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## Minister tells TANESCO to pull Katavi, Kigoma to national grid



Water deputy minister Maryprisca Mahundi walks towards the Lupata water project site in Rungwe district, Mbeya region, on Wednesday. The project was abandoned for five years and had spent 30m/-. Photo: Correspondent Nebart Msokwa

By Guardian Correspondent, Shinyanga

THE Tanzania Electricity Supply Co. Ltd (TANESCO) has been operating at a loss in Katavi and Kigoma regions due to the use of heavy fuel oil (HFO) in power generation.

Energy minister Dr Medard Kalemami said yesterday that in Kigoma Region, TANESCO's operating expenses in the two regions exceeds generated revenues amounting to 400,000/- per month compared to production costs which stand at 1bn/-.

In Katavi Region, the firm spends 800,000/- per month in power production using heavy fuel oil, but ends up collecting 400,000/- only.

"I am giving you until September to connect all electricity users to the national grid. Power generation using the heavy fuel oil should come to an end to bring down operational expenditures," the minister directed, at a meeting with TANESCO officials and employees in Shinyanga Region.

Minister Kalemami was accompanied by Deputy Minister Steven Byabato and Acting Energy Commissioner Edson Wingabo who is member of Parliament for

TURNTOPAGE 2

## Lands suspends two at ARIMO for 2.1bn/- land mapping frauds

By Guardian Correspondent, Morogoro

LANDS, Housing and Human Settlements Development deputy minister Dr Angeline Mabula has directed the management of Ardhi Institute Morogoro (ARIMO) to immediately suspend two instructors following embezzlement of 2.1bn/-.

She also ordered ARIMO Principal Huruma Lugala to suspend the head of administration, Michael Lori for suspected collaboration with the two instructors in embezzling funds collected during the land formalization exercise.

Dr Mabula gave the order on Wednesday in a meeting with officials of the lands department at a one-day inspection visit to verify project implementation progress

**...some unfaithful officers who have been using the institute's name to obtain money from the residents with promises of helping them secure title deeds**

under the National Housing Corporation (NHC).

The ministry had earlier considered involving private firms in the formalization exercise intended to simplify land surveying and ensure timely provision of title deeds, she said, regretting that some private firms and some public sector officials used the opportunity to defraud land owners' money without completing the work.

She accused the ARIMO Head of Administration of conspiring with the two instructors in stealing the monies, insisting that their suspension shall simplify the conduct of investigations.

Earlier, the minister was informed by

TURNTOPAGE 2



## Simanjiro handling over 1000 land fights yearly

By Correspondent Marc Nkwame, Simanjiro

THERE are at least 800 serious land conflicts either erupting or being reported across the 17 wards of the vast Simanjiro District in Manyara Region each year, taking it to the top of the country's land clashes hotspots.

Simanjiro District Commissioner Zephania

Chaula (pictured) says that in the past four years, more than 4000 land skirmishes were taken up and solved amicably, making out an average of 1000 cases per year.

That came to light at Emboreet Village in Emboreet Ward during an occasion to distribute demarcated and secured certificates for customary rights of occupancy for grazing areas for seven villages.

"These customary land certificates are now an ultimate solution to the perennial land occupancy conflicts haunting Simanjiro residents permanently," he stated.

The new documents issued to seven villages signal a new chapter in solving clashes for a new life in Simanjiro as the New Year starts, he further noted.

The ongoing presentation of customary

TURNTOPAGE 2

## Geita mine bosses must pay out old occupants in 30 days

By Guardian Reporter, Geita

MINERALS minister Doto Biteko (pictured) has directed the Geita Gold Mine (GGM) management to compensate more than 1,500 citizens residing around the mining site within 30 days, after the mining firm took over their agro-residential and petty mining zones.

The minister issued the directive in Geita at a public meeting with large and



small miners from various districts in the region, saying that the company needs to pay the citizens within the timeline or they should expect no cooperation from the government.

"We have talked to the leadership of GGM to pay the residents the compensation to all of those surrounding the mining site," he affirmed, asking the miners to be patriotic and stop smuggling

TURNTOPAGE 2



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## Minister tells TANESCO to pull Katavi, Kigoma to national grid

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Chato.

He also directed TANESCO to make sure that all parts of the country and in urban areas are connected to the main grid, emphasizing the need to ensure that new customers are connected with the prepayment metering (LUKU) to enhance revenue collections.

The deputy minister, Steven Byabato said that TANESCO regional managers must submit the list of customers using prepaid meters—LUKU by January 31st, expressing concern that there many power users compared to registered customers.

A national census to identify LUKU meter users will help control embezzlement of public funds and boost revenues, he reiterated, elaborating that ministerial data indicates that the country has recorded high levels of access to electricity at 84.6 percent in 2020.

The number of villages with access to electricity rose to 9,112 in April 2020 from 2,018 in 2015 while the number of customers connected to grid power reached over 2.7m, from 1.4m, an increase of 1.3m new connections.

Power generation increased to 1,601.84 megawatts in April 2020 from only 1,308MW in 2015.

The increase in power capacity is attributed to the completion of Kinyerezi I and II natural gas-powered stations with a combined capacity for 398.22MW.

Natural gas is the country's largest source of power mix accounting for 892.72MW of the national grid, with hydropower contributing 573.70MW, heavy oil and biomass sources contributing 88.80MW and 10.50MW respectively.

The Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project (JNHPP), set for completion mid next year, will pump a game changing 2,115MW into the national grid, officials noted.



Secretary to President John Magufuli Ngusa Samike submits forms on behalf of the president to the Ethics Secretariat Commissioner Judge Sivangilwa Sikalalilwa Mwangesi (R) at the headquarters in Dodoma yesterday. Photo: State House

## Lands suspends two at ARIMO for 2.1bn/- land mapping frauds

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the Institute's Principal that there were some dishonest instructors who have been sabotaging the institute's efforts towards improvement of services as well as the land formalization exercise.

The principal said that ARIMO has "some unfaithful officers who have been using the institute's name to obtain money from the residents with promises of helping them secure title deeds."

Following complaints from conned people the ARIMO leadership decided to conduct investigations when it discovered that the two instructors had taken people's monies without providing them with formal documents, he said.

Identifying the two instructors as Adolf Milungala and Khamis Kindemile, the principal said the former obtained 1.9bn/- and the latter pocketed 275m/- from payments for the land formalization exercise in 43 areas in the region.

She praised the institute's management for steps taken to suspend the suspects to pave the

way for investigations, noting that the ministry was initiating measures against private firms failing to complete the land formalization exercise.

The deputy minister also expressed dismay over poor revenue collections by local government authorities in the region as towards the end of December 2020 about 2.3bn/- or 18 percent had been collected out of the targeted 11bn/- for the 2020/2021 financial year.

Regional officials must enhance efforts in the collection of property tax, she said, noting that about 1.6bn/- remains in unpaid taxes, she specified, irritated that "no one is making efforts to ensure the monies are paid."

The deputy minister also inspected progress in the construction of offices of the Tanzania Forest Services Agency (TFS) in Mvomero District, tasked to the National Housing Corporation (NHC).

The project will be completed on time as the NHC has been ensuring timely completion of projects at the required standards, she affirmed.

## Most Kenyans want joblessness tackled in New Year - Infotrak

NAIROBI

A research conducted by polling firm Infotrak and whose results were released yesterday shows that a majority of Kenyans - about 61 per cent - believe that 2020 was an extremely difficult year, mainly because of the COVID-19 pandemic and mismanagement of the economy.

As the country ushers in the New Year, a majority of Kenyans want the government to address the rising cases of unemployment, the high cost of living, as well as lack of access to better healthcare.

A research conducted by polling firm Infotrak and whose results were released on Thursday shows that a majority of Kenyans - about

61 per cent - believe that 2020 was an extremely difficult year, mainly because of the Covid-19 pandemic and mismanagement of the economy.

Those surveyed said that corruption, the COVID-19 pandemic, lack of access to better education and the crisis in the healthcare sector, including the strike by healthcare workers, were some of the causes of the difficulties experienced in 2020. The survey was conducted between December 27 and 29 with a margin of error of a plus/minus 3.

The respondents also listed lack of access to basic amenities like water during the pandemic, lack of food, insecurity and crime, high

cost of doing business, the crisis in the education sector, among other things, as some of the issues that contributed to the hardships experienced in 2020.

"Unemployment, the high cost of living and access to healthcare are the issues that concern Kenyans most at the moment," said Walter Nyabundi, director of research at Infotrak.

"Unemployment ranked at 18 per cent, high cost of living at 13 per cent, access to healthcare at 10 per cent, corruption at 7 per cent, the COVID-19 pandemic at 6 per cent, quality of education at 5 per cent," he added.

A further analysis of the data, according to Nyabundi, revealed that a majority of the difficulties

experienced by most Kenyans were tied to loss of jobs, resulting from layoffs by companies during the pandemic, closure of businesses and the decline in the growth of the economy, which meant less money in the pockets of Kenyans.

The result of this is that most people either forfeited what they had previously considered as necessities but which they could no longer afford like holidays during the festive season and even family get-togethers and celebrations.

Of those surveyed, in all the eight regions across the country, celebrations like Christmas were no longer a priority, with most respondents worried about the

possibilities of either regaining their businesses and jobs or the potential of the economy bouncing back in the new year.

The report shows that 44 per cent of the surveyed respondents stated that financial instability was the biggest reason for the difficulties experienced in 2020, while another 45 per cent either lost their jobs or saw their businesses collapse.

Another 2 per cent said they had lost a friend or relative to COVID-19, with another 1 per cent contracting the virus. Another 1 per cent of the respondents admitted that they had been evicted from their homes while another 1 per cent reported to have had a family member

contracting the virus.

"On celebrating the festive period, 77 per cent have been unable to spend this festive period as they have in the past, 61 per cent have been unable to celebrate this festive period as they would have liked due to the financial constraints," said the report.

Looking forward to 2021, 61 per cent believe that the new year will be a better year than the previous one, with some 27 per cent of the respondents hopeful that the economy will improve while another 15 per cent are looking forward to receiving vaccinations against Covid-19.

AGENCIES

## Simanjiro handling over 1000 land fights yearly

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land titles to protect grazing areas is being executed by the Ujamaa Community Resource Team (UCRT), with support from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in association with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Edward Loure, the UCRT coordinator in Simanjiro, pointed out that the presentation of certificates involved "the tedious and challenging task of fresh surveying, demarcating and allocating land."

"In the past, people used to map boundaries while seated at desks in the comfort of their offices, far away from actual location and ground reality," he pointed out, noting that the new task of village land surveying involved local residents, while land officials came to the villages for the exercise.

So far the land and boundaries of 19 out of 23 villages in the district "have been successfully surveyed and demarcated by 100 percent," he said, noting that work continues on the four villages remaining.

Loure also happens to be the winner of the Goldman Environmental Prize, having helped to protect more than 200,000 acres of land traditionally used by the Maasai pastoralists and Hadza hunters and gatherers, benefiting indigenous people and wildlife conservation.

A total of 111, 919 hectares of grazing land shared between the seven villages of Sukuro, Terrat, Emboreet, Loborsoit A, Loborsiret, Kitiangare and Nadonjukina are officially gazetted with their 'secured certificates for customary rights of occupancy for grazing areas' presented to

respective village chairmen.

Leonard Melkiori Msafuli, the deputy commissioner for land responsible for Manyara Region, reminded the certificates' recipients that the right - and decision-to-sell-or-lease communal land can only be reached during village council meetings. It isn't something that can be decided by individual village chairmen, he emphasized.

"All people in the village must be involved when making such decisions; this is how we get to avoid conflicts and future misunderstandings," he declared.

On his part the Simanjiro district executive director, Yefred Myenzi pointed out that Simajiyo features 17 wards and measures 21,000 square kilometers, the second largest district after Tunduru (Ruvuma region). Even then, ensuring proper land usage in the district remains a vital need, he stated.

The wider livestock demarcation and customary titles drive involves more than six million hectares of land specifically for grazing by the year 2025, as the country gears up to formalize the traditional livestock sector to strengthen it as an economic pillar.

Official grazing areas have been mapped over two million hectares of land, and this coverage is set to



...the tedious and challenging task of fresh surveying, demarcating and allocating land



Zanzibar Second Vice President Hemed Suleiman Abdulla inspects 32 homes submerged as a result of flood waters at Chumbuni. Photo: SVPO

## Geita mine bosses must pay out old occupants in 30 days

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minerals to other countries.

On his part, Regional Commissioner Robert Gabriel said the payment of compensation to the residents was in motion, as the Regional Administrative Secretary (RAS) had written to the company to start paying them.

Geita MP Constantine Kanyasu lauded the government for showing concern on the issue, saying that the rights of the

residents were at stake as they have waited for a long time for compensation and they cannot develop their areas.

The matter has taken a long time and the decision by the government to give a 30 days ultimatum was long overdue, he stated.

Two weeks ago, the minister ordered the suspension of three officials at the Chunya Minerals Trading Center (CMTC) over suspicions of participation in gold

smuggling.

He also removed the CMTC supervisor Paulo Gagala, to pave way for investigations over the three officers' role in the recent smuggling of 15.4 kilograms of gold by traders.

The minister said it was under Gagala's watch at the trading center that the traders smuggled the gold, also revoking licenses of six gold traders in the district for suspicions of involvement in gold smuggling.

"It is better to have fewer minerals traders who are trustworthy than having a hoard of traders who are smuggling our minerals out of the country," he declared, specifying that Chunya district was leading in gold smuggling that was being facilitated by minerals officials.

Minerals department officials involved in gold smuggling will have their employment will be terminated, the minister added.





Uzini MP Khamis Hamza Chilo (R) hands over bricks for classrooms construction at Mchangani primary school yesterday. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

## Govt may remove unnecessary levies on livestock and fisheries products

By Guardian Correspondent, Busega

THE government plans to have single centre for collection of all levies charged on livestock and fisheries products and remove levies that have been affecting the growth of the sector.

Speaking to fishermen in Nyamikoma Ward in Busega District, Simiyu Region during his one-day visit, the Minister for Livestock and Fisheries Masimba Ndaki said the ministry will also review the levies to ensure they were friendly to investors.

He said removing the unnecessary levies will also help small herders and fishermen to benefit from the sector.

“We believe the existence of levies that are friendly for the growth of the livestock and fisheries sectors will woo many people to invest in the sectors because economic activities thereof will increase,” Ndaki said.

He said as for now the fish market was large as compared in the past, hence it would be better for the fishermen to embark on fish farming in ponds and dams to increase their incomes.

He said the policy of the government is to ensure that in the next five years more employment opportunities will be obtained via fish farming.

He instructed the Permanent Secretary (Fisheries) Dr Rashid Tamatamah to establish fish ponds for training purposes, including dispatching ministry experts to rural areas to train

people about fish farming.

For her part, the ministry's Deputy minister Pauline Gekul stressed that the government was not ready to continue closing its eyes for fishermen who destroy fish products.

She said it was now time for the community to work together with the government to identify people involved in illegal fishing so that they face the law because, she added, these live in your areas and were known to you.



**We believe the existence of levies that are friendly for the growth of the livestock and fisheries sectors will woo many people to invest in the sectors because economic activities thereof will increase**

## Rukwa Police warn criminal gangs during end of year festive period

By Guardian Correspondent, Sumbawanga

POLICE in Rukwa Region have warned some people engaging in criminal activities including armed robberies to stop the habit as they will not remain safe.

The warning was given mid this week by the Regional Police

Commander Justine Masejo when speaking on the Police's strategies against criminal gangs as the region was in festive mood to welcome the New Year - 2021.

He said there are some people in the region including visitors who have been using the period to engage in crimes, warning them this time around they will not remain safe.

RPC Masejo said when people

are houses of worship thanking God for having crossed into 2021, there were a few people who roam the streets during the night breaking into people's homes to steal.

He said the police are well mobilised to conduct street patrols to deal with these people who would be promptly arrested and face the laws.

He said has also cautioned

Rukwa Region residents to ensure some family members or a guard remains in their homes when other go to houses of worship.

He also wished Rukwa residents a Happy New Year 2021 and called on them to continue implementing the Police's slogan “Obey the laws without being forced to do so” so that they live peacefully in the region.

## Pemba embarks on new drive to stop malaria by 2023

By Guardian Correspondent, Pemba

AUTHORITIES in Pemba Island have embarked on a fresh campaign aimed at eradicating malaria in the Indian Ocean archipelago in the next three years.

Head of malaria control department in the Zanzibar Ministry of Health, Makame Muhammad Kombo revealed this here yesterday when opening one-day meeting on the implementation of spraying thousands of households with a non-toxic insecticide in efforts to control the breeding of mosquitoes that transmit malaria, Africa's top killer.

This also involves distribution of long-lasting, insecticide-treated bed nets. The meeting brought on board district health officials and those from the malaria control department.

“We've been working closely with district, villages and ward executive officers to ensure that we reach all areas with the spraying and treated bed nets provision service and this project has been succeeded very well in Chake Chake District, Pemba South Region as the disease cases have drastically gone down,” he said.

Yussuf Ali Juma, health officer at the malaria control department said that the prevalence rate in Pemba has dropped to 0.1 percent.

He said that the achievement came following strengthened national health systems, the level of investment in malaria control and a number of other strides taken by the government to fight the disease.

“The government's aim to totally eradicate malaria by

2023, we are finalising plans to commence the spraying exercise by early this year, we will spray households with a non-toxic insecticide so as to control the breeding of mosquitoes that transmit malaria,” he added.

According to him, the programme was initiated in 2014 and has so far reached thousands of households in the Isles.

“In 2006, there was a huge national campaign to distribute mosquito nets to pregnant mothers and children, this has also contributed immensely in the fight of the disease,” Yussuf added.

Abdallah Omar Mjawiri, a Uweleni village (shehia) leader claimed that shortage of special receipts that the residents have to show them during distribution of the nets has been one of the challenges thwarting efforts to reach more people with the service.

“Majority of households do not have the receipts to show them when they go to the distribution centres to receive the nets,” he said.

Responding, Hamdani Sultan Omar, a pharmacist from Mkoani District said that the shortage of the receipts was the impact of COVID-19 pandemic but the situation has already been resolved.

Chake Chake District administrative officer (DAS) Omar Juma Ali said that the meeting is important towards making plans well on how to implement the anti-malaria project.

He wanted community leads to ensure that they strengthen cleanliness programmes in their localities especially during this rainy season.



Deputy minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office ( Disabled) Umyy Nderiananga (2nd L) accompanied by disabled art group at Machinga Complex in Dar es Salaam Region. The group deals in leather shoes making. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

By Guardian Reporter, Zanzibar

ZANZIBAR Second Vice President Hemed Suleiman Abdulla has called upon government officials to respect public funds and control government's revenues.

He said he will be observing the activities at Malindi port to ensure revenue collected at the country's vital entry point was secure.

Abdulla gave the remarks after listening to complaints and challenges facing workers of the Zanzibar Ports Corporation (ZPC) who had sought audience with him during his impromptu visit at the port mid this week.

## Zanzibar Second VP urges ZPC workers to control public funds

He said in order for the port to perform well and increase revenue collections, top ZPC officials have the responsibility to ensure workers' rights including allowances are paid in time.

Abdulla said in order to evaluate whether ZPC's achievements are on increase, its top officials ought to submit, by January 30 2021, a report on various challenges that had been resolved.

He explained that what was

needed for the ZPC top officials and other staff was to continue working together to avoid unnecessary conflicts.

The Second Vice President directed ZPC director to work on the President's instructions in various ZPC departments to assess the challenges they were facing.

He said if it was found an official was failing in his or her performance according to laws, regulations and procedures

governing public servants. He has the right to take appropriate step on the official, if not he would have to bear the consequences himself.

In their complaints, ZPC workers said the delay in payment of arrears of allowances has been a discouragement to them to work hard.

They also asked to be given training to enable them perform better as well as being provided with health insurance.



## 'Projekt Inspire' set to promote science, technology, engineering, mathematics amongst the youth

By Getrude Mbago

THE country's youth led organisation- 'Projekt Inspire' has brought together young scientists from various secondary schools in the country in a special boot camp aimed to promote science, technology, engineering and mathematics amongst the youth and to enable them become change makers.

Themed "Girls and Boys in STEM for Sustainable Development: "Inclusive and equitable STEM education for lifelong learning", the five-day boot camp was held from December 28, 2020 to January 1, this year in Tanga.

Speaking during the official opening of the event early this week, Projekt Inspire director Dr Lwidiko Mhamilawa said that the organisation aim at impacting these skills to the students whereby they could see the application of STEM education in agricultural and fisheries sectors; ecological sciences such as renewable energies, water management and others thus create more employment and fight poverty.

He said that the boot camp aimed to give the young students opportunity to learn about various career paths and develop interest in the field, sparking their creativity and research skills and thus be able to solve people's challenges through technology.

"We host annual STEM youth boot camps for secondary students as a way to encourage and steer critical thinking, problem solving and innovation in the world of rapidly evolving science and technology, particularly for Tanzanian industrial economy," he said.

According to Mhamilawa, this is a sustainable project that aims at mainstreaming the project based learning and integrated learning to complement the formal secondary schools' science and mathematics curriculum. This will unleash the students' potential through involving students in integrating their classroom lessons into projects as a way of improving the quality of education, and

consequently quality of graduates from secondary schools

"The boot camp is based on introducing interactive projects to students in all levels of secondary schools allowing them to apply the theories in the practical world, hence inspire them to pursue STEM related careers. In addition to providing hands on experience to students, this project will serve as a comprehensive developmental programme designed to train and inspire the youth to be prepared for a competitive labor market in the STEM fields," Mhamilawa added. Issaya Ipyana, boot camp coordinator said that the camp brought together at least 70 young students from various secondary schools in the country that are pioneered in innovating new solutions to solve people's challenges through technology.

"The camp aims to trigger students' passion by actively engaging them in research, problem solving and creativity in the science and mathematics fields," Ipyana said.

He noted that the world today stands at the threshold of a new technological age. Great changes in how we live, how we work, how businesses trade will reshape economies and transform societies in the years ahead. This technological revolution presents huge opportunities for countries with the means to seize them. And one of the best ways to ensure that developing countries such as Tanzania are able to seize opportunities presented by technology is empowering its youth with the tech skills and capacity. He urged the government to increase its investment in youth and science to enable the country to have enough stock of experts and not depend much on experts from foreign nations.

Ipyana said that the boot camp has been supported by several donors and sponsors including the Human Development Innovation Fund (HDIF), Tanga city council, Social Action Trust Fund (SATF), Nabaki Afrika, Open society initiative of East Africa, Stanbic Bank and various individual contributors.



Dr Angelina Mabula deputy minister for Lands, Housing and Human Settlements development talks with lands officials in Morogoro on Wednesday. Photo: Munir Shemweta

## Deputy Water minister vows to fire all negligent RUWASA district managers

By Guardian Correspondent,

Rungwe

DEPUTY Water Minister, Maryprisca Mahundi has said her ministry will soon embark on a special operation to fire all negligent district managers in the Rural and Urban Water and Sanitation Authority (RUWASA) and appoint new people in their positions capable of supervising well the water sector.

Mahundi was speaking in Mbeya Region mid this week during her visit to inspect water projects, saying there have been many complaints from the people in regard to inadequate water supply while the RUWASA managers

were submitting fictitious reports on water projects.

She said a big percentage of the managers are those who were heads of water departments in the local councils before the establishment of RUWASA, hence they perform their duties habitually, the practice that was unacceptable.

Mahundi said the government provides a lot of funds for water projects but these officials have failed to appropriately supervise the projects thereby making people suffer.

He said there are young people under the charge of those district managers who have great ability hence the ministry will promote them and make the current

managers ordinary technicians.

While in Rungwe District, the Deputy Minister toured three water projects at Masoko group anticipated to serve 13 villages, Lukata village water project in Rungwe District, and Kandete water project in Busokelo District.

In these projects, Mahundi was satisfied by only Masoko group project while in others she discovered many deficiencies, including one that angered her and threatened to fire on the spot the District Ruwasa Manager.

Some Rungwe District officials appealed to national leaders not to believe reports read to them by water experts saying many of them were fictitious hence they should go directly to the projects

to inspect them.

Chairman of Busokelo District Council Anyosise Njobelo, said these water experts do not listen to people's complaints and instead they remain in their offices earning their salaries without sweating over them.

For his part, Rungwe District Commissioner Julius Chalya said the district is among districts with many water sources but the residents face acute shortage of water.

He said there are some water projects that started very long time ago, but so far they have not benefitted the people, saying they are faced with many problems, including wrong feasibility studies.



Goba -Tegeta 'A' residents look at a lorry stuck under a makeshift bridge in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala

## Minister warns against misuse of public funds

By Guardian Correspondent, Bahi

MINISTER of State, President's Office, Regional Administration and Local Government Selemani Jafo has warned some leaders of Bahi District Council in Dodoma Region to stop misusing public funds.

He warned local government councils against embezzlement of development funds, saying they must always strive to attain value for money in all projects they undertake.

According to him, there were some leaders, especially

village officers who have not been depositing the monies in the government's accounts or even documenting the actual collections.

He said that some of those responsible for collecting public funds have been tampering with the Point of Sale (POS) machines in order to read incorrect data.

"Bahi is doing great in various areas but some dishonest leaders have been stealing government funds through various ways, some district revenue collectors have not been issuing receipts when they receive the collections as well

as not depositing the monies in the government's accounts," he said. He urged the village leaders to ensure that they always observe ethics when executing their daily activities.

He wanted the district authorities including the executive director to make sure that revenues are well collected to support various development projects in the country.

"I am sure that come of the village leaders were no alone. I am sure that this is done in collaboration with district officials, so make sure that you

address this challenge," Jafo directed.

He also directed district councils in the country to ensure that they come up with digital plans that will replace paper use in their daily activities.

"Heads of departments and councilors should be the first to adopt digital devices such as "ipad" to implement various official activities. The use of the devices will help reduce costs incurred by the government and the burden of having to make photocopies and transport the materials," he said.

## Farmers in Chemba and Kondoa resort to climate change adaptation

By Polycarp Machira, Dodoma

FARMERS in the semi-arid districts of Chemba and Kondoa in Dodoma Region have resorted to climate adaptation means using locally sourced materials, innovations and courage.

Raphael Monga from Isini village in Chemba District said adapting to the negative impact of climate change is a harsh reality.

However, Raphael has proved to be resilient and is adapting in many ways, using locally sourced materials, "I strive to adapt to climate change by having good seeds, prepare my farm by making contour ridges along slopes to prevent soil erosion and to harvest precious rainwater," he said.

He said that he also grows drought-tolerant crops, including sorghum and pearl millet, and apply farmyard manure for his crops.

This has been possible through training on climate change project being implemented by Inades Formation Tanzania which is funded by the Bread For The World (BftW) a German-based organization which has assisted almost 1,370 households in Kondoa and Chemba districts by providing drought-tolerant farming technology.

At least 18 farmers have their seeds certified by the authority as suitable for planting in their areas, allowing them to sell to the neighbouring farmers.

Quality declared seed farmers (QDS) are certified by the Tanzania Official Seed Certification

Institute (TOSCI) and have begun producing their own drought-tolerant seeds and selling them to their communities.

"At first, it was difficult to get farmers on board as they were very resistant to change. After some time, the community began to trust us and are now benefitting from our technical support," said Inades Formation Tanzania's executive director, Herman Hishamu

He noted that in addition to using QDS and climate-smart agricultural, the project has also encouraged other alternative sources of income. Providing better chickens to community members is another component of the programme.

Kondoa District agriculture, irrigation and cooperatives officer, Jovenille Anthony noted that the new farming methods introduced by the organisation in Chemba is highly useful in both food and cash crop production.

He noted that there are 84 villages in the district but the project is implemented in only three villages, requesting that it should be rolled out in other villages to help increase agricultural productivity.

"What Inades on the other hand is assisting in capacity building among extension officers and the good results can be seen," he said.

Halima Rashid, one of the leaders of women groups that rear chicken said they hope the project will help change their lives when they start getting income from it.



# Study finds Africa's smallholders wary of fertiliser quality

By Guardian Reporter and Agencies

Michelson said.

SMALLHOLDER farmers in sub-Saharan Africa are, on average, using fertilisers at well-below recommended rates in their crop production. This was according to the results of a study conducted by researchers from the University of Illinois (UoI) in the US, largely because these farmers perceived their locally available fertiliser products to be of sub-standard quality.

One of the researchers, Anna Fairbairn of the UoI's College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES), found that many of the hundreds of fertiliser samples that she collected from sellers in eastern Tanzania's Morogoro area were visually unappealing.

These particular samples often looked dirty or contained clumps of fertiliser, sticks and small amounts of other impurities. This was largely due to inadequate fertiliser handling processes in the local value chain.

However, according to Prof Hope Michelson of the UoI's ACES college, laboratory analyses of these samples showed that "just a small percentage" were "marginally out of compliance with industry standards", and that there was no evidence of widespread fraudulent adulteration of the fertilisers being sold to smallholder farmers in Tanzania and elsewhere.

"We found evidence that [Africa's smallholder] farmers worry about the quality of the fertiliser in the marketplace, and [this] impacts their willingness to pay for it. This can affect the amount of fertiliser they're buying, and whether or not they purchase fertiliser at all. These farmers are operating in contexts with weak regulatory systems and [they] may be broadly suspicious."

The study found that largely due to this distrust, Tanzania's and Kenya's smallholder farmers were applying, on average, [just] 13kg of fertiliser per hectare compared to the average 165kg/ha to 175kg/ha applied by smallholder farmers in India and Brazil.

Tanzania's and Kenya's smallholder farmers were yielding an average of 1.2t/ha to 1.7t/ha of cereals compared to the average 4t/ha to 4.5t/ha of cereals being harvested by India's and Brazil's smallholders.

Michelson said that the distrust of their fertiliser quality by Africa's smallholder farmers could be exacerbated by their difficulties in being able to observe the direct correlation between applied fertiliser volumes on final crop yields.

"They could be applying fertilisers at the wrong time, or not applying enough. Weather is also a factor driving crop yields. They can't always tell if the fertiliser is doing anything because of the rainfall variability factor. Farmers could blame these things on the fertiliser not being good quality [whereas it actually is of good quality]," she said.

According to a statement by the AfricaFertilizer.org Initiative, lower than optimal fertiliser consumption by many of the continent's farmers was one of the key impediments to ending food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition.

"More investments, improved knowledge and information, better availability of fertilisers and balanced plant nutrition, enhanced agronomic advice and co-operation with farmers, are all needed, as well as a holistic and joint intervention of the public and private sectors, to lead a cost-effective African Green Revolution," the statement said.



Morogoro Regional Police Commander SACP Fortunatus Musilimu talks with drivers of commuter buses. Among them 10 were arrested for failing to observe traffic signs and regulations. They were expected to appear in court yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Frank Kaundula

# Govt in Mbeya receives 120 iron sheets assistance for classrooms construction

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbeya

THE government in Mbeya Region has received 120 corrugated iron sheets from Ndele Mwaselela, a development stakeholder, as assistance for the ongoing construction of classrooms at secondary schools to enable all the students selected to join Form I this year do so.

Receiving the iron sheets, Mbeya Regional Commissioner, Albert Chalamila said they will be distributed to two local councils - Mbeya City and Mbeya Rural District.

He said the aim of the government in the region was to ensure all classrooms needed are ready by January 10 this year to beat the deadline set by the Prime Minister.

Chalamila said the region needs a total of 100 classrooms for more than 5,000 students and that the ongoing classroom building was going fast in all the respective schools.

"I thank you a lot Mwaselela for your assistance as we want to proceed at a fast pace to complete the work much early," he said.

He instructed Mbeya District

Commissioner William Ntinika to distribute the iron sheets to the two local councils depending on their needs.

He also appealed to other development stakeholders to assist the government to complete classrooms construction.

For his part, Mwaselela said he was among the believers of better education environment in the country to attract students to study hard for the country's development.

Mwaselela who owns Dar es Salaam based Patrick Mission schools and Mbeya based

Paradise schools said he hails from Mbeya and is among people who received education in a hard way, hence he does not like others to receive their education in difficult environments.

"From here on we will proceed to a fund raising event for classrooms, hence we shall continue to work together in other development activities," he added.

Mbeya City Director Amede Ng'wanidako said he will ensure to supervise well the construction of the needed classrooms to enable students start their lessons early.



Zanzibar minister for Information, Youth, Culture and Sports Tabia Maulid Mwiya (R) receives 65 tracksuits and sports gear from Zanzibar NMB Bank manager Abdallah Duchi for sports rally and competition to be held today to commemorate the Zanzibar Revolutionary celebrations. Left is the ministry's Permanent Secretary Omar Hassan King. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

# AU awards three best education innovations

By Special Correspondent, Addis

Ababa

THE African Union (AU) has awarded three outstanding education innovations including a project used during the COVID-19.

During the Innovating Education in Africa Pitch Event 2020, the innovations were awarded grants of US\$60,000, 40,000, and 20,000 according to their ranks, said AU in a statement.

The grants would be used to undertake pilot projects in collaboration with AU member states, it said, indicating that one of the innovations aimed to help teachers and parents during the COVID-19.

The innovations include BAG (Building A Generation), which is a gamified platform that offers real-time access to experience-based learning for university students; Learnable, which is a teaching assistant that allows teachers to compose and distribute lessons via a dedicated mobile app and WhatsApp; and Chalkboard Education, a remote teaching and learning toolkit that can help teachers and parents during the COVID-19 crisis.

The high and persistent levels of unemployment together with

job vacancies that remain unfilled could be addressed through adopting innovative approaches in education and training, said the AU Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology, Sarah Anyang Agbor.

The AU Commissioner has called on all the stakeholders to build education, training and innovative ecosystems that have local relevance, global competitiveness, and mutual recognition to enable Africa to equip the African citizenry with the necessary knowledge and skills.

Innovating Education in Africa (IEA) is a flagship programme of the AU Commission and its partners, intended to identify and promote practical social and technological innovations aimed at enhancing access, quality, relevance, and inclusion in education in order to release the potential for empowerment, employability, and inventiveness.

**The grants would be used to undertake pilot projects in collaboration with AU member states**

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbeya

# Mbeya police arrest two over possession of stolen property

POLICE in Mbeya Region have detained two youth, residents of Mtakuja area in Mbalizi Town for being found with stolen property.

Speaking to reporters mid this week Mbeya Regional Police Commander Ulrich Matei named the two as Vesto Timothy (18)

Michael Mwile (18).

He said the two were arrested with one TV set which he did not reveal where they stole or its value, saying investigations were continuing after which they will be taken to court.

"We are continuing with our various operations hunting for all criminals in our region, and whoever intends to commit a crime should desist from doing so because he will be dealt with severely," said RPC Matei.

He said as the New Year approaches, people are not required to celebrate the day by breaching the peace including burning of tyres on the roads.

He said whoever would be arrested committing such crimes,

stern legal measures would be taken against him, and called on motorists to abide by road traffic rules.

RPC Matei said the police will beef up security in various areas of the region to ensure

residents celebrate New Year in peace.

He called on all residents to ensure some family members or a guard remains in their homes when others go out to celebrate the New Year.



## More than ten million people will suffer from malnourishment in 2021

By Guardian Reporter

THE United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has raised concerns over the health and well-being of 10.4 million children projected to suffer from acute malnutrition next year, the highest since 2013.

Meanwhile, the number of children suffering from severe acute malnutrition is expected to increase from about 292,000 children this year to over 313,000 children in 2021.

The increase in household food insecurity and acute malnutrition among children is attributed to ongoing conflict and insecurity, and limited access to essential nutrition, health care and water, sanitation and hygiene services. Flooding in some areas in 2020 has exacerbated the already high level of acute malnutrition among children. The children are from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), northeast Nigeria, the Central Sahel, South Sudan and Yemen, countries which have been experiencing dire humanitarian crises while also grappling with intensifying food insecurity, a deadly pandemic and a looming famine.

UNICEF Executive Director, Henrietta Fore said: "For countries reeling from the consequences of conflicts, disasters and climate change, COVID-19 has turned a nutrition crisis into an imminent catastrophe. Families already struggling to feed their children and themselves are now on the brink of famine. We can't let them be the forgotten victims of 2020."

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, an estimated 3.3 million children under five will suffer from acute malnutrition in 2021, including at least 1 million with

severe acute malnutrition. These alarming figures are due to ongoing insecurity, the socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and limited access to essential services for vulnerable children and families.

In northeast Nigeria, more than 800,000 children are expected to suffer from acute malnutrition in 2021, including nearly 300,000 with severe acute malnutrition who are at imminent risk of death.

In South Sudan, The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) update released earlier this month indicated a further deterioration of food security, with almost 7.3 million people - 60 per cent of the population - expected to be facing severe acute food insecurity in 2021.

The number of children suffering from acute malnutrition could rise by 21 per cent. This would bring the total number of malnourished children in the three countries to a staggering 2.9 million, including 890,000 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition.

UNICEF is urging humanitarian actors on the ground and the international community to urgently expand access to and support for nutrition, health and water and sanitation services for children and families.

Despite challenges in the context of COVID-19, this year UNICEF and partners have continued to deliver lifesaving assistance to the most vulnerable children and their families in the hardest to reach areas through adjustments on the existing programmes to maintain and increase access.

UNICEF has appealed for more than US\$1 billion to support its lifesaving nutrition programmes for children in countries affected by humanitarian crises over 2021.



Murukulazo Ward councillor in Ngara, Kagera Region Mukiza Byamungu airs challenges of health, water and infrastructure facing the residents at a public rally addressed by Ngara MP Ndasaba Ruhoro (not in the picture) on Wednesday. Photo: Correspondent Shaban Njia

By Special Correspondent

UNITED Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) warns that some 10.4 million children - all in countries on the African continent with the exception of Yemen - face severe food insecurity and malnutrition in the coming year.

The affected nations include Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), northeast Nigeria, the Central Sahel nations and South Sudan.

"For countries reeling from the consequences of conflicts, disasters and climate change, COVID-19 has turned a nutrition

## UNICEF concerned of increased food insecurity in African nations

crisis into an imminent catastrophe," said Henrietta Fore, the UNICEF executive director. "Families already struggling to feed their children and themselves are now on the brink of famine. We can't let them be the forgotten victims of 2020."

In DR Congo, a looming humanitarian disaster affects 3.3 million children under five who already experience an ongoing

security crisis amid the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In Nigeria, an estimated 300,000 of the 800,000 undernourished children face imminent risk of death, UNICEF said.

Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger are likely to see a 21 per cent increase in the number of children experiencing acute malnutrition, bringing the total in just those nations to 890,000 among the 2.9 million children

who are malnourished. Burkina Faso alone has seen a 167 per cent increase in food insecurity, even as the Sahel nations grapple with the rise in regional conflict, displacement and climate change impacts.

UNICEF says it has appealed for more than US\$1 billion to support nutrition programs for children in countries affected by humanitarian crises in the coming year.



Kilimanjaro International Airport officials led by acting director Christina Mwakatobe welcome tourists arriving from abroad to visit the country's tourist attractions. They arrived on Wednesday, this week. Photo: Correspondent Asraji Mvungi.

## Agro-ecology helping subsistence farmers to reap maximum yields

By Halligan Agade

ORGANIC agriculture has developed in response to the great changes in agricultural practices globally during the last century.

The genesis for an increasingly industrialized agricultural production was farm mechanization, synthetic production of ammonium nitrate as fertilizer, and the introduction of DDT as one of the first insecticides. The development of Genetic Modified Organisms further intensified production.

However, agriculture experts advocating for more natural ways of farming have emerged globally to halt the negative impacts of modern agriculture. These side effects have led to long-term pollution of soils, groundwater, rivers, and lakes, the elimination of beneficial insects and other animal species, loss of efficiency in pesticides, and pesticide residues in foods.

Experts in North-Eastern Kenya, county of Meru are conducting practical fieldwork by helping farmers to engage in agroecology. This is basically diversification of agriculture where farmers are encouraged to practice inter-cropping rather than mono-cropping.

Farmers are now planting a variety of crops that can be harvested at different periods on the same farm. For instance, arrow-roots, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, beans, vegetables like spinach, kales, and cabbage, sorghum, and fruit trees are inter-cropped.

Agro-ecology according to the experts is not only beneficial in terms of food security but also is a form of economic empowerment especially to small-scale farmers.

"In our case, we are promoting diversification of agriculture, this is where farmers are able to grow different crops within the same portion of land and keep different livestock within the same farm," says Morris Mwitii Director, Caritas Meru.

He says they embarked on this system of farming in the region in 2016 after a study appearing in the Journal AAS Open Research and conducted between 2003 and 2018.

A team from Meru Hospice, Mount Kenya University, Aroha Cancer Centre, and Meru University of Science and Technology concluded the region was a stomach cancer hot spot.

Some scholars believe there is a link between cancer to high usage of agro-chemicals.

"Our agriculture is unsafe, so many people consume crops that have high residual levels of chemicals and even meat and milk that is consumed may also be having high residual levels of chemicals," submits Mwitii.

Agro-ecology does not only engage crop husbandry but also teaches farmers about how to protect against soil erosion, harvest enough water for the crops, and how to use manure as a chemical-free pesticide.

Using green manures for fertilization instead of synthetic fertilizers is a classical organic method. Green manure crops are grown before the main crop.

They are usually slashed two to three weeks before sowing the main crop and ideally before or at the flowering stage when they have accumulated a maximum of nitrogen. They are worked into the topsoil to decay and to feed a subsequent crop with their nutrients.

Mwitii says: "We train community members on how they can use locally available material to produce pesticides. Some of those are 'Tithonia-wild sunflower', aloe vera, and chilly pepper, we mix with soap and it can act as a fertilizer and also eliminate some pests."

Organic agriculture seeks to consider the whole picture of the environment - not just one pest which must be killed. It tries to fit agricultural activities into existing natural cycles and the complex food chains.

## Increased testing needed as Africa sees rise in virus cases

DAKAR, Senegal

AS a result of holiday gatherings, African officials warn of a resurgence of COVID-19 on the continent and urge increased testing to combat it.

The level of testing across the continent is considerably less than what health experts say is needed to effectively control the spread of the disease.

Africa makes up about 3.3% of the global total of confirmed virus cases, but this is believed to be just a fraction of the actual cases on the continent of 1.3 billion people.

When the pandemic began only two of Africa's 54 countries had laboratories to test for the disease. Now virtually every one of the continent's countries can carry out the tests. Together Africa's

countries have conducted at least 25 million COVID-19 tests, with a recent increase of 3%, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Compared to the small amount of testing at the beginning of the pandemic, Africa CDC Director John Nkengasong has said the increased testing is "good progress and we continue to be hopeful of this."

The distribution of the tests, however, is very uneven. Just 10 countries - South Africa, Morocco, Ethiopia, Egypt, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, Rwanda and Cameroon - are carrying out more than 70% of the continent's testing. To make the testing more widespread, 2.7 million additional tests have been procured by member states, the Africa CDC

said some weeks ago.

Increased testing is needed to help Africa locate where cases are rising and where additional medical responses are needed. And, when they become available to Africa, where vaccines should go.

Africa's rural areas have even less testing than its cities, where most hospitals and clinics are located. More testing is needed in rural areas, said Nkengasong, especially as urban Africans travel to remote areas to unite with their families as the New Year approaches.

Rapid antigen tests would dramatically boost the ability to test in Africa's remote, rural areas, according to the Africa CDC and WHO.

The rapid tests look for antigens,

or proteins found on the surface of the virus. They are generally considered less accurate - though much faster - than PCR tests, which are higher-grade genetic tests. PCR tests require processing with specialty lab equipment and chemicals and it can take several days before patients get the results.

In contrast, the rapid antigen tests can provide results at the testing site in less than 30 minutes.

The World Health Organization and its partners announced in September that 120 million of the rapid tests would be made available to help Africa's poor and middle-income countries test at levels closer to those of richer countries, which are deemed necessary to effectively fight the spread of COVID-19.



# Covid-19 takes its toll on African economy

By Special Correspondent

AFRICA has so far been spared the worst of the coronavirus pandemic in terms of cases and deaths but its economy has not been so lucky, especially the poorer, smaller countries dependent on a single resource or sector.

The spread of the disease has also picked up speed in recent weeks, stoking concerns that worse is to come.

Some of the key features of the pandemic's economic impact on Africa include historic recession, whereby for 2020, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that the economy of sub-Saharan Africa will shrink 3.0 percent, "the worst outcome on record". However, it should then grow 3.1 percent next year – although this is a much slower pace than elsewhere in the world.

In terms of per capita income, it has fallen 5.3 percent and back to 2013 levels in the space of just a few months.

Abebe Aemro Selassie, the head of the IMF's African division, highlighted the fact that unlike in the 2008-09 global financial crisis, sub-Saharan countries were in a much worse budgetary position, with fewer resources available to face the crisis than their wealthier peers.

Different countries, different impact; African countries can be classified as three economic types – diversified, such as in West Africa, with Ivory Coast, Senegal and Ghana and in the east, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.

In these economies, activity has slowed significantly but they are still managing to grow, the IMF says.

On oil producers such as Algeria, Angola and Nigeria have suffered very badly from the plunge in crude prices, especially

in the early months of the crisis.

Since then, prices have firmed slowly to arrive back at around \$50 per barrel.

For the tourism-dependent countries such as Morocco, Tunisia and the Seychelles, the pandemic has brought travel to a virtual standstill, grounding airlines, which are struggling to survive.

"The crisis has confirmed the differences between diversified countries and the exporters of industrial raw materials but has also impacted North African countries which were in a growth rebound thanks to tourism since 2016," noted Clement Gillet, economist with Societe Generale.

Standing on its own, South Africa, the continent's second-biggest economy, has been hit the worst given that it was already in recession before the crisis hit.

Its economy is expected to shrink 8.0 percent this year.

On raising funds, again, the picture is mixed when it comes to how different countries manage debt and raise fresh funds.

On the one hand, there is Zambia, which is heavily dependent on mining and became the first country to default on its debt last month, while Ivory Coast only two weeks later easily raised funds on the market.

Since then, "the financial markets have found their appetite for risk again, and especially for African debt, but investors are going to be much more careful about the details" and quality of the issuers, said Gillet.

Another important source of funds for African countries is remittances from their foreign workers and inevitably this has also suffered in the pandemic.

According to the World Bank, such remittances are expected to fall 14 percent to about \$470 billion going into 2021.



Mwanza Regional Police Commander Murilo Jumanne talks with fishermen at Izinga at Karumo village in Sengerema District Photo: Correspondent Rose Jacob

## S. Africa moves to address congestions at border posts

PRETORIA

SOUTH Africa will deploy additional immigration and health officials and inspectors at the country's border posts to ease congestion starting on Jan. 2, said Home Affairs Minister Aaron Motsoaledi.

Motsoaledi made the remarks at a press briefing about immigration matters and border

law enforcement under the adjusted COVID-19 level-three lockdown.

He said that they expect a massive movement of people into the country and they want to ensure their smooth travel.

"Home Affairs will deploy an additional 160 officials at six busiest land ports of entry to process returning travelers until Jan.14," said Motsoaledi, adding

that they will be deployed at the border posts with Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Eswatini, Lesotho, and Botswana.

Motsoaledi said another 60 additional immigration law enforcement officers will be deployed to support the soldiers at identified high-risk areas along the borderline where people cross illegally into South Africa.

He said the health department will deploy additional port health officials to all ports of entry to ensure that only travelers with valid polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests are allowed into the country.

"South Africa will not allow any traveler into the country without a valid PCR test or the antigen tests for COVID-19," he said.



Mererani miners association secretary Recho Njau addresses mining artisans yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Woinde Shizza

## CPPCC members share poverty relief experiences with African MPs

By Zhang Yangfei

THE China-Africa Friendship Group of the country's top political advisory body held a video conference on Monday night with parliamentarians from eight African countries to discuss poverty reduction issues in China and Africa.

The friendship group, the first of its kind in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, was established in June last year. It is committed to implementing outcomes of the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, deepening exchange and cooperation between the CPPCC and institutions in African countries, expanding China-Africa dialogue and

consultation in multiple fields, promoting practical China-Africa cooperation, and consolidating China-Africa friendship.

The eight parliamentarians were from Benin, Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Guinea, Cameroon, Comoros, Mauritius and Senegal. They gathered online with several CPPCC members to share experiences on poverty reduction and sustainable development.

Guo Jun, deputy secretary-general of the CPPCC National Committee and deputy head of the friendship group, said this year marked the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the forum on cooperation and China-Africa cooperation had yielded fruitful results in that time.

Now, China and African countries are supporting each other to overcome the difficulties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, once again demonstrating the value of a community with a shared future.

He said that as China heads toward becoming a moderately prosperous society and sets course for building a modern socialist country, it will create more opportunities for other countries, including those in Africa, to share in its high-quality development achievements.

As a continent with a large number of developing countries, Africa is a main "battleground" for global poverty reduction, Guo said, adding that achieving prosperity is "the expectation of

all African people and the wish of all Chinese people".

The African parliamentarians praised China's efforts in combating poverty. They also asked CPPCC members questions to learn more about China's experiences.

Hassan Omar Mohamed, a member of the Finance Committee of the National Assembly of Djibouti, said friendship and cooperation between the two countries has been fruitful in many areas of politics, the economy and trade.

The Chinese government and enterprises have also given Djibouti special support in employment and poverty reduction, he said, which helped promote closer bilateral relations.

## Restrictions dampen New Year festivities in East Africa

By Special Correspondent, Nairobi

EAST Africans are bracing to bid adieu to 2020 and welcome 2021 amid restrictions and cautions by the government to observe social distancing norms and abide by curfew restrictions.

In Kenya, people have taken to social media to express their disappointment after the police directed people to celebrate the arrival of New Year from their home. In normal times, Nairobi's central business district used to be a hub of midnight celebrations with a display of dazzling fireworks and dancing on New Year's eve.

"It is only on the midnight of Dec. 31 that children would go running around dancing while getting hypnotized by the spectacular fireworks way past their bedtime. This year the streets are silent. It is a sad year indeed. I wish the government had at least allowed us to celebrate under scrutiny from security officers," Lydia Magera, a 33-year-old college student from the Kenyan capital Nairobi said.

In Kenya a predominantly Christian nation, people used to worship to welcome the New Year. Religious leaders have pleaded with the government to relax COVID-19 restrictions to allow the Christian community to usher in the New Year with prayers. So far, the government has chosen to ignore the pleas, citing the safety of Kenyans.

Religious leaders had argued they would pray for the country's future and to overcome the effects of COVID-19. Rev. Boniface Simani urged the government to provide security to worshippers during the night, instead of imposing restrictions.

"We should unite as a country in our places of worship, the president should remove that directive because it is a new year, it is only one night, just some few hours where worshippers

can congregate and pray for the country," he said.

Bishop Titus Kirui also described banning people from the houses of worship terrible.

"Our New Year prayers are powerful, everybody prays for the nation and the world, people have been banned from the streets, from houses of worship and from hosting celebrations, this is terrible, we need to pray for the world," he said.

Kenya's Inspector General of police Hilary Mutyambai said security has been deployed to ensure enforcement of curfew. He asked people to stay indoors.

Uganda has also banned religious gatherings and New Year celebrations.

"All public end of year festivities such as musical concerts, overnight prayers, fireworks display has been banned this time around due to the existence of COVID-19. As you keep safe to remember that curfew hours, traffic rules remain in place and will be enforced by the police," said Judith Nabakooba the country's information minister.

Speaking to Anadolu Agency, Juliet Namono, a Ugandan accountant said it is very unfortunate but hastily added that it may be necessary this time to enforce such regulations that may seem draconian.

"We have lost loved ones to this disease. I have lost a very close friend if it was my wish. They should have allowed the prayers. But I feel the laws are there to keep us safe especially with the new strain of COVID-19," she said.

Namono said since the daily infections are at a record high, she called people to stay at home and avoid large gatherings.

To prevent large gatherings, the Kampala Metropolitan Police carried out a crackdown on bars that were not following restrictions. At least, 329 people were arrested.



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## New Year visit by Chinese foreign minister an auspicious event for us

CHINESE foreign minister Wang Yi is expected to make a two day official visit to Tanzania on January 7 and 8, another high profile visit from the traditional ally of Tanzania in the Far East, probably the most remarkable since President Xi Jinping toured the country early in his presidency, in 2013. The foreign minister has been in the post for nearly the same period of time, making him a key member of the higher levels of that country's leadership for most of the past decade. He has met with numerous African leaders at there are periodic China-Africa summits and consultations at ministerial level; cohesive organization.

Top government officials issued an outline of issues that will preoccupy the government and the high level state visitor, citing trade and industrial growth as likely to occupy front space in discussions during the working visit of the Foreign Affairs minister. One item was that talks were held earlier between President Dr John Magufuli and President Xi Jinping. In that case the Chinese leader is sending the State Councilor for Foreign Affairs to detail on the issues discussed, and definitely these and similar matters concern a number of African countries he will also be visiting. It is a continuation of routine consultations with a definite range of issues that need to be worked upon intensely, as an aspect of a regional strategy.

As a matter of fact top Chinese leaders visiting Tanzania are like old friends, as few African countries have ever had deep underlying friendship with a non-colonial country as Tanzania with China. One other aspect in this friendship is an essential continuity of government and political leadership in the two countries, which makes conversations as familiar as in

a family or a clan, despite that clan members change from time to time. When one listens to someone like Foreign Minister Prof Palamagamba Kabudi, a veteran of the University of Dar es Salaam an intensely versed issues in history of these ties, is as effective a host as former Prime Minister Salim Ahmed Salim, a medaled friend of the Chinese people.

Relations between Tanzania and China were an upshot first of the trials that Tanzania faced after the union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar, and southern African issues, where China proved to be an indispensable friend. In turn, Tanzania spearheaded efforts of the African caucus at the United Nations General Assembly to work for entrance of the People's Republic of China, taking over from Taiwan, its erstwhile province sitting in the UN as the Republic of China. This was achieved in 1970 with Dr Salim's efforts in part, reinforcing friendships, as was Mwalimu Nyerere's avid interest in the Chinese experience on the building of socialism, twice visiting China. Nothing can take away these fond memories, for once.

Commenting on the visit, Chinese ambassador Wang Ke said the foreign minister will visit Tanzania and other African countries like Botswana, Senegal and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) at the start of the New Year. Observers noted that scaling up the post-Covid-19 recovery effort for Tanzania and arrangements for supply of the Sinovac anti-coronavirus vaccine now authorized for use after being tested in various foreign countries will be key issues during the minister's tour of African countries. Even with its limited exposure to the coronavirus pandemic so far, we have an interest in that matter as well.

## Seaweed can continue to support impoverished coastal communities

SEAWEED farming or kelp farming is the practice of cultivating and harvesting seaweed. In its simplest form, it consists of the management of naturally found batches. In its most advanced form, it consists of fully controlling the life cycle of the algae. Seaweed farming began in Japan as early as 1670 in Tokyo Bay.

Seaweed farming has frequently been developed as an alternative to improve economic conditions and to reduce fishing pressure and overexploited fisheries. Seaweeds have been harvested throughout the world as a food source as well as an export commodity.

Global production of farmed aquatic plants, overwhelmingly dominated by seaweeds, grew in output volume.

In spite of an increasingly developed and wealthy world, poverty persists in countries and communities all over the globe. These populations strive to acquire greater security, access to healthcare, improved equality and human rights protections.

Those living in poverty face many challenges to achieving these goals, including environmental challenges that threaten their safety, economic output and overall livelihood. Additionally, 70 per cent of the world's poor rely on natural resources and their surrounding environment for their livelihood, which can negatively impact the environment with unsustainable practices.

Therefore, poverty and the environment have a mutually

reinforcing relationship that can be supported through sustainable solutions to improve the state of both parties. A prime example of this is seaweed farming, a sustainable practice that continues to improve coastal communities. In the United Nations' latest Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) conference, the global eradication of poverty in all its forms was identified as the first goal that must be achieved by 2030.

In an effort to expand upon this environmental aspect, the UN Environment Programme and the UN Development Programme partnered in 2018 to create the Poverty-Environment Sustainable Action Goals. This framework strives to more deeply integrate environmental consideration and sustainability to countries' development plans and enhance knowledge sharing on sustainable solutions and practices. In addition to deepening environmental objectives within national and subnational policies to improve resource management, private and public investments will be utilised to more aggressively pursue the SDGs.

Additionally, UNICEF adds that extreme poverty could be reduced by decoupling economic growth from the reliance on natural resources. Due to developing countries' reliance on natural resources, vulnerable communities will be affected when these same resources come under intense strain and will soon no longer be able to support growing economies.

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## Market-driven agriculture, food system key in maximising return on investments and effort

By Riaz Lodhi

SUPPLY Chain is an important pillar of food system. It connects the food produced by farmers to the consumers. Supply chain costs comprise 40-80 per cent of commodity costs for the consumers. In some cases, these costs are even more than the commodity cost itself.

In many developing countries where food is produced by smallholder farmers, a high level of malnutrition is also observed even in food-producing areas. This malnutrition is a result of a lack of dietary diversity. In these areas, traditionally people produce only what they consume or vice versa. The solution to this problem is Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture which is a food-based approach to agricultural development that puts nutritionally rich foods, dietary diversity, and food fortification at the heart of overcoming malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. This approach stresses the multiple benefits derived from enjoying a variety of foods, recognizing the nutritional value of food for good nutrition, and the importance and social significance of the food and agricultural sector for supporting rural livelihoods. The overall objective of nutrition-sensitive agriculture is to make the global

food system better equipped to produce good nutritional outcomes (FAO).

To diversify their diet, rural populations need to transport the foods they produce to other regions and bring other types of food into their communities, which would lead to high logistics costs and losses. Doing so would be too costly for the rural populations, but if they shorten their supply chains by producing diverse food commodities—land, and climate permitting—it will not only avoid high transport costs but improve their nutrition and income.

If nutrition-sensitive or diversified food is produced in areas that are far away from the final consumers, it can also result in high logistics costs and the farmers may not benefit from the potential of their production capacity and investment. For instance, the cost of maize in the southern highlands of Tanzania where it is produced maybe \$110 per tonne, however, the countries neighboring southern Tanzania (Zambia, Malawi) are not the usual market. Instead, Tanzania's maize is usually purchased by Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda and it costs over \$ 100 per tonne to deliver it to northern Tanzania or to the neighboring countries. Likewise, Tanzania has the potential to produce

good quality white sorghum in the northern areas or Lake Zone, which has a high demand in South Sudan. However, the farmers do not produce sorghum in large quantities in these areas either because they don't consume this commodity, or they lack investment and information about the market. If this food is produced in the northern areas and Lake Zone, closer to the consumer market, its benefits will reach the producer and the consumer which will make a sustainable food system.

Therefore, while the production should be nutrition-sensitive, it is also important that farmers adopt a market-driven approach to maximize the return on their investment and effort. A healthy food system will be one where food produced by farmers reaches the consumer through an efficient and cost-effective supply chain. This approach will be necessary to build the farmers' confidence in the markets and will lead to sustainable food systems. Any reduction in supply chain costs would spare poor households extra resources for food, health, education, and help improve their quality of life, leading to economic development.

Many farmers sell their crops at very low prices as they lack market information and fear to lose their food because they

cannot adequately store it. A well-developed supply chain can support farmers with improved food storage such as community warehouses to help reduce post-harvest losses, common transport to markets, and access to technologies and market information to better understand demand and supply. Shortening of the supply chains will also reduce the burden on infrastructure (roads and warehousing) and environmental and stimulate regional trade.

WFP's Global Commodity Management Facility (GCMF) launched in 2011 is a good example of shortening the supply chain. Through this approach, WFP can purchase food locally and regionally when it is available at lower costs and is closer to the intended consumers. By doing so, WFP gained over 15 percent in cost-efficiency whereas delivery time was reduced by 60 percent. Tanzania is strategically located for WFP to have a GCMF hub which allows WFP to purchase large quantities of food including maize, sorghum and beans for its operations in Tanzania and neighboring countries. This not only benefits Tanzania's farmers but also makes food readily available for populations that rely on WFP food assistance.

Riaz Lodhi is the Head of Supply Chain, WFP Tanzania

## ICC's war crimes investigation in Nigeria

By Special Correspondent

THE International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, issued a statement on December 11, 2020, stating that after about a decade of preliminary investigations into the activities of the Nigerian Army and Boko Haram, there was enough evidence to prove that both forces have committed war crimes. As a result, the ICC, she said, would initiate an investigation to gather enough evidence which could be used to prosecute perpetrators of the crimes.

In her statement, the prosecutor said, "members of Boko Haram and its splinter groups have committed the following acts constituting crimes against humanity and war crimes: murder; rape, sexual slavery, including forced pregnancy and forced marriage; enslavement; torture; cruel treatment; outrages upon personal dignity; taking of hostages; intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population or against individual

civilians not taking direct part in hostilities; intentionally directing attacks against personnel, installations, material, units or vehicles involved in a humanitarian assistance; intentionally directing attacks against buildings dedicated to education and to places of worship and similar institutions; conscripting and enlisting children under the age of fifteen years into armed groups and using them to participate actively in hostilities; persecution on gender and religious grounds; and other inhumane acts."

On the part of the Nigerian Army, the ICC prosecutor's statement claimed that "While my Office recognises that the vast majority of criminality within the situation is attributable to non-state actors, we have also found a reasonable basis to believe that members of the Nigerian Security Forces ("NSF") have committed the following acts constituting crimes against humanity and war crimes: murder, rape, torture, and cruel treatment; enforced disappearance; forcible transfer

of population; outrages upon personal dignity; intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population as such and against individual civilians not taking direct part in hostilities; unlawful imprisonment; conscripting and enlisting children under the age of fifteen years into armed forces and using them to participate actively in hostilities; persecution on gender and political grounds; and other inhumane acts."

Most of the issues raised by the ICC prosecutor are not new to the Nigerian public, as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the media in Nigeria have raised concerns about them over the years. However, it is difficult to comprehend how the ICC could engage in an investigation into these atrocities at a time when the war against terrorism is still ongoing, and its end does not seem to be in sight. For instance, how would ICC investigate non-state actor Boko Haram and its fighters who are very fluid, evasive and mainly fugitives scattered all over the

Sahel region?

Secondly, to investigate the Nigerian Army at a time when forces are engaged in warfare may constitute an avoidable distraction. Boko Haram has continued to mutate from one form into another, and its strategies changing, making it difficult for the army to tame them. Under this atmosphere, the military needs to focus on this war instead of responding to an investigative panel. As Nigeria is a signatory to ICC charter, it may be legitimate to investigate its army and officials for war crimes. However, there are several other countries' armies in the West who have committed more grievous war crimes in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and the rest, but the ICC has not initiated an investigative process against them. If ICC insists on carrying out this investigation in Nigeria, it would lend credence to the observation that the ICC seems to have been set up in order to investigate African soldiers and leaders only, as they tend to look the other way when Western powers engage in war crimes.



# On giving birth during a pandemic in South Africa

By Sarah Hoek

When South Africa went into lockdown expectant mothers had to give birth in the middle of a pandemic. Some of them share their experiences of birth and motherhood in a masked and socially distanced world.

The Covid-19 pandemic changed the way society operates in many ways. For new and expectant mothers, however, it also changed the way they experienced pregnancy, birth and motherhood.

Natashja Hayes was around four months' pregnant when lockdown began and all her plans were put on hold.

"I really felt alone and had no idea how I was going to care for a newborn," Hayes says. "Prenatal classes [were] cancelled and the journey I thought I was going to have with my friends ended up being a journey mostly taken alone."

Even Hayes's 20-week scan was cancelled. For her next visit she had to go alone and leave all her belongings outside, including her phone, with which she wanted to take videos of the scan for her husband, she says.

"Before the pandemic all my appointments were relaxed and full of laughter - it was a wonderful time to share with my husband," Hayes says. "When I did get an appointment again I had to be behind a solid screen [and] just the doctor's hand came around to do the ultrasound. I was not allowed to speak and when [my doctor] did speak to me she left the room and spoke from the hallway. I was excited to see my baby but that was a very uncomfortable and awkward appointment."

The financial and health implications of Covid-19 also made pregnancy difficult, says Kimberley Raphael, who gave birth to her son in Kraaifontein, Cape Town, on 18 September.

"Not knowing what tomorrow holds is quite stressful. I was sick all the time; it was emotionally and mentally draining," she says. "Going to the clinic was nerve-wracking. You had to stand in long queues, you're worried about getting sick and then the clinic is closed because of an outbreak."

The pandemic also put some babies themselves even more at risk, says Tanya Pitman, who brought her triplets home on the first day of lockdown.

"Being prem, their lungs weren't fully developed when they were born. So, you're obviously terrified, because if they get Covid-19 it will be a really serious situation," she says. "I'm very anxious every day about someone in the family getting Covid-19. The [triplets] are older now, but they are still high-risk infants."

## Born in a pandemic

Deana Bonthuys gave birth on 26 March, in a hospital in Somerset West, the day South Africa went into lockdown. She recalls the strict protocols that were in place when she gave birth.

"I know the hospital was already in lockdown mode, so they allowed my birth partner to go in with me, but if she wanted to leave she wasn't allowed to come back again," she says.

After her baby Luna was born Bonthuys was not allowed any visitors and says her family had to convince the hospital staff to let them in to bring Bonthuys her belongings for her hospital stay.

"I was completely alone. Most of the time no one was allowed to be with me. The nurses were very helpful, but it was quite scary because it was my first baby," she remembers. "I had an epidural so I couldn't feel my legs, so I couldn't do anything for myself. I had to call people whenever I needed anything and there were no familiar faces."

When Raphael went into labour, she says, she laboured at home for 12 hours so that when she did go into the hospital she would be ready to have her child and would not be sent away. Then, she gave birth alone, without her partner or family allowed to be with her.

"It was scary. I couldn't walk from the screening tent into the hospital because my contractions were so close together," she says. "You were monitored but there wasn't much contact. When my son came I immediately had to move because they needed the bed."

Despite the pandemic adoptions were also still taking place and adoptive parents had to navigate this process during lockdown. Rachel\* remem-



bers how she and her partner found out they would be the parents to twins in May.

"It was overwhelming. Even when we were going to visit them before we bought them home we had to have permission to travel from the [adoption] agency," she says. "We were stopped in roadblocks almost every day. It's quite stressful, on top of just bringing babies home - that's very stressful in itself - to have the added layer of going out and feeling like you're doing something wrong, just by being on the road."

## A different kind of homecoming

After giving birth mothers had to take their babies back home during lockdown. Some mothers also found that lockdown took away their opportunities to gain wisdom from other mothers, and they had to face new motherhood alone.

"History would have us believe that maternal instinct is what motivates us to want to have children and then know exactly what to do once they arrive. However, anyone parenting a newborn learns on the job, through instruction, good role models and observing what works and doesn't with each child," says Sara Lindberg in an article for Healthline.

Yet, isolation was, for Courtney Kotze, also the most difficult part of her experience.

"Being a first-time mom was really hard. Not having your support system there, like not having your mom come to visit you and help you look after your child. I remember googling 'How do I put my child to sleep?' because they don't teach you that in your birthing classes. You kind of expect those small things to come from your mom or your sister, and [I] didn't have that," she remembers.

When Bonthuys took her daughter home she remembers having to face taking care of a newborn in isolation.

"It was horrible in the beginning. My midwife and doula were supposed to check in on me with a home visit the first three days after I gave birth,

and they weren't able to do that. That security that I created for myself was immediately taken away," she remembers.

With her two new babies, Rachel remembers the overwhelming experience of navigating motherhood, adoption and a pandemic.

"I don't think my husband and I quite knew what to expect," she says. It was horrible because not only did everyone want to meet the babies, but I also needed some extra support."

Kotze also feels she missed out on being able to introduce her son, who was born on 25 March, to her family and friends.

"Not being able to share this bundle of joy with your family, it goes without saying that it's such an exciting time that you just want to share, and you can't do that," she says.

## Bonding with your baby in lockdown

Despite the struggles that come with having a baby in a pandemic, some mothers say they are grateful for the time they had to bond with their children.

"Only close family got to meet [my baby] at first," says Angeline dos Santos, who gave birth to her daughter in July. "But I guess it might've been a blessing in disguise because [in] those first few weeks you really want [your] baby all to yourself."

Tanya Scott-Winlow had her son, WJ, who is her second child, on 9 April and says lockdown has allowed her children to connect.

"Because I had both kids at home, they bonded, and they are having such a ball. It worked out well," Scott-Winlow says.

Bonthuys says she also treasures the time she got to spend alone with her newborn during lockdown.

"I enjoyed the time when it was just me and [Luna], where I didn't have any other distractions. It did create a firm bond between me and her," she says. DM/ML

Funerals may become super-spreaders, and the dead may

(still) carry the Covid-19 virus

We reach the end of the year of the pandemic with our heads hung low. Our collective grief was written all over the face of the president on Monday night as he laid down tighter regulations to curb Covid-19. He did, however, say funerals could go ahead. I believe this is a mistake.

I make this claim not in the way that the Democratic Alliance has instrumentalised the virus and turned it into a cause (everything-the-government-says-or-does-is-necessarily-wrong).

The point I want to drive home is that funerals may turn into superspreaders. And, it should be said, there are religious rituals that may widen this spread. In some religions and cultures the dead are kissed and touched and "displayed" for families and friends to "see" them and recite prayers. We cannot let death spread further than it already has. While the dead are, well, dead and nothing else remains, life is more sacred than the economy - never mind what homo economicus may say.

Anyway, looking back over the past year the abiding images are the mass graves in Iran that were so vast they were visible from space, and images of mass burials on Hart Island in New York City. The site has a long history of mass burials, and burials of indigents or people whose bodies have not been identified or claimed. It has now become the burial place for masses of people who have died from Covid-19. These images were somehow evocative of the catacombs of Paris and Rome. It's just as well we are far from those burials in Iran, Brazil and New York City - for now.

This is a short clip of mass burials in Iran. This is Brazil.

All of this ruminating brings up the question of what happens to all the bodies, and resultant complications. The number of deaths in South Africa is low - 26,735 at the time of writing. While land is still relatively inexpensive here and there are very many below-

ground burial spaces on the outskirts of cities, there should be no problem with burials. It would be safest, of course, if the dead were simply cremated to minimise the spread of the disease from the dead to the living. Personally I would like to be buried, so the worms and maggots can eat my corpse (the way I have eaten plants and animals during my life) and complete the natural cycle.

## Don't touch me on my dead

However, the very idea of cremation will probably upset serious religious groups. Some prefer to wash the dead and put them on "display" at prayer services before taking them to their final destination. It is against Muslims' beliefs to cremate bodies. Most recently, in Sri Lanka, it was reported that 15 Muslims, including a 20-day-old baby, were cremated "against family wishes and funeral rites laid out in Islam".

These are, however, strange and exceptional times. There are places around the world (New York, Iran, Iraq, Brazil, Sri Lanka, etc) where people of all religions are buried in sites created for Covid-19 victims. For instance, Reuters reported that in Iraq, medical staff and volunteers bury between two and four bodies a day, and grapple with the differences between Muslim and Christian burial rites. In some ways cremation is the "easiest", in that you get rid of the infected body. I should say, at this point, and more below, that there is insufficient evidence that the dead carry the virus, but it is best to err on the side of caution.

When the British government initially (in March) proposed "mandatory cremations" the Jewish and Muslim communities were offended. The head of Britain's Jewish Board of Deputies, Marie van der Zyl, requested that the government respect religious traditions on burials.

"For those that do succumb to this pandemic, it is important that they know that they will be laid to rest in accordance with their wishes," she said. We do, however, live (and die) in unusual times...

Under pressure from Jewish and Muslim citizens, the government made an almost immediate about-turn, and amended the bill that called for mandatory guidelines. By December, cases in the UK rose to 2.3 million. It may be impossible to convince Muslim or Jewish families of the benefit of cremation, let alone anonymous burials wrapped in plastic.

By December, the UK government published new guidelines "to ensure that: bereaved people are treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect [and that] funerals can continue to take place while minimising the risk of infection", with the caveats that the guidelines remain under review and that no more than 30 people are allowed to attend a funeral, "whether indoors or outdoors".

Insufficient evidence of dead-to-living transmission

The pandemic has changed burial rituals across religions. In India, Hindus have, for centuries, burned corpses on funeral pyres along the Ganges River. Jews traditionally received condolences at home during a seven-day mourning period. Muslims gathered to wash the corpses of loved ones. But "global burial rituals are being dramatically changed".

This raises several questions. Is it really necessary to summarily, and without religious rituals, cremate or anonymously bury people who died of Covid-19? Well, if you err on the side of caution (and don't care for religious rituals) the answer is a simple yes. If, however, you want to allow, say, Christians, Muslims and Jews to take possession of the body, there may be the risk of infecting their families. This brings up another question: Can someone be infected by a corpse?

There is no straightforward answer, which makes it easier to err on the side of caution. What we do know is that traditional funeral practices around the world, and among most religions, have been disrupted. Muslim and Jewish practices and rituals have been especially upended. Governments around the world have focused more on reducing (living) person-to-person transmission, as well they should.

Corpse management in the age of Covid-19 remains a mystery - nobody seems to have a straight answer as to how long the virus remains active after the carrier has died. At this point there is very little scientific literature (I searched through countless medical journals available online over a few hours and found only a single related research article) on the post-mortem risks of Covid-19. The Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine published an article in May (Covid-19 in forensic medicine unit personnel: Observation from Thailand) that reported a likely infection directly or indirectly from a deceased person.

Either way, as we count the dead in South Africa - and given the flouting of regulations across the country - we should probably keep contact between the living and those who have died from Covid-19 to a minimum.

We have come a long way, in terms of science and technology, since the Spanish flu when mass mortality led to macabre scenes of bodies. In the US, Red Cross nurses in Baltimore "reported instances of visiting flu-ravaged homes to discover sick patients in bed beside dead bodies. In other cases corpses were covered in ice and shoved into bedroom corners where they festered for days. Inundated undertakers stacked caskets in funeral home hallways and even in their living quarters."

Closer to home, during the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, the virus remained highly contagious after a person's death. Traditionally, burial customs in parts of West Africa involve family members washing, touching, and kissing the bodies, thereby significantly increasing the risk of transmission. In 2015, the World Health Organisation estimated that "at least 20% of new Ebola infections occur during burials of deceased Ebola patients". It was reported in 2014 that the Ebola virus was transmitted to others during a burial in Guinea.

We are a long way from the mass burials on New York's Hart Island. We are longer away still from the ossuaries of Paris and Rome's catacombs. If we are to reduce infections, and have families play a role or show respect to their dead relatives, it may do no harm, in some instances, to ask families help dig graves - as a sign of respect and of involvement in putting relatives to rest - and turn to dry abutments before burials. This could minimise touching, washing and kissing bodies. Until there is firm evidence that the virus dies after it has killed a person, it may be better to avoid all contact with the deceased. Then again, all of this may be moot.

DM





# Increased testing needed as Africa sees rise in virus cases

DAKAR, Senegal

As a result of holiday gatherings, African officials warn of a resurgence of COVID-19 on the continent and urge increased testing to combat it.

The level of testing across the continent is considerably less than what health experts say is needed to effectively control the spread of the disease.

Africa makes up about 3.3% of the global total of confirmed virus cases, but this is believed to be just a fraction of the actual cases on the continent of 1.3 billion people.

When the pandemic began only two of Africa's 54 countries had laboratories to test for the disease. Now virtually every one of the continent's countries can carry out the tests. Together Africa's countries have conducted at least 25 million COVID-19 tests, with a recent increase of 3%, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Compared to the small amount of testing at the beginning of the pandemic, Africa CDC Director John Nkengasong has said the increased testing is "good progress and we continue to be hopeful of this."

The distribution of the tests, however, is very uneven. Just 10 countries – South Africa, Morocco, Ethiopia, Egypt, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, Rwanda and Cameroon – are carrying out more than 70% of the continent's testing. To make the testing more widespread, 2.7 million additional tests have been procured by member states, the Africa CDC said some weeks ago.

Increased testing is needed to help Africa locate where cases are rising and where additional medical responses are needed. And, when



they become available to Africa, where vaccines should go.

Africa's rural areas have even less testing than its cities, where most hospitals and clinics are located. More testing is needed in rural areas, said Nkengasong, especially as urban Africans travel to remote areas to unite with their families as the New Year approaches.

Rapid antigen tests would dramatically boost the ability to test in Africa's remote, rural areas, according to the Africa CDC and WHO.

The rapid tests look for antigens, or proteins found on the surface of the virus. They are generally considered less accurate – though much faster – than PCR tests, which are higher-grade genetic tests. PCR tests require processing with specialty lab equipment and chemicals and it can take several days before patients get the results.

In contrast, the rapid antigen tests can provide results at the

testing site in less than 30 minutes.

The World Health Organization and its partners announced in September that 120 million of the rapid tests would be made available to help Africa's poor and middle-income countries test at levels closer to those of richer countries, which are deemed necessary to effectively fight the spread of COVID-19.

"Once we begin to use the antigen test more broadly, it will become a game-changer aspect of the way we do testing for the across the continent, especially in the remote areas and especially during this holiday period," said Nkengasong.

Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, WHO's regional director for Africa, has said that many cases remain unrecorded in Africa, because of the lack of testing, which has focused on travelers, patients and direct contacts. Few African countries have been able to do adequate community testing to

find where the disease is concentrated and at what level.

Laboratory capacity for testing in African nations is lower than in most countries, according to WHO, calling testing volumes sub-optimal due to limited supplies of PCR test kits, which can be expensive.

"The global demand has put a strain on the supplies, with delays and some of the countries have inadequate infrastructure for setting up labs with molecular testing capacity for PCR diagnosis of COVID-19," according to the WHO.

Prof. Pontiano Kaleebu, who heads an agency in charge of testing for the coronavirus in Uganda, said in many African countries people cannot afford the tests.

Testing fees in Uganda range from \$65 to \$100, and the service is not available in many remote areas.

"Sometimes people keep saying, 'Where do I go? What do I

do?'" he said, referring to patients who need to take a COVID-19 test but lack the money or don't know of a nearby testing facility.

According to Ugandan government guidelines, hospitals are ordered to isolate patients who show COVID-19 symptoms on admission, but others on routine visits to health facilities aren't necessarily tested and must pay out of pocket if they wish to be tested.

Officials standing guard at hospital entrances conduct temperature checks and desultorily take notes, but some visitors can pass through undetected when the guards are tired or have gone for a lunch break.

Uganda, which has tested over 736,000 samples for COVID-19, has reported nearly 34,000 cases and 248 deaths as of Dec. 30.

"If we had all the resources, we would test more," Kaleebu said.

The World Health Organization recommends that countries should not be finding more than about 5% of all cases they test to be positive, suggesting that above that threshold they aren't testing widely enough.

In Africa, the positivity ranges from 2.3% to more than 40%, according to Our World in Data, which compiles data from Johns Hopkins University. In Europe, however, the range is similar, from 5% to more than 30% in some countries.

However, when looking at the tests carried out per 1,000 people, African countries are

on the low end ranging from 0 to the highest in Morocco at 119 tests per 1,000 people, according to the data.

In efforts to track the level of infections in communities, countries such as South Africa and Ghana are testing for the prevalence of COVID-19 in sewage water.

In South Africa, which has conducted more than 5.6 million tests, the Water Research Commission at wastewater treatment plants found COVID-19 fragments in sewage, mainly human feces, which corresponded with official numbers on the prevalence of the virus, especially in hotspot areas.

Water samples are drawn from water treatment facilities serving residential and commercial areas, but the research has been widened to include non-sewered areas in South Africa's poor and overcrowded informal settlements.

"In South Africa, the number of COVID-19 patients are most likely underestimated, mainly due to the limitations regarding testing and also due to the likely large number of asymptomatic individuals," said Jay Bhagwan, executive manager for water use and waste management of the Water Research Commission.

"If we can rapidly expand the wastewater surveillance program in South Africa, the sector will have a tool that provides valuable additional information about the spread of the virus as a complement to health surveillance."

AP

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates

It was a scene that just a few months ago would have been unthinkable. As Emiratis in flowing white robes and headdresses looked on, the Israeli bride and groom were hoisted on the shoulders of skullcap-wearing groomsmen and carried toward the dance floor, where dozens joined the throng swaying and singing in Hebrew.

Noemie Azerad and Simon David Benhamou didn't just throw a somewhat normal wedding bash in the middle of a pandemic that has shut down their country and ravaged the world. They were reveling in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, which—like most of the Arab world—had been off-limits to Israeli passport holders for decades.

The pair was among tens of thousands of Israelis who had flocked to the UAE in December after the two countries normalized ties in a breakthrough U.S.-brokered deal.

Israel's latest virus-induced lockdown, which began earlier this week, temporarily cooled the travel fever. But Israelis with dashed vacation plans, now stuck at home, hope that vaccination campaigns will help contain the outbreak and make Dubai trips possible again soon.

The lure of Dubai, the UAE's skyscraper-studded commercial hub with sandy beaches and marbled malls, has already proven powerful. Scores of Israeli tourists, seeking revelry and relief from monthslong virus restrictions and undeterred by their government's warnings about possible Iranian attacks in the region, have celebrated weddings, bar mitzvahs and the eight-day Jewish festival of Hanukkah with large gatherings banned back home.

"I expected to feel really uncomfortable here," said 25-year-old Azerad, the Israeli bride, from the hotel ballroom, bathed in the glow of Dubai's glittering skyline. But all of her preferred wedding destinations announced tough restrictions on gatherings to check the spread of the virus. Dubai caps parties at 200.

Unwilling to delay the wedding, the choice was obvious.

"I feel like it's Tel Aviv," Azerad said of Dubai. "I hear Hebrew eve-

## In new playground Dubai, Israelis find parties, Jewish rites



rywhere."

Her French father, Igal Azerad, said he always hides his skullcap in his pocket for fear of assault on the streets of Paris. But in Dubai the sight of his kippah prompts "Emiratis to come up and tell me 'Shalom,'" he said.

The dizzying pace of normalization has stunned even the skeptics. Despite the countries' long-secret ties, the UAE had considered Israel a political pariah over the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The modest expat Jewish community in the federation of seven sheikhdoms kept a low profile and prayed in an unmarked villa.

But the arrival of 70,000 Israeli tourists, according to travel agents' estimates, on 15 non-stop daily flights in December changed everything. A 12-foot

(3.5-meter) Hanukkah candelabra appeared under the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest tower, where Jews gathered to light the candles and take selfies as festive Hebrew songs blared across the massive fountain downtown.

The Jewish community's furtive Friday night Shabbat meal has transformed into celebrations at two cavernous banquet halls with spillover seating for Israeli visitors. "Made in Israel" signs have popped up in Dubai's chain grocery and liquor stores, which now sell wine from the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights. Wine, honey and tahini from Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank will hit the shelves in the coming weeks and be labeled products of Israel, according to a Dubai-based commodities company.

On social media, a trip to

the UAE has become a status symbol for Israelis who display photos of themselves in Dubai. A dozen hotels across the city say they've booked thousands of Israeli travelers and hosted a range of Israeli business conferences, holiday parties and days-long weddings. Israeli singers have planned concerts for spring. Kosher catering companies from the United Kingdom and elsewhere have set up shop in the UAE. Plans are underway to break ground on the country's first Jewish cemetery and ritual bath known as a mikvah, according to Rabbi Mendel Duchman, who helps run the country's Jewish Community Center.

"It was unbelievable, it was a tsunami," said Mark Feldman, head of Jerusalem-based Ziontours, noting the contrast to Israel's "cold peace" with Egypt

and Jordan. "Dubai became an oasis for Israelis in the middle of the pandemic."

For weeks in December, the only other countries where Israelis could land without a 14-day home quarantine upon return were Rwanda and the Seychelles. Dubai has remained open for business and tourism, with few restrictions beyond social-distancing indoors and masks outside. Guests at weddings and other gatherings often do not wear masks.

Even as Israelis gush about the warm embrace of their hosts, very little has been heard about the UAE's 180-degree shift from its 1 million citizens, who are granted free housing, education and health care and tend to seclude themselves from their country's vast expatriate population. The

sheikhdom's hereditary rulers suppress dissent. Even dramatic political decisions are met with acquiescence.

Ahmed al-Mansoori, an Emirati museum director who has welcomed dozens of Israeli visitors to his collection of ancient maps and manuscripts, including a fourth-century Torah scroll, acknowledged "some cultural misunderstandings among populations that haven't really dealt with each other before."

"Each Emirati has their own psychology about this," he said when asked about the policy reversal that Palestinians view as a betrayal of their quest for a state on lands occupied by Israel.

But he noted that Dubai, a city powered by millions of workers from Africa, Asia and the Middle East, easily absorbs waves of expats, including from countries locked in bitter struggles with each other.

Despite initial worries about Iranian threats and diplomatic fallout from misbehaving tourists, travel agents say there have been only minor hiccups. A few Israeli tourists got stuck in sand dunes while racing on quad bikes, prompting an elaborate rescue mission by a government helicopter, said Yaniv Stainberg, owner of Privilege Tourism. Some were arrested for snapping photos at a mosque, he added. Others were scolded for kissing in public, an offense punishable under the UAE's Islamic legal system with prison time.

But as the virus surged in Israel and photos of raucous unmasked parties in Dubai splashed across social media, Israel's health and foreign ministries were reportedly sparring over whether to classify the UAE as a high-infection zone, which would require quarantine upon arrival in Israel and perhaps mar the countries' new courtship.

Within days, the point was moot. Israel entered its third lockdown on Sunday. By then, the newlyweds, Azerad and Benhamou, had returned home.

"COVID has really hindered us, it's unfortunate for all the new friends in the region who we want to meet," said Eliav Benjamin, an Israeli Foreign Ministry official, referring to Israel's other recent normalization agreements with Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco. "Vaccines, however, will be a game-changer."



# Chinese expert helps Djibouti develop marine fishery industry

By Correspondent Jenifer Gilla

**F**IKA Mwakabungu is the director of curriculum training at the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) who managed to maintain her work performance during the outbreak of COVID-19 in the country.

By Li Kaizhi

THE market of Tadjourah in Djibouti was bustling with customers busy buying seafood in a morning in March 2018. However, the crowd also had some unfamiliar faces. Yang Guoquan, a Chinese fishery expert who had just arrived in the East African country, was conducting a research there with his colleagues, accompanied by Mohamed Ahmed, a technician with the Ministry of Agriculture, Water, Fisheries, Animal and Maritime Resources of Djibouti.

They saw a blue grouper weighing about 30 kg at a stall. "Make, is it a male or a female?" Yang asked. Make fiddled with the fish for a while but couldn't figure out. The vendor didn't know either.

Yang picked up a small wooden stick, pointing to the excretory holes in the fish's abdomen. "Ones

with three holes are female and with two holes are male," Yang said. "This fish is six years old by the way." After hearing this, the crowd spontaneously applauded him.

"At home, people wouldn't think much of it, but here, such knowledge is little known," Yang told ChinAfrica. According to Yang, Djibouti's marine resources have great potential for development.

## Fate and focus

Djibouti is located in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, the gateway to the Suez Canal. Its annual average temperature is 30 degrees Celsius.

Yang, 55, hails from Hainan Province in south China that has a coastline of nearly 2,000 km and abundant marine resources. He has been engaged in marine fishery for more than 30 years. Before coming to Djibouti, he worked at a company mainly focusing on artificial propagation and breeding of marine fishes.

On March 15, 2018, he set foot in Djibouti as part of an expert team dispatched by the Chinese Government to aid the local agricultural development. "To be honest, my family was a little worried when I

signed up for this program because of the unfamiliar environment and language. I am glad they respect my decision," Yang said.

Djibouti's agriculture accounts for about only 3 percent of its GDP, and its fresh water resources are extremely scarce. The average annual marine production is less than 2,500 tons due to low productivity and efficiency.

"Djibouti's marine fishery industry is hindered by capital shortage and outdated technologies," Yang said. "Limited by the lack of funds, it has only three fishing terminals with few and relatively simple facilities."

In order to effectively utilize the local marine resource endowment, Yang and his colleagues conducted a preliminary survey and formulated a long-term development plan.

They completed a report on the fishery resources along the Djibouti coastline and proposed a three-dimensional aquacultural development model combining high-level tidal ponds and cages. A total of 10 fish, shrimp and shellfish species suitable for local farming were recommended. The experts also gave suggestions for the planning of the

whole industry chain including fish species, breeding, feed, processing and logistics.

In addition, Yang has helped fishery authorities of Djibouti establish contact with some Chinese enterprises to seek their investment and technological cooperation.

## Training and pilot

"To give full play to Djibouti's advantages, it's necessary to start from the basic work including appropriate planning and bidding for international fishery development projects," Yang said.

As Djibouti's colleges and universities do not have marine fishery-related majors, its well-trained professionals in this field are inadequate.

Yang organized training sessions, focusing on the basic knowledge. He also visited three fisheries associations and gave lectures on the development of the industry in the world. More than 250 people participated in his training.

"After a training session, Mahmoud Ali, President of the Arta Fisheries Association, told me by phone that his fishermen always couldn't sell their catches before

they got rotten," Yang said. This phone call gave him an inspiration to help local people create a sustainable development model of fish farming.

The next day, Yang drove more than 60 km to check the conditions of Arta's equipment. "I suggested them to set up a cage at the depth of 5 meters at the seaside where they live, and later we donated the materials needed to them," Yang said. Not long after, Ali called to thank the Chinese team for their solution, saying it helped increase the monthly income of the fishermen by \$56.5.

In Djibouti, China also donated a 2,040-square-meter high-level maricultural demonstration site. "Production equipment and raw materials such as oxygenators, power units, diesel pumps, automatic bait throwers and feed were all donated by the Center of International Cooperation Service of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of China," Yang said.

The site is a key agricultural cooperation project between China and Djibouti. During its construction, Mohamed Ahmed Awaleh, Minister of Agriculture, Water, Fisheries, Animal and

Maritime Resources of Djibouti, and Ahmed Darar Djibril, Director of the Fisheries Department of the ministry, made several visits and gave suggestions. They recognized the contributions of the Chinese expert team.

Before the completion of the site, in order to provide a better training platform, the Chinese experts assembled an indoor recirculating aquaculture system.

They bought plastic buckets, PVC pipes and other materials for water storage, and collected cobblestones from rivers outside the city to make water purifiers. The whole process took only 10 days to complete. Even with the outdoor temperature reaching 38 degrees Celsius, it can still operate normally.

Yang returned to Djibouti in October 2020 after a vacation in China. "Although I miss my family very much, I am very pleased to do my best to help African friends increase their fishing ability," he said, adding that he is proud of being able to contribute to the lofty mission of promoting China-Africa agricultural cooperation and building an even closer China-Africa community with a shared future in the new era.

## Alarm as exploratory drilling for oil begins in northern Namibia

By Jim Tan

ON December 21, Reconnaissance Energy Africa (Recon Africa) announced that it had begun exploratory drilling for oil and gas in the Namibian portion of the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA). The move has alarmed environmental campaigners and community groups who are concerned about the impact this could have on the region's watercourses, people and wildlife.

Recon Africa is the holder of a licence to explore a 2.5 million hectare area (6.3-million-acres) of northeastern Namibia, granted to a predecessor company in January 2015. The majority of the area covered by Petroleum Exploration Licence (PEL) 73 sits in the KAZA, a conservation initiative covering 520,000 square kilometres (201,000 square miles) of Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The company also has a licence to prospect for oil in another section of KAZA, 1 million hectare area (2.5 million acres) of northwestern Botswana, where it hopes to begin drilling in 2021.

The KAZA conservation area is home to the largest remaining population of African elephants and is one of the last remain-

ing strongholds of the African wild dog (*Lycya pictus*). Recon Africa's exploration areas in both Botswana and Namibia fall largely within the Okavango River Basin which flows into the richly-biodiverse Okavango Delta – a UNESCO World Heritage site. Conservationists are particularly concerned by the potential impact drilling for oil and gas here could have on the interconnected watercourses of the river basin.

"There is a serious lack of knowledge on groundwater resources in the target oil and gas extraction area," said Surina Esterhuysen, a geohydrologist at the University of the Free State, South Africa. "In Botswana, the Okavango river basin is still relatively pristine, but the planned exploration and extraction could have serious impacts on the [Okavango] delta."

Recon Africa is drilling into a 9,000-meter-deep sedimentary basin known to geologists as the Kavango Basin to establish whether there is actually oil beneath the KAZA, and if these resources can be economically exploited. Daniel Jarvie, a geochemist consulting for Recon Africa, estimates that the basin holds a similar potential quantity of extractable oil and gas as the



Exploration for oil in northern Namibia and Botswana could threaten parts of the KAZA transfrontier conservation area, home to the largest remaining population of African elephants and one of the last remaining strongholds of the African wild dog.

Eagle Ford Basin in Texas, USA. Since production there began in 2008, over 20,000 oil and gas wells have been drilled at Eagle Ford.

"The possible impact that oil and gas extraction would have on the water resources in Namibia and Botswana is the biggest concern," says Esterhuysen, whose research focuses on the impact of oil and gas extraction on groundwater resources. The two main areas of concern are the use of water, particularly in areas such as northern Namibia, where water is a scarce resource, and possible contamination of water sources through oil and gas extraction.

The risks posed by oil and gas extraction are greater if unconventional hydraulic fracturing techniques, commonly known as fracking, are used. Regular references to "unconventional plays" in

Recon Africa's marketing material and the hiring of experienced fracking engineers have led to concerns that this may be the company's intention.

Both Recon Africa spokesperson Claire Preece and the Namibian government have denied that there are any plans for fracking to take place. So far the Namibian government has only approved the drilling to two test wells approximately 55km south of the town of Rundu. Any further activity would require additional environmental impact assessments and approval from the Namibian government, which has a 10% share in the oil exploration venture through the state oil company, NAMCOR. Whilst they await the outcome of the current operations, communities in the region are growing increasingly concerned.

"The local community

are in darkness, they don't have clues on what is going on," said Max Muyemburuko, chairperson of the Muduva Nyangana Conservancy that lies in PEL 73. "They want their voices to be heard."

Muyemburuko says they have not been contacted by Recon Africa or the Namibian government about potential plans for oil and gas production in the region. Residents of the Muduva Nyangana Conservancy rely on tourism income and natural resources from the land. Muyemburuko fears these could be jeopardised by pollution from oil and gas production.

"Kavango is the only land that we have," he said. "We will keep it for the generation to come."

The ministry of mines has said that proposed oil exploration activities will not harm the Okavango ecosystem in any way and

highlight the potential economic benefits of a major oil discovery. The ministry also says that no oil and gas exploration will be allowed in national parks, but this does not include the KAZA conservation area which does not enjoy the same level of environmental protection as parks.

Recon Africa's carefully crafted responses to challenges over environmental questions strike a sharp contrast to the company's bold claims of an "unprecedented opportunity" in its marketing materials. If the Kavango Basin proves to have the lucrative potential that Recon Africa's shareholders are hoping for, the Namibian government will face difficult questions over how to balance the allure of oil dollars against environmental protection for one of the world's most important ecosystems.

## WHO experts caution COVID-19 crisis is 'not necessarily the big one'

By Special Correspondent

WORLD Health Organisation experts have warned that even though the coronavirus pandemic has been very severe, it is "not necessarily the big one", and that the world will have to learn to live with Covid-19.

The "destiny" of the virus is to become endemic, even as vaccines begin to be rolled out in the US and UK, says Professor David Heymann, the chair of the WHO's strategic and technical advisory group for infectious hazards.

"The world has hoped for herd immunity, that somehow transmission would be decreased if enough persons were immune," he told the WHO's final media briefing for 2020.

But Heymann, who is also an epidemiologist with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, said the concept of herd immunity was misunderstood.

"It appears the destiny of SARS-CoV-2 [Covid-19] is to become endemic, as have four other human coronaviruses, and that it will continue to mutate as it reproduces in human cells, especially in areas of more intense admission.

"Fortunately, we have tools to save lives, and these in combination with good public health will permit us to learn to live with Covid-19."

The head of the WHO emergencies program, Dr Mike Ryan, said: "The likely scenario is the virus will become another endemic virus that will remain somewhat of a threat, but a very low-level threat in the context of an effective global vaccination program.

"It remains to be seen how well the vaccines are taken up, how close we get to a coverage level that might allow us the opportunity to go for elimination," he said. "The existence of a vaccine, even at high efficacy, is no guarantee of eliminating or eradicating an infectious disease. That is a very high bar for us to be able to get over."

That was why the first goal of the vaccine was to save lives and protect the vulnerable, Ryan said. "And then we will deal with the moonshot of potentially being able to eliminate or eradicate this virus."

Ryan warned that the next pandemic may be more severe. "This pandemic has been very severe ... it has affected every corner of this planet. But this is not necessarily the big one," he said.

"This is a wake-up call. We are learning, now, how to do things better: science, logistics, training and governance, how to communicate better. But the planet is fragile.

"We live in an increasingly complex global society. These threats will continue. If there is one thing we need to take from this pandemic, with all of the tragedy and loss, is we need to get our act together. We need to honour those we've lost by getting better at what we do every day."

WHO chief scientist Dr Soumya Swaminathan told the briefing that being vaccinated against the virus did not mean public health measures such as social distancing would be able to be stopped in future.

The first role of the vaccine would be to prevent symptomatic disease, severe disease and deaths, she said. But whether the vaccines would also reduce the number of infections or prevent people from passing on the virus remains to be seen.

"I don't believe we have the evidence on any of the vaccines to be confident that it's going to prevent people from actually getting the infection and therefore being able to pass it on," Swaminathan said. "So I think we need to assume that people who have been vaccinated also need to take the same precautions."

## Turkey extends helping hand to African nations to better combat pandemic

ISTANBUL

TURKEY has helped its African partners to better combat the coronavirus since the early days of the pandemic, whether supplying ventilators to Somalia, sending fabric and sewing machines for mask-making to Mozambique and Eswatini, or solving transportation problems for Ugandan health workers in remote areas.

Despite battling the COVID-19 outbreak at home, Turkey did not forget its partners and sent fleets of planes carrying medical supplies, masks, respirators and more across the African continent to stem the spread of the virus.

In April, a military plane carrying

medical supplies took off to help South Africa, which was emerging as the worst-hit country on the continent.

"This is a gesture of the Turkish government to South Africa," Turkish Ambassador Elif Çomo lu Ülgen said when the supplies landed at Cape Town International Airport.

Besides medical equipment, the supplies included personal protective gear, surgical masks, medical-grade N95 masks, protective suits, face shields, medical safety goggles, hand sanitizers and a disinfection tunnel made specifically for South Africa.

The state-run Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) also sent over 10,000 N95 face masks to Kala-

fong Hospital in South Africa's executive capital, Pretoria, to help health workers fighting the virus.

TIKA also provided protective gear to Lesotho, a landlocked country encircled by South Africa. The items included sanitizers, gloves and masks, and were handed over to the country's disaster management team which later distributed the supplies to three hospitals and 20 clinics in the poorest and most remote parts of the country.

Turkey also dispatched a shipment of medical supplies, including new Turkish-made ventilators, to Somalia to help the Horn of Africa country combat the COVID-19 outbreak.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said

on Twitter that the locally manufactured ventilators, created using recent technological advances, "will breathe new life into Somalia, which suffers from a severe shortage of ventilators."

Namibia also received Turkish medical supplies, including 30,000 N95 masks, 60,000 three-layered masks and 20,000 protective coveralls. Officials said the Turkish donation to Namibia was a gesture of friendship and goodwill.

Turkish Ambassador to Botswana Meltem Büyükkarakaya said that TIKA donated 27 tons worth of food to 1,000 families in Botswana to help them deal with difficulties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.



By Correspondent James Kandoya

# Road accident victims encounter wall of silence on compensation

JUNE 2 is an unforgettable day in my life after a motorbike accident changed me from an able to a disabled person.

"It is now 26 years moving by a wheelchair since I got the accident that broke my a bone on the back, a part of the spine that's aligned with the chest and connects to the rib cage. It happened in 1994 in my last year of ordinary secondary school in Kigoma region."



Tuma Dandi, a presenter at TBCI says that he has never claimed compensation from the insurance company since that accident, for various reasons.

"At the age of 20, I was not aware of insurance compensation and its importance and thus I did not do so. Furthermore, who knew whether our motorbike had been insured?" he wondered?

Dandi admits that low awareness about rights of victims of crashes to be compensated is a challenge, calling for increased awareness to the community on procedures to claim when accidents happen.

"Low knowledge of how to claim for insurance, and even the family, caused me to remain poor. Had I known before, I'm sure that I would have filed claims to the insurance firm," he laments.

He believes policy makers need to amend existing legal frameworks and entire systems as they are more business oriented.

"Without family support, it would not be easy for me to realize my dreams and become anything in life. I would have been among the poorest persons, if not for my fam-

ily and relatives," he says, wiping away tears.

In the northern region of Arusha, Mwamvita Sipemba lost her right leg in 2015 while travelling to Dar es Salaam. Sipemba got into an accident as she was entering the bus after a short tea break at Moshi, Kilimanjaro region.

"I lost my right leg after one of the front tyre passed on my leg as I was trying to get on the bus after a short break," she narrates.

Sipemba, a retired person, and her family incurred big costs to ensure proper treat-

ment, taking her to hospital and back virtually every day.

"It costs me almost 5,000/- daily to reach KCMC hospital in Moshi and back to get treatment until I recover," she says, noting further that the family bought assisting devices including a plastic leg and other accessories, all taking up close to 5m/- outside treatment and related costs.

Even after treatment, she has yet to be compensated for various reasons, including unclear insurance company policy technicalities for compensation. In most cases

they evade compensating road crash casualties on the basis of specified guideline for compensation based on insurance policy cover.

Dandi and Sipemba represent the majority of road crash victims who are not compensated by insurance companies on account of ambiguous insurance policy guidelines.

There are also a number of obstacles as the issue is not straight forward due to bureaucracy and even elements of corruption.

What traffic police say

What scholars say Mariana Makuu, an Assistant Lecturer at the Open University of Tanzania (OUT) affirms that insurance benefits provided for road traffic accident victims is enmeshed with obstacles, so it is not a straightforward process as bureaucracy creates environment for bribes.

In a study, "Socioeconomic Consequences of Road Traffic Accidents to the Victims and their Families in Dar es Salaam," Makuu says that even in cases where vehicles are properly insured, compensation payments are commensurately low and insufficient to cover medical treatment and other personal costs.

RTAs consume much time to investigate and this causes payment to be made after lengthy judicial processes, and not when the funds are needed for medical and other costs, the study underlined.

Furthermore, it is difficult to understand why vehicle owners get insurance soon after accidents while it takes a long time for RTAs' victims to be covered as claimed.

However, while people debate the issue of compensation to victims, very little is known about the economic impact of road traffic accidents and long-term consequences to the victims and their families.

Mariana suggests that the government and private organizations should review the insurance system so that victims can be covered with insurance benefits as soon as they are involved in road traffic accidents.

"In so doing, it will enable victims to receive the required treatments without many delays and will also help victims and their families to meet basic requirements," she added

# 2020 finally ending, but New Year's revelries muted by virus

CANBERRA, Australia

This New Year's Eve is being celebrated like no other, with pandemic restrictions limiting crowds and many people bidding farewell to a year they'd prefer to forget.

Australia will be among the first nations to ring in 2021 because of its proximity to the International Date Line. It is a grim end to the year for New South Wales and Victoria, the country's two most populous states, which are battling to curb new COVID-19 outbreaks.

In past years 1 million people crowded Sydney's harbor to watch fireworks that center on the Sydney Harbor Bridge, but most will be watching on television as authorities urge residents to stay home.

Locations on the harbor are fenced off, popular parks closed and famous night spots eerily deserted. A 9 p.m. fireworks display was scrapped but there will be a seven-minute pyrotechnics show at midnight.

People are only allowed in downtown Sydney if they have a restaurant reservation or are one of five



guests of an inner-city resident. People won't be allowed in the city center without a permit.

Some harborside restaurants were charging up to 1,690 Australian dollars (\$1,294) for a seat, Sydney's The Daily Telegraph newspaper reported Wednesday.

Sydney is Australia's most populous city and has had its most active local transmission of the coronavirus in recent weeks.

Melbourne, Australia's second most populous city, has canceled its fireworks this year. "For the first time in many, many years we made the big decision, difficult decision to cancel the fireworks," Mayor Sally Capp said.

"We did that because we know that it attracts up to 450,000 people into the city for one moment at midnight to enjoy a spectacular display and music. We are not doing that this year."

In notable contrast, the west coast city of Perth - which has not had community spread of the virus since April - was gearing up to celebrate the new year almost normally with large crowds expected to watch two fireworks spectacles.

New Zealand, which is two hours ahead of Sydney, and several of its South Pacific island neighbors have no COVID-19 cases, and New Year celebrations there are the same as ever. In Chinese societies, the Lunar New Year celebration that falls in February in 2021 generally takes precedence over the solar New Year, on Jan. 1. While celebrations of the Western holiday have been growing more common in recent decades, this year will be more muted.

Beijing is holding a countdown ceremony with just a few invited guests, while other planned events have been canceled. And nighttime temperatures plunging to -15

Celsius (-5 Fahrenheit) will likely discourage people from spending the night out with friends.

Taiwan is hosting its usual New Year's celebration, a fireworks display by its capital city's iconic tower, Taipei 101, as well as a flag-raising ceremony in front of the Presidential Office Building on New Year's morning. The island has been a success story in the pandemic, registering only seven deaths and 700 confirmed cases of COVID-19.

Hong Kong, with its British colonial history and large expatriate population, has usually seen raucous celebrations along the waterfront and in bar districts. For the second year running, however, New Year's Eve fireworks have been canceled, this time over coronavirus rather than public security concerns.

Hong Kong social distancing regulations restrict gatherings to only two people. Restaurants have to close by 6 p.m. Live performances and dancing are not allowed. But crowds still throng shopping centers.

Much of Japan was welcoming 2021 quietly at home, alarmed after Tokyo reported a record number of daily coronavirus cases at about 1,300. It was the first time that daily cases in the capital have topped 1,000.

Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike asked people to skip countdown ceremonies and expressed concern about crowds of shoppers.

"The coronavirus knows no yearend or New Year's holidays," she told reporters.

Many people skipped what's customarily a chance to return to ancestral homes for the holidays, hoping to lessen health risks for extended families.

Rural restaurants saw business drop, while home deliveries of traditional New Year's "good luck" food called "osechi" boomed.

Emperor Naruhito is delivering a video message for the new year, instead of waving from a balcony with the imperial family as cheering crowds throng outside the palace.

Train services that usually carry people on shrine visits overnight, as well as some countdown ceremonies, were canceled.

Meiji Shrine in downtown Tokyo, which normally attracts millions of people during New Year holidays and is usually open all night on New Year's Eve, closed at 4 p.m. this year.

In South Korea, Seoul's city government canceled its annual New Year's Eve bell-ringing ceremony in

the Jongno neighborhood for the first time since the event was first held in 1953, months after the end of the Korean War.

The ceremony, in which citizens ring a large bell in a traditional pavilion when the clock strikes midnight, normally draws an estimated 100,000 people and is broadcast live.

Authorities in eastern coastal areas closed beaches and other spots where hundreds of thousands of people typically gather on New Year's Day to watch the sunrise. The southeastern city of Pohang instead planned to broadcast live the sunrise at several beaches on its YouTube channel.

South Korea's central government banned private social gatherings of more than five people and shut down ski resorts and major tourist spots nationwide from Christmas Eve until Jan. 3 to help bring a recent viral resurgence under control.

Millions of Indians planned to usher in the new year with subdued celebrations at home because of night curfews, a ban on beach parties and restrictions on movement in major cities and towns after the new, more contagious variant of the coronavirus reached the country.

In New Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai, hotels and bars were ordered to shut at 11 p.m. The three cities have been the worst hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

Drones were keeping watch on people's movements in Mumbai, India's financial and entertainment capital. Large gatherings were banned, but there were no restrictions on visiting friends, relatives and public places in groups of not more than four people, police said. Face masks and social distancing were mandatory, they said.

Many revelers flocked to Goa, a former Portuguese colony and popular backpacking destination with numerous beach resorts. Authorities decided against imposing a curfew with coronavirus infections largely controlled there.

In Sri Lanka, public gatherings have been banned due to a resurgence of COVID-19, and health and law enforcement authorities urged people to limit celebrations to close family members. Health officials have warned of legal action against hotels and restaurants that hold parties.

Officials have also closed schools and restricted public transport in response to the renewed outbreak.

AGENCIES

THE GUARDIAN SIMPLE WORD FIT // THE GUARDIAN CROSSWORD --00 165 00--

In this Puzzle you have no clues, only a list of words that all fit into the grid. The Guardian have given you a head start

3 LETTERS: PET, APE, CUM  
 4 LETTERS: FLOW, OVER, EVEN, REAL, OVER, ROME, MOOS, POUR  
 5 LETTERS: LARGE, NOVEL, OMBRE, SPORT, METER  
 6 LETTERS: EAGLES, LEAN TO, MTWARA, MODERN, REJECT  
 7 LETTERS: MOROCCO  
 8 LETTERS: ACCOUNTS  
 10 LETTERS: FREE MARKET

CLUES: Across

- fail to impress
- a memorandum
- accumulate over time
- a corner
- heaven
- known about by many people
- the refuse of grapes that have been pressed for winemaking out of the way
- Kuala Lumpur is her capital city
- one as a quantity
- a small stone made smooth and round by the action of water

Down:

- Muslims bound together
- a legislative body in the ruling assembly of Russia
- a house
- Zambia's capital
- on to
- Largest state in U.S.A
- vehicle equipped for living in the holding of an office
- a slatted wooden case used for transporting goods
- an accomplice of a hawkler
- Mother
- labium

WORD-FIT SOLUTIONS

F	R	E	E	L	O	A	D	E	R
I	M	A	B	U					
N	E	S	T	M	E	A	N	T	
E	P	C	A	S	E	L	U		
M	E	K	O	N	G	I	C	E	
N									
A	G	E	D	E	M	B	E	D	
U	I								
L	I	B	E	R	A	L	S	I	
A	N	O	N						
Y	Y	E	M	E	N	I			

CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS

J	O	U	R	N	A	L	I	S	M
L	O	M	E	S	E	R	V	E	
Y	G	A	D	A	P	I	O		
F	R	A	N	C	E				
E									
K	N	O	W						
A	A	H							
A	D	I	C	T	E	D			
S	E	A	T						
K	M	E	N	I	A	L			



# TAA VOWS TO BACK INSTITUTE OF TRANSPORT AIRPORT UTILITY VEHICLES DRIVING COURSE

## Nxuba wind farm successfully reaches commercial operation

CAPE TOWN

Enel Green Power RSA's (EGP RSA) 140MW Nxuba wind farm in the Eastern Cape has reached commercial operation and is expected to generate 460GWh of energy annually.

The €200m wind farm will be supported by a 20-year power supply agreement with Eskom, as part of government's Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (REIPPPP) tender, which awarded in April 2015 a total of five wind projects for 700MW to the Enel Group in its fourth round.

The project's location in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa makes it well suited for wind generation, largely attributed to the strong wind current along the province's coastline between Cookhouse and the western border of Lesotho. The region is in close proximity to major grid connections, making it convenient to feed energy into South Africa's national electricity grid.

With the Nxuba wind farm now online, EGP RSA now has eight operational projects in the country, for an overall installed capacity exceeding 650MW. In the Eastern Cape province, in addition to Nxuba, EGP RSA has two other wind farms in operation, namely Nojoli (88MW) and Gibson Bay (111MW). In the Northern Cape, the company has solar plants Upington (10MW) and Adams (82.5MW). Additional solar plants include Pulida (82.5MW) in the Free State, Tom Burke (66MW) in Limpopo, and Paleishuwel (82.5MW) in the Western Cape.

Two projects, Garob in the Northern Cape and Oyster Bay in the Eastern Cape, will commence full operation in the second quarter of 2021 and another two, Karusa and Soetwater in the Karoo Hoogland, in the fourth quarter of 2021, each with an installed capacity of 140MW.

The construction of the Nxuba wind farm involved local skills transfer, with EGP RSA enlisting the services of small and medium enterprises from the local Blue Crane Route and Raymond Mhlaba municipalities to assist in the construction. Additionally, the concrete tower sections were manufactured locally in the town of Somerset East.

By Property Watch Reporter

A course for training personnel driving airport utility vehicles introduced by National Institute of Transport has received strong backing from Tanzania Airports Authority.

TAA's Julius Nyerere International Airport Manager, Paulo Rwegasha said the airports landlord's Director General fully backs the course which is aimed at producing skilled manpower for the task at a time when there is shortage in the market.

Rwegasha said TAA will make sure that the course brings productivity and improves safety of passengers and cargo in the interest of the whole nation. He congratulated NIT management for launching the course which aligns well with plans of the government to boost aviation industry.

"It is my belief that transport stakeholders particularly in airports will use this opportunity to train their people at the Institute," he said adding that Tanzanians who get a chance to participate in the course, will be good ambassadors for NIT as they will use new skills in protecting aviation infrastructures.

Citing, Rwegasha said the government has purchased 11 new planes of which eight have already been received while also investing in the construction and expansion of airports across the country to rejuvenate the aviation industry.



National Institute of Transport premises at Mabibo in Dar es Salaam.

He said massive investments have been made at JNIA's Terminal III, Kilimanjaro International Airport and Mwanza International Airport while a new airport is coming up at Msalato in Dodoma, among many others. "Once completed, the airports will increase the number of flights and passenger mobility but also cargo hence need more qualified people to drive utility vehicles," Rwegasha noted.

On his part, Chairman of NIT Governing Council, Prof Blasius Nyichomba said launching of the course is part of implementation of the institute's plans in line with various policies as stipulated in the country's Vision 2025.

Prof Nyichomba said stiff competition in the transport industry has led to an increase in demand of experienced human resources in the country and abroad. He

said the situation has compelled NIT to introduce various courses so as to meet growing demand in the market.

Earlier the NIT Rector Prof Zacharia Mganilwa said the institute has introduced the historic course for service providers in the aviation sector because it plays a critical role in developing professionals who will protect people and property at airports.

"This course is a result of efforts between the government through Ministry of Works and Transport and other stakeholders," Prof Mganilwa said while stressing that NIT's Transport Safety and Environment Studies Department supervises 28 short courses for professional road transport operators.

Among these courses are the Tyre Care and Maintenance, Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV), Fuel Management in Vehicle Operations, Advanced Drivers Course Grade II (Industrial), Transport Officers Course, Advanced Drivers Course Grade II (VIP), Planning Preventive Maintenance for Motor Vehicles and Senior Drivers Course. He said launching of the airport vehicle drivers' course adds the number of short courses to 29. Prof Mganilwa said the number of participants in short courses has been increasing on a yearly basis hence the number of trained drivers has also been increasing. "But before, we had no specific airport utility vehicles driving course at NIT," he added.

## Planned Mena power sector investments slump by a third amid pandemic

AMAAN

Planned investment in the Middle East and North Africa region's power sector slumped by a third amid the pandemic-driven slowdown this year. However, investments already committed to the sector remained stable in 2020, according to the Arab Petroleum Investments Corporation.

The \$114 billion drop in planned funding is driven partly by several regional projects being moved to committed investment status in 2020, Apicorp, a multilateral lender focused on the energy sector, said in its 2020-2024 Mena Power Investment Outlook report. Stalled projects in Iran, Iraq, Tunisia and Lebanon due to the direct impact of the pandemic also drove the overall value of planned investments down, Apicorp said on Tuesday.

Other factors that contributed to the decrease in planned investments included increased surplus capacities in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. "Compared to other energy sectors, the investment landscape in the power sector held relatively steady despite the Covid-19 pandemic," Ahmed Ali Attiga, chief executive of Apicorp, said.

"We expect the power sector to play a vital role in accelerating the post-pandemic recovery process as enhancing energy security and digital services take on increased strategic



Wind turbines at a wind farm beside King's Highway in Ma'an Governorate in Jordan. Planned investment in Mena power sector slumped by a third amid the pandemic-driven slowdown this year.

importance." In its 2019-2023 projections made last year, Apicorp, which funds energy sector projects in Opec-member countries, expected overall investment in the Mena's energy sector to reach \$1 trillion, with the power sector accounting for 36 per cent.

Planned projects represent almost two-thirds of the total value of the 2020-2024 Mena power sector's project pipeline.

Mirroring global trends, renewables currently account for the largest share of planned and committed power projects for the five-year period at around one third of total investment value. Oil and gas-fired power plants account for 27 per cent of total investments, while nuclear power and coal represent 15 per cent and 3 per cent respectively.

The increased penetration of clean energy in the Mena region is driven by unprecedented cost

declines in renewable energy and governments' renewable energy targets, which range from 13 per cent to 52 per cent of installed capacity by 2030.

However, the lack of grid-scale storage means that fossil fuels - primarily natural gas - and nuclear, will remain indispensable to the power supply mix in the foreseeable future, Apicorp said. The recent push by several countries to boost regional electricity

interconnectivity may lead to an increase in investments in power transmission and distribution projects, it added.

Mena economies, especially the six-member economic bloc of the GCC, have invested heavily in electricity generation projects over the past few years. Saudi Arabia and the UAE are pursuing ambitious power generation targets to meet future demand, while the region has also opened up power generation projects for private sector investment. However, the role of the private sector and financing in the power industry will largely remain dependent on sector reforms and government guarantees, according to Apicorp.

"Looking ahead, policy efficiency and the digitalisation of the power sector weigh in as the most influential factors in the future for power demand and investments," Leila Benali, chief economist at Apicorp, said. "In addition to becoming a more interconnected power market, the Mena region holds vast potential as an exporter for net-zero products, especially given the shift towards electrification from sources such as hydrogen and ammonia."

## Developers lament stalled housing projects in Abuja

ABUJA

Property developers in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, have lamented that the COVID-19 locked down stalled their housing projects that would have been completed to boost the nation's stock.

One of the firms affected is Brains and Hammers, a real estate development company. The Project Director, Mr Mukhari Musa revealed its projects, which were conceived as self-sustaining and affordable programmes, designed to cater to the housing needs of the middle and low-income earners is now

underway to make up for a lost time.

The project consists of one, two, three and four-bedroom flats. The first phase of the project is made up of 1,200 units, completed and 200 residents have moved in to occupy the smart city, and they targeted a total of 3,600 housing units when completed, he stated.

He also explained that the smart cities are much more than just residential buildings, adding that they are complete packages of commercial, hospitality, infrastructure, and property development in Abuja, Kano, and Lagos.

The Group's Head of City

Projects, Maryam Bello said the city was built as a standalone where every occupant would have access to whatever they need as a family, including high-level fibre optics for internet service, shopping malls, filling stations, schools, an orphanage, 24-hour power supply, and top-notch security.

"We believe the initiative will mark a new beginning in private sector participation in the provision of mass housing for Nigerians. The significance of the completion of phase one is not lost in us as a developer, nor on residents. As we enter the second phase of the construction process, we are

focusing on delivering every component of the smart city plan. Our concern right now is the delivery of homes to our clients, and ensuring that this community is habitable and enjoyable."

The Executive Director of Shelter Origins, Mr. Ezekiel Ojo said the Covid-19 pandemic actually exposed the country's deficiencies in affordable housing. "There can be no lockdown without adequate housing in place for citizens."

According to Ojo, during the pandemic, salaries of civil servants, and the income of prospective clients were affected because mortgage depends

on these sources for development, which directly or indirectly, hinder developers from constructing houses.

"Mortgages were not paid during the pandemic, and many citizens lost their jobs and could not continue with their payments nor buy a property. The issue of overcrowding, and inability to own, is being addressed by the Government's new initiative of 300,000 housing units plan," he added.

On his part, the Chief Executive of Millard Fuller Foundation, Sam Odia said the pandemic experience has been a mixed bag on the supply and

the demand side, while investments have been slowed down in the housing sector.

He said the market has not been able to mop up existing assets, leading to a low rate of supply while in the short term, most real estate businesses have not been out of the negative impact, as the pandemic has impacted negatively on the economy. Odia emphasised that a major impact has been on the prices of imported goods, which led to a sharp increase in prices in the construction sector generally.

"This is becoming a mixed bag as demand for simple adequate housing increases.

The government for instance has been reminded of the importance of housing for the poor, in this season of lockdown and social distancing. The short term effects of the pandemic have been largely negative; it has jolted a realisation of the greater need for simple, decent and affordable housing, which can only lead to greater activity in the sector in the long term." According to the Managing Director of Numatville Project Limited, Dr. Akin Olowookere the Covid-19 pandemic deterred optimum productivity in all ramifications.



# SHINYANGA RAS URGES RESIDENTS TO EXPLOIT TELECOMS PRESENCE

By Property Watch Reporter, Shinyanga

RESIDENTS of Shinyanga region have been advised to exploit services brought by presence of Airtel Money Branch and 4G network launched last week.

Shinyanga Regional Administrative Secretary, Boniface Chambi said while launching a new modern Airtel Money Branch in Shinyanga Town that the shop and fourth generation (4G) network in the area.

"I am impressed by Airtel Money services and urge Shinyanga residents to continue using such facilities by transacting using the platform," said Chambi adding that such services offer safe and secure vehicles.

He urged the residents especially those from rural areas where they are no banking services but also lack reliable communications services to make use of the latest developments. "I call upon them to use Airtel Money services for their safety and efficiency," he added while noting that Airtel is also creating employment.

He said in addition, Airtel Tanzania is a company owned by Tanzanians by 49 percent hence deserved public support because its business



Shinyanga regional administrative secretary, Boniface Chambi (C) cuts a ribbon to officially launch Airtel Money Branch in Shinyanga town earlier this week. He is accompanied by Airtel Tanzania Shinyanga sales officer, Ezekiel Emmanuel (L) and shop attendant Salma Hamisi. Photo courtesy of Airtel.

success means that the government earns more. "I also com-

mend Airtel Tanzania for taking financial inclusion to most of un-

banked population in Shinyanga region," the RAS added.

Briefing Chambi on the telco's services in Shinyanga, Airtel Tanzania Shinyanga Sales Officer, Ezekiel Emmanuel said the telco is committed in taking communication services closer to customers in order to facilitate development work.

"Here in Shinyanga, we have 49 Airtel Money Branches of which three are in Shinyanga town. This is to ensure that our services and products are easily available and accessible everywhere in the region," Emmanuel said adding that the cotton rich growing region has 657 Airtel Money agents.

The 657 Airtel Money agents include boys and girls who have received training from the company in order to serve our customers well. These young people are self-employed hence earn income from Airtel in order to live," he explained.

The launch of Airtel Money Branches in Shinyanga region is part of Airtel initiatives of improving communication services and sensitizing the public to adopt 4G network as it is fast and comes with the latest technology aimed at easing communication services.

## Helb, Kenya Railways still locking horns over Sh45m land

NAIROBI

The Higher Education Loans Board (Helb) and the Kenya Railways have not resolved a dispute on ownership of a Sh44.6 million property in Nairobi's Upper Hill area.

Auditor General Nancy Gathungu says although ownership documents show the 0.6 hectares land belongs to the board, the Kenya Railways Corporation claims that the plot was illegally excised from the corporation's land by the then Commissioner of Lands.

She said the Helb management has indicated in a letter dated March 27, 2020 to the principal secretary, Ministry of Lands and Physical Planning, that a tripartite meeting was held between the board, Kenya Railways Staff Retirement Benefits Scheme and Kenya Railways following a circular from the Treasury directing that all cases where all parties involved are public institutions should withdraw the cases and have the matters resolved amicably.

"However, no resolution had been arrived at the time of my report," Ms Gathungu said in the latest audit of Helb books of accounts tabled in Parliament. President Uhuru Kenyatta in July ordered all government institutions that have filed court cases against each other to withdraw them within seven days.

He barred cabinet secretaries and State agencies from hiring external advocates without the approval of the Attorney-General Kihara Kariuki. The order followed the suspension by the court of his earlier orders requiring State institutions to end engagements with private law firms in 21 days.

The Law Society of Kenya moved to court to challenge the legality of Mr Kenyatta's directive. The LSK argued that there was no public participation before the directive was made, whose effect was to terminate contracts of lawyers' who were contracted.

The lawyers said the decision is contrary to the Fair Administrative Action Act and there is danger that the scheme can be used to give work by basing it on ulterior considerations besides legal competency, capacity and other values such as competitive and cost-effective considerations.

# Radisson Group expands serviced apartments portfolio across Africa, EMEA

JOHANNESBURG

The Radisson Hotel Group has announced that it plans to more than double its serviced apartments portfolio by 2025 across the EMEA region as it recognises the attractive model of either combining both hotel and serviced apartments in one development or as a standalone operation.

Serviced apartments currently represent around 10% of the group's EMEA portfolio with 45 properties and more than 5,400 units in operation and under development. It operates its serviced apartments as a standalone or a mixed-use development in combination with a traditional hotel operation. Serviced apartments will be developed as a brand extension of the existing Radisson Hotel Group's brand portfolio to cater to the different segments from mid-scale to luxury.

Elie Younes, executive vice president and chief development officer of the Radisson Hotel Group, said: "For many years, we have explored the strong demand for serviced apartments and extended stay products by recognising it as an attractive risk-adjusted investment proposition that has considerable growth potential.

Given its relevance to the current economic climate, this value proposition has recently been further defined in our portfolio, offering a holistic concept with more opportunities for our investors and more possibilities for our guests. We commit to stay relevant to all our stakeholders."



Radisson Hotel & Suites Amsterdam South.

Ramsay Rankoussi, vice president, development, Africa & Turkey, Radisson Hotel Group, said: "The business model of serviced apartments has demonstrated resilience over time and is less affected

by market volatility as we can target both short- and long-term guests. We believe there is an opportunity to roll out our Radisson Serviced Apartments brand across all key cities within Africa.

The offering will not only complement our existing portfolio, but would certainly attract a new profile of investors interested in entering the industry with this hybrid concept between residential

and hospitality. The addition of this new product will further accelerate our ambitions to reach 150 hotels in operation and under development by 2025."

# AfDB approves Desert-to-Power technical support programme

ABIDJAN

The African Development Bank (AfDB) recently approved a Desert-to-Power (D2P) technical support programme that aims to advance the rollout of solar generation in G5 Sahel countries.

The Desert to Power initiative intends to turn the Sahel region into a renewable powerhouse, harnessing its solar potential to create the world's largest solar zone. Aimed to increase solar generation capacity by 10GW through on and off-grid projects, Desert to Power is expected to transform the livelihood of some 250 million people across the 11-state Sahel region.

These activities are expected to address various challenges hampering the development of the energy sector in the

G5 Sahel countries, including the lack of sufficient installed generation capacity, high reliance on imported fossil fuels and the inability of national grids to absorb larger amounts of variable renewable energy.

Technical assistance programme

The technical assistance, in the form of a \$5m grant from the Sustainable Energy Fund for Africa (SEFA), has three main components: technical studies for the integration of variable renewable energy (primarily solar) in national grids; feasibility studies for solar hybridisation of existing isolated grids; and capacity building to support Chad to integrate the first solar power project (Djermaya Solar PV IPP) in its national grid.

"This technical assistance programme

responds directly to needs identified in the National Desert to Power Roadmaps of the G5 Sahel countries. It specifically addresses key bottlenecks for the large-scale deployment of solar projects, and will help prepare bankable projects for subsequent investments," said Dr Daniel Schroth, acting director for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency at the African Development Bank.

The approval follows the fourth Africa Energy Market Place (AEMP) event held by the AfDB. The 8-10 December 2020 event focused on the G5 Sahel countries and successfully mobilised a broad coalition of technical and financial partners to support the initiative. The G5 countries are Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Mali and Niger.



A desert solar farm.



## CONSTRUCTION

# The Guardian PROPERTY WATCH

DISCOVER INFORM INSPIRE

## US MORTGAGE RATES FOR 30-YEAR LOANS REGISTER RECORD DROP

## SAN FRANCISCO

The average for a 30-year fixed loan fell to 2.66 per cent, down from 2.67 per cent last week and the lowest in data going back almost 50 years, Freddie Mac said in a statement.

The cheaper borrowing costs have fuelled a housing rally that's boosted the broader economy during the pandemic. But the real estate market cooled a bit in November, and with coronavirus cases surging, there is concern about how long the rally can last.

"The housing market is poised to finish the year strong as low mortgage rates continue to fuel homebuyer demand," said Sam Khater, chief economist at Freddie Mac. "Moving into 2021, we expect rates to hold steady but the key driver in the near term will be the trajectory of the Covid-19 pandemic and the execution of the vaccine."

Mortgage rates, which started tumbling in March when the coronavirus roiled financial markets, have been below 3 per cent since July. The lower rates, combined with demand for more space to ride out the pandemic, have pushed



Vehicles travel along Interstate 80 in San Francisco, California. The US real estate market cooled a bit in November, and with coronavirus cases surging, there is concern about how long the price rally can last.

buyers into the market. Current owners have also been able to save money by refinancing their loans.

A low inventory of homes to buy, combined with the surging demand, has driven up prices. That's raised concerns that the housing boom will run out of steam,

particularly if rates start to tick up. New-home sales in the US tumbled to a five-month low in November, dropping 11 per cent in a sign the market is cooling off as coronavirus cases surge.

Sales of previously owned homes were also down last month, slipping for the first

time in six months. That came as the median selling price jumped 14.6 per cent, the fourth straight month of double-digit increases.

"The slight decline in rates this week doesn't change the big picture much for either homeowners or homebuyers," said Keith Gumbinger, vice president at HSH.com, a mortgage and consumer loan information company. "With quiet financial markets and little new economic data out, there's little reason to expect any more movement in mortgage rates than we've seen of late."

US home prices jumped in October by the most in more than six years as a pandemic-fuelled buying rush drives the number of available properties for sale to record lows, according to new data released on Tuesday.

The combination of strong demand and limited supply pushed home prices up 7.9 per cent in

October compared with 12 months ago, according to the S&P CoreLogic Case-Shiller 20-city home price index. The rise in home prices marks the largest annual increase since June 2014.

The coronavirus outbreak has forced millions of Americans to work from home and it's curtailed other activities such as eating out, going to the movies or visiting gyms, leading more people to seek out homes with more room for a home office, a bigger kitchen or space to work out.

"The data from the last several months are consistent with the view that Covid has encouraged potential buyers to move from urban apartments to suburban homes," said Craig Lazzara, managing director at S&P Dow Jones Indices.

All 19 cities reported larger year-on-year price gains in October than in September, Mr Lazzara

said. Detroit wasn't able to fully report its home sales data because of delays related to a coronavirus lockdown. The biggest price gain was in Phoenix for the 17th straight month, where home prices rose 12.7 per cent from a year ago, followed by Seattle with 11.7 per cent and San Diego at 11.6 per cent.

Home sales slipped in November, according to the National Association of Realtors, after rising steadily for the previous five months. Even after the decline, sales were nearly 26 per cent higher last month compared with a year ago.

Sales have also been boosted by low mortgage rates, which reflect the Federal Reserve's moves to keep its benchmark short-term rate at nearly zero. The number of homes for sale fell to 1.28 million in November, the Realtors said, enough to last just 2.3 months at the current pace of sales. Both figures are record lows.

## Britain's housing boom pushes price growth to six-year high in 2020

## LONDON

British house prices rose 7.3 per cent in 2020, the highest growth in six years, as the property market surged amid a raft of policy measures and a shift in how people want to live.

Prices ended the year 5.3 per cent higher than in March and 0.8 per cent up in December from the previous month, taking the average house price to £230,920 (\$311,562) as the market defied the wider economic downturn.

"The resilience seen in recent quarters seemed unlikely at the start of the pandemic. Indeed, housing market activity almost ground to a complete halt during the first lockdown as the wider economy shrank by an unprecedented 26 per cent," said Robert Gardner, Nationwide's chief economist. "But, since then, housing demand has been buoyed by a raft of policy measures and changing preferences in the wake of the pandemic."

The housing market has boomed this year as buyers have looked for bigger properties or homes with gardens after the spring lockdown closed the market completely. UK finance minister Rishi Sunak then suspended Stamp Duty Land Tax on home purchases until the end of March 2021, causing a surge in activity in the sector.

The growth continued through the summer and even during the second wave of the virus in the autumn because sales and viewings were allowed



A terrace of residential houses in the Dulwich district overlooking skyscrapers in the City of London.

to continue when the country faced further coronavirus restrictions in November.

Mr Gardner said policy measures such as the furlough and Self Employment Income Support schemes bolstered the labour market, while a host of policy measures helped to keep the cost of borrowing down and the supply of credit flowing. "Lenders also responded by offering payment holidays to borrowers impacted by the pandemic, helping people stay in their homes rather than potentially being forced to sell,"

he said.

The pandemic itself also boosted activity, as life in lockdown and changes to working patterns led many to re-evaluate their housing needs, with Nationwide research identifying an increased demand for less densely populated locations and different property types. "This helps to explain why detached properties have seen greater price gains in recent quarters, while flats have underperformed," Mr Gardner said.

Looking to 2021, analysts are divided on how the property

market will fare. While property website Rightmove expects asking prices to climb 4 per cent due to a backlog of demand and rush to move before the tax reduction expires at the end of March, retail bank Halifax says prices could slump as much as 5 per cent next year as unemployment rises.

Mr Gardner expects housing market activity to slow in the coming quarters, perhaps sharply, if the labour market weakens to the 7.5 per cent level quoted by Mr Sunak in November, especially once the

stamp duty holiday expires at the end of March.

"The outlook remains highly uncertain. Much will depend on how the pandemic and the measures to contain it evolve as well as the efficacy of policy measures implemented to limit the damage to the wider economy," he said. "Behavioural shifts as a result of Covid-19 may continue to provide support for housing market activity, while the stamp duty holiday will continue to provide a near-term boost by bringing forward home moves."

## Airbus mulls new narrowbody jet design with GE component

## TOULOUSE

Europe's biggest plane maker Airbus and engine manufacturer General Electric are in talks to develop a "next-generation" aircraft, court documents show.

Airbus is seeking engine ideas for a narrow-body jet it is developing and has drawn a proposal for a new geared design from GE, Bloomberg reported, citing a court opinion that has since been sealed.

The court document did not specify if the Airbus jet would be a new model or an upgrade to existing models such as the A320neo or A220 narrow-body jets. It also did not provide details on when GE proposed the new engine, when or whether the plane might come to

market, or how advanced the talks were. "GE Aviation continually reviews opportunities with airframers, including Airbus and Boeing, about engine technologies for the next generation of aircraft. The details of these discussions are confidential," GE said in an emailed statement. The Toulouse-based company is building an extra-long range version of its A321neo that will allow airlines to serve long-distance routes with smaller, more fuel-efficient aircraft.

Airbus is also working on developing a hydrogen-powered aircraft as it seeks to bring the world's first emissions-free passenger plane into service by 2035. Airbus did not reveal the nature of discussions with GE.



Damac Properties on Sunday said it is looking at a potential acquisition.

## Dubai Airports chief views 2021 with 'cautious optimism'

## DUBAI

The chief executive of Dubai Airports said he views 2021 with "cautious optimism" as countries distribute Covid-19 vaccines and economies rebound. "We are geared up and ready to expect a surge in demand once the vaccines start to [be distributed] in any meaningful scale," Paul Griffiths told Bloomberg TV on Monday.

"Four billion people around the world have been in lockdown over the last eight to nine months; that is half of the population, and one of the most aspirational things that everyone wants to get back to is freedom of movement."

Dubai International Airport was the world's busiest international travel hub before the Covid-19 crisis. Global pharmaceutical companies including Pfizer and BioNTech, Moderna and AstraZeneca have achieved major breakthroughs in developing a coronavirus vaccine in recent weeks. The first vaccine given in the US on Monday, where the pandemic had killed more than 306,460 people.

The UK began to give people the vaccine last week. Mr Griffiths said the inoculation would not be required to fly into Dubai as it would be "a huge economic negative ... I can't see that being a requirement." "We have got so many sensible measures, including PCR testing on arrival, to make sure travel is safe enough for everyone to consider taking a journey. So, in my view, that would be ... unnecessary."

The aviation industry has opposed the vaccination requirement for passengers amid fears that it could hit air travel in a similar way to quarantine measures. Mr Griffiths's optimism for an industry recovery was also buoyed by the success of the UK-Dubai air travel bubble set up about a month ago.

"We are very confident that we are going to get back to about 30 per cent of our normal throughput during the month of December, which is probably going to be about double what we experienced through the previous months," he said.

The emirate is set for an "incredibly busy" holiday season because of the agreement between the two governments, he said. About 65 per cent of the airlines that were flying at the start of the year have resumed flights to Dubai.

The airport is preparing for an austere 2021 but is prepared to sustain liquidity around a traffic base that is less than 30 per cent of pre-Covid levels, he said. "We are now in a position where we can weather the storm going forward," Mr Griffiths said.



## WORLD

## UK, EU sign post-Brexit trade deal, but difficulties lie ahead

LONDON/BRUSSELS.

THE post-Brexit trade deal between Britain and the European Union (EU) has been approved by British lawmakers and signed by EU leaders, paving the way for an orderly Brexit when the transition period ends yesterday.

The deal brings reassurance to both sides and the global market that a possible chaotic and disorderly economic break has been avoided; but observers have noted that difficulties remain in the implementation of the deal in the near and long term.

## DEAL SIGNED

British lawmakers approved the post-Brexit trade deal as they were recalled on the morning of Wednesday to put the agreement into British law, one day before Britain stops following EU rule.

They voted 521-73 to back the deal in the House of Commons, or the lower house of the parliament, after only five hours of debate, and the House of Lords also backed the deal late Wednesday evening.

Also on Wednesday, European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen signed the post-Brexit trade deal on behalf of the EU.

The signed documents were then transferred to Britain and signed by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

The signing ceremony was held after the provisional application of the agree-

ment as of Jan. 1, 2021 was approved by the EU member states on Tuesday. The trade deal will need to be scrutinized by the European Parliament early next year before it is formally ratified by the EU Council.

According to a press statement by the European Commission, the agreement covers not just trade in goods and services, but also a broad range of other areas, such as investment, competition, fisheries and social security coordination.

Both parties have committed to ensuring a robust level playing field by maintaining high levels of protection in areas such as environmental protection, the fight against climate change and carbon pricing, said the statement.

"It is a fair and balanced agreement that fully protects the fundamental interests of the European Union and creates stability and predictability for citizens and companies," Michel said in a press release.

In an interview with the BBC, Johnson said the deal would allow Britain to "go our own way but also have free trade" with the EU.

"There will be changes. And we've been very clear with people that they have to get ready for Jan. 1, things will work differently," he said.

## DIFFICULTIES AHEAD

As Britain and the EU part as "old friends" in the new year, experts and analysts have warned that there could



British Prime Minister Boris Johnson

still be difficult times ahead as uncertainty remains.

Many large issues are left out of the current deal, warned Rajneesh Narula, the John H. Dunning Chair of International Business Regulation at the Henley Business School, University of Reading.

Notably, the trade deal did little for the service sector, which makes up 80 percent of the British economy, he said.

"It means that everything to do with services, that is to say banking, finance and insurance, and telecoms. These are all issues that will be negotiated in the new saga," Narula told Xinhua.

According to Narula, everything from the validity of degrees and certificates has yet to be discussed and could mirror what happened in the negotiations for the trade deal.

Observers also warned that trade between the two sides could be disrupted by a huge amount of new paperwork and border checks.

Tony Danker, director-general of the Confederation of British Industry, said that with the deal coming so late, "it is vital that both sides take instant steps to keep trade moving and services flowing while firms adjust."

"There's going to be a certain amount of chaos," said Narula. "I think we will see queues of different types and as people suddenly realize, 'Oh, wait a minute, what does that mean for me?' And then so the next three to six months will be people going 'Oh, I didn't know that.'"

The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), a London-based think tank, warned last week that the deal leaves workers' rights and environmental protection at risk of erosion.

"This thin deal is better than no deal at all, but still creates major trade barriers with our closest neighbour, which will inhibit growth and slow the economic recovery," said Marley Morris, an IPPR director focusing on trade and EU relations.

The deal, which came after nine months of arduous negotiations between Britain and the EU, is the biggest bilateral trade deal signed by either side, covering trade worth around 668 billion pounds (about 905.4 billion U.S. dollars).

The EU is Britain's largest trading partner while Britain is the EU's third largest trading partner in goods, following the United States and China.

Xinhua

## Fauci sees US gaining control over pandemic by next autumn

LOS ANGELES



THE leading U.S. infectious disease specialist, Dr. Anthony Fauci, said on Wednesday he foresees America achieving enough collective COVID-19 immunity through vaccinations to regain "some semblance of normality" by autumn 2021, despite early setbacks in the vaccine rollout.

Fauci (pictured) made his remarks during an online discussion of the pandemic with California Governor Gavin Newsom, who announced at the outset that a more infectious coronavirus variant originally found in Britain has been detected in his state, a day after the first known U.S. case was documented in Colorado.

Newsom said the coronavirus variant B.1.1.7 had been confirmed earlier in the day in a Southern California patient. He did not provide further details. But the California Department of Public Health said in statement later that the person, a San Diego County patient, has no known travel history, suggesting the variant is spreading within the community.

Fauci said he was "not surprised," adding that additional cases of the variant would likely surface around the country and that the mutating nature of such viruses is normal.

"It appears that this particular mutation does make the virus better at transmitting from one person to another," he said. However, individuals infected with earlier forms of SARS-CoV-2 "don't seem to get re-infected by this," meaning that any immunity already acquired "is protective against this particular strain," Fauci added.

He also stressed that the so-called UK variant is believed to be no more severe in the illness it causes, and that newly approved COVID-19 vaccines will prove just as effective against it as against earlier known forms of the virus.

The same is believed to be true for a second new variant, also more infectious and first reported in South Africa, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Still, the emergence of a more highly transmissible variant could make a swift rollout of immunizations all the more critical.

## Reuters cameraman detained in Ethiopia has seen no evidence against him, lawyer says

NAIROBI



REUTERS cameraman Kumerra Gemechu has been held in solitary confinement for nearly a week without charge or being given any evidence of wrongdoing, his lawyer said.

His lawyer Melkamu Ogo said on Wednesday that police informed him that their lines of enquiry included accusations of disseminating false information, communicating with groups fighting the government, and disturbing the public's peace and security. However, he said he has seen no evidence.

Kumerra (pictured) was arrested at his home in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa last Thursday and is being held until at least Jan. 8 pending a police investigation.

Kumerra's family said he was being held in a cold cell and was sleeping on a mattress on the floor. However, they said they were being allowed to visit Kumerra, as is his lawyer, and have brought him extra clothing, food and medication.

The Ethiopian police and prosecutor's office did not respond to questions from Reuters on the reasons for Kumerra's arrest and the conditions in which he is being held, nor requests for comment on his case.

"Kumerra is part of a Reuters team that reports from Ethiopia in a fair, independent and unbiased way," Editor-in-Chief Stephen J. Adler said in a statement on Monday. "Kumerra's work demonstrates his professionalism and impartiality, and we are aware of no basis for his detention."

Similar accusations have been levelled against several other journalists this year, Melkamu said. However, media watchdog groups say in most cases no formal charges were filed. Police and government officials did not respond to requests for comment.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize in 2019, has overseen sweeping reforms since taking office in 2018, including the release of tens of thousands of political prisoners and unbanning of scores of media outlets.

However, some rights activists have expressed concern that his government may be reverting to some of its predecessor's authoritarian ways. Thousands of people were arrested this year after outbreaks of deadly violence, including a conflict between the military and a rebellious regional force in the northern region of Tigray.

Media watchdog groups, including the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists and Paris-based Reporters Without Borders (RSF), reported the arrests of at least seven Ethiopian journalists in November, the month that fighting broke out in Tigray.

Agencies

## Xi stresses making greater breakthroughs in reform at new development stage

BEIJING

PRESIDENT Xi Jinping on Wednesday stressed concerted efforts to make greater breakthroughs in the reform at China's new development stage.

Xi (pictured), also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks while presiding over the 17th meeting of the central committee for deepening overall reform.

Li Keqiang, Wang Huning and Han Zheng, all members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and deputy heads of the central committee for deepening overall reform, attended the meeting.

The meeting reviewed a summary and evaluation report on deepening overall reform since the third plenary

session of the 18th CPC Central Committee.

The meeting also reviewed and approved a series of guidelines and plans on integrating the Party's leadership into corporate governance of centrally administered state-owned enterprises (SOEs), developing an economic system for green and low-carbon circular development, law-based environmental information disclosure, administrative data sharing, deepening reforms on budget management, enhancing ideological and political work, improving tax law enforcement, and the establishment of a financial court in Beijing.

Xi said reforms over the years have witnessed the development of a series of innovative theories, the launch of a host of major initiatives, and a raft of major breakthroughs, all of which are revolutionary and have broken new ground



in advancing the causes of the Party and the country toward historic achievements and changes through reform and opening-up.

He added that the reforms have brought about profound changes in the ideological and theoretical field, organizational structure as well as the state and governance systems, with extensive public participation.

Xi stressed that China still faces complex contradictions and problems on the road to reform.

He said it is imperative to integrate advancing reforms with serving the overall work of the Party and state, com-

bine deepening reforms with fostering institutional integration, and combine advancing reform with forestalling and defusing major risks.

He also urged to combine stimulating innovative vitality with gathering strength to forge ahead, and fully stimulate the enthusiasm, initiative and creativity of all sides to advance reforms.

The relationship among Party committees, the board of directors and executive management should be properly handled in central SOEs in a bid to forge a corporate governance mechanism featuring clear-cut rights and responsibilities, coordinated operation and effective checks and balances, according to the meeting.

Establishing and improving a green and low-carbon circular economic system and promoting the green transformation

of economic and social development are the fundamental solutions to China's resource, environmental and ecological problems, the meeting noted.

The meeting also called on enterprises to fulfill their legal obligations, while urging the establishment of a compulsory environmental information disclosure system.

The meeting stressed optimizing the coordination mechanism for administrative data sharing, deepening the reform of the budget system, enhancing and improving ideological and political work and improving the tax law enforcement.

Establishing financial courts is an important measure to serve the implementation of the country's financial strategy, forge a sound legal environment for finance and boost healthy economic development, the meeting noted.

Xinhua

## CAR opposition calls for cancellation, rerun of elections

BANGUI

THE Democratic Opposition Coalition 2020 (COD-2020), a platform of opposition parties of Central African Republic (CAR), has called for the cancellation and rerun of the presidential and legislative elections held last

Sunday.

In a statement dated Tuesday, COD-2020 cited low voter turnout in provinces under threat from armed rebels and electoral irregularities linked to insecurity as reasons that prompted it to call for a "concertation of the active stakeholders of the nation

before holding the new elections."

It described the implementation of the electoral process security plan, signed between the CAR government and the United Nations mission in the country (MINUSCA), as a "total failure" in ensuring "the security of voters,

candidates, and electoral material throughout the country."

Before last Sunday's polls, the opposition had insisted on postponing the elections because of insecurity, but their request was rejected by the Constitutional Court.

According to government

spokesman Ange-Maxime Kazagui, 5,400 polling stations, or over 85 percent of the total, managed to open last Sunday, allowing for legitimacy and credibility of the polls, which took place in relative calm in the presence of MINUSCA across the country.

Xinhua

## China helps accelerate process of international poverty reduction

CHINA is willing to work with all countries to promote international poverty reduction and build a community with a shared future for humanity, said Chinese President Xi Jinping in a congratulatory letter to the International Forum on Sharing Poverty Reduction Experience, which opened in Beijing on Dec. 14.

In the letter, Xi also expounded on the historical process, great achievements and international contribution of the efforts made by the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Chinese government in poverty alleviation.

Xi's letter demonstrated China's unwavering determination in responding to challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic with the

world, in jointly promoting poverty alleviation and helping more people in the world benefit from the results of poverty reduction.

Calling poverty eradication "a common ideal of humanity," Xi said that the CPC and the Chinese government made unremitting and arduous efforts to ensure a better life for the people.

Over the past 40-plus years of reform and opening-up, more than 700 million people in China have been lifted out of poverty, contributing more than 70 percent of the global poverty reduction.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, the CPC and the Chinese government have moved pov-

erty alleviation to a more prominent position, and fought the largest and most vigorous battle against poverty in history.

After eight years of continuous efforts, China has accomplished its poverty alleviation target for the new era on schedule.

The country has lifted all the rural poor under the current income standard out of poverty, removed all impoverished counties from its poverty list, and eradicated absolute poverty and overall regional poverty.

With nearly 100 million poor people in rural areas lifted out of poverty, China has achieved a significant victory that has impressed the world.

"Between 1981 and 2004, China

succeeded in lifting more than half a billion people out of extreme poverty. This is certainly the greatest leap to overcome poverty in history. China's efforts alone have ensured that the world's Millennium Development Goal on poverty reduction will be met," said Robert Zoellick, former president of the World Bank.

China has always believed that "You yourself desire rank and standing; then help others to get rank and standing."

While advancing poverty alleviation at home, China has always provided assistance to other developing countries to the best of its capacity, and has contributed to the global poverty reduction cause through

concrete actions.

The country has set up the China-UN Peace and Development Fund and the South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund, and made solid progress in cooperation projects under such frameworks as the Pilot Project of Poverty Reduction Cooperation in East Asia and the China-Africa Poverty Reduction and People's Welfare Plan.

China has also continued to seek greater synergy between the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) cooperation and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

According to a World Bank report, BRI projects could help lift 7.6 million people out of extreme poverty

and 32 million people from moderate poverty.

In June this year, China joined the UN Alliance for Poverty Eradication as a founding member.

In 2021, the country will host a workshop on digital technology-enabled poverty alleviation, in a bid to unleash the role of digital technologies in eradicating poverty in the Asia-Pacific region.

China has provided assistance for at least 166 countries and international organizations to help reduce poverty in other developing countries, noted Alicia Bárcena, executive secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). **People's Daily**



## BRI to call for greener business practices

CHINESE enterprises have been shouldering corporate social responsibilities in their host countries, progressing China's Belt and Road agenda. Meanwhile, with the international communities reaching a consensus toward achieving sustainable development goals, experts believe that now is the optimal time to foster green development linked to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

### Go green together

The Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railways (SGR), part of BRI in Kenya, has established a strict management system, adopting practices and processes that are environmentally responsible throughout the project.

The SGR has invested 220 million Kenyan shillings (\$1.97 million) in environmental protection and conducted 236 environmental impact assessments (EIA), according to "2018-2019 Chinese Enterprises in Kenya Social Responsibility Report" by Kenya China Economic and Trade Association.

As for its management of quarries and dump sites, the Chinese contractor has strictly followed environmental protection measures specified in the EIA report during the construction to minimize the impact on the environment.

It has also built noise barriers along the section running through the Nairobi Wildlife Park to reduce the impact of noise on wildlife.

To reduce the impact of noise on surrounding communities, the SGR has also chosen quieter machinery, the report said.

Chinese enterprises operating in Kenya has adopted a proactive approach to environmental impact management and incorporated energy conservation and environmental protection into their day-to-day operations, the report introduced.

Chinese companies are focused on reducing the consumption of raw materials, water and energy by optimizing processes and upgrading technologies.

Meanwhile, companies are working to manage the direct environmental impacts of their construction and operation activities, including liquid effluent, solid waste, air emissions, and noise levels.

Throughout the construction of the C12 Highway Project, China Wu Yi Co, a construction and engineering company, initiated dialogues with local government agencies, wildlife conservation organizations and local communities.

It introduced its wildlife protection experience and practices, developing wildlife protection and rescue operation plans for sections that may have adverse effects on wildlife.

Taking suggestions from wildlife protection organizations, the Chinese company adjusted its work schedule to avoid the impact of construction noise on wildlife.

Chinese enterprises increasingly see ecological restoration as a necessary part of the construction processes.

China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) Kenya signed an agreement with an environmental management company regarding the restoration of the mangrove ecosystem near its construction site in Mombasa.

In response to the Kenyan government's call for action to protect the environment, PowerChina installed an incinerator to dispose plastic waste generated by the Kenya 330 Highway Project to reduce the release of pollutants into the environment, the report said.

Huawei Technologies (Kenya) has donated approximately \$100,000 each year to the Safaricom Marathon, an annual sporting event hosted in the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy for 10 consecutive years.

### Global efforts

Working with partners worldwide, China is jointly building a green Belt and Road with concerted efforts to create synergies for global biodiversity conservation.

The Ministry of Ecology and Environment of China (MEE) and partners have jointly initiated the BRI International Green Development Coalition (BRIGC), to build a cooperation platform for green BRI development and achieving the 2030 sustainable development goals together with BRI participating countries.

"China will peak carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. Immediately after [China], South Korea and Japan made similar promises. In the US, Joe Biden has foreshadowed a green agenda as a core part of his presidency. The EU is driving a green new deal, so all these three main economies are driving the go green direction, and many businesses are doing the same. So this is the most exciting, promising optimistic time for the environment in our generation and we should grasp this opportunity," Erik Solheim, President of BRI Green Development Institute and former head of UN Environment Program, told the Global Times on December 8.

The BRIGC now has more than 150 partners from over 40 countries and regions.

The BRIGC advisors have recommended that China apply more stringent environmental controls over its outbound investments.

Zhu Chunquan, head of Nature Initiatives and Tropical Forest Alliance at the World Economic Forum in Beijing, told the Global Times on Thursday that BRIGC is conducive to promoting economic, trade and sustainable development cooperation between China and the Belt and Road countries.

"BRIGC integrates with the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), global biodiversity targets while addressing challenges of climate change and achieving carbon neutral goals," Zhu said.

"In terms of investment, project planning, design and implementation or operations, [Chinese companies] need to practice internationally recognized standards and guidelines. It's more conducive to international dialogue and accepted in the country where the project is located," Zhu pointed out.

There's so much enthusiasm now for going green, following China making a commitment on carbon neutrality, Solheim noted.

Global Times

## With Xiaokang victory in sight, China saddles up for socialist modernisation

### BEIJING

CHINA has accomplished its poverty alleviation target for the new era on schedule, completing the foundational task and meeting the landmark target of building a Xiaokang society, rendered in English as a "moderately prosperous society in all respects," by the centenary of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

By achieving its first centenary goal within the set time frame, China will then turn to the second, entering a new stage of development to build a modern socialist country in an all-round way, as the CPC leadership has adopted proposals for formulating the 14th Five-Year Plan and long-range goals.

Building a Xiaokang society has, for decades, remained the Party's firm commitment to the people and to history.

New interpretations of Xiaokang have emerged, a concept that took root over 2,500 years ago that represented ancient Chinese people's longing for a peaceful and happy life, as the Party deepens its understanding of the term and sets higher targets to meet people's growing demands for better lives, covering everything from material and cultural needs, democracy, rule of law, fairness and justice, to security and a better environment.

The advent of a moderately prosperous China is about building better lives for the Chinese public. Over the past five years, China has lifted 55.75 million rural residents out of poverty and created more than 60 million new jobs in urban areas.

The country has also built the world's largest social security system during the five-year period, with its basic medical insurance covering over 1.3 billion people and basic old-age insurance covering nearly 1 billion people. Chinese people have more money to spend, have become more educated and enjoy better medical services as well as an improving natural environment.

In 2020, against the backdrop of the ravaging COVID-19 pandemic and the sluggish world economy, the Chinese economy managed to achieve a V-shaped recovery and is expected to generate positive growth, the only one among major economies. With its gross domestic product (GDP) exceeding 100 trillion yuan (about 15 trillion



Combo photo taken between July and October 2020 shows villagers, who used to be registered as impoverished households in over 20 cities and counties of northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, smiling as they have benefited from the poverty alleviation industry. (Xinhua)

U.S. dollars) and per capita GDP over 10,000 U.S. dollars, China's economic performance in this extraordinary year adds impetus to global economic recovery and growth.

As economic globalization rides into strong headwinds amid rising trade protectionism and isolationism worldwide, the challenges and pressure brought by external changes did not crush the Chinese economy but have rather boosted China's innovation and self-development.

Meanwhile, China has sped up the country's reform and opening up and pushed forward high-quality growth. The Chinese economy has stood the test of the pandemic. The fundamentals sustaining sound and steady economic growth remain unchanged.

With a population of 1.4 billion and a middle-income group exceeding 400 million, an increasingly open China is the world's biggest and most promising consumer market as it boasts ultra-large domestic demand. Its solid material foundation accumulated in the past decades, rich human resources, well-developed industrial system and

growing strength in sci-tech innovation have brought the world's second-largest economy the confidence and capability to guard against external risks and impacts.

China's socialist system boasts an institutional advantage of working under a nationwide framework with concentrated efforts and resources pooled for major projects.

The decisive victory in building a Xiaokang society in all respects, which still requires a systematic assessment and review in the first half of 2021 before the official announcement of the achievement of moderate prosperity can be made, has laid a solid material foundation and provided a strong guarantee for embarking on a new journey to fully build a

modern socialist China.

China is and will long remain in the primary stage of socialism, with the formidable tasks of implementing reform, achieving development and ensuring stability still ahead.

The country still faces acute problems caused by unbalanced and inadequate development, as well as the onerous tasks of consolidating and expanding poverty alleviation achievements, narrowing the urban-rural divide and improving social security and governance, among others. There is still a long way to go to lead the Chinese people to common prosperity.

China aims to achieve a set of social and economic objectives over the next five years. The country will take new steps in implementing its reform and opening up, further enhance its socialist market economy and basically complete the building of a high-standard market system, further improve social etiquette, make new progress in promoting ecological civilization, improve people's well-being and enhance governance capacity. **Xinhua**

## Death toll rises to 22 in Aden's airport explosions in southern Yemen

### ADEN

THE number of deaths caused by three explosions that struck Aden's airport in southern Yemen rose to 22 on Wednesday evening, the country's Interior Ministry announced.

According to a statement released by the pro-government ministry based in the southern port city of Aden, nearly 22 people were killed and 50 others wounded in Aden's airport blasts.

The ministry's statement indicated that the coordinated blasts targeted local officials and employees gathered to welcome the government's members at the airport. Yemen's President Abdu-Rabbu Mansour Hadi accused the Houthi rebel group of being behind the explosions.

The Yemeni president officially directed the formation of a committee from the new power-sharing government to investigate the repercussions of the attack against the airport of Aden.

Hadi chose the newly-appointed Minister of Interior and leaders of the security and intelligence departments to lead the investigation committee in Aden, in coordination with the Saudi Arabia-led coalition, according to the state-run Saba News Agency.

He also stressed, during his phone call with the country's Prime Minister Maen Abdulmalik, that "the terrorist acts committed by the Iranian-backed Houthi militia and extremist terrorist groups will not discourage the legitimate government from exercising its duties from the temporary capital of Aden."

Meanwhile, the International



Smoke billows at the airport in Aden on Dec 30, 2020 after explosions rocked the Yemeni airport shortly after the arrival of a plane carrying members of a new unity government. (AFP)

Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Yemen said that one of its employees died during the airport's explosions in Aden.

The Red Cross branch in Yemen said in a statement posted on their official Twitter account that "we are profoundly saddened that one of our colleagues was killed in Aden's airport explosion."

"Two others are unaccounted for and three were injured. Our staff were transiting through the airport with other civilians. This is a tragic day for us and the people of Yemen," the Red Cross statement said.

Three massive explosions on Wednesday struck Aden's airport just minutes after the arrival of a new power-sharing government from Saudi Arabia.

Earlier this month, Hadi issued a decree to form a new power-sharing government in Yemen led by Saeed, a move that received regional and international welcome.

The new government consisted of 24 ministerial portfolios, divided equally

between the northern and southern provinces in Yemen.

The new Yemeni government was established in accordance with the terms of the Riyadh Peace Agreement jointly signed in November last year between the Yemeni government and the leaders of the Southern Transitional Council (STC).

In 2019, Saudi Arabia persuaded the STC and the Yemeni government to hold reconciliation talks, which resulted in a deal to form a new technocratic cabinet of no more than 24 ministers.

But numerous obstacles have stood in the way of implementing the deal, which excluded the Houthi rebels who are still controlling the capital Sanaa and other northern provinces of the war-torn Arab country.

The impoverished Arab country has been locked in a civil war since late 2014, when the Houthis overran much of the country and seized all northern regions including Sanaa.

## Algeria to use Russia's Sputnik V during mass vaccination

### RABAT

ALGERIA will use the Russian Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine when it will launch mass vaccination for its population scheduled for January 2021, TSA news portal reports, citing the decision made by the Algerian government following a meeting on Wednesday chaired by Prime Minister Abdelaziz Djerad.

"The Algerian health minister has announced the signing of an agreement with a Russian laboratory to purchase the coronavirus vaccine to start vaccination in January," spokesperson for the cabinet Ammar Belhimer noted. According to him, the Pasteur Institute of Algeria "carried out consultations with the Russian producer of the Sputnik V vaccine, while simultaneously continuing consultations with other foreign parties."

On December 20, Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune instructed Djerad to pick a vaccine to launch mass vaccination already in January.

On December 14, Minister of Health, Population and Hospital Reform Abderrahmane Benbouzid revealed that vaccination against COVID-19 would definitely be free of charge for all categories of citizens. He also highlighted that Algeria would be cautious in choosing the vaccine to use.

On August 11, Russia became the first country in the world to register a coronavirus vaccine named Sputnik V, which was developed by the Gamaleya Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology of the Russian Health Ministry. The job passed clinical trials in June-July. The post-registration trials of Sputnik V began in Moscow on September 7, volunteers received the first vaccine already on September 9.

Agencies

## Japanese look back on what could have been

### TOKYO

IT should have been a perfect year for Japan. There was the reinvigoration promised by the Tokyo Olympics in the summer and the prospects for the country to forge a new path in its relationship with China.

The sakura season when cherry blossoms float like pale pink clouds on the trees that line Tokyo's streets and rivers was to have provided a colorful backdrop for the scheduled visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping and the start of celebrations leading up to the Summer Games.

But the coronavirus had other ideas for Japan, and the rest of the world, in 2020.

As for the much-anticipated visit of the Chinese leader, the practical implications were great. Even greater, was

the symbolism bound up in Xi's arrival. That's because more than a decade has passed since the last Chinese president was received by Japan as a state guest Hu Jintao in May 2008.

In recent years, long-standing Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe had worked to rebuild his country's badly damaged relations with China. The state visit by Xi would serve to consolidate an improvement in bilateral ties. In the end, 2020 is closing without that landmark visit, and Abe stepped down in August because of poor health.

"The relations with Beijing had improved greatly during Abe's term. From my perspective, it would be a shame if the state visit were not to happen in the future and see all of Abe's work thrown out," said Kiyoyuki Seguchi, research director at the Canon Institute for Global Studies.

Abe, who had become Japan's longest-serving prime minister by the time he resigned after two stints in power, ended his second term of almost eight years in the nation's highest office with mixed results.

But an improvement in Japan's ties with China, after years of often-chilly interactions, can be added to his legacy on the diplomatic front.

"Abe implemented a steady strategy that can be described as following the United States firmly in politics and national security issues while deepening cooperation with China on economic matters," said Erbiao Dai, vice-president of the Asian Growth Research Institute in Fukuoka, Japan.

"In the past eight years, that strategy was relatively successful in balancing the relations between Japan, China and the US. That enabled Japan to enjoy sta-

ble economic growth under the Abe regime." It falls to Yoshihide Suga, as Abe's successor, to build on the foundations laid by him.

Dai said Sino-Japanese ties underwent a severe test in 2020. However, with the joint efforts of the two countries, the overall relationship has achieved stability. And, in a troubled year, there were many instances of mutual support and solidarity in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Japanese government and civil society provided "timely aid for China's prevention", and the mainstream media also offered warm support, Dai said.

"This was in sharp contrast to the attitude of a few other developed countries, which took the opportunity to try to suppress China.





Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton celebrates on the podium after winning the Bahrain Grand Prix at Bahrain International Circuit in Sakhir, Bahrain in this November 29, 2020 file photo.

## Arise Sir Lewis; Formula One champion Hamilton gets his knighthood

LONDON

SEVEN-TIMES Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton was awarded a knighthood in the UK New Year's honours list published on Wednesday.

The 35-year-old this year became the most successful F1 driver of all time after equalling Ferrari great Michael Schumacher's record seven titles and beating the German's 91 race wins.

The sport's only Black driver, who grew up in social housing as the grandson of immigrants from the Caribbean, Hamilton has also used his profile to campaign for diversity and speak out against racial injustice.

The Monaco resident's presence on the overseas and international list, rather than a main one with many rewarded for service to public health in a pandemic, was seen as a reflection of his tax status.

The Daily Mail newspaper said Prime Minister Boris Johnson had "bent the rules" to get around the tax requirements for domestic awards.

The citation referred to Hamilton's sporting record and his "charitable and philanthropic contributions in the UK and overseas".

Cinematographer Roger Deakins, famed for his work on movies such as "1917", "Shawshank Redemption" and "Skyfall", was also knighted on the same overseas list.

Hamilton's supporters have long felt his achievements have not been sufficiently recognised at home and

they expressed delight at the Mercedes driver joining a select group of sporting sirs.

"Lewis is a true giant of our sport and his influence is huge both in and out of a car," said newly-appointed Formula One chief executive Stefano Domenicali, a former Ferrari team principal.

"What he has achieved is phenomenal with still more to come." Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff hailed Hamilton, who won his first title with McLaren in 2008, as the most successful British sportsman of his era.

The knighthood, he added, showed that Hamilton -- often seen as a polarising figure -- was "now receiving the recognition he has earned during a career of unparalleled success in motorsport".

"The UK can be very proud to have a champion and ambassador of the calibre of Sir Lewis Hamilton," added the Austrian.

Hamilton is the fourth F1 driver to be knighted after the late Australian Jack Brabham, Stirling Moss and triple champion Jackie Stewart and the only one to have received the award while still racing.

Cycling's Tour de France winner Bradley Wiggins, Olympic 5,000 and 10,000 metres gold medallist Mo Farah, twice Wimbledon tennis champion Andy Murray and England cricketer Alastair Cook have also been knighted as active sportsmen.

REUTERS

## Yanga leadership congratulates players for Taifa Stars' call-up

By Correspondent Ismail Tano

YANGA's leadership has congratulated the outfit's six players who have been selected for Tanzania's senior national team, Taifa Stars, for preparation for the 2021 Africa Nations Championship (CHAN) finals.

The Vodacom Premier League (VPL) squad's information officer, Hassan Bumbuli, said that the side's players selected for Taifa Stars deserve kudos for the achievement, given they will be serving the country.

Yanga's players selected for Taifa Stars are Deus Kaseke, Yasin Mustapha, Ditram Nchimbi, Bakari Mwamnyeto, Feisal Salum and Farid Mussa.

Out of the six, Mustapha has earned his debut call up to the senior national team.

Taifa Stars' head coach, Ettiene Ndayiragije, announced the names of 30 players making a provisional squad which will enter the camp ready for selection for the final squad that will participate in this year's CHAN finals, which will take place in Cameroon.

The squad which was announced on Tuesday evening, put the team's silence to an end, given some of countries, whose teams have qualified for CHAN finals, have had the teams traveling to Cameroon for final preparations.



Yanga's fullback, Yasin Mustapha, is one of the outfit's six players that have earned Tanzania's senior national team 'Taifa Stars' call up for preparation for the 2021 Africa Nations Championship (CHAN) finals. PHOTO: COURTESY OF YANGA

The countries include Uganda, whose team, Cranes, have been camping for some weeks.

Tanzania Football Federation (TFF) said Taifa Stars will enter camp on January 20 to prepare for two friendly matches against DR Congo.

Ndayiragije has left out Yanga's number one keeper, Metacha Mnata and Azam FC's keeper, David Kissu, in the provisional squad.

The Burundian coach

has replaced the two goalies with youthful keepers, Daniel Mgoro (Biashara United) and Abdultwalib Mshery (Mtibwa Sugar).

Mgoro and Mshery will be joined by veterans, Juma Kaseja (Kinondoni Municipal Council (KMC) FC) and Aishi Manula (Simba SC).

Other players selected for the provisional squad are Shomari Kapombe (Simba SC) Israel Mwendu (KMC FC), Edward Charles (Namungo FC),

Aggrey Morris (Azam FC), Erasto Nyoni (Simba SC), Carlos Protas (Namungo FC), Said Ndemla (Simba SC), Baraka Majogoro (Mtibwa Sugar), and Yusuf Mhulu (Kagera Sugar).

Ayoub Lyanga (Azam FC), Rajab Athuman (Gwambina FC), John Bocco (Simba SC), Lucas Kikoti (Namungo FC), Adam Omary (JKT Tanzania) and Dickson Job (Mtibwa Sugar), as well, constitute the team.

Ndayiragije has also included five players from junior teams, including Abdulrazack Hamza (Mbeya City FC U-20), Khelfine Salum (Azam FC U-20), Samwel Jackson (Ihefu FC U-20), Omari Omari (National U-17 squad) and Paschal Gaudence (Azam FC U-20).

The announcement of the squad comes in line with the government's insistence on selection of young players for the team in order to see to it the side puts good performance in various tournaments.

Minister for Information, Culture, Arts and Sports, Innocent Bashungwa, issued the call after holding a recent session to listen to views issued by former soccer players and coaches.

He said the government was determined to make improvements by seeing to it the country restores its glory in major competitions.

"Our session is aimed at getting ideas and advices, where are we

stuck? You should advise us so we can see to it our national team restore its glory," he said.

Bashungwa said despite the fact that the sports industry has been doing poorly, the government has been struggling to take various measures, including making law reforms in line with changes' pace.

"In 1967 the government made legal improvements in sports, seeing to it sports gain professional status, the number of Tanzania's players earning professional contracts outside the country has been rising and now we have reached 54 players for all sports, including football, according to government's statistics," he said.

The ministry's Deputy, Abdallah Ulega, said the meetings will be sustainable as the government is determined to get good results.

"We recognize that a large percentage of the former players are still alive and they are engaged in sports, we will continue to hold meetings with them as they are icons," he said.

Former Yanga and Taifa Stars' player, Ally Mayay, called on the government to establish a system for grooming children in variety of sports at the right age.

"The cost for teaching children should be reduced to enable parents to take care of their children," the veteran noted.



Simba SC's left fullback, Mohamed Hussein (3rd R), celebrates with team mate, Meddie Kagere, when the former scored for the team in their Vodacom Premier League (VPL) encounter with Ihefu FC, which took place in Dar es Salaam on Wednesday. Simba SC won 4-0. PHOTO: CORRESPONDENT JUMANNE JUMA

## Hammon first woman to coach NBA team; Lakers beat Spurs

SAN ANTONIO

BECKY Hammon would have preferred a victory over history after becoming the first woman to coach an NBA team.

The assistant coach took over the San Antonio Spurs in the second quarter after coach Gregg Popovich was ejected in a 121-107 loss to LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers on Wednesday night.

"I try not to think of the huge picture and huge aspect of it because it can be overwhelming," Hammon said. "I really have had no time to reflect. I have not had time to look at my phone. So, I don't know what's going on outside the AT&T Center."

Hammon and the Spurs already had a lot to contend with against the defending league champion Lakers.

James celebrated his 36th birthday with 26 points, eight assists and five rebounds in the Lakers' third double-digit victory. The teams will complete the two-game set Friday night.

"(I was) trying to get the guys in the right spots," Hammon said. "Trying to get them motivated. Obviously, it's a learning situation for all of us, but I would have loved to have walked out there with a win with the guys."

Popovich was ejected by official Tony Brown with 3:56 remaining in the second quarter. Popovich screamed at Brown and entered

the court following a non-call on DeMar DeRozan's attempted layup and a subsequent attempted rebound by Drew Eubanks.

As he exited the court to applause from several of the team's family members in attendance, Popovich pointed a finger at Hammon and had a succinct message.

"You got 'em," Hammon said. "See? He doesn't treat us any differently than he does you guys."

Said LeBron James: "Obviously she's been paying her dues over the last few years and Coach Pop has given her the opportunity. ... It's a beautiful thing just to hear her barking out calls, barking out sets. She's very passionate about the game. Congrats to her and

congrats for our league."

Hammon took over the team's huddles during timeouts and walked the sideline following Popovich's ejection. Hammon was the first full-time female assistant coach in league history.

"Well deserved," Lakers coach Frank Vogel said. "I've talked to her before and she really knows her stuff and obviously she's here for a reason. She's equipped, intelligent (and) the guys have great respect for her. She's going to be a great coach one day."

A three-time All-American at Colorado State, Hammon played for the New York Liberty and San Antonio Stars in the WNBA as well as overseas before retiring to join Popovich's staff in 2014.

"Even in timeouts with Pop as head coach, she is quick on her feet," DeRozan said. "She tells us about defensive assignments, offensive sets we should run. Seeing her in the forefront, it would have definitely been cool to have won for her."

The Lakers contributed to Popovich's frustration and the Spurs' fortunes didn't get much better after the veteran coach exited.

Dennis Schroder had 21 points, Anthony Davis had 20 points and eight rebounds for the Lakers. Wesley Matthews was 6 for 6 on 3-pointers in scoring 18 points off the bench.

The Spurs opened with a 9-2 run, including an uncontested

drive through the lane by Keldon Johnson for a two-handed slam. The Lakers responded with an 11-0 run that promoted a timeout by Popovich.

The Lakers took their first double-digit lead at 35-25 on Kyle Kuzma's 3-pointer with 1:14 remaining in the first quarter.

Dejounte Murray had a career-high 29 points, seven assists and seven rebounds.

"At the end of the day, it don't mean nothing, we lost," Murray said.

DeRozan added 23 for the Spurs, who lost their second straight after opening the season with two consecutive wins.



## Man City kick off new year at Chelsea after COVID clearance

LONDON

MANCHESTER City kick off the New Year at Chelsea on Sunday, eager to move on from a recent COVID-19 outbreak and get back to putting pressure on Premier League leaders Liverpool.

The match, cast into question when COVID-19 forced City to close facilities and postpone Monday's game at Everton, is set to go ahead after the visitors returned to training on Wednesday.

Surging infections in London and the postponement on Wednesday of Tottenham Hotspur's match at Fulham, Chelsea's West London neighbours, raised doubts but the Premier League is confident fixtures can go ahead.

"Safety remains our number one priority, and the club will continue to proceed with great caution," City said in a statement.

"The bubble will undergo further testing in the coming days, the results of which will inform and dictate the next steps."

On the pitch, eighth-placed City will be chasing a third successive league win while Chelsea need to turn around a run of poor form that includes three defeats and a draw in their last five games.

"At the moment, they are a crisis club because they are underperforming," former Chelsea striker Chris Sutton told BBC radio after the West Londoners drew 1-1 with Aston Villa and slipped to sixth.

"They are flat and that's why (manager) Frank (Lampard) needs to get a few wins under his belt and extremely quickly because it can, as we know, turn ugly at Chelsea."

Champions Liverpool, on 33 points from 16 matches, drew 0-0 with Newcastle United on Wednesday and travel to Southampton on Monday.

The points difference between City and Liverpool is seven points but City have two games in hand.

Manchester United, second in the standings and on a nine-match unbeaten streak, host fifth-placed Aston Villa on Friday evening. Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side are three points behind Liverpool.

Leeds United, fresh from a 5-0 thrashing of West Bromwich Albion on Tuesday, travel to Tottenham Hotspur for Saturday's lunchtime kickoff while high-flying Leicester City are at Newcastle United on Sunday.

Everton host West Ham United on Friday and Arsenal play at West Brom on Saturday.

Sheffield United, with two points from 16 Premier League games, travel to Crystal Palace, who are on a five-game winless run, on Saturday.

REUTERS

## Prem has 'full confidence' season will continue

LONDON

THE Premier League said it has "full confidence" that the 2020-21 season will continue as planned, despite an escalation in positive COVID-19 cases that has led to a second fixture postponement in three days following the decision to call off Tottenham's clash with Fulham on Wednesday.

An outbreak of COVID-19 at Fulham saw the game postponed just three hours before kick-off. Everton's Goodison Park clash with Manchester City on Monday was also called off four hours before kick-off as a result of an unspecified number of positive cases at City. City, however, have since announced a return to training, suggesting their match with Chelsea scheduled for Sunday will go on as planned.

The Premier League on Monday reported 18 positive tests of players and club staff between Dec. 21 and Dec. 27 -- a record high since testing began in the summer.

But with infections rising within the UK and more stringent social restrictions imposed by the government in an effort to control the pandemic, the Premier League has insisted that its safety protocols are comprehensive enough to ensure games can continue.

A Premier League statement said: "With low numbers of positive tests across the overwhelming majority of clubs, the Premier League continues to have full confidence in its COVID-19 protocols and being able to continue to play our fixtures as scheduled."

A statement later on Wednesday said the league has not discussed any postponements, and has no plans to do so at this time, adding: "These protocols continue to have the full backing of Government."

"With the health of players and staff the priority, the League is also fully supportive of how clubs are implementing the protocols and rules."

The Premier League confirmed, meanwhile, that the Spurs-Fulham clash was postponed at Fulham's request.

The league said: "Fulham lodged a request with the Premier League Board to rearrange the fixture following a significant rise in positive COVID-19 cases, as well as a number of players showing symptoms today."

"The Premier League Board has consulted its medical advisors and the decision to postpone the game has been taken as a precaution and with the health of players and staff as the priority. The group will now be retested immediately."

(Agencies)

# Liverpool's lack of ruthlessness holding champions back, keeping title race alive

NEWCASTLE, England

LIVERPOOL ended 2020 just as they started it, at the top of the Premier League and in pole position to end the season as champions, but Wednesday's 0-0 draw against Newcastle United at St James' Park proved that not everything is the same as it was 12 months ago.

The first goalless stalemate between these two clubs since 1974 highlighted the key difference between the Liverpool of today and the one that sprinted clear of the chasing pack in the first half last season.

A year ago, Liverpool racked up the points by finding the killer touch in tight games and winning when the margins were narrow. But at St James', despite seeing the likes of Mohamed Salah, Sadio Mane and Roberto Firmino have clear chances to score, this Liverpool was unable to unlock the door and turn one point into three.

That is becoming a recurring problem and explains why Liverpool enter 2021 locked in a title race rather coasting at the top, as they were a year ago.

"We drew tonight and we are still top of the table, so that just shows how difficult the season is for everybody," Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said. "When life gives



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah in action during their Premier League match against Newcastle United at St James' Park in Newcastle, Britain on Wednesday. REUTERS

you lemons, make lemonade."

Klopp and Liverpool might be making lemonade with their lemons, but it is lacking a certain sweetness right now. A central factor in Liverpool's title success last season was their ability to find a crucial one-goal margin on the way to the title, but this time around, they have done so just four times.

When Firmino headed in his 90th-minute winner in the 2-1 Anfield victory against Tottenham two weeks ago, it seemed as though normal service had been resumed. The subsequent 7-0 win at Crystal Palace three days later then appeared to be an emphatic warning to the rest that Liverpool had found their scoring

boots and would inevitably pull clear at the top, leaving the rest trailing in their wake.

But Sunday's 1-1 draw at home to relegation-threatened West Brom was the kind of result that Liverpool would always manage to turn into a victory last season. And the same could be said of this game at Newcastle. Worryingly for Klopp, Liverpool managed just one shot on target in the second-half against West Bromwich Albion and his team repeated that statistic at St James'.

The lack of creativity in midfield is one factor. Collectively, Liverpool's array of midfielders have amassed just three goal-scoring assists all season. The goals are still being made by the full-backs, with seven coming from deliveries by Trent Alexander-Arnold and Andy Robertson,

but opponents have learned how to smother Liverpool in the centre of the pitch.

The return to action of Thiago Alcantara as a second-half substitute at Newcastle, more than two months after his last appearance against Everton, is a positive for Klopp, and the Spaniard will make a difference, but Liverpool do not have the luxury of a huge lead at the top that they had this time a year ago and they are facing a genuine battle to hold onto their crown.

Although they ended 2019 with a 13-point lead over second-place Leicester City -- having played one game fewer than the Foxes -- the delayed start to this season as a result of the coronavirus pandemic means that the year-on-year comparison is not a fair representation of

Liverpool's diminished returns. But after 16 games last season, Liverpool were eight points clear having won 15 and drawn one of those fixtures. Now, they are three points clear of second-place Manchester United, who can move level with Liverpool if they win their game in hand against Aston Villa on Friday.

In terms of goals, Klopp's team are only three behind last season's tally of 40 after 16 games, but the seven scored at Palace distort the picture somewhat. Having dropped points with draws against struggling West Brom, Fulham and Brighton & Hove Albion, their inability to score when it matters is an issue that Klopp accepts is become a problem.

"We didn't score

enough in the other games," he said sharply, when asked to explain the failure to turn draws into victories. "Not scoring is only a concern if you don't create. If you create, it's just momentum. If you keep creating, you will score. I know we will score again, that's how it is. It's not a problem in the moment."

Liverpool should have scored more than once at St James'. Salah sent two close range efforts wide, Firmino had a header well-saved by Newcastle goalkeeper Karl Darlow and Mane was only denied a clear strike into the net by Fabian Schar's goal-line clearance in the second-half.

But the goal didn't come and Klopp even substituted the mis-firing Salah late in the game in an attempt to find a way through. Having lost defender Virgil van Dijk and Joe Gomez to long-term knee injuries earlier this season, the concern at Liverpool was that defensive problems would become the obstacle in their bid to retain the title. But the reality is that it is a lack of ruthlessness at the other end of the pitch that is holding Liverpool back.

A year ago, they blew the rest away because they were so good at killing teams off, but now, their failure to do that is keeping the title race alive.

ESPN

## Reyna leads charge of Bundesliga's rising teen stars

By Ryland JAMES

THE Bundesliga returns this weekend after a two-week break with Borussia Dortmund's American midfielder Giovanni Reyna leading a crop of talented teenagers rapidly becoming household names.

Reyna, who marked his 18th birthday in November by extending his contract until 2025, scored his first Bundesliga goal on the opening day of this season.

He has featured in all of Dortmund's Bundesliga and Champions League games in 2020/21, scoring three league goals - including the equaliser in a 1-1 draw at Frankfurt - and producing six assists.

Reyna, an attacking midfielder who can play on either wing, needs a strong performance at home to Wolfsburg on Sunday after Dortmund's shock 2-1 defeat to Union Berlin a fortnight ago.

The result left Dortmund fifth in the league, eight points behind leaders Bayern Munich, who host Mainz on Sunday.

Against Wolfsburg, Dortmund could welcome back striker Erling Braut Haaland, who scored ten Bundesliga goals in eight games before being sidelined by a hip injury.

Having forced his way into the Dortmund first-team, Reyna now wants to emulate Haaland and England winger Jadon Sancho, both 20, by deciding games.

"You see guys like

Sancho and Haaland - I want to be at their level," Reyna told The Players' Tribune.

"I know I can make that jump this season. I've come out of my shell. I now demand the ball."

The son of former USA captain Claudio Reyna, he joined Dortmund from New York City FC in July 2019.

Shortly after his 17th birthday last January, Reyna made his Dortmund debut, then bagged his first senior goal in February with a jaw-dropping strike in a German Cup game at Bremen.

He marked his Champions League debut the same month with a brilliant pass to set up Haaland for the winning goal in the last 16, first-leg victory over Paris Saint Germain.

However, Reyna's raw talent needs polishing.

His defensive work was exposed when Union's Liverpool loanee Taiwo Awoniyi got in front of him to head home.

Dortmund fielded a youthful side in Berlin where Haaland's understudy Youssoufa Moukoko became the league's youngest goal-scorer at 16 years, 28 days.

Down in Bavaria, European champions Bayern Munich are also giving youth a chance.

- Musiala impresses for Bayern -

Before this season, double Champions League winners Thomas Mueller and David Ala-



Giovanni Reyna

ba, who graduated from Bayern's academy more than a decade ago, were the last first-team players to come up through the club's youth structure.

That has all changed with 17-year-olds Ja-

mal Musiala and Bright Arrey-Mbi, plus Angelo Stiller, 19, given game time this season for the European champions by Hansi Flick.

As Alphonso Davies proved last season in making the left-back

berth his own as a then 19-year-old, Flick cares more about talent than age.

"Finally, we once again have a few players on our (academy) campus who are breaking through," said Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge.

Of Bayern's trio of teens, Musiala has made the biggest impact.

The attacking midfielder, who can also play on the left, became the club's youngest goal-scorer during the 8-0 demolition of Schalke on the opening day of this season.

Born in Stuttgart - his mother is German - Musiala moved to London as a child and rose through Chelsea's academy before joining Bayern's youth structure last year.

Shortly after earning his first England Under-21 cap in November, Musiala then came off Bayern's bench and

scored with a superb strike in the 3-3 draw against RB Leipzig.

"We're very happy about Musiala's development, he's very calm on the ball and the football world can look forward to what will come of this young talent," Flick said recently.

Musiala also hit the post in Bayern's 2-1 win at Bayer Leverkusen which put them top a week before Christmas.

His obvious talent has drawn the attention of Germany team director Oliver Bierhoff, who hopes to persuade Musiala to play for the country of his birth rather than England.

"We're watching him, because of his German FA past and his current performances," Bierhoff recently said of Musiala, a rarity having played for Germany Under-16s as well as England's juniors.

AFP

Gwiji by David Chikoko





## SPORT

Man City kick off new year at Chelsea after COVID clearance

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT, PAGE 19



Athletics Tanzania (AT)'s president, Anthony Mtaka, speaks at the association's General Assembly, which took place in Dar es Salaam yesterday, to focus on the association's constitutional amendment. PHOTO: CORRESPONDENT JUMANNE JUMA

By Correspondent Nassir Nchimbi

**A**THLETICS Tanzania (AT) is expected to use the association's amended constitution in the election, which is expected to be announced anytime.

The AT's members have approved various amendments for the association's new draft constitution and are expected to present it to the Registrar of Sports Associations and Clubs for registration.

At the AT's General Assembly, which took place in Dar es Salaam on Wednesday to approve the draft, it took more than six hours for the members to discuss and approve the agenda for reducing the number of members of the General Assembly for each region from three to one.

The agenda, which sparked tension, was eventually approved by delegates after AT president Anthony Mtaka had spoken emotionally about it.

Before Mtaka's comments, the Acting Registrar of Sports Associations and Clubs, Ally Mchungahela, entered into an argument with the members, explaining that the change in the constitution is in the nation's interest.

The delegates asked Mchungahela to clarify which law governs his assertion before he had issued details on the sports policy, which directs the presence of such a structure.

Mtaka had to calm the members down, given there was a disagreement between some members, insisting AT is solely concentrating on seeing to it the country achieves success in the sport.

Before the delegates had agreed to have one member from each region attending the AT's General Assembly and election, one of the delegates, former prominent athlete Gidamis Shahanga, questioned his colleagues on

reasons for fielding the three members.

He wanted to know whose interests are the members vouching for in approving the decision.

The AT's second vice-president, Hamad Ndee, supported Shahanga's point, explaining that in the election, regional athletics associations' chairmen might have personal interests, so giving each region chance to field one voter in the election will help to eliminate bureaucracy.

Mtaka was adamant the AT wants to see to it the sport enjoys success and the association has, for that matter, been forced to have such a structure in the draft constitution.

"If we need success, we must accept the change, let's proceed with this structure and AT will spend more money to support the regional teams," he noted.

The delegates agreed to approve the item and continue discussing other changes which have been made, including the appointment of the association's secretary general and AT having a Board of Trustees.

It should be recalled that while the constitutional review committee of the AT was handing over the draft constitution to the then Minister for Information, Culture, Arts and Sports, Harrison Mwakymbe, he proposed that the association should reduce the number of members representing regions in the association's General Assembly.

Currently, each region has three members for the General Assembly, who are all voting, so, the AT members recommended that each region should field one member in the meeting and election.

Filbert Bayi, the chairman of a committee responsible for supervising the a constitutional amendment, said that, even in the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), each country is represented by one member, who is the one who votes for the representation, so the changes will help reduce operating costs.

Other proposals in the draft touched on the level of education for the AT leaders, in which the draft recommended candidates for the AT's president and vice-presidents' positions must have at least a diploma education, with the age for people that are running for the posts limited to 70 years.

The composition of the AT Executive Committee, as per the draft constitution, is the committee should be made up of president, one vice-president instead of two, a secretary and treasurer appointed by six Executive Committee members from each region.

The draft moreover recommended the formation of a Disciplinary Committee, Disciplinary Appeals Committee, Election Committee and Board of Trustees.

**5 EATV FRIDAY**

**TONIGHT @ 9:00**

11:00 DADAZ LIVE  
12:00 Mid Week Movie (r)  
13:30 Kali Za Wana  
14:00 Bongo Hits  
15:00 Funguka  
15:30 Wakilisha (r)  
16:00 Ujenzi (r)  
16:30 #HASHTAG  
17:00 SSELECT  
17:55 Kurasa  
18:00 eNewz  
18:30 Skonga  
19:30 EATV SAA I  
19:45 MJADALA  
20:00 DADAZ (r)  
21:00 Friday Night Live  
23:00 Kurasa (r)

**Friday Night Live** The Weekend begins here! Listen to upbeat mixed music by the hottest DJs. Gossip, showbiz updates and exclusive interviews with celebrities from home and abroad. Don't you dare miss this.

**eastafrica RADIO**

06:00 Supa Breakfast  
10:00 MAMAMIA  
12:00 Kipenga Xtra  
13:00 Planet Bongo  
16:00 EA Drive  
20:00 Kipenga  
21:00 Friday Night Live

**88.1FM DAR ES SALAAM**



Kinondoni Municipal Council (KMC) FC's players participate in training in Dar es Salaam recently to shape up for the team's Vodacom Premier League matches.

## KMC FC takes aim at Mbeya City FC in VPL

By Correspondent Ismail Tano

A 23-man squad of the Kinondoni Municipal Council (KMC) FC left for Mbeya on Wednesday evening to face Mbeya City FC in a Vodacom Premier League tie, which will take place at Sokoine Stadium tomorrow.

The domestic top flight's first phase match between KMC FC and Mbeya City FC, which took place in Dar es Salaam, saw the former cruise to 4-0 win over the latter.

Christine Mwangala, KMC FC's information officer, said all of the team's players who make the trip, are in good condition and are eager to come out with good results.

The KMC FC squad had, earlier on Wednesday, held its final training session in Dar es Salaam in a bid to stay in great shape ahead of the game.

The club is placed 10th place in the domestic top flight's table with 21 points, while their opponents, Mbeya City FC, has been placed 16th with 13 points.

Four of KMC FC players who were nursing injuries have returned to the squad.

The outfit disclosed Abdul Hillary, Hassan Kapalata, who were nursing various injuries, made their way back to the squad on December 27 to join their teammates in training to prepare for the domestic top flight's second phase.

Kapalata and Hillary were not with the team for a month due to the injuries.

Others, who were also nursing injuries and have regained fitness, include Hassan Kabunda, who was injured in the game against Simba.

Kabunda missed out on KMC FC league encounters with Ifeju FC and JKT Tanzania.

The KMC FC's left fullback, David Bryson, who was featuring for the national U-20 side 'Ngorongoro Heroes', has also joined his teammates.



FC Platinum's head coach, Norman Mapeza.

## FC Platinum braces for tricky 2020/21 CAF Champions League second leg against Simba SC

By Correspondent Ismail Tano

ZIMBABWE'S FC Platinum's head coach Norman Mapeza has said that the second leg of the CAF Champions League's first round match pitting his club against Tanzania's Simba SC will be quite competitive given both outfits are out to sail through to the tournament's group stage.

The two outfits will lock horns in the second leg at Benjamin Mkapa Stadium in Dar es Salaam on January 6.

Mapeza, who led his side to a 1-0 victory over Simba SC in the first leg, which took place at the former's backyard a week ago, said he feels FC Platinum will face stiff opposition in the Dar es Salaam game because of preparations, which have been put in place by Simba SC.

He said Simba SC's slogan 'War In Dar', which will be used to motivate the squad's players in the coming clash, gives him a feeling the latter will seek to make the most of their home ground advantage.

Simba SC's ability to fully exploit the club's fans' support to post victory in the outfit's home games in the continental showpiece, according to him, will also boost the outfit in the next week match.

Simba had, in their participation in the premier continental club tournament in 2018/19, notched wins over Es-

watini's Mbabane Swallows, Zambia's Nkana FC, Al Ahly of Egypt, Algeria's JS Saoura and AS Vita Club of Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Mapeza stated: "The obvious truth is that they have a good record in their home venue, which is a bit scary but it still can't stop us from managing our plans, we have won at home but even out here we still need better results."

"As for tracking down opponents, for us it is done without any problems and that is the main reason why we start preparations early."

"Simba have come up with the slogan meaning that the battle is in Dar es Salaam, where their players have promised to play to the best of their ability to qualify for the group stage", he stated.

The teams are expected to meet in the second leg on January 6 and the aggregate winners will advance to the group stage, while the losers will fall to the play off stage of the CAF Confederation Cup.

Simba SC will need to record 2-0 win over FC Platinum next week to book a place in the CAF Champions League's group stage.

The FC Platinum will be out to notch either a draw or victory to knock Simba SC out of the round.

## Flexibles by David Chikoko

... AND a HAPPY NEW YEAR 2021!

