



National Pg 2
Tourism promotion campaign in Vietnam

National Pg 3
Funds for youth to improve businesses

National Pg 4
Two children disappear in Mbeya region

Page 13



TRA adds 20pc more revenue in fiscal year second quarter

JKT camp, two prisons focus on oil palm seeds

By Guardian Correspondent, Kigoma

THREE public institutions have embarked on mass production of improved seedlings of oil palm. “Tenela” in view of the government’s push to revive the palm oil crop for cooking oil production in Kigoma Region.

The public entities taking up massive production of the improved seedlings are the National Service Camp at Bulombora (JKT-Bulombora), Kwitanga and Ilagala prisons in Kigoma and Uvinza districts respectively.

“Tenela” seedlings produced by these institutions will be grown in their farms and distributed freely to residents in nearby villages to push up palm oil production following directives issued by Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa during a tour of the region.

Speaking on the ongoing strategies, the Acting Commander of 821 JKT Bulombora, Capt Benitho Lubida said producing “Tenela” seed is tied to its high oil yields that will reduce costs of importing cooking oil each year.

He said the production of seeds was being conducted in collaboration with the Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute (TARI), tasked by the government to oversee palm oil production.



Home Affairs deputy minister Hamad Masauni (2nd R) views a demonstration of the procedure to register people for a national identity card from the National Identification Authority (NIDA). The deputy minister was in Morogoro region yesterday. With him is NIDA registration officer James Malimo (2nd R). Photo: Home Affairs

For the month of October, 2019 TRA collected 1.484trn/-, while November collections rose to 1.501 trn/-

By Henry Mwangonde

THE Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) has collected 4.972 trn/- out of the targeted 5.100trn/- in the second quarter of 2019/20, an increase of 19.78-percent from the amount collected the same period the previous year.

Speaking at a press conference yesterday, TRA Commissioner General Dr Edwin Mhede said the taxman collected 1.987 trn/- for the month of December 2019.

“TRA broke its own record made in September where it collected 1.767trn/- equivalent to 97.20-percent of the targeted 1.817trn/-,” he said.

The December collection was equivalent to 100.20-percent of the targeted 1.983 trn/-, adding 22.05 percent in collections compared to 1.628trn/- collected during the same month in 2018.

The second quarter covers October, November and December, where for the month of October 2019 TRA collected 1.484trn/-, while November collections rose to 1.501 trn/-.

Dr Mhede said the increase and achievements were a sign that Tanzanian

In collaboration with TARI, Bulombora JKT are preparing 500,000 ‘Tenela’ seedlings to cater for six districts and numerous villages close to the camp

Capt Lubida said for a start they have planted 19,600 seedlings while they continue to prepare more seedlings, with a 916 acre farm prepared for the purpose in response to the premier’s appeal.

In collaboration with TARI, Bulombora JKT are preparing 500,000 “Tenela” seedlings to cater for six districts and numerous villages close to the camp, he said.

The Chief Warden of Kwitanga Prison, Dominic Kazimile said the government wants to ensure that prisons become centres for production, and in this prison the focus is on growing high quality “Tenela” oil palm seedlings that yield big quantity of palm oil.

He said the prison aims to cultivate 6,000 acres and already they have prepared 400 acres in the first phase, while growing 10,795 seedlings and removing aged trees planted way back in 1968.

For his part, Chief Warden of Ilagala Prison in Uvinza District, ASP Mangole Mbaruk said they have received 10,000 seedlings from TARI and have prepared 200 acres for palm oil palm farming.

TARI Director Dr Geoffrey Mkamilo was pleased by Bulombora JKT and Prisons in responding the call from premier Majaliwa.

TURN TO PAGE 2

Stability uppermost in JPM and Shein New Year messages

By Guardian Reporters

PRESIDENT John Magufuli and his Zanzibar counterpart, Dr Ali Mohamed Shein yesterday urged Tanzanians to maintain peace, love and stability in the year 2020 to ensure more development and the country’s prosperity.

In separate New Year messages circulated to the media, both leaders said peace, stability and unity are crucial aspects in ensuring successful implementation of development plans.

Speaking from Rubondo Island National Park during New Year Eve, Dr Magufuli said he has also received New Year messages from a number of Tanzanians, retired presidents and religious leaders across the country.

In their New Year messages, the clerics praised Magufuli for a job well done in ensuring development of Tanzanians. They were optimistic that in 2020 the country will record further development

In their New Year messages, religious leaders praised Dr Magufuli for a job well done in ensuring the development of Tanzanians. They were optimistic that in 2020 the country will record further development.

A message from the Head of the Evangelical Lutheran of Tanzania (ELCT), Dr Fedrick Shoo read: “Praise the Lord, I am congratulating you for spearheading our nation’s development. I praying that our Almighty God continues to bless you in 2020; I wish you many more successes. It is only by His grace we are blessed to see the New Year.”

President Magufuli directed Chato District Executive Director, Eliud Mwaiteleke to announce a tender for construction of the 2.2km Kasenda - Muzanza road. He said road should be constructed at tarmac level, and the government will fully fund the project.

He also directed the Chato DED to control

TURN TO PAGE 2

‘Tanzania expected over 5,000 babies on New Year’

By Guardian Reporter

AN estimated 5,000 babies were expected in Tanzania on the New Year, on the basis of an affirmation by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

The UN agency said in a statement yesterday that an estimated 392,078 babies would be born worldwide on New Year’s Day, set out by the World Data Lab forming the basis of the UN report, World Population Prospects (2019).

During 2020, UNICEF has appealed to world leaders and nations to invest in health workers with the know-how and equipment to save every newborn

“The beginning of a new year and a new decade



is an opportunity to reflect on our hopes and aspirations not only for our future, but the future of those who will come after us,” said Henrietta Fore, UNICEF Executive

Director.

“As the calendar flips each January, we are reminded of all the possibilities and potential of each child embarking on her or his life’s journey—if they are just given that chance.”

Fiji in the Pacific will most likely deliver 2020’s first baby and the United States, its last. Globally, over half of these births are estimated to take place in eight countries—India (67,385), China (46,299), Nigeria (26,039), Pakistan (16,787), Indonesia (13,020), United States (10,452), Democratic Republic of Congo (10,247) and Ethiopia (8,493).

Each January, UNICEF celebrates babies born on New Year’s Day, an auspicious day for child birth around the world. However, for millions of newborns around the world, the day of their birth is far less auspicious.

In 2018, 2.5 million newborns died in just their first month of life, about a third of them on the first day of life. Among those children, most

TURN TO PAGE 2



TURN TO PAGE 2

World welcomes 2020 as wildfires, protests cast a pall over some celebrations

SYDNEY/HONG KONG/
LONDON

The world celebrated the New Year yesterday with fireworks displays from Sydney to London, although celebrations were clouded by deadly wildfires in Australia, protests in Hong Kong and India and nuclear tensions with North Korea.

Large crowds gathered in European capitals for spectacular firework displays that lit up the skies over landmarks like Big Ben in London, the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, the Parthenon in Athens and the Kremlin in Moscow.

The traditional drop of a Waterford crystal ball on Times Square in New York capped a six-hour New Year's Eve show. Intermittent rain did little to dampen the festivities as hundreds of thousands of people were treated to performances by pop star Post Malone, the Korea-pop band BTS, and singer songwriter Alanis Morissette.

In Australia, a million revelers thronged Sydney harbor and nearby districts to watch more than 100,000 fireworks explode above the city, even as thousands of people along the country's eastern seaboard sought refuge from the bushfires on beaches.

Thousands in Hong Kong welcomed 2020 on neon-lit promenades in the picturesque Victoria Harbour, breaking into pro-democracy chants shortly



Anti-government protesters take part in a New Year countdown demonstration at Tsim Sha Tsui in Hong Kong, China, January 1, 2020. PHOTOL: REUTERS.

after the countdown to midnight.

Hong Kong authorities canceled the main midnight fireworks display for the first time in a decade, citing security concerns. A "Symphony of Lights" took place instead, involving projections on the city's tallest skyscrapers, while smaller-scale pyrotechnics were launched from waterfront rooftops.

In Japan, people took turns striking Buddhist temple bells, in

accordance with tradition.

SYDNEY CONTROVERSY

Sydney decided to press ahead with its fireworks despite calls by some members of the public for the display to be canceled in solidarity with fire-hit areas in New South Wales, of which the city is the capital.

Sydney Mayor Clover Moore said planning had begun 15 months ago and that the event

also gave a boost to the economy.

Some towns in eastern Australia canceled their New Year's celebrations as naval vessels and military helicopters helped firefighters rescue people fleeing the fires, which have turned swathes of New South Wales into a raging furnace.

The fires have killed at

least 11 people since October, two of them overnight into Tuesday, destroyed more than 4 million hectares (10 million acres) and left many towns and rural areas without electricity or mobile coverage.

Elsewhere, celebrations from Auckland, New Zealand, to Pyongyang, the capital of isolated North Korea, welcomed in the New

Year with fireworks displays.

Fireworks exploded and confetti rained on revelers after the ball dropped in New York. High school science teachers and students pressed the button that started the ball on its 60-second descent to count down to the New Year in a gesture to highlight efforts to combat climate change.

The ball has changed form several times since it first dropped at One Times Square in 1907 as an iron-and-wood sphere and has now become a global symbol of the New Year.

But amid the celebrations of a New Year and decade, old tensions threatened to flare up. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said on Wednesday his country would keep developing nuclear programs and introduce a "new strategic weapon" in the near future, after the United States ignored a year-end deadline to restart denuclearization talks.

PROTESTS, BREXIT

In Hong Kong, rocked by months of sometimes violent pro-democracy demonstrations, protesters were urged to wear masks at a New Year rally called "Don't forget 2019 - Persist in 2020," according to social media posts.

Some 6,000 police were deployed and Hong Kong's chief executive, Carrie Lam, appealed for calm and reconciliation in her New Year's Eve video message and Chinese leader Xi Jinping hoped "harmony" would return to the territory.

The protests began in response to a now-withdrawn bill that would have allowed extraditions to mainland China, where courts are controlled by the Communist Party, and have evolved into a broader pro-democracy movement.

Thousands of Indians ushered in the year by demonstrating against a citizenship law they say will discriminate against Muslims and chip away at India's secular constitution.

The demonstrations came despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi's attempts to dampen protests that have run for nearly three weeks.

Irshad Alam, a 25-year-old resident of the Shaheen Bagh area of New Delhi, stood with his 1-year-old child in his arms and his wife by his side. He said he had been participating in the protest every day.

"It's freezing here," he said. "But we are still here because we care about this movement."

More than three years after the UK voted to leave the European Union, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, fresh from winning a parliamentary majority in last month's election, promised in his New Year's message to "get Brexit done before the end of this month."

"As we say goodbye to 2019, we can also turn the page on the division, rancor and uncertainty which has dominated public life and held us back for far too long," Johnson added.

Agencies

SEOUL

North Korea's leader plans to further develop nuclear programs and to introduce a "new strategic weapon" in the near future, state media said on Wednesday, although he signaled there was still room for dialogue with the United States.

Kim Jong Un presided over a four-day meeting of top Workers' Party officials this week amid rising tensions with the United States, which has not responded to his repeated calls for concessions to reopen negotiations. Washington has dismissed the deadline as artificial.

Kim said there were no grounds for North Korea to be bound any longer by a self-declared moratorium on testing nuclear bombs and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), according to a statement on the results of the policy meeting carried by the official KCNA news agency.

At times smiling or striking the podium with his hand as he made remarks during the meeting, Kim accused the United States of making "gangster-like demands" and maintaining a "hostile policy", such as by holding continued joint military drills with South Korea, adopting cutting edge weapons and imposing sanctions.

He pledged to continue bolstering his country's nuclear deterrent but said the "scope and depth" of that deterrent will be "properly co-ordinated depending on" the attitude of the United States.

"The world will witness a new strategic weapon to be possessed by the DPRK in the near future," Kim said, using the initials for North

North Korea's leader promises 'new strategic weapon,' leaves room for talks



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un attends the 5th Plenary Meeting of the 7th Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) in this undated photo released on December 31, 2019 by North Korean Central News Agency via REUTERS. File photo

Korea's official name - the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"We will reliably put on constant alert the powerful nuclear deterrent capable of containing the nuclear threats from the U.S. and guaranteeing our long-term security."

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said it would be "deeply disappointing" if Kim reneges on denuclearization commitments and Kim would hopefully "choose peace and prosperity over conflict and war."

In his latest comments on Tuesday in the United States, President Donald Trump said he had a good relationship with Kim and thought the North Korean leader would keep his word.

"He likes me, I like him. We get along. He's representing his country, I'm representing my country. We have to do what we have to do."

"But he did sign a contract, he did sign an agreement talking about denuclearization," Trump told reporters at his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida.

Seoul's Unification Ministry in charge of inter-Korean affairs said large-scale joint military drills with the United States had been halted and it would be unhelpful for negotiations if North Korea took action to introduce what it called a new strategic weapon.

There were no official reports as of early afternoon on Wednesday in South Korea that Kim had delivered an annual New Year's address.

'STRATEGIC WEAPONS'

Kim had previously said

he might have to seek a "new path" if Washington failed to meet his expectations. U.S. military commanders said Pyongyang's actions could include test firing an ICBM alongside nuclear warhead tests. North Korea last test fired an ICBM in 2017.

Jeffrey Lewis, a non-proliferation expert at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in California, said it was difficult to predict North Korea's next move. But it might involve firing a solid-fuel ICBM and an

atmospheric nuclear test, he said.

However, Jeong Han-beom, who teaches security policy at Korea National Defense University in Seoul, said North Korea would not immediately stage such a provocative act as an ICBM or nuclear test because it could risk derailing negotiations.

Tension had been rising ahead of the year-end as North Korea conducted a series of weapons tests and waged a war of words with Trump.

The nuclear talks have made

little headway despite three meetings between Kim and Trump since 2018. Working-level talks in Stockholm in October broke down, with a North Korean chief negotiator accusing U.S. officials of sticking to their old stance.

Kim said there will "never be denuclearization on the Korean peninsula" if Washington adheres to what he calls its hostile policy.

"We will steadily develop necessary and prerequisite strategic weapons for the security of the state until the U.S. rolls back its hostile policy towards the DPRK and lasting and durable peace-keeping mechanism is built," Kim said.

He called for North Koreans to brace for an "arduous and prolonged struggle" and foster a self-reliant economy because of a delay in the anticipated lifting of sanctions.

"The present situation warning of long confrontation with the U.S. urgently requires us to make it a fait accompli that we have to live under the sanctions by the hostile forces in the future, too, and to strengthen the internal power from all aspects."

Yang Moo-jin, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, said the party assembly results made clear Kim wants U.S. security guarantees before taking substantial action toward denuclearization.

"And he is suggesting that he will take the bull by the horns to achieve that goal, while promoting self reliance at home and still being open to talks depending on how Trump handles 'hostile policy,'" Yang said.

Agencies

2020 is the decade of action and it has to be a sprint

By Siddharth Chatterjee

Happy New Year, Kenya. 2020 marks a decade of action towards the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Peace and development are inextricably linked, with each making the achievement of the other far more likely. This puts the conflict-prevention and development work of the UN at the heart of the agenda in East Africa, but in a multi-agency and programme environment, making meaningful progress is challenging.

Aware of this, the UN began a process of structural reforms led by the UN Secretary-General António Guterres who made reforms of the United Nations, a priority at the very beginning of his term in January 2017. The aim being to deliver better results through cooperation, collaboration and integration. 2019 was the year that the impact of these reforms became real and nowhere more than in the peace, conflict-prevention and development pillars of the UN's work.

At the country level, that shift towards a nimble, 21st century UN challenges deeply entrenched practices and operations. In a



Hosted by the governments of Kenya, Denmark and UNFPA, world leaders gather for the 3-day Nairobi Summit on ICPD25 to advance sexual, reproductive health & rights for all. November 12, 2019. File photo

country team with over 23 individual agencies, funds and programmes, the reform process can be complicated, even messy.

To the credit of the Kenya country team, we overcame the challenges of ceding long-held agency interests for the collective good and achieved some ground-breaking milestones in our partnership with governments, civic organizations and the private sector.

The most outstanding was our venturing out to confront challenges that transcend borders. East Africa faces major threats to peace and development across multiple fronts, and respective UN country teams have, in a remarkable show of teamwork, sought to harmonize their responses to these threats. Intersecting border conflicts and the effects of climate change together make a formidable challenge that brought

together UN teams from Kenya and Uganda, in a pact that seeks to bring sustainable development to the Karamoja triangle.

This pact follows from another successful regional collaboration project on the Kenya-Ethiopia border where communities accustomed to recurrent hostilities are now reaching out to each other to find solutions to common socio-economic challenges.

We believe that our regional

surge towards prevention, peacemaking and diplomacy will have a particular impact on the youth, who suffer an enduring sense of being neglected and ignored. This narrative is a breeding ground for extremism and radicalization, so addressing such concerns was a key point of deliberation during last July's African Regional High-Level Conference on Counter-Terrorism and the Prevention of Violent Extremism in Nairobi.

The same regional approach was behind the initiative by Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Somalia to sign the Declaration and Action Plan to End Cross-border FGM in April 2019. This was the first time multiple countries had come together to tackle this pernicious cross-border crime.

But there remain many in the region still left behind by development, and we continue to stand up for them through our UN Development Assistance Framework 2018-2022. The framework's gender equality and rights focus is unmistakable, because in too many communities, the simple fact of being born female shatters one's chances of living in full human dignity.

Our focus on giving a leg-up to those left farthest behind has attracted a positive response from our partners in national and county governments. By staying in lock-step with national priorities on issues such as health, agriculture and housing, the common thread of messages from our partners is that we are staying effective and responsive to the ambitions of Kenyans.

As 2020 beckons, the decade of action starts and it has to be a sprint to deliver on the SDGs, the UN team in Kenya is rolling up its sleeves

with greater urgency, ambition and innovation. We will enhance regional cooperation and private-public partnerships as we work with the Government towards lifting millions of the citizens of this region out of poverty and upholding their human rights.

We are re-imagining ways of delivering development in ways such as the co-creation of an SDG innovation lab between the Government of Kenya, the Centre for Effective Global Action at the University of California in Berkeley, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the UN. The SDG Lab will kick off with support for the delivery of Kenya's Big Four agenda by harnessing, big data, technology and innovation to achieve scale and impact.

As a UN country team, we got off the blocks in 2019 in pursuit of UN Deputy Secretary General Amina Mohammed's challenge to "flip the orthodoxy" for the repositioning of the UN. We have dared to go beyond the typical and will do whatever it takes to respond effectively to the challenges faced by Kenya's people, now and in the future.

Siddharth Chatterjee is the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Kenya.

New Delhi, India

As Shahin Kausar steps down from the makeshift stage set up in the Muslim enclave of Shaheen Bagh in the Indian capital of New Delhi, it is difficult to hear her speak.

Her words are no longer amplified through a sound system, and the man now holding the microphone is drowning her out with boisterous slogans.

It doesn't help that Kausar herself is also on the verge of losing her voice from weeks of shouting. But she is clear why she is in Shaheen Bagh.

"When I saw in front of my eyes, the passion in the people here, they were outraged... That's why I had to come and join," says the 44-year-old activist.

For more than two weeks now, protesters, such as the ones in Shaheen Bagh, have taken to the streets across India to oppose the passing of the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which critics say discriminates against Muslims and violates the country's secular constitution.

Protest led by women

In the Indian capital, the protesters of Shaheen Bagh - especially women such as Kausar - have stood out.

For 16 days now, these women have occupied a part of the main highway, blocking traffic between the capital and Noida, a satellite city. And they don't plan on going anywhere.

"We are here to fight for our rights, our concerns," says 53-year-old Tarannum Begum at the sit-in. "Until they take back their [policies], this will go on."

Away from the limelight of protests in Central Delhi - dominated largely by English-speaking protesters from higher socioeconomic backgrounds - Shaheen Bagh has become a symbol for more vulnerable communities on the fringes of the city.

Police have cracked down brutally on many protests, particularly in Muslim ar-

India has witnessed massive protests since the citizenship law was passed earlier this month. FILE PHOTO. File photo

reas and universities, vandalising homes, using tear gas and batons even on children, and opening fire on peaceful protesters.

At least 26 people have been killed across India, with most deaths reported from Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state governed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The majority, if not all, of those killed were Muslim. Thousands have been detained, mostly in Uttar Pradesh, whose hardline chief minister had vowed revenge on the protesters.

But the demonstration at Shaheen Bagh has remained peaceful, even as protesters remain resolute in opposing Modi's Hindu nationalist government.

NRC fears

At the heart of the unrest is the CAA, which provides a path to citizenship to refugees who arrived in India before 2015 from three neighbouring coun-

tries, as long as they are not Muslim.

Muslims fear the CAA is a precursor to a nationwide National Register of Citizens (NRC), as repeatedly indicated by India's powerful Home Minister Amit Shah.

Recently, the NRC process in the northeastern state of Assam excluded 2 million people, many of them Muslims, effectively rendering them stateless. They now fear either detention or deportation.

Meanwhile, several detention centres operate and are in the works across Assam and in other parts of the country to detain undocumented migrants, triggering fears among Muslims of mass incarceration.

A nationwide NRC would force all Indians to prove their citizenship with documentation, something India's mostly impoverished people of all religions lack.

But women say they are particularly vulnerable.

"I don't have a husband, and us ladies don't even get prop-

erty papers," says Begum, a widow. "Everything is in the name of the husband, so how will a woman prove [citizenship] through her papers?"

Violence at Jamia Millia Islamia

At Shaheen Bagh, the chilly air caused by New Delhi's record winter has a mix of both anxiety and determination.

For 16 days and despite biting cold, crowds have gathered here non-stop, with a legion of volunteers running the show. Protesters huddle over bonfires with free snacks and tea, while women sit in an enclosure next to the stage.

Evenings are particularly busy, with a variety of activities taking place - candlelight vigils, late-night singing, spirited slogans and speeches by activists.

Many women, mostly housewives such as Kausar and Begum, say they have not gone home for days.

"I've been wearing the same set of clothes for the past three days... I have only managed to go

home once," says Begum.

Shaheen Bagh is barely 2km (1.2 miles) from Jamia Millia Islamia, a predominantly Muslim university, which was the site of a brutal police crackdown on December 15.

Over 100 students were injured when police stormed the campus with tear gas and batons following clashes at an area close to the university.

Police ransacked the campus, broke windows in the library and even fired tear gas inside a reading room. Many of the students injured and detained had not been involved in the protest.

The Jamia crackdown catalysed the protest at Shaheen Bagh, with a large number of its students having links to the community.

Daily protests also take place at Jamia, but they generally end up moving to Shaheen Bagh by the end of the day.

"The protest started the day female students at Jamia were brutally attacked and beaten up. Their hair was pulled," says Kausar.

'Won't leave': Women lead protest in India capital's Muslim area



Begum is equally adamant. "They woke us up, we were sleeping," she says.

"It is better to die here [protesting] than be put in detention camps."

However, many in this Muslim neighbourhood remain fearful of what lies ahead.

As the night wears on, the crowd gathers around a projector to watch a documentary about what the government's citizenship policies mean for them.

A clip from one of Modi's recent speeches beams from the screen.

"Those who are creating violence can be identified by their clothes itself," says the prime minister, his voice booming across Shaheen Bagh through loudspeakers.

Many in the crowd are wearing traditional clothes - men in skullcaps, women in burkas. Modi is speaking in innuendo, but he is talking about people like them.

It is one of the many comments made by BJP leaders and government officials, suggesting Muslims do not belong.

For 48-year-old Maqsood Alam, it couldn't be further from the truth. "We were born in India. India is our soil. We love India," he says.

Yet, having to prove that he belongs is a frightening thought for Alam. Like many Muslims in this part of the capital, his status as a migrant worker only makes documentation more complex.

As a result, the father of five seems resigned to a fate of not passing a potential citizenship test.

"The future of our kids is at risk. We went to such lengths to allow them to study. Now where will they live, where will we live?" he asks.

"A child is like a tree, it takes time and effort to grow," says Alam, breaking down as he finishes his sentence.

"They are asking for papers that go back years. I have nothing to prove [my status], I am just a poor man."

AGENCIES

Project empowers over 700 SMEs in Iringa and Njombe regions with key business skills

By Correspondent Friday Simbaya, Njombe

MORE than 700 small and medium scale entrepreneurs (SMEs) in Iringa and Njombe regions have benefited with training on how best to conduct their business and be able to access markets.

The training provided by Tanzania Local Enterprise Development (T-LED)—a Canadian funded project through VSO Tanzania in partnership with Cuso International.

Implemented for five years from 2015 to 2020, the project covered five regions namely, Mtwara, Lindi, Mwanza, Njombe and Iringa.

Apart from sharpening entrepreneurs' business skills, the organization also provides SMEs with machine subsidies, and links them with financial institutions.

T-LED project manager for Iringa and Njombe re-

gions, Stella Mdhila said the business operators were equipped with skills and knowledge to enable them keep financial records, networking, marketing and assisting them to secure loans from banks and financial institutions.

"We focus on finding solutions to challenges facing female entrepreneurs; we want them to access growing markets in the extractive and agribusinesses sectors. Almost 60 percent of the SMEs we support are headed by women", she said.

An entrepreneur, Loyce Polla, said through the trainings she has been able to improve her poultry farming project.

A 63-year-old woman who and retired primary school teacher from Mjimwema Ward in Njombe town said: "My life changed after I was linked to T-LED and where I received a number of trainings as well as being linked to markets. In my farm, I have over 100 local chick-



Njombe-based entrepreneur, Lucy Kitavile on her tractor from TLED support project. Photo: Correspondent Friday Simbaya.

ens, but the number expected to increase since I have

the support from T-LED and Small Industries Develop-

ment Organization (SIDO)".

Stella also keeps hybrid chickens where she collects six trays of eggs daily

although the market is not good due to the fact that many people are engaging in the particular business.

She commended the organization for providing her with an incubator machine worth 3.5m/- for hatching eggs where she pays 40 percent of the cost and T-LED covers the remaining 60 percent.

She said with an incubator she can hatch over 1,000 eggs, and sells a single chick at 1,500/-.

Another beneficiary of the project, Lucy Kitavile who produces fortified maize flour said the organization has supported her with a milling machine with a capacity to process up to 7 tonnes of maize every day.

"I have moved to Songea to Njombe where I am now selling fortified maize flour brabred—'Mama Seki'. I getting various support from T-LED including transport to fetch raw materials and taking finished products to the markets", said Kitavile add-

ing to still have difficulties to access markets in other regions.

The organization also provides tractor under the subsidy scheme to enhance production of maize.

Frank Msigwa who engaged in horticulture business in Njombe region, said he started cultivating avocado in 2006, but after being linked with T-LED he has grown the business and secure markets abroad.

Msigwa said he is now selling avocados in South Africa, Rwanda, Nigeria, Uganda and Kenya. He said that the quality avocados he produces are cultivated through organic farming where no chemical fertilizers are added to the soil.

A local wine producer, Theodory Mlowe said: "I am grateful to the organization for providing me with machines. I have been linked to financial institutions as well as markets within and outside the region".

Ukerewe: Where family planning uptake remains an uphill task

By Lusekelo Philemon

AT the age of 37, Theopista Peter already has ten children. To her, the number is enough as she has started feeling the pinch of taking care of the ten children, particularly when it comes to meeting their basic needs—food (including water), shelter and clothing.

Though in the modern world, the minimum level of consumption of 'basic needs' is not just food, water, clothing and shelter, but also sanitation, education, healthcare, and also internet use.

Living in Busiri village located 19km from Nansio Town—the headquarters of Ukerewe District—the largest island in Lake Victoria, Theopista blames nobody, but lack of awareness on modern family planning, which according to the World Health Organization (WHO), is the ability of individuals and couples to anticipate and attain their desired number of children and the spacing and timing of their births.

Family planning enables women who wish to limit the size of their families to do so as evidence suggests that women who have more than four children are at increased risk of maternal mortality.

At the age of 19, Theopista as it is to other rural-based young girls was married although she wasn't aware of any family planning method—the situation that ended her into having such number of children, whom she is not sure of giving all the necessary needs.

When she started visiting maternal and child health (MCH) clinics, she started hearing of the modern contraceptives and importance of child spacing. But, when she shared the information with other women in the village, she was discouraged because of the myths and misconceptions around modern contraceptives.

Modern contraceptive methods approved for use in Tanzania include implants, male and female steriliza-



Women and their children attending maternal and child health (MCH) clinics recently at one of the health facilities in Ukerewe district. Photo: Guardian Photographer.

tion, oral contraceptive pills, progesterone-only injectables, intrauterine device - copper containing only (IUCD), male and female condoms, and emergency oral contraceptive pills. While traditional methods of contraception include the lactational amenorrhea method, coitus interrupts (withdrawal method), calendar method or rhythm method, cervical mucus method and abstinence.

At some point, Theopista says that she was at the cross road as some of her colleagues used to say modern contraceptives may lead to breast tenderness, headaches, weight gain, lack of regular menstrual bleeding, nausea, and sometimes permanent infertility.

"This is what led me to be a mother of ten as I feared to use any one of the modern contraceptives and instead I relied on traditional methods which weren't helpful to me as I kept on conceiving," she says.

Theopista who is breastfeeding a one-year-old baby has opted to the calendar based method that allows her to avoid sexual intercourse during the fertile stages of their menstrual cycle.

"To me I see this as the safest method as I managed to breast feed my child until now without having any problem and if it wasn't this method I would have another baby," says Theopista, a short, slender and confident woman.

On a light touch, Theopista says: "I delivered these children like dog...and this is my last born because life is much more expensive than it was in the past. I am tired. My womb is not as strong as it used to be."

Theopista is not alone as Christina Focus share the similar experience as she ended up having eight children within shortest period of time, though she cites

the issue of traditional and believes that having many children is a pride in the Kerewe people who lives in Ukerewe Island situated in the Ukerewe District of Tanzania, 45 km north of Mwanza to which it is linked by ferry. It's also the fifth-largest lake island in the world.

Apart from low level of modern family planning education, it is important for male to be actively involved in modern contraceptives, according to Renatus Sylvester works with Sauti ya Wanawake Ukerewe (SAWAU) as a volunteer.

"It is high time for men to be actively engaged in family planning as they have a big share when it comes to the use of modern contraceptives," he suggests.

He adds: "A man has a big share when it comes to issues related to family planning at family level and most of the time men are left behind in this issue."

"Low level of education as one of the factors that plunge women in that trap as many of them are unaware of the modern contraceptives; and instead venture into traditional methods, which aren't effective," says Sylvester.

"As organization, we've been using medical practitioners to educate women on the benefit of using family planning methods, but, women seem to be skeptical because of myths and misconceptions around modern contraceptives."

Pudensiana Ngereza, Special Seats Ward Councilor in the district says more work needs to be done on modern family planning in the island whose community depends on fishing as the main economic activity.

She describes misconceptions around modern contraception as one of the hiccups that still discourage women in the lake Victoria island from using modern contraceptives.

Pudensiana who also works with SAWAU says: "We'll continue bringing women together and thereafter make them informed on issues related to family planning and the importance of child spacing."

At the district level, the situation is unappealing as data shows that in 2015, the use of modern contraceptive was at 11 percent, and this year is at 31.2 percent.

District Medical Officer (DMO) Dr Raphael Mhana says: "Despite all the factors that thwarts family planning use in this island, but we've started seeing improvement and I hope the number of people using contraceptives will continue to grow."

He views family planning as an important tool towards reinforcing people's rights to determine the number and spacing of their children.

"By preventing unintended pregnancy, contraception prevents deaths of mothers and children, that's why we're working hard to scale up MCH services in the district."

According to him, family planning is one of packages pregnant mothers are given when attending MCH clinics, "the challenge remains for those who don't attend MCH clinics, particularly those who are living in small islands where there are no health facilities."

Ester Chaula, Ukerewe District Executive Director (DED) admits that modern family planning uptake remained a challenge in the district due to geographical location, myths and misconceptions on contraceptives.

With the population of more than 400,000 people, the district has a total of 38 islands, though only 15 are inhabitable.

"Having all these scattered islands, making the issue of modern family planning uptake an uphill task and this has been attributed by the fact that many women in Ukerewe are reluctant when it comes to the use of contraceptives," she says.

She adds: "People here don't see the importance of modern contraceptives, that's why we're working hard to ensure that they are empowered with education on family planning as well as child spacing as these are crucial issues for the health of women."

Dr John Chacha, Mwanza-based obstetrician and gynecologist also views family planning as important as it reduces the need for abortion, especially unsafe abortion.

According to him, a woman who carries many pregnancies put her health at risk as her womb is not as strong as it used to be. Her system is not as ready to carry a pregnancy as she did with her firstborns.

"Pregnancy alone is enough to end a woman's life, that's why we're encouraging people to venture into modern family planning," he says.

Apps advise farmers on weather, prices, loans

By Agatha Ngotho

FROM digital advisories on weather and planting information to marketing of produce and accessing financial and insurance services, agriculture in Kenya is coming of age.

Digital services have changed the way farmers do business as they are able to access information via mobile or smartphone applications.

The Food and Agricultural Organization says innovation is a life-changing approach where some see opportunities while others see problems.

"Digital innovation is transforming ideas into values, creating employment and new business. With the new challenge in technologies, we need to address these opportunities in terms of fighting hunger, reducing poverty, increasing resilience and improving productivity in agriculture," says Samuel Varas, FAO chief information officer.

Andrew Tuimur, Agriculture Chief Administrative Secretary, says the ministry is integrating digital technology, access to and interpretation of the use of data-based information as the country enters the Third Industrial Revolution.

He says the government in partnership with World Bank recently launched the One Million Farmers platform aimed at scaling up disruptive digital technologies in Kenyan agriculture.

"The idea is to ensure access to extension services, finance, market and a data-driven application. This will also help in fast-tracking the Agricultural Sector Transformation and Growth Strategy using some of these technologies. This is a 10-year national strategy in which the Big Four Agenda is embedded," Tuimur says.

This was launched by the World Bank in conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture, Korean Trust Fund, Mercy Corps and UN-SDGs Partnership Platform.

The platform has identified four key categories including productivity, market linkages, financial inclusion and data analytics.

Tuimur says the technologies will also be targeting the youth who are the major users.

Many uses: agro-weather analytics, pest, disease trends, food reserves early warning for price inflation.

Agriculture PS Hamadi Boga says Kenya is at the forefront of technology adoption in Africa with 95 per cent mobile penetration.

There are 36 million internet subscriptions and today, 25 per cent of Africa's agri-tech startups are in the country.

Boga says the ministry has prioritised a number of digital use cases to champion until 2023. They include accelerating farmer registration and targeting eligible farmers with e-incentives, using digital tools and analytics to improve tracking and payment direct to providers.

"Improve farmer practices by providing farmers with customised e-extension that incorporates current and predictive data such as agro-weather analytics, pest and disease trends and prices. Monitor emergency food reserves stocks with digital tools to determine the future quantity of stock to buy. Make more dynamic trade and price stability decisions using early warning system for food price inflation among others," he says.

Some of the digital platforms in Kenya include Digi-Cow that links smallholder farmers to veterinary officers, artificial insemination services and feeds.

Precision agriculture for development targets large-scale farmers with personalised agricultural advice through their mobile phones.

M-Shamba, a digital extension platform, uses interactive voice response services to explain and transfer agricultural technologies to smallholder farmers.

TruTrade Africa uses cloud-based mobile and online applications to provide smallholder farmers with linkage to market and fair prices for their produce.

Acres Africa links farmers to crops, livestock and industry insurance products to shield them against unpredictable weather.

A decade in the Asia-Pacific region: 2010 to 2019

The year 2019 marks the end of a decade defined by natural disasters, political upheavals and mass displacements in the Asia-Pacific region.

From the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan that killed close to 16,000 people and triggered the Fukushima nuclear disaster, to the forced evacuation of more than 700,000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar to Bangladesh in 2017, the region saw major disruptions over the last 10 years that will continue to reverberate in coming years.

Political triumphs and transitions also dominated the headlines, including the 2014 military coup in Thailand and the 2015 historic election in Myanmar that catapulted Aung San Suu Kyi to power.

Thailand and Japan's monarchy also changed hands, with the passing of King Bhumibol Adulyadej in 2016 and the abdication of the throne of Japan's Emperor Akihito earlier this year.

October 2010

Jailed writer and activist Liu Xiaobo was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his "long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China".

At the ceremony in Oslo, Liu was represented by an empty chair.

China said awarding the prize to a "criminal" like Liu was a "blasphemy". His wife, Liu Xia, was put under house arrest.

Liu, a prominent critic of the Chinese government who took part in the Tiananmen Square protests and drew up Charter 08, a petition calling for greater human rights and democratic freedom in China, developed liver cancer while in jail and died in hospital, still under guard, in July 2017.

A year later, Liu Xia was finally released and allowed to leave for Germany.



Jailed writer and activist Liu Xiaobo, who was awarded the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize, died in hospital in 2017. (File: Shenyang Municipal Information Office/AP)

since the Korean peninsula was split in half by the Korean War.

Although the two sides signed a ceasefire in 1953 they remain technically at war. The younger Kim's death paved the way for the appointment of his son, Kim Jong-un, who later carried out a deadly purge of the North's leadership.

November 2012

Xi Jinping was announced as the next leader of China's all-powerful Communist Party. He was formally installed as leader in March 2013.

With the announcement, Xi also became head of China's military, marking a break from the tradition of retiring leaders holding onto the post for a transitional period to extend their influence.

The run-up to Xi's ascent to power was unsettled by events surrounding Bo Xilai, a political star seen as a candidate for a top post until a scandal in which his wife was convicted of murdering a British businessman. The sensational affair torpedoed Bo's political career.

April 3, 2013

North Korea announced it will restart all nuclear facilities at its main Yongbyon complex, sparking new fears of conflict in the region.

Following the move, the US stationed a warship off the Korean peninsula.

November 2013

At least 6,000 people were reported killed when one of the strongest storms on record slammed into the central Philippines. Hundreds of thousands of people were also displaced from their homes.

May 2014

Thailand's army chief announces that a military commission that imposed martial law is taking control of the country's government.

General Prayut Chan-ocha, who headed the commission, said that the military takeover was necessary to maintain order in the country during a political unrest. Prayut would later become the country's prime minister.

Thailand has experienced 12 coups - including the May 2014 coup - since it became a constitutional monarchy in 1932.

July 2014

MH17 was shot down over eastern Ukraine in July 2014.



Russia and its separatists in Ukraine were blamed for bringing down MH17 in 2014. (File: Maxim Zmeyev/Reuters)

killing all 298 people on board. The disaster came just four months after another Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777, MH370, disappeared on a night flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing.

Russia and its separatists in Ukraine were blamed for bringing down the plane using a BUK missile launcher.

The Netherlands, which is leading the investigation into what happened, will begin a trial of four key suspects in March 2020.

October 2014

Jakarta Governor Joko 'Jokowi' Widodo was elected as president of Indonesia. He won over his opponent, former General Prabowo Subianto, who would later challenge him again in the 2019 presidential elections.

Widodo, a former furniture maker known widely as "Jokowi," campaigned as a fresh face and outsider. He also promised to reform the country's economy and political system.

March 2015

Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's first prime minister, died at the age of 91.

Lee was widely considered to be single-handedly responsible for Singapore's unique success story, the architect behind its fantastic transformation from glorified fishing village into one of the world's economic powerhouses.

Thousands queued to sign the books of condolence, lining the streets despite the rain, for his funeral.

November 2015

After nearly four decades of brutal military rule, Myanmar held elections. Aung

San Suu Kyi and her party, the National League for Democracy, won in a landslide but Suu Kyi was barred from the presidency by the constitution.

Myanmar will go to the polls again in 2020.

May 2016

Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte was elected as president of the Philippines for a six-year term in office.

Nicknamed "The Punisher", then 71-year-old Duterte promised a relentless crackdown on drugs and crime.



In 2018, UN investigators concluded that Myanmar's military carried out mass killings and gang rapes of Rohingya with 'genocidal intent'. (Shawkat Shafi/Al Jazeera)

and an overhaul of the country's constitution.

The mayor's single-issue campaign focusing on law and order chimed with popular anxiety about corruption, crime and drug abuse, but for many his incendiary rhetoric and talk of extrajudicial killings echo the country's authoritarian past.

Since his victory, Duterte has carried out a deadly war on drugs. Earlier this month, police said at least 5,552 people were killed between July 1, 2016 and November 30, 2019. Human rights advocates, however, placed the death toll to at least 27,000.

October 2016

Thailand's King Bhumibol dies at the age of 88. The revered monarch ruled the country for 70 years, and had earned the deepest respect from the vast majority of Thais.

Bhumibol was the revered "father of the nation". He came to the throne at the age of 18 in 1946 when his brother was shot dead in mysterious circumstances at the Royal Palace in Bangkok.

Following his death, his son, Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn succeeded him. King Maha was formally crowned as Thailand's new monarch earlier this year.

April 2017

The Chinese government cracks down against Muslim-minority Uighurs in its westernmost province of Xinjiang.

Conservative estimates put the number of ethnic Uighurs - and other Muslim minorities held under some form of detention since 2017 - between one and 1.5 mil-

lion.

However, Randall Schriver, the top US defence official in charge of Asia, said in May that the figure was "likely closer to three million citizens" - representing almost a third of the total 10 million Uighur population.

China has denied that Uighurs are being held against their will. Beijing has described the facilities as "training centres" or "re-education" camps aimed at countering the "terrorist threat" and "extremism" in Xinjiang. Beijing also denies any mistreatment of Uighurs.



In 2018, UN investigators concluded that Myanmar's military carried out mass killings and gang rapes of Rohingya with 'genocidal intent'. (Shawkat Shafi/Al Jazeera)

mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, after a gunman opened indiscriminate fire at Muslim worshippers.

A 28-year-old Australian man, Brenton Tarrant, was charged with multiple counts of murder. His trial begins on June 2, 2020.

The attack led to an overhaul of New Zealand's gun laws, with the government banning military-style semi-automatic weapons.

April 2019

Japan's 85-year-old Emperor Akihito marks an end to his three-decade reign. He is the first monarch to abdicate his throne in 200 years.

Prince Naruhito, the emperor's first-born son, succeeded Akihito. Naruhito's formal enthronement was held in an elaborate ceremony last October.

June 2019

Mass protests erupted in Hong Kong following the decision of Chief Executive Carrie Lam to schedule a bill allowing extradition of suspects living in the semi-autonomous Chinese city.

Millions of Hong Kongers took to the streets during several demonstrations, some of which have turned violent.

So far, more than 6,000 people have been arrested, with nearly 3,000 people injured.

Hong Kong residents have accused authorities of using excessive force against protesters.

The opposition won 113 seats - one more than required for simple majority - leading to the ouster of Najib Razak as prime minister.

The Pakatan Harapan's win was a stunning triumph

that almost no one had predicted. It also paved the way for the prosecution of Najib in the IMDB case.

Najib, 66, now faces dozens of criminal charges over accusations that \$4.5bn was stolen from IMDB.

June 2018

US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un sign an agreement pledging to support a peaceful resolution to seven decades of hostilities between the two countries and a de-escalation of nuclear tensions, during a historic meeting in Singapore.

Since the June 12, 2018 meeting, the two leaders have met twice in Vietnam and in the border between South and North Korea.

However, negotiations on Pyongyang's denuclearisation and the lifting of US sanctions have stalled, leading to the return of heated rhetoric between the two nations.

October 2018

Close to 2,000 people were killed when an earthquake hit the Indonesian city of Palu in central Sulawesi island. The magnitude 7.5 quake rocked the city of 350,000, triggering a tsunami that swept people to sea, as well as soil liquefaction, that buried many people and homes.

March 2019

At least 51 people were killed and dozens of others wounded in shootings at two



In 2017, violence in Myanmar forced more than 700,000 Rohingya to flee to neighbouring Bangladesh. The UN said Myanmar's military carried out the violence with 'genocidal intent' against the stateless Muslim group. (File: Kevin Frayer/Getty Images)

Here are some of the momentous events in the region in the last decade:

March - May 2010

Years of discontent between supporters of exiled former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra and Thailand's ruling elites exploded onto the streets of Bangkok in the early months of 2010, as the government of then Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva turned to the military to quell protests that had brought the capital to a standstill.

At least 90 people were killed and 2,000 injured in the country's worst political violence in 20 years.

Thaksin's sister Yingluck Shinawatra won elections the following year, but as protests resumed the military again intervened. The general who led the 2014 coup, Prayuth Chan-ocha, was elected to head the government in controversial elections in 2019 that critics say were designed to preserve the military's hold on power.

March 2011

At 2.46pm on March 11 2011, a 9.1 magnitude earthquake rocked the seabed of the Pacific Ocean not far from Japan, triggering a tsunami that rose as high as 38 metres when it crashed into the northwestern coast of the main island of Honshu.

Around 16,000 people were killed and thousands went missing as the wall of water crashed ashore, and hundreds of thousands were forced from their homes.

In Fukushima, the nuclear power station was inundated, overwhelming reactor cooling systems, causing multiple meltdowns and sending radiation over a large area in a disaster rivalled only by Chernobyl.

December 2011

Kim Jong-il declared dead at the age of 69 after suffering a heart attack, while aboard a train during a trip out of Pyongyang.

Kim took power in 1994 upon the death of his father, Kim Il-sung, who had led North Korea

THE GUARDIAN SIMPLE WORD FIT // THE GUARDIAN CROSSWORD =029=

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

WORD FIT

CROSSWORD

Clues: Across

1. Motion pictures (6)
5. Flying mammal (3)
6. Musical instructions to be silent (6)
8. In addition (4)
9. Not often (6)
11. Maids in South Asia (5)
14. Business agent (6)
15. Principle (5) 16. Wage (3)
17. Employ something for purpose (4)
19. Port of Yemen (4)
20. Large jug with a wide spout (4)
21. Cause of problem (6)

Down:

1. Engine (5)
2. Governor representing sovereign (7)
3. Consume (3)
4. Christian ceremony (4)
7. Islamic title (6)
10. Women (6)
12. Ornamental trees (5)
13. Fighter (7)
14. Set upright (5)
17. Component (4)
18. Always (4)
19. Upper human limb (3)

Comments: 0/29 43/309



Thursday 2 January 2020

Indonesia plans fixed fees for e-wallet transactions

JAKARTA

Indonesia plans to impose fixed fees on some e-wallet transactions, five people familiar with the matter said, in a move that could choke a key revenue stream and raise costs for payment startups backed by the likes of Alibaba's Ant Financial.

Providers of e-wallet services in Southeast Asia's largest economy currently customize fees for vendors, charging a premium from big retailers and absorbing costs for smaller merchants in an effort to get them to use their platforms.

But Bank Indonesia has already held talks with the biggest digital-payment startups to make fees on QR code transactions uniform, the people said, building on its move in August to standardize electronic payments that use the matrix barcode.

Bank Indonesia did not respond to repeated messages and calls requesting comment.

Leading the pack of e-wallet firms in the country is home-grown ride-hailing startup Gojek, backed by firms including Alphabet's Google, and startup OVO, in which Gojek rival Grab has a stake. Ant Financial's e-wallet DANA trails them, along with state-owned payments platform LinkAja.

The central bank wants to fix some e-wallet transaction fees at 0.7 per cent, the people added, a move that could deter smaller merchants that now pay next to nothing from staying on the e-wallet network or force the latter to increase incentives.

Fixed fees on payments at bigger vendors, like Starbucks, that are currently charged as much as 2 per cent, would also dent revenue for the e-wallet firms, the people said.

The startups have already burned through millions of dollars in incentives to lure vendors in Indonesia, where a multi-billion dollar digital payments industry has flourished as over half its nearly 270 million population have no bank accounts.

The country's internet economy was \$40 billion this year and is expected to grow more than threefold by 2025, according to a report here by Google, Temasek and Bain & Co.

Bank Indonesia is yet to decide on fees on transactions closed at bigger vendors, the people said, with one person close to the talks adding it could also be fixed at 0.7 per cent.

A big retailer is typically charged between 0.5 per cent to 2 per cent, one of the people said. As a benchmark, Visa and Mastercard charge around 2 per cent to 3 per cent.

"This will hurt all of us," said an executive at an Indonesian e-wallet firm, who was not authorized to speak to media and did not want to be named.

The fee earned on e-wallet transactions would have to be split three ways under the new system, sources said: between the e-wallet companies, middle-men payment processors, and the National Electronic Transaction Settlement - a consortium of major Indonesian lenders.

Until now e-wallet firms either kept the whole fee or split with some payment processors, and no lenders were involved.

Kamwewe directs mobile phone firms to send service to villages



By Guardian Correspondent,

Mlele

THE Minister for Works, Transport and Communications Eng Isack Kamwewe yesterday launched communication service in the villages of Mlele District in Katavi Region.

Eng Kamwewe launched the services at Kanoge Village, Utende Ward in the district by inaugurating the communication tower erected by Universal Communications Service Access Fund (UCSAF) in collaboration with Vodacom Tanzania at a cost of 300m/-.

The minister said there are mobile phone firms that did not want to go to villages preferring places with money, hence the government established UCSAF to provide subsidy to mobile phone firms which also contribute in erecting communication towers in villages.

He added: "And since I am the one who issue licenses, now I direct mobile phone firms to go to certain villages where there are no communications or busi-

ness attractions to provide the important service to the wananchi."

He also asked UCSAF to also incorporate data communication, and not only voice mails as without data students will be unable to study in schools, while the wananchi also need data.

He said: "That is why I initially brought along 50 computers for primary and secondary schools, and now I am bringing in electricity so that children start playing with computers because right now Internet Communication Technology (ICT) is the real economy."

The chairman of UCSAF Board Dr Joseph Kilongola said by using UCSAF funds they ensure communication service reach to the wananchi as mobile phone firms alone are not ready to send communication service to the villages.

UCSAF Managing Director Justina Mashiba said up to now communication service reception has reached 94 per cent compared to 45 per cent in 2009 when UCSAF was being established.

She said UCSAF has adver-

tised tenders to construct communication towers in 252 wards in the country whose implementation, when finished, service reception will reach 96 per cent, and added that UCSAF will continue to ensure public schools get computers.

For his part, Mlele District Commissioner Rachel Kasanda said there will be no child who will not go secondary education two weeks after schools open on January 6 2020.

Vodacom Tanzania Zonal head for Southern Highlands Ezekiel Nungwi said they were ready to continue cooperating with the government through UCSAF to ensure all the wananchi are communicating digitally by constructing towers in various rural areas that will be able to offer both voice and data service.

A Kanoge villager Cretus Edus thanked the government for building the tower, as of now they are informed on many issues online as in the past they only used to hear about YouTube, Facebook and Instagram without knowing what these things were.

Dollar index records smallest ever annual move in 2019

NEW YORK

THE U.S. dollar index recorded its smallest-ever annual move in 2019, up just 0.24 per cent for the year after a drop in December reversed early gains as trade hopes and investor confidence diminished demand for the safe-haven asset.

The pound GBP, the euro EUR and a clutch of trade-sensitive currencies rallied as the dollar slid to a six-month low on Tuesday as investor optimism about global growth prospects and the Phase 1 U.S.-China trade deal spurred a risk-on move.

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that the first phase of an American trade deal with China would be signed on Jan. 15 at the White House, though considerable confusion remains about the details of the agreement.

The dollar index .DXY was last down 0.33 per cent to 96.418, its fourth consecutive session in the red and its weakest level since July 1. The Phase 1 trade agreement reached earlier in December has pulled the dollar down 1.89 per cent in the last month.



U.S. dollars and other world currencies lie in a charity receptacle at Pearson international airport in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

The dollar had recorded a strong 2019 before December, owing to the outperformance of the U.S. economy and a long period of uncertainty in the negotiations between Washington and Beijing.

"Weakness in the U.S. dollar toward the end of this year has coincided with the renewed expansion of the Fed's balance sheet and the paring back of pessimism over the outlook for

global growth," MUFJ analysts said.

On the last trading day of the year, the dollar was up just 0.24 per cent for 2019, compared with 4.4 per cent in 2018. At the end of November, it was up 2.18 per cent for the year.

The shift also reflects investor bets that the dollar will weaken further in 2020.

"Everybody has been wanting to short the dollar. It has been the most frustrating trade of

the year. I think for the most part, there's not a lot of resistance going back into that trade. If we look into the top 2020 calls for FX, it's going to be short the dollar," said Marvin Loh, senior global macro strategist at State Street Global Markets.

Investors' appetite for risk drove the euro to \$1.124, a five-month high. It was last trading 0.22 per cent higher at \$1.122.

Huawei's 2019 revenue to jump 18pc, forecasts 'difficult' 2020



The Huawei logo is pictured. File photo.

SHANGHAI

HUAWEI Technologies earlier this week said its full-year revenue would likely jump 18 per cent last year to 850 billion yuan (\$121.72 billion), lower than its earlier projections, as a U.S. trade blacklisting curbed growth and disrupted its ability to source key parts.

The world's biggest maker of telecom network equipment and the second largest manufacturer of smartphones of the world, was all but banned by the United States in May from doing business with U.S. companies, preventing its access to technology like Google's (GOOGL) Android operating system.

The U.S. government alleges Huawei equipment pose national security risks because they could be used by the Chinese govern-

ment to spy on users. Huawei has repeatedly denied its products are a security threat.

Huawei's Rotating Chairman Eric Xu revealed the numbers in a New Year's message to employees and customers in which he also forecasted 2020 to be a "difficult year", saying that the firm was unlikely to grow as rapidly as it did in the first half of this year.

Its estimate of 18 per cent revenue growth in 2019 is less than 2018, when Huawei's annual revenue rose 19.5 per cent.

The company did not break down fourth-quarter figures but according to Reuters calculations based on its previous statements, revenue in the quarter to end Dec. 31 rose to 239.2 billion yuan (\$23.28 billion), up 3.9 per cent from a year earlier and slower than the 27 per cent increase it reported in the third quarter.

"The external environment is becoming more complicated than ever, and downward pressure on the global economy has intensified," he said.

"In the long term, the US government will continue to suppress the development of leading technology - a challenging environment for Huawei to survive and thrive."

Xu also said that Huawei shipped 240 million smartphones this year, a 20 per cent increase from 2018. Huawei has mainly sold smartphones that were launched before the ban.

The newest Mate 30 smartphone first went on sale in September but it cannot access a licensed version of Google's Android operating system because of the trade curbs.

US said in his letter that Huawei would in 2020 "go all out" to

build its Huawei Mobile Services ecosystem, which comprises services such as cloud storage and an app gallery, describing it as "the foundation of our ability to sell smart devices in markets outside China".

It is also developing its own mobile operating system known as Harmony, although analysts are skeptical that the system is a viable alternative.

Huawei's reputation was dented earlier this month after details of the dismissal and wrongful detention of a former employee went viral.

In his letter, Xu said they would continue to remove mediocre managers and complacent employees as Huawei needed to rid the company of complacency, and that they would remove managers performing in the bottom 10 per cent every year.

Fed sees small take-up of repo, rates fall for year-end

NEW YORK

The Federal Reserve averted a year-end funding squeeze on Tuesday as large banks took only a small portion of \$150 billion on offer in its last overnight repo operation of 2019, and the cost of borrowing fell to its lowest level since March 2018.

The New York Federal Reserve has been injecting liquidity into the repo market to reduce the chance of funding stress after a flare-up in September sent the cost of overnight

loans as high as 10 per cent, more than four times the Fed's rate at the time. That had caused particular concern about the year-end.

"It looks like what the Fed did worked," said Tom Simons, a money market economist at Jefferies in New York. "The Fed acted out of an abundance of caution, and fortunately the result was a very calm year-end here so far."

Banks took \$25.60 billion in the Fed's overnight repurchase agreement, or repo, operation, which offers funding over the crucial year-end period. The

banks also took only a small share of three liquidity operations on Monday.

Banks and investors borrow in the repo market to finance asset purchases and other business expenses, but the availability of loans over year-end can dry up as banks pare their risk-taking.

"There really are not any signs of dollar funding pressure across markets," said Mark Cabana, head of U.S. rates strategy at Bank of America Merrill Lynch. He said the smooth year-end was partly due to the Fed's actions, as well as pre-planning by banks.

The Fed has thrown \$255.6 billion

into the funding market through early January to ensure the financial system operates smoothly over the choppy year-end period.

It will continue pumping tens of billions a day into the repo market through the end of January at least, including up to another \$185 billion in one-day and term deals on Thursday, when the market kicks off the new year.

Cabana said he anticipated the Fed would extend support through the end of the first quarter, but noted that the market wants to know "What's the end

game?"

Markets have absorbed a lot of funding provided by the central bank, which suggests the Fed is providing needed liquidity, said Joseph Abate, a short rate strategist for Barclays.

"You could definitely imagine that rates would be higher" without that support, he said.

The overnight repo rate jumped to 1.90 per cent on Tuesday before dropping to 1.40 per cent, which is below the Fed's target fed funds range of 1.50 per cent to 1.75 per cent.

High demand for Treasuries for

year-end was the likely factor behind the fall. The Fed saw the strongest demand for Treasuries in its reverse repo operation on Tuesday since June 2018.

In a reverse repo operation the Fed borrows money from market participants in exchange for Treasury collateral. The rate is far lower than previously predicted.

Forward repo markets were pricing overnight loans for year-end at 2.50 per cent early on Monday and at around 4 per cent a few weeks ago, according to analysts.

Parliament clips CBK powers over State mortgage financier

ISTANBUL

OFFERING its guests the opportunity to fly directly to 126 countries from Istanbul, Turkish Airlines added Xi'an, the Chinese city with three thousand years of history, to its flight network on December 30.

Xi'an became the flag carrier's fourth destination in Mainland China and the 318th destination in the world. The flights will be operated three times a week with Airbus A330 aircrafts.

Starting its flights to People's Republic of China back in 1999 with Beijing as its destination, Turkish Airlines reinforced its strong position in Asia with the Xi'an flights.

With this new addition, global carrier's flight network encompassed the entirety of the historical Silk Road that started in Xi'an and ended in Venice.

During the ceremony of the inaugural flight, Turkish Airlines General Manager Bilal Ekici stated: "We conclude the year by adding a very special city to our flight network after numerous innovations in various areas and the move to our new home that took place during 2019.

"We will carry our guests to 126 countries from Xi'an, one of the most significant historical capitals while transferring the historical Silk Road to above clouds with our cargo operations. Our new flights will also contribute to the tourist numbers coming to our country with the increasing attention from Chinese tourists to tourism centers of Turkey."

Turkish Airlines passengers traveling to Xi'an, one of the oldest civilizations of the world, will have the opportunity to explore the numerous cultural heritages along with the historical fabric of the three thousand years old city.

Serving as the capital of 13 different dynasties during the history of China, the region's most popular destination is the Terracotta Army, which draws over two million tourists annually.

Hidden underground for nearly 2200 years, it was first discovered during the excavations in 1974. Featuring eight thousand terracotta soldiers, it is considered as the Eighth Wonder of the World.



Turkish Airlines Air Hostess displays a Chinese house frame.

Uber, Postmates sue to block California gig worker law, claiming it's unconstitutional

LOS ANGELES

RIDE-hailing company Uber Technologies Inc and courier services provider Postmates Inc asked a U.S. court to block a California labor law set to go into effect on Wednesday, arguing the bill violates the U.S. Constitution.

In a lawsuit filed in Los Angeles federal court on Monday, the companies and two app-based drivers said the law, which would make it harder for gig economy companies to qualify their workers as independent contractors rather than employees, was irrational, vague and incoherent.

The office of California Attorney General Xavier Becerra said in a statement on Monday it was reviewing the complaint. The bill, called AB5, faces multiple legal challenges.

The law was signed by California Governor Gavin Newsom in September and has garnered national attention, largely owing to the size of California's workforce and the state's leadership role in establishing policies that are frequently adopted by other states.

Backers of the bill, including labor groups, have argued the law protects workers' rights. By classifying the contractors as employees, the companies would be subject to labor laws that require higher pay and other benefits such as medical insurance.

The bill strikes at the heart of the "gig economy" business model of technology platforms like Uber, Postmates, Lyft Inc, DoorDash and others who rely heavily on the state's 450,000 contract workers, not full-time employees, to drive passengers or deliver food via app-based services.

Uber, Postmates and other app-based companies said the legislation compromises the flexibility prized by their workforce, and that fewer workers would be hired were they considered employees.

The companies in their Monday lawsuit called AB5 a "thinly veiled attempt" to target and harm gig economy businesses. Singling out app-based workers violates equal protection guaranteed under the constitutions of the United States and California, the companies argued.

"It irreparably harms network companies and app-based independent service providers by denying their constitutional rights to be treated the same as others to whom they are similarly situated," the lawsuit said.

The companies pointed to allegedly arbitrary exemptions of different non-gig worker groups, including salespeople, travel agents, construction truck drivers and commercial fishermen.

The full impact of the bill remains unclear in the short term, but the lawsuit cited a study saying the bill would increase ride-hailing company Lyft's operating costs by 20% and lead to some 300,000 fewer drivers in California.

Ron Herrera, secretary-treasurer of Teamsters Local 396 and Teamsters International vice president, said in a statement late on Monday night, that the labour union objects the lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of AB-5.

"Teamsters Local 396 and the broader American Labor Movement must use all of the resources at our disposal to ensure that AB-5 is protected and that workers have a voice at the table," Herrera added.

Uber, Lyft and food delivery company DoorDash have earmarked \$90 million for a planned November 2020 ballot initiative that would exempt them from the law.

Trump says US-China trade deal will be signed on January 15

WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that Phase 1 of trade deal with China would be signed on Jan. 15 at the White House, though considerable

confusion remains about the details of the agreement.

The president wrote in a tweet that he would sign the deal with "high level representatives of China" and that he would later travel to Beijing to begin

talks on the next phase.

Last week, Trump said he and Chinese President Xi Jinping would host a signing ceremony to ink the Phase 1 deal.

The Phase 1 deal, struck earlier this

month, is expected to reduce tariffs and boost Chinese purchases of American farm, energy and manufactured goods while addressing some disputes over intellectual property.

However, no version of the text has been made public, and Chinese officials have yet to publicly commit to key planks, such as increasing imports of U.S. goods and services by \$200 billion over two years.

China bought \$130 billion in U.S. goods in 2017, before the trade war began, and \$56 billion in services, U.S. data show.

The United States launched a trade war against Beijing a year and half ago over allegations of unfair trade practices, such as theft of U.S. intellectual property and subsidies that unfairly benefit Chinese state-owned companies.

The United States Trade Representative said the Phase 1 deal includes stronger Chinese legal protections for patents, trademarks, copyrights, including improved criminal and civil procedures to combat online infringement, pirated and counterfeit goods.

Issues such as industrial subsidies would be addressed in a later deal, U.S. authorities said.

The escalating tit-for-tat tariffs, which began in July, 2018, have roiled markets and crimped economic growth worldwide.

Though it was not immediately clear who would represent the Chinese delegation at the signing, the South China Morning Post reported on Monday that Vice Premier Liu He would visit Washington to sign the deal.

Asked Tuesday when the deal might be signed, China's foreign ministry spokesman referred questions to China's Department of Commerce.



U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping as they met recently. File photo.

US holiday returns surge with booming e-commerce



The company logo for United Parcel Service (UPS), is displayed on a screen at the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York, U.S. File photo

LOS ANGELES

UNITED Parcel Service Inc (UPS.N) on Thursday expects to ship 1.9 million gifts and other items back to U.S. retailers as e-commerce fuels an anticipated 26 per cent year-over-year volume surge on "National Returns Day."

Jan. 2 is the busiest day for holiday returns in the United States. U.S. shoppers return more packages than their peers around the globe, spurred by free shipping on orders and returns - costly perks that squeeze retailer profits.

About 10 per cent of goods sold in the United States go back to retailers every year, resulting in roughly \$369 billion in lost sales, according to a 2018 report

from Appriss Retail and National Retail Federation.

Apparel is an outsized contributor. Returns in some categories approach 50% due to inconsistent sizing across brands, said Greg Buzek, founder and president of IHL Group, a research and advisory firm. "That causes great expense for retailers," said Buzek, who estimated that annual global losses from retail returns are nearly \$1 trillion - up from \$600 billion in 2015.

Los Angeles-based Happy Returns promises to slash returns-related expenses up to 30 per cent by reducing shipping costs and customer support calls.

It has 700 "return bars" in U.S. retail stores and

shopping malls, where customers drop off items and arrange refunds or exchanges. The company charges retailers a flat fee for every item it processes.

"You have to have some free (return) option. Nobody said it had to be the mail," said Happy Returns Chief Executive David Sobie.

Amazon.com Inc (AMZN.O) also encourages shoppers to return products to its own physical stores or Kohl's (KSS.N) locations, where eligible items are packed and shipped for free.

While 30 per cent of shoppers return items to stores, more than twice that many opt for shipping, according to UPS' 2019 Pulse of the Online Shopper report. UPS said it handled

more than 1 million returns each day in December, but declined to give an annual total.

UPS and home furnishing retailer IKEA are among the investors in Optoro Inc, which helps retailers sort, resell and dispose of returned merchandise more efficiently.

The aim is to prevent products from sitting in a back room losing value or getting routed and rerouted at great expense, said Larisa Summers, Optoro's senior vice president of e-commerce.

"You have to welcome these goods back, otherwise customers won't shop with you the first time," Summers said.

Gold's rally stays alive for the past decade

BERLIN

Gold's December rally stays alive to seal best year since 2010. Gold climbed to a three-month high to clinch its best annual performance since 2010, as a weaker dollar helped cap a year marked by global economic jitters and trade frictions.

Bullion has gained 19 per cent this year as central banks globally embraced looser monetary policy to boost growth. Brexit, unrest in regions from Chile to Hong Kong and buying sprees from key central banks and exchange-traded funds have also helped support prices.

Spot gold climbed as much as 0.7% to \$1 525.38 an ounce on Tuesday, the highest since September 25, and traded at \$1 522.84 by 10:47 in London. The Bloomberg Dollar Spot Index fell

to the lowest since June.

Still, some analysts doubt that gold's strength will stick next year and JPMorgan Asset Management cautioned that bullion may not offer sound portfolio protection.

"There are very few certain environments in which gold does well, and it's not necessarily the case that 2020 won't be any of those," Hannah Anderson, a global market strategist at JPMorgan, said in an interview with Bloomberg TV.

"In the next downturn, I do believe that bonds still could be defensive assets."

JPMorgan has come out this month to make the case for a risk-on investment allocation for 2020 as the global economy gathers momentum in the wake of the recent slowdown.

On Tuesday, data showed China's

manufacturing sector continued to expand output in December, adding to evidence that the world's second-largest economy is stabilising. Commentary out of China and the US suggest that both countries are committed to their phase-one trade pact.

However, haven asset demand in 2020 could be supported by other brewing global tensions, DailyFX strategist David Song said in a note.

"The threat of a US-EU trade war may become a greater concern," he said.

In other precious metals, silver has risen 17 per cent this year, also poised for its best performance since 2010. Platinum is up 22 per cent and top-performer palladium is set to end 2019 with an annual gain of 52 per cent.



A bullion of gold ready to be put on market for sale. File photo.

Tencent gets into global groove with stake in Vivendi's Universal

PARIS/HONG KONG

A TENCENT-led consortium is taking a 10% stake in Vivendi's Universal Music Group, valuing the music label that houses Lady Gaga and The Beatles at 30 billion euros (\$34 billion) and giving the Chinese firm a global backstage pass.

The deal allows both companies to expand in a recovering global music market, giving Tencent more access to U.S. artists while UMG can tap into the Asian market, including big-selling "K-Pop" Korean pop stars.

After months of talks, French media conglomerate Vivendi (VIV.PA) said on Tuesday it had finalised the sale of an initial 10% of the world's largest music label to the Tencent consortium, which also had the option to buy up to 10% more by January 2021 on the same price basis.

Vivendi, controlled by French billionaire Vincent Bollore, is seeking

to cash in on the music industry's revival, driven by a growing subscription and ad-based music streaming services and the deal gives UMG an enterprise value of 30 billion euros.

The initial deal would soon be followed by a second one allowing Tencent Music Entertainment (TME.N) to buy a minority stake in UMG's greater China subsidiary.

Tencent did not immediately respond to a request for comment, while Vivendi did not disclose the details of the consortium beyond saying they were "global financial investors".

Singapore's state investment firm GIC and Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) were also involved, a source familiar with the deal told Reuters. QIA declined to comment and GIC did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The IFPI federation said in April that global recorded music revenues

had risen 9.7% in 2019 from last year, while Universal was Vivendi's main third quarter sales growth driver, with revenues rising nearly 16% to 1.8 billion euros.

"Universal has been enjoying increased revenues for the last 5 years. With the company in a strong position, it can make sense to capitalise on the valuation with a minority sale at this point in the growth cycle," said MB Capital director Marcus Bullus, commenting on the deal.

The tie-up between Tencent and Vivendi builds on a partnership struck two years ago, allowing Tencent to license Universal's music for distribution over its streaming platforms.

Vivendi said in July last year it might sell up to half of UMG and any cash raised from a divestment could help finance a share buyback or acquisitions.



The logo of Google is seen at the high profile startups and high tech leaders gathering, Viva Tech, in Paris, France.

Google to end 'Double Irish, Dutch sandwich' tax scheme

AMSTERDAM

Google parent Alphabet (GOOGL.O) will no longer use an intellectual property licensing scheme, known as the "Double Irish, Dutch sandwich", which allowed it to delay paying U.S. taxes, 2018 tax filings show.

A Google spokesman on Tuesday confirmed it would scrap the licensing structure, saying this was in line with international rules and followed changes to U.S. tax law in 2017.

Dutch filings, which were seen by Reuters, showed that in 2018 Google moved 21.8 billion euros (\$24.5 billion) through its Dutch holding company to Bermuda, up from 19.9 billion in 2017. Google said it would end the practice after 2019.

"A date of termination of the Company's licensing activities has not yet been confirmed by senior leadership, however management expects that this termination will take place as of 31 December 2019 or during 2020," the Dutch filing said.

"Consequently, the Company's

turnover and associated expense base generated from licensing activities will discontinue as of this date," the filing with the Dutch Chamber of Commerce added.

Google, like other multinationals that make use of international tax minimization strategies, has always said it pays all its taxes.

"We're now simplifying our corporate structure and will license our IP (intellectual property) from the US, not Bermuda," a spokesman said in a statement. "Including all annual and one-time income taxes over the past ten years, our global effective tax rate has been over 23%, with more than 80% of that tax due in the US."

For more than a decade, Dutch, Irish and U.S. tax law allowed Google to enjoy an effective tax rate in the single digits on its non-U.S. profits, around a quarter the average tax rate in its overseas markets.

The subsidiary in the Netherlands was used to shift revenue from royalties earned outside the United States to Google Ireland Holdings, an affiliate based in

Bermuda, where companies pay no income tax.

The tax strategy was legal and allowed Google to avoid triggering U.S. income taxes or European withholding taxes on the funds, which represent the bulk of its overseas profits.

Under pressure from the European Union and the United States, Ireland in 2014 decided to phase out the arrangement, ending Google's Irish tax advantages in 2020.

The Trump administration's Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which came into effect in January 2018, ended the reason for U.S. companies to hoard foreign profits offshore. Now profits that have been made and taxed abroad are not subject to taxation when returned to the U.S.

In the Bermuda filing for 2018, Bermuda-based "Google Ireland Holdings Unlimited Co." said in the future it would no longer continue licensing intellectual property or holding debt securities, but it would continue equity investment operations.

WORLD

Iraqi militiamen hurl stones at US Embassy, prepare for extended stay

BAGHDAD

HUNDREDS of Iraqi militiamen and their supporters hurled stones at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad for a second day yesterday and security forces fired tear gas and stun grenades to drive them away.

The protests, led by Iranian-backed militias, mark a new turn in the shadow war between Washington and Tehran playing out across the Middle East.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who faces re-election in 2020, on Tuesday threatened to retaliate against Iran but said later he did not want to go to war.

The protests also cast uncertainty over the continued presence of U.S. troops in Iraq.

Crowds had rallied on Tuesday to protest against deadly U.S. air strikes on militia bases, setting fires, throwing rocks and smashing surveillance cameras. They did not breach the huge embassy's main compound, however.

Overnight, demonstrators pitched tents and camped outside the embassy walls. On Wednesday morning, they were bringing in food supplies, cooking equipment and mattresses, Reuters witnesses said, suggesting they intended to stay for a long time.

Senior Iraqi army officers had negotiated with those gathered outside the embassy in an attempt to convince them to leave but failed to do so. Washington is putting pressure on Iraqi leaders to ensure the security of its staff.



US Embassy security men use stun grenades to disperse protesters and militia fighters during a protest to condemn air strikes on bases belonging to Hashd al-Shaabi (paramilitary forces), outside the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq yesterday. REUTERS

The incident marked a sharp escalation of the proxy conflict between Washington and Tehran - both influential players in Iraq - while mass protests are challenging Iraq's own political system nearly 17 years after the U.S. invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein.

The protests followed U.S. air strikes on Sunday on bases operated by the Iranian-backed militia Kataib Hezbollah inside Iraq which killed at least 25 fighters and wounded 55.

The strikes were retaliation for the killing of a U.S. civilian contractor in a rocket attack on an Iraqi military base, which Washington blamed on Kataib Hezbollah.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei yesterday condemned the U.S. attacks.

"The Iranian government, nation and I strongly condemn the attacks," Iranian state TV quoted Khamenei as saying.

Trump accused Iran of orchestrating the violence at the U.S. Embassy and said Tehran would be held responsible. Iran rejected the accusation.

More U.S. troops were being sent to the embassy, U.S. officials said. The 750 troops would initially be based out of Kuwait. The officials said that as many as 4,000 troops could be sent to the region in the coming days if needed.

More than 5,000 U.S. troops are stationed in Iraq supporting local forces. The air strikes have galvanized calls inside Iraq to expel U.S. forces, not just from Iran-backed militias but also their political rivals.

Agencies

World leaders call for courage, efforts to make 2020 a better year

BEIJING

IN their New Year messages, leaders of various countries have called for courage and efforts to make 2020 a better year, and overcome challenges as we enter a new decade.

In a New Year speech delivered on Tuesday evening, Chinese President Xi Jinping pledged to achieve the first centenary goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects for China in the "milestone" year.

Xi stressed the year as "crucial in winning the anti-poverty battle" in China, and voiced the hope for a prosperous and stable Hong Kong. "We are not afraid of winds and rains, or any kind of difficulties," said the Chinese president.

Xi reiterated China's commitment to peaceful development, world peace and common development, saying "we stand ready to join hands with people around the world to actively build the Belt and Road, push for the building of a community with a shared future for humanity,

and work tirelessly to create a better future for humanity."

Russian President Vladimir Putin said in his New Year message for the Russian people: "We are living in turbulent, dynamic and contradictory times, but we can and must do everything for Russia to develop successfully, so that everything in our lives changes only for the better."

He called for unity and concerted efforts by the Russian people, noting "our personal plans and dreams are inseparable from Russia."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, in her New Year's Eve address, appealed for courage and confidence of the German people to meet the challenges of the new decade.

She emphasized the need to halt climate change, a "real" threat. The younger generation will have to live with the consequences of climate change if politicians do not act, Merkel said, adding that she will do her utmost to ensure that Germany "makes its contribution ecologically, economically, socially" to get the issue under control.

In the New Year's Eve address



German Chancellor Angela Merkel

broadcast live on Tuesday evening, French President Emmanuel Macron vowed to push through the government's pension reform plan, which was met with union-led national strikes in December.

"The pension reform will be fully carried out," said Macron, adding he hopes to quickly find a compromise with unions.

The promise to take Britain out of the European Union by the end of January was reaffirmed, and national efforts to usher in a remarkable decade of prosperity and opportunity were urged by Prime Minister Boris Johnson in his first New Year message at 10 Downing Street.

"The first item on my agenda is to

fulfil the will of the electorate and take us out of the European Union," said Johnson. "We can start a new chapter in the history of our country, in which we come together and move forward united, unleashing the enormous potential of the British people."

For 2020, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in his New Year's statement on Wednesday made reforms a priority for his government, including creating a social security system that can help people live in a more carefree manner.

Abe also expressed his hope for a successful execution of the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics to be held this summer, saying he hopes the games will be a wonderful event that will excite children and let them have dreams for the future.

When sending New Year greetings via social networks on Tuesday, Chile's President Sebastian Piner described 2019 as a difficult year for the South American country, which has since mid-October suffered widespread anti-government protests fueled by anger over social

troubles.

"But it left us valuable lessons and opportunities so that together we can build a better Chile for all," he said, adding that the new year is a good time to make balances and projections and work to heal the wounds of the country.

In his end-of-year address to the nation Tuesday evening, Cameroon's President Paul Biya vowed to continue fighting armed separatists in the central African country, saying the separatists pose "one of the most urgent problems."

Meanwhile, he said new legislations on greater autonomy to local communities and bilingual and multicultural practices are paving the way for a new Cameroon that is "adapted to present times and looks to the future."

Zambia's President Edgar Lungu in his New Year address broadcast on state television on Tuesday described 2019 as "a very challenging year" with extreme weather greatly affecting agricultural production and electricity generation.

Xinhua

Top DPRK leader warns US against falling into impasse over nuke talks

PYONGYANG

TOP leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Kim Jong Un has blamed the United States for the impasse of bilateral nuclear talks, the official Korean Central News Agency reported yesterday.

At the Fifth Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea Tuesday, Kim said the

more the United States stalls for time and hesitates in the settlement of the DPRK-US relations, the deeper it will fall into an impasse. In his report, Kim blamed Washington for the current difficulties facing Pyongyang, saying the United States "applied the most brutal and inhuman sanctions against and posed the persistent nuclear threat" to the DPRK over the past seven decades, and that the current situation on the Korean Peninsula "is getting

more dangerous and reaching serious phase."

Noting that Pyongyang has taken measures to build confidence in bilateral ties, including halting nuclear tests and shutting down a test ground, Kim rebuked Washington for conducting tens of joint military drills and threatening Pyongyang with the shipment of ultra-modern warfare equipment into South Korea. "There is no ground for us to get unilaterally

bound to the commitment any longer," Kim said, adding that "the world will witness a new strategic weapon to be possessed by the DPRK in the near future," without giving details of the weapon.

"If the U.S. persists in its hostile policy towards the DPRK, there will never be the denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula and the DPRK will steadily develop necessary and prerequisite strategic weapons for the security of the state, until the U.S. rolls back its hostile policy towards the DPRK and lasting and durable peace-keeping mechanism is built," he said.

Xinhua

China never stops efforts to expand opening-up

CHINA is becoming increasingly attractive to investment thanks to its significant improvement in business environment in recent years, foreign economic experts and scholars told People's Daily.

China joined the world's top 10 most improved economies for ease of doing business for the second year in a row, according to the World Bank's annual doing business report released on Oct. 24.

The country ranked 31st among 190 economies globally on the ease of doing business rankings, a significant improvement compared with the 46th place in last year's rankings, the report said.

China has achieved great success in improving business environment, leaping from the 78th place two years ago to the 31st place, said Marcin Pitakowski, a senior economist at the World Bank, attributing the remarkable achievement to the Chinese government's comprehensive business environment reform.

Doing Business 2020, a World Bank flagship publication, documented regulatory reforms implemented globally during the 12 months to May 1, 2019. Overall 115 economies around the world implemented 294 business regulatory reforms making it easier to do business, the report showed.

China has shown a notable improvement in eight areas including starting a business and dealing with construction permits, the report said. For example, the country streamlined the process of dealing with construction permits and getting electricity, and reducing the time for administrative approval.

China has made encouraging progress in improving its business environment. In terms of nurturing new businesses, it ranks higher, said Stephen Roach, a senior fellow at Yale University.

As the report points out, the Chi-

nese government has achieved concrete results in supporting start-ups, which indicates the country's focus on technological innovation.

China unveiled its first regulation on improving business environment on recently. Drawing on past experience and aligning with advanced international levels, the regulation codifies the country's reform measures that have been proven workable, obtained people's satisfaction and supported by the market entities. It provides an institutional guarantee to improve business environment.

The World Bank welcomes China's measures to further improve business environment, said Marcin. Beijing and Shanghai have implemented a slew of ground-breaking reform measures, and their successful experiences are expected to be applied in other cities in the country, he pointed out.

China still has potential to improve its business environment indicators such as credit and cross-border trade, Marcin noted, adding that the improvement in business environment will help boost the high-quality development of the country's economy.

Wang Jiangyu, associate professor at the Faculty of Law of the National University of Singapore, hailed China's regulation on improving business environment as a far-reaching reform measure. It will legally guarantee entrepreneurship and transactions in the country and promote the transformation of the government's role, Wang added.

At present, some international institutions have lowered their expectations on the growth of the world economy amid rising protectionism.

China, as one of the major engines driving world economic growth, will boost its own growth and carry posi-

tive implications for global economic development through optimizing its business environment.

The World Bank's cross-border indicators showed that China is striving to reduce the cost of importing goods, demonstrating its resolve to expand opening-up, Marcin pointed out.

Katsuyuki Hasegawa, chief economist at Mizuho Research Institute Ltd., said China is translating challenges into opportunities through continuous efforts to promote structural reform.

The country has taken measures to improve business environment, including relaxing regulations for foreign enterprises, opening its market to the world and deepening structural reform, Katsuyuki noted, adding that China's drive for greater openness is of great significance to the stability and development of the

Russia takes over the reins to chair BRICS in 2020

MOSCOW

ON January 1, Moscow is taking over the one-year chairmanship of the BRICS group (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). Russia plans to carry out about 150 activities at various levels during its chairmanship, which will culminate in July, when St. Petersburg will host the next BRICS summit.

The five countries' leaders will hold another meeting on the sidelines of the G20 summit in the Saudi capital of Riyadh in November.

According to procedure, each BRICS member takes over the group's chairmanship for a year. Russia last chaired BRICS in 2015, when a summit took place in Ufa. Russia also presided over the group back in 2009, before BRIC turned into BRICS following South Africa's accession.

Over 20 ministerial meetings are also expected to take place, including those involving the Russian Security Council secretary, the Supreme Court chief justice and the chairpersons of both house of Russia's parliament.

Apart from St. Petersburg, BRICS events - such as meetings between Sherpas, ministers, business community members and experts - will take part in dozens of other Russian cities, including Yekaterinburg, Kazan, Novosibirsk, Samara, Saransk, Sochi, Ulyanovsk, Ufa, Khanty-Mansiysk and Yaroslavl. The theme of Russia's chairmanship is "BRICS Strategic Partnership for Global Stability, Shared Security and Innovative Growth."

Russia's priorities

President Vladimir Putin clarified Russia's priorities as BRICS chair in Brasilia in November 2019.

Moscow will focus on enhancing foreign policy coordination between member countries on key international platforms, primarily, within the United Nations.

According to Putin, BRICS nations need to make more proactive efforts to play a leading role in the UN. Specific goals in this regard include fighting terrorism and the dissemination of terrorist dogma, particularly on the Internet, as well as combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism, while working to take back criminally obtained assets.

As for the economy, Russia plans to suggest that the five nations renew the BRICS Strategy for Partnership in Trade and Investment that they adopted at the Ufa summit.

According to the Russian Economic Development Ministry, the updated document will cover cooperation fields such as the development and integration of remote areas, the exchange of experience in regulatory impact assessment, digital trade, the use of digital solutions in the field of intellectual property and the promotion of artificial intelligence technologies.

Moscow also calls for defining new strategy tasks aimed at boosting cooperation between specific industries up until 2025.

President Putin pointed out that Russia would seek to strengthen the existing BRICS structures and financial mechanisms, namely the New Development Bank, the Contingent Reserve Arrangement and its microeconomic data exchange system.

Work will continue to create a BRICS local currency bond fund, and energy cooperation will carry on as well. At the same time, Moscow plans to put forward some new ideas to expand dialogue between the five countries' tax, customs and competition agencies.

Lastly, the agenda of Russia's chairmanship will include a number of festivals, theater tours, artistic competitions for children and adults, and sports tournaments. Putin earlier handed down instructions to draw up measures for the creation of a new competition concept for BRICS countries.

Boosting space cooperation is another important task. According to Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, who is the country's BRICS Sherpa, Moscow will "fill the emerging five-party space cooperation with specific activities." Steps will be taken to continue the implementation of the Clean Rivers program, aimed at improving the environmental situation in river basins.

Fighting the glorification of Nazism

One of Russia's key initiatives concerns the upcoming 75th anniversary celebration of the Soviet Union's Victory over Nazi Germany in the Great Patriotic War and the creation of the United Nations.

At the BRICS summit in Brasilia, Putin suggested discussing a possible joint statement on those events.

The Russian leader pointed out that it was important to discuss attempts to glorify the Nazis and Nazi collaborators, and to stand together to support a world order based on international law and the UN Charter.

As Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Pankin said at a meeting of the Victory organizing committee, BRICS countries plan to host events dedicated to the 75th anniversary celebration of the Victory.

Agencies

world economy.

Kiyoshi Fushitani, senior managing executive officer of Japan's ORIX Corporation, shared some observations about improvement in China's business environment as the company's businesses entered China since the 1980s.

Kiyoshi noted that he really felt the Chinese government's emphasis on business environment, from release of relevant laws and regulations to vigorous efforts of governments at all levels.

An enabling business environment is a beneficial to both Chinese and foreign enterprises, and will create a more open market environment and provide opportunities for more foreign companies to develop in China, he added.

"China has never stopped efforts to expand opening-up, and we are impressed by its firm resolve to further open its market to the world", Kiyoshi exclaimed.

People's Daily

The
Guardian

SPORT



Simba SC's midfielder, Said Ndema (2nd R), attempts to shoot the ball past Ndanda FC defenders when the two clubs clashed in a Vodacom Premier League duel, played in Dar es Salaam on Tuesday. Simba won 2-0. PHOTO: CORRESPONDENT JUMANNE JUMA

A refined Kapalua presents different test to start new year

KAPALUA, HAWAII

LUSH green grass, Pacific blue horizon. That much about the Plantation Course at Kapalua hasn't changed for the 34 winners on the PGA Tour last year who have assembled for the Sentry Tournament of Champions. Fifteen players are competing for the first time and won't notice the \$12.5 million refinement project by designers Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw.

Dustin Johnson did. "It's definitely a little harder," said Johnson, who has been playing every morning as the sun climbs over the horizon and is done with 18 holes before the breakfast buffet has been cleared. "The greens are firmer because they're new. The greens are firm and the fairways are soft. I think it will play more difficult."

What really got his attention was the third hole, which for 10 years has been a driver and a wedge. With a new tee some 30 yards farther back, and facing a stiff trade win, Johnson blasted driver and reached for a 6-iron.

"I knew it was longer and that I'd have longer in," Johnson said. "I didn't think I'd have that far. It's a difficult green with wedge to get it close. With a 6-iron, it's not that much fun."

This refinement was not all about length. The Plantation Course had grown old enough that it lost its speed from so much thatch in the grass. The idea was for this course to play fast. That would make it more difficult for elite players to control their shots, and make it easier for resort guests who found the course too long because the ball wasn't rolling as far as it once did.



In this Jan. 7, 2017, file photo, Dustin Johnson hits for the fourth fairway during the third round of the Tournament of Champions golf event at Kapalua Plantation Course in Kapalua, Hawaii. The course has gone through a refinement to prepare for the winners-only event on the PGA Tour that starts Thursday, Jan. 2. (AP Photo)

The entire course was grassed with a new strain called "Celebration Bermuda." The greens were redone with TiffEagle Bermuda, with some ridges and plateaus added to create more hole locations and restore some shot-making value. Missing on the wrong spot of certain greens becomes more penal.

"Instead of having one gradual slope, now it's kind of turned into shelf," Justin Thomas said. "And you have to maybe focus a little bit more on being on the correct side of the shelf, or the correct side of the hole."

The course re-opened two months ago. The first big test is the Tournament of Champions. Because the grass is new, and with ample rain over the last month, the fairways remain relatively soft. That should change over time, but there have been enough examples during practice to let players know what to expect.

Defending champion Xander Schauffele hammered a drive on the downhill, 667-yard closing hole and was surprised to see it hop out of pitch mark instead of bouncing forward. The pitch mark was 8 feet behind where his ball finished.

"If it firms up, it's going to be awesome," said Kevin Kisner, who needs some roll to play a 7,596-yard course at par 73.

All the bunkers were rebuilt with drainage. Some were moved to tighten the landing area, such as on the 16th and most noticeably on the par-5 fifth. It appears to be in the middle of the fairway, but it narrows the landing area. For now, that might not be an issue because the fairway is soft enough it's hard for anyone to reach it.

The biggest change, at least for the players who have previously played this winners-only event, are the sharpened slopes on some of the greens and the length, mainly on No. 3, 4, 9 and 10.

"Another one they renovated they didn't make shorter. I've yet to see that," Kisner said with a grin.

Kisner hit 3-iron into a strong wind on the 409-yard third hole. On the ninth, playing the new tee, he hit driver and a 3-wood that barely reached the second portion of the fairway. That wasn't just because he doesn't hit a country mile. J.B. Holmes, one of the longest hitters, said he barely cleared the steep slope to get back to the fairway.

Holmes wouldn't expect that tee to be used dead into the wind.

"They can set it up and make all the changes look terrible, or they can set it up and make it look good," he said. "Overall, I think they did a good job."

Holmes had a few complaints, such as the severity of the 13th green and the length on No. 3, saying the green wasn't designed for the club required into the wind.

Then again, no one is ever happy with change, especially on the PGA Tour.

"I've seen a redo on some golf courses and was like, 'What the hell were they thinking?' It's not like that here," Holmes said. "I think they made the shots more challenging."

Either way, it's the hardest event on the PGA Tour to play – winning is the only criteria. It's on the west end of Maui with endless views of the Pacific and the occasional splash of a humpback whale. There's no cut. Last place gets \$64,000.

"You never complain about being in Kapalua," Kisner said.

Harden has 35 as Rockets down Nuggets 130-104

HOUSTON

NOW that the Houston Rockets are healthy, James Harden is excited for his team's possibilities.

But he knows there will be ups and downs as his teammates figure out how to play together.

Harden scored 35 points after missing the last game with an injury to lead the Rockets to a 130-104 victory over the Denver Nuggets on Tuesday night.

The Rockets were back to full strength after Harden missed his first game of the season because of a sprained right toe in a loss to New Orleans on Sunday. Clint Capela (bruised heel) and Russell Westbrook (load management) also returned after sitting out on Sunday in the 127-112 defeat. They got Eric Gordon back on Sunday after the guard sat out for about six weeks after arthroscopic knee surgery.

"We've just got to find a way," Harden said. "It will get there. We're not where we want to be obviously. It's still early in the season. But we've got to find a way to sustain it for four quarters and once we get that it's going to be pretty tough to beat us."

Houston pushed a small lead to a big advantage with a 19-3 run to start the fourth quarter. The Rockets were up by 17 when Harden scored five quick points, with a 3-pointer, to make it 118-96 with about 3 1/2 minutes left and end his night and that of most of Houston's starters.

Nikola Jokic scored 21 points for the Nuggets, who had a two-game winning streak snapped.

"Our defense wasn't there all night long," Denver coach Michael Malone said. "The turnovers were too much. Give them credit, they're a good team, but a really disappointing fourth quarter."

Westbrook had 28 points for his 11th straight game with 20 or more, the longest streak by a Rockets player besides Harden



Houston Rockets guard James Harden (13) shoots as Denver Nuggets forward Torrey Craig defends during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Tuesday, Dec. 31, 2019, in Houston. (AP Photo)

since Yao Ming did it in 14 games in a row in 2006.

The Nuggets used a 37-point third quarter to cut the lead to three, but the Rockets scored the first 12 points of the fourth to make it 104-89 with about 9 minutes left. Ben McLemore had two 3-pointers to power that spurt.

Denver got its first points of the quarter on a 3 by Torrey Craig after that. Houston then scored the next seven points, capped by a 3 from Harden to stretch the lead to 111-92 midway through the period.

Coach Mike D'Antoni was happy with the way the Rockets opened the fourth quarter, but was disappointed that they let up in the third to allow the Nuggets to cut the deficit.

"If you stop them and it went the other way the game could have been over (earlier)," he said. "But we have that tendency of letting people back in and we've got to develop better habits. Because if you want to go deep in the playoffs you can't just turn it on."

The Rockets were up by 12 after a 3-pointer by Harden with about 7 minutes left in the third quarter. Jokic then scored four quick points to cut the lead to 78-70 midway through the quarter.

Houston remained up by eight later in the third when Harden, who had six 3-pointers, made three free throws to push it to 86-75.

The Rockets had pushed the lead to 10 with about 3 minutes left in the third before the Nuggets used an 11-4 run to cut the lead to 92-89 entering the fourth. Malik Beasley led the Nuggets in that stretch, scoring five points capped by a 3-pointer with 2.7 seconds left.

Meanwhile, in Toronto, Kyle Lowry kept injury-ravaged Toronto rolling along by finishing off 2019 with another 20-point performance.

Lowry scored 24 points, Terence Davis matched his career high with 19 and the Raptors beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 117-97 on Tuesday night.

Serge Ibaka had 20 points and 10 rebounds and Rondae Hollis-Jefferson scored 14 points in his first start with Toronto as the Raptors recorded their fifth straight home win over the Cavaliers.

Toronto won for the fourth time in seven games since losing starters Pascal Siakam (groin), Marc Gasol (left hamstring) and Norman Powell (left shoulder) to injury.

Lowry, who did not speak to reporters, has scored 20 or more in eight of his past nine games. He had 14 in a Christmas Day loss to Boston.

"Kyle Lowry is a Hall of Famer," Cleveland's Tristan Thompson said. "He's a five-time All-Star, Olympic gold medalist, an NBA champ. He's their backbone."

"He keeps this ship running and he's playing at a high level. Kyle's a bulldog, he's going to compete every night. That's why his teammates always love him."

AP



Bukima Village residents watch a canoeing race hosted by Rural Musoma Constituency's Member of Parliament, Sospeter Muhongo, and took place at the village early this week. Eleven wards in the constituency entered teams in the race. PHOTO: CORRESPONDENT

Kisses, cheers, fireworks welcome 2020 in Times Square

NEW YORK



Post Malone performs at the Times Square New Year's Eve celebration on Tuesday, Dec. 31, 2019, in New York. (AP)

COUPLES kissed. Others cheered and waved balloons as fireworks burst into the night sky and confetti fell to welcome the start of 2020 in New York City's Times Square.

In one of the globe's most-watched New Year's Eve spectacles, the crowd counted down the last seconds of 2019 as a luminescent crystal ball descended down a pole. Throngs of people cheered and sang along to the X Ambassadors' soul-stirring rendition of John Lennon's "Imagine" just before midnight.

About 3,000 pounds (1,360 kilograms) of confetti showered the sea of attendees, many of whom were also briefly rained

on earlier in the evening as they waited in security pens for performances by stars including rap-pop star Post Malone, K-pop group BTS, country singer Sam Hunt and singer-songwriter Alanis Morissette.

The frenzied moment of celebration came after many hours of waiting for much of the crowd.

Eric and Aileen Sanchez-Himes brought their son and nephew from Framingham, Massachusetts, to experience what they consider a "bucket list item." Eric packed granola bars and water in his coat in case they got hungry. They arrived at 10:30 a.m. "I grew up in New York, in Brooklyn and the Bronx and I've never done this and this was the first time

for us and what better year than 2020 to do this," Aileen said.

Mathieu Plesotsky, 25, visiting from Hesse, Germany, said he wanted to be a part of the spectacle after watching it for years on TV. He arrived in Times Square at 1 p.m. with his girlfriend and bopped along to the performers while waiting for the ball to drop.

"We've just stayed, stand, tried not to pee, danced to the Village People," he said. Ever since the NYPD tightened security and began cracking down on public drinking years ago, Times Square on New Year's Eve has been an endurance contest as much as a raucous celebration.

AP



Mane set to crowned king of Africa as troubles rumble on

JOHANNESBURG

LIVERPOOL sharpshooter Sadio Mane is expected to become the first African football headline-maker of 2020 by winning the Player of the Year award in Egypt next week.

The January 7 ceremony will set in motion a year sure to be full of drama on and off the field with 2022 World Cup and 2021 Cup of Nations qualifiers in the mix.

AFP Sport looks at some of the issues facing the most popular sport in a continent where good footballers and bad administrators often share the media stage.

Awards
Consistent Liverpool scorer and Senegal talisman Mane is favoured to become the second star from his country after El Hadji Diouf to be named Player of the Year.

His rivals are Liverpool teammate Mohamed Salah, the Egyptian who won the last two editions, and Algerian Riyad Mahrez of Manchester City.

The Player of the Year, and the winners of seven other male and female categories, will be announced at a ceremony in Egyptian Red Sea resort Hurghada.

World Cup
A couple of weeks after the awards banquet, Egypt will host another eagerly anticipated event, the draw in Cairo for the group stage of World Cup qualifying.

The latest FIFA rankings are expected to determine the seedings, meaning Senegal, Tunisia, Nigeria, Algeria, Morocco, Ghana, Egypt, Cameroon, Mali and DR Congo will be in pot one.

All those nations except Mali have played at the World Cup, and an Ivory Coast team that can call on the dazzling footwork of Wilfried Zaha could be the most dangerous second seeds.

Cup of Nations
Trouble lies ahead after a change from a January/February to June/July tournament this year to avoid tug of wars between clubs and countries over the services of Europe-based stars.

The first revamped Club World Cup, featuring 24 teams, is set for June 17 to July 4 2021 in China, effectively ruling out a mid-year Cup of Nations in Cameroon.

Senior CAF officials say off the record that a return to January/February dates is likely, and with it the possibility that an increasing number of players will put clubs first.

Nations Championship
Tunisia have reportedly decided because of fixture congestion to withdraw from the 2020 edition in Cameroon of the tournament for footballers playing in their country of birth.

Traditionally a biennial January/February competition, it is slated for April 4 to 25 this year in three southern Cameroon cities, the capital, Yaounde, Douala and Limbe.

The 16-nation championship will test the readiness of Cameroon to stage the Cup of Nations next year after construction delays led to them being replaced by Egypt as 2019 hosts.

Champions League
Tunisian club Esperance have

been erratic as they seek an unprecedented third straight title, battling to overcome a Chadian club then defying the odds to defeat Raja in Casablanca.

They have lost several 2019 title-winning stars, including Algeria winger Youcef Belaili, and the starting line-up for a group match last weekend included only four Tunisians.

Record eight-time champions Al Ahly of Egypt, TP Mazembe of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa and Casablanca clubs Raja and Wydad are potential threats.

Confederation Cup
A new name will be engraved on the trophy this year as recent winners Ahly, Etoile Sahel of Tunisia, Mazembe, Raja and Zamalek of Egypt are all competing in the Champions League.

Judged by group form up to the halfway mark, Cairo outfit Pyramids could become the third Egyptian winners of a competition modelled on the UEFA Europa League.

Emirati Salem al Shamsi has invested millions in a squad dominated by Egyptians but also containing stars from Burkina Faso, Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Tunisia and Uganda.

Super Cup
Zamalek are threatening to boycott the February 14 match against Esperance scheduled for Qatar, a country Egypt accuses of destabilising the Middle East region.

Controversial club chairman Mortada Mansour says Zamalek will change their stance only if ordered to do so by the government.

"I do not understand why CAF want to stage the match in a country which is an enemy of Egypt. We are African clubs so why should we play in Asia?" Mansour asked during a press conference.

CAF
The six-month secondment of FIFA secretary general Fatma Samoura to crisis-plagued CAF ends on January 31 and there will be huge interest in what progress the Senegalese has made.

Her brief was to introduce reforms, notably in governance, competitions and refereeing, to an organisation World Soccer magazine labelled the "biggest basket case in football".

Assisting Samoura is CAF president Ahmad Ahmad, who has not commented on various allegations against him, including corruption, financial misappropriation and sexual harassment.

TV
There have been no broadcasts in sub-Saharan Africa of CAF national team and club fixtures since November after a 12-year TV deal with a French company was scrapped.

Lagardere Sports paid one million dollars (890,000 euros) in 2017 for the TV and marketing rights, but separate judgments ruled the deal illegal because there was no tender process.

Desperate football followers have resorted to streaming, but fixture options are limited and the high cost of internet data is an additional obstacle.

AFP

Klopp EXCLUSIVE: Liverpool's desire to win trophies is immense



Jurgen Klopp

BY MARK OGDEN, SENIOR WRITER, ESPN FC

AT some point this season, Liverpool's supporters will be able to enjoy the ride that will, barring an unprecedented loss of form or some strange alignment of the stars in the night sky, take them all the way to the club's first league title since 1990. But right now, despite enjoying a double-digit lead over their closest challengers at the top of the Premier League, nobody connected to the club -- player, fan, director or otherwise -- is daring to speak publicly about ending the 30-year wait to be crowned champions of England again.

It's partly desperation and part fear of failure -- the scars are still raw from Steven Gerrard's slip against Chelsea which as good as cost Liverpool the title in 2014 -- but manager Jurgen Klopp appears to be the only person at Anfield who can see the funny side of the tension that is gripping the Liverpool fan base.

"They are [desperate for the title], Klopp laughs, during an interview with ESPN. "They are, but we cannot change that. We cannot change that it takes time, that you have to work, that you have to play all the games."

"It is not for sure that we will win it. We have a chance obviously. We've created a good base so far, but we have to fight in each game like crazy. Nothing is easy for us."

But are the fans too scared of something going wrong to even dare mention their desire to see the Premier League trophy hoisted aloft by captain Jordan Henderson next May?

"No, no, no, people tell me that constantly," Klopp said. "When I see them, they constantly tell me that. But the only thing what I can say is 'I try' or 'we try.' I cannot promise more. That's how it is."

"When I became champion with Dortmund, it was always the same question. It's always about 'come on, do you want to be champion?' Of course you want to be champion. 'But will you be champion?' I don't know. It's not interesting to me until we are."

One thing that is certain amid all the nervous tension, however, is that no Liverpool supporter would rather have anyone else leading their title charge than Klopp. The 52-year-old German, who ended Borussia Dortmund's nine-year wait for a Bundesliga title back in 2010-11, has become the coach that every other club would dream to have since succeeding Brendan Rodgers at Anfield in Oct 2015. Pep Guardiola might have more trophies on the board than Klopp, but nobody connects to their club's supporters quite like Klopp, and it's difficult to argue that even Guardiola's City have been a more exciting, scintillating team than the current Liverpool side.

Ultimately, Klopp's refusal to allow the pressure that comes with chasing silverware to become a burden

shows why he's the perfect man for Liverpool. Expectancy is huge at Anfield, but Klopp has harnessed it as a positive energy -- Barcelona's capitulation in last season's 4-0 Champions League semifinal second-leg defeat is an example of the irresistible force he can create -- and the ability of his team to overcome the disappointment of finishing second on 97 points last season is down to the manager's refusal to focus on the negative.

"Common sense," Klopp said, when asked how he turned finishing second into a positive. "Yes, we were disappointed, but if your main contender is Man City, you can't expect to just get something only because you do your best, because they did it as well."

"We pushed each other through the league and we were disappointed, yes, but of course it helped that we had three weeks later a big final [in the Champions League] for us. It helped, for sure, but the disappointment after the season was not as much as we would maybe expect. And not because we didn't want it. I think everyone saw we really wanted it. Just because we accept the reality. That's how it is. That's what I said before."

"All Liverpool supporters wanted to be champion, and it didn't work out, obviously. We try again and again and it is what we do this year with a slightly better basis than usually. That is all."

There has been no hangover from finishing second. Instead, Liverpool have torn the field apart, winning 18 of 19 games so far in the Premier League. Klopp has built a team of all talents that dominated the ESPN 100, from the world's best goalkeeper, Alisson Becker, a colossus at centre-half in Virgil van Dijk, two world-class full-backs in Andy Robertson and Trent Alexander-Arnold and a forward line of Mohamed Salah, Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane that has proved to be the best on the planet in 2019. And now it has all come together to create arguably the best team in the world.

"We are not dreamers," Klopp said. "We work for the things we want to

have and, if you work for it, it's not guaranteed that you get it. It's only chance that you get anything, and that's what we try and that's exactly what we did again."

"The mood was brilliant when we started the season again. We play for everything. The Super Cup is a good example. We didn't know exactly how important it is. When we won it, it felt sensational, but we had no clue before."

The UEFA Super Cup, won via a penalty shootout against Europe League winners Chelsea in Istanbul in August, was the Reds' second trophy of 2019 following the Champions League success against Tottenham two months earlier. Liverpool then added the FIFA Club World Cup in December, beating Flamengo in Doha, Qatar, to become world champions for the first time.

From being a team and a coach who were becoming viewed as "nearly men," Liverpool and Klopp have flipped it around to become a team and coach that might just win everything this season. Two trophies are in the bag and they already have one hand on the Premier League title. Who's to say they won't retain the Champions League and win the FA Cup, too?

But for Klopp, wanting to win again and again is not greed. It is simply a desire to experience glory as often as possible.

"Is it greed? I'm not sure," he said. "It's like this desire you want to have trophies. I don't think it's real greed. We have improved our opportunities obviously with different things, with the players we brought in and to work together for a while of course with more experience. Stuff like this."

"Getting used to different situations more and more [is helpful too]. You know a defeat is a defeat, but if you learn, it still makes sense, like the Champions League final [defeat to Real Madrid] the year before, when [Liverpool] lost that. It's not that we really learned something from the final, but the way to the final or the way to the next final, the experience for me before helped us a lot."

"I really think our desire is immense. It's big, it's massive to win

more trophies. If it's greed, I don't know, but yeah. Who cares?"

Despite the insistence around the club, Liverpool are in a good position to sweep the board in 2020. Even Klopp admits that is basic numbers.

"A lot of teams can do that to be honest," he said. "OK, with the Premier League, maybe it's now three teams. I don't know exactly who can win it still, and the Champions League there are still 16 teams who can win it."

"The FA Cup? I don't know exactly how many teams are in still, but that's how it is. The good thing is that if you think about it, you don't think we have no chance, and that's a start. We have a chance. But we knew that."

"I remember two years ago, before when we qualified for the Champions League after the Hoffenheim game, we had a meeting. I said to the boys, 'look, in the competition there are maybe 10 clubs who can win the Champions League.' There were more teams in obviously at that moment, a lot of teams are part of it, but about 10 clubs can win it. We are one of them. It doesn't feel in the moment like this, but we are. That's what we should try, and that's how we took the Champions League, for example."

"With the Premier League, it's slightly different and difficult when you see the dominance of Man City for the past three years. You work on that, you hope for it but you don't know exactly. So we are no dreamers. We are just quite positive about our skills and our relationship and the things we do together and the things we want to achieve together."

"So we will see what happens. Nobody knows if we win one of these trophies, but we will work of course."

But unlike those at Liverpool who are facing sleepless nights as the long wait for the title ticks down, Klopp won't be worrying too much.

"I don't have to know when it will be or whatever," he said. "There is a final match day in May sometime, I don't even know exactly when it is."

"So if we are then top of the table, believe me we will celebrate it, but until then we don't have to think about will we really be it or what."

Gwiji by David Chikoko



SPORT

Liverpool's desire to win trophies is immense

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT, PAGE 19

TODAY @ 18:00

EATV

THURSDAY

11:00 DADAZ (live)
12:00 Moyo
13:00 FUNGUA
14:00 Bongo Hits
15:30 #HASTAG
17:00 SILEKT
17:55 Kura
18:00 #NEWS
18:30 Music
19:00 EATV SAA 1
19:30 KAJAGALA
21:00 Bongo Hits

88.1FM DAR ES SALAAM

05:00 EA Breakfast
09:00 Supamix
12:00 Kipenga Xtra
13:00 Planet Bongo
16:00 EA Drive
20:00 Kipenga
21:00 The Cruise

NEWS is your one stop show for everything entertainment. It covers celebrity interviews, gossip, what's hot, what's not, trending online and offline and what happened in history.

Jonesia Rukyaa to officiate Dar derby for fourth time

By Guardian Correspondent

REFEREE Jonesia Rukyaa will take charge of the Dar es Salaam derby match pitting Simba SC against Young Africans (Yanga), scheduled for Saturday at National Stadium in Dar es Salaam.

The clash, dubbed Dar derby, will be the only Vodacom Premier League game in the day and Rukyaa, who is among the country's six FIFA accredited referees, will officiate the match and she will be assisted by other FIFA accredited match officials, Soud Lila and Hamisi Chang'alu.

Hery Sassi, also a FIFA referee, will be the Dar derby's fourth official while Khalid Bitebo will be the match commissioner.

Rukyaa is no stranger to Simba and Yanga affairs, with this being the fourth time she is officiating the Dar derby.

Her first Dar derby she was chosen for happened in 2014. The game finished in a 2-0 victory in favour of Simba in promotional match, dubbed 'Nani Mtani Jembe'.

In February 20, 2016 she was in charge once again when Yanga won 2-0 in a Vodacom Premier League match where she sent off Simba defender Abdi Banda on the 21st minute.

The last Dar derby she was chosen for happened in 2018. The game finished in a barren draw.

In heated moments and highly charged atmosphere, Rukyaa has never been shy about showing the cards.

In the three Dar derby games that she has officiated, she has brandished two red cards.

She sent off Yanga defender Kelvin Yondani for a bad tackle on Simba winger Ramadhan Singano in her first derby. She then followed it up with another marching order for Banda in her second derby.

Rukyaa was also in the spotlight in the Kagera and Simba suspension controversy where she was the fourth official and had to give evidence before a TFF committee set up to investigate Mohamed Fakhri yellow cards.

There will be a lot more than bragging rights at stake this weekend as Simba are 10 points clear at the top of the table.

A defeat for Yanga will not only extend their derby winless run to five games but also put them in a quite uncomfortable position in the title race.



Jonesia Rukyaa

CAF snubs Tanzania's referees for CHAN 2020 finals



Tanzania Football Federation (TFF) president, Wallace Karia (R), and the federation's vice-president, Athuman Nyamiani, speak to journalists at the body's recent press conference which took place in Dar es Salaam. PHOTO: COURTESY OF TFF

By Correspondent Michael Mwebe

NO match at the 2020 Africa Nations Championship (CHAN) finals will be refereed by a Tanzanian official after a list of match officials released by the continental football governing body, CAF, deemed them not good enough to handle any game in Cameroon.

The tournament will run from April 4 to 25, 2020. Sixteen African nations including Tanzania and defending champions

Morocco will take part in the competition.

Tanzania qualified for the second time after overcoming Sudan and Kenya.

CAF selected a total of 39 referees and assistants from 29 countries to officiate in the sixth edition of the tournament for home-based players.

Council of East and Central Africa Football Associations (CECAFA) members

- Uganda, Kenya, Sudan, Djibouti, Eritrea, Rwanda and Burundi - have officials in the championship.

The regional soccer body's other member, Ethiopia, is also has no single official in the tournament.

Tanzania has four centre referees on the FIFA male referees panel, Emmanuel Mwandembwa, Hery Sassi, Mfaume Nassoro and Martin Saanya.

Referees:

Mokos Teklu Tsegay (Eritrea), Jean-Claude Ishimwe (Rwanda), Zakaria Mahmoud (Egypt), George Gatogato (Burundi), Daouda Gueye (Senegal), Samir Guezzaz (Morocco), Mahmoud Ismail (Sudan), Daniel Laryea (Ghana), Ali Moussa Mohamed (Niger), Lahlou

Benbraham (Algeria), Atchou Pierre (Gabon), Mohamed Mansour (Egypt), Rakotojaona Andofetra (Madagascar), Haythem Guurat (Tunisia), Peter Waweru (Kenya), Souleiman Ahmed Djama (Djibouti), Heerali Ahmad Imtehaz (Mauritius), Dahane Beida (Mauritania), Janny Sika-zwe (Zambia), and Papa Gassama (Gambia)

Assistant referees:

James Fredrick Emille (Seychelles), Sanou Habib Oumar (Burkina Faso), Dick Okello (Uganda), Wahid Youssef Elbosaty (Egypt), Abdi Salah Mohamed (Djibouti), Jawo Abdul Aziz Bolle (Gambia), Mathew Kanyanga (Namibia), Jospin Luckner Malonga (Central Africa Republic), Abdoul Aziz Moctar Saley (Niger), Samuel Pwadutakam (Nigeria), Nouha Bangoura (Senegal), Dos Reis Montenegro Abelmiro (Sao Tome & Principe), Ditsoga Boris Mariaise (Gabon), Hassan Khalil (Tunisia), Styven Moutsassi Moyo Danek (Congo), Brinsi Zakaria (Morocco), Abdi Hamza (Somalia), Soulaïmane Almadine (Comoro), and Lionel Haisinjao-soa Andrianantea (Madagascar).

The continental football governing body has also approved four female assistant referees, Janet Balama, Hellen Mduma, Dalila Mtwana and Grace Wamala.

Defense was our only option against Simba SC, says Ndanda FC coach

By Correspondent Michael Mwebe

NDANDA FC's coach, Abdul Mingange, said he banked on a defensive strategy to keep Simba SC at bay on Tuesday and avoid an embarrassing score.

Ndanda FC barely tested the Simba SC defense in a Vodacom Premier League match played at National Stadium in Dar es Salaam.

Most of the game, which ended with Simba winning 2-0, took place in Ndanda FC's half but Mingange said he did not regret his approach.

"I have been with the team for only two weeks, this is my second match after

the Federation Cup. We were not overwhelmed, that was a strategic approach. I had not played against a strong opponent such as Simba before. The time I had was not enough to prepare for such an encounter," Mingange told reporters after the defeat.

"If you open up against Simba, they will punish you. Did you expect to see us play open football and be humiliated 7-0? I did not want to win, I needed to keep the score line respectable. Do you know how Ndanda players are?" he retorted.

A first half free kick strike from Kenyan import Francis Kahata was topped up

by another goal by Deo Kanda to extend Ndanda FC winless streak to six matches since their 2-0 victory over Ruvo Shooting in November.

The results leave the Mtwara-based club second from bottom after collecting eight points in their opening fourteen matches.

In the opposite bench, Simba head coach Sven Vandenbroek stated that he was not happy with his side's display despite managing the victory that extend their lead at the top of the table by 10 points.

Vandenbroek explained he was pleased by the mentality shown by his players who might have played with their mind already

in weekend's Dar derby match against Yanga.

"Our tempo was too low, we played old school football with always asking the ball on the feet instead of running. We only woke up in the last five minutes of the games."

"I am happy John Bocco played 90 minutes, I am happy Deo Kanda and Kahata scored again but I'm not happy with the mentality and intensity of quite a few guys. We have to change," the Belgian told reporters after the match.

England board to back four-day test proposal - report

NEW DELHI

ENGLAND will be "cautiously" backing a proposal to make four-day tests mandatory from 2023 under the World Test Championship, joining a growing push to shorten the game's longest format.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) cricket committee is set to discuss the issue next year as the game looks for ways to free up a crammed international calendar and reduce player workload.

"We believe it could provide a sustainable solution to the complex scheduling needs and play-

er workloads we face as a global sport," an England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) spokesperson told London's Daily Telegraph newspaper.

"We're definite proponents of the four-day test concept, but cautiously so, as we understand it's an emotive topic for players, fans and others who have concerns about challenging the heritage of test cricket."

The ECB did not immediately reply to a Reuters e-mail seeking further elaboration.

Ashes rivals Australia already seem to be taking the same view. Cricket Australia chief executive

Kevin Roberts said last week that the board would "seriously consider" playing four-day tests.

The other "Big Three" member of the ICC, the powerful Indian board, has yet to declare its stance on the matter, with its president Sourav Ganguly saying he wants to see the proposal before commenting.

Four-day matches were given the green light by the ICC in 2017, when South Africa hosted one against Zimbabwe, while England played one against Ireland in July this year.

With an increasing number of test matches ending premature-

ly, the administrators are keen to free up more space in the schedules for lucrative shorter form matches.

Australia batsman Travis Head believes test cricket should not be denied the possibility of late drama on a fifth-day wicket.

"I think that (five-day tests) plays a lot with the wicket, brings spin into play," Head told reporters in Sydney on Tuesday.

"So I'd like to keep it at five days," he added, echoing skipper Tim Paine's view that test cricket should remain a five-day affair.

The Federation of International Cricketers Associations (FICA)

fears the new gaps in calendar could well be filled with more cricket.

"It would take pressure off the schedule but our concern would be that the ad hoc way the schedule currently works they would simply plug in more cricket into the gaps," FICA chief Tony Irish told ESPNcricinfo.

While four-day tests allow a golf-like Thursday-to-Sunday scheduling, they require a minimum of 98 overs a day to be played, a challenge considering five-day matches already often fall short of their daily quota of 90 overs. REUTERS

Flexibles by David Chikoko

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