The Msimbazi Street side's fans and officials are tired of seeing the rival, Yanga, which is known for making tough decisions when it comes to offloading players with attitude problems for the sake of the club, enjoy success.

Soccer fanatics ought to trace what happened to Yanga's Congolese players-right-back Djuma Shabani, and midfielders Yannick Bangala and Mukoko Tonombe.

Africa Cup of Nations 2023: Roberto Nditi on his adventure with Stars

By Guardian Correspondent & Agencies

SOMETIMES dreams come true, but sometimes something that he/she has never even dreamt about can happen to him/her.

That can be the story of what happened to Roberto Nditi, a Tanzanian citizen born in England and living in Scotland, who has been called to join the country's senior national squad, Taifa Stars, which will compete in the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON).

According to the Scottish Football podcast, the Forfar Athletic FC full-back, Nditi, admits it is 'crazy' he might go from playing at Peterhead in Scottish League Two to facing World Cup semi-finalists Morocco in the 2023 AFCON.

Basingstoke-born Nditi, aged 23, has been selected in Tanzania's senior national squad for AFCON to be held in Ivory Coast which will kick off on 13 January.

The Taifa Stars' first group match will see it play against Morocco on January 17.

"It's a special moment for me and my family. I can't wait to get going," he told the Scottish Football podcast.

"It's an opportunity I never thought would come but it has and I can't wait."

"It's a crazy situation when you put it into perspective- to go from Peterhead on Saturday to playing Morocco, world-class opposition.

"That would be an incredible opportunity. Even just to be involved in that situation, you dream of that and representing your nation."

Nditi, who joined Forfar (The

'Loons') in February 2021 and had a season at Queen of the South before returning to Station Park, hopes playing with and against top players at AFCON will enhance his own game.

He will join up with a squad containing former Aston Villa striker Mbwana Samatta, who now plays for Greek side PAOK Salonika.

"It is going to be a fabulous experience and I will get to learn from the other players, everyone is high quality out there," Nditi added.

"Watching them, learning, taking bits out of their game. Samatta has played for Villa in the Premier League, and as a defender I can watch how he moves, and hopefully that will increase my game when I'm back at Forfar."

Nditi, who was born on October 1, 2000, qualifies for Tanzania through his parents and heads out to join his international teammates on December 26 and will be in Africa until late January at the very least.

"I've had conversations with the manager, the assistant manager, and the chairman, and I'm sure they weren't expecting it - maybe even less than I was - but now they're full of encouragement and positivity. They are excited for me," Nditi said.

Tanzania ranked 121st in the FIFA rankings, have one other UK-based player in their squad, Haji Mnoga, who plays for English National League side Aldershot Town.

This will be their fourth appearance in the final stages of AFCON and they are in Group F alongside the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia as well as star-studded Morocco.



Tanzanian full-back, Roberto Nditi.

Joshua delighted with inclusion in Stars' provisional squad

By Correspondent Nassir Nchimbi & Agencies

DESPITE having a muted season in the 2023-2024 Football Kenya Federation Premier League (FKF) Premier League season, Tusker FC's Tanzanian forward Ibrahim Joshua has been handed a call-up to his country's senior national team's provisional squad for the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations.

The lanky forward has overcome injury setbacks suffered towards the conclusion of the 2022/23 season though he is yet to hit the road for the Ruaraka beer makers.

Joshua secured a place in the 53-man provisional squad for Taifa Stars released two days ago by head coach Adel Amrouche.

The AFCON finals are set to run from January 13 to February 11, 2024, in various cities on the Ivory Coast.

The matches are scheduled to take place in Abidjan, Bouake, Yamoussoukro, Korhogo, and San Pedro.

Amrouche, the former Harambee Stars' head coach, unveiled a squad largely dominated by locally-based players and is expected to trim it to 27 players, four more than has been the norm in past tournaments.

Despite getting limited play-

ing time at Tusker FC, Joshua was glad to have won the trust of Amrouche.

The 29-year-old has been struggling with a knee injury that saw him miss the better part of last season. He underwent surgery in June of this year.

"Every player has the ambition to play in big tournaments like the AFCON. I am craving it as well," he said.

The player who has four caps for the senior national team, all earned while at Tusker FC, however, understands that he has to work his socks off to make the final squad.

Joshua, who joined Tusker FC in August 2021 from Mbeya's Ken

Gold FC, made his Taifa Stars bow in March last year, coming on in the second half of the team's 3-1 friendly victory against the Central African Republic.

The performance he put in the game procured him a place on the starting team in Tanzania's next game against Sudan.

Taifa Stars will be making their third appearance in the 24-nation AFCON tournament with the last outing coming in 2019, when the competition was held in Egypt and were grouped alongside Kenya and Senegal.

In the Group Stage, Tanzania will face off against their neighbouring nations, Zambia's 'Chippolopo' and DR Congo's 'The

Leopards'.

They will also compete against the formidable Moroccan team, Atlas Lions, in Group F.

Should Joshua make it to Taifa Stars' final list, he will be the only export from the FKF Premier League in the continental showpiece set for Ivory Coast.

The 34th edition of the biggest sports event on African soil will take place from January 13 to February 11 2024 in Abidjan, Yamoussoukro, Bouake, San Pedro, and Korhogo.

The opening game will feature hosts Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau at Alassane Ouattara Olympic Stadium of Ebimpe, in Abidjan on January 13, 2024.



Tanzanian forward, Ibrahim Joshua.

Liverpool host Arsenal in battle for Premier League Christmas No.1

LONDON

LIVERPOOL and Arsenal will battle for the Christmas number one spot when they meet today, each with a golden chance to open up a significant lead over absent champions Manchester City.

If there is not a winner at Anfield, third-placed Aston Villa could be top at Christmas for the first time since 1999 should their phenomenal home form continue against bottom-of-the-table Sheffield United.

The festive Premier League programme also features Manchester United's trip to West Ham and in-form Everton's visit to fifth-placed Tottenham.

AFP Sport looks at three talking points ahead of the weekend action.

*Liverpool and Arsenal vie for top spot

Arsenal sit top of the Premier League table with 39 points from 17 matches, one ahead of Liverpool and five clear of Manchester City, who are on Club World Cup duty in Saudi Arabia.

The defending champions' run of one win in six games prior to heading to the Gulf has opened the door to a fascinating title race.

If the Gunners win at Anfield, Pep Guardiola's men, currently in fourth spot, would find themselves eight points adrift by the time they return to top-flight action at Everton on December 27.

Last year City put on the afterburners to chase down long-time leaders Arsenal, eventually over-

hauling them to win a third straight Premier League title.

But Mikel Arteta's men look better equipped to last the course this season.

Liverpool could open up a 10-point advantage over City as they are in action twice before their title rivals play again in the Premier League.

But after a disappointing 0-0 draw at home to Manchester United last weekend, Jurgen Klopp has called for an electric atmosphere to ensure Arsenal's wait for a win at Anfield since 2012 goes on.

"We need Anfield on their toes from the first second, without me having an argument with the opposition coach," Klopp said after a 5-1 thrashing of West Ham in the League Cup quarter-finals on Wednesday.

"If it is too much football in December, if you are not in the right shape, give your ticket to somebody else."

*Villa ready to pounce

Villa can move to the top of the table on Friday when Sheffield United visit Villa Park seemingly as lambs to the slaughter.

Unai Emery has had a stunning impact since taking the helm in October 2022.

The eye-catching statistics keep mounting for Villa, who are now up to 15 consecutive Premier League home victories and counting.

Only City, with 87, have tallied more points in the Premier League in 2023 than Emery's side's total of 81, including a club record 25 Premier League wins in a calendar year.

The omens are bleak for



Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp (left) and Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta are both aiming to top the Premier League charts at Christmas. Agencies

the visitors, who have just two Premier League wins all season and have not won in the league at Villa Park since 1966.

Chris Wilder returned to Sheffield United as manager earlier this month but he will have to work miracles

to save the club, who are rock bottom of the table and already six points from safety.

*Man Utd search for cutting edge

Which Manchester United team will show up at

West Ham?

Erik ten Hag's men toughed out a 0-0 draw at Anfield last week, ceding control as they focused on defensive resilience to eke out a point.

West Ham do not boast Liverpool's attacking threat

but they have players who can hurt United, including the in-form trio of Jarrod Bowen, Lucas Paqueta and Mohammed Kudus.

The visitors are likely to enjoy more possession than they had at Liverpool, where they had the ball for less than a third of the time.

But even if they do manage to exert more control, will they make anything of it?

United have scored just 18 times in the Premier League this season – only five teams have fewer goals to show for their efforts.

They have failed to score in three of their four Premier League games in December and are already six points off the top four, in danger of being cut adrift in the race for Champions League football.

Fixtures Today (1500 unless stated)

West Ham v Manchester United (1230), Fulham v Burnley, Luton v Newcastle, Nottingham Forest v Bournemouth, Tottenham v Everton, Liverpool v Arsenal (1730)

Tomorrow Wolves v Chelsea (1300)

AFP

Madrid, Barcelona want to revive Super League - but it's dead

By Henry Bushnell

THE last remaining proponents of a European Super League attempted to revive the idea Thursday after a landmark court ruling limited UEFA's and FIFA's ability to block a break-away league run by soccer's dominant clubs.

In a long-awaited judgment, the European Union's Court of Justice wrote that UEFA and FIFA, the European and global soccer governing bodies, were "abusing a dominant position" when they opposed and threatened to sanction the so-called Super League in 2021.

The league's architects, an opaque company called A22 backed by Real Madrid and FC Barcelona, jumped on the decision to unveil revamped plans, including a new meritocratic format for men's and women's competitions that would usurp the current UEFA Champions League.

But the Court of Justice clarified: Its ruling "does not mean that a competition such as the Super League project must necessarily be approved." And it does not mean the Super League will suddenly come back to life.

In fact, the full, 258-paragraph judgment is far more favorable to UEFA and FIFA than initial headlines suggested. It does not necessarily undercut their power or invalidate their self-appointed positions atop the sport.

And no legalese could invalidate the fundamental reason the Super League swiftly collapsed in 2021, two days after 12 top clubs tried to launch it. Nine of those 12 clubs withdrew amid backlash from fans, coaches, players, politicians and a broad coalition of soccer's established stakeholders. The establishment viewed the project as a greedy attempt by wealthy owners and commercially driven institutions to consolidate power. On Thursday, the establishment rose once again to shout down a potential Super League 2.0.

So no, explosive change is not imminent. Here is what we know about the Super League's future after Thursday's ruling, which cannot be appealed.

*What did the European Court of Justice rule?

A22 had accused UEFA of operating an illegal monopoly on European soccer – controlling tournaments (such as the Champions League), selling commercial rights to monetize them and enforcing rules that impede other entities from creating renegade tournaments (such as the Super League) that challenge the Champions League's supremacy.

The court ruled, essentially, that UEFA had indeed done this in 2021. "The FIFA and UEFA rules making any new interclub football project subject to their prior approval, such as the Super League, and prohibiting clubs and players from playing in those competitions, are unlawful," the court explained in a news release.

Its full reasoning and context, though, were more nuanced. The rules were unlawful because they weren't sufficiently "transparent, objective, non-discriminatory and proportionate." With some updates, though, the rules have a right to exist.

Paragraph 144 of the court's judgment confirmed, crucially, that UEFA and FIFA are allowed to maintain and enforce rules that "guarantee the homogeneity and coordination of [] competitions within an overall match calendar" and rules that "promote ... the holding of sporting competitions based on equal opportunities and merit."

So if the rules are amended to comply with EU law – a process that already began last year – UEFA can (and likely will) still control European soccer.

And UEFA seemingly can (and likely would) prevent the formation of a Super League, unless member clubs break from soccer's established structure, including national leagues, entirely – something they've explicitly said they won't do.

ments and partners alike," UEFA said in a statement.

And FIFA will continue to control global soccer. "With the greatest respect for the European Court of Justice," FIFA president Gianni Infantino said in a statement, "today's judgment does not change anything, really."

*How did the Super League founders respond?

Despite all those details, Real Madrid president Florentino Perez "welcome[d] the decision with great satisfaction."

A22 boldly proclaimed, "after nearly 70 years, UEFA's monopoly over European football has come to an end. Without fear of punishment, clubs can now propose and openly discuss new ideas for midweek European competitions. With the #RightToCompete, a new era begins."

Within a few hours, with pre-produced videos on a spruced-up website, they'd already proposed two such competitions.

*What is the new Super League proposal?

The "European Men's Super League" would be an expanded, amended version of the revived April 2021 Super League – with one key difference: Nobody would be guaranteed a permanent place in it.

Back in 2021, the 12 founders pitched a 20-team league. They hoped to woo three more traditional powers, and they indicated those 15 clubs would be entrenched, immune to relegation out of the Super League. Only five places would be open to others, via qualification through domestic leagues.

That semi-closed format reeked of unabashed self-interest. It drew widespread, scathing rebuke. So, two-and-a-half years later, the new proposal features promotion and relegation.

The reimagined format would feature 64 teams divided into three tiers – 16 in the top tier, 16 in the second and 32 in the third. And after each season ...

- In Tier 1: Two last-place teams fall down into Tier 2; the Tier 2 finalists replace them in Tier 1.
- In Tier 2: Two last-place



The European Super League's revival attempt, following a Thursday court ruling against UEFA and FIFA, faces challenges as the court's decision does not guarantee approval for the league. (REUTERS)

teams fall down into Tier 3; the Tier 3 finalists replace them in Tier 2.

• In Tier 3: Twenty of the 32 teams – the bottom five in each eight-team group – fall out of the Super League altogether; they're replaced by other clubs that, as with the current Champions League, qualify through performance in their domestic leagues.

The women's format would replicate the top two tiers of the men's competition. Both are explained, verbally and visually, here and here. Teams would be split into groups of eight, with the top four in each group advancing to a traditional knockout. Games would be played on weekday nights throughout the season, replacing the Champions League but allowing clubs to remain in their standard domestic leagues.

A22 also teased grandiose plans to create a free, direct-to-consumer streaming platform; to "strictly" enforce "Financial Sustainability rules"; to make more money than ever before; and then to share at least 400 million euros annually, or 8% of Super League revenue, with non-Super League and grassroots clubs.

A22 and its backers, though, did not detail how they'd achieve any of that. And they have one all-encompassing problem: They don't have 64 or even 32 clubs that want to participate. They have two.

*Which clubs are in the Super League?

Within 48 hours of their April 2021 announcement, nine of the 12 founders – Manchester United, Manchester City, Chelsea, Liverpool, Arsenal, Tottenham, Atletico Madrid, Inter Milan and AC Milan – pulled out of the project.

Real Madrid, Barca and Juventus remained faithful until Juve also withdrew its support this past summer. The two Spanish giants forged ahead and celebrated Thursday's ruling. Perez, the Real president, said it would mark an inflection point and "a great day for the history of football and for the history of sport."

But their former partners quickly distanced themselves from the Super League. "Our position has not changed," Manchester United said in a brief Thursday statement. Nor has Bayern Munich's – "such a competition would be an

attack on the importance of the national leagues and the structure of European football," CEO Jan Christian Dreessen said in a statement. "So let me make it very clear once again that the door for the Super League remains closed at FC Bayern."

Borussia Dortmund, PSG, Atletico Madrid, Inter Milan, Manchester City, Chelsea and a laundry list of other top clubs also opposed it. The English Premier League, as a united entity, said it "continues to reject any such concept." The European Clubs Association, an umbrella group representing more than 400 pro clubs, said Thursday's court ruling "in no way whatsoever supports or endorses any Super League project."

"In short, the world of football moved on from the Super League years ago, and progressive reforms will continue," the ECA said. UEFA president Alek-

sander Ceferin, speaking at a news conference as most of his members united in their opposition, took a shot at A22 and the Super League holdouts.

"It's close to Christmas; [they] saw a big, well-decorated box under the tree; they were super happy, and started to celebrate," Ceferin crowed. "But then when they opened the box, they realized there was not much inside."

*Is the Super League still dead?

For now, the Super League itself is very much dead. A22 is a corporate zombie. But the concept will likely never die because the market forces that fueled it still exist.

European soccer's power dynamics have evolved over the past decade. Wealth, and therefore talent, has migrated to England. The Premier League makes gobs of money; its clubs woo players with that money; the players create an entertaining product, which the Premier League sells to broadcasters and sponsors for lucrative sums, which filter down to the clubs, which can then woo even greater players.

The cycle, catalyzed by gigantic TV deals, has become irreversible. And continental Europe is struggling to keep pace. Per Transfermarkt data compiled by Yahoo Sports, the annual gulf in net spend between the Premier League and the other four "big five" leagues combined was around 200 million euros in 2011-12, the last season before the EPL secured its first true TV contract bo-

nanza. Five years later, the gulf had grown to 800 million. Last summer, it rose to 1.35 billion, and it rose further in January.

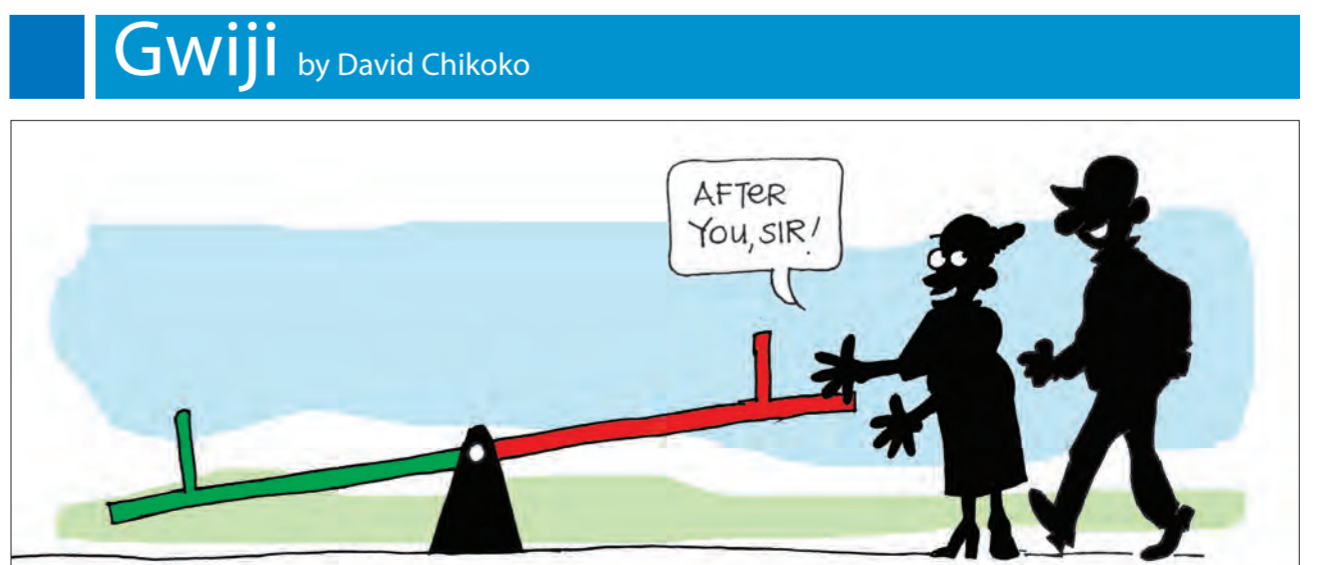
To keep up with England, continental superclubs such as Barcelona and Real Madrid push for greater shares of their national league's revenue – which, in turn, exacerbates domestic inequality. Spending within those leagues has become hugely inequitable. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2019, the English Premier League's top spender outspent its poorest club by a ratio of 10-to-1. In Italy's Serie A, that ratio was 16-to-1; in Germany's Bundesliga, 22-to-1; in Spain's La Liga, 25-to-1; and in France's Ligue 1, 36-to-1.

A shocking number of clubs in Italy, France, Spain and beyond – including Barcelona – are now hurting financially. And if they can't reverse the cycle, they'll probably have to break it.

Their first attempt, the 2021 Super League, was an overreach. It was poorly conceived, poorly communicated and politically miscalculated. Its mistakes and subsequent collapse stained the entire Super League concept, so much so that Thursday's proposal – which is far more sensible – was summarily dismissed as a nonstarter. It has failed.

But similar concepts still have merit. European soccer's current trajectory is unsustainable. The rich are getting richer, and the poor comparatively poorer. The same teams always win. Something has to change. Disruption is necessary.

Yahoosports



Liverpool host Arsenal in battle for Premier League Christmas No. 1 **PAGE 19**

Yanga gears up for Tabora United test in NBC Premier League tie



Yanga's head coach, Miguel Ángel Gamondi. PHOTO: COURTESY OF YANGA

"We'll fight to win, though I wish this game was at home. Our chairman worked hard to get the Ali Hassan Mwinyi Stadium approved, but it wasn't meant to be," he noted.

Kopunovic received a boost with the Tanzania Football Federation's confirmation that the Ali Hassan Mwinyi Stadium, was previously deemed unsuitable.

The stadium now meets Premier League regulations and can host Tabora United's home games but this was too late since their game against Yanga is scheduled to take place at Jamhuri Stadium in Dodoma.

Tabora United captain, Saidi Mbaty, was confident in his team's chances, disclosing: "We're here to compete against Yanga, a quality team led by a great coach. We'll put up a fight and believe we can get those three points."

With nine wins and only one loss, which came in a tie against Ifhefu SC, Tabora United is sitting 12th on the league log having collected 15 points after featuring in 10 games.

The Tabora club is two points adrift of Ifhefu SC and Kagera Sugar now sitting 13th and 14th respectively in the relegation/promotion playoff positions.

Yanga occupies second place in the Premier League, trailing the current league leader Azam FC by four points.

Victory over Tabora United is crucial to solidifying Yanga's aspirations for defending the Premier League's top honour.

By Correspondent Seth Mapoli

YOUNG Africans SC's head coach Miguel Angel Gamondi has emphasized the challenging nature of the upcoming NBC Premier League match against Tabora United slated for today in Dodoma.

Despite the difficulty, he expressed the team's goal of collecting three points in the clash.

Gamondi conveyed the message to the media before today's Mainland Tanzania's NBC Premier League clash between the two teams, slated to take place at Jamhuri Stadium, Dodoma, with kick-off scheduled for 1:00 pm.

Young Africans SC, alias Yanga, recently secured a comfortable 3-0 victory over Ghana's Medeama SC in the 2023/24 CAF Champions League Group D tie which took place in Dar es Salaam on Wednesday.

The Argentine coach disclosed: "We've prepared as much as possible. Playing every three days isn't easy, but we're ready for tomorrow. We need those three points."

Despite Yanga's 3-0 victory over Medeama SC in the CAF Champions League, Gamondi highlighted the need for adaptability.

"This is football. When you

coach Yanga, you have to be ready. Players get tired and injured. Sometimes you need to change things," the tactician revealed.

He noted: "Lomalisa Mutambala is still out, and we're working on solutions. You'll see who fills that position tomorrow - several players are capable."

Yanga goalkeeper, Metacha Mnata, echoed Gamondi's determination, saying: "We're grateful for a safe arrival and well-prepared for tomorrow."

The keeper disclosed: "Every player knows this game's importance. We'll give us all for those three points."

Tabora United's head

Simba SC hails Benchikha's impact on CAF Champions League campaign

By Correspondent Seth Mapoli

SIMBA SC Board of Directors Chairman, Salim Abdallah Try Again, has reaffirmed its unwavering support for the club's head coach Abdelhak Benchikha.

This comes after Benchikha's impressive start to his spell at the club, as it secured victory over Morocco's Wydad Casablanca in the 2023/24 CAF Champions League Group B tie which took place in Dar es Salaam on Tuesday.

The Algerian coach has, as a result, steered Simba SC towards a promising second position in Group B of the premier continental club showpiece.

In his first three CAF Champions League outings with Simba SC, Benchikha has already secured a crucial victory, a commendable draw, and a single defeat.

This impressive performance, with the recent 2-0 triumph over Wydad Casablanca serving as a highlight, has undeniably pleased the club's board which is committed to providing him with the resources necessary for further success.

"We've witnessed coach Benchikha's impact on Simba SC, he is a phenomenal coach, and in his brief tenure, we've seen positive changes, both in playing style and results," Abdallah stated.

The Board of Directors Chairman stated: "His tactical acumen and ability to motivate the players have already yielded dividends in the CAF Champions League, where a second-place finish in Group B is well within reach."

While league fans crave both positive results and exciting football, the CAF Champions League demands relentless pursuit of victories, regardless of playing style.

Benchikha understands this pressure, and the board is behind him every step of the way.

"We, as leaders, want to assure our fans that we'll support the coach unconditionally," Abdallah declared.

He revealed: "This includes meaningful transfer support to acquire players he needs. Simba SC deserves joy, and coach Benchikha is key to achieving that."

"We believe in his vision and are confident that he will continue to lead the team to greater heights, both domestically and on the continental stage," he stated.



Simba SC's newly appointed head coach, Algerian Abdelhak Benchikha. PHOTO: COURTESY OF SIMBA SC

Morogoro Girls win 2023 TCA U-19 Girls Series title

By Guardian Correspondent

MOROGORO U-19 girls cricket squad has clinched the 2023 Tanzania Cricket Association (TCA) U-19 Girls Bilateral Series silverware after notching a 10-run win over the Arusha U-19 girls team in the final which took place in Gairo, Morogoro last weekend.

The tie witnessed the Arusha U-19 girls squad electing to bowl once they had won the toss, limiting the Morogoro U-19 girls squad to 102 runs for the loss of four wickets in the allotted 20 overs.

Top-order performer, Adolphina Jeremia, had an impressive outing during the hosts' innings, notching 39 runs not out which included two fours.

The opener, Zulfa Hussein, had the Morogoro U-19 girls squad seeking to finish the innings with a better total after posting 22 runs not out.

There were also notable contributions by other top-order performers, Tuliana Essau and Doricia Herman, who scored 16 runs and 11 runs. Doricia cleared the boundary once in her spell which saw her face 16 balls.

Doricia had the Morogoro U-19



Cricketers making Morogoro U-19 girls squad and their officials pose for a picture after winning the 2023 Tanzania Cricket Association (TCA) U-19 Girls Bilateral Series which took place in Gairo, Morogoro last weekend. PHOTO: COURTESY OF TANZANIA CRICKET ASSOCIATION

girls' squad just 10 runs short of a triple-digit total when she exited the crease in the 18th over after she was bowled by Arusha U-19 girls squad's Farida Amiry.

The quartet sought to step up their showing following an early exit of the other opener, Maimuna Fikiri, who could only manage to notch five runs from 10 knocks.

Maimuna, also the squad's skipper, was caught by Arusha

girls U-19 squad's Englide Geofrey from Josephina Ulirk's delivery.

The batting squad's total was somehow boosted by eight extra runs conceded by the bowling side, which included one leg bye and seven wides.

Mary Justine was so far the only bowler with significant showing when the Arusha U-19 girls team fielded, having finished her stint with 2-22 in four

overs.

In response, needing 103 runs to come out victorious, Arusha U-19 cricketers batted zealously but eventually could not live up to expectations - ending with 92/2 in 20 overs.

Mary, batting at number three, led the Arusha U-19 cricketers' unsuccessful chase with her 33 runs not out, whereas opener, Rebecca Martin, scored 22 runs.

The other opener, Farida, chipped in with 15 runs, whilst clearing the boundary once, and propelling the batting side to 38 runs after nine overs.

Much as Josephina made her way back with the bat in hand, having chipped in with eight runs, her efforts could not help the Arusha U-19 girls' squad reach the target.

The final Player of the Match prize went to Morogoro U-19 girls squad's Adolphina for her impressive batting performance, which was pivotal to the team's acquisition of the convincing total.

Adolphina Jeremia (Morogoro) clinched the Player of the Tournament award, whereas the show-down's Best Batter award was won by Jennifer Gabriel (Tanga).

Mwamvita Mwesiga (Mwanza) was presented with the tournament's Best Bowler award and Mary Justine (Arusha) was voted as the show-down's Best Upcoming Player.

The national cricket governing body coordinated the competition, which served as a platform for up-and-coming female cricketers to put their skills to show and improve their performance.

Flexibles by David Chikoko

