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Minister Dr Faustine Ndugulile

Uproar as internet bundles cost rises

By Guardian Reporter

THERE was anger and dismay among internet users yesterday after

charges of data bundles went up instead of dropping as promised by the government last month. All major service providers began issuing notifications to subscribers informing them of upward changes in charges which they said were in accordance with

new regulations of the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA). Under the changes, the telcos have shaken up bundle packages by either reducing bundle package for the same amount of money or increasing the amount of money for the same quantity.

In reaction to the changes, various users took their anger to social media with some seeking a comment from the minister responsible. This is in sharp contrast with guidelines issued by TCRA last month and a recent

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A re-enactment of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ performed yesterday at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania's Azania Front church in Dar es Salaam as part of Good Friday mass. More photos on Page 4. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma

BLOCKED MAIZE TRADERS APPEAL TO STATE HOUSE

By Guardian Reporter, Arusha

TANZANIAN and Kenyan maize traders who are stranded with truckloads of the grain at Namanga border in Longido district, Arusha region, for a month now, have called for intervention of presidents of the two countries to resolve the stalemate.

On 5 March, Kenya slapped a ban on maize imports from Tanzania and Uganda on suspicion that the grain from its two neighbours contains cancer-causing aflatoxins.

The East African Business Council (EABC)—the apex private sector body of the East African Commu-

nity (EAC) - held a stakeholders meeting at Namanga One Stop Border Post to discuss the matter. Speaking at the meeting

on behalf of traders from both countries, Mercy Irirama called on President Samia Suluhu Hassan and her Kenyan counterpart

Uhuru Kenyatta to intervene and resolve the matter so that the consignments can enter Kenya. "Each trader incurs a

loss of USD 200 per day due to this impasse. The matter is beyond our ability to solve," she said. "We kindly request

presidents of the sister countries to intervene and put this matter to rest once and for all." Ireri who is a repre-

sentative of the Kenya Truckers Association said that soon after the ban,

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Easter like no other as police ban celebrations

By Guardian Reporter



AS Christians in Tanzania join their counterparts around the world in marking Easter, things may not be like in previous years since police have banned celebrations as commonly held.

Police headquarters issued a media alert on Thursday against holding festive events or celebrations as the country is observing 21 days of mourning following the death of former president Dr John Magufuli.

"It is our hope that Easter mass will be conducted quietly," the police statement noted, adding that the mourning period covers March 18 to April 7, which overlaps Karume Day.

Yesterday was Good Friday which is ordinarily shorn of fanfare, a somber reminder of the death of the Messiah while Easter Sunday is a festival commemorating the resurrection, continuing the next day to compensate for Sunday which is unavoidably a resting day.

As the Easter festival has come up within the national mourning period, and police cautioning against any visible celebrations, Easter is billed to be spent quietly at home and outdoors but without blaring music and fanfare.

Then sitting president Magufuli died on Wednesday March 17 at Mzena Hospital, a reclusive clinic in Dar es Salaam, and was buried on March 26 at his home village of

Mlimani in Chato District, Geita Region.

Less than 48 hours following the death, then Vice President Samia Suluhu Hassan was sworn in as Union President, having announced state mourning for 21 days, in accordance with prevailing legislation.

Police headquarters spokesman David Misime said that police would be on alert to ensure that the Christian community engages in worship in a peaceful environment.

"Regional police commanders and their units are well prepared to ensure the security situation continues to improve and to take strong action against all those who violate safety laws during this period," he added.



Uproar as internet bundles cost rises

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promise by Information and Communication Technology Minister Dr Faustine Ndigulile that charges for data bundles would fall soon.

Efforts to get a comment from TCRA were futile as phone calls to the regulator's spokesperson went



unanswered for the better part of yesterday.

Last month TCRA issued a number of rules to guide telecom companies in issuance of data bundles in a move aimed at addressing grievances and increasing complaints by consumers on costs and time variations.

The new rules which started operating with the passing of March require service providers not to offer bundles without approval from the regulator, and ensure that data bundle prices are within indicative prices set out by TCRA.

Service providers are required to insert a mobile app to help user verify the rate of data bundle usage

by downloading the app.

The service provider is also required to enable user to choose and agree to charges outside the bundle upon expiry of the bundle and units of the selected data bundle.

The rules also require telecom companies to put a choice to agree as the first to select in the menu before a user chooses a data or voice bundle, so that TCRA makes out differences between using bundles and without them.

The TCRA Consumer Consultative Council shall analyse and address complaints by users over being short-changed on bundle packages, the minister had stated, noting that users have been complaining about given less internet data or being overcharged when they purchase bundles.

Mobile phone selling voice and data bundles are TTC Mobile, Vodacom (T), Airtel (T), Tigo (T), Zanzibar Telecommunications (Zantel), Halotel (Vettel Tanzania) along with Smart and Smile.

TCRA data shows that the number of mobile internet subscribers stood at 27.9m at the end of September 2020, or roughly 48 percent of the total population.



Zanzibar President Dr Hussein Ali Mwinyi has a word with his fellow Muslim faithful shortly after Friday prayers at Amaan Mosque in Zanzibar yesterday. Photo: Zanzibar State House

Promising signs as 3,800 tourists arrive in Seychelles

VICTORIA

A week after Seychelles opened its borders to most countries, 3,800 visitors have arrived in the island nation, a figure that a top Seychelles Tourism Board (STB) officer describes as "more than satisfactory."

Seychelles reopened its borders on Thursday, March 25 to all visitors from any country except South Africa so as to relaunch its tourism industry amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic.

The chief executive of STB, Sherin Francis, told SNA that "visitors' arrivals for the last week have been more than satisfactory taking into consideration all the challenges we are facing."

"So far the signs are promising and

gradually, we will be able to reclaim our industry," said Francis.

A statistician from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Aubrey Fock-Tave, informed SNA on Thursday that for the week of March 25 to March 31, Seychelles saw the arrival of 3,800 visitors. This represents 55 percent of the 6,820 total visitor arrivals since the start of 2021.

Data collected between January 1 and March 28 by NBS, the year-to-date figure for 2021 shows that 5,579 visitors disembarked in Seychelles, an archipelago in the western Indian Ocean. Compared to 2020, when 92,646 visitors landed in the country for the same period, the year-to-date visitor arrivals have dropped by 94 percent.

The current leading market for tourist arrivals is the United Arab Emirates (UAE) followed by Israel and other European countries in second and third place respectively. European countries are traditionally the leading markets of Seychelles, and when the pandemic started affecting arrivals last year, the five leading markets were Germany, France, UK and North Ireland, UAE and India.

"We are very mindful that our traditional source markets would take a while to become stable in view of the evolution of the pandemic and the various restrictions that still exist in these markets. Our strategy is to tap into what we termed as the 'go-to markets' where through marketing intelligence data we saw there were pent-up demands," said

Francis.

In a recent interview, Francis said that the board is currently focusing on promoting the island destination in Israel, India, Russia, UAE, and certain Eastern European as restrictions continue to impede travel between Seychelles and the core, traditional markets.

"It was important for the short term that we identify a list of what we call the 'go-to markets' where we know that investing in them will bring a faster return. This is provided that we have good air connectivity and that travel restriction eases in those markets, there are travel corridors established, visitors do not require quarantine upon arrival in Seychelles or going back to these countries," said Francis.



Newly appointed Finance and Planning minister Dr Mwigulu Nchemba (R) receives a bouquet from the ministry's Deputy Permanent Secretary, Mary Maganga, upon arrival at the ministry's offices in Dodoma city on Thursday after being sworn in by President Samia Suluhu Hassan at Chamwino State House. Next to him is the ministry's Permanent Secretary, Doto James. Photo courtesy of Finance Ministry

Blocked maize traders appeal to State House

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officials from the neighbouring country arrived at the border and took samples of the maize for testing but have never come back with the outcome.

"We have tried to seek answers from the Kenya government on several occasions but in vain," she said.

Responding to the queries, an official at the Kenyan Ministry of Agriculture, Cactus Efukho said testing of the samples taken last month was still ongoing and once ready; the results will be made public.

Adrian Njau, the trade and policy advisor at EABC said the body will communicate the request through relevant channels in both countries.

It should be recalled that 10 days after the ban and the uproar that followed, Kenya lifted the ban but with strict conditions on exporters which many if not all are failing to comply with.

Kenya's Ministry of Agriculture said then that all stakeholders dealing in maize imports were required to be registered, the consignments coming in must be accompanied with certificate of conformity on aflatoxin levels and that traders had to furnish details of their warehouses.

In its statement, the ministry said that certificate of conformity had to indicate that aflatoxins level in any consignment comply with the maximum permitted level of 10 parts per billion.

President Kenyatta rules out tax reliefs, saying lockdown is not countrywide

NAIROBI

President Uhuru Kenyatta has ruled out tax reliefs to cushion Kenyans and businesses during the partial lockdown affecting five counties that recorded the highest number of COVID-19 infections.

While defending the measures which include a cessation of movement in Nairobi, Nakuru, Kajiado, Kiambu and Machakos, the president said it is not possible to calculate incentives for specific regions and assured that the lockdown is temporary.

"When you talk tax you talk about the whole country and not a section of the country. So we will have to look at specific measures that can

apply to within a particular county like Nakuru has said there will be no licenses. So it will have to be a case by case basis because this is not a national lockdown and we cannot do different tax measures for one County as opposed to another," Kenyatta said, while giving hope to businesses that the situation will normalise with the contribution of each and every individual.

He spoke on the da the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI) President Richard Ngatia urged the government to cushion businesses, including reducing tax to 14 per cent.

There have been protests in Nairobi by hotel, bars and workers in the

entertainment industry whose businesses remain closed following the order issued by President Kenyatta last week when he also revised curfew hours in the affected counties to start from 8pm from the earlier 10pm.

"That fully conscious that 70% of Kenya's reported cases of COVID-19 have been recorded in the Counties of Nairobi, Kajiado, Machakos, Kiambu and Nakuru, those Counties are individually and collectively declared a disease infected area," Kenyatta declared.

Effectively, he said, "there shall be a cessation of movement into and out of the five counties effective Saturday until further notice."

Citing statistics from the Ministry of Health, Kenyatta said "if you test 100 Kenyans today, 20 will be positive compared to January this year when only 2 would have been positive."

"This tells us that the rate of infection has gone up 10 times between January and March 2021," he said.

Worse still, he said, out of every 10 positive cases countrywide, 6 are from Nairobi.

While insisting that the measures are necessary in stemming the rising cases of COVID-19 in the country, the President pointed out the whole country will be fully opened when the curve flattens and the positivity rate goes down to less than 5 percent.

"It is our hope that within a 30 day period or even sooner when we are able to bring that curve to 5 percent, we will resume. Like I said, we have not locked the economy; we have locked down specific areas that have been mentioned by experts as being super spreaders," said Kenyatta.

On Wednesday workers in the entertainment and hospitality industry took to the streets to protest the partial lockdown that also led to the closure of bars, eateries and entertainment joints, with most establishments having resorted to sending their employees home, as they have become unsustainable.

The workers demanded that the government reopens the country,

saying they could no longer foot their bills.

On Thursday, 14 people succumbed to coronavirus pushing fatalities in the country to 2,167 deaths.

Health Chief Administrative Secretary Rashid Aman said an additional 894 COVID-19 infections were recorded raising the total caseload to 135,042 this as the positivity rate stood at 18.5 percent.

Aman also announced that 196,435 Kenyans have so far been vaccinated against the virus while 388 people were cleared of the virus raising the total number of recoveries to 93,067.



Dodoma Regional Police Commander Gilles Muroto shows journalists yesterday animal skins, a locally made gun and cannabis he said police impounded during a special operation ahead of the Easter season. Photo: Correspondent Peter Mkwavila

Ministry calls for action plan on implementation of key projects

By Guardian Reporter

WORKS and Transport minister Dr Leonard Chamuriho has called upon the ministry staff to cooperate with the newly appointed deputy minister Mwita Waitara in ensuring successful implementation of projects.

Dr Chamuriho insisted that projects should be at recommended standards and quality.

Speaking during a meeting to welcome the new deputy minister, Dr Chamuriho emphasised the importance of timely submission of project reports as well as a coordinated approach in issuing information.

"Success of the ministry largely depends on the cooperation between workers and the management. You must all work together to ensure successful implementation of strategic projects," said the minister noting sharing information on the project's implementation progress is crucial.

According to him, the ministry supervises implementation of some crucial flagship projects which includes construction of railways, planes, ships, ferries, bridges and roads. He urged deputy ministers to

plan and review implementation of the development projects to identify challenges and seek immediate solutions. Deputy minister, Godfrey Kasekenya said he has been closely with the ministry management, the thing that made him to work more professionally.

"I have received a lot of cooperation from the management, they have been sharing with me all the needed information," said the deputy minister.

Deputy minister Waitara also called for co-operation from ministry workers and the management. He also urged workers to work hard to ensure the development projects are completed within the schedule.

Permanent Secretary (Works), Arch Elius Mwakalinga said that with the ministry having two deputy ministers its performance is expected to be high with all the projects completed within the time frame.

Waitara was appointed deputy minister in the Ministry of Works and Transport following President Samia Suluhu Hassan's cabinet reshuffle on March 31st this year.

After abrupt ban on Kenyan arrivals, London tries to soothe angry Nairobi

NAIROBI

A DECISION by the British government to ban travellers from Kenya from entering its territory, to tame COVID-19 cases, is eliciting anger among Kenyans, with many terming it discriminatory.

But London argues "scientific evidence" based on tests, which showed a rise in positive cases among arriving passengers from Nairobi.

More than 30 per cent of the cases were new variants of the virus first detected in South Africa, the UK claims. Sources told the Press

yesterday that UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab will seek to explain the stance to Kenyan diplomats, but will not rescind the decision meant to "protect public health".

According to the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and development Office (FCDO), a significant number of arrivals from Nairobi have tested positive, with nearly a third of the positive cases carrying the B.1.351 variant which originated from South Africa.

The indication may mean Kenya has not been strict on travellers from South Africa and other regions where the

variant was detected.

Yesterday, the UK added Kenya, Philippines, Pakistan and Bangladesh on its 'Red List' of countries where arrivals are refused entry into the UK.

The directive means visitors who have either transited through or departed from Kenya in the past 10 days cannot enter the UK. It means all travellers, except nationals and residents, arriving from Nairobi will be turned away at the airport.

"From 0400 UK time on 9 April, visitors who have been in or transited through Kenya in the previous 10 days will be refused entry

into England," said an update from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

British, Irish and third world country nationals with residence rights arriving from these countries will be required to quarantine in a government-approved facility for 10 days.

Flights from these countries will not be banned but the restrictions mean only nationals of the UK and legal residents will be allowed into the UK, and will be forced to quarantine for 10 days, during which they will be compelled to take two tests of COVID-19. The

UK demands testing on the second and eight days of quarantine. Those who test negative after 10 days will be allowed to leave the specified quarantined centres.

At least 500 people travel to the UK every week from Kenya, making it one of the most stable flight routes out of Nairobi. The ban by the UK ran counter to Kenya's own decision last December when it resolved not to bar UK arrivals after a new variant of the virus was discovered in the UK.

Health minister Mutahi Kagwe said at the time available measures were sufficient to control infections.

"We have very strict travel measures with the UK, which the US and the Europeans did not have. We are carefully observing every passenger travelling from there," Kagwe said, after 53 countries temporarily banned travellers from the UK. "We will, therefore, make decisions based on scientific advice as well as any additional advice from WHO. We are not part of the EU (European Union)."

With the new directive, it is still unlikely that Kenya could retaliate.

But some Kenyans accused the UK of "medical racism".

Of the 39 countries on the Red List, none is in Europe. Most are in Africa and Asia, with others in South America. "Once the US, UK and EU reach herd-immunity by June, it will close itself against Africa, Latin America, Middle East and Asia. It will be medical racism," argued lawyer Donald Kipkorir.

Many of the citizens responding to the announced ban questioned the timing of the restrictions, days after British soldiers were accused of bringing in a new variant from the UK on their field training mission in Kenya.

'Sixty-five entrepreneurs in Coast Region received equipment and loans totalling over 177, 000, 000/-

By Guardian Correspondent, Kibaha

MORE than 65 groups of entrepreneurs in Coast Region have received various equipment and loans amounting to 177, 746, 400/- allocated by Kibaha district for special groups including women, youth and people with disabilities (PWDs).

Handing over the equipment, Coast Regional Commissioner, Eng Evarist Ndikilo said the money is part of the district's internal revenue collections.

The law requires district councils to use 10 per cent of their internal revenues for issuance of loans to PWDs, youth and women. This is in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act, CAP 290 which has been implemented from the 2018/2019 financial year.

Implementation of the law resulted into more district councils improving issuance of loans to women, youth and PWDs. The amendment included adding of Section 37A which insists on issuance of the loans in each financial year. The donated equipment includes 12 motorbikes, two three wheeler taxi and one portable machine for production of soap.

Eng Ndikilo said that issuance of loans to the special groups is in accordance with country laws as well as the ruling party's election manifesto (2020-2025). He said that in the 2019/2020 financial year, a total of 2.6bn/- was given to 672 groups of entrepreneurs across the region.

The Regional Commissioner however faulted beneficiaries over poor repayment of the loans whereas out of the issued 2.6bn/-, only 645,770,927/- was repaid, equivalent to 54 percent.

Eng Ndikilo said in the 2020/2021 financial year, all the nine districts councils issued loans amounting to over 2.1bn/- while loan repayment amounted to 1,713,172,068/- until February this year. The amount returned is equivalent to 78.54 percent.



Umyy Mwalimu (L, gesturing), Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office (Regional Administration and Local Governments), has an audience with senior officials at the ministry's offices in Dodoma city shortly after being sworn in by President Samia Suluhu Hassan on Thursday. Photo: Augusta Njoi

Construction of 29 technical and vocational education will be completed in June, says ministry

By Getrude Mbago, Dodoma

THE ongoing work to construct 29 new technical and vocational education colleges in various districts in the country is set to be completed in June this year, something which will increase production of more competent human resources officers for the national socio-economic development.

Deputy Minister for Education, Science and Technology Kipanga Juma Omary told the National Assembly this week here that the completion of the colleges will see more young Tanzanians joining the colleges and achieving their dreams.

He was responding to a question from Husna Seki-

boko (Special Seats) who sought to know the government's plans to enroll into the vocational training colleges, all Tanzanian youth who fail to continue with secondary or university education.

In her basic question, Sekiboko claimed that there was a good number of young graduates from various levels of education who remain home with nothing to do even after spending years in schools.

The MP noted that that the development of any country, Tanzania included depends on availability and effective utilisation of human resources, which in turn are predicated on the level, quantity and quality of education, especially vocational and technical education which have the role of improving livelihoods.

Responding, the deputy minister said the government recognises the importance of the youth and has been timely been improving and expanding the number of students who join various vocational education centres.

He said the government has invested in various reforms which aim to enhance quality of vocational education and training, expand numeric of students, promote creativity and innovation and improve training infrastructure so as to produce competent human resources for the country's industrial development.

He said that the contribution of vocational education and training on industrial development cannot be overemphasised. This has been evident elsewhere, it is

not exception today and Tanzania cannot do without it.

"Skilled and competent workforce stimulates initiation and development of industries and also contributes to increasing employment rates. So the government through the Vocational Education and Training Authority (VETA) works hard to ensure that the country has enough skilled workforce, which constitute majority of the operations manpower required in industrial production and services," he explained.

The deputy minister further urged parents and all Tanzanians to utilize well the vocational training colleges by sending their children to improve skills and thus transform their lives.

Good Friday prayers in Arusha, Dar, Dodoma, Iringa and Mbeya



Bishop Amon Kinyunyu (L) of the Dodoma Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) leads service at an Arusha Road church yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Ibrahim Joseph



Youths at Catholic Church Bikra Maria Consolata Mshindo parish in Iringa municipality re-enact the pre-crucifixion persecution of Jesus Christ. Photo: Correspondent Francis Godwin



Dar es Salaam's Mbezi Beach ELCT congregation choir performs during the service. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala



Bishop Dr Alinikisa Cheyo of the Moravian Church leads mass at a church in Mbeya city's Iwambi suburb. Photo: Correspondent Nebart Msokwa



Mass in progress at an ELCT Arusha Road church. Photo: Correspondent Ibrahim Joseph



Former first lady Anna Mkapa (L) among the congregation at ELCT's Azania Front church in Dar es Salaam. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma



Youth at ELCT's Azania Front Church in Dar es Salaam re-enact the pre-crucifixion persecution of Jesus Christ. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma



Another scene of the re-enactment of the pre-crucifixion persecution of Jesus Christ, as performed by Catholic Church Bikra Maria Consolata Mshindo parish youths. Photo: Correspondent Francis Godwin



Energy minister Dr Medard Kalemani (3rd-R) gives directive to Donasian Shamba (in green overcoat), Tanzania Electric Supply Company (Tanesco) acting regional manager for Dodoma, during an inspection tour of power projects in Ntyuka ward on Thursday. Photo: Correspondent Paul Mabeja

Measles upsurge in DR Congo increases to 'worrying' levels

KINSHASA

DOCTORS Without Borders (MSF) has voiced concern on a 'worrying' recent upsurge in measles cases in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has reported more than 13,000 since Jan. 1.

"Unfortunately, since the end of 2020, several provinces have started recording new increases in patients with measles, notably the North and South Ubangi provinces," said Anthony Kergosien, MSF emergency response coordinator in the country, according to a statement released late on Thursday.

"We had to urgently send mobile response teams again to help stem the progression and save as many lives as possible," Kergosien was quoted as saying in the statement.

The Central African country recorded its worst measles epidemic between 2018 and 2020, when more than 460,000 children contracted the disease and nearly 8,000 died from it, three-quarters of whom were under five, according to MSF.

The international medical group said its teams were tracking virus hotspots in 22 of the Central African country's 26 provinces, treating 90,000 patients and vaccinating more than 2.3 million children.

Faustin Igulu, who is leading the MSF project in the northwestern town of Bosobolo, said the humanitarian organization had trained local staff in managing measles patients and supervising the provision of care, notably for patients suffering from severe symptoms.

"Since we arrived in Bosobolo in mid-February, we have been helping staff to care for their patients in eight health centers and in the general hospital to which complicated cases are referred," Igulu said.

Measles is a highly contagious viral disease. It remains a significant cause of death among young children globally, despite the availability of a safe and effective vaccine.

While vaccination has drastically reduced global measles deaths - a 73 percent drop in between 2000-2018 worldwide - measles is still common in many developing countries, particularly in parts of Africa and Asia.

Nyaligongo villagers volunteer to construct dispensary

By Guardian Correspondent,

Shinyanga

RESIDENTS of Nyaligongo village in Shinyanga District who are engaged in gold mining have volunteered to construct a dispensary to bring medical services closer.

Chairman of the village, Masumbuko Lushona made

the statement yesterday during a visit by Shinyanga District Commissioner, Jasinta Mboneko, who toured the village to inspect the ongoing construction of the dispensary. The chairman asserted that the villagers reached the decision to save women, children and older people from walking for long distances in search of medical treatment.

"We normally walk for five kilometers in search for medical service in neighbouring villages. Some pregnant women have been giving birth before reaching the hospital," said Lushona adding completion of the dispensary will provide relief to the villagers.

"Since most of the Nyaligongo village residents engage in gold mining, they cannot fail

to contribute funds for construction of a dispensary. We have just started the construction work, and we are hoping to complete the project by end of this year at a cost of 90m/-," Lushona told the District Commissioner.

Shinyanga District Director, Hoja Mahiba commended the residents for the initiative which is geared at improving

provision of health services. He said the national health policy requires each village to have a dispensary to ensure closer services to the people.

Mahiba assured the villagers of government support in completing the project.

Shinyanga District Commissioner, Jasinta Mboneko said it was high time for other villages to also start constructing

dispensaries at their localities instead of waiting for the government to implement each of the development projects.

"My visit today is aimed at assuring you of the government support towards completion of the project. The government will provide all the necessary support to ensure the dispensary becomes operational by end of this

year," noted the DC. One of the villagers, Mary Benjamin said that construction of the dispensary would save them from walking distances in search of medical services.

She said the villagers have also been contributing money for construction of a police station as well as purchasing desks for both primary and secondary school.

MP Abood hails President Samia

By Guardian Reporter

MOROGORO Urban MP Abdulaziz Abood, has commended the speed of President Samia Suluhu Hassan.

Speaking to this paper yesterday, Abood said Samia has shown the ability to transform the nation in just a short period.

Abood asked Tanzanians regardless of their differences in political ideology to support the president and pray for her so that she can be able to implement all strategic projects and improve the economy of the country.

He said the initial speed of the president is a clear testimony that she is able to help raise the income of many Tanzanians who are currently living in poverty.

"It is also a clear testimony that she is able to fight corruption and embezzlement so we Tanzanians regardless of our differences should come together and support our president who has shown love to her country," said Abood.

He said the move by president Samia to direct the Controller and Auditor General (CAG) to audit money spent within January and March this year from Bank of Tanzania (BoT) is a clear testimony that she will continue fighting corruption and embezzlement within the government.

He said president Samia has huge experience in leadership because she has been the minister for a very long time before she became the Vice President in 2015 - 2020 under the late President

John Magufuli.

"We were together with President Samia in Constitutional Parliament when she was the Deputy of the late Chairperson Samuel Sitta so we know her ability and her leadership skills and no one can question her ability," said Abood.

Either, Abood said Samia's speech delivered on Thursday this week after she sworn in ministers and their deputies was appreciated by many Tanzanians.

In her speech, President Samia told Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) to stop using force and intimidation when collecting taxes from business community.

President said due to that embarrassments, some of the business people have closed their businesses and moved to neighboring countries to continue with their businesses.



It is also a clear testimony that she is able to fight corruption and embezzlement so we Tanzanians regardless of our differences should come together and support our president who has shown love to her



Arumeru district commissioner Jerry Muro (R, foreground) and Meru district executive director Emmanuel Mkongo take part in a tree-planting campaign they had just launched on Thursday. Photo: Correspondent Asraji Mvungi

SADC to establish disaster and emergency operations centre

By Guardian Reporter

THE Southern African Development Community (SADC) Council of Ministers has endorsed the offer by Mozambique to host the SADC Humanitarian and Emergency Operations Centre (SHOC) which will be responsible for facilitating enhanced regional disaster risks preparedness, response and early recovery to support Member States affected by disasters.

The Council of Ministers on March 12th, 2021 held a virtual meeting to discuss policies, strategies and programmes geared towards consolidating SADC regional integration in fulfillment of Council's man-

date as spelt out in Article II of the SADC Treaty.

Verónica Nataniel Macamo Dlhovo, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Mozambique, chaired the meeting in her capacity as the chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers.

The SADC Council noted that the SHOC will enhance the coordination of support towards Member States affected by disasters.

The SADC Region has over the years stressed the need to strengthen climate resilience as well as general preparedness against natural disasters such as droughts, cyclones and floods.

These multiple hazards have highlighted the im-

portance of cooperation and coordinated response, as well as the need to come up with innovative mechanisms to strengthen resilience, preparedness and responsiveness for disasters, including pandemics, epidemics and related hazards.

In the past few decades, the SADC region has experienced an increasing frequency and severity of droughts, floods, cyclones and locusts that have been attributed to climate change and variability, resulting in food insecurity and other socio-economic impacts.

The region has faced a number of weather-related phenomena such as tropical cyclones which caused extensive flooding in SADC Member States such as the Comoros, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique,

South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

Cyclone Idai, which hit the region in 2020, was recorded as one of the worst tropical storms to ever affect Africa and the southern hemisphere.

The 2019 annual report of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change said 91 percent of all major disasters and 77 percent of economic losses from natural disasters during the year were attributed to extreme weather events.

This percentage is expected to increase as the World Meteorological Organisation has projected that global temperatures would rise by between three and five degrees Celsius by 2100.

Zanzibar civil society bodies say they have hope in Samia

By Guardian Reporter, Zanzibar

ASSOCIATION of Non-Governmental Organisations in Zanzibar (ANGOZA) says it holds high hopes to work with Union President Samia Suluhu Hassan (pictured) in finding solutions to challenges facing the nation aimed at spurring economic growth.

Addressing reporters here early this week ANGOZA Secretary general Hassan Khamis said they know President Samia's performance and experience as well as her capability from her work in both sides of the Union.

He said following the passing away of President John Magufuli now Tanzanians have another able leader in president Samia.

He mentioned some of strategic projects initiated by late president Magufuli as including the Julius Nyerere Hydro Power Project (JNHPP) on Rufiji River to produce 2,114MW of power.

He said another was free education for primary education that relieved many poor parents in educating their children.

Khamis said they know president Samia's ability as before she entered politics she had worked in ANGOZA.

He said in that time she fully participated in various workshops and seminars that saw the development of the civil societies and was one of the champions in defense of democracy and the development of various economic sectors.

For his part ZAFACO Director Abdallah Abeid said the expectation of many civil societies was to closely work with President Samia to ensure they perform in accordance with the laws.

He said civil societies will work together with President Samia in strengthening good governance, accountability and ensuring achievements in the country economic progress.

A total of 12 civil society organisations from both Unguja and Pemba participated in the resolution to support President Samia.



Dr Islam Seif (C), Zanzibar's Trade and Industry ministry permanent secretary, cuts ribbon at Malindi in Zanzibar yesterday to launch Indesso Company. Photo: Rahma Suleiman

Malawi starts vaccination drive with AstraZeneca from COVAX

BLANTYRE

MALAWI is vaccinating health care workers, the elderly and those with health conditions that put them at higher risk of severe Covid-19, using the AstraZeneca doses that arrived early in March.

Malawi, one of the world's least developed countries, has launched its vaccine drive with the 360,000 doses that it received through the global COVAX initiative, which aims to ensure that low- and middle-income countries have fair access to vaccines.

Malawi aims to vaccinate

about 11 million people of its population of 19 million. Malawi has recorded a cumulative total of 33,525 cases of Covid-19 including 1,116 deaths, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Thaddeus Wright Metera, 63, says he is delighted to be among the first in Malawi to receive the potentially life-saving jab.

Working as a data processing assistant at Malawi Council for the Handicapped for 18 years (since February 3, 2003) Metera said he stepped up to get a job.

"Persons with disability face strength challenges in their bodies. If this pandemic infects us, I realized it will be a challenge and as such I thought of coming to receive this vaccine so that I am protected," said Metera. "I meet a lot of people including parents of children with disability. I am the first person they meet at the institution and that puts me at a risk to COVID-19. As such, I am so delighted to get the vaccine."

Many Malawians, like Metera, are enthusiastic to get the AstraZeneca shots, although nearby South Africa

scrapped its use of the vaccine because a small, preliminary test showed that it was relatively ineffective in protecting against mild to moderate forms of Covid-19 caused by the variant dominant in South Africa. It is not known how much that variant has spread in Malawi.

Many African nations planned to use the AstraZeneca vaccine because it was affordable and it can be kept in ordinary refrigerators. The COVAX initiative had planned to distribute hundreds of millions of AstraZeneca vaccines across Africa. But the

continued rollout of the vaccines produced by the Serum Institute of India has been delayed.

COVAX has shipped some 31 million doses to roughly 60 countries in recent weeks and had previously announced plans to ship 237 million AstraZeneca doses by the end of May, part of plans to deploy some 2 billion Covid-19 vaccines worldwide this year.

EU officials are locked in a bitter dispute with AstraZeneca over delayed deliveries while India has said it needs more doses made by the Se-

rum Institute to stop the recent surge of cases there.

UNICEF, which has a key role in deploying the COVAX vaccines, says supply schedules to the 60 countries that have received doses are affected by the delays from the Indian company and it's unclear when they might be fixed.

Malawi must acquire millions more vaccines to reach its goal of inoculating 60% of its population. The country will also have to launch a vaccination campaign that will reach into its rural areas, where majorities of its peo-

ple live. Malawi Secretary for Health Dr Charles Mwansambo said the government is trying everything possible to get enough vaccines to inoculate more than the 20% planned for the first phase.

"For us, as a nation to be adequately protected, 20% is not enough. So, we are looking at getting that number to 60% of the population so that we get herd immunity," he said. "So as a country we are planning to immunize 11 million people so that we can get adequate protection, so that everybody should be adequately protected."



Muheza District Council chairman Erasto Mhina (L) presents sanitary pads to a Masuguru Primary School pupil on Thursday, as Masuguru councillor Mohamed Baghoza (R) looks on. Photo: Correspondent Steven William

Artisanal miners at big risk of unemployment following mercury ban

By Guardian Correspondent, Singida

A huge number of artisanal miners are at risk of losing their jobs following decision by mining companies to reduce operating costs in protest to a government move to ban usage of mercury in smelting minerals.

The small scale miners told journalists who toured the mining site at Mpitipi village in Singida Region that mining companies spend millions in generating energy for smelting minerals.

One of the small scale miners, Mussa Maduhu said they have been using a lot of money to buy diesel because the electricity generation company has failed to connect power at the mining area.

He said due to the fact that

miners use a lot of money in operating the mining they opt to retrench workers to save money.

"If the use of mercury is banned, we will fail to afford the costs of using alternative chemicals," said Rebecca Mgana one of the miners.

Acting Commissioner for Energy in Singida Region, Lucy Kimaro said that authorities in Singida are working to address the challenges facing small scale farmers adding that various initiatives have been put in place.

"Lack of knowledge about chemicals is a big challenge among the processors. Therefore, it is our hope that the training will enable us to reduce chemical's impacts to the environment and people's health," he said.

Doctors in Nigeria demanding better wages, stage strike

LAGOS

AN indefinite strike by doctors has paralysed medical services at public hospitals in Nigeria, leaving hundreds of patients unattended to.

The National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD), an association of Nigerian resident medics, last week gave the federal government an ultimatum to improve the wages and allowances of doctors to avert the indefinite strike.

Uyilawa Okhuaihesuyi, the head of the association, on Wednesday said the medics would go on strike if their demands are not met.

"The National Executive Council (NEC) has unanimously agreed that NARD should proceed on a total and indefinite strike on April 1, 2021," he announced after a meeting of the association.

He said the doctors' demands include settlement of salary arrears, review of hazard allowance to 50%, and



payment of death-in-service insurance for all health workers who died from COVID-19 while on duty.

Scores of patients said the strike could aggravate their pains and health conditions as medics stopped working on Thursday.

"I was scheduled to see the doctor today at the Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH) after undergoing a series of tests. I am afraid my condition could worsen with the strike," Bello Adewale, a patient, told Anado-

lu Agency in Lagos, Nigeria's commercial capital.

Patients at the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital (UMTH) and Federal Medical Center, Gombe in Nigeria's northeast, said they were not attended by the striking doctors.

Meanwhile, Health Minister Olorunnimbe Mamora told journalists in the capital Abuja the federal government has released about \$53 million for death-in-service insurance to health workers.



World Trade Organisation Director General Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala attends a press conference at WTO headquarters in Geneva.

WTO: Global trade set to grow a little faster this year than thought

GENEVA

INTERNATIONAL trade is set to grow a bit faster this year than previously predicted, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) has said.

The volume of global trade contracted by 5.3 per cent in 2020, less than expected as the pandemic hit.

According to WTO Managing Director, Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, trade is set to grow 8 per cent this year.

"Following a sharp decline in the first half of the year, trade recovered more quickly than expected in the second half of 2020. This rebound has continued and the WTO's baseline trade forecast foresees an 8 per cent increase in the volume of World merchandise trade for 2021," Dr Okonjo-Iweala said.

Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala sees the frustrations caused by the blockade of the "Ever Given" on the Suez Canal last week as a good sign for growth in global trade.

A year ago, the organization cautioned that global trade could plummet by a third in 2020 due to the pandemic. But it had already revised that estimate to an expected 9.2-per-cent drop.

"The fact that the Ever Given was able to cause so much disruption is a sign that global merchandise trade is relatively robust and that global supply chains have held up through the pandemic", the WTO boss added.

According to the global trade body, while trade for this year will be stronger than expected, growth is forecast to slow to 4 per cent in 2022.

The WTO however cautions the still-raging coronavirus pandemic could thwart any rebound in global trade.



Following a sharp decline in the first half of the year, trade recovered more quickly than expected in the second half of 2020. This rebound has continued and the WTO's baseline trade forecast foresees an 8 per cent increase

AfDB brings graduates one step closer to helping their countries access climate finance

By Special Correspondent, Abidjan

SEVENTY-four trainees from 26 African countries will join the continent's community of climate finance experts after successfully completing a training programme through the African Development Bank (AfDB). Eighteen of the 74 graduates who emerged as top achievers qualified as trainers and will continue to build capacity across the continent.

The "training of trainers" programme empowered trainees to design proposals that will enable them to access climate finance from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and teaches them to pass on their skills to others. The 120-hour training program was conducted virtually in three languages: English (45 participants), French (19 participants) and Portuguese (10 participants).

Desire Nemashakwe, a trainee

from Zimbabwe, remarked: "The course has boosted my knowledge and skills and understanding of the GCF and how to develop project proposals for GCF funding. I was a consultant for the Government of Zimbabwe on the GCF Readiness programme and managed to lead in the development of the Country Programme and two readiness project proposals. I have been strengthened in my skills to de-

velop proposals which target GCF resources."

Inadequate access to climate finance remains a major impediment to implementing Africa's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), a requirement of the Paris climate agreement, partly because of a lack of capacity within national institutions to design project proposals that meet the requirements of global climate funds such as the GCF. The

new graduates said they were eager to fill this capacity void by applying the knowledge acquired through this programme. Their skills will be relevant to a wide range of actors, including project developers, development institutions and national focal points for all the climate and environment funds. The training of trainers programme complements ongoing work by the African Development Bank to enhance

the capacity of African countries to access GCF resources through small grants from the Africa Climate Change Fund.

"The African Development Bank has prioritized inclusive green growth in the delivery of its flagship agenda, the High 5 strategic priorities, and has pledged to scale its climate finance to \$25 billion up to 2025. Innovative continental interventions such as Desert to Power, the Great Green Wall

Initiative, the Africa Adaptation Acceleration Program, aimed at lifting millions out of poverty while protecting nature, require long-term concessional finance. For regional member countries, acquiring the capacity to design and implement climate projects is a step in the right direction," said Gareth Phillips, Manager for Climate and Environment Finance at the African Development Bank.

SADC gets tough on Mozambique

By Jeff Kapembwa

THE Chairperson of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation, President Mokgweetsi Masisi of Botswana, said the region is getting tough on the terror in Mozambique and a hard-hitting response will be noticed soon.

President Masisi (pictured) on Wednesday met Presidents Edgar Lungu (Zambia) and Emmerson Mnangagwa (Zimbabwe), and revealed he had also been in touch with Cyril Ramaphosa (South Africa) on the Mozambique issue.

After meeting President Mnangagwa he said, "Coming to the regional issues to do with security and peace ... as chair of the Organ, and with President Mnangagwa as the outgoing chair and therefore a member of the (Organ) Troika and President Ramaphosa as the incoming chair and a member of the Troika, last night I conferred with President Ramaphosa. I have reported to President Mnangagwa the contents of the discussions with President Ramaphosa, and we have formed views as Troika.



"One of them will result in taking this further so that we as SADC respond in a helpful manner to ensure that we assure the integrity and sovereignty of one of our own never to be assaulted by dissidents, rebellious non-state parties that undermine the democratic credentials and peace of the region.

"I speak on behalf of the Troika as Chair, following our consultations, we are going to make that known. Right now we are going to finish that with President Ramaphosa but you won't have to look for it when you see it." President Mnangagwa said, "... President Masisi, as the current Chairperson of the SADC Troika, was briefing me about the security situation in the region with particular emphasis on what is happening in Cabo Delgado (Mozambique)."

Earlier, President Masisi conferred with President Lungu and assured him that the region was serious about diffusing the situation in Mozambique.

President Masisi also used the whistle stop visits to Zambia and Zimbabwe to discuss their nations' respective bilateral ties, as well as to drum up support for Botswana's candidate for the post of SADC Executive Secretary, Elias Magosi.

Magosi is up against the DRC's Professor Faustin Mukela in the race to replace Tanzania's Dr Stergomena Tax, who serves out her second four-year term in August. President Masisi said, "I return to Botswana a thoroughly happy man because President Mnangagwa has adopted one of our own in Botswana in the name of Elias Mpendi who we have put forward for the position of the upcoming SADC Executive Secretary."



A section of secondary school students who attended the launch of an education programme on ways to control online crimes. Photo: Guardian Photographer

By Guardian Reporter

THE Alliance to Counter Crime Online (ACCO) has launched an education programme to help control online crimes following increased incidents of crime groups victimizing young people.

The launch which was held at Nguva Secondary School in Kigamboni, Dar es Salaam was attended by 350 students.

The event featured comedy, singing, lectures and an interactive breakout session where more than 80 per cent of attendees said they felt more confident about staying safe online.

ACCO Executive Director, Gretchen Peters said: "ACCO members have identified how organized crime

Education programme seeks to combat online crimes

groups have weaponized social media to victimize innocent people and some of the most vulnerable populations are young people in Africa."

Peters added: "We realised we needed to design a programme to educate young populations by designing fun and entertaining programmes that also teach critical lessons."

Speaking at the event, ACCO Educator, Shubert Mwarabu said that online black markets threaten youth as well as Tanzania's precious natural heritage.

"I love teaching and entertaining, and it is a great passion of mine to support a cause working to protect

people," he noted.

According to ACCO the newly launched educational programme aims to expand the Stay Safe Online Programme in Tanzania, train-the-trainer and educate the media and create public service videos.

Internet use is growing rapidly in Tanzania. Latest data from the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) shows that the number of mobile internet subscribers stood at 27,900,069 at the end of September 2020, or roughly 48 per cent of the total population.

As the number of internet users increases, there has

been a parallel increase in the number of online criminals and scams, which results in increased number of cybercrime victims.

While the internet and social media platforms like Facebook provide great opportunities to connect with friends, share music and video, and even conduct business, there is also a dark side to cyberspace.

Criminal gangs, including wildlife and human traffickers, have weaponized social media platforms, in particular Facebook, in order to victimize innocent people.

There have already been some cases of job scams reported in Tanzania, and authorities fear more of this will happen as more internet users, inexperienced with the threat of cyber crime, come online.

The Guardian

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SATURDAY 3 APRIL 2021

**Taking A New Look
At The News
ESTABLISHED IN 1995**

Yes, hostile language a sure way to keep investors away

A successful society is characterized by a rising living standard for its population, increasing investment in industries and basic infrastructure, and the generation of additional surplus, which is invested in generating new discoveries in science and technology.

That is what should be the aspirations of many poor nations, Tanzania included trying to develop themselves. However, the catalyst for attaining that lies in investment.

If the country is able attract investments from within and outside its borders, then it stands a good chance to make development strides - so long as the country has investment opportunities and good investment policies.

Does Tanzania have these? That is a million-dollar question. We have no qualms over opportunities - there are plentiful - but what is of concern could be the second item - good policies, including the environment for investment.

Granted, we might be having good investment policies - as our leaders always utter at rostrums - but do we have things to corroborate the verbal rants? We believe there are still shady areas for concern.

Early this week the Minister of State in the President's Office (Investments) Prof Kitila Mkumbo warned some government officials who are fond of giving statements

unfriendly to investors and businessmen who approach them requesting to invest in the country.

The minister gave the warning in Morogoro when opening a task meeting for desk officers for the implementation of the programme to strengthen investment and business environment, rallying officials to change their mindset in the entire issue of investment.

He said the country must be ready for competition through investment basics because it was the only way towards meaningful economic growth, hence any utterances by officials that stand to undermine investors' confidence should be screamed at.

To hammer the point home, he said the 1997 Investment Act was set for amendments, and among others, it will have in place high level investment environment in regard to job creation for both Tanzanians and those from foreign.

We say since the government has concentrated in having in place a good working environment for business as well as domestic and foreign investment, various government authorities and institutions are supposed to ensure the implementation of their responsibilities in order to attract more investors.

Officials should be courteous to would be investors, they should view them as well intentioned partners in development in the envisaged win-win scenario.

Protecting rights of people with autism counts for much in the war we must wage on discrimination

WORLD autism awareness day is an internationally recognized day on 2 April every year, encouraging member states of the United Nations to take measures to raise awareness about people with autistic spectrum disorders including autism and asperger syndrome throughout the world. It was designated by the United Nations General Assembly resolution passed in council on 1 November 2007, and adopted on 18 December 2007. It was proposed by the United Nations representative from Qatar, Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Missned, Consort of His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the Emir of the State of Qatar, and supported by all member states.

This resolution was passed and adopted without a vote in the UN General Assembly, mainly as a supplement to previous UN initiatives to improve human rights.

World Autism Day is one of only seven official health-specific UN Days. The day itself brings individual autism organisations together all around the world to aid in things like research, diagnoses, treatment, and acceptance for those with a developmental path affected by autism.

The original resolution had four main components: the establishment of the second day of April as World Autism Awareness Day, beginning in 2008 invitation to member states and other relevant organizations to the UN or the international societal system, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to create initiatives to raise public awareness of autism; encourages member states to raise awareness of autism on all levels in society; asks the UN Secretary-General to deliver this message to member states and all other UN organisations. There are three types of autism spectrum disorders: Autistic disorder. This is sometimes

called "classic" autism. People with asperger syndrome usually have milder symptoms of autistic disorder, pervasive developmental disorder.

Autism is the name of a disorder affecting brain development. It is one of a group of disorders called autism spectrum disorder Asperger syndrome, atypical autism and childhood autism are kinds of autism spectrum disorders. It is a condition that affects the way a person relates to their environment. The word spectrum is used because not all people with autism have the same traits and difficulties. Some people find interacting more difficult than others. Autism may be very apparent in someone or they may show no outward signs of it. The main areas of difficulty are in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication and restricted or repetitive behaviors and interests. In most cases of autism, motor communication {doing things} is affected. All these signs develop in the child's first two to three years of age.

People who have autism find it difficult to act in a way that other people think is 'normal'. They may find it difficult to talk to other people and to look at other people in the eyes. Some people with autism do not like being touched. A person who has autism can seem to be turned inwards. They may talk only to themselves, rock themselves backwards and forwards, and laugh at their own thoughts.

They might not like any type of change and may find it very difficult to learn a new behavior like going to school.

Autism is caused by the way that the brain develops, both before and after a baby is born. About one in every 160 children has an autism spectrum disorder. It has no known cure, and many autistic people do not want a cure. They want it to be accepted as a difference. This is known as neurodiversity

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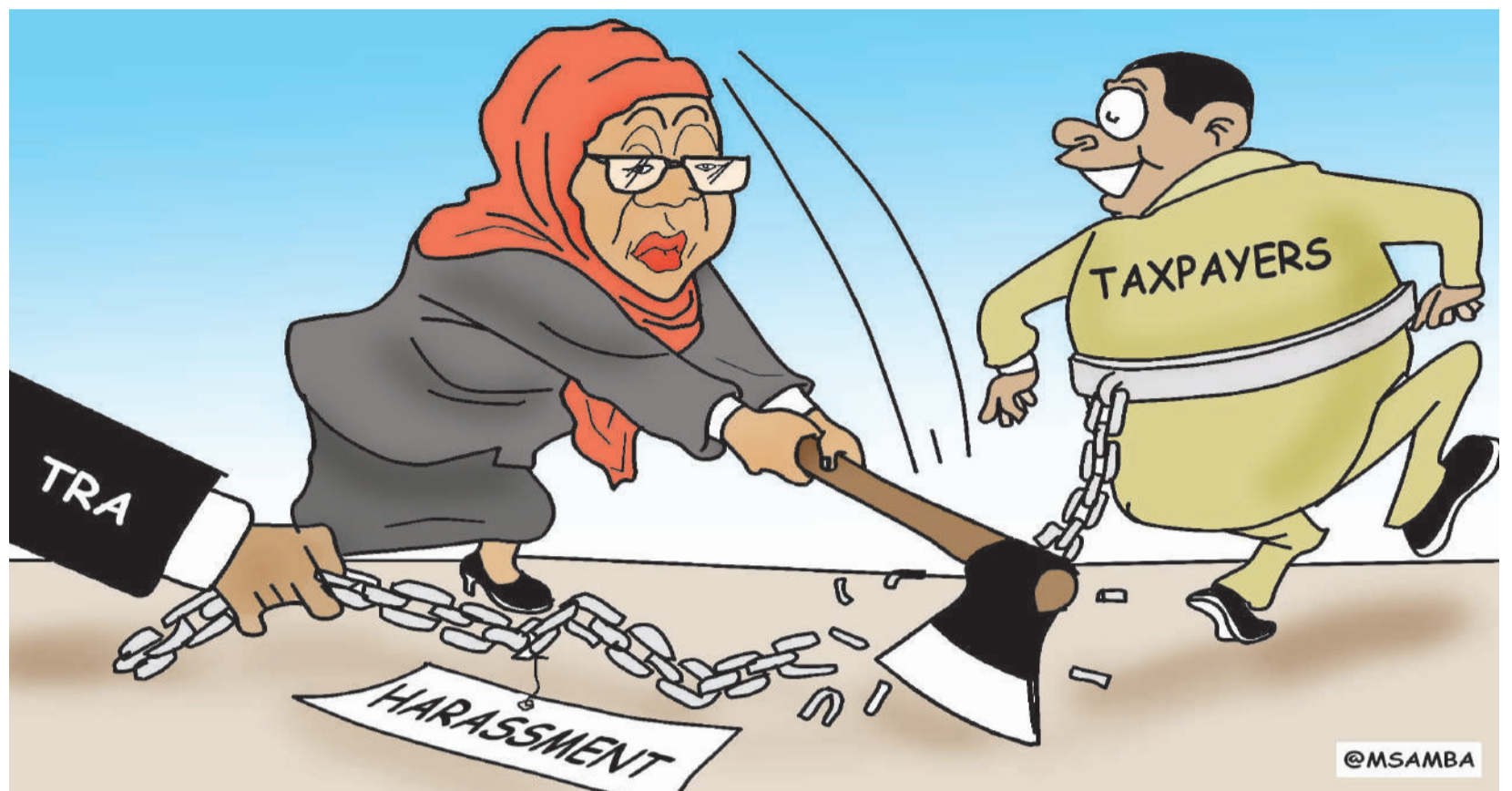
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All dictatorships come to an end

By Jerry Wehtee Wion

THE outside world knows what a dictatorship is when they see one except that the dictator and his clowns want to have it both ways... and it depends on who the players are talking to. Democracy and dictatorship cannot co-exist under any form of government: you are either a dictator running a dictatorship or a democrat running a democracy.

Most African dictators think because they conduct "sham elections" therefore they pass the minimum test of democracy. If this fallacy holds then the likes of Saddam Hussein of Iraq, Moammar El Gaddafi of Libya, Hosni Mubarrack of Egypt, Mobutu Sese Sekou of DR Congo/Zaire, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, William Tubman, William Tolbert, Samuel Doe, Charles Taylor, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and now George Weah of Liberia could all sing the democracy song of holding "free, fair and transparent elections." So why do their so-called "democracies" fail/fall in the end? Because democracy is a democracy and a dictatorship is a dictatorship... no ifs, buts, and ors.

American democracy which is the Mother of all modern democracies plus



Saddam Hussein

the other western democracies are deeply rooted or planted in strong INSTITUTIONS: the constitution and the rule of law. This is why the January 6, 2021, American "insurrection" failed and the coup plotters are now being arrested to face justice.

Mulbah Morlu, Nat McGill, Jeff Kojee, and Samuel Tweah don't take time to read the annual US State Department Human Rights and Labor Practices Report. An example is when President Weah told the US Millennium Challenge Corporation officials to provide him and his cabinet ministers "study materials" in order to pass the MCC pass and fail the test. True indeed, the US stopped the hundreds of millions of dollars that went to Liberia each year to help with water and electricity restoration and road pavement. Nearby Sierra Leone gets about \$400 million yearly including this year. God help Liberia.

Even if the coup plotters in America had succeeded in hanging VP Mike Pence and some Congressmembers as they chanted, the institutional pillars of American democracy are so strong that they could not have succeeded in stopping then-President-Elect Joe Biden and VP Kamala Harris from taking office... the evidence is all crystal clear today.

A number of US Presidents have been assassinated while in the office including John Kennedy and the ever-popular Abraham Lincoln but the US government had never been overthrown. Even a military coup is not possible in America with its military second to none in the world.

If you want to be a dictator, just be a dictator and don't pretend to be a democracy. CDC Chairman Mulbah Morlu does not have the credentials to be a good disciple in a dictatorship. Their inexperience is made public from their

defeat in the December 8, 2020, senatorial elections. Why go public to ask for the firing of someone you don't want in the government? A phone call should solve the problem. Now you have exposed the government that it is not a democracy where all citizens have the right to employment unless they join the ruling CDC. REALLY?? Inexperience exposed! George Weah and his minions need to study the works of Saddam Hussein, Gaddafi, Fidel Castro, and others.

To run a perfect dictatorship, you can leave no stone unturned: the institutions that run a dictatorship must be headed by diehard fanatics, trained foot soldiers-your national elections body, police, national security apparatus, and very importantly, state media. There is no room for privately operated media, or they must follow the script of the state-run media.

But then again, the fish starts to rot from the head. Weah is being schooled by the likes of people who have no record of higher education and who have not read books on historical revolutionaries and by dictators like Fidel Castro and others.

That is why these fake democracies continue to fall all over the world because democracy and dictatorships are arch enemies. Darn good dictators last long although they fall in the end and the ones trying to mix them both are the first to tumble. Which one are you in Liberia? Just a thought and not a sermon.

Dealing with Nigeria's joblessness

By Special Correspondent

LAST week, Bloomberg, a global media and financial data and analytics conglomerate, predicted that Nigeria would soon set another record as home to the highest number of the unemployed. A third of Nigeria's labour force, according to the report, is without employment with many working only a few hours a week.

That puts the country second after Namibia in the list of 82 countries. The report noted that unemployment has more than quadrupled over five years, making the World Bank to warn even before the advent of coronavirus pandemic that "Nigeria could become home to a quarter of the world's destitute within a decade."

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has in the past few years consistently confirmed a pattern of worsening unemployment in the country, rising from 9.9 per cent in 2015 to 19.70 per cent in the last quarter of 2016.

In its latest report presented two weeks ago, the situation is

even more dire. The jobless rate rose to 33.3% in the fourth quarter of 2020, from 27.1% in the second quarter of 2020. Namibia is barely a fraction higher at 33.4 per cent. In clear terms, more than 23 million Nigerians had no jobs or worked less than 20 hours a week.

That one fourth of the nation's labour force is idle is bad enough. Worse and extremely dangerous is the fact that more than 40 per cent of that army of idle citizens is peopled by the youth. In the Northeast and the Northwest, wracked by insurgency and general insecurity, the numbers of the unemployed are much higher.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Governor, Godwin Emefiele said last week that the level of unemployment must be addressed swiftly "to moderate the restiveness among the populace."

The prevalent public disillusionment is worsened by severe economic hardship occasioned by rising inflation.

At more than 17 per cent and rising, inflation is at its peak in four years, evidently helped by

the constantly depreciating value of the naira which exchanges for almost N500 to a dollar. In the last five years, the country was plunged into recession twice.

Already home to the world's extreme poor, the prevailing economic downturn has worsened the capacity of both the state and individuals such that basic necessities, including food, medicare and shelter have gone far beyond the reach of majority of Nigerians.

This is not only frightening but breeds the risk of social, economic and security turbulence.

Some of the factors responsible for this state of affair include a rapidly growing population amid declining financial resources, predominant production of primary goods over finished products. Nigeria relies on oil as a foreign exchange earner, even in an age where fossil fuels are gradually going extinct.

Besides, the general insecurity in the country is putting everyone on edge and scaring away investors.

Unfortunately, the response from government to these chal-

lenges remains incoherent. Even with all the rhetoric about diversification of the economy from oil to agriculture, the tilt is still towards heavy government participation.

As pointed out by Bloomberg, the present administration's efforts at repositioning the economy had been largely ineffectual. The tilt should be towards adding value to agricultural produce through industrialisation.

Also of fundamental imperative is that we must urgently realign the nation's educational curriculum with the needs of the economy.

Even though there are many well educated young men out there, it has been said with some measure of justification that majority of school leavers are actually 'certificated illiterates' who are unemployable.

It has therefore become necessary that our educational training curriculum at all levels incorporate skills acquisition and entrepreneurial development. There is also an urgent need to examine the pattern of our largely unproductive population growth.

Millennials and global consumers push US companies to get political

BOSTON/NEW YORK

A PUSH to attract young and diverse talent and global consumers is behind some of corporate America's willingness to speak out on politically charged issues like Georgia's new voting law, executives and corporate governance experts said.

Georgia's decision last month to strengthen identification requirements for absentee ballots and make it a misdemeanor to offer food and water to voters waiting in line, among other changes, drew condemnation from many U.S. companies this week, including Microsoft Corp and Citigroup.

A number of companies say it disenfranchises some voters. Some, such as Delta Air Lines and Coca-Cola Co., are based in Georgia, where state lawmakers have the power to raise state taxes. Delta CEO Ed Bastian said in a public memo that his decision to speak out was informed by discussions with leaders and employees in the Black community.

The companies criticizing the law so far represent a sliver of the U.S. business landscape. Yet they are part of a growing group of companies shedding their reluctance to speak out on politically controversial social issues that matter to many of their employees and customers globally, business leaders interviewed by Reuters said.

"Young people want more than words, they want action," Debra Lee, the former chair and CEO of BET Networks, a TV network owned by ViacomCBS Inc, said in an interview on Thursday. ViacomCBS has also criticized the Georgia law.

A new focus from investors on environmental, social and governance issues such as climate change and the Black Lives Matter and #MeToo movements has also emboldened companies.

Recent examples range from companies criticizing former President Donald Trump's claims of elec-



Protesters gather outside of the Georgia State Capitol to protest HB 531, which would place tougher restrictions on voting in Georgia, in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S. March 4, 2021. FILE PHOTO

tion fraud, to Washington Redskins football stadium sponsor Fedex Corp asking for a team name change. Retailers Walmart Inc and Dick's Sporting Goods Inc, for example, have adopted new restrictions on gun sales following mass shootings.

Some companies that are reluctant to criticize specific laws or policies are still willing to come out with more general statements. For example, roughly 330 of the 500 companies in the S&P 500 Index issued comments last year in support of social justice in the wake of the death of George Floyd, a Black man, in the custody of Minneapolis police, according to shareholder advocacy group As You Sow.

This approach, however, does not always appease activists looking for bigger change. Olivia Knight, the group's racial justice initiative coordinator, said companies often did not follow up with any action, and that many were lim-

ited to vague statements of support.

"I don't think we can make the assumption the corporate world is a pot of social justice advocacy and should be looked to for guidance on these issues," she said.

On Thursday, Reuters reported that Ford Motor Co's political action committee is resuming making political donations. It said it will not rule out making donations to Republican lawmakers who voted against President Joe Biden's election certification on Jan. 6. Former American Express Co CEO Ken Chenault, who co-authored a letter with other Black business leaders this week calling on companies to condemn the Georgia voting law, said in an interview that some firms may be hesitant to speak out for fear of appearing partisan.

But he noted that more than 60 big U.S. companies recently signed a statement opposing state bills focused on sexual orientation, showing a willingness to weigh in at

least on some topics. In the battle on voting bills, "we are in the early stages," Chenault said.

Speaking out against politically sensitive issues can be risky. Shares of some western apparel companies declined after they faced boycotts in China over their statements expressing concern about labor conditions, amid investor worries they would lose access to a vast, growing market. However, companies that spoke out against the Georgia voting law saw little impact on their share price.

Shivaram Rajgopal, a Columbia Business School professor who follows corporate cultural issues, said corporate America is focused on satisfying its skilled young workers, who are getting more politically active on social media.

"The younger workforce expects you to take a stand on these social justice issues," Rajgopal said.

A 2019 study by the Pew Research Center found members of the U.S. generations known as Millennials, born between 1981 and 1996, and Gen Z, born after 1996, share more liberal attitudes than older generations on a range of issues, such as favoring more racial diversity and activist government.

"If we are not speaking up against these voter suppression efforts, we're really taking a chunk out of ourselves and who we are as aviation," said Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants, speaking at a U.S. aviation summit on Wednesday.

The views of global customers and investors also matter more to international conglomerates like Coke and Delta than local politics, said Ric Marshall, executive director at sustainability ratings firm MSCI.

"Management at these companies is much more beholden to this broader stakeholder group," Marshall said. Conversely, companies that have said less about voting rights could be wary of alienating a more domestic customer base, he said.

Hong Kong's new electoral system: What next?

HONG KONG

AS the legislative changes adopted by the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee on improving Hong Kong's electoral system went into effect last week, the global financial hub officially embarked on the local legislation.

"A VERY TIGHT SCHEDULE"

"We have a very tight schedule," Hong Kong lawmaker Horace Cheung said with regards to drawing up the legislative work agenda for the coming months.

Cheung, the newly-elected deputy chairman of a Legislative Council (LegCo) subcommittee on improving Hong Kong's electoral system, will race against time with his colleagues to deliberate on amendments to more than 20 principal and subsidiary ordinances from mid-April.

"It's a complicated, challenging task. We will go all out to finish the legislation at an early date," he said ahead of the committee's Wednesday meeting, the second since its establishment on March 19.

The amended Annex I and Annex II to the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) were passed last week at a session of the NPC Standing Committee with a unanimous vote from all 167 committee members in attendance.

The two annexes respectively concern the method for the selection of the HKSAR chief executive and the method for the formation of the HKSAR LegCo and its voting procedures.

THREE MAJOR ELECTIONS

Elaborating on the government timetable, HKSAR Chief Executive Carrie Lam pledged on Tuesday that no effort will be spared in pushing forward the necessary amendments to the local electoral legislation in accordance with the amended Annex I and Annex II.

Lam's remarks were made at a press conference after her meeting with LegCo President Andrew Leung.

The government will propose an omnibus bill that contains multiple amended electoral laws to the legislature in mid-April, she said. Echoing Lam's words, Leung said the LegCo will arrange additional meetings so that the deliberation process will be able to advance at full speed.

After the passage of local electoral laws, Hong Kong will be able to hold three major electoral events in the next 12 months, for the seventh-term LegCo, the Election Committee and the HKSAR chief executive.

With the new electoral system taking shape, the global financial hub will be able to build a political structure that upholds the "one country, two systems" principle, reflects the actual situation of Hong Kong, and ensures "patriots administering Hong Kong," observers said.

As an important part of the improvement to the electoral system, the Election Committee membership has been expanded from 1,200 to 1,500 and has been empowered



Carrie Lam (C), chief executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), speaks to the press in China's Hong Kong, March 30, 2021. (Xinhua)

with two more functions of electing a relatively large proportion of LegCo members and participating in the nominations of all LegCo candidates.

FROM CHAOS TO STABILITY

The improvement to the electoral system came as another major step taken by the central authorities since the national security legislation in the HKSAR to help ensure peace and prosperity in Hong Kong.

Not only will the electoral chaos that repeatedly occurred in the past be ended, but the legislature will be able to better supervise the government, make constructive proposals and improve the efficiency of ad-

ministration, Tu Haiming, chairman of the Hong Kong New Era Development Thinktank, said, adding that many deep-seated problems from housing to youth development will be resolved.

Echoing Tu's words, Maria Tam, deputy director of the HKSAR Basic Law Committee under the NPC Standing Committee, said more capable talents will emerge through the improved electoral system and help Hong Kong better respond to challenges and opportunities in the future.

And most pertinently, the global financial hub will bid farewell to street violence, social disturbances and the

political chaos that haunted its residents and businesses during recent years.

Joephy Chan clearly remembers the dark days. When seeking re-election as a District Council member in 2019, the 31-year-old and her team faced enormous threats to their personal safety.

"We suffered from verbal abuse and physical attacks on the streets and some people also threatened online to 'teach us a lesson,'" said Chan, who lost the election.

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

With the wrongs corrected and the fundamentals set right, the global financial hub is set to get down to business.

Allan Zeman, a business magnate who founded Lan Kwai Fong Group in Hong Kong, believes the Hong Kong economy battered by unrest and COVID-19 will have the chance to regain momentum by fitting into the national

landscape, in particular the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

"I think going forward, the Greater Bay Area will be Hong Kong's strength," Zeman said.

Looking ahead, Carrie Lam said the HKSAR will be able to leverage its unique advantages and the staunch support of the central authorities to develop its economy and improve people's livelihoods.

The steadfast and successful implementation of "one country, two systems" as well as the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong will be assured, she added.

Xinhua

Pandemic accentuates need for Caribbean countries to improve food and nutrition security

KINGSTON

LAST year, Jaxine Scott was off work as a caregiver at a primary school as a result of the pandemic. One day, she noticed a green shoot emerging from some garlic in her fridge. She decided to plant it, and to her surprise, it thrived. "I thought 'It looks like I have a green thumb, let me plant something else,'" Scott says. She now has a backyard garden, including cucumber, pumpkin, melon, callaloo, cantaloupe, pak choy and tomatoes. "It makes me feel good," she says. "I can help my family members and neighbours. It has saved me money. I'm not going to stop, I'm going to continue," she says.

Scott, 45, is just one of thousands of Jamaicans who have found an interest in gardening, both as a way to pass the time and to become more self-sufficient when it comes to food and nutrition.

This is a small yet important step for a country and region in which the trees are laden with an abundance of fruits, yet many people go hungry every day.

An October, 2020 study of eight Caribbean countries found that 40% of people surveyed experienced some form of hunger, with 42% of those saying it was moderate to severe. The survey by the College of Health Sciences at the University of Technology included 2,257 households in eight countries across the region (Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Belize, Barbados, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Antigua and Barbuda.) Another recent study from the Caribbean Research and Policy Institute and Unicef also found that in a survey of 500 Jamaican households, 44% reported that they were experiencing food shortages, while 78% said their savings could last them four weeks or less.

Food security is a technical term referring to the availability of nutritious food, and defined by the United Nations as having "physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life." The World Bank reports that despite the pandemic, there is adequate supply, however the challenge lies at the national level. The risks to food security include higher prices and reduced incomes, which forces households to rely on smaller portions of less nutritious foods.

"We suspected people were cutting back on their intake, especially households where the breadwinners were losing their jobs. It has shook up some of the households quite a bit. People are cutting back on the number of meals that they were having," says Dr. Vanessa White Barrow, the Head for the School of Allied Health and Wellness at the University of Technology's College of Health Sciences.

The effect of this, of course, has many repercussions, including malnutrition, lack of energy, obesity as a re-

sult of consuming lower-cost but unhealthy foods and a variety of health issues like diabetes and hypertension.

"What has happened is that the nutrition divide has widened as a result of COVID," says Prof. T. Alafia Samuels, of the Caribbean Health Research Institute at the University of the West Indies.

"We also know that before, because of the extent that many households were dependent on processed food, people have cut back (on healthy foods) and are going for cheaper alternatives, and this has long-term health implications," she says. This especially impacts children, who need nutritious food to grow and learn adequately. In addition, children are confined to their households, doing online learning and missing physical activity they would have had at school.

Food and nutrition insecurity are just one frightening outcome of the pandemic, which has ravaged one of the most tourism-dependent regions in the world. In Jamaica alone, a minimum of 50,000 people have been laid off from the tourism industry, a number that is likely even higher when taking into account indirect employment. An estimated 135,000 people have lost their jobs in total. The country's real GDP for fiscal 2020/21 is expected to contract by up to 12%, according to the Bank of Jamaica, and the unemployment for Oct. 2020 was 10.7%. According to the World Bank, the percentage of people living below the poverty line was 19.3% in 2017, and while this figure had been improving, it is unlikely to continue this trajectory.

With this hardship in mind, the government has introduced a series of financial stimulus measures to reach the most vulnerable, but these are not sustainable. In addition to financial measures, the government has also focused on increasing food security, an effort that existed prior to the pandemic, but



Jaxine Scott displays some vegetables in her backyard garden at her Kingston, Jamaica home. (File photo)

has since been ramped up.

In terms of boosting food security and assisting the farming industry, Jamaica's Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Floyd Green says that the government is investing JMD\$1 billion this year.

Decreased market demand, in large part from the hotel and restaurant industry, has harmed the farming industry. So while at times there is an excess of supply, a lack of demand has impacted farmers and their production systems, which in

turn erodes food security.

"The challenge with COVID is clearly the downturn in the market, which discourages the farmers from producing," says Green, adding that they worry their supply will not be absorbed. With this in mind, the government created a "buy-back" program, which found new clients for farmers, which has helped.

"We saw an initial decline in production with COVID when it came in, but we went back into a growth position overall, and now year-over-year seeing growth."

Ultimately, Green says COVID has forced people to examine their self-sufficiency. "Covid has brought back into sharp focus in the minds of people the need to be more self-sufficient when it comes to feeding ourselves."

The need for self-sufficiency exists on a large scale as well, especially on an island that imports over US\$1 billion of goods annually. And while some of that cannot be avoided as it is inefficient or impossible to produce everything needed by Jamaicans, Green says there are some efforts to increase the nation's self-sufficiency, as well as to ramp up exports, which can help to balance the import bill.

"A part of what we have been doing is to have to take a critical approach to analyzing our import bill, and what can we do what can we grow efficiently to reduce the import bill. We have a twofold approach, we don't only focus on the import bill, but export revenues. We have to look to raise export revenues as a small island state that won't be able to produce efficiently," Green says.

To this end, the government is looking to encourage production of ginger, turmeric, cocoa, coffee, castor oil, and mangoes, which are all in demand because of their superior quality, he says. "We are looking to further encourage incentive some of our farmers to go into some of these crops. What you will see now over the next three years is a determined push towards export stimulation."

In terms of local food supply, Green says it is sufficient. The issue, however, is with a lack of purchasing power, especially of late as a result of the economic downturn. "Our challenge is to restart the economy to make sure people can get back purchasing power."

Green mentions a backyard gardening program in which 2,500 families across the country, with a majority focus on urban areas, received a kit containing all the necessary tools to start a garden and become more self-sufficient. This is one measure towards achieving food security, says Jamaica Agricultural Society vice-president Denton Alvaranga. **IPS**

Covid-19 has given us a unique opportunity to completely change our education system

BY MICHAEL WORKMAN

THE only good thing about Covid-19 is that for the first time in a long while it could initiate educational change. I say "could" because no doubt there will be schools that refuse to change or don't even know why the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is one good reason why change is so necessary. Covid-19 has given all stakeholders time to reflect and question both education and the curriculum and how well they are serving the state.

In "pre-Covid" or "normal-normal" circumstances, change was difficult to implement, given that people were locked into different paradigms depending on their values, principles and what matters most to them. Paradigms give many people a frame of reference, a comfort zone, that usually takes generations to break down because siblings never question rituals and mores – after all, parents know best! However, at some time these customs will be questioned, and when this happens chaos is created and paradigms get shifted making way for authentic change and new ideas.

For the most part, Covid-19 has been so disruptive and chaotic that it has helped to shift a worldwide paradigm change. In a way, this is the best and the worst thing that could have happened, not only in South Africa, but on a global level as well. The worst is all the deaths and suffering it has caused. It has, however, given South Africa a window of hope for education.

It is a fact that out of many crises come opportunities. Wars have produced massive growth in technology. Diseases have given scientists opportunities to create vaccines. Nelson Mandela once said, "education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world". In a way, it's like taking advantage of the enemy. Suffice to say, education could be the weapon that ultimately will destroy Covid-19.

Schools are about education, they are places where children meet and socialise, take part in sport and compete against one another. They enjoy the freedom to express themselves through art, music and drama. They question or discuss opinions with their teachers in an enriched learning milieu.

Covid-19 has given parents opportunities to realise schools are not the only places where children can be educated in terms of academics. Flip and blended learning teaching can be

used very effectively to educate. Zoom and tele-education have given a whole new meaning to education. For the first time, parents have a choice in their child's future.

There are many suggestions emerging regarding schooling, such as homeschooling, smaller schools, and different types of schools offering a good variety of education. These are all new schooling concepts. Parents and pupils now have a smorgasbord of different educational environments to select from. However, my advice to most parents is, don't jump too early. Do your homework first. It is not so much education that matters most, but the curriculum and how passionate the teachers are.

Independent and "Model C" schools should be able to survive this ongoing crisis because of their strong community support. Be that as it may, there is still plenty of work involved in crafting a new curriculum because no independent or state school that I'm aware of has produced an exciting curriculum that responds to the needs of the 4IR. For the most part, curriculum change is more about adding on, not "taking out" of an already bloated timetable.

The 4IR is already here and parents need to know that if educators ignore this any longer they will do a huge injustice to all our children. This will ultimately require a paradigm shift. Piaget, Vygotsky and Dewey argued that children under 12 couldn't think abstractly. If this is true, which I believe it is, why then do primary schools continue to teach disciplines – for example, why are history and geography taught in the same way?

The main focus at primary school level must revolve around teaching the basics of numeracy and literacy well. In this way, it is further postulated that children need many different sets of skills in the 4IR. STREAM (science, technology, reading, engineering, arts, and mathematics) must be integrated into the curriculum; time must be more flexible and continually focus on the present and the future. Universities must work more closely with all schools, ongoing evaluation in the form of action research will help drive and develop this curriculum development initiative.

If you have decided that you are going to select a different type of school for your child then it is imperative that considerable thought is given to the curriculum that is offered at this new institution, whether it be homeschooling, streaming, or Zoom-based teaching. A crucial factor to consider is the



quality of education – teachers are the ones who make the difference.

To this end, they should be looked after. The last thing we need is the top teachers leaving the profession. Homeschooling will require competent, well-qualified teachers or capable parents who will work with no conflict, for many hours each day. If you do not have the patience or cannot be this type of parent, do not consider this option. Another school option could be technology, using flip and blended learning and using different teaching strategies. Children, unless they have some structure or someone working with them, become bored very quickly.

An issue that always makes me feel distinctly uncomfortable is that while the middle class may have a choice in school-

ing for their child, what will happen to those who are less fortunate? Are the actions taken to address their issues going to be taken seriously or as usual, further polarise the rich from the poor? Statistics clearly reveal that crime rates are climbing every day. This has a knock-on effect. And so the cycle continues. No education, no jobs, poverty, crime, no education...

There are, however, solutions beginning to emerge through this chaos. Most independent schools have the facilities to stream to these poorly resourced schools. Teachers who are competent with technology could pair with teachers who are particularly good at teaching the core subjects.

It is essential that we toss the present curriculum out the window. Let's set our

sights on a new and meaningful curriculum that caters for the 4IR for all those who live in South Africa. Hopefully, the Department of Education has an eye on the ball and takes full advantage of this opportunity. Issues such as the digital divide and the 4IR are concepts that are absolutely critical for equity, equality and social justice.

STREAM would certainly give a solid framework upon which this 21st-century curriculum should be developed. Relationships must be built between communities, and all stakeholders should be involved in ensuring educational ownership. Obviously, this is not a blueprint for educational change, but rather a starting point to discuss ideas and possibilities about the purpose and nature of schooling. **DM**

Project helps protect lives on, around Lake Victoria

By Guardian Reporter and Agencies

A SUCCESSFUL four-year project in East Africa has demonstrated how improved weather, water and climate services save lives and livelihoods and support socio-economic development of vulnerable communities, according to World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

The High Impact Weather Lake System (HIGHWAY) project established a pilot regional 'Early Warning System' to inform fisher folk and other local stakeholders about high impact weather events on Lake Victoria.

There is now growing momentum to scale up the investment as part of support for the implementation plan of the East African Community (EAC) Regional Early Warning System Vision 2025.

Initial studies concluded that more than 200,000 people have directly benefited, and 1.4 million indirectly, from the HIGHWAY project, which was funded by the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) through the Weather and Climate Information Services for Africa (WISER) programme.

The project has also reduced annual weather-related deaths on the lake by 30% - thus saving more than 300 lives per year, according to the studies. Economic benefits of the project are estimated at US\$ 44 million per year, a benefit to cost ratio of 16:1.

"The HIGHWAY project demonstrates that improved access to, and use of, co-designed early warnings has protected lives and livelihoods and improved the economic and social well-being of the communities living in the Lake Victoria Basin," said WMO Secretary-General, Petteri Taalas adding "WMO hopes that this is a model that can be replicated in other parts of Africa and, indeed, the world."

"The WISER HIGHWAY project is a great example of how to increase resilience to climate change through the improvement of weather and climate services. HIGHWAY has worked with partners across East Africa and leaves a legacy of improved services along with a commitment to ongoing development. HIGHWAY demonstrates the difference partner funding can make to lives and livelihoods when implemented through a coordinated and collaborative approach. Fewer lives lost and less damage to property," commented Julius Court, Deputy High Commissioner and Development Director, FCDO, Nairobi, Kenya.

The Lake Victoria Basin supports approximately 25% of the surrounding population. It hosts Africa's largest inland fishery, producing about one million tons of fish annually, employing over 200,000 fisher folk and generating over US\$ 500 million annually in exports. Over 30 million people live near the coastline, with 1,400 landing sites or beaches from which 50,000 boats operate, according to WMO.

On average, 3,000 to 5,000 deaths occurred on the lake each year due to navigation accidents caused by strong winds and waves. Prior to the HIGHWAY project, no regional, operational early warning systems existed to protect the health and safety of those dependent on the lake.

The need for early warnings were highlighted by heavy rainfall which caused Lake Victoria waters to rise to record levels. Ensuing floods dis-



placed more than 200,000 people living in the Basin in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

Loss of life was minimized by improved regional cooperation between the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) of Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. This resulted in a regionally harmonized set of marine forecasts covering the whole of Lake Victoria, issued twice daily in English and local languages.

Since its inception in 2017, the project has enhanced capacities of the participating NMHSs through strengthening institutional frameworks, improving access to data sources and strengthening integration between forecasters and beneficiaries.

The development of forecasts, co-designed by NMHSs and fishing communities, to meet the needs of fisherfolk to ensure safety before going out on the lake;

The dissemination of high impact weather warnings from NMHSs to fishing communities through radios, flags, notice boards and social messaging applications;

The establishment of a regional WMO Integrated Global Observing System (WIGOS) centre to monitor meteorological data quality in East Africa, jointly run by the Kenya Meteorological Department and the Tanzania Meteorological Authority;

The improvement of meteorological data through enhanced observations tools in the Lake Victoria Basin, notably through the revival of Upper Air Stations in the region; and The development and enhancement of meteorological tools (Met Office 4km Unified East Africa model; the RDT (Rapid Development Thunderstorm); Near-Cast product, and Convective Rain Rates (CRR) products) to improve the accuracy of severe weather forecasting in the region.

The project also worked through the EAC to develop a regional strategy for coordinating the issue of severe weather warnings throughout EAC's six Member States - Regional Early Warning System Vision 2025 for East Africa. The Vision was approved in June 2019 by Ministers at the EAC 16th Meeting of the Sectoral Council on Transport, Communications and Meteorology.

On his part, EAC Deputy Secretary General in charge of Infrastructure and Planning, Engineer Steven Mlote, said that Regional EWS Vision 2025 for East Africa would enhance regional cooperation with pooled resources, harmonise practices, and facilitate knowledge exchange to deliver impact-based early warnings across East Africa in a consistent way, according to WMO.

"To that end, the Severe Weather Forecasting programme (SWFP) would underpin the operationalisation of the Vision 2025 in delivering

the regional consensus forecasts and potentially aggregating at the regional level the warnings produced at the national level through a proposed East Africa Community multi-hazard Alert System (EACAS)," said Eng. Steven Mlote.

HIGHWAY project partners are calling for greater investment by international development partners, to build upon the FCDO investment and support the implementation of the Regional Early Warning System Vision 2025. The countries have committed to increasing regional cooperation for the delivery of more accurate, timely and reliable impact-based early warning services, notably by the availing of data through the WMO Information System (WIS) and application of EAC policy for sharing of meteorological data. They have also agreed to work within their respective governments to ensure sustained resourcing for such efforts.

By Special Correspondent

EACH year, an estimated 800,000 people are trafficked globally, though the true number may be higher.

In a quest to arm officials and stakeholders around the globe with more accurate and trusted data to better understand and address this global problem, the University of Georgia has established a new interdisciplinary center to combat human trafficking through research, programming and policy development.

The Center on Human Trafficking Research & Outreach will be housed in the School of Social Work, and David Okech, an associate professor at the school, will serve as the center's

New centre to combat global human trafficking

first director.

This collaborative effort aims to identify better ways to measure the prevalence of trafficking while crafting real-world solutions to best equip nongovernmental organizations and policymakers with the tools and information they need to combat trafficking.

Joining Okech in driving research and program development at the center are Nathan Hansen, a professor of health promotion and behavior at the College of Public Health, Tamara Callands, an assistant professor

of health promotion and behavior at the College of Public Health, Jody Clay-Warner, professor in the department of sociology in the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences, and Lydia Aletraris, an associate research scientist in the School of Social Work.

They have been part of the African Programming and Research Initiative to End Slavery, known as APRIES, which is providing the foundation for the transition into a center.

"Science is always a building block," Okech said. "You build it up, and sometimes it's big and sometimes it's small,

but you keep building. Through the center, we want to let the research speak for itself. If particular research or methodologies work, good, and if it doesn't, then we need to think about what else could work because right now we don't know what really works well in terms of estimation methods and generating reliable data that can inform anti-trafficking policies and programs."

Faculty members across campus from law, political science, psychology, public health, social work and sociology as well as postdoctoral research as-

sociates and students all will be active in advancing the center's mission in enhancing the science around measuring and monitoring the prevalence of human trafficking and implementing plus evaluating evidence-based programs and policies to reduce the problem.

"Human trafficking and modern slavery are large, complex problems that require solutions from multiple perspectives to address," Hansen said. "Thus, a multidisciplinary center allows a variety of disciplines to work together on these problems. Further, locating this center at the University

of Georgia allows access to the broader university community, including many talented and motivated faculty and students, who can contribute to finding solutions to these issues."

"Having a center will enable us to take all of our collective expertise, knowledge and skills, and package it in a way where we can get this information out to those who need it," Callands said. "This will be a center that will benefit from the connections we have, the work we're doing and the lessons learned, enabling it to be successful. That means sharing information with others, and providing trainings, programming and other resources to advance this important work."

Gender discrimination threatens crop production among Africa's smallholder farmers - new study

By Special Correspondent

A STUDY examining bean productivity among smallholder farmers in Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe has found that on average, yields are 6 percent lower among female than male farmers.

Women are often 'invisible' in agriculture, researchers say, due to social structural barriers and national agricultural policies, which do not address discriminatory land rights; education and agricultural information and decision making, which must be tackled to reverse this trend.

The paper "What Does Gender Yield Gap Tell Us about Smallholder Farming in Developing Countries" published in the open access scientific journal Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing (MDPI), analyzed data from southern region in Tanzania since 2016 and also drew on research from case studies conducted in Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe among other countries in the region.

Eileen Nchanji, Gender Specialist at the Alliance of Bioversity International and International Center for Tropical Agriculture (The Alliance), said: "We think this six percent drop in productivity is significant, because it shows that with access to the right information and resources, and if we are intentional about making gender part of new interventions, women will be able to increase their yields significantly."

"Our case studies from Burundi and Zimbabwe have shown that, when women have ac-

cess to improved seeds and information, they can double their yields," she added.

By bringing the public and private sector together, and targeting women, youth and men together with improved seed varieties and better knowledge about agricultural practices and collective decision making on farm operations, productivity among the whole community increases.

Researchers highlight that issues of more concern to women are often ignored at policy level.

They include providing more nutritious food crops such as beans for the family instead of relying on staples like maize which may fetch more income but offer less nutritional value; selection of varieties with attributes such as faster cook-times or easier processing attributes; as well as overall household food security.

Among the challenges women face in boosting crop yields are land rights and ownership. They may not have the power to implement changes if the land is not theirs.

Similarly, while women contribute around 65 percent more on-farm labor than men, they do not always have the same access to information or technology, resulting in lower yields.

Agnes Nduguru, a researcher at the Agricultural Research Institute Uyole, Mbeya, Tanzania, said that a key solution at community level is to ensure the co-distribution of end resources to both women and men.

"Even if we conduct training about gender constraints and differences, and communi-



ties are aware about production and yield gaps, at policy-level, if we want to eliminate poverty, women have to be able to make their own decisions," said Nduguru.

The Alliance's Agricultural Economist, Enid Katungi, said: "We researched on who manages the land or makes decisions about the plot; what age and sex they are; what information and knowledge they have access to. We found structural differences; women tend to cultivate more degraded land, highlighting power differences within households when it comes to resources. So it's clear we need interventions to address those differences at both

developmental and policy level, involving all decision makers in the community at all levels."

The study also reveals that women who engaged their families in decisions on varieties to plant often had better yields, and that access to improved varieties boosted productivity by 35% compared to growing indigenous or local varieties, implying that access to better information and resources for both men and women is key.

Yet a woman's age, family size, years of schooling and how they spend income from beans or other crops all restrict a woman's ability to produce more food and

nutritious family meals in general.

Key recommendations in the paper to tackle gender inequality for improved agricultural yields include gender-specific support to close the yield gap, ensuring equal income distribution and reduced poverty among female farmers.

These include deliberate women empowerment strategies through trainings and free improved seed provision, participatory plant breeding that considers variety attributes that appeal to women; national policy on gender issues in agriculture and general public support to finance women's agriculture.

The strategies Western countries use to ensure application of 'patriots-administering' principle

BEIJING

IN a bid to ensure the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is administered by patriots, China's top legislature passed a decision earlier this month on improving Hong Kong's electoral system.

Such an improvement, as analysts say, helps plug the loopholes and cure the defects of the existing electoral system, paving the way for Hong Kong's long-term prosperity and stability as well as the implementation of "one country, two systems."

As a move to safeguard steady development and people's interests, expelling insurgents and separatists from the government to ensure the country or the city being administered only by people who love it is a common practice for almost all countries around the world.

Patriotism is what any country would expect of its public servants. The Western countries are no exception, even though some of them have been hurling accusations against China for implementing the "patriots administering Hong Kong" principle.

Here are some facts about how those China-bashing countries apply the same "patriots-administering" principle as an effort to safeguard the national security of their own.

The United States

Patriotism is a criterion for all public officials in the United States, which explicitly prohibits people from holding public office if they have violated their duty of loyalty. The law of the United States clearly defines the basic obligation of public service, and the first of its general principles is to pledge loyalty to the U.S. Constitution and laws.

According to the "negative list" of the U.S. law, anyone shall not be allowed to serve in the U.S. government if he/she advocates the overthrow of the constitutional form of government, or participates in a strike against the U.S. government, or participates in an organization that engages in such activities. Employees in the U.S. government are required by law to execute an affidavit confirming that they do not have any of the above conditions. Those who make false statements will be subject to criminal penalties. The U.S. Constitution and criminal law also clearly stipulate that people who commit crimes such as rioting and treason shall be incapable of holding any office in the United States.

Both the House and the Senate of the U.S. Congress have independent ethics committees, which are responsible for monitoring and investigating whether members of Congress have committed acts of disloyalty to the United States. In U.S. history, 18 members of Congress have been expelled for disloyalty to the country.

Under Article VI of the U.S. Constitution, members of the U.S. Congress and all executive and judicial officers of the government and states shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support the Constitution. The U.S. law further specifies that all persons holding public office must take an oath. Taking an oath without solemnity could not only be deemed as refusing to take the oath, but also cause serious consequences.

The United States has a large number of electoral legislations. In the past two years, members of Congress have introduced more than 40 bills to improve the electoral system. On the same day when China's top legislature announced its agenda for improving Hong Kong's electoral system in Beijing time, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a "For the People Act" to improve the electoral system and ensure election security.

The U.S. federal government is in charge of the improvements of the country's electoral system. With specific election rules, it en-

sures that only the "patriots" could be elected. In terms of eligibility, people who violate their duties of loyalty are explicitly prohibited from running for office, or they shall be subject to criminal penalties. Its electoral system also limits foreign influence on candidates during the election process. For example, the Federal Election Campaign Act explicitly prohibits foreign nationals from providing financial support to any political election in any form, and the Foreign Agent Registration Act stipulates that foreign agents must identify themselves when communicating with candidates.

Apart from the official election rules, the election culture based on patriotism is also the "game rules" which the candidates must abide by. In order to win the support of voters, the candidates on different sides must go to all lengths to display their patriotism in the campaign, as the public typically hold high expectations and strict requirements for a candidate's patriotism.

Britain

Britain sets out clear requirements for the loyalty of public servants to the country. To crack down on crimes such as secession, subversion, collusion with external forces, and disclosure of national secrets, ensure people's loyalty to the country and safeguard national security, Britain enacted a set of acts including the Treason Act 1351, the Treason Felony Act 1848, and the Official Secrets Act 1989. These acts apply equally to public servants. Additional penalties will be imposed if they commit crimes against national security. If a civil servant is convicted of treason, he/she will automatically forfeit his/her pension entitlements, in addition to the usual disciplinary penalties.

The Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament stipulates that "members have a duty to be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen, her heirs and successors" and "members have a general duty to act in the interests of the nation as a whole." The Civil Service management code also states that "civil servants are servants of the Crown and owe a duty of loyal service to the Crown as their employer."

Britain's oath system comprises a set of acts, which covers a wide range of people. Several acts including the Parliamentary Oaths Act 1866, the Promissory Oaths Act 1868, and the Oaths Act 1978 stipulate requirements for public servants to take oaths, including the oath of allegiance, official oath and judicial oath. Local government officials are also required to take an oath. For example, the Scotland Act 1998 provides that members of the Scottish Parliament, ministers and junior ministers are required to take the oath of allegiance and the official oath in accordance with the Promissory Oaths Act 1868. For judges, taking a judicial oath is required.

Britain requires that the oath shall be solemnly and publicly made. If any officer specified in the schedule hereto declines or neglects, when any oath required to be



Citizens display China's national flag in support of implementing the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong" at Tamar Park in Hong Kong, March 6, 2021. (Xinhua)

taken by him/her under the Act is duly tendered, to take such oath, he/she shall, if he/she has already entered on his/her office, vacate the same, and if he/she has not entered on the same, be disqualified from entering on the same.

In Britain, the central government plays a leading role in local elections in a bid to maintain national electoral security and constitutional order. As a unitary country, the electoral system of each region is decided by the central government of Britain. At present, Britain has enacted more than 200 acts, orders, and rules relating to the election of members of Parliament, mayors, police and crime commissioners in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. For example, with the highest-degree of autonomy, Scotland's electoral system was set by the Scotland Act passed by the British Parliament in 1998 and amended in 2012.

Britain strictly restricts foreign donations to its political parties. It prescribes that political parties may accept donations above 500 pounds (691 U.S. dollars) only from "permissible donors," which don't include foreign individuals and institutions.

Germany

Germany's Basic Law and Federal Civil Service Act stipulate that civil servants exercising the power relating to national sovereign affairs shall stand in a relationship of service and loyalty defined by public law. If civil servants engage in activities that violate the basic order of freedom and democracy as defined by the Constitution, or participate in activities that threaten the existence or security of the

Federal Republic of Germany, they shall be deemed to have failed in their duties.

According to Article 64 of the Federal Civil Service Act, civil servants must take an oath to protect the Basic Law (German Constitution) and all the laws applicable in Germany and faithfully fulfill their duties.

German civil servants' special duty of loyalty to the country and its Constitution has been confirmed and clarified by the Federal Constitutional Court in a judicial precedent in 1975. In practice, German civil servants are not only required to faithfully maintain the constitutional order to which they have sworn allegiance and not to participate in any activities that undermine the constitutional order, but also required to perform a higher degree of loyalty obligations, such as not participating in strikes or non-cooperative movements that weaken the efficiency of government operations, otherwise they will be regarded as violating service obligations and being disloyal to the government.

Article 21 of Germany's Basic Law stipulates that parties that, by reason of their aims or the behavior of their adherents, seek to undermine or abolish the free democratic basic order or to endanger the existence of the Federal Republic of Germany shall be unconstitutional.

Germany has set up a monitoring system to avoid, supervise and punish violations of loyalty obligations by its civil servants. Germany has adopted a series of laws and regulations, such as the Basic Law, the Federal Civil Service Act, the Federal Disciplinary Act and the Rules on Integrity, to supervise its civil servants' performance of

their duties.

France

The Constitution of France emphasizes that France shall be an indivisible Republic, and no section of the people nor any individual may arrogate to itself, or to himself/herself, the exercise of national sovereignty.

Section IV of the French Criminal Code lists various crimes against the nation, the country and peace and corresponding penalties, including offences against the institutions of the Republic or the integrity of the national territory, crimes against public peace, treason and espionage, etc.

The Constitution of France stipulates that political parties and groups shall contribute to the exercise of suffrage, they shall be formed and carry on their activities freely, and they shall respect the principles of national sovereignty and democracy.

France has set up a special election supervisory organ to perform the monitoring function. At the central level, there is a national supervisory committee set up by the Ministry of the Interior, which is responsible for supervising the national election process and the observance of the basic election principles in the election campaign.

Canada

The Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector issued by the Canadian government in 2003 places a duty of loyalty on public servants and restricts them from publicly criticizing the Canadian government. Any violation may lead to dismissal.

The Constitution Act, 1867 stipulates that every Member of the Senate or House of Commons of Canada shall before taking his/her Seat therein take and subscribe before the Governor General or some Person authorized by him/her, and every Member of a Legislative Council or Legislative Assembly of any Province shall before taking his/her Seat therein take and subscribe before the Lieutenant Governor of the Province or some Person authorized by him/her.

The Constitution Act, 1867 provides that a senator will be disqualified if he/she takes an Oath or makes a Declaration or Acknowledgment of Allegiance, Obedience, or Adherence to a Foreign Power, or does an Act whereby he/she becomes a Subject or Citizen, or entitled to the Rights or Privileges of a Subject or Citizen, of a Foreign Power, or if he/she is attainted of Treason or convicted of Felony or of any infamous Crime.

Australia

The Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act stipulates that any person who:(I) is under any acknowledgment of allegiance, obedience, or adherence to a foreign power, or is a subject or a citizen or entitled to the rights or privileges of a subject or a citizen of a foreign power; or (II) is attainted of treason, or has been convicted and is under sentence, or subject to be sentenced, for any offence punishable under the law of the Commonwealth or of a State by imprisonment for one year or longer, shall be incapable of being chosen or of sitting as a senator or a member of the House of Representatives.

The Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act stipulates that every senator and every member of the House of Representatives shall before taking his seat make and subscribe before the Governor-General, or some person authorized by him/her, an oath or affirmation of allegiance in the form set forth in the schedule to this Constitution.

The Public Service Act 1999 stipulates that an Australian Public Service employee on duty overseas must at all times behave in a way that upholds the good reputation of Australia. Any violations may result in termination of employment, reduction in salary, deductions from salary by way of fine, or re-assignment of duties.

The Guidance for Australia Public Service Employees and Agencies: Personal Behavior on Social Media issued by the Australian government in 2017 regulates civil servants' behavior on the Internet and restricts them from criticizing the government online. Xinhua



Citizens sign in support of the "patriots administering Hong Kong" principle and improving the electoral system in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in the Sha Tin Station, March 7, 2021. (File photo)

Some global food brands are resistant to animal welfare regulations - WAP

BY FRANCIS KAJUBI

SOME global food brands are stubbornly resistant to improving animal welfare standards, according to a new World Animal Protection (WAP) report.

The 2020 Business Benchmark on Farm Animal Welfare (BBFAW) report released on Wednesday reveals that 59 of the 150 companies appear in the lowest tiers, indicating these companies provide little or no information on their approach to farm animal welfare.

It states that one in five trusted global food companies has no farm animal welfare policy at all. However, encouraging news, is that 23 companies have moved up at least one tier, yet the average score for companies overall is just 35 percent, showing there is much room for improvement.

Some of the lowest scoring compa-

nies with presence in Africa ranked in the second last tier of the benchmark are Subway and Starbucks, all of whom have been assessed annually since BBFAW started in 2012, yet they lag significantly behind their peers on farm animal welfare.

Reporting the proportion of animals that currently meet standards is a key part of the BBFAW scoring system to ensure that policies are successfully being implemented. However, company data indicates that more needs to be done to deliver positive welfare impacts for animals.

"Only one in eight companies reports on the proportion of laying hens free from beak trimming. Of these, just four companies (3 percent) report that more than 25 percent of laying hens in their global supply chains are free from beak trimming.



Dr Victor Yamo, Farming Campaigns Manager at World Animal Protection.

Only one in eight companies reports on the proportion of broilers that have better welfare due to a more natural growth rate," states the report.

The proportion of companies that report on the number of broiler chickens that grow at a more natural pace resulting in improved welfare outcomes has increased to 13 percent from just 4 percent in 2019.

Specifically Nestle, Unilever, and Carrefour are companies with presence here in Africa that have improved significantly since their first rank.

Dr Victor Yamo, Farming Campaigns Manager at World Animal Protection, said in a statement that COVID-19 has brought new challenges like never before, but despite that stakeholders must continue to accelerate and drive forward the animal welfare movement.

"We must do better for the world's 50 billion animals that are factory farmed each year, causing immense suffering. Not only do the cruel practices of intensive farming subject animals to misery, but they expose us to potential diseases and risks too. The BBFAW tool exposes those companies that care for animals, and those who do not," he said adding.

"Animal cruelty is becoming more and more important for consumers - producers, supermarkets and restaurants would be foolish to ignore it. This tool brings all the commitments together in one place, providing a clear and transparent scorecard for all to see."

According to him, consumer interest and growing momentum for companies to take an interest in animal welfare shows why the world's most influential food companies should be willing to change and continue to improve year on year.

Thirteen producers and manufacturers improved their score by at least one tier between 2019 and 2020, compared to nine retailers and wholesalers, and just one company in the restaurants and bars sub-sector.

The Business Benchmark on Farm Animal Welfare (BBFAW) is an initiative backed by World Animal Protection and Compassion in World Farming, and is the leading global measure of corporate action on farm animal welfare.

Kenya Power defaults by over Sh23bn on bill

NAIROBI

KENYA Power defaulted on payment for electricity worth Sh23.9 billion supplied by KenGen in the year ended June 2020, exposing the electricity producer to the risk of major losses.

The Office of the Auditor-General says in its report on the power generator's financial statements that the debt had increased from Sh19.3 billion a year earlier.

Kenya Power, the distributor, swung into a pre-tax loss of Sh7.04 billion for its financial year to the end of last June on costly wholesale electricity purchase from the electricity producer and higher financing costs that offset modest sales.

This has made the firm struggle to meet its obligations, in a business setting that has seen it seek debt relief in the race to cut costs.

"In addition, the amounts due from Kenya Power were on average outstanding for periods of 195 days, which was way above the 90-day credit cycle provided for in the agreement between the two companies," the Auditor-General said in the report.

The delayed payment has hurt KenGen's cash flows, prompting it to reduce capital expenditure and increase its borrowings. The company ended the review period with a cash balance of Sh5.3 billion, down 42.3 percent from Sh9.3 billion the year before.

Its net profit, however, more than doubled to Sh18.3 billion, partly helped by a Sh4.5 billion tax credit.

Other power producers are also claiming a total of Sh20.5 billion from Kenya Power and it was not immediately clear how much of the amount is in default.

The audit found differences between what KenGen is claiming from Kenya Power and what the electricity distributor says it owes the power producer.

While KenGen says it is owed Sh23.9 billion, Kenya Power says the debt stands at Sh24 billion, a variance of Sh44.7 million.

KenGen is also claiming from Kenya a separate Sh224.3 million for its Aggreko project - an emergency power plant it manages on behalf of the Ministry of Energy.

Kenya Power says it owes KenGen Sh197.6 million in relation to the Aggreko project, leaving Sh26.7 million in dispute.

A total of Sh71.4 million is contested, with the power producer saying the amount represents penalties for default. "According to management, the unconfirmed amount of total trade receivables of Sh71.4 million relates to



Kenya Power chief executive Bernard Ngugi.

interest on delayed payments, which Kenya Power has disputed," the audit report said.

The interest KenGen charged Kenya Power for the outstanding amounts is much smaller compared to the penalties levied in previous years.

The power producer, for instance, charged interest of Sh722.3 million in the year ended June 2019 when the electricity distributor had delayed payments amounting to Sh19.3 billion.

Kenya Power, meanwhile, is disputing the reduced penalties. The company's default in the year ended June 2020 represents 70.2 percent of KenGen's current assets.

The power producer has in the past written off Kenya Power debt running into hundreds of millions of shillings, representing up to 2.5 percent of the amounts owed.

The company's internal policies show that it now faces the risk of major losses from the electricity distributor's default that had stretched to 6.5 months against its 40-day window.

"There is a rebuttable assumption that the credit risk on a financial asset has increased significantly since initial recognition when contractual payments are more than 30 days past due," KenGen says in its credit risk analysis.

For this purpose, default is defined as having occurred if the debtor is in breach of contractual obligations, or if information is available internally or externally that suggests that the debtor is unlikely to be able to meet its obligations."

The Auditor-General, commenting separately on Kenya Power's financial

statements for the year ended June 2020, says the risk of the company becoming insolvent has increased over the years.

Its short-term liabilities in the review period stood at Sh117.4 billion, surpassing its current assets of Sh74.8 billion by Sh42.6 billion.

"The company has reported negative working capital position for the fourth consecutive year. As disclosed by the board and management in the past and current financial statements, strategic initiatives have been undertaken to improve the financial results of the company," the audit report said.

"However, these initiatives appear not to have yielded the intended results as at June 30, 2020. These conditions indicate that a material uncertainty exists, which may cast a significant doubt on the company's ability to continue as a going concern."

The government, which owns a 50 percent stake in the electricity distributor, has initiated a series of measures aimed at saving the company from bankruptcy.

The latest effort is the formation of a task force to review power purchase agreements (PPAs) signed between Kenya Power and all electricity generators with a goal of renegotiating the energy prices and other terms downwards. Review of the PPAs comes after it emerged that Kenya Power had signed contracts committing it to take more electricity than it can sell, leaving it to pay onerous capacity charges to energy producers even when their plants are idle.

"The terms of reference of the task

force shall be to ... undertake a comprehensive review and analysis of the terms of PPAs entered into by the Kenya Power and Lighting Company Limited (KPLC)," said a gazette notice announcing the formation of the team.

"Review the take-or-pay approach applied under the PPA structure and recommend a viable pay-when-taken (merchant plant) approach, or any other viable payment structure, for use in independent power generation projects."

The task force is also expected to review the allocation of risk between the independent power producers and the electricity distributor.

There will also be an audit of the operations of the power producers, with the government threatening to terminate the contracts of those found to have broken the country's laws or taken advantage of Kenya Power.

Efforts to offer financial relief to the company include a moratorium for payment of principal and interest on government on-lent loans amounting to Sh5.7 billion million until July 2021 and waiver of any penalties arising from the deferment of these payments for a period of one year.

The government is also reviewing the firm's existing commercial facilities with an aim of retiring expensive ones through engagement on favourable terms with international development financiers.

"The strategy of the company is to pursue restructuring of short-term commercial facilities (overdrafts) into medium-term facility," Kenya Power said.

Co-op bank lands Sh1.1bn loan to boost agriculture enterprise

NAIROBI

CO-OPERATIVE Bank of Kenya has received Sh1.1 billion (\$10 million) loan from Luxembourg-based impact investment fund for on-lending to agribusinesses.

The lender said Thursday it had received the subordinated loan from eco business Fund and will extend the same to sustainable agribusinesses, such as those in the coffee and tea.

The facility marks the first investment in Kenya for eco-business Fund, which specialises in promoting use of natural resources, and mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Co-op Bank chief executive Gideon Muriuki in a statement said the loan will provide much-needed financing for agricultural businesses, especially in light of the Covid-19 hardships facing many businesses.

"This new partnership with eco business Fund that makes available \$10 million for on-lending to farmers is a winner on many fronts," said Mr Muriuki.

"It provides financing that is structured to suit the financing cycles of agriculture, and also comes with the support mechanisms to assist farmers to make a successful pivot towards sustainable, climate-smart agriculture."

Agriculture contributes about a

third of Kenya's gross domestic product but commercial lending to this sector remains low, limits the ability of producers and processors to invest in sustainable production practices.

Chairperson of the board of directors at eco.business Fund Jens Mackensen said the deal seeks to promote green finance.

"We are excited about our first investment in Kenya. This new partnership with Co-op promises to be a fruitful one as the bank is well positioned to act as an enabler of sustainable production practices," said Mr Mackensen.

The fund supports sustainable operations in agriculture, fishery, forestry and tourism sectors and targets businesses that hold sustainability certification or seeking loans to make sustainable investments.

The loan looks set to increase Co-op's loan book that is classified as green portfolio from the current Sh3.4 billion.

Co-op is among the top lenders in Kenya that are growing their focus on sustainability financing that rides on Environmental and Social Governance (ESG) practices.

The lender has adopted IFC's exclusion list which defines the types of projects such as trade in radioactive materials that the entity does not finance.



Co-operative Bank of Kenya MD Gideon Muriuki.

Pan African Fintech accelerator due to help tech startups at growth-stage

LAGOS

THE Entrepreneurship Academy of the SANAD Fund for MSME in partnership with IMPACT Lab and MEST has announced a six-month Fintech Accelerator programme designed for high-potential technology businesses looking to scale up their business, create partnerships and explore North African markets.

In a statement, the organisations claim that globally, the financial sector is undergoing profound changes, driven by digital transformation and technological innovation. In Africa, where approximately 66 percent of the adult population is unbanked, this has created an unprecedented opportunity to drive financial inclusion for all.

However, the development of the Fintech industry is inhibited by inadequate access to capital and gaps in technical skills needed to build robust products and businesses that can scale successfully, they add.

The core objective of the Pan-African Fintech Accelerator is to stimulate growth-stage startups operating within the Fintech vertical and equip them with the skills and knowledge to successfully scale their solutions into North Africa.

According to the organisers the six-month programme is open to Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire and will be entirely virtual.

"Using a high-impact and tailor-made market integration and immersion curriculum, training will be complemented by facilitated sessions with North African experts on the local Fintech regulatory environment as well as mindset culture," reads an excerpt from the statement.

Chairperson of SANAD Technical Assistance Facility which runs the Entrepreneurship Academy, said the accelerator hopes



to support the development of a resilient and agile tech ecosystem in Sub-Saharan Africa that is capable of expanding into the North African market and competing globally.

The accelerator is scouting for start-ups with solutions in personal finance, lending, insurance, regulatory technology, payment and money transfer, HR, payroll, wealth management, accounting and expense management. Ten businesses will be selected to participate in the maiden edition of the Pan-African Fintech Accelerator.

The organisations add that they will receive industry-specific training on how to assess and enhance their Fintech product for the North African market as well as invaluable access to pre-identified potential clients, corporate investors, industry experts and an ecosystem of institutional partners.

In a joint statement, the Director of MEST Consultancy, Prasanth Kumar, and the CEO of IMPACT Lab, Salma Kabbaj, expressed their excitement about the program, lauding its distinctiveness in promoting cross-regional learning, collaboration and immersion.

They added that with more start-ups in Africa providing technology-based financial solutions than ever before, and the

COVID-19 pandemic compounding the need for contactless commerce, it has become crucial for local start-ups to bridge their knowledge and experience gaps with industry players and develop stronger ties with other regions.

The program officially kicks off in January 2021 and will conclude with a live Demo Day where investors, industry experts,

corporates and ecosystem players will witness the transformative growth of the start-ups.

An equal opportunity initiative, the program aims to have an even ratio of male to female participants. Interested applicants must have a dedicated full-time founding team and be operational for at least two years before applying for this program.

Tech alliance set to tackle digital gaps in Botswana schools

GABORONE

BOTSWANA Fibre Networks (BoFiNet) has partnered with Huawei to address the digital gaps in schools and bolster e-Learning.

This is one of the main objectives of collaboration between the two companies, according to Pelani Siwawa-Ndai, BoFiNet Board Chairperson.

This after a donation of Huawei ICT infrastructure and internet connectivity to Gaborone Secondary School, one of the country's oldest learning centres.

Huawei was approached by BoFiNet to serve as a technical partner in the installation of fibre optic network to homes in Gaborone.

The donation stems from this alliance.

"It is our hope that our partnership with Huawei Botswana will, henceforth, play a role in closing any digital gaps that may exist and accelerate e-learning at this school," said Siwawa-Ndai, adding that the intention is to equip schools to help them respond to challenges brought about through COVID-19.

BoFiNet has established contractual agreements with partners that incorporate joint CSR projects.

"The contractual agreements carry an obligation for all our partners to commit and set aside a certain percentage of their funds towards a sustainable CSR project in the area in which they operate in," said Siwawa-Ndai, adding that government will not be able to develop and improve the lives of communities single-handedly.

"It is incumbent upon companies operating in Botswana to play a key role in the development of communities within which they operate, in an effort to drive social change and impact the livelihoods of Botswana," she said.

Huawei's donation comes at a time the country is witnessing an increase in the uptake of internet across the country due to e-learning and working from home.



Airtel Africa Group in it to win it, says CTO

NAIROBI

Airtel Africa plans to be the number one service provider across all fourteen countries it services on the continent.

The telecommunications operator made headlines recently after concluding infrastructure acquisition agreements with Helios Towers, as well as Rise Fund investment of US\$200-million in Airtel Mobile Commerce BV (AMC BV).

Recently Airtel Africa penned an agreement with Helios Towers over passive infrastructure operations in Madagascar and Malawi, as well as an MoU for passive infrastructure assets in Chad and Gabon. The Rise Fund investment values Airtel Money at US\$2.65-billion.

The developments have strengthened the company's confidence and its determination to not only sustain its operations in 14 countries and provide services to 120 million customers across Sub-Saharan Africa, but also engage with new markets.

Group Chief Technology Officer Razvan Ungureanu joined the company in 2016 and has developed the network and helped expand operations into some of the continent's most isolated and unconnected areas.

He told ITWeb Africa that connectivity remains an ongoing priority as Africa continues to digitise, and added that the way a customer interacts with the company for services is a key trend going forward.

He referred to the company's mobile app and how it speaks to the needs of the digital customer as an example. This is delivered via its IT services division and supported by several technologies.

A core component of the company's value proposition is the expansion of 2G, 3G and 4G network coverage across its footprint.

"(In) ninety-five percent of our footprint we are delivering 3G, seventy-six percent we are delivering 4G, and our plan for the next financial year is to bridge that gap and reach almost one hundred percent across all technologies," said Ungureanu.

He is confident of the company's ability and network strength. He claims that according to benchmarks measuring data speed, quality of service and network performance available through Facebook to telecommunication services providers, Airtel is well placed.

"Across my fourteen operations, more than fifty percent we are best in class, so basically number one ... in the worst case we are number two and we have plans in the next six months to be number one across all fourteen countries. We are not here to just fake something, we are here to win," he added.

The main challenge with operating in Africa is the actual environment itself Ungureanu said, reflecting on the issue of power consumption and distribution as



Airtel Group chief technology officer Razvan Ungureanu.

a case in point.

"Having power is a day-to-day strife... our organisation, the mobile operators organisation, has one of the biggest fuel distribution (operations) across Africa, we are the second biggest distributor of fuel after the pump station... because in order to maintain our sites and make sure they are up, because the power outages are so often, we need to deliver fuel to the power generators."

Power is one issue but security and logistic/ geo-

graphic considerations also impact operations.

According to Ungureanu, despite these challenges, a customer can pay one US dollar in ARPU per month and still expect the same quality in service that anyone in a Western country would receive.

"Mobile is the only gateway that they have to the world and sometimes one person paying you one dollar to recharge makes a very big choice between food and reloading his mobile, so you

have to respect that choice. It is a very important choice and you have to respect it, he cannot waste his money... so what we deliver for that dollar must be worth the money."

Africa also magnifies the level of success or failure within a business' operations, Ungureanu explained. He said in Europe if a mistake is made and there is a drop in ARPU, it would be noticed but largely shrugged off to bad luck.

"Here if you make a mis-

take, you have an immediate hit. Eighty percent of our handsets are dual SIM, so if you r network is out one day, customers will immediately go to the second operator and you lose revenue for one month. Ninety-nine percent of the market is prepaid, so the volatility of the market is extremely high. So the network stability and the way that you address the market must be damn solid and you can't afford a lot of mistakes."

Rather than simply jump into the latest technology

and revel in the many buzzwords, Airtel takes a more logical approach to innovation said Ungureanu.

It has to make business sense he explained and used 5G as an example and specifically in terms of handset penetration. "So today sixteen percent of my handsets are 4G ready and I just did a study last week of how many handsets are 5G ready and the average is 0.08, the highest percentage is 1%."

In Nigeria, Airtel's largest market, the company has

21 000 handsets that are 5G ready in a market comprising a 30-40 million customer network.

"So we can quickly see it is not making sense now to address the market with 5G."

Fixed wireless access represents a very strong use case for 5G in Africa, he added.

"I believe that 5G will make sense in Africa, but not now. Another major factor is that the big majority of roll outs in Africa are basically the telcos, meaning we don't own the tower, not only Airtel, any operator in Africa.

Why? Because as I explained in the beginning, they are bringing power to the tower, a totally different business and different type of focus. So those guys that are delivering us power, they specialise in that. When I have a contract with a telco, I have some limitations. I have limitations on the weight I can put on top of the tower, I have constraints with the number of antennas and the amount of power."

As to Africa's telecommunications ecosystem, Ungureanu said that the focus must be on the reliability of the network and investment in the best quality infrastructure from vendors to ensure this reliability.

Network availability is critical to the bottom line, he said. "... because I pay less on maintenance and my network will be up more so I have more revenue. We are investing in more reliable vendors."

Tencent's Timi gaming studio generated \$10 billion in 2020

BEIJING

CHINESE tech giant Tencent's Timi Studios, maker of popular video games Honor of Kings and Call of Duty Mobile, generated revenue of \$10 billion last year, two people with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters.

The \$10 billion would make Timi the world's largest developer, the sources say, which many industry watchers had suspected to be the case.

It also provides a hefty basis for its ambitions to move beyond mobile games and compete directly with global heavyweights developing expensive "AAA" titles on platforms such as desktop computers, Sony's PlayStation, Nintendo's Switch and Microsoft's Xbox.

In a recruitment notice last month, a Timi engineer wrote that the company aims to create a new AAA game that resembles the virtual community from the movie Ready Player One, and will "compete head-to-head against big powers from Japan, Korea, Europe and U.S."

Tencent is building studios overseas, including one for Timi and one for Lightspeed and Quantum, both in Los An-



The Tencent logo is seen at its booth at the 2020 China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS) in Beijing, China.

geles, with the goal of creating content with original intellectual property that has global appeal.

Tencent aims eventually to

derive half its game revenue from overseas, from 23 percent in the fourth quarter of 2019, the most recently available figure.

Many major studios are turning to Tencent for support to convert their "hardcore" desktop or console games to mobile. Such games feature long ses-

sions and in-depth storytelling or battles, with some including multiplayer online role-playing or online battle arenas.

Last week, Tencent reported

156.1 billion yuan (\$23.79 billion) in overall online game revenues for 2020 but did not break down revenue for individual studios, which are run independently and compete with each other.

Timi's proceeds accounted for 40 percent of the game revenue, said the two people.

Of Tencent's remaining gaming revenue last year, its Lightspeed and Quantum studio, the developer of PUBG Mobile, another top-grossing game, contributed 29 percent, the people said, while 26 percent was proceeds from publishing for other developers. Aurora Studios Group, boosted by its Moonlight Blade Mobile title, contributed 3 percent, the people said.

The sources declined to be identified because the information is not public. Tencent did not immediately reply to a Reuters request for comment.

Tencent, which has benefited from a surge in paying gamers, said last week its online games revenue rose 29% to 39.1 billion yuan in the fourth quarter.

White House asks EPA to study how EVs could further generate renewable fuel-linked credits

NEW YORK

THE White House has directed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to study how using renewable fuels to power electric vehicle charging could generate tradeable credits under the nation's biofuels program, two sources familiar with the discussions told Reuters.

The move could give the fledgling U.S. electric vehicle industry a big boost by granting it fresh incentives and a new revenue stream. But the idea would introduce new actors like Tesla Inc into a program that has already bitterly divided the oil and corn industries.

Under the U.S. Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS), oil refiners must blend biofuels such as corn-based ethanol into their fuel mix or buy tradable credits, known as RINs, from those that do. The program was launched more than a decade ago to support farmers and reduce petroleum imports.

If the program were expanded to include EVs the RINs would come from charging the vehicle using electricity produced by a renewable source of methane, like gas siphoned from landfills or dairy operations, according to the sources.

There's potentially a lot of that kind of fuel available: Agriculture accounts for 10 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, with livestock making up more than a third of that, according to EPA data. Landfills, meanwhile, are a major source of methane.

Electricity from biogas is already technically eligible for generating RINs under the RFS, but the EPA has never approved applications to do so because the agency hasn't yet figured out the logistical issues.

The key questions are how to trace the credit-eligible biogas from its origin all the way through to a car's battery, and who along that supply chain should be allowed to claim the lucrative credits.

"There's going to be a big fight between biomass producers, charging station operators and EV carmakers like Tesla over who gets custody of the RIN," said one of the sources. The White House and the EPA declined to comment.

The existing RFS program is already a lightning rod of contention between the oil and corn industries. Refiners complain that complying with the regulation costs them a fortune, while farmers and biofuel producers say the program is essential for them to stay in business.

One source told Reuters that Tesla, which produces both cars and charging stations, has been lobbying the Biden administration to ensure it can generate and sell credits if the new plan gets off the ground.

Tesla did not respond to a request for comment.

Goldman promotes female partners to executive roles

NEW YORK

GOLDMAN Sachs Group Inc on Thursday promoted four female partners to senior leadership roles at the firm, according to memos seen by Reuters.

Among them, Goldman's head of investor relations, Heather Kennedy Miner, was given the No. 2 job in the bank's asset management business, and Jacqueline Arthur was named deputy chief of staff for the executive office.

Goldman has set some of the most aggressive and specific goals among big U.S. banks for increasing the presence of Black, Latino and female professionals at all job levels. Thursday's promotions reflect what Chief Executive David Solomon has said was a lack of diversity in the bank's senior



ranks.

Solomon said at a virtual event last year hosted by the Economic Club of New York that he was "not pleased" with the levels of diversity among the bank's senior leaders.

Goldman has four women on its board of directors and will have a fifth if shareholders approve the nomination of Royal Dutch Shell plc Chief Financial Officer Jessica Uhl later this month. But Solomon has urged the bank to increase diversity in the top ranks more quickly.

A recent analysis of the companies included in the Russell 3000 Index, which includes Goldman, shows women held just 12% of the "named executive officer" positions, up from 9% in 2015.

In the memos, Miner was named

chief operating officer for Goldman's asset management division. She previously led investor relations for the bank since 2017.

The head of Goldman Sachs's bank unit and deputy treasurer, Carey Halio, was appointed to replace Miner as head of investor relations. Arthur will serve as deputy chief of staff and secretary to the management committee, reporting to John Rogers.

Lisa Donnelly was given an expanded role as head of core operations responsible for coordinating common practices, standards and protocols for the bank's global divisions. She succeeds Phil Armstrong, who is retiring.

The Goldman Sachs company logo is seen in the company's space on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, (NYSE) in New York.

US Supreme Court backs Facebook in fresh case about unwanted texting

WASHINGTON

THE US Supreme Court on Thursday made it easier for businesses to pester consumers with phone calls or text messages by tossing out a lawsuit accusing Facebook Inc of violating a federal anti-robocall law.

The justices, in a 9-0 decision authored by Justice Sonia Sotomayor, sided with Facebook over its argument that text messages the social media company sent did not violate a 1991 federal law called the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA).

The case highlighted the challenge for the justices in applying outdated laws to modern technologies. The ruling sparked calls for the U.S. Congress to update the law, enacted three decades ago to curb telemarketing abuse by banning most unauthorized robocalls.

"By narrowing the scope of the TCPA, the court is allowing companies the ability to assault the public with a non-stop wave of unwanted calls and texts, around the clock," Democratic Senator Edward Markey and Democratic Representative Anna Eshoo said in a joint statement.

The court ruled that Facebook's actions - sending text messages without consent - did not fit within the technical definition of the type of conduct barred by the law, which was enacted before the rise of modern cellphone technology.

The lawsuit was filed in 2015 in California federal court by Montana resident Noah Duguid, who said Facebook sent him many automatic text messages without his consent. The lawsuit accused Menlo Park, California-based Facebook of violating the Telephone Consumer Pro-

tection Act's restriction on using an automatic telephone dialing system.

Facebook said the security-related messages, triggered when users try to log in to their accounts from a new device or internet browser, were tied to users' cellphone numbers.

"As the court recognized, the law's provisions were never intended to prohibit companies from sending targeted security notifications and the court's decision will allow companies to continue working to keep the accounts of their users safe," Facebook said in a statement.

Sergei Lemberg, Duguid's lawyer, said anyone could steer clear of liability under the law as long as they use similar technology to Facebook's.

"This is a disappointing ruling for anyone who owns a cellphone or values their privacy," Lemberg

added.

In this instance, the lawsuit asserted that Facebook's system that sent automated text messages was akin to a traditional automatic dialing system - known as an autodialer - used to send robocalls.

"Duguid's quarrel is with Congress, which did not define an autodialer as malleable as he would have liked," Sotomayor wrote in the ruling.

The law requires that the equipment used must use a "random or sequential number generator" but the court concluded that Facebook's system "does not use such technology," Sotomayor added.

Duguid said that Facebook repeatedly sent him account login notifications by text message to his cellphone even though he was not a Facebook user and never had been. Despite numerous efforts, Duguid



said he was unable to stop Facebook from "robotexting" him.

Facebook responded that Duguid had most likely been assigned a phone number that had been previously associated with a Facebook user who had opted in to receive the no-

tifications.

A federal judge threw out the lawsuit but in 2019 the San Francisco-based 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals revived it. The 9th Circuit took a broad view of the law, saying it not only bans devices that automatically dial randomly gen-

erated numbers but also stored numbers that are not randomly generated.

The National Association of Federally-Insured Credit Unions said the decision "to narrowly interpret autodialers is a win for the credit union industry."

"We have long fought for

this clarity to ensure credit unions can contact their members with important, time-sensitive financial information without fear of violating the TCPA and facing frivolous lawsuits," the association said in a statement.

WORLD

UK PM's black adviser quits amid row over race report

LONDON

BRITISH Prime Minister Boris Johnson's senior adviser on race is to resign amid the intense debate over Downing Street's controversial report on racial disparities in Britain, local media reported Thursday.

Samuel Kasumu, Johnson's special adviser for civil society and communities, will leave his role in May and has informed colleagues of his decision on Wednesday, sources confirmed to British media.

News of his departure emerged the day after the British government released a report which concluded that there was no evidence of institutional racism in Britain.

"The report by the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities faced heavy criticism, with claims that it is culturally deaf, out of step with public opinion, and steeped in denial," the Evening Standard newspaper reported.

Kasumu is expected to stay in post until May to continue work on improving vaccine uptake in minority groups, reported the Lon-

don-based newspaper.

But a Downing Street spokesperson said Kasumu had been planning his departure "for several months" and was not linked to the report by the government's Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities.

"Any suggestion that this decision has been made this week or that this is linked to the (commission's) report is completely inaccurate," the spokesperson added.

Kasumu, who has not commented on the race report yet, has reportedly been unhappy with the British government's stance on racial issues.

He had previously handed in a resignation letter in February, accusing the Conservatives of a "politics steeped in division".

The British government's race report, issued Wednesday, said that social class and family structure, rather than race, had a bigger impact on how people's lives turned out. It claimed Britain acts as "a model" for other white-majority countries when it comes to racial equality in education and the workplace.



People hold up placards in support of the Black Lives Matter movement as they take part in the inaugural Million People March march from Notting Hill to Hyde Park in London. (File photo)

The study was set up after Black Lives Matter protests last year. A section of the report that claimed there was a new story to be told about the "slave period", which was not just about "profit and suffering", has been criticised for "glorifying" the slave trade.

Labour's Shadow Women and Equalities Secretary Marsha de Cordova on Thursday called the report "divisive," adding it was "no wonder" the government was "losing the expertise from their team".

"To have your most senior advisor on ethnic minorities quit as you publish a so-called landmark report on race in the UK is telling of how far removed the

Tories are from the everyday lived experiences of Black, Asian and ethnic minority people," she added.

Johnson said Thursday the British government is not going to agree with "absolutely everything" in the race report, but "it has some original and stimulating work in it that I think people need to read and to consider".

"There are very serious issues that our society faces to do with racism that we need to address," he said.

"We've got to do more to fix it, we need to understand the severity of the problem, and we're going to be looking at all the ideas that they have put forward," he added.

If you're waiting for gender equality, try 135 years

THE time it will take the world to achieve gender equality has increased from 99.5 years to more than 135 years because of the toll inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021 said.

Examining 156 countries, the report found that despite progress in education and health, women are confronted by economic hurdles, declining political participation and workplace challenges.

The pandemic has worsened the situation, and the report noted that progress toward gender equality is stalling partly due to women being more frequently employed in sectors hardest hit by lockdowns, such as the consumer sector, combined with the pressure of providing care at home.

"The pandemic has fundamentally impacted gender equality in both the workplace and the home, rolling back years of progress. If we want a dynamic future economy, it is vital for women to be represented in the jobs of tomorrow," said Saadia Zahidi, managing director of the World Economic Forum.

"Now, more than ever, it is crucial to focus leadership attention, commit to firm targets and mobilize resources. This is the moment to embed gender parity by design into the recovery."

The report said Iceland remains the world's most gender-equal country, followed by Finland, Norway, New Zealand, and Sweden.

The five most improved countries in the overall index in 2021 are Lithuania, Serbia, Timor-Leste, Togo, and the United Arab Emirates.

In Asia, Japan ranked 120th among the 156 countries, remaining in last place among the world's most advanced economies. The Philippines is the region's best-performing country at 17th.

Underrepresented

Worldwide, women only hold 26.1 percent of parliamentary seats and 22.6 percent of ministerial positions, the report said.

As the job market recovers from the effects of the pandemic, LinkedIn data shows women are being hired at a slower rate in multiple industries.

"Women aren't well represented in the majority of fast-growing roles, which means we are storing up even bigger gender representation problems as we emerge from the pandemic," said Sue Duke, head of Global Public Policy at LinkedIn.

"These roles play a significant part in shaping all aspects of technology and how it is deployed in the world. We simply have to have women's voices and perspectives represented at this foundational stage, especially as digitization is accelerating," she added.



Women, wearing face masks to curb the spread of COVID-19, show banners and shout slogans during a demonstration in front of the Minister of Economy and Finance, to mark the International Women's Day, in Rome, March 8, 2021. (PHOTO / AP)

Spokesperson: US should mind its own human rights issues

BEIJING

A Chinese government spokesperson on Thursday urged the United States to take a good look at its own serious internal human rights issues.

Ma Xiaoguang, a spokesperson for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, made the remarks in response to a query about the US annual report on human rights which said that the mainland has tried to influence Taiwan media outlets "through pressure on the business interests."

Ma said that the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had refuted the report, pointing out that the accusation was maliciously concocted without any regard for the truth.

For self-interest, Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) authority has long been manipulating media outlets, keeping bots, cracking down on dissidents, suppressing opinions and fooling people with fabricated lies, Ma said.

However, the United States, for the purpose of manipulating the DPP authority, has turned a blind eye to the widespread suspicion and strong condemnation of the DPP's vile acts from all walks of life of the Taiwan society, he added.

Moreover, the US side has distorted facts and smeared China, which laid bare the former's clumsy tactics and vicious attempts, as well as the dirty political deal behind its collusion with Taiwan, Ma said.

BCI's boycott against Xinjiang cotton groundless, politically motivated, says Pakistani expert

ISLAMABAD

THE accusation of "forced labor" in China's Xinjiang region and the boycott against the region's cotton by the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) are groundless and politically motivated, a Pakistani expert has said.

The targeted propaganda of the BCI deliberately ignored the ground facts and realities, Chairman of the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association Jassu Mal, who has been to Xinjiang several times and witnessed the advancement and modernization of the region's cotton industry, told Xinhua in a recent interview.

"The organization has not proven its mettle through detailed research work," he said, adding that his field examination has visibly demonstrated that high-standard international procedures are being followed in Xinjiang cotton produc-

tion, which has been highly mechanized, reducing the need of laborers greatly to cut costs.

One thing seems to be obvious through evidences that the BCI has been used by anti-China forces to malign and suppress China, he said.

As China is a major cotton producer in the world, the entire campaign seems to have some political and economic agenda, the chairman said, adding that the mentioning of Xinjiang region is just an excuse for finding ways to propagate misinformation against China's growing cotton industry.

The rapid development of China's textile industry has prompted many in the West to raise their eyebrows, and the recent boycott by several international brands speaks volumes for the nervousness of Western countries, he said.

"Such a campaign, under the pretext of human rights viola-



A cotton picking machine moves in a cotton field in Dolatbag Town of Bachu County, northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, Oct. 30, 2018. (Xinhua)

tion, will only make lives difficult for the people in the region and ultimately harm international trade and businesses," Mal said. Fair competition, rather than defamation cam-

paigns and blame games, can ensure benefits for all stakeholders, he said.

In Mal's eyes, the BCI is not so authoritative and does not have much influence in

Pakistan. In Pakistan, the practices defined by the organization, including training of local farmers, are largely not implemented, he said.

Xinhua

WHO: European virus vaccine campaign 'unacceptably slow'

PARIS

EUROPE'S rollout of vaccinations against COVID-19 is "unacceptably slow," the World Health Organization's European head said on Thursday, raising concern that delays in giving shots could prolong the pandemic as cases of variants spread.

Only 10 percent of the region's population have received one vaccine dose, and 4 percent have completed a full course, Hans Kluge said.

Europe was slower than Britain and the United States, not only to order vaccines last year from companies but also in approving them. Even once they



A health worker administers a dose of the BioNTech/Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at a vaccination clinic set up inside the Derby Arena at Pride Park in Derby, Derbyshire on March 31, 2021. (AFP)

were approved by the bloc, rates of vaccinations there have largely trailed behind British and US efforts.

Europe's medicines regulator reiterated its backing of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine, say-

ing no particular group of age, sex or a previous medical history was especially susceptible to blood clotting after receiving the shot. However, while repeating that the vaccine's benefits outweigh risks, it cautioned

that people should be aware of the "remote possibility" of rare blood clots occurring, and must seek immediate medical attention in case of symptoms.

"A causal link with the vaccine is not proven, but is possible and further analysis is continuing," the European Medicines Agency (EMA) said in a statement.

AstraZeneca delivered 29.8 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine to EU member states in the first quarter (Q1) of 2021, "a few doses away" from the promised 30 million, a European Commission spokesperson said on Wednesday.

EU member states have received 67.5 million doses from

BioNTech-Pfizer and 9.8 million doses from Moderna, said European Commission deputy chief spokesperson Dana Spi-

nant. The European Union has asked India to allow it to buy 10 million doses of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine from Serum Institute of India, a government official told Reuters, the latest sign of growing pressure on Delhi to export more of its production to other countries.

The EU wants the doses from Serum, the world's largest vaccine maker, to offset supply shortfalls from AstraZeneca's European plants and speed up the bloc's vaccine roll-out.

Agencies

Courtyard economy bears sweet fruits in increasing income in SW China's Cangxi county

CANGXI county, Guangyuan city, southwest China's Sichuan province, has achieved notable results in increasing residents' income by promoting courtyard economy.

Since the 1980s, the county has been encouraging villagers to build small orchards, tea gardens, and fishponds, and plant various commercial crops on idle lands around their houses, which is known as the courtyard economy.

Local government has taken many measures to ensure that every household has the infrastructure facilities needed for developing courtyard economy, such as a sanitary water well, a small pool with a capacity of over 100 cubic meters, and a hardened road to the house.

In addition, Cangxi county has also promoted the construction of methane-generating pits and the upgrading of such facilities as livestock pens, toilets, and kitchens, laying a solid foundation for making the most of the space around people's houses to plant fruits and vegetables while creating a pleasant living environment featuring birds' twitter and fragrance of flowers.

Many rural households in Cangxi county have planted kiwi fruits on idle lands around their houses, with the combined planting area once reaching 5,000 mu (about 333.33 hectares), according to reliable statistics.

Besides kiwi fruits, people have also grown snow pear and walnut trees, as well as characteristic crops like Chinese medicinal plants,

eventually making every village and each household have its own featured product or business.

So far, a total of 100,000 households in Cangxi county have engaged in courtyard economy, which increases the per capita annual income of the once-impoorished families by more than 5,500 yuan (\$847).

"I see over 20 kilograms more walnuts in each of our trees next year," Wang Libang, a resident in Changgang village, Yuedong township of Cangxi county, said happily while pruning walnut trees in his courtyard.

Courtyard economy is a great choice for Wang, as the man in his sixties is no longer suitable to become a migrant worker.

"Don't you think less of the small pieces of

land around people's houses," said Yang Jiarong, secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) branch of Linlang village, Hedi township of Cangxi county.

Some 50 percent of the once-impoorished households in Linlang village have planted kiwi fruit trees near their houses, Yang said, explaining that these trees could help increase the annual income of each of these households by 3,000 to 5,000 yuan, if calculated on the assumption that each family has grown 0.5 mu of kiwi fruits on average around their houses.

Zhang Fuquan, a once-impoorished resident in Zhiyuan village, Bamiao township of Cangxi county, thinks it a great idea to build a duck shed on the idle land in front of his house and have it connected with a methane-gener-

ating pit. "It's both convenient and sanitary," he said.

Zhang has built an environmentally-friendly duck shed covering an area of nearly 300 square meters with the help of a poverty-relief official named Chen Jichuan, who has also donated 150 ducklings to Zhang and invited technicians to provide the resident with guidance on duck farming.

"The feces in my duck shed can be directly disposed with the methane-generating facility constructed by the government. It's easy and convenient for me to take care of the ducks as the shed is located near my home," said Zhang, who now enjoys a more than 10,000 yuan increase in his annual income by raising ducks.

People's Daily

Biden unveils major infrastructure plan amid opposition to tax hike

WASHINGTON

U.S. President Joe Biden on Wednesday unveiled a 2-trillion-U.S.-dollar infrastructure plan, touting it as a "once-in-a-generation" investment in America and proposing a corporate tax hike to offset the cost.

The plan, widely welcomed by Democrats, is expected to face a tough fight in Congress, as Republicans have flatly rejected any increase in taxes. Meanwhile, concerns over mounting debt and inflationary risks are expected to further complicate the plan's prospects.

REVIVING "CRUMBLING" INFRASTRUCTURE

The proposal, dubbed the American Jobs Plan, includes 621 billion dollars to improve transportation infrastructure, such as roads, bridges and airports, with 174 billion dollars allocated to electric vehicles.

The plan also see 300 billion dollars earmarked to revitalize American manufacturers and small businesses, 213 billion for housing, 180 billion to boost the country's research and development, 100 billion in high-speed broadband, and 100 billion to modernize schools and early learning facilities.

"What I am proposing is a one time capital investment of roughly 2 trillion dollars in America's future, spread largely over eight years," Biden said in a speech in Pittsburgh.

Pennsylvania, where he kicked off his presidential campaign. "It will generate historic job growth, historic economic growth, help businesses to compete internationally, create more revenue as well," Biden said, noting that among the highest-value investments would be in America's "crumbling" infrastructure.

According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, the country's infrastructure scores a C minus, with 43 percent of public roadways in poor or mediocre condition, and 7.5 percent of the nation's bridges "structurally deficient."

"Unfortunately, we have been underinvesting in our infrastructure for decades. In 2019, the U.S. spent just 2.5 percent of our GDP on infrastructure, down from 4.2 percent in the 1930s," said the organization, adding that the COVID-19 pandemic has made a difficult situation "worse."

Jeffrey Sachs, economics professor at Columbia University and a senior UN advisor, recently told Xinhua that he strongly supports the long-term pack-



US President Joe Biden

age, as investing in infrastructure builds "the base of the economy." "The United States hasn't done this properly in a long time ... The United States needs to focus on infrastructure investment," he said.

TAX HIKE COULD BE TOUGH SELL

To offset the plan's massive costs, Biden proposed increasing the corporate income tax rate to 28 percent, up from the current 21 percent, attempting to partially reverse the tax cuts under the Donald Trump administration.

The tax reform proposal will also raise the global minimum tax on U.S. multinational corporations from 10.5 percent to 21 percent, in a bid to discourage offshoring and create incentives for investment in the United States.

Biden's proposal is widely welcomed by Democrats, with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Elizabeth Warren quickly voicing support. Republicans lashed out at the plan.

"Rolling back Right to Work laws. Imposing the biggest new tax

hikes in a generation -- killing jobs and slowing wage growth when workers need a fast recovery," said Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell in a tweet, who recently said that he thinks no Republican would vote in favor of raising taxes to pay for the infrastructure plan.

Within the Democratic Party, consensus is not yet in place. Joe Manchin of West Virginia has indicated support for raising the corporate tax rate to 25 percent, while Democrat Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez argued that the 2-trillion-dollar plan is "not nearly enough."

"Just as difficult as financing the project will be garnering political support in a U.S. Senate that is controlled by Democrats under a 50-50 split," Joseph Brusuelas, chief economist at accounting and consulting firm RSM US LLP, wrote in an analysis.

Brusuelas said without any significant GOP support, Democrats will need to use budget reconciliation to move the legislation, a procedure adopted to pass the 1.9-trillion-dollar relief bill in the Senate with a simple majority, instead of the 60-vote threshold.

Xinhua

Ambassador hopeful espionage incident will not affect Russia-Italy relations

ROME

RUSSIAN Ambassador to Rome Sergei Razov is hopeful that the recent espionage scandal will not affect relations between the two countries, as he himself said in an interview with Italy's Rai News24 TV channel yesterday.

"The incident causes deep regret, as does Italy's decision to declare two employees of the Russian military attache's office personae non grata.

They have departed for their home country. As I pointed out at a meeting with senior officials at the Italian Foreign Ministry, we expect that the incident won't have a negative impact on the generally constructive relations between our countries.

We need to look at the bigger picture. Our multifaceted relations aren't restricted to some unpleasant episodes," the envoy noted.

On Tuesday night, the special forces unit of the Italian Carabinieri detained an Italian Defense Ministry official and an employee of the Russian military attache's office during an alleged handover of classified documents in return for cash.

On Wednesday, the Italian Foreign Ministry summoned the Russian ambassador and announced its decision to expel two employees of the Russian embassy in Rome.

The Italian officer has been charged with espionage and can face up to 20 years in prison if found guilty.

Russia registers world's first anti-coronavirus vaccine for animals

MOSCOW

THE world's first animal vaccine against COVID-19, developed by scientists of the Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance (Rosselkhoznadzor), has been registered in Russia, the watchdog's deputy head Konstantin Savenkov has told reporters.

"Carnivak-Cov, a sorbate inactivated vaccine against the coronavirus infection (COVID-19) for carnivorous animals, developed by Rosselkhoznadzor's Federal Center for Animal Health, has been regis-

tered in Russia. So far, it is the world's first and only product for preventing COVID-19 in animals," he said.

The mass production of the world's first animal vaccine against COVID-19 may be launched as early as in April, on the basis of the country's largest platform to produce veterinary products - the Federal Center for Animal Health, the official said.

According to Savenkov, clinical trials of Carnivak began last October, and involved dogs, cats, foxes and Arctic foxes, minks and other animals.

"The outcome of the research gives us grounds to conclude that the vac-

cine is safe and has strong immunogenic effect, because all vaccinated animals developed antibodies to novel coronavirus in 100%.

According to Savenkov, Russian scientists continue their research in a bid to find out how long the vaccine's effect lasts.

"At present, it is estimated to last no less than six months," he said.

Other countries interested

Other countries have already shown interest in the anti-coronavirus vaccine for animals, developed by Russian scientists, Konstantin Saven-

kov has told reporters.

"As COVID-19 cases are registered in animals in many countries worldwide, purchases of the Federal Center for Animal Health's vaccine, are planned by domestic animal-breeding enterprises and commercial firms from Greece, Poland and Austria. Companies from the United States, Canada and Singapore have also demonstrated interest in Carnivak-Cov," he said.

According to the World Organization for Animal Health, certain animal species are susceptible to COVID-19. Cases of the disease have been regis-

tered in various animals all over the world. Every week, countries inform the World Organization for Animal Health about animal cases of COVID-19 on their territory. Last week, the organization received information about three such cases in Mexico and one in Brazil.

Besides, mass outbreaks of COVID-19 were earlier registered at fur farms. On November 4, 2020, Denmark's government made a decision to exterminate 17 mln minks for fears they might infect humans with the mutated coronavirus.

Agencies

Internet fuels innovation for China's film and television products

CHINA'S film and television industry has been deeply integrated with the internet in recent years. While online video platforms have become an important channel for the broadcasting of films and TV programs, film and television products also constitute a major part of the content on internet platforms.

The application of internet thinking and technologies is profoundly altering the forms of presentation, creative ideas and production practice of film and television art, and big data mining has proven effective in the development of film and television projects.

With the help of quantitative analysis of various types of big data, film and television makers are able to gain insights into the demands of the market, create a portrait of the target audience, determine the purpose and theme of products, optimize scripts, decide the style of images, music and editing, and find suitable directors and actors.

In The Longest Day in Chang'an, a famous web series in China, the actor playing the leading role "Zhang Xiaojing" was selected using artificial intelligence (AI) and big data based on compre-



Photo taken on August 21, 2019, shows visitors at the 28th Beijing International Radio, TV and Film Exhibition, which displayed 4K/8K ultra-high-definition production technology, 5G transmission and development trends, progress in media convergence, AI, cloud computing, big data and other new technologies.

hensive evaluation of the looks of actors, their resemblance to the role, as well as their performance in previous works.

Many online platforms have introduced intelligent script evaluation systems, which could automatically use a curve to show the development of the plots and conflicts in a script, and help verify whether the story has been appropriately designed.

It is a routine for many film and television projects to formulate targeted and differentiated communication strategies based on the characteristics of users.

Compared with television broadcasting, internet platforms can better recommend individualized film and television content to users according to their ages, genders, regions, and occupations.

Relevant technologies, which enable platforms to bring content to users with the help of algorithm and save users the trouble of searching for content, have been widely adopted, particularly by short video platforms.

Meanwhile, online film and television products are increasingly integrated with literature, education, e-commerce, cultural tourism,

games and other fields.

The Chinese web series Cross Fire showed close interactions with a game with the same name; Once Upon A Bite, a popular food docu-series in China, has joined hands with brands from various sectors; Chinese short video platforms, such as Douyin and Kuaishou, have added functions to their apps to allow users to place orders for goods while watching videos. Such crossover cooperation helps film and television industry further extend the industrial chain.

Internet platforms are also able to monitor the broadcasting of film and television content throughout the entire process and provide feedback for content reproduction.

Online platforms can collect data from users in real time, and adjust the content layout timely through the viewing behaviors of users such as searching, fast forwarding and rewinding, and adjusting the pace up or down, and their evaluation shown by bullet screens, ratings, comments, and forwarding.

Internet means and information technology are supposed to support, instead of

Egypt's Suez Canal says to seek over 1-bln-USD compensation for losses caused by stuck ship

CAIRO

EGYPT'S Suez Canal Authority (SCA) will seek over 1 billion U.S. dollars in compensation for the losses caused by the container ship Ever Given that was stuck in the waterway and blocking navigation for six days, SCA chairman Osama Rabie has said.

The compensation for the losses and damages "will reach over 1 billion dollars," Rabie told a local TV channel on Wednesday. "This is the right of the state and we will not give it up."

The 224,000-ton Panama-flagged ship was grounded in the vital Suez waterway on March 23 and was refloated six days later through the efforts of the SCA in cooperation with the Dutch firm Boskalis and its emergency response team SMIT Salvage hired by Ever Given's owner.

The SCA chairman explained that the compensation demanded by the authority is not only for the financial losses caused by six-day navigation suspen-



Rescue machines and vessels work at the site of the stuck container ship Ever Given on the Suez Canal, Egypt, March 28, 2021. (Xinhua)

sion, but includes the expenses of using dredgers and tugboats and the physical damage caused during the salvage process.

Egypt resumed navigation in the canal several hours after the stranded container ship was rescued early Monday, after which many of the 422 ships that have been kept waiting started to cross the waterway.

By Saturday at most, all 422 delayed ships will have crossed the Suez Canal, ac-

ording to Rabie.

Linking the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea, the Suez Canal is a major lifeline for global seaborne trade since it allows ships to travel between Europe and South Asia without navigating around Africa, thereby reducing the sea voyage distance between Europe and India by about 7,000 km.

Some 12 percent of the world trade volume passes through the man-made canal.

China adheres to people-centered philosophy in human rights protection

CHINA recently delivered a joint statement on behalf of more than 100 countries at the 46th Session of the UN Human Rights Council, calling for a people-centered global response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

China's perception of human rights addresses the common challenges faced by mankind, and mirrors the common aspiration and expectation of developing countries.

Taking people as the central focus is a distinctive feature of China's human rights protection. Human rights are the rights of people, and democracy represent the will of people. The ultimate goal of human rights protection is to safeguard the interests and rights of people, and their sense of fulfillment, happiness, and security shall be enhanced dur-

ing the process.

China has lifted 770 million rural residents out of poverty since the beginning of the reform and opening-up over 40 years ago when calculated in accordance with China's current poverty line, and all 98.99 million poor rural population have been taken out of poverty since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) held in 2012.

Such an achievement is remarkable because it has not only lifted Chinese people's income and livelihood, but also ensured their rights to education, medication

and housing. China has built the world's largest social security system that guarantees basic elderly care, healthcare, living allowance and housing. This is a miracle in the human history of poverty reduction, as well as a vital contribution to the progress of global human rights protection.

China's people-centered philosophy in its human rights protection has withstood tests. Facing the COVID-19 epidemic, the country carried out a life rescue mission on an unprecedented scale by mobilizing nationwide efforts, which not only safeguarded the rights to

life and health of its own citizens, but also deepened international anti-pandemic cooperation, enhanced information sharing and joint prevention, and made COVID-19 vaccines a public product that is accessible and affordable for global countries, especially developing countries.

Joining the global vaccine sharing scheme COVAX of the WHO, China promised to offer 10 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to meet the urgent need of developing countries. The country has provided and is providing COVID-19 vaccine aid free of charge to 69 devel-

oping countries in urgent need, while exporting vaccines to 43 countries.

Recently, China announced to donate 300,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines to UN peacekeepers, with priority given to the African mission area.

These concrete actions perfectly validate China's people-centered philosophy in its human rights protection.

The progress of global human rights protection calls for justice. Belarus delivered a joint speech on behalf of 71 countries at the 46th Session of the UN Human Rights Council to

support China's stance and measures on issues related to Hong Kong, and oppose western countries' interference in China's domestic affairs.

Cuba also delivered a joint statement on behalf of 64 countries at the session, to praise China's people-centered philosophy and support the country's stance on issues related to Xinjiang, calling on relevant parties to stop making unfounded allegations against China out of political motivations.

Besides, representatives from multiple developing countries made a joint statement, condemning relevant

western countries that seriously violated human rights by unilateral coercive measures, and urging them to immediately stop such measures.

Belarus, on behalf of multiple countries, pointed out that the UK and EU countries have systematic human rights violation, including hate speeches, whitewashing Nazism, racial discrimination, and violations against migrants, refugees and the indigenous.

These voices fully demonstrated that justice will always prevail on the issue of human rights.

Mankind shares a common goal to enjoy human rights. To respect and ensure human rights has always been a consistent stand of the CPC and Chinese government.

People's Daily

Yanga striker Sarpong, eyes sharpening goal scoring touch

BY CORRESPONDENT ISMAIL TANO

YANGA's forward, Michael Sarpong, has said that the only thing he likes to do on the field is scoring goals for his team.

The Ghanaian attacker is a new addition to the Yanga squad led by interim head coach, Juma Mwambusi, who took over from Cedric Kaze who was sacked on March 7.

Sarpong as recruited by Yanga from Rayon Sports of Rwanda and he signed a two-year deal to serve the Tanzanian side.

Yanga have scored a total of 36 goals in this season's Vodacom Premier League after playing 23 matches.

Sarpong has been involved in five goals, netting four goals and executing one assist.

He netted his first goal for his new side when it entertained Rukwa-based Prisons in this season's Premier League clash, which took place in Dar es Salaam.

The striker made no mistake with an opportunity which went his way in the first half, pouncing on a loose ball within Prisons' penalty box to notch the goal for his outfit.

Prisons went on to force a 1-1 draw with Yanga in the match, which was the opening clash of the campaign for both teams.

He went on to notch the all-important goal for Yanga in a league clash against Biashara United, which took place in Musoma and had Yanga posting 1-0 victory.

Sarpong also scored from the spot in the 'Dar es Salaam Derby' bringing together Yanga against Simba, which ended in 1-1 draw.

He was actively involved in one of Yanga's goals in the top flight clash against Kagera Sugar, which took place in Dar es Salaam and saw the latter notch 3-3 draw with the former.

He crossed in for midfielder, Deus Kaseke, to stab home from close range and notch an equalizer for the hosts.

The muscular attacker stated: "I like to score and help my team win. There is nothing else I like. If I fail to score then I will make room for my teammates."

"The truth is that the fans like to see the team win. I know even the coach has been telling us the same story. I hope I will do that in our future matches," he said.

Sarpong's memorable goal turns out to be the one he scored in the clash against Simba.

He effortlessly netted a spot kick that Yanga won when winger Tuisila Kisinda was brought down by Simba's center back, Joash Onyango, within the area.



Simba Queens' Bertha Omita (R), dribbles past Mwanza's Alliance Girls' defender when the sides met in this season's Mainland Women Premier League's tie, played at Benjamin Mkapa Stadium in Dar es Salaam recently. PHOTO: CORRESPONDENT

Kenyan female soccer player now excels at Simba Queens

BY CORRESPONDENT NASSIR NCHIMBI

BERTHA Omita, a Kenyan female soccer player, who plays for Simba Queens in the Mainland Tanzania Women's Premier League, has become a prominent player for the side, coached by Mussa Hassan 'Mgosi'.

Simba Queens are out to defend the domestic women top flight's title they lifted in the 2019/20 season.

Bertha signed for Simba Queens this season from Kenya's Kisumu All Starlets as high profile player in the Tanzanian club.

She is as well a member of Kenya's senior national women team, Harambee Starlets.

Bertha stated: "I was born in Kenya at the province called Siaya. I was raised by a single mother and I never got to know my father. I went to Awelo Primary School."

She noted: "In high school I attended Aluor Girls High School, did well and later went to Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology. I studied teaching and I got a degree in English and Literature."

How did you start playing soccer?

"As for football, I have always loved it since I was very young, when I was in school a friend of mine used to take me to their team called Wadadia."

"Fortunately, I played well and they said they were taking me and from that day on, God helped me a lot and I grew up playing every time I was given a chance and people grew to see me in matches and believe me."

"After that I went to play for clubs which include Oserian Ladies and Kisumu All Starlets in Kenya and then Simba Queens, so I have generally played four teams

so far."

Have you ever dreamed of playing in Tanzania?

"I never knew there would be a day when I would come to play in the Tanzanian league, so I can say it's just that God wants me to come here."

"I wanted to play professional football first until I got far in progress. But my other dream was to study to be a teacher and here as I speak with you, I am a secondary school teacher by profession."

Have any team ever followed you apart from Simba Queens?

"In Kenya there were a lot of teams that needed me, but in Tanzania Simba Queens and Baobab Queens sought to recruit me."

What is the difference between the Tanzanian women league and Kenya's?

"There is a difference because in Kenya most match-

es are very tough, but for Tanzania I can say Simba Queens, JKT Queens, Yanga Princesses and maybe Ruvuma Queens (are competent clubs) but also there is also a lot of competition."

How did your first match with Simba Queens come about?

"I was very happy because there were so many fans giving us support and that's the sweetest thing in football."

"On the 'Simba Day' the way the crowd was packed and the way people love football surprised me."

What are your expectations within Tanzania Women League?

"I don't think I've found a big difference because I knew Simba Queens were (previous season) champions and we have put a lot of work into the start of the season so as we can defend our championship," she concludes.



Yanga's forward, Michael Sarpong. PHOTO: COURTESY OF YANGA

Coach Francis Baraza keen on improving Kagera Sugar strikers

BY CORRESPONDENT ISMAIL TANO

KAGERA Sugar's head coach Francis Baraza has said that he is seeking to deal with his outfit's attacking force to regain edge before this season's Vodacom Premier League resumption.

Football and the remainder of sporting activities are currently on a recess in Tanzania given the country is observing 21 days of national mourning caused by the death of President, John Pombe Magufuli.

Baraza has replaced coach Mecky Mexime who was sacked Kagera Sugar due to the team's poor performance in the Premier League.

Mexime had last taken charge of Kagera Sugar in a Premier League's encounter with Azam FC at Kaitaba Stadium.

The hosts went down 2-1 to the visitors, with the outcome being a continuation of the poor performance showcased by the former.

Mexime is currently free, he has been linked with a move to Biashara United to take over from Baraza.

Baraza said he had looked at Kagera Sugar's strikers and saw the need to start with them to speed up the attacks.

He noted: "In order for a team to win they must take control and the the plan starts with the strikers as well as midfielders, whose job it is to create scoring chances for the strikers."

"The biggest thing I believe we can achieve is getting good results in our matches so, our fans can support us without having to worry about us," he said.

Kagera Sugar are placed 13th in the Premier League standing with 25 points after playing 24 matches.

The Bukoba-based squad's attacking line-up, which has, among others, leading goal scorer Yusuph Mhili, has scored 23 goals this season.

Kagera Sugar will come up against Mbeya City FC upon the domestic top flight's resumption at Sokoine Stadium in Mbeya on April 8.

Mtibwa Sugar will then entertain Kagera Sugar in the latter's next fixture in Morogoro on April 17.

Manula leaves future in Simba SC's hands amid Al Merreikh interest

BY CORRESPONDENT NASSIR NCHIMBI

SIMBA SC goalkeeper Aishi Manula has stated the club would have the last say on his future amid reported interest from Sudanese giants Al Merreikh.

Manula is an undisputable first-choice goalkeeper for the Msimbazi Street-based side but recent rumours around his future have generated a lot of questions on whether he can accept an offer from Simba's CAF Champions League Group A rivals.

The reports have indicated Al Merreikh are ready to acquire the shot stopper, who is as well turning out for Tanzania's national squad 'Taifa Stars'.

Al Merreikh have tabled \$8,000 as the sign-on fee but the goalkeeper has said he will not make a decision on the matter.

"The club knows about what might happen next but for me I know I have got a contract with Simba and it is them that will decide to sell me or not," he noted.

"As a player, I have to wait and hear what the club will say because they are the employers. If my contract was about to end, I would have made a decision but because it has not, it means the club will give way forward," Manula said.



Aishi Manula

He added: "They will decide whether the offer is good for them or not and they will also make a decision whether I will remain with them or not. I am here to work for Simba and ensure we achieve our targets. I am also here to make sure I achieve my individual set targets."

Manula also explained why they have been able to keep four clean sheets in the Champions League, even after playing tough matches

like the one against Egypt's Al Ahly in Dar es Salaam.

"As a team, we always work as hard as possible to ensure we do not concede a lot of goals. With the unity and the coach's guidance I think we have generally done a good job," he stressed.

He added: "So far we have achieved four clean sheets in the Champions League group phase. We are preparing for our game with the hope that we are going to defeat AS Vita Club."

"It is also my hope that we will keep a clean sheet so as to continue registering good records.

"My performance is improving day in and day out and this has been possible because I have been working hard and implementing what the coach wants me to. I cannot also forget to mention the team's effort generally as it has been quite good."

"The team has been pushing hard and that is also making me, even more, better as a goalkeeper. I cannot also fail to mention the coach because whatever he is teaching seems to be good and that is why the performance is also top-notch," the three-time Vodacom Premier League's golden gloves winner noted.

Simba will face Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)'s AS Vita Club tomorrow at home as the former look to seal a place in the last eight.

They remain unbeaten in Group A and will conclude the group matches against the 2019/20 CAF Champions League's winners, Al Ahly, whom they defeated 1-0 on match day three.

Simba have 10 points, three more than Al Ahly's tally while AS Vita are placed third with four points.

Al Merreikh are at the bottom having lost three games and posted draw in one.

Juve look to reboot Serie A title defence in Turin derby

MILAN

CRISTIANO Ronaldo returns to Serie A on Saturday with Juventus looking to reboot their title defence against struggling city rivals Torino.

Hopes of a 10th consecutive league title were rocked when Juventus fell 1-0 at home to lowly Benevento before the international break.

Juventus are third, 10 points adrift of leaders Inter Milan, with both teams having 11 games left to play this season.

Ronaldo returns from international duty where his fury at a winner ruled out against Serbia was followed by joy at scoring against Luxembourg.

The Portuguese striker will play his sixth Turin derby, which could be his last, amid speculation of an exit from Turin at the end of the season.

The 36-year-old, Serie A's top scorer this season, has scored three goals in his previous five derbies, but just once at Torino in his first season back in 2018. Just six points separate Juventus in third from seventh-placed Lazio in the race for elite European football.

The pressure is on coach Andrea Pirlo with defensive duo Leonardo Bonucci and Merih Demiral both testing positive for Covid-19 after international duty.

Goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon will not be available due to his one-match blasphemy ban.

Forward Paulo Dybala has recovered after nearly three months out with a knee injury, but there are suggestions he could be suspended as punishment for attending a lockdown gathering with Arthur Melo at the home of American teammate Weston McKennie.

Torino, one point above the relegation zone, have won just one of their last 29 Serie A matches against Juventus, and that was six years ago.

"Against Torino it will certainly be a battle, because both of us need points," warned Juventus winger Juan Cuadrado.

"The defeat to Benevento was very difficult to digest," the Colombian told Sky Sport.

"During the break we worked hard and put fuel in our legs to finish the season in the best possible way."

Inter Milan are back in action at midtable Bologna after their

match before the international break against Sassuolo was postponed because of a Covid-19 outbreak.

Antonio Conte's side are six points ahead of second-placed AC Milan, who take on 12th-placed Sampdoria.

Inter can count on the return of captain and goalkeeper Samir Handanovic from Covid while Bologna's Polish goalkeeper Lukasz Skorupski has tested positive.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic's AC Milan need to improve their home form to keep in the running for a first 'Scudetto' since 2011, having not won any of their last five games in all competitions at the San Siro.

Atalanta, in fourth, equal on points with Juventus, host 11th-placed Udinese looking to hold off Napoli, who are at home against basement club Crotona.

Roma, three points behind Napoli travel to eighth-placed Sassuolo, after losing two league games in a row for the first time this season.

Sassuolo will be without their Italian internationals, Gian Marco Ferrari, Manuel Locatelli, Domenico Berardi and Francesco Caputo, "as a precaution" despite their negative tests, after an outbreak on the Italy team.

One to watch: Giuseppe Iachini
Giuseppe Iachini returns to the Fiorentina bench just over four months after being replaced by former Italy coach Cesare Prandelli, who resigned a week ago citing the strain of current football. 'La Viola' are 14th, seven points above the relegation zone, before travelling to Genoa, who have not lost at home in eight games.

Key stats:

149 - Lazio striker Ciro Immobile's Serie A goals

23 - Ronaldo leads the Serie A scorers' chart

8 - Inter's league winning run

4 - Juventus' defeats this season

Fixtures (all times GMT):
Today

AC Milan v Sampdoria (1030),

Atalanta v Udinese, Benevento v Parma, Cagliari v Hellas Verona,

Genoa v Fiorentina, Lazio v Spezia, Napoli v Crotona, Sassuolo v Roma (all 1300), Torino v Juventus (1600), Bologna v Inter Milan (1845)

AFP

Battle for English Premier League top four heats up



Top-four battle: Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (left) and Leicester City boss Brendan Rodgers. (Agencies)

LONDON

MANCHESTER City already have one hand on the Premier League trophy but the battle for the top four is likely to go down to the wire as a clutch of clubs seek to join Europe's elite next season.

AFP Sport takes a look at the contenders as the 2020/21 campaign enters its final stretch, with nine games remaining for most teams.

The favourites

Manchester City, Manchester United, Leicester and Chelsea currently occupy the top four places in the English top-flight.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's United are eight points clear of fifth-placed West Ham and are on track to finish in the top two for only the second time since they were last champions in 2013.

United's run-in does not appear too tricky, although they still have to travel to Tottenham and host Liverpool. They also play top-four rivals Leicester at Old Trafford.

Leicester came agonisingly close to qualifying for the Champions League for only the second time in their history last season but missed out on the final day, beaten by United.

Brendan Rodgers' side, who last month beat United in the FA Cup quarter-finals, look more robust this year and are just one point behind the Red Devils.

Leicester face Manchester City this weekend before a run of kinder fixtures, but they will be keen to maintain a buffer, with a difficult set of matches to end the season -- against United, Chelsea and Spurs.

Chelsea, still unbeaten in all competitions since Thomas Tuchel took over from Frank

Lampard in January, are in fourth spot but have less margin for error and are also still involved in the FA Cup and Champions League.

Tuchel's side have been remarkably tight at the back, not conceding a single goal since February, but they have also lacked sharpness in front of goal.

They also face a challenging run-in, with consecutive matches against City, Arsenal and Leicester in May.

The challengers

Could West Ham do the unthinkable and join Europe's big guns next season?

David Moyes' men are in fifth place in the Premier League, just two points behind Chelsea, and aside from matches against Leicester and Chelsea, their fixture list looks relatively kind.

But the Hammers, who have been lifted by the loan signing of Manchester United forward Jesse Lingard, have taken just four points from their past four matches and must ensure they get back to winning ways away to Wolves on Monday.

Moyes' side finish their season with games against Brighton, West Brom and Southampton, all of whom are in the lower reaches of the table. Tottenham, who looked rank outsiders a few weeks ago, are just one point behind West Ham after four wins in five league games.

Manager Jose Mourinho remains under pressure after a season in which Spurs have flattered to deceive but a win against City in this month's League Cup final or a top-four finish would give him a huge boost.

The club's run-in looks relatively straightforward, with the exception of a match against

United, whom they beat 6-1 in October.

Champions Liverpool are desperate to salvage something from the wreckage of their title defence and they may be pleased they are not playing Arsenal at home on Saturday.

While Jurgen Klopp's men, currently five points behind Chelsea, have not won in the league at Anfield since December, their results on the road have been much better.

The outsiders

Everton are level on points with Liverpool and have a game in hand but they do not have the experience of their city rivals at the sharp end of the table and have not finished in the top four since 2005.

Manager Carlo Ancelotti last month talked about the club's Champions League dream but successive defeats to Chelsea and Burnley have damaged their hopes and they look unlikely to bridge the gap.

Arsenal are nine points behind Chelsea and are rank outsiders to return to the Champions League, where they last played in the 2016/17 season.

Fixtures Today

Chelsea v West Brom (1130 GMT), Leeds v Sheffield United (1400), Leicester v Manchester City (1630), Arsenal v Liverpool (1900)

Tomorrow

Southampton v Burnley (1100), Newcastle v Tottenham (1305), Aston Villa v Fulham (1530), Manchester United v Brighton (1830)

Monday

Everton v Crystal Palace (1700), Wolves v West Ham (1915)

AFP

Barca, Real Madrid begin Haaland transfer talks

MADRID

ERLING Haaland's father, Alf-Inge Haaland, and agent Mino Raiola held talks with Barcelona and Real Madrid on Thursday over a possible transfer for the superstar Borussia Dortmund forward.

Alf-Inge Haaland and Raiola flew into Barcelona on Thursday morning for a 2½-hour meeting with new Barca president Joan Laporta and the club's incoming director of football Mateu Alemany.

Sources told ESPN that the meeting was a first step to explore the viability of a deal, with talks in their very early stages. The pair then flew to Madrid, arriving at the city's Barajas Airport on Thursday afternoon and holding discussions with Real Madrid which went on into the evening.

Sources told ESPN that the meeting with Madrid was "friendly" and "like those we often hold regarding players."

Raiola and Haaland wanted to know more about Real Madrid's intentions and summer plans, while Florentino Perez wanted to hear first-hand details of the player's situation.

Sources said that, if Madrid decided to move for the Norwegian, they felt they would have the edge over Barca given their relationship with Borussia Dortmund and more



Erling Haaland

favourable financial situation.

Sources added that Dortmund are aware of the meeting between Haaland's representatives and it is expected further clubs will seek to discuss a transfer with the player. Haaland held similar rounds of talks with interested clubs, including Manchester United, before he left FC Salzburg to join Dortmund in January 2020.

Dortmund sporting director Michael Zorc said later on Thursday: "I don't have anything against [Mino Raiola and Alf-Inge Haaland] taking in the sun on the Mediterranean. We've talked and our stance is quite clear. I am very, very relaxed in that matter because I know what we want."

Haaland, 20, has scored 49 goals in 49 games for Borussia Dortmund since signing for the Bundesliga club. A release clause in his contract does not come into effect until 2022, and ESPN has reported that Dortmund would accept €180m this summer.

Sources told ESPN that Laporta believes Haaland would be a strategic signing that would strengthen Barca for a decade or more, as well as avoiding his joining a rival club. However, there is an acceptance that Barca's financial situation will make agreeing a deal difficult, as will competition from Real Madrid and Manchester City.

Barca are aware that a move to Madrid would be attractive to Haaland, while City's economic firepower makes them serious contenders. Laporta and super-agent Raiola have a long-standing relationship, but these talks are the first official contact over a potential deal for Haaland. Sources said the role of Barcelona technical secretary Ramon Planes -- whom Raiola knows and trusts -- could also be key.

Barca considered a move for Haaland in 2020, before a bid was ruled out by then-sporting director Eric Abidal. The club are investigating lines of credit that would make a deal possible, just as they did for the

signing of Antoine Griezmann in 2019.

Sources told ESPN that Haaland's profile as a young, up-and-coming talent suits that of Ronald Koeman's new Barcelona team. His signing would also be viewed as a major statement and a powerful argument to convince Lionel Messi to renew his contract, which expires this summer.

Barca are also working on reducing their wage bill -- even more so if Messi decides to stay -- and would need to move on high earners such as Philippe Coutinho, Samuel Umtiti and even Griezmann.

Meanwhile, Sergio Ramos will miss Real Madrid's El Clasico clash with Barcelona and both legs of their Champions League quarterfinal with Liverpool, sources have told ESPN, after suffering a calf muscle injury on international duty with Spain.

Ramos became aware of the issue on Wednesday after coming on as an 86th

minute substitute in Spain's 3-1 World Cup qualifying win over Kosovo in Seville.

"After tests carried out on our captain Sergio Ramos by Real Madrid's medical services, he has been diagnosed with an injury in the calf muscle of his left leg," Real Madrid said in a statement on Thursday.

Madrid host Liverpool in the first leg of their quarterfinal tie on April 6, before playing Barca on April 10, and then travelling for the return leg with Liverpool on April 14.

Sources have told ESPN that there was a feeling of anger and resignation at the club after losing Ramos, 35, at such a crucial stage of the season, while the player himself is "very upset" at the news.

"The truth is that I've had a tough few weeks," Ramos said in a message published on Instagram. "Surgery is always a sporting and emotional break.

Luckily, for a few days now I've been feeling better, but in football as in life, bad luck has a part to play too.

"Yesterday, after the match, I stayed on to train on the pitch and I felt a shooting pain in my left calf. I've undergone tests today, and it's been confirmed that I have a muscular injury.

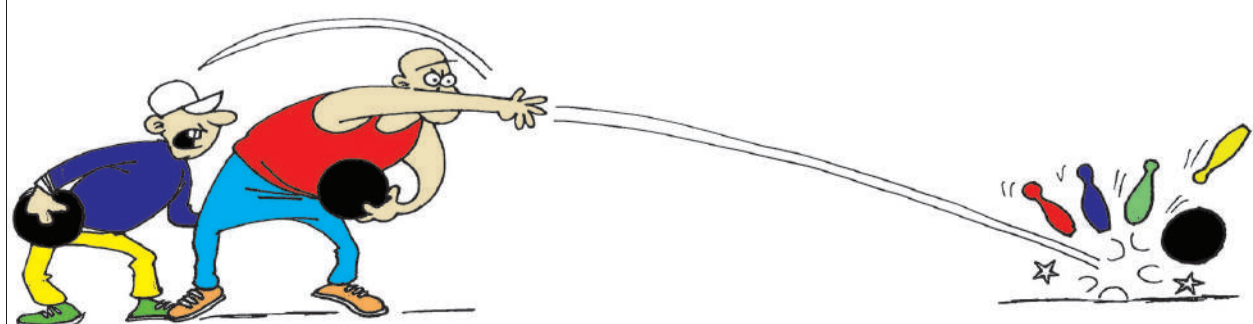
"If there's anything that hurts me, it's not being able to help the team in these demanding games in which the season is at stake... All I can do is speak frankly, work hard and support the team."

Ramos had only just returned from injury, undergoing surgery on the meniscus of his right knee on Feb. 6 and recovering in time to take part in the second leg of Real Madrid's round-of-16 Champions League elimination of Atalanta.

His contract at the Bernabeu expires in June, and an agreement is yet to be reached on an extension.

ESP

Gwiji by David Chikoko



SPORT

Battle for English Premier League top four heats up

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT, PAGE 19

Yanga coach now delighted by presence of Sarpong, Yacouba

By Correspondent Ismail Tano

JUMA Mwambusi, Yanga's interim head coach, says that the presence of two of his outfit's strikers, Michael Sarpong and Yacouba Songne, in training gives him the strength to see to it the team perform well in coming Vodacom Premier League and Federation Cup fixtures.

Ghanaian Sarpong has scored four goals and executed one assist while Burkinabe Yacouba has scored four goals and executed four assists, making a total of eight out of 36 goals after 23 appearances.

Yanga have already started training at the Kigamboni camp in Dar es Salaam to prepare for the Premier League as well as Federation Cup assignments.

Mwambusi said that his players have started to improve, a situation which gives him belief they will do well.

"The task at hand is to see how we can be strong. I have seen players including Sarpong, Yacouba and others are happy for me and the team as a whole," he said.

Mwambusi has continued taking charge of the side, since his appointment as Yanga's interim head coach.

The tactician has taken over the reins of Burundian Cedric Kaze who was sacked by

the club on March 7, 2021 for what was described as the team's poor performance.

In Yanga's six Premier League matches in the second round, Kaze witnessed the outfit notch draw in four, victory in one and loss in the other.

The domestic top flight leaders went down 2-1 to Coastal Union to post their first loss this season.

Mwambusi has been dividing Yanga players into three groups in the team's training, in which one group is tasked with defending, one group is creating chances and the other is tasked with finding back of the net.

The team's central defender, Dickson Job, said that Mwambusi has been improving the team's balance by practicing the defending and scoring techniques, an exercise that has been put into practice well by the players.

"Basically our camp is going on very well, because the coach has been emphasizing defending, scoring goals and making the most of chances whenever they come our way, we have been working on them regularly and giving positive results," the defender stated.

Yanga are training at the Avic Town camp in Kigamboni, a place which serves as the squad's training camp for the rest of the season.

Onyango wins Simba SC's best player prize for March

By Correspondent Nassir Nchimbi

KENYAN defender Joash Onyango has been voted as Simba SC fans' player of the month for March.

The former Kenya's Gor Mahia player becomes Simba's second recipient of the award which was launched by the Vodacom Premier League champions in February this year.

Mozambican winger, Luis Miquissone, had lifted the prize in the previous month.

The award, an initiative from the Msimbazi Street-based giants' fans, is sponsored by Emirate Aluminium Profile company and will see players being valued for their efforts every month.

Onyango secured the award after beating goalkeeper Aishi Manula and Miquissone in the votes cast by the fans.

According to a statement from Simba, which was obtained by The Guardian, a total of 25,719 votes were cast by the fans with Onyango posting 20,288.

Tanzanian keeper Manula, who is being linked with a transfer to Sudanese outfit Al Merreikh, came second after garnering 4,673 while Miquissone managed 758 to finish third.

With the award, Onyango, who has formed a strong partnership with Ivorian defender Paschal Wawa in the heart of the Simba SC defence, will walk away with

prize money of 1,000,000/-.

The award will be a huge boost to Onyango, who will be needed to help his team secure the draw they need to progress to the quarterfinals of this season's CAF Champions League for the second time in history, as they entertain AS Vita Club of Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) today.

The Msimbazi Street-based club will host the DRC side at Benjamin Mkapa Stadium, where the hosts are yet to lose a match in the competition in this campaign.

Simba are topping Group A of the showpiece with 10 points after beating AS Vita 1-0 in their first match in Kinshasa, returned home to beat Al Ahly of Egypt 1-0, travelled to Sudan where they got a 0-0 draw against Al Merreikh before returning home to hammer the Sudanese side 3-0.

A point for Simba against AS Vita will guarantee the former progression to the quarterfinals.

French tactician, Didier Gomes Da Rosa, insisted that Simba will however not target a draw but will go for a win against the DR Congo side.

Al Ahly are placed second in the group with seven points and they will as well face Al Merreikh in Khartoum today before their final group matches on April 9, which will see Simba travel to Cairo to face the CAF Champions League's defending champions while Al Merreikh will be up against AS Vita.

Simba SC head coach happy with duo's inclusion in squad



Simba SC's midfielder, Benard Morrison.

By Correspondent Ismail Tano

SIMBA SC's head coach, Didier Gomes, is delighted to start working with his team's two players who have been involved in three goals in this season's CAF Champions League organized by the Confederation of African Football (CAF).

Simba, who have played four matches, lead the showpiece's Group A with 10 points.

They have netted a total of five goals, two of which have been scored by midfielder Luis Miquissone of Mozambique, DR Congo's Chris Mugalu and Tanzanian Mohamed Hussein.

Out of the mentioned players, Gomes has started training with Mugalu who has scored two goals and midfielder Bernard Morrison who had one assist in the clash against Al Merreikh.

Morrison set up Hussein to notch the goal in the game, which ended with Simba cruising to 3-0 victory.

Mugalu scored Simba SC's first goal in the clash against AS Vita Club from the penalty spot in Kinshasa.

The Congolese attacker's second goal was scored against Al Merreikh at Benjamin Mkapa Stadium in Dar es Salaam as the scoreboard read Simba SC 3-0 Al Merreikh.

Gomes disclosed he is delighted with the presence of his players that include Mugalu and Morrison at the training camp as they have been in great form.

The tactician pointed out he is looking forward to as well use other players that were with their national teams in Africa Cup of Nations' qualifiers.

"The players have been doing well and everyday they have been working hard which is a good thing and their presence for me is a joy," he said.

While the coach continues to enjoy the presence of the players, Miquissone, Simba SC's attacking midfielder noted that what he enjoys on the field is seeing to it the team get positive results.

Miquissone is the first choice for the French tactician.

The midfielder lifted Simba's fans' best player prize for February.

He scored with a spectacular strike in the continental tournament's tie against Egypt's Al Ahly at Benjamin Mkapa Stadium.

The goal was scored from outside the 18 yards with a powerful shot that beat Al Ahly goalkeeper, Mohamed El Shenawy, finishing off a pass from midfielder Clatous Chama.

Simba will this afternoon host AS Vita in CAF Champions League's Group A clash.

When Simba locked horns with AS Vita in Kinshasa, the score board read AS Vita 0-1 Simba SC, with Mugalu netting the all-important goal.

Miquissone noted: "I like to see the team get good results, I like to make an effort all the time and all the time, impress our fans."

TFF bans Yanga official for five years

By Correspondent Nassir Nchimbi

THE Tanzania Football Federation (TFF) Ethics Committee yesterday issued a five-year ban on Yanga's vice-chairman, Fredrick Mwakalebela, for the official's inciteful statements.

The Jangwani Street-based outfit's top official had been accused of inciting the club's supporters and members against the TFF and its affiliate bodies.

After a hearing, the federation's relevant committee found Mwakalebela guilty and consequently banned him from engaging in football activities at domestic and international levels for a period of five years.

"Tanzania Football Federation Disciplinary Committee has banned Yanga's vice-chairman Mwakalebela from participating



Fredrick Mwakalebela

ments but the committee found Mwakalebela's defence insufficient and fined him without a ban.

"On February 19 2021, Mwakalebela, in a press conference, claimed that TFF and the Tanzania Premier League Board are biased against Yanga, he failed to substantiate such claims before the disciplinary committee," the statement added.

The TFF statement stated: "In the second count, on October 1, Mwakalebela claimed that he had a copy of the contract that [Bernard] Morrison's signed with Simba. He knew he was lying and his act was against the law.

The federation pointed out: "The Disciplinary Committee found him guilty on that count and consequently warned him not to repeat such a mistake in the next five years."

He has also been fined 2,000,000/- in accordance with article 6(1) of the TFF Regulations of 2013."

Mwakalebela's ban comes after Yanga's information officer, Hassan Bumbuli, was banned for three years.

"Yanga's information officer, Hassan Bumbuli, has been banned from engaging in football matters either in or outside the country for the next three years," the committee's statement, obtained by The Guardian, read at the time.

"The judgment has been made based on Article 78(8)(a) of the 2013 regulations. The defendant (Hassan Bumbuli), was accused of failing to obey an initial order that had been issued by the disciplinary committee."

"On September 28, 2020, the committee ordered Bumbuli to pay 5m/- and further ordered him not to commit another disciplinary issue within a period of two years. He never obeyed the order and did not appeal against the judgement."

The new orders and sanctions, in addition to Morrison's incomplete case, are expected to generate more friction between the federation and the record Mainland Premier League winners.

Flexibles by David Chikoko



in football activities for five years," a statement obtained by The Guardian read.

The TFF noted: "Mwakalebela has also been fined 5,000,000/- after he was found guilty of inciteful statements for the Yanga members and fans against football administration bodies in the country."

"The judgement has been delivered pursuant to article 73(4) of TFF Regulations of 2013." Ghanaian midfielder Bernard Morrison's transfer controversy pitting Yanga against Simba is also responsible for landing Mwakalebela in the TFF's bad book.

The official was charged for falsely claiming he had obtained a copy of Morrison's contract with Simba.

Morrison turned out for Yanga prior to crossing over to Simba in a move which brought about lot of complaints by Yanga.

Yanga are contesting Morrison's contract with Simba, saying it fell short of legal require-