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JPM swears in new Ethics czar, unveils Xmas wishes

● Likely to remain in capital for the festival

By Polycarp Machira, Dodoma



President Dr. John Magufuli hands working instruments to Justice Sivangilwa Mwangesi after he was sworn in as Ethics Commissioner at the Chamwino State House yesterday. Photo: State House

PRESIDENT John Magufuli yesterday wished Tanzanians a Merry Christmas as he prepared for the holiday with his family in Dodoma but urged civil servants to take at least three days off their desks and joint families for the Christian community's celebrations.

"Leaders and government officials are obliged to be with their families. It's not a sin to spend at least two, three or five days in your home with family," he said shortly after administering an oath of integrity to the new Ethics Commissioner, Judge Sivangilwa Mwangesi of the Court of Appeal at the Chamwino State House.

President Magufuli who often celebrates Christmas and New Year at his Chato home in Geita region, is this year in Dodoma and most likely spend the festival days in the capital.

He cautioned, however, that top officials need to have a backup plan for the end of the year's holidays if the circumstances so demand, referring to those who are detailed to finish up

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Police gun down suspected bandits

● Two police intelligence officers arrested for fraud

By Guardian Correspondent, Arusha

POLICE in Arusha Region have killed two gang members while two officials of the force are being held over fraud allegations. Regional Police Commander Salum Hamduni said here yesterday that the bandits were killed in gunfire exchange with the police on the night of December 23.

The arrested police officers belong to the police intelligence unit in Dodoma, and are alleged to have illegally secured some 30m/- from one minerals dealer here. RPC Hamduni noted that one of

“The police are determined to ensure the safety and security of people and their properties throughout the festive season”

gangsters, Joseph Bernard (24), had stated in an earlier arrest that the gang has been involved in a number of crimes in the city. Bernard also agreed to name his accomplices and revealed their plan to invade an M-Pesa outlet at Sakina area, on the northern outskirts of the city.

After interrogation, the suspect attempted to escape from police hands and gave a sign to his accomplices that there were police officers around the area, the RPC indicated.

The group of criminals immediately started to shoot at police officers who responded and injured the two bandits who died as they were being taken to hospital. Police are yet to identify the other bandit whose age is likely to be slightly lower than or around 34 years.

The two bodies are being preserved at the Mount Meru Referral hospital, he said, elaborating that the police recovered a shotgun and two pistols, a Browning No. A080455-07 loaded with four bullets and No. CZ75P-07 loaded with five bullets.

The arrested police officers are Gaspar Paulo and another identified just as Mushi,

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PM urges investments in ICT skills among youths

By Guardian Reporter

PRIME Minister Kassim Majaliwa (pictured) has appealed to Tanzanians to properly utilize Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in their production and services provision in various sectors in order speed up the country's economic growth,

reduce poverty and increase employment opportunities.

Presenting awards to winners of an ICT Competition organized by the giant Huawei mobile phone manufacturing firm, he said the government intends to build communication network in many more areas to increase communication services.

Current coverage stands at 45 per cent and this needs to rise to 80 per cent by 2025, he told the audience, where Tanzania grabbed second spot globally and the first in sub-Saharan Africa for extension of coverage and accessibility of Huawei broadband products.

In order to attain set development goals, the government will give priority to innovation and research as well as registering ICT service providers

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TOSCI closes down 25 fake seeds shops

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbeya

THE Tanzania Official Seed Certification Institute (TOSCI) has closed down 25 shops selling seeds in Mbeya and Songwe regions for operating illegally.

TOSCI officials in the Southern Highlands zone conducted an operation on Thursday last week to inspect seeds selling points



to ensure that farmers buy genuine farm inputs during the ongoing farming season.

The closed shops were not registered, thus violating the Seeds Act, No. 18 of 2003.

Peter Nassari, a senior TOSCI official, said that during the crackdown, around 200 shops selling seeds were inspected, where some shops were selling seeds illegally imported from different countries.

TOSCI is responsible for certification and promotion of quality agricultural seeds produced or imported into the country for sale, to safeguard farming

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Communications and Information Technology minister Dr Faustine Nduguile exchanges greeting with Chinese ambassador to Tanzania Wang Ke at awards giving ceremony to winners of information technology which Tanzania emerged the first winner in Africa and second position in the world. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

JPM swears in new Ethics czar, unveils Xmas wishes

FROM PAGE 1

some urgent tasks, including city, municipal and town council directors.

"Except for leaders prohibited by the Prime Minister to leave their desks pending completion of classroom construction, other leaders can go on holiday if they can assign subordinates to the tasks," he said amid cheers.

Regional and district commissioners, division secretaries and teachers were not held from having their Xmas, he said.

The prime minister, Kassim Majaliwa ordered officials in charge of coordinating

construction of classrooms in regions that had reported high shortage of classrooms not to leave their duty stations for festivals.

The president similarly directed public officials, numbering 15,000 who are required to fill in ethics declaration forms to do so before December 30, to comply with the precepts of the law.

Concerned public official must do so as quickly as possible, he said, noting that this is why he had appointed the new Commissioner for Ethics to fill the vacancy left by the late Judge Harold Nsekela.

Many civil servants are yet to fill in and submit the forms including himself, he stated, vowing that he

would do so before the deadline.

Stressing confidentiality when submitting the forms, he said that the forms are now available online. "It is better for civil servants to download the forms and fill them, but they must submit the papers to the respective authorities instead of scanning and uploading them," he specified.

Deogratius Ndejemi, the Deputy Minister of State in the President's Office (Public Service Management and Good Governance) said that out of more than 15,000 servants, around 92 per cent of them had already filled the forms.

"The late Commissioner Nsekela did a good job of pushing

public servants to fill the wealth declaration forms. It is your (Mwangesi) task now to evaluate the value of the wealth," he told the gathering, addressing the new commissioner.

The president urged the Ethics Commission to abandon the submission of ethics forms electronically in order to prevent content leakages and instead the forms should be obtained from the commission's website, filled manually and submitted physically. Original copies need to be handed to the commission.

The new commissioner must continue with the good work done by his late predecessor Harold Nsekela, the president underlined.

Travellers stranded as queue to SA-Zimbabwe border gets longer

MUSINA, South Africa

A long traffic queue on the South African side stretching up to 15 kilometres between the Beitbridge Border Post and the Musina central business district is quite a sight.

Frustrated and exhausted travellers heading to Zimbabwe get out of their cars and buses, and stand on the roadside under trees, sheltered from the scorching Limpopo sun as they breathe in the fresh air.

Hawkers pace up and down selling water and food at inflated prices to cash in on the desperate travellers, most of whom are reluctant to leave behind their goods or vehicles to dash into Musina town to buy food.

Amid the exhausted travellers, a woman collapsed and died.

Some motorists say they have been in the queue for up to four days, while others are coming from as far as Cape Town as the queue continues to stretch longer each passing day.

Most fear that they will spend Christmas Day stranded at the border.

"I am thinking of going back to Bloemfontein where I am coming from," says Gerald Motsi, a Zimbabwean national who is travelling to Harare for the holidays.

"I have been here for the past two days and with the way things are, I don't see our bus crossing the border before Christmas. Under normal circumstances, I would have arrived in Harare yesterday. I'm tired and being here is now costly because everyone is buying food every day."

The travellers include those in transit to Zambia and Malawi.

A 10pm curfew imposed by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa on December 15 as part of stringent lockdown measures following a coronavirus

second wave is said to be the main cause of the delay in crossing the border.

The curfew is also affecting those travelling from Zimbabwe although longer queues are on the South African side.

The Beitbridge border is normally a 24-hour port of entry on both sides of the countries but the South African end shuts its doors to private vehicles, buses and pedestrians at 10pm.

Only freight trucks and commercial vehicles are allowed to pass through after curfew.

Musina is a town notorious for travellers falling victim to muggings but Director of Communications Services at Limpopo Department of Transport & Community Safety says Matome Moremi-Tauetsoala some plans are in place to reduce criminal incidences on the parked vehicles.

"We are aware of the pile-up at the Beitbridge and our team from South Africa Police Services and traffic have re-strategised their plans and they will put them into action," Mr Moremi-Tauetsoala said on state-owned SABC News.

"The matter will be addressed and also the Minister of Home Affairs will be making an announcement that will also enhance the plans that we have now. We are calling on motorists to be patient with each other in the meantime."

While there have been several reported cases of robberies in the queues and there are also health concerns due to lack of ablution facilities on the highway which has seen people relieving themselves in the bushes on the roadside.

The biggest worry in this traffic congestion is the spread of the coronavirus as people can be seen not observing health protocols like social distancing, masking up and sanitising their hands.

Police gun down suspected bandits

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he said, noting that investigations on the matter are continuing and soon the suspects will be arraigned in court.

He urged parents to take care of their children and monitor their movements during the festival days, similarly appealing to road users and especially drivers to respect traffic rules so as to avoid

accidents.

The police had so far arrested 90 suspects during this week, including suspects of drug trafficking and robbers, conducting crimes using motorbikes.

"The police are determined to ensure the safety and security of people and their properties throughout the festive season," the RPC added.

TOSCI closes down 25 fake seeds shops

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community from poor and fake seeds from vendors of farm inputs.

The operation was thus meant to help farmers obtain better seeds to accelerate production and boost the country's economy through modernized agriculture, he said.

"We collected 150 kilograms of maize seeds that were illegally imported and circulated in local markets," he said, elaborating that the ongoing inspection will be extended to other zones.

The arrested agro-sector dealers will be punished in accordance with the law, as it requires agro-dealers acting contrary to the 2003 Seeds Act to be subjected to penalties of 0.5m/- to 1m/- or face imprisonment from three months to one year, he declared.

TOSCI quality seed controller Salehe Kombo said that apart from taking stringent measures against agro-dealers violating the law, the institute also provides education to farmers on how to identify genuine and fake seeds as well as the importance of using quality certified seeds.

"We also educate sellers of farm inputs because some of them violate the law out of ignorance," he specified, urging farmers to make sure they collect receipts and the packages are labeled by TOSCI.

With receipts, it becomes easier

for farmers to trace the seller or report the matter in TOSCI offices, he said.

Some interviewed farmers in Mbeya Region urged the public authorities to take stringent measures against agro-dealers working at variance with the set regulations since they have been contributing to farmers getting losses most farming seasons.

Joseph Nkembo, a farmer at Utengule village in Mbeya District, said farmers have usually taken risks buying fake seeds from unfaithful sellers. The government must intensify the war against counterfeit agricultural inputs as some of the seeds fail to germinate," he appealed.

Farmers have been purchasing counterfeit seeds for lack of knowledge on how to differentiate genuine and fake ones, and only start complaining after the planted seeds fail to germinate, he said.

TOSCI and the Tanzania Telecommunications Corporation (TTCL) have lately come up innovatively to address the problem by introducing mobile technology to enable farmers to check the seeds.

Farmers can check if seeds are certified by sending the code number to a receiver number with the certification body, identified as 15035 and receive the answer whether the sample is genuine or fake, the official intoned



Zanzibar President Dr Hussein Ali Mwinyi hands over Zanzibar urban services projects investigation report to Zanzibar Anti-Corruption and Economic Crimes Authority director Mussa Haji Alikwa for further action at the State House yesterday. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

PM urges investments in ICT skills among youths

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countrywide, he stated.

Inaugurating the 12th Parliament on November 13, President John Magufuli highlighted that in the current

world industrial revolution anchored in the communication sector, Tanzania must go in tandem with the pace of this main growth sector.

The premier urged local ICT firms to emulate Huawei by

investing more on the youth in order to enhance creative talent in communications and handling ICT equipment, asking participants and winners to work on experience gained in the contest and seek out opportunities

by emulating the role models they came across.

"I also congratulate Huawei for their huge contribution in strengthening the country's economy through ICT and other digital services," he added.



Water minister Jumaa Aweso participates in digging a water pipe channel at Golani Kimara Ward in Ubungo District which is under Dar es Salaam Water and Sanitation Authority. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

PS gives contractor 14 days to complete construction of dam

By Guardian Reporter

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Prof. Elisante Ole Gabriel has given 14 days to ZECO, contractors for the refurbishment of the Kimokuwa dam in Longido District, Arusha Region to complete the project work.

The dam was being revamped for livestock drinking as well as for other human activities.

Prof. Gabriel issued the directives yesterday during his inspection visit of the project and added:

"Originally the firm started well but of late it has become problematic as its work is not up to the standard resulting in many shortcomings in regard to the entire project."

He also called on the contractor to satisfy itself on the strength of the dam's walls because if the collapses, stern measures would be taken against him.

From the deficiencies, the PS gave the contractor 14 days to ensure he finalises the project, and that the Livestock and Fisheries deputy minister Pauline Gekul will not accept substandard the project.

Prof. Gabriel called on the local contractor to ensure he implements project professionally in order to be trusted and respected by the government, because, he said, all project money came from taxpayers.

Longido District Administrative Secretary R. Simba praised Prof Gabriel for his decision to inspect the project before being handed over and added that the shoddy work was also discovered by district authorities.

Simba also called on the contractor to work on all the shoddy work identified during the inspection so that herders and residents benefit from the dam.

Kimokuwa village chairman Kileli Olendere said the PS was right for not bringing the deputy minister to receive the dam as it was not complete, adding that the contractor must first work on the shoddy works identified.

ZECO director, Zephania Umbuli said he has received the directives given by the PS and pledged to work on them within the 14 days.

The refurbishment of the Kimokuwa dam costing 511.9m/- was supposed to be completed by November 25, this year, however the contractor asked for more time extension to December 10, this year.

Originally the firm started well but of late it has become problematic as its work is not up to the standard resulting in many shortcomings in regard to the entire project

Gekul directs councils to plough back 15 pc of revenue to livestock services

By Guardian Correspondent, Moshi

Livestock and Fisheries deputy minister, Pauline Gekul has directed all local council executive directors in the country to implement the 2002 Government Circular that called on them to plough back 15 per cent of their revenue collections from the livestock and fisheries sectors to improve them.

She issued the directive on

Wednesday this week when she addressing Mwangi District officials in Kilimanjaro Region during her visit to inspect livestock and fisheries activities.

Gekul said in 2002 the government issued the Circular, saying the money ploughed was to be used to improve livestock services including refurbishing of cattle dips, auctions management and purchase of animals' vaccines.

"Refer back to the 2002 Circular that is in force until 2025, as that will enable the improvement of livestock services in order to reap quality products from the livestock," she told the district directors.

She said many infrastructure serving the livestock were worn out and gave an example of cattle auctions, many which were conducted in open areas without any fencing, the situation

contributing to loss of local councils' revenues.

Gekul said the government's goals as for now was to ensure cattle dips are refurbished, auctions infrastructure are revamped and vaccines are available.

She also called on livestock officers to supervise well government levies to plug revenue losses, saying good revenues means better livestock services.

Central African Republic in turmoil ahead of elections

By Agencies

The Central African Republic is scheduled to hold presidential and parliamentary polls on December 27, 2020. But the government is accusing former president François Bozizé Yangouonda of attempting a coup, and rebel groups are reported to be marching on the capital.

The Rwandan government has sent troops to the country, and the CAR government says Russian troops have also arrived.

Bozizé was president from 2003 to 2013. He is listed as having risen in army ranks under Jean-Bedel Bokassa in the 1970s. After Bokassa's ouster, Bozizé served as defence minister from 1979 to 1981 and then as minister of information.

Bozizé took part in a failed 1982 coup against president Andre Kolingba, after which he fled the country. Years later, he served as army chief of staff under president Ange-Félix Patassé, and began a rebellion against him in 2001.

In March 2003, his forces captured the capital Bangui while Patassé was out of the country. Bozizé ushered in a transitional government, winning the 2005 and 2011 elections in the second and first rounds,

respectively.

In 2012, rebel forces accused him of not honouring peace agreements made during the CAR bush war in 2007.

Bozizé fled to Cameroon via the Democratic Republic of Congo and was sheltered by Cameroon President Paul Biya. On May 29, 2013 an

international arrest warrant was filed by the CAR against Bozizé, for murder, arbitrary arrests and torture.

In December 2020, the CAR Constitutional Court rejected the former president's request to run in the election, citing the charges brought against him.

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Dodoma energy capacity increasing - Dr Kalemani

By Polycarp Machira, Dodoma

DODOMA's energy capacity has increased by fourfold after the completion of construction of Zuzu substation, Energy minister Dr Medard Kalemani has announced.

The minister said the region's demand grew to 48megawatts in 2020 from only 15megawatts in 2017, nearly overlapping the power capacity which also stood at 48megawatts.

Tanzania Electric Supply Company Limited (Tanesco) embarked on an expansion project of the Zuzu substation to stabilise electricity supply in the capital city. The project initially involved the construction of 220kv power distribution line and transformers but later the government secured 64.8million US dollars from the African Development Bank to finance the country's backbone transmission investment project. The project is also projected to bring an additional 400kv power lines.

Dr Kalemani hailed Tanesco's executive for completing the projected eight days' prior the December 30th deadline. "I want the 400kv power line from Singida to Iringa to be completed by March next year," he said rejecting a proposal from Tanesco to complete the project by next June.

The minister said the energy available can now power industries and factories without interruptions. He directed Tanesco to speed up power connectivity in the region stressing that there is enough energy which needs consumers.

According to the minister, there has been a challenge in surveying new customers. He said it was high time for the power utility firm to purchase motorcycles for every surveyor to fast-track the process. "I want to emphasise that the Singida-Manyara project must be completed on time," he

said detailing that the project is expected to connect power Tanzania to Kenya and Zambia.

Dr Kalemani highlighted that with the government moving faster in implementing the Julius Nyerere Hydroelectric Power Project (JNHPP) the power distribution line must be read to supply and sell electricity to Kenya from Ethiopia and from Tanzania to Zambia.

The Backbone Transmission Investment project includes the construction of 670km Iringa-Dodoma-Singida-Shinyanga transmission line and four extended 220kv substations.

Eng Peter Kigadye, project coordinator said the transmission line has a capacity to transmit over 2000megawatts. He detailed that the Zuzu substation has already connected the State House in Chamwino and expected to connect the government city at Mtumba in the coming eight days.

"The centre now has the capacity to pump 248megawatts and it will be connecting Singida and Arusha regions," he said assuring the minister the job will be completed on time.

Eng Kigadye said construction work on the 414kms Singida-Arusha transmission line is now at 97 per cent complete and the company will soon embark on the construction of a 624kms section Iringa-Sumbawanga line. He said on Kenya side, the substation and transmission line has already been fixed.

Meanwhile, the minister announced that so far 10018 villages across the country have been connected to the power supply and that the remaining 2280 villages will be connected next year.

He ordered Tanesco to continue disconnecting customers who had not paid bills.

"I want to emphasise that the Singida-Manyara project must be completed on time"



Fishing director in the ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Magese Bulayi (2nd L) briefs deputy minister Pauline Gekul (C) about fishing gear deployed at Nyumba ya Mungu dam situated in Mwanga District, Kilimanjaro Region on Wednesday. Right is Simanjiro Member of Parliament Christopher Ole Sendeka. Photo: Correspondent Mbaraka Kambona

By Correspondent Marc Nkwame,

Arusha

ARUSHA-based prominent gemstone dealer, businessman and miner, Sammy Mollel, was reportedly kidnapped by unknown people who held him ransom, demanding millions.

Mollel who is the director of Arusha-based Gem and Rock Ventures, was captured by people allegedly from the police headquarters in Dodoma but so far nine people, including three police officers who have been arrested allegedly in connection with the incident.

The Arusha Regional Police Commander Salum Hamduni stated here investigation was underway with the suspects being questioned by police over alleged abduction of a prominent gemstone dealer on the 12th of

Arusha gemstones dealer allegedly kidnapped - RPC

December 2020.

They extorted from him cash money valued at 10 million/- which as far as reports go, he submitted to the kidnappers. Mollel is the President of the Tanzania Mineral Dealers Association (TAMIDA) who also owns a number of Tanzanite mining plots in Mirerani Hills of Simanjiro.

Police reports reveal that some of the suspects were three police officers who claimed to be from the intelligence squad based in Dodoma. There is also a gemstone dealer, Lucas Mdeme of Crown Lapidary company, who is suspected to be the mastermind

behind the racket.

Other suspects are Heavenlight Mushi a police officer from Kinondoni, Dar es Salaam; Bryton Murumbe a cop from Dodoma and Casper Paul, another police officer from Dodoma.

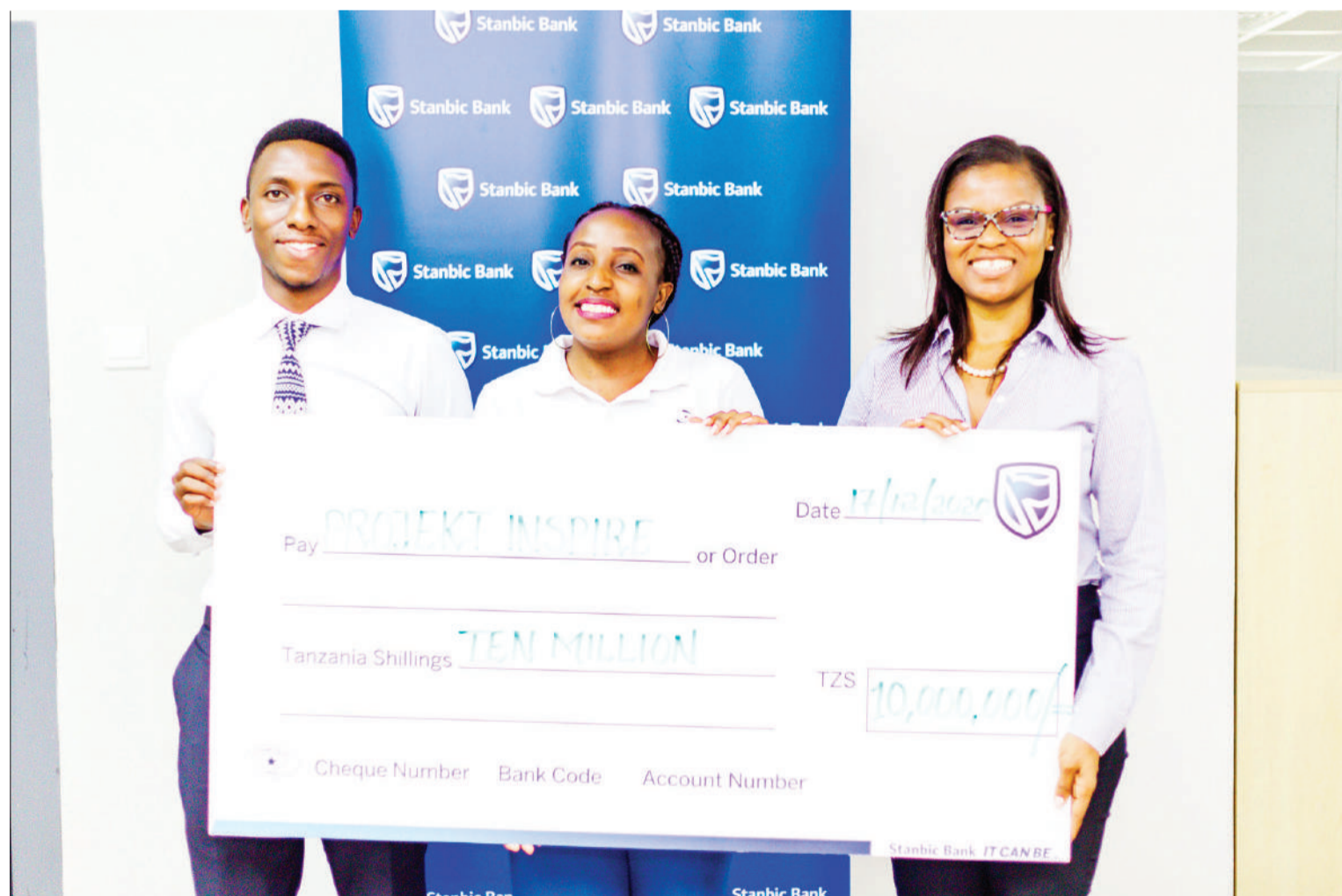
There is also Joseph Damian Chacha a businessman from Ilboru, Arusha, Shaaban Benson, a trader from Dodoma; Omary Alphonse Mario, a trader from Arusha; Nelson Lyimo and Lucas Michael Mdeme also a trader from Arusha.

Initially the abductors had demanded 30 million/- from their victim on December 12 when he was confronted by the nine

abductors at his Pangani street office in Arusha.

They were taking him to Dodoma but upon reaching Makuyuni on the way to Dodoma, they said they were ready to settle for third of the amount a sum of 10 million/- which he paid. The remaining sum of 20 million/- was to be settled on the 19th of December but all the nine people were arrested before they could show up for the loot.

The RPC said investigation into the whole issue was underway and that the file would be forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) for further legal measures.



Stanbic Bank head of marketing Desideria Mwegelo (R) hands over a dummy cheque worth 10m/- to the marketing manager Ronnie Godfrey (C) and administrative manager Issa Ipiana (L) of Projekt Inspire, as a grant to support the STEM to promote creativity and innovation in science subjects among students in secondary schools. This is in light with the bank's efforts to support the education sector and youth development in the country. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

AfDB approves US\$7million to transform Africa's mini-grid renewable investment

By Special Correspondent

THE African Development Bank (AfDB) has approved a US\$7m grant from the Sustainable Energy Fund for Africa (SEFA), for a new technical assistance initiative meeting the needs of the continent's fast-evolving renewable mini-grid industry.

The Africa Mini-Grid Market Acceleration Programme (AMAP), which aims to expand private mini-grid investment on the African continent, will include three core components: the implementation of a new and standardised framework for national-scale Mini-Grid Acceleration Programmes (MAPs) in four countries; the design and enhancement of financial de-risking solutions; and support for knowledge, innovation, and skills development activities, including the continuation of the Bank's Green Mini-Grid Help Desk website.

"Mini-grids are an integral and increasingly important feature of the energy access solution, not just in terms of providing lights to households, but also in ensuring that underserved populations have access to productive uses of energy to power inclusive and green economic growth. AMAP underscores the African Development Bank's commitment to strengthening Africa's mini-grids industry, which we see as a key driver for accelerated energy access, climate resilience, and a green post COVID-19 recovery," said Dr Kevin Kariuki, AfDB's vice-president for power, energy, climate and green growth.

AMAP's initial phase is expected to lead to 880,000 new electricity access connections providing

modern energy access to more than four million people; more than 80MW of renewable energy-based generation; the creation of 7,200 full-time jobs, of which 1,800 are anticipated to be held by women; reductions of more than 6.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e) in lifetime greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and the facilitation of an estimated \$650 million of public and private investments in mini-grids.

According to Aaron Leopold, CEO of the Africa Minigrad Developers Association, "To achieve SDG 7, the UN's target for universal energy access, the sector must be radically scaled up, and to do this, a holistic and broad-spectrum support programme informed by industry needs is required to bring governments, investors, and of course the mini-grid sector the kind of support that can facilitate fast and efficient progress. For these reasons, AMDA is excited to see AfDB working to bring mini-grid investments in Africa to the next level."

“Mini-grids are an integral and increasingly important feature of the energy access solution, not just in terms of providing lights to households

Ministry calls for improving provision of health services

By Guardian Reporter

Health Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children minister Dr Dorothy Gwajima has directed regional and district medical officers in the country to prioritise improving health service provision in remote areas.

Dr Gwajima issued the directive yesterday in Kibaha during her

one day tour in the Coast Region where she met the Regional Commissioner moments after she visited Tumbi hospital.

She issued the directive after a request from RC Evalist Ndikilo to improve provision of health services including drugs and medical staff to Mafia District hospital where residents are walking long distances in search of the services.

The minister said in her directive DMOs and RMOs are supposed to identify and list down all the areas facing challenges and address them.

She added that in addition she will visit Mafia Island to see for herself on the challenges so that her ministry can work on them.

Commenting on the overcrowding of patients at Mkuranga hospital, the minister

said she will soon visit the facility to ensure she sees for herself challenges facing the facility.

Earlier, RC Ndikilo told the minister that Mafia Island was facing a critical shortage of health workers and that there was a need for an urgent solution.

The RC also asked the minister to send therapists at Ikwiriri hospital which has all the facilities for the services delivery.

Government ready to collaborate with investors who abide by laws, says Waitara

By Guardian Reporter, Mwanza

Deputy Minister in the Vice President's Office (Union and Environment), Mwitwa Waitara has said that the government is ready to provide co-operation to industrial investors who follow the law.

He also said that it will continue to create a conducive environment for their activities, especially as they adhere to the Environment Act of 2004.

Waitara made the remarks yesterday when he visited and inspected Saji Packaging LTD factory which deals with production of plastic wrappings as well as recycling of plastic waste in Ilmela district in Mwanza.

Expressing satisfaction with the factory's operations, he said it has become environmental friendly due to its move to collect plastic waste that would be dumped on the street where it is used as raw material.

"The government's job is to make sure you adhere to the various rules, regulations and guidelines and if you do that we will not quarrel and we have come here to see you work well without affecting the environment and also provide employment.

The deputy minister also urged other industrialists to follow the rules and regulations to assist the government and when they get stuck in their activities to not hesitate to seek advice from relevant authorities including the National Environment Management Council (NEMC) and the Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS).

On his part, the Inspector from TBS Lake Zone, Nelson Mugema called on other manufacturers in the country to take action to verify the quality of products in

the organisation.

Mugema said that TBS has set various standards in food packaging and other products including breads that reach the end consumer.

He urged them to follow the procedure by submitting applications so that the packaging they produce can be verified in quality ready for market and environmental protection.

The director of the factory, Salim Khahi thanked the government through its executives who said that they have been giving him instructions and advice on the whole issue of environmental protection.

"Here in this factory the environment is well protected and does not produce dirt of any kind every plastic waste we collect here is recycled," explained Khahi.

It will be recalled that in June 2020 the government banned the use, transportation and production of plastic bags due to its environmental degradation.

Waitara's visit to the Lake Region accompanied by officials from the NEMC aims to review compliance with the Environment Act of 2004 and educate the public on the government's efforts to protect the environment.



Here in this factory the environment is well protected and does not produce dirt of any kind every plastic waste we collect here is recycled



Constitutional and Legal Affairs minister Dr. Mwigulu Nchemba (C) talks with judicial management members in Dar es Salaam on Wednesday. Left is deputy minister Geoffrey Mizengo Pinda and principal judge Dr. Eliezer Mbuki Feleshi.

Mwigulu commends Judiciary for exemplary professionalism

By Guardian Reporter

THE government has praised the good work and exemplary professionalism shown by the country's Judiciary in helping Tanzanians.

In addition to the praise, the Judiciary has been called upon to ensure it quickly implements its plans as by not doing so, its implementations could be costly without basic reasons.

Dr Mwigulu Nchemba, the Constitutional and Legal Affairs

Minister gave the remarks in Dar es Salaam when addressing the Judiciary's Management during his three-day working visit.

He said the government will address all challenges facing the Judiciary countrywide to ensure the people receive the required service including quick disposal of cases.

Dr Nchemba stressed that the Judiciary including all government officials should be bold enough in taking decisions as being insisted upon by President John Magufuli

from time to time.

In regard to laws amendment, court procedures and sentencing, the minister stressed on his directives during his visit to the Law School to changing these into Kiswahili.

For his part, Geoffrey Pinda, the Constitutional and Legal Affairs Deputy Minister praised the Judiciary for great work in ensuring the people receive justice without intimidation.

"Many court cases have not been decided on because many

related organs such as the police fails to finalise investigations thereof in time," Pinda said.

Speaking on behalf of the Chief Justice Prof Ibrahim Juma Khamis, Principal Judge of Tanzania High Court Dr Eliezer Feleshi thanked for the cooperation he gets from the ministry saying without strong leadership many issues would have stalled.

Judge Feleshi said the cooperation has enhanced quick accountability and implementation of its duties.



GSM marketing officer Smart Deus (L) hands over Ahsante card to the winner of the firm's 'Discover and Win festive season draw', Abdulrahem Msonde (C). He was presented with a coffee table in Dar es Salaam. Looking on is GSM home supervisor Abdallah Tawaqall. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Songwe police vows to control eruption of robberies in region

By Guardian Correspondent, Songwe

POLICE in Songwe Region have vowed to curb the activities of a criminal network that has recently erupted and said to be involved in various incidents of robberies at petrol stations and shops.

Songwe Regional commissioner Brig Gen Nicodemus Mwangela said apart from the good security

situation or any security threat towards the end of the year holidays, he nonetheless called on the police to mobilise themselves and be ready to confront incidents of robberies at petrol stations and shops.

"Due to incidents of robberies at petrol stations and shops in Tunduma, Mlowo and other areas in the region, I have instructed the

police force to work together with other state organs to ensure these incidents are controlled," the RC said.

Brig Mwangela mentioned some of the incidents as including the one at one Tunduma Petrol Station when bandits made away with large amount of cash which he did not mention, saying investigations were still

continuing.

However, other reports say apart from the cash that was stolen, the bandits also made away with firearms used by the petrol station guards.

He used the occasion to call on the people to provide cooperation to state organs by disclosing all those involved in the recent incidents of robberies.

Mwinyi suspends ZSSF boss over misconduct

By Guardian Reporter, Zanzibar

ZANZIBAR President Dr Hussein Ali Mwinyi has suspended the Managing Director of the Zanzibar Social Security Fund (ZSSF) Sabra Issa Machano over alleged misconduct in execution of major government projects.

Dr Mwinyi announced the decision on Wednesday during his meeting with officials of the Zanzibar Anti-corruption and Economic Crimes Authority ZAECA.

Apart from Machano, the President has also sacked the head of the Zanzibar Urban Services Project (ZUSP) Ramadhani Abdalla Ali and its coordinating committee under the Ministry of Finance.

He accused the officers of poor supervision of the railway building construction project at the Darajani area in Urban Unguja. He said the officials will stay out of their offices to allow investigations.

He however assured them of justice in all the faced allegations insisting the government is not satisfied with the project's implementation pace as well as the violation of procurement procedures.

The 93m/- ZUSP project was expected to end a number of challenges within Unguja, he added.

The President also directed ZAECA officials to conduct investigations against one employee of the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) Haidar Mussa Maisara who is alleged to provide tax relief to importers of a Scania truck head belonging to KEVIS Company.

Maisara is said to be engaging in corruption in executing his duties

whereas he has been reducing the amount of taxes paid by individuals or businesses.

He expressed disappointment with the way government officials are supervising some major projects saying most of them do not have value for money.

ZAECA Director General, Mussa Haji Ali said the institution has been successfully in implementing its activities, adding that officials have already started to investigate the projects in question. He said that they are conducting investigations on corruption allegations in the execution of two major projects— construction of the railway building and construction of the Mpigaduri port.

Ali noted that ZAECA is also investigating the ongoing project for construction of the Bububu - Mkokotoni road in North Unguja and the Ole - Kengeja road which is said to be delayed due to several reasons including corruption allegations.

Other construction project under investigations includes, construction of the Mangapwani port, Kangani fruits market, construction of a textile factory for youth development in Pemba and maintenance of buildings at the Economic Development Army (JKU) and prison buildings in Wete, Pemba



The 93m/- ZUSP project was expected to end a number of challenges within Unguja

UNFPA donates new 30 million/- worth ultrasound machine to Bariadi Hospital

By Guardian Correspondent, Simiyu

THE United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has donated an ultrasound machine to Bariadi Town Hospital at Somanda in Simiyu Region being one year after the earlier machine was stolen.

The machine valued at more than 30m/- was received by the District Commissioner Festo Kiswaga and handed over to the hospital on Wednesday this week to serve pregnant women.

On August 5 last year, the former ultrasound machine was stolen from the hospital's Maternity Ward and has not been recovered ever since.

Speaking after receiving the machine, DC Kiswaga said ultrasound services at the hospital have resumed after it received another machine and called on hospital's staff and workers to take care of the equipment provided by the government and other development stakeholders.

"We thank UNFPA for the equipment they have donated out of sheer kindness, but I am still convinced the stolen machine will be recovered ... and if this one is also stolen we shall take stern steps against all the involved," Kiswaga said.

UNFPA Coordinator for Simiyu Region Dr Amiri Batenga said since the loss of the former machine, pregnant women were the ones who experienced inconveniences and hence they have decided to replace the machine to continue

providing ultrasound services to them.

Bariadi Town Medical Officer Dr Judith Ringiya thanked UNFPA for the assistance of hospital's buildings and medical equipment provided to the council.

"UNFPA have built five modern maternity wards, an operation theatre at Ngulyati Health Centre and at Somanda we have been donated with a maternity ward and medical equipment, thank you very much," she said.

She said following the loss of the former ultrasound machine they continued to provide ultrasound services using an older machine at the hospital.



We thank UNFPA for the equipment they have donated out of sheer kindness, but I am still convinced the stolen machine will be recovered ... and if this one is also stolen we shall take stern steps against all the involved



Meru Seed company workers in Mbeya Region packing seedlings for verification at the Tanzania Seed Certification Institute (TOSCI) factory yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Nebart Msokwa

Don't sell land given by govt, Kabudi tells Kilosa residents

By Guardian Correspondent, Kilosa

RESIDENTS of Kilosa District in Morogoro Region have been told not to sell the land they will be given by the government after revocation of ownership deeds of former owners and that whoever will do so, the government will immediately reclaim the land.

Addressing residents of Kimamba A and Magomeni in Kilosa District, the Kilosa Member of parliament who is also the Minister for Foreign

Affairs and East African Cooperation, Prof Palamagamba Kabudi said the land to be given to the people should be used in accordance with better utilization of land planning to avoid frequent conflicts pitting farmers and herders.

He said the government plans to revoke ownership of all the land owned by private firms, institutions and private individuals which remained idle for many years and which will be handed to the people in Kilosa

District.

Prof Kabudi stressed on the people that the government has no plans to revoke ownership of all sisal farms in the district due to the fact that the value of sisal has begun to go up after plastic bags being seen to be unfriendly to the environment.

He said many areas in Morogoro Region are fertile and called on Kilosa residents to mobilise anew and revive sisal and cotton cultivation due to reliable transport after

completion of the modern railway line that will be used to carry the commodities to the port of Dar es Salaam for export to foreign markets.

Some of the people in Kilosa District thanked the government for responding to their cries in regard to land shortage as they used to loan farms at a cost of 50,000/- per acre or pay in crops after harvests saying the arrangement is sheer slavery as they don't get any benefits from farming.



Arusha Regional Police Commander Salum Hamduni displays firearms at a press briefing. Two suspected armed bandits were allegedly killed in exchange of fire with police yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Tumaini Mafie

Macron organises One Planet Summit for biodiversity 2021

By Guardian Reporter

FRANCE President Emmanuel Macron has organised a One Planet Summit for Biodiversity scheduled for January 11th 2021 in Paris.

The summit was decided by France in consultation with the United Nations and the World Bank.

It was originally scheduled for June 2020 as part of the IUCN World Conservation Congress, but was postponed due to the global health situation.

The One Planet Summit will bring together Heads of State and governments and leaders of international organisations, financial organisations, the economic sector and NGOs, all ready to make commitments to take concrete action to preserve and restore biodiversity, to make new strong announcements and to launch transformational initiatives for the benefit of nature.

The summit will be an opportunity to scale up the international community's ambition when it comes to protecting nature and responding to the new questions posed by the crisis.

It also aims to help build momentum for political mobilisation in the international events leading up to COP15 and raise the level of ambition in the fight against the erosion of biodiversity at the dawn of a year 2021 that will see many international events on nature.

During the conference, four key themes for the preservation of life will be presented including the protection of terrestrial and marine ecosystems, promotion of agro-ecology, mobilization of funding for biodiversity and the link between deforestation, species and human health.

Around one million animal and plant species are in danger of extinction and will be in the coming decades, revealing the most alarming rate of biodiversity destruction in the history of

humankind.

More than 40 percent of amphibian species and more than a third of all marine mammals are endangered.

Up to 70 percent of coral reefs have already disappeared or have been greatly damaged.

This unprecedented destruction of ecosystems and natural habitat accelerates climate change and increases the risks of transmission of zoonoses, such as coronaviruses.

The current trend of disappearing biodiversity not only threatens progress in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but also the well-being and dignity of millions of human beings.

Human rights cannot be preserved if the ecosystems in which we live cannot. Reversing this trend will be a major challenge in the decades ahead: we need to rethink our entire relationship with nature.

This is a major social and economic challenge that requires a huge transformation of value chains, our trade models and our consumption habits, to end our production models which destroy biodiversity.



The summit will be an opportunity to scale up the international community's ambition when it comes to protecting nature and responding to the new questions posed by the crisis

Women challenged to fight for their rights

By Correspondent Crispin Gerald

WOMEN have been challenged to organise and find out the best means of addressing challenges facing them in order to get their rights.

Ambassador Getrude Mongela made the remarks recently in Dar es Salaam during the event to celebrate 25 years of Beijing conference.

She said that it is not enough for women to complain over the challenge facing them, what they need to do is to find out the best means to address the challenges.

"You need to stop complaining about challenges facing you, the best means to do is to find a

proper mechanism to address the challenges," she advised.

"We want to see Africa with peace, and a country with no incidences of gender violence, we need to see women taking the lead in political positions in order to help the government in daily activities," she said.

Mongela added that the government is expecting to see the positive contributions of women in the country, especially addressing issues of gender based violence.

The celebration which was organised by purple planet organization brought on board more than 50 women from various organizations to share

views and to chart out the way forward after 25 years of Beijing.

Mongela who chaired the conference as the secretary-general of the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995, said that there are a lot of opportunities women can use to win the challenge.

The Beijing conference which took place in 1995, provided a declaration and platform for action of 1995 which serves as an agenda for the empowerment of women.

It still remains the most comprehensive global policy framework and blueprint for action, it is also a current source of guidance and inspiration

to realize gender equality and human rights of women and girls.

For her part, executive director for Purpleplanet organisation Hilda Msoka said that there are a lot of opportunities for women to benefit from, but the women need to identify the opportunities and put them into priorities.

She added that women need to put down their differences and to unite together to form a joint venture to win the economy.

Msoka added that the government and private sector should open more opportunities to women in the country to get positions in the office to advocate for their changes.

'Device better strategies to inspire more youth to take part in country's election'

By Guardian Correspondent, Arusha

HUMAN rights activists have suggested the need for key players in the electoral process to come up with better strategies that will encourage youth to take part in the country's electoral process.

They made the suggestion on Wednesday when speaking at the meeting organised by the Arusha-based Tanzania Women Lawyers Association (TAWLA) through the project titled: "Increased Democratic and Inclusive Election in Tanzania in 2020 (IDIET 2020)", which is executed in different regions across the country with the support from the European Union (EU). The project is being implemented in collaboration with Tanzania Youth Coalition (TYC)—a non-government organization focused on making the voices of the youth heard on all policy platforms.

TYC director, Lenin Kazoba described voting as a fundamental process in a democratic system, that needs all people who are eligible to take part in the election process. In this case, he said there is a need for the government and other players to come up with better ways that will make the youth effectively take part in the election. According to him, in the just-ended election, the number of youth who came out was few as compared to those who were registered in the voters' registry.

"There is a need to ask as to why the number of youth who cast their votes in the polling day is small, when we know for sure that it's their democratic rights," Kazoba queried when wrapping up the meeting.

He also asked the National Electoral Commission (NEC) to come up with better ways to

improve forms that are used to fill in total votes they sometimes confuse. It's also high time for NEC to think of improving education for election supervisors on the matter before the polling day," he said.

He also suggested the need for political parties to sit down with agents and train them on all issues related to the election.

Biliuda Kisaka, chairperson of the women's forum in Monduli cited a lack of a friendly environment for people with disabilities as challenges experienced in this year's general election.

She called on the government and other development partners to chip in and address the hiccups for the future elections so that PWDs exercise their democratic rights.

Mathias Seif suggested the need for the public to change mindsets on the election, saying: "Election is not there to create enmity, but rather is a way people can choose their candidate or their preferences in a representative democracy."

TAWLA legal officer, Ekael Michael said that the meeting involved different stakeholders including religious leaders, political parties' representatives, women leaders, community development officers, and government leaders. She said the meeting is meant to reflect on the just-ended election.

Michael said that in Arusha, the project is implemented in five constituencies of Monduli, Karatu, Arumeru West and East.

"As players in this area, we'll continue to encourage the public on their needs to take part in elections which is part and parcel of their democratic rights."



Mbeya residents throng shops and markets to make Christmas purchases. Photo: Correspondent Grace Mwakalinga

Mwanza police hold security guard over spouse's murder

By Guardian Reporter, Mwanza

POLICE in Mwanza Region have detained eight people for various offences including murder, robbery and being in possession of illegal drugs.

Mwanza Regional Police Commander Muliro Jumanne Muliro told reporters here on Wednesday that the suspects

include Benson Oluochi (54), resident of Capri Point and a guard from a private security firm who is suspected to have murdered his wife Elizabeth Benson.

He said the motive for the murder was claimed to be mistrust within the couple.

RPC Muliro said the suspect allegedly attacked Elizabeth using a stick until she died. "Elizabeth

(45), was subjected to the violence on December 20 this year at 5,00 in the evening and died a short time after reaching Sekou Toure Hospital for treatment.

In another incident the police have detained Sitta Gabunga (66), resident of Igombe area for being in possession of 5 bags and 30 sticks of marijuana estimated to weigh 194 kgs.

In the third incident, the RPC said six people were being held for robbery of various items including one motorcycle with reg. No. MC 971 CDU, three TV sets, a Sundar Solar panel and a radio.

He mentioned the names of the suspects as Raphael Sili, Sephu Saidi, Isack Petro, Oscar Paul and two others who are yet to be apprehended.



Dar es Salaam residents buying clothes and gifts for their loved ones for the festive season as captured yesterday at Kongo Street in Kariakoo suburb Dar es Salaam. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Mbeya RC advises Songwe Prison to establish cereal crops processing industries

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbeya

MBEYA Regional Commissioner Albert Chalamila has advised the Songwe Prison to come up with plans to establish industries to process cereal crops produced by the country.

Chalamila issued the advice when he toured the Songwe prison to see the implementation of a directive by President John Magufuli on ensuring that the prison was feeding itself.

He said one of the industries that the prison service must be thinking of establishing is the one to produce flour and animal feeds so that instead of transporting raw materials they should transport readymade products.

He said the main aim of the government was to ensure the prison was food sufficient instead of depending on the government.

"When you do that you will have added value to the facilitation of the management of our prisons and our prisoners ill eat better because the food is there," said Chalamila.

He said Songwe prison was one of the dependent entities in food production where he said

about 200 tonnes of maize was transported to other regions like Morogoro and Dar es Salaam.

During the tour, Chalamila talked to inmates where he urged them to work hard which was a way of changing their behaviour.

He told the inmates that the aim of sending them to prison was not to punish them but to secure them from angry mobs that he said at times plan to kill them.

For his part, head of Songwe prison Mathias Mkama said they have added areas of cultivation to 500 acres where they have planted maize.

He said they use the manpower that they have including using the tractors that they were given by the government.

"This time we do not depend on rains only, as you can see we have irrigated more than 500 acres and we are still working on other areas," he said.

"When you do that you will have added value to the facilitation of the management of our prisons and our prisoners ill eat better because the food is there"

ADDIS ABABA

THE African Union (AU) has deployed election observers in Central African Republic (CAR) and Niger, for the general elections scheduled to take place on Dec. 27, 2020 in the two AU member states.

The Chairperson of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, has made the decision to deploy the AU electoral

AU deploys electoral observers in CAR, Niger

observation missions (AUEOM) in the two countries, said the 55-member pan-African bloc in a statement on Wednesday.

The missions deployed from Dec. 21 to Dec. 31 are made up of electoral observers and experts as well as officials of the AU Commission.

The mission to CAR is led by

Mali's former Prime Minister Modibo Sidibe, while the mission to Niger is led by Mauritania's former Prime Minister Sghair Ould M'Bareck.

The deployment of the missions in the two countries is in accordance with the relevant provisions of AU on the principles governing democratic elections in

Africa, AU guidelines for election observation and monitoring missions, as well as the African charter for democracy, elections and governance.

This deployment is also in line with one of AU's aspirations in the Agenda 2063, aiming to ensure good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, and

justice among others in Africa.

The missions are expected to among others provide accurate reports including an impartial assessment of the general elections, including the level of their compliance with national, regional, continental and international standards governing democratic elections.

They will also formulate recommendations for the improvement of future electoral processes in the two countries on the basis of the findings, thereby demonstrating AU's solidarity and support to the electoral process in the two countries, ensuring that the conduct of said elections contribute to the consolidation of democratic governance, peace and stability.

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

Surely it is time to let the girls rest, dropping out and all

EDUCATION officers all over the country have been directed to cut out talk on girls' pregnancies, as there is too much focus on the matter whereas there are more boys leaving school to conduct petty trades, and at times move to illegal mining where small boys are known as 'rats.' In that case those officials will no longer release figures regarding the number of school girl pregnancies occasioning dropping out from the education system. It all is geared not to allow pregnancies to continue, as the law is clear about that.

The issue really as the Minister for Education, Science, Technology and Vocational Training, Prof Joyce Ndalichako explained at the opening of the 7th Regional and District Education Officers Association (REDEOA) annual meeting in Dodoma is being fair to girls. The minister said statistics show that the number of boys who drop out of school is higher than girls, but education officers constantly release statistics of girls' pregnancies. In that case girls in uniform are looked at suspiciously whereas the boys are seen as the real pupils and students, whereas the problem is higher with boys than it is with the girls.

On a rather different note, the minister indicated that change is slowly creeping into the education sector, when she emphasized that education officers must strongly oversee the quality of education provided in their areas. She particularly underlined that they ensure that teachers in all fields, namely academic, sports, culture and special education perform their duties as required. It is true that there are education fields that have tended to be left behind, for instance physical education, drama and the arts, woodwork and for that matter agricultural

education. All these spheres are meant to excite talent in young learners.

With channels for formal employment narrowing with population growth and explosion of secondary and higher education, widening the field of primary and secondary education is vital. With the government battling to spread electricity to all villages in the country by late 2022, innovative young people forming a drama group can be constituted even in a village, as is a sport group, a woodworking outfit, etc. Start ups depend on imparting skills at an early stage, such that education is widened, not just math, science, civics.

When the minister for instance referred to the way boy children are hawking food at bus stops during school hours in pastoralist and fishing areas, and indeed in tobacco or mining zones, part of the problem is that education hasn't kindled any interest in their minds. If the other types of education were being provided a child could picture himself in any of those roles, being leader of a group or member of a start up doing any of those things, demanding creativity in one way or another. Hobbies become future plans.

Looking at these plans, it appears that the work needing to be done is just starting and will take a number of years for education to take a different picture, not just exam preparation but the tapping of talent in all directions.

As the minister pointed out, first education offers must stop pointing fingers at girls, and then make sure that education masters in different fields deliver as required, despite that this emphasis is only just starting. Sports, gymnastics, drama, woodwork, agriculture - there are other fields waiting out there.

SUA should be assisted in more research on what rats can do for humans

FOR centuries rats didn't have the best reputation in the human culture.

The rodents were seen as dirty, vicious and the spreaders of disease including the plague - which in the 14th century caused the deaths of more than a third of Europe's population.

However, a recent study has found that it was humans rather than rats that were responsible for the spread of the plague, dubbed Black Death.

Of recent, however, in Africa especially, rats have actually been saving lives and fight diseases, even though many say it's too early to even think the rehabilitation of their reputation in so far as the human culture is concerned.

Tanzania's Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) based in Morogoro have for many years been working with Charity Apopo Organisation, in training rats to react to the scent of explosives, enabling them to detect landmines in countries including Tanzania, Mozambique and as far as Cambodia.

Landmines, buried in the ground during armed conflicts to deter invasion of enemies have been claiming thousands of lives during peacetime.

Their detection of landmines is usually an expensive business, and countries often lack the resources to carry out the time-consuming and complicated work.

For instance, a human using a metal detector would take 25 hours to search a 200-sq-m area - a rat can do the same work in 20 minutes.

Rats are not only cheaper than dogs in mines' detection but are also light enough that they don't set off the landmines.

And it's not just landmines. Rats can also smell out the odour specific to tuberculosis.

Every year, three million people infected by Tuberculosis (TB), go undiagnosed and therefore do not receive the care they need.

SUA research has shown that rats are able to detect whether a child has tuberculosis (TB), and are much more successful at doing this than a commonly used basic microscopy test.

The Pediatric Research shows that when trained rats were given children's sputum samples to sniff, the animals were able to pinpoint 68 percent more cases of TB infections than detected through a standard smear test. Inspiration for investigating the diagnosis of TB through smell came from anecdotal evidence that people suffering from the potentially fatal lung disease emit a specific odour.

According to the research current TB detection methods are far from perfect, especially in under-resourced countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia where the disease is prevalent, and where a reasonably cheap smear test is commonly used.

In this regard we would like to appeal to the government and other stakeholders to provide financial and other assistance to SUA researchers for its continual research on what rats can further do to help human being.

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By Jillian Green

DON'T leave it all to government to beat Covid-19, you have a responsibility too. In a year like annus horribilis 2020. Annus Horribilis. This Latin phrase means, 'horrible year', and fits 2020 when everything has seemingly gone for a ball of chalk, it's easy only to see how terrible things are. To look at the world through COVID-19-coloured glasses...

That's how this column was supposed to start. The plan was to focus on some good things and positive developments that 2020 has brought us. It will have to wait for another day, probably in the very distant future.

With the announcement that South Africa is now experiencing a second wave of coronavirus infections, it seems we have much to do before we can celebrate.

Except that's just the trouble. We were too quick to celebrate the lockdown being eased, the economy opening up, and that we could gather socially. We reverted to pre-lockdown behaviour almost immediately. We dropped our guard, we said we were covid-fatigued.

Businesses and restaurants

It's literally in our hands to beat the second wave

started operating as normal - first with strict rules, then more relaxed. "You don't have to wear your mask, we [the service staff] will do so," was the response when I asked why customers at a popular Joburg coffee shop were unmasked.

Modellers initially predicted that a second wave would hit South Africa in late January or early February - when holidaymakers returned and the working year kicked into gear. Instead, we have hardly started the festive season break and it's here.

Just drive through any hip and happening strip in any town in the country and you will see why. Bars are throbbing with maskless young people potentially unwittingly carrying and sharing the virus with each other and those they come into contact with after a night out on the town. Spare a thought for the elderly and those with comorbidities in their paths.

What we have clearly forgotten is that the virus did not disappear with the easing of lockdown.

Active cases and deaths decreased. Lockdown levels decreased and with it our resolve to protect ourselves and others. Now a price is to be exacted.

On 9 December, 6,709 new cases of Covid-19 were reported, inching us ever closer to the million case mark. Total cases stood at 828,598. More than

22,574 people - all someone's mother, father, brother, sister, wife, husband, child, friend - have succumbed to the virus already.

But it's perhaps these very numbers that make us so blasé. They are too large to contemplate. Too amorphous. Too distant. Until it hits home.

We should not wait until we are personally affected to make a change. Life is too short for regrets, especially when you know what you have to do.

We can't blame the government for the continued spread of Covid-19.

As a country, we got behind the hard lockdown understanding that, as difficult as it was, we had to do it to buy ourselves time to

prepare our health system to deal with the influx of sick people. But lockdown was not an elixir to the virus.

Another hard lockdown, as tempting as it may be, is not going to prevent the second wave, or subsequent outbreaks. The country's battered economy needs some TLC so that the secondary effects of lockdown - increased hunger and widespread job losses, among others - can be softened.

And significantly we can't expect the various arms of government to police our behaviour - Collins Khosa paid too dear a price for that. The only thing, bar an effective and quickly rolled out anti-Covid vaccine (for now just a dream for us Saffers), that can stop the spread of this virus is our personal actions.

It's up to you and me. And, in truth, it's rather simple. Wash your hands/sanitise regularly. Wear your mask. Keep your distance.

It's literally in our hands to save lives. DMI68

2020: The longest year of the decade

By Abdulateef Usman Abiodun

FOR a long time, we have been hearing of Vision 2020. Anytime that year is mentioned, we just waved it by as just another year that will come and go. Little did we know that it would be a symbolic year that will take the glory of God to survive. Situated strategically at the tail end of the decade, 2020 is a year that won't be forgotten in a hurry. Covid-19 pandemic that started in 2019 but wreaked havoc in 2020 put the whole world on a standstill and brought the world order onto its knees. The events and occurrences of the year are so overwhelming and consuming that it seems the year is foot-dragging and doesn't ever want to end.

2020 is a year of plans disruption. What started as a normal year, with plans laid out by

people to accomplish one thing or the other, but most of the plans would never be actualized. Many prospective graduates, many planned but never done weddings, many collapsed businesses and endeavours, many abandoned personal physical projects, and so on. Most of these socio-economic activities might never see the light of the day again. Gone for life. Gone with 2020.

On a national scale, the year further exposed our ineptitude as a nation. Forced to stay and treat their various ailments in the country, year 2020 has shown that we have a long way to go in putting our health sector in shape. Have our ruling elite ever thought of a time when they have to feel the hopelessness being faced by poor Nigerians anytime they want to access healthcare services? The wise among those who God allows to

escape the calamities of this year among our elite should channel their gratitude towards giving Nigerians a perfect health care system that can withstand any future pandemic.

When the nation thought all was over and that the rest of the year would end peacefully, the EndSARS protests erupted across the country. Almost the same time, looting of palliative warehouses started. Both events, though sad, are indications that the political and ruling class are sitting on gunpowder that could explode anytime.

Unless something is urgently done to correct the culture of improvisation of the Nigerian youths by the elite, a day will soon come when everything will go out of control. So, the year 2020, among many things, is a year of warning to leaders to sit right or be seated up.

Apart from the high profile deaths due to Coronavirus infection, this is also a year when many billionaires emerged. In the midst of the lockdown and starvation, it was common to hear of billions budgeted for one relief project or the other. Whether they get to the real poor people or not will be taken care of by time. Ironically, some people started the year as paupers and are finishing it rich and vice versa. Call it a year of twisting fates.

Now, it is December and the year is winding down. But 2020 is not yet done with us. The abduction of the 344 Kankara schoolboys in Katsina and subsequent release is one of the goodbyes the year is giving to us. As we are about to say 'Thank You for Coming' to the year, our 'friend', Covid-19 is saying 'Hello' again. May 2021 be good with us but surely, 2020 is the longest year of the decade.

By Asukile R. Kajuni

Preamble

Tanzania is considered as one of the best tourism destinations in Africa and its tourism industry has shown a rapid growth in the last decade. The number of tourists has doubled since 2010 and is showing positive signs of continued growth. In 2010, the country recorded a total of 782,699 tourists, which went on to grow to 1.53 million visitors generating revenues to the tune of \$2.6 billion in 2019 (MNRT, 2020). These increases in number of tourists visiting the country is due to its magnificent natural attractions associated with properly managed protected areas with abundant wildlife, paleontological/archeological resources and to a less extent on those linked to cultural resources and unpolluted beaches along the 800 Km of coastline.

This article marks the beginning of a series of documents that highlight some of the most important and critical tourism products available in the country and why they should be proactively promoted. It is intended to guide and facilitate the design, development and implementation of the tourism within the target priority areas. In addition, it provides details on how the tourism activities should be managed in order to support government policy in poverty alleviation by opening and expanding the reach into less visited areas but with equally unique and abundant biodiversity assets, archeological as well other intangible resources that are available.

Introduction

The remote location of Katavi National Park, unaffected by the tour vans of the northern circuit offers protection and safe haven to more resident wildlife species that can support a year-round tourism industry. Such scenario provides a great opportunity for tourism investors to take the lead and capture the market in these unexplored natural settings to provide unparalleled recreational opportunities. Opening up the Katavi National Park to increased visitation would provide a gateway to Mahale Mountains National Park including surfing on the white waters of Lake Tanganyika; and a visit to Kalambo Falls, a 235m single drop waterfall, located on the southeastern area of Lake Tanganyika on the border with Zambia. This will eventually pave the way for increased tourist visitations in Ugalla River and Kigosi national parks and the Ugalla Game Reserve and Malagarasi-Moyowosi RAMSAR Site and Wildlife Management Areas of Ipole and Uyumbu. The protected areas and national parks in particular are key to the development of niche tourism markets in the Western Tourism Circuit and especially for specialized high value Chimp watching tourism in Mahale and Gombe national parks.

The Tanzania government policy on poverty alleviation aims at implementation of poverty reduction strategies through a market base economy by making tourism industry one of the leading export products capable of contributing up to 50% of the national GDP. It is envisaged that numbers of tourists and their length of stay will increase as a direct result of increased diversity of tourism products. While the government will facilitate efforts to develop the basic strategic infrastructure (roads, airports), legal framework and other enabling environment on its part, the private sector, on its part, is expected to meet this challenge by taking advantage and invest in tourism facility development in the Western Tourism Circuit. Opening up the Western Tourism Circuit will boost up major international tourism visitation through direct air links to Mbeya from Dar, Arusha, Dodoma and possibly other major tourist centers in the SADC region over the medium and long term.

The desired tourism product include accommodation types designed to match the outdoor activities that suit clients interested in minimum contacts with other tourists in the wilderness

Tanzania's western tourism circuit anchored from Katavi National Park - Part I



and pristine areas that the Western Tourism Circuit has in abundance. In addition the Western Tourism Circuit has opportunities for tourist hunting and is the only zone with specialized high value Chimp watching tourism product.

National Tourism Policy and Strategy

The tourism policy underscores the need for 'local communities' involvement in decision-making and in sharing of tourism proceeds and resources, as well as providing strategies that will ensure increased benefits for local communities, balancing interests of the communities and the private sector and providing mechanisms for micro financing to SMEs. Moreover, the policy has other strategies like developing infrastructure to improve accessibility, enhancing quality, and marketing. Furthermore, the policy has some strategies to promote cultural tourism, and positioning Tanzania as a leading destination in wildlife and hunting expeditions. In line with the broad national policy the government developed and adopted the Integrated Tourism Master Plan in 2002. The core of the Integrated Master Plan strategy is to develop an integrated tourism product that is capable of attracting a low volume, high yield segment of the international tourism market to spend their entire holiday in Tanzania as a "single destination" in their holiday plans. The primary focus of this plan is to obtain sustainable benefits for the people of Tanzania by generating additional economic activity from available resources by addressing the six following primary areas:

- Creating greater awareness of Tanzania in the tourism source markets;
- Expanding tourism products;
- Securing a more competitive position;
- Maximizing the necessary services skills; and
- Establishing the necessary structures and controls to underpin tourism development.

Through the Integrated Tourism Master Plan, the Government is fully aware of the need for increased investment and technological advancement in the industry. Therefore the need for development of strategic infrastructure on roads, telecommunication, airports, lodges and hotels was eminent and especially so in less known areas with new tourism products, including but not limited to, the Western Tourism Circuit. In that regard, the onus is on the private sector as the engine of growth of the tourism industry's development in the country. So far, the government has shown commitment by implementing prudent macro-economic and other economic reform policies that has result-

ed in stable economy and lowered the average inflation to single digit levels consistently for almost a decade. Ultimately, there should be every reason to believe that tourism will continue to grow and provide an important industry for job creation and absorb majority of the youth from rural areas from some of the most remote areas of the country.

Western Tourism Circuit Unique Attributes and Pull Factors

Tanzania is a vast country whose infrastructure is not fully developed and therefore poses a serious constraint to the full utilization of the available tourism opportunities in the country. Other key constraints in the tourism sector include bureaucracy and high taxation both of which are being dealt with under current government. On the other hand, these constraints are also important opportunities for the country. The current tourists are mostly highly educated people and require more than just looking at and taking photographs of wildlife and wild places. Apart from requiring interactions with host communities, they need solitude and remoteness both of which Tanzania and the Western Tourism Circuit has in plenty. Such remote areas as Katavi, Ugalla River, Kigosi, Gombe and Mahale national parks, Kalambo Falls and Lake Tanganyika and shores of Lake Rukwa provide these unique attributes in abundance. Other important areas that provide attractions include: Rukwa, Lukwati, Rungwa, Ugalla, and Uwanda game reserves; Mlele Forest Reserve; Wildlife Open Areas of Chunya, Piti, Rungwa South, and Mzombe West; Mountains Kwimba and Mwene; natural hot springs in Ileya village; Masololo and Matundasi caves in Ngwala village.

In addition recent government initiatives in allowing local communities' participation in conservation and management of natural resources and the protection of wildlife through the Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and Village Land Forest Reserves (VLFs) approaches, is critical to the success of conservation endeavors and to the tourism industry. Such conducive enabling environment is a magnet to entice the private sector to take advantage of by investing in the more remote areas of the country to diversify tourism products and generate more income. As they lie idle the country loses not only the income from these areas but also the opportunity to alleviate poverty through sustainable tourism development. In order for tourism to alleviate poverty and foster development of local communities in rural areas, a shift of emphasis has been implemented by government to include pro-active policies that end with more "trickle-down" and multiplier effects by involvement of local

communities from decision-making to direct engagement in running tourism facilities through the WMAs and VLFs. Tanzania has a competitive advantage over most of its competitors in the region because of the presence in its borders vast and incredible endowment of tourism assets, which include opportunities for wildlife safaris, hiking, cultural tourism, and other activities like unique landscape scenery, the wilderness, and has a rich heritage of archaeological, historical and rock painting sites, a number of which have been designated as World Heritage Sites. The enabling and coherent investment policies and incentive structure should be translated into increased tourism sector investors' confidence in order to support the government's desire to increase number of days tourist spend in the country.

The Katavi National Park

Katavi National Park is one of the 22 national parks under the management of Tanzania National Parks. The area around Katavi Plains and surrounding areas was originally gazetted as a national park in 1974 and covered an area of 4,471 Km². Katavi National Park's area has doubled to more than 7,500 Km² as a result of a government decision to upgrade and include parts of the former Rukwa Game Reserve into the boundaries of the national park. The park headquarters is located about 40 Km near Sitalike village southeast from Mpanda, the Katavi Regional headquarters and about 430 Km from Sumbawanga the regional capital for Rukwa Region. The main road from Sumbawanga to Mpanda crosses the park along the western portion through Kanyamkaa entrance gate to the south. Another major access route that bisects the park is a stock route from Sitalike through Ikuu to Kibaoni towards Lake Rukwa. There are two main airstrips inside the park, one at park headquarters near Sitalike and the other at Ikuu near Lake Chada. The park could be accessed by rail from Tabora along the Tabora-Mpanda of the Tanzania central railway line.

The major exceptional resources for which Katavi National Park is renowned include Puku (only national park where it is found), elephants, and high populations of hippopotamus, Katavi and Chada lakes, wetland and mbugas migrant and non-migrant water birds, exclusiveness and wilderness character of the area. In addition the magnificent and incredible scenery of steaming plains game along the Ilyandi Ridge; the Lukima high ground overlooking the Lake Rukwa plains, wetlands and Lake Rukwa itself; and the magnificent Ndidu waterfall. All these products require to be explored as they provide some of the most important natural attractions

and critical tourism product. The tourists expect to visit pristine natural areas with minimum manmade intrusions and get value for their money.

Opportunity for Katavi National Park Tourism

Katavi National Park offers one of the greatest opportunities for private sector to excel in tourism business (combination of air travel and tented camp). This opportunity is enhanced by the desire of the TANAPA to open up the park for more visitor facilities. As part of the country's effort to increase investment in infrastructure, the southern highland regions have regional airport in Mbeya City and another being constructed in Kigoma Municipal Council that will act as hubs for most of air travel to the Western Tourism Circuit; Rukwa region is linked to Songwe and Katavi regions by a tarred road from Tunduma border post; The Mpanda to Kigoma Road as well as Kigoma to Nyakanazi Road is being tarmacked and will be open in the not-too-distant future. Now with these developments therefore tourism is bound to increase in the regions and protected areas in the regions would be the choice parks because of their unique wilderness character and richness in natural attractions. These will also address the economics by making it cheaper to transport tourists from either Mbeya Regional Airport or Kigoma than from Dar, Dodoma or Kilimanjaro airports.

The park has important exceptional resources and values that are key to the tourism growth including:

- Remoteness and pristine environment
- Large numbers of hippos and other plains game
- Large numbers of migrant and non migrant waterbirds
- Huge expanses of wetlands and mbugas
- An area in the Albertine Rift that is fully protected as national park
- unique vegetation types and landforms
- Seasonally inundated with water and therefore permanent water throughout the year
- Sanctuary of threatened and endangered plants and animals
- Historic/cultural sight at Kasanga Springs; and
- Tranquility

Katavi National Park must use its comparative and competitive advantage in tourist niche markets that take a positive view of what Katavi has to offer in the way of exclusiveness, quality resources, and peace and quiet to benefit communities and the country through increased revenues.

Other Key Tourist Attractions in the Western Tourism Circuit

There are opportunities for Cultural and Community Eco-tourism as well visits to historic sites. There is a cultural tourism programme associated with the national Cultural Tourism Programme, which is based in Mbeya and take advantage local landscape characterized by relief forms created by the volcanic effects of the African Rift Valley. A number of local cultural tourism organizations are formed to take advantage of such opportunities based in major business centres in Mbeya City, Kigoma and Sumbawanga municipalities as well as Mpanda Town Council. The members of these grassroot organizations arrange trips including overnight stays to the main visitor attractions.

Special Sites and Features**1. Gombe and Mahale National Parks**

Some of the most special sites within the Western Tourism Circuit are the Gombe and Mahale National Parks marking the easternmost habitat for chimpanzees. Toshisada Nishida from Kyoto University Japan and Jane Goodall from England started studying chimps in Mahale Mountains and Gombe National Parks respectively in the early 1960s. These studies are now two of the longest continuous studies of any group of animals in the world. Currently the Greater Mahale Ecosystem chimp populations are the most viable in Tanzania constituting 93% of Tanzania's 2,800 chimps (TAWIRI, 2018). The chimps along the shores of Lake Tanganyika have taught us about toolmaking in animals and social structures in primates and have helped us to understand ourselves as humans.

Guided walks are available that take visitors deep into the forest to observe and sit with the extraordinary primates for an entire morning. Besides chimpanzee viewing, many other species of primates live in the tropical forests including Vervet and colobus monkeys, baboons, forest pigs and small antelopes inhabit the dense forest, in addition to a wide variety of tropical birdlife.

To be Continued

Ten defining moments for women in 2020

UNITED NATIONS

While 2020 will be remembered most for the way COVID-19 changed our lives in nearly every way and in every part of the world, we made some strides for women's rights and gender equality.

From new laws addressing domestic violence and equality to women's critical leadership during the global pandemic, join us to celebrate some key moments for gender equality this year.

Women leaders shine in the face of COVID-19

Governments across the world worked to respond to COVID-19, with research suggesting that in countries where women lead, the responses were quicker, more effective and stronger. In countries with women leaders, including New Zealand, Germany, Finland, Bangladesh and more, the quick and decisive actions of the women in charge led to lower cases and lower deaths.

Even though COVID-19 has demonstrated the important role of women in leadership and decision-making, as of December 2020, there are only 22 countries with women serving as Heads of State and/or Government worldwide. As we look ahead to building back better in the future, women's leadership is critical to success.

US elects first woman vice-president

In November, Kamala Harris became the first woman vice-president-elect of the United States, shattering barriers that have kept men entrenched at the highest levels of American politics for many years. Following her swearing-in in January 2021, she will join the ranks of other female vice-presidents around the world, in countries including Bulgaria, Nicaragua, Liberia, Costa Rica, Venezuela, The Gambia, South Sudan, and others.

US President-elect Joe Biden also



Kamala Harris



Nanaia Mahuta



Women footballers in Brazil

announced an all women senior communications team, a first for the White House.

Scotland makes period products free for all

The Scottish parliament voted unanimously in favour of the Period Products bill in November, making Scotland the first country to allow free and universal access to menstrual products - including tampons and pads - in public buildings including schools and universities.

It marks a significant victory for the global movement against period poverty which impacts women and girls in many ways. With 12.8 per cent of women and girls worldwide living in poverty, the cost of menstrual products and added taxes leave many without ways to safely manage their periods.

Mother's names to be included on children's IDs in Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, the President signed a new law stating that for the first time, mothers will be named on their children's birth certificates and identification cards, making it easier for women

to get education, healthcare and other documents for their children. The change will especially benefit women who are widowed, divorced or otherwise raising children on their own.

The new law comes after a year-long social media campaign #WhereIsMyName, advocating for women's rights and empowerment in the country.

World leaders reignite the vision of the Beijing Platform for Action

In October, co-hosted by the President of the General Assembly and UN Women, leaders came together to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for action, the most comprehensive roadmap for advancing gender equality.

Over 100 countries committed to concrete actions that would accelerate the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls everywhere. Some of the commitments include eliminating discriminatory laws, social norms and gender stereotypes; matching commitments to gender equality with adequate financing; strengthening institutions to promote gender equality; harnessing the potential of tech-

nology and innovation to improve women's and girls' lives; and regularly collecting, analyzing and using gender statistics.

Looking ahead, all eyes are on the robust actions and commitments to fast-track implementation on gender equality, at the Generation Equality Forum in Mexico and France in 2021, and through the Generation Equality Action Coalitions.

Equal pay for women footballers in Brazil and Sierra Leone

Brazil and Sierra Leone have joined Australia, England, Norway and New Zealand in publicly committing to equal pay for women and men footballers. Globally, the gender pay gap stands at 16 per cent, meaning women workers earn an average of 84 per cent of what men earn. For women of colour, immigrant women, and women with children, the difference is even greater.

In Sierra Leone, the commitment to equality covers appearance fees and winning bonuses for the national women's team. Similarly in Brazil, female national players will be paid the same as male national players in preparation

periods and games.

Kuwait's domestic violence law signals hope for women

In September, Kuwait issued a new law on protection from domestic violence, following years of activism from Kuwaiti women's rights groups. The law creates a national committee to write policies to combat domestic violence and protect women. It also establishes shelters and a hotline to receive domestic violence complaints, provides counseling and legal assistance for survivors, and allows for emergency protection orders to prevent abusers from contacting their victims.

Although the new family protection law is a step forward for the country with high levels of domestic abuse, much work remains in implementing the law, filling protection gaps and repealing discriminatory laws.

Worldwide, as the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the ever-present pandemic of violence against women surged dramatically.

Calls to helplines increased up to five-fold in some countries during the first weeks of the coronavirus outbreak. Projections show that for every three months of lockdown, an additional 15 million women could experience violence. Laws and policies matter right now, to curb violence against women and recover from the social and economic fallout of COVID-19.

TIME's first Kid of the Year celebrates girl power and women in science

Fifteen-year-old scientist and inventor, Gitanjali Rao, was selected as TIME magazine's first-ever 'Kid of the Year'. From an early age, Rao thought about how to use science and technology to create social change, as motivated by her desire to introduce positivity and com-

munity to the world around her.

She developed Kindly, an app and a Chrome extension based on artificial intelligence that is able to detect cyberbullying at an early stage. Rao is currently working on an inexpensive and accurate means of detecting bio-contaminants in water.

New Zealand appoints first indigenous woman Foreign Minister

Nanaia Mahuta became the first indigenous woman appointed as Foreign Minister of New Zealand in November. Mahuta, who is Maori, and was first elected to parliament in 1996, previously made history as the first woman member of parliament to wear a moko kauae, or traditional tattoo, on her chin.

New Zealand also has one of the most diverse parliaments in the world, led by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, with almost half of lawmakers being women, and around 10 per cent of incoming parliamentarians being members of the LG-BTQ community.

Two women take home Nobel Prize in Chemistry

In October, Emmanuelle Charpentier and Jennifer A. Doudna were awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for their work on a way of editing DNA, known as Crispr-Cas9. The two scientists led efforts to turn molecules made by microbes into a tool for customizing genes.

Dr. Charpentier and Dr. Doudna's joint win marks the first time in history that the prize has gone to two women, and they are only the sixth and seventh women to win Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

AGENCIES

Brazzaville

An interview with Dr. Maria Rebollo Polo, Team Leader of the Expanded Special Project for Elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases (ESPEN) at the World Health Organization's Regional Office for Africa.

First things first Maria, can you please tell us about Neglected Tropical Diseases and how they impact communities across Africa?

NTDs are some of the most important group of diseases in the world. They make up a varied group of infectious diseases that, as the name would suggest, have long received little attention on a global scale. As a result, far less investment has been dedicated to NTD treatment and research, despite the devastating effect that this group of diseases has on public health.

Approximately one third of those affected by NTDs live in Africa and diseases like NTDs like trachoma, onchocerciasis, lymphatic filariasis, helminthiasis and schistosomiasis can debilitate overall health and cause disability. Tragically as a result, communities across the continent suffer from the pressure that this places on their families, on the health care systems and the economy too.

But there is some good news. NTDs are both curable when you detect them early and preventable, and so the devastation that they cause can be minimised and even eliminated altogether over time. It is up to us to invest more strongly in their treatment and prevention so that we can alleviate this unnecessary suffering.

It's devastating that NTDs don't tend to receive the same level of funding and global attention as other more well-known diseases. Can you tell us about the wider benefits that investing in NTDs can have?

Only 0.6% of global healthcare funding goes to controlling NTDs, but the truth of the matter is that by investing in NTDs we can make massive strides against both NTDs

Fight against neglected tropical diseases vital to the fight against Covid-19



and other problems that share the same origins. For example, poor sanitation and a lack of clean water are at the root of many diseases. In this sense, investing in sanitation systems and access to safe, clean water for hygiene and consumption would not only prevent the onset of NTDs but it would also minimise other serious threats across Africa, such as COVID-19 or diarrheal diseases. Furthermore, NTD programs also offer an access platform for medical interventions against COVID-19 and other future health threats. Therefore, investing in NTDs is hugely beneficial, as it can help improve health conditions, strengthen health systems on the continent and advance sustainable development across Africa.

With the world currently battling COVID-19, do you think it is also important that we keep a focus on NTDs?

Whilst the world continues to battle COVID-19, it is critical that we do not allow the pandemic to reverse years of hard fought progress against NTDs. So far in 2020, NTDs have caused far more diseases, disability and mortality in Africa than COVID. Schistosomiasis alone cause up to 130,000 estimated deaths in the continent in the absence of the life saving treatment praziquantel. It's up to us to keep the pressure on. Several Af-

rican countries have diverted all their NTD workforce to the COVID-19 response and this has been extremely disruptive. It should be noted that those suffering from NTD morbidity fall into the higher-risk group for COVID-19 due to the way in which NTDs compromise sufferers' immune systems and overall health. People affected by NTDs are also more at risk because they generally live in poverty, lacking resources, hygiene and access to health systems. People suffering from NTDs often live in poverty, what typically equates to living in very crowded conditions and not being able to keep minimal social distancing and hygiene strategies. NTDs perpetuate the cycle of poverty and disease. We must therefore fight COVID-19 and NTDs in tandem, and by doing so help protect hundreds of millions of people at risk of NTDs across Africa.

This is clearly such an important cause. How does your work at ESPEN help contribute to fighting NTDs?

It really is vital, which is why the Expanded Special Project for Elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases (ESPEN) has made it its mission to fight NTDs and control and eliminate them entirely by 2030. ESPEN's focus is to accelerate the elimination of the most prevalent NTDs in Africa that can be prevented and treated by Preventive Chemotherapy delivered through

Mass Drug Administration, complemented by hygiene, water and sanitation, the most cost-effective elimination strategy against NTDs.

We have seen one more time through the COVID pandemic how critical it is to have access to good quality real time data: ESPEN's data portal enables health ministries and stakeholders to share and exchange subnational high quality programme data to help support the battle against NTDs. Those affected by NTDs often belong to the world's poorest and most remote communities, and ESPEN is fighting to make sure that these people are not forgotten.

Congratulations to you and your team! How has ESPEN been able to facilitate progress?

Together with the help of international communities, ESPEN has already been able to accomplish a great deal so far! We have managed to improve access to data scale up treatment and enhance the capacity of countries across 45 countries Africa, like Congo and South Sudan, to effectively deliver NTDs interventions. Recently, Togo and Egypt managed to eliminate as a public health problem one NTD, elephantiasis, and Ghana has eliminated trachoma as public health problem too, freeing millions from suffering, disability and blindness. With amazing pro-

gress like this already being achieved, it is clear the goal of eliminating NTDs is within our reach if we truly keep focus and not divert our resources and attention.

What do you think are the main obstacles that you currently face in achieving these goals?

With the fight against COVID-19 is still very much at the forefront of everyone's minds, there is a risk that attention and funds could shift towards the prevention and treatment of coronavirus, which could threaten the progress we've achieved against NTDs. Yet, investment into NTDs is relatively inexpensive, with treatment for the top five NTDs costing less than \$0.50 per person per year. We therefore now need to help spread the awareness that investing into NTDs will greatly help to protect those at risk while fighting COVID-19 at the same time. We have the tools, we have the drugs, we have the data, and we have the solutions. We are so close to the finish line and we need to keep the momentum going. Trying to combat COVID in a vertical manner doesn't make any sense, while relying on a very well structured platform of NTDs at community level provide an excellent strategy to tackle both COVID and NTDs.

Finally, what do you think the future holds for the fight against NTDs and what must we do together to help eliminate these devastating diseases?

2021 is set to be a big year for the fight against NTDs, as in early January the 2030 NTD roadmap will be launched by the World Health Organization. At the African Level the ESPEN framework 2021-2025 and the Continental framework for NTDs from the African Union will be launched at the same time. The goals set out in these documents will be critical to guide the next decade of action and progress against neglected tropical diseases. We must work together in our battle to improve the well-being of the population, whether it's NTDs or COVID-19 the threat they face, in order to ensure that those most vulnerable get the necessary support to prevent the spread and have access to treatment. In Africa we cannot just accept avoidable deaths and complications from NTDs. As public health leaders we must stand together and end this suffering for good. Our people deserve it.

AGENCIES

Soil fertility map will be life changing for African farmers

By Claire Taylor

A LANDMARK map detailing soil fertility across the whole of Africa will be a game-changer for the world's poorest farmers.

For every single field on the continent, vital information such as the acidity, organic content, and nutrient levels of the soil is now available which will help advise farmers in a number of different areas, such as yield forecasting, crop suitability and fertilizer application.

Africa will now have access to more detailed soil information than many European countries, including the UK.

It is hoped that this will be an important step towards tackling major human health challenges caused by food grown in poor quality soil, including the estimated 1.1 million child deaths caused each year by malnutrition.

It also marks the first time an entire continent's soil has been studied to this level of detail and raises

real hopes for much improved harvests - and subsequently, the health, livelihoods and food security of more than a billion people.

It was produced by iSDA, a social enterprise founded by three research institutes - Rothamsted Research, World Agroforestry and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture.

CEO of iSDA, Dr Jonathan Crouch, said: "For the first time, farm level soil data is now available for the entire African continent.

"With ever growing demand for food, it is critical that we find ways to increase productivity in sustainable ways that also allow millions of smallholders to improve their livelihoods," he explained.

"If we know the current status of essential soil nutrients, we can maximize productivity, profitability and environmental benefits."

From the Tunisian coast, all the way to the Cape - some 5,000 miles away - the iSDA soil map charts the

continent's 3.4 million square miles of potential agricultural land in unrivalled detail at roughly 24 billion locations.

Due to their extreme old age, unforgiving climates, and decades of unsustainable management, large areas of Africa are heavily depleted of nutrients, strongly acidic or low in organic carbon. Poor soil fertility has long been recognised as a major contributor to Africa's high incidences of child mortality, stunting, and wasting.

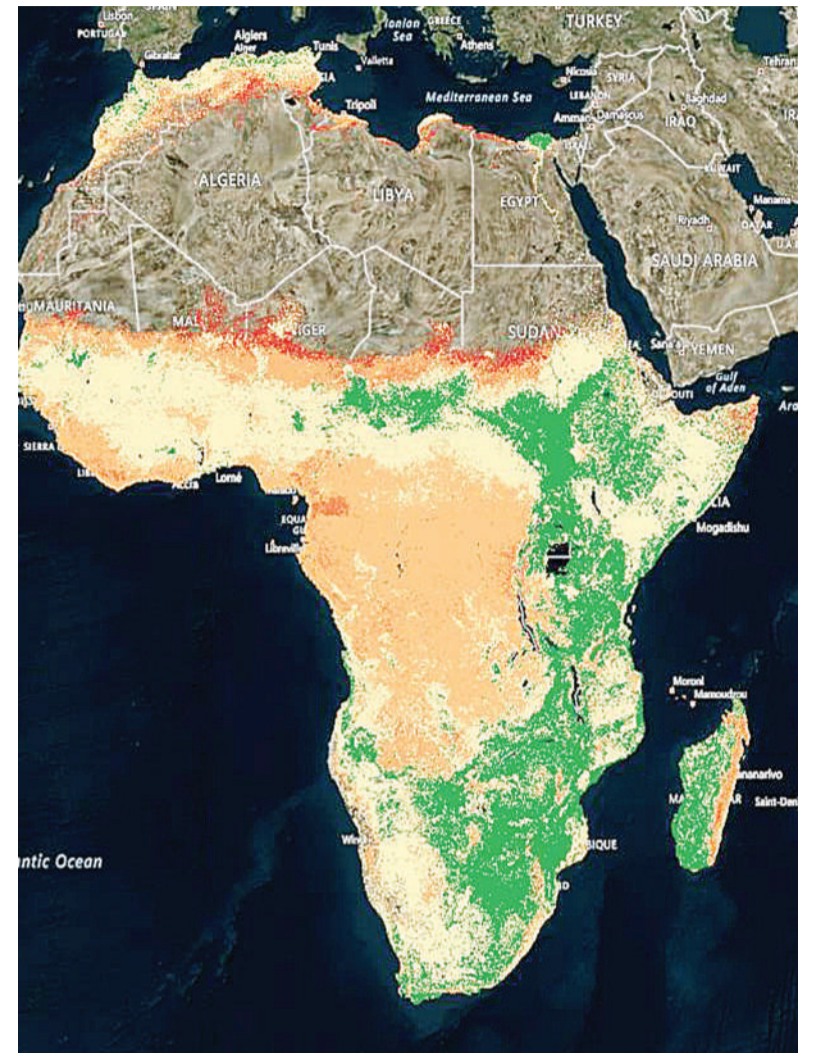
The new map charts soil fertility every 30m and will help to target nutrients where they are most needed. Many African farmer's fields are far smaller in size than those in Europe and the 30m resolution of iSDAsoil finally lays the foundation for individually tailored, field level advice for smallholders - a significant improvement on the 250m resolution available previously.

Soil scientist and Rothamsted's Professor Steve McGrath, added: "In the UK we only have national

coverage at a scale of 1000m. Even though we have had this data for many years, it has never really been used, and because we know now that there is so much variation in soil properties within individual fields, it means this resolution of soil data is virtually useless for farm-level decisions."

In addition to improving health and livelihoods, iSDAsoil will also be of use in the battle against climate change by, for example, optimizing soil carbon capture and increasing soil quality and resilience.

Lead Data Scientist at iSDA, Dr Matt Miller, concluded: "Soils are fundamental to life on earth, but knowledge about African soil has been incomplete and out-dated. In order to continue to feed the fast-growing population sustainably, there is an urgent need to generate accurate, up-to-date soil health information to support agricultural development, environmental sustainability and fight climate change."



A map charting soil fertility every 30 metres across the whole of Africa has been developed by a group of international scientists

COVID pandemic leaves fishing industry casting for customers

MARYLAND, USA

THE coronavirus pandemic has created a windfall for Maryland farmers as families, stuck at home, load up on local produce and cook their own meals. But for the state's seafood purveyors, these are tough times.

The "aquaculture industry has been hit really hard this year," said Colby Ferguson, director of government and public relations for the Maryland Farm Bureau.

The reason: Americans don't like to prepare seafood at home. There are several factors behind this fish fussiness. Some say cooking fish at home stinks up the house. Others say cooking fish is too troublesome. But a bigger issue appears to be fear.

Steve Vilnit, vice president of marketing for Capital Seaboard, a wholesale seafood company in Jessup, Maryland, that caters to restaurants, says that people prefer to eat seafood at restaurants where they believe it will be prepared properly, rather than at-home where there's a chance they could become ill if it's cooked incorrectly.

Consumers are "scared to cook" seafood at home, he said, or "don't know how."

But, he adds, "they trust the chef," at a restaurant.

That's especially true for shellfish such as oysters, which are complicated to handle and have a short time frame in which they must be consumed. Vilnit says almost all oysters are eaten at bars and restaurants.

Crabs, which consumers tend to purchase already cooked, have been the exception and have enjoyed strong sales this year.

For seafood overall, nearly 70% in the United States is consumed at restaurants, according to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

With most restaurants in Maryland - and much of the nation - either closed or operating at reduced capacity, commercial demand for seafood has fallen sharply. Maryland restaurants currently are allowed to operate at 50% capacity, although some counties have further restrictions.

Jason Ruth, owner of Harris Seafood Co., an oyster grower in Chester, Maryland, says sales of oyster are down 72% this year when compared to last year.

"People are feared to death right now," said Ruth, and are not

dining out. "Fish and oysters are something that people generally don't take home to shuck themselves or clean themselves. And those two products actually had the worst years they've ever had," Ruth said prices are 25% lower than this time last year.

Harris Seafood was founded on Kent Island in the 1930s during the Great Depression. For years, it was one of the dozens of oyster packing houses, where workers clean and prepare the oysters to be sold.

During its heyday, Harris Seafood shucked 1,900 gallons of oysters in a single day, according to its website.

Most packing houses closed during the 70s and 80s, leaving Harris Seafood one of the last remaining packing houses on Kent Narrows and one of the last full-time shucking houses in the state of Maryland, according to the company's website. The company also sells clams and crabmeat across the United States to retail stores like Costco, as well as to restaurants.

When restaurants and bars are allowed to open at full capacity, Ruth is hopeful that business will spring back.

"I do think the ones that survive are gonna be stronger than ever," he said. "I think they're going to be very efficient in their menu choices and stuff like that. And I do think the business will come back."

The seafood industry plays an important role in the state's economy. According to the Maryland State Archives, the seafood industry contributes nearly \$600 million in business activity.

Luckily for Harris, the crab business has been brisk. Because crabs are usually eaten outside and they tend to be purchased already prepared, sales of Maryland's famous blue crabs hit records over the summer.

People "know how to eat crabs at home," said Ruth. "You had all these people that were looking to do something at home that was different. They had the money to do it and they were buying crabs."

Janet Terry, the owner of Olney Farmers Market, says business at produce markets has also been strong. She said many families come to the market as their one group outing of the week.

"I am shocked how well we are doing, some of the farmers say this is the best season they've ever had," Terry said.

COVID-19 could be springboard for African innovations

By Special Correspondent, Nairobi

THE COVID-19 pandemic could be a blessing in disguise for Africa's future growth because innovative ideas for addressing it could chart a path for future tech-based economies, scientists say.

The technologies that have been developed in response to COVID-19 in Africa include WhatsApp Chatbots in South Africa, self-diagnostic tools in Angola, contact tracing apps in Ghana and mobile health information tools in Nigeria.

"Africa's future is dependent on technology and innovation, which are crucial for addressing the challenges of low structural transformation and inclusive development on the continent," says Moredreck Chibi, WHO Africa regional advisor for innovation, in an interview with SciDev.Net this month.

"There is a need for investing in innovation as an absolute and fundamental shift

in the continent's traditional business model."

Chibi explains that some rapidly developing health technologies during the COVID-19 pandemic include reconfiguration of District Health Information System in countries such as Kenya, South Africa and Uganda to offer key functionalities such as accelerated case detection, situation reporting, active surveillance and response for COVID-19.

And in a recent analysis conducted by the WHO Africa Regional Office, Africa accounted for 120 of the 1,000 new or modified technologies deployed worldwide to respond to COVID-19 including, surveillance, treatment, prevention and control.

According to the analysis, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda and South Africa were the leading innovators - accounting for 37 per cent of the continent's share - mainly due to existing innovation frameworks in those countries.

The WHO Africa analysis conducted between July and September 2020 examined 1,000 COVID-19 technological innovations electronically from scientific databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar and Scopus using a custom web-mining instruction to search the web for text, image, audio, or videos of the innovations.

Researchers also examined all COVID-19-related technologies published on different organisation websites, social media channels such as Twitter, and on several local and international media channels.

Moses Makayoto, the immediate former deputy director at the Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute and an award-winning Kenyan research scientist and innovator, says the number of new tech innovations coming out of some African countries is not surprising.

According to Makayoto, a

good educational system is one of the reasons behind the African COVID-19 innovation growth, adding that many African educational institutions are doing well in global rankings.

"Kenyan universities and technical colleges, for instance, rank high on the continent and globally. Top notch research and innovation go on in these institutions all the time," he says, adding: "The ideas are being turned into reality in the various tech incubation centres across the country."

According to Chibi, the origin of Africa's tech movement can be traced to Kenya, which has been home to several technological innovations between 2007 and 2010, branding Kenya as Africa's Silicon Valley.

But despite many African countries having policies, strategic frameworks and investments for innovations, not many African countries are creating and implement-

ing innovations, Chibi says.

Peter Ofware, country director of HealthRight International, Kenya, says that technology plays a key role in the health sector, and therefore economies of resource-poor countries.

"It is encouraging therefore to note that the creativity among innovators is inspired even by a crisis like COVID-19 ... the biggest health challenge in a generation," he says.

There is the need to improve on the existing policy frameworks and invest in improving infrastructure to spur further growth in tech innovation.

"Governments have a responsibility to sensitise the young people who are behind most start-ups to realise they hold the future of their countries through such innovations," he says. "Major tech companies and ICT service providers have a corporate social responsibility to give incentives to start-ups."

WHO chief scientist warns against Covid complacency, saying herd immunity unlikely until end of next year

SINGAPORE

THE world must remain vigilant for the next six months, while the coronavirus vaccine is rolled out as it will take time before most of the population receive their vaccinations, the World Health Organisation's chief scientist said.

"We are going to approach the beginning of the end, we can see the light at the end of the tunnel," said Dr. Soumya Swaminathan (pictured) said on Wednesday. "However, there's still a tunnel we have to go through, and the next few months are going to be very critical."

Confirmed cases of Covid-19 have continued to rise at an alarming pace, with global infections topping 78 million, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

While we can look forward - certainly by the end of next year - to a much better picture, the next few months, I think, are going to be tough.

Swaminathan said the vaccines will initially protect a very small group of people who are most vulnerable and most at risk, and months will pass before the rest of the population can be covered.



"It's going to take till the end of 2021 till we start seeing some level of population immunity coming up in some countries," she told CNBC's "Street Signs Asia" on Wednesday.

"We have to keep our guard up, we have to do all the things that we know reduce the transmission and the chances of people

getting ill from this," she said. That includes public health measures and individual behavioral changes.

"While we can look forward - certainly by the end of next year - to a much better picture, the next few months, I think, are going to be tough," she added.

New strain in the UK

Separately, Swaminathan discussed a new variant of the virus that emerged in the United Kingdom recently, and has been identified in countries including Australia, Denmark and Italy.

She said it is unusual because it has a large number of mutations and has separated itself from the average strain.

"What's more worrying is that it has about eight mutations in the region of the spike protein," she added. The spike protein of the virus latches on to receptors found on the surface of human cells in the respiratory tract, or the ACE2 receptor in the case of Covid-19. Mutations have been detected in the part of the protein that binds itself to receptors in the respiratory tract.

"That's probably the reason why this virus seems to have an advantage in infecting people, it seems to be transmitting more efficiently, it seems to be infecting children

who have less of these receptors," she said.

But she noted that the new variant "does not appear to increase clinical severity or make things worse" for those who are infected by it.

The WHO said in a note that the strain may "spread more readily," but that "there is not enough information at present" to determine if mutations will change the severity of the disease, antibody response or vaccine efficacy.

Swaminathan said there's "no reason" to believe that the current vaccines will not cover it at the moment. That's because the vaccines produce a "broad immune response" that is likely to be effective against the new strain.

Still, if the vaccines need to be tweaked, that can be "easily" done. "If there's a need, it could be done," she said. "But at the moment, I think most people believe that the current generation of vaccines should work just fine."

If you think Covid-19 made women's lives hard, climate change will make it worse

By Jennifer Smout

2020 - a year we won't forget. Few will be able to forget the day we first heard the word 'coronavirus' or the night we had our first family meeting with the President and he told us we'd be going into a lockdown. A National Disaster was declared, and regulations and emergency response measures were developed at lightning speed. For the past nine months, it has been hard to think of anything else.

But, with Covid-19 at the forefront of our minds some of us may have forgotten that in the first half of 2020, scientists had already begun predicting that 2020 had a 75 percent chance of being recorded as the hottest year ever measured with instruments since records began, breaking the record set in 2016. By December it was tied with 2016, the hottest year ever recorded.

As glowing reports of Venice's clean canals and fresh air blew across many cities for the first time in ages, we may also have forgotten that South Africa is a significant contributor to climate change - the 14th largest greenhouse gas emitter in the world and the worst on the African continent.

Changing climatic conditions affect temperatures, sea levels, agricultural production, rainfall and water availability and will have a huge impact on every species on the planet. Climate change will certainly result in future declarations of National Disaster in South Africa, and it is important that we don't forget that disasters don't affect everyone equally.

What Covid-19 (hopefully) taught us

Shortly after the 2020 lockdown was announced, schools and Early Childhood Development Centres closed. It's probably safe to say that mothers everywhere felt a sense of foreboding that extended beyond the risk of the pandemic.

Research shows that although many women in South Africa work, their work is perceived as less important and secondary to their duties as carers in their homes. The recent General Household Survey indicates that children are far more likely to live with just their mothers (42%) than just their fathers (4%). Even where two parents are at home, women in heterosexual partnerships continue to do more than double the care and domestic labour according to our last time



Pupils from 20 schools protest about the climate crisis outside Parliament in Cape Town in 2019. File photo

use survey.

Covid-19 exacerbated this gender gap, as reports from around the globe have shown. Working mothers were expected to continue their day job from home and take up the duties of home-schooling. Mothers who were informal workers - street vendors, domestic workers, and waste pickers - were unable to work due to the lockdown restrictions and research shows that Covid-19 resulted in huge job losses for women in this sector. Where women lost their jobs in Covid-19, it was harder for them to get them back than for their male partners, despite less strict regulations. As the Daily Maverick reported, many women went hungry so that their children would have something to eat.

Covid-19 has shown that trying to respond to a crisis in a 'gender neutral' way is never neutral. Without gender-inclusive planning and emergency response measures, gender inequalities are inevitably worsened by crises.

The Constitution provides for the right to health, and it also provides the right to a clean and healthy environment that isn't harmful to our health or wellbeing, and the right to have the environment protected. South Africa has passed several laws and policies to bring this commitment to fruition.

Yet, South Africa is, as a country, planning for climate change. In August 2020 the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy was approved for implementation and in December this year the President announced the representatives on our National Climate Change Coordinating Commission, which he will Chair. South Africa also has a draft climate change bill. However,

although we've signed on to a raft of global agreements (including the Paris agreement), our efforts at meeting our targets to keep global warming below 2°C are highly insufficient.

In addition, 2020 research that I helped to produce with Action24's African Climate Reality Project shows that in this planning the government is (almost always) forgetting to take gender into account despite the evidence that climate change has differentiated impacts on women and men.

Planning to respond to climate change, but forgetting to include gender

"I found the fact that South Africa's law and policy framework around climate change is not gender responsive particularly revealing. Women, especially poor women, are one of the most vulnerable groups to climate change effects, yet South Africa's policies and laws are largely gender blind. They do not consider the differentiated vulnerability between men and women to the effects of climate change. The lack of a gender responsive approach will only serve to reinforce existing inequalities" says Amy Gilliam, Branch Manager at the African Climate Reality Project.

The UNFCCC reports that "differentiation is widely considered to be based on pervasive historical and existing inequalities and multidimensional social factors rather than biological sex." Women, especially poor women, are one of the groups most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and least likely to have the resources to cope with them. Climate change increases the likelihood of natural disasters and women are 14 times as likely as men to die during a disaster and to be negative-

ly affected in the aftermath by stress-related or health issues, gender-based violence, depression, and loss of livelihoods (C40, 2019).

For instance, when Cyclone Idai swept across Southern African countries (Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique) in 2019, women's access to health was negatively affected, and their risk of exploitation and sexual violence was increased. This has ramifications for this generation, but also future generations. For example, when crops fail, families often pull their children out of school, and it is frequently girl children who are pulled out first. As climate change increases the chances of water-borne and other illnesses, women in rural areas will have to travel further for water collection, and where this is not possible will have an increased care burden due to family illness.

Yet the African Climate Reality Project research shows that the law and policy framework to respond to climate change at the national level is for the most part not gender inclusive - including key national documents. Although the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy includes gender sensitivity as a guiding principle, it doesn't specify the mechanisms for this. The Draft Climate Change Bill (last published in June 2018) does not mention gender, women, or gender-differential vulnerability. South Africa's 2009 Climate Change Response White Paper commits South Africa to taking into account the needs and specific issues facing vulnerable groups including women, and positively does not try to homogenize this grouping. It also specifies the importance of women's inclusion and participation in drafting

climate change strategies and responses.

The report also looked at provincial, district and metro municipality climate change strategies in four provinces - Gauteng, Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape. Sadly, the policies and plans in these provinces showed little effort to undertake a gender analysis, often referring simply to vulnerable groups (sometimes without defining these).

What needs to change if we want a better response to climate change?

The report makes clear that as it stands now, South Africa's response to climate change is at risk of exacerbating existing inequalities by not taking gender into account. But all is not yet lost says Gilliam.

"Our hope is for the report to influence existing policies and development of new policies so that they are more gender responsive, and the processes more gender-inclusive. In collaboration with all those involved, we plan to officially launch the report in 2021 and share it as widely as possible amongst community based organisations, civil society groups, provincial legislatures, and the public."

Hearing the voices of women seems more possible with the announcement of the National Climate Change Coordinating Commission in December. The establishment of the Commission arose from the Presidential Jobs Summit held two years ago, in October 2018. According to the Presidential statement "under the Commission's Terms of Reference it will advise on and facilitate a common understanding of a just transition, cognisant of the socio-economic, environmental, and technological implications of climate change. This covers adaptation, mitigation, as well as means of implementation."

The Principles for Deep Just Transitions in the Climate Justice Charter developed this year provide a helpful starting point for defining a just transition. These emphasise climate justice, social justice, eco-centric living, participatory democracy, specialised ownership, international solidarity, decoloniality, and intergenerational justice. At the core of these principles is the commitment that "every community, village, town, city and workplace has to advance the deep just transition to ensure socio-ecological transformation."

"To develop more effective gender inclusive responses to climate change, women must be at the centre of policy making processes" says Gilliam. "I am pleased to see that the new Climate Change Commission is equally split between male and female representatives. It is also encouraging to see a selection of strong female advocates for climate change such as Ms Makoma Lekalaka, Ms Melissa Fourie, and even youth activist, Ms Ayakha Melithafa."

This Commission has its work cut out for it and the responsibility to make sure that a just transition includes gender justice belongs to all of us.

AGENCIES

By Guardian Reporter

Residents of Ilungu Ward, Mbeya Rural have started to reap benefits from electricity powerplant infrastructure project undertaken by Texpol Development Company Limited in collaboration with the Institution of Light for Africa Foundation from Poland and Texpol Development Company Limited from Tanzania.

The project has helped to improve health and education services in the ward.

Despite the preparations of the investor and area's residents to invite the deputy speaker to come as a sign of love and happiness they have after the electricity has reached in their villages Dr Tulia Ackson couldn't make it to the ceremony due to having an emergency, however, they did not give up, they continued to wait for her until night time.

The investor apologized to the residents of Ilungu that they were forced to postpone the inauguration until when the honorable Deputy Speaker will get a chance to visit the project another time.

The residents were curious what is the main reason for her to fail to come while they have been informed about her coming one week before the occasion in which they wanted to congratulate her for being elected to be a deputy speaker and a member of parliament for

Ilungu residents reaping benefits from electricity power plant project



Ifupa and Mwela villagers in a joyful mood during electricity power plant inauguration ceremony where Deputy Speaker Dr Tulia Ackson was scheduled to officiate in Ilungu ward, Mbeya Rural District recently. Photo: Guardian Reporter

Mbeya Urban.

They were determined to tell her about various grievances which are supposed to be resolved including infrastructure challenges.

The residents also wanted to congratulate her for being elected a member of parliament for Mbeya Urban and a deputy speaker of the national assembly for a second time.

The residents of Mbeya have received well the project in which the investor from Poland has invested 8

billion to residents who have not got electricity. They have congratulated the efforts of Dr John Pombe Joseph Magufuli and his government for bringing development to people by inviting investors and putting in place an enabling environment which has made the project a success.

Also the investor Julius Zella, who is a chairman of the Institute of Light for Africa Foundation of Poland has congratulated the Minister for Energy, Dr

Medard Kalemuni for being in the forefront and his ministry in facilitating step by step the project which has helped Ilungu Ward and some of the villages to get reliable electricity.

The chairman has thanked government authorities in its cooperation in the execution of the project, including Tanzania Electric Supply Company (TANESCO), Rural Electrification Agency (REA), Energy and Water Regulatory Authority (EWURA), all these institutions have fully

participated in cooperation with Texpol Development Company Limited.

Speaking with journalists, some of the residents who participated in the inauguration, Watson Samson, and Zakaria Ndolela, said the investor has done an important thing to invite the Deputy Speaker to be the Guest of Honor because she knows well the challenges of the villages due to the fact that she is also a resident of that ward, who is also our daughter. The ward councilor of Ilungu ward, Ibrahim Mbwiga was also present and commended the efforts of the local investor, Julius Zella for valuing his relatives by bringing to them electricity and other social services.

For his part, Pastor Elly Lufingo Mwanwezi of ifupa village in the Ilungu ward, said the project has brought about big achievements including water, medical equipment for assisting pregnant women and children in the health centers which are in the villages in

Ilungu ward, education equipment, such as desks and tables and other equipment for those schools like clean and safe water. Connecting of internet network at Ilungu ward secondary school.

The access to these services in the Ilungu ward has helped to significantly reduce the grievances of the residents of Ilungu.

For his part, project manager, Raphael Zella, explaining on how the project will bring success to residents of Rural Mbeya, said the project is divided into two sections, one is to construct a hydro-power project which will produce 632 MW at a cost of 22 billion shillings. The second part of the project is construction of electricity infrastructure in the Ilungu Ward, which will cost 7 billion and a total of 900 customers have been connected to electricity from TANESCO and Texpol paid for the costs.

Following a request through their speech, residents of the Ilungu ward in a meeting which was convened in 16/03/2012 requested their son Julius Zella to bring electricity to their place and this meeting bore fruits in 31/11/2012 where Texpol Development Company Limited was established and registered by BRELA under number 95567, the headquarters of the company was in Tabata Kisukulu, in Dar es Salaam and another branch in Ifupa, Ilungu ward, Mbeya rural.

The aim of the project is to solve challenges which has been out of the capacity of the residents of Ilungu to resolve and also to support the government to help residents to get access to electricity.

They believe that the availability of electricity will bring sustainable development in their ward.

TURNSTAR HOLDINGS POST 4PC PROFIT, MLIMANI CITY MALL, CONFERENCE CENTRE SHINE

AfDB approves funding for medium-scale independent power producers in Sub-Saharan

ABIDJAN

The African Development Bank last week approved \$15m from the Sustainable Energy Fund for Africa (SEFA) and \$10m from the Clean Technology Fund (CTF) to advance the African Renewable Energy Fund (AREF) II's projects in Sub-Saharan Africa.

SEFA's contribution will comprise a package of \$10m in equity and a \$5m reimbursable grant. CTF, part of the Climate Investment Funds (CIF), will provide \$10m in equity. The combined contribution of \$20m from SEFA and CTF will go to capitalise AREF II's catalytic tranche. The reimbursable grant is earmarked for AREF II's project support facility.

The CTF contribution was approved by the CTF Trust Fund Committee on July 2020 under its Dedicated Private Sector Programme (DPSP III). The financing aims to help small and medium-sized producers to add more than 800MW of hydropower, solar and wind power and battery storage in countries across Sub-Saharan Africa.

Risk of under-investment

"We are very excited to support AREF II at a time when, due to competing financing needs, on account of the cost impacts of the pandemic and for post Covid-19 recovery efforts, there is real risk of under-investment in the African power sector, including in renewables," said Dr Kevin Kariuki, the AfDB's vice president for power, energy, climate and green growth. The bank manages SEFA, a special fund, and is also a CTF implementing entity.

Capitalising the fund's catalytic tranche is expected to attract critical private investment at a time of investment uncertainty and economic disruption owing to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and to ensure capital flows to support the delivery of sustainable power infrastructure to meet the region's growing energy needs.

The AREF II Project Support Facility will work to bring projects to the required level of readiness and bankability. AREF II, the second generation of the pan-African Renewable Energy Fund, is targeting a \$300m market capitalisation, and will be managed by Berkeley Energy.

By Property Watch Reporter

BOTSWANA based Mlimani City investor, Turnstar Holdings posted a four percent profit increase this year thanks partly to good performance by the mall and conference centre whose popularity surged by 75 percent.

Turnstar Holdings Managing Director, Gulaam Abdoola said in an annual report for 2020 that Mlimani City Mall has always enjoyed good occupancy with a large contribution being from the expatriates' community. "As a result, Mlimani enjoys a large market share in Dar es Salaam," Abdoola said.

He pointed out that the coronavirus outbreak affected the conference centre immensely but recent refurbishments had however spiked appetite to 75 percent. The group which also has properties in Botswana, Dubai and Portugal, reported revenue increase of four percent to 10.7 million pulas (over 2.29bn/-) thanks to containing operational expenses.

Mlimani City which is operated by Mlimani Holdings Limited has 165 active tenants on a 56,370 square metres of total lettable area with a market value of US\$960 million according to the Turnstar MD.

Mlimani City comprises of four distinct components being Mlimani City Retail Centre which has a total rentable area of 27,465 sqm; Office Park with a total rentable area of 15,017 sqm; the conference centre with rental space of 4,903 sqm and a residential complex which has 50 free-standing single units.



Mlimani City Conference Centre.

Abdoola further added that mushrooming of commercial properties in Dar es Salaam has affected Mlimani City's commercial office blocks, coupled with the shifting of the government's administrative capital to Dodoma which left behind offices which are now being occupied at lower rentals.

"A renowned local foundation has signed a five year term lease and will occupy 768 square meters of the office Block 6. This signing will attract more investors

to Mlimani City Offices. Competition in the city's residential market is challenging and has been further aggravated by mushrooming of alternative accommodation," the Turnstar Holdings chief executive noted.

"Interest and loan repayments on the US dollar loan facility are made from US dollar rentals earned from the group's Tanzanian property. Hence, there is no foreign currency exposure on the loan and interest repayments," the annual report stated

while noting that due to vacancies in the commercial office space, Mlimani Holdings reported a fair value loss for the year.

"It does not reflect the actual cost nor the condition of the buildings and may change from year to year, depending on occupancy levels. The Botswana properties recorded fair value gains. However, due to the Mlimani fair value loss, the group recorded an overall value loss for the year," the Turnstar Holding report for 2020 stated.

SGR defies Covid woes to grow income by 11pc

NAIROBI

Revenue generated from transportation of cargo on the standard gauge railway (SGR) rose by 10.8 percent in the three months to September, shaking off the economic knocks of the Covid-19 pandemic, official statistics show.

The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) data show the freight services, on the modern railway from Mombasa to Suswa near Naivasha, earned the country Sh3.16 billion in the quarter to September from Sh2.85 billion in three months to June, during a period of the pandemic that saw disruptions in the supply and transport systems. Earnings in the quarter to March were Sh2.68 billion. This indicates a resilience in the period after the onset of the Covid-19 in March.

The pandemic hit hard the logistics sector including public transport and the long-haul transits following the imposed night curfew and restrictions of movement in and out of Nairobi metropolitan area, Mombasa, Kilifi, Kwale and Mandera. The cargo service remained in operation as the passenger trains were halted in line



An SGR cargo train leaves a terminal at the Port of Mombasa for Nairobi's Inland Container Depot.

with government's directives, to support flow of goods through the Mombasa port.

During the period, June and July generated higher cargo business accruing revenues to Sh1.02 billion and Sh1.07 billion respectively, defying the below-

target performance that was associated with the service in its early years of operations. "We carried more goods from April to August on SGR because we were operating during the Covid-19 lockdown unlike passenger business that was

grounded to a halt.

"Customers have also seen the efficiency of SGR in moving cargo," said Kenya Railways managing director Philip Mainga in a response to Business Daily query Tuesday. The SGR passenger business

on the other hand was hit hard following travel restrictions that saw the bookings drop to zero in May and June respectively. However, the trains have been recording growth in the number of passengers since the restrictions were eased.

The KNBS data show the number of passengers in SGR increased from 19,502 in July to 43,235 in September. The revenues also doubled, from Sh22.83 million to Sh51.84 million in the three months. The bookings on both the business and economy coaches are, however, yet to match revenues and number attained last year.

In 2019, there were 135,582 passengers who brought in Sh148.15 million in July. "The Madaraka Express passenger service has seen a steady rise in passenger numbers from July 13. Shortly after resumption, the maximum seat occupancy was 50 percent," said KRC's senior corporate affairs officer Anne Maina in a previous interview with the Business Daily.

Infrastructure will turn green in 2021, Fitch forecasts

PARIS

Published 7 December, its look ahead to next year predicts that infrastructure operators like Vinci, Ferrovial and ACS will spend much less after Covid decimated revenues from airports and to a lesser extent toll roads and public transport systems. However, it will be a record year for green infrastructure, particularly non-hydropower renewable energy schemes, as governments implement plans to decarbonise and stimulate their economies.

Emerging markets will struggle to attract private investment despite positive borrowing conditions, Fitch says, because risk remains high. And

if the conflict between China and the US continues, it will push many developing countries into choosing between the two for infrastructure support as the US and its allies push back against the Belt and Road Initiative.

Airports grounded

Passenger traffic plunged by between 60% and 75% this year at airports operated by Vinci and Ferrovial, which Fitch believes will push back scheduled investments. Around the world, major airport developments have been hit by delays. One of earliest hit was the large Terminal 5 project at Singapore's Changi Airport, which the government put on hold for at least two years while

it assesses the future of aviation in a world with Covid-19. In the US, construction of San Francisco International Airport has been pushed deep into 2021 owing to reduced passenger numbers.

Some airport projects were halted without even a notional restart date, such as the \$1bn San Francisco International Airport project, and the \$3bn Terminal F project at Dallas Fort Worth International. Major packages of the \$13bn modernisation of John F. Kennedy (JFK) International in New York City have also been pushed back, among numerous others, Fitch notes.

Green shoots

However, Fitch believes the renew-

ables sector will get a major boost as they anchor governments' economic recovery plans in tandem with plans to meet carbon reduction targets. Solar, wind, hydrogen and energy-efficiency retrofits are sure to feature. As an example, France has named a zone off the coast of Normandy for a 1GW wind farm and has begun the tender process to develop it.

In the US, construction industry bodies in the US have hailed the election victory of Joe Biden, who campaigned on a \$2trn green infrastructure plan that includes a "second great railroad revolution," building 1.5 million affordable homes, upgrading four million buildings and "weatherising" two million existing

homes.

Another example would be the plan by Porsche, Siemens and other companies to build a wind farm on the Magellan Straits in southern Chile to power a factory they say can produce 550 million litres of hydrogen-based "e-fuel" a year by 2026. This project has received €8.2m from the German government.

Emerging markets slow to emerge The picture in emerging markets remains cloudy, in Fitch's view. Despite the steady growth in popularity of public-private partnerships (PPPs) for infrastructure, Fitch says private investors remain wary of getting involved because of the uncertain course and duration of the

pandemic.

Fitch also believes that "project enabling environments" in many emerging markets remain poor, adding to project risk. Its Project Risk Index (PRI) measures the level of financing, construction, and operational risk in particular markets and, in key emerging markets looking to PPPs, it is still too high.

Developing Asian infrastructure markets score an average of 49.1 out of 100, well below developed Asian markets with their average of 80.1. "Without risk profiles improving, emerging market governments will likely be frustrated in their efforts to attract large amount of private capital," Fitch said.

NEW STRATEGIC COMPANY TAKES OVER EDENVILLE'S RUKWA PROJECT

By Property Watch Reporter

OPERATIONS at Edenville Energy Plc's Rukwa Coal to Power Project have been taken over by a new strategic partner company called Infrastructure Logistics Tanzania Limited.

In its interim results for the year ending June 2020, Edenville said it has finalised two agreements with ILTL as restructuring of the operations of Rukwa Project was completed. "A third agreement was signed in August 2020," the Edenville Plc half year report said while noting that the strategic partnership with ILTL is aimed to address mining, sales and the company's capital position.

During the period under review, the company conducted two fund raising events through issuance of new equity to mostly existing shareholders which grossed 1.2 million pounds sterling. The London Stock Exchange listed company further noted that the coronavirus and heavy rains impacted on its results negatively hence causing losses.

Commenting on the company's performance so far, Edenville Chairman, Jeff Malaihollo said



Trucks loading coal at Edenville's Rukwa mines.

Covid-19 pandemic affected businesses throughout the world and that the government ordered a countrywide partial lockdown during the second quarter.

"However, the third quarter saw a recommencement of mining, processing and sales of coal from Rukwa and also the completion of three related

agreements with our strategic partner ILTL," Malaihollo said.

He pointed out that the coming on board of ILTL will form a new business model which is expected to improve the fortunes of the company by freeing up the capital need for operations.

"In June 2020, the board also welcome the appointment of Nick von Schirnding as an

independent non-executive director who replaced Rufus Short. Nick has 25 years of experience in coal mining and natural resources including strategic development, mergers and acquisitions plus driving operational change," he added.

Malaihollo further noted that the ILTL deal will also help renegotiation of Edenville's

debts while the board changes put the company in a stronger position to achieve its goals.

The company is also having ongoing discussions with Lind Partners LLC regarding the status of the funding agreement; and proposed hand over of day to day operations to ILTL under the conditions of the coal mining agreement in November 2020.

Daewoo E&C wins US\$455 mln deal from Mozambique

MAPUTO

This map, provided by Daewoo Engineering & Construction Co., shows the location of a project to build two liquefied natural gas (LNG) production trains in Mozambique. Daewoo Engineering & Construction Co., a major builder in South Korea, said Wednesday it has won a US\$455 million order to build two liquefied natural gas (LNG) production trains in Mozambique.

Under the deal signed with CCS joint venture, Daewoo E&C will handle steel structures, mechanics, piping works and electronic instruments in the project at the Afungi Industrial Complex in northern Mozambique. The joint venture, a special purpose company set up for the project, is composed of U.S. oilfield services provider McDermott International Inc., Italy's Saipem SPA and Japan's Chiyoda Corp.

Daewoo E&C said it is set to complete the project in 33 months after starting construction. The two trains will have an annual production capacity of 6.4 million tons of LNG. With the latest deal, Daewoo E&C has won orders worth 3.05 trillion won (\$2.74 billion) so far this year, achieving 60 percent of its annual order target of 5.1 trillion won.

Kensington housing renovated by 'exceptional artisans' from informal settlements area in CP

CAPE TOWN

Cape Town residents have taken to social media to praise the body corporate of a well-known housing complex in Kensington for hiring unemployed people from a nearby informal settlement to do their renovations.

The Kensington Place body corporate plans to unveil the newly renovated complex on Saturday, 19 December. This is the first time in 20 years that the building has received a facelift. Residents say they decided to use the project as an opportunity to uplift their community and create employment. The three-week-long upgrades were completed by a team of 13 workers, most of whom were from Die Kamp informal settlement near the complex.

Project funding

Funding for the project came from savings accumulated over the years, said Joseph Bruintjies, a resident of Kensington Place and the project manager who oversaw the upgrades. "There are 12 units in the complex and some of our residents are retired, so we have a low living standards measure in terms of income. We only had R350,000 available to do the upgrades and we wanted to make this a viable, low-risk project," he said.



People involved in the refurbishing of Kensington Place hope that their project will inspire other communities to use the skills and services of unemployed people in their area.

Had the body corporate decided to hire a contractor, most of the funds would not have gone to the artisans who did the work,

said Bruintjies. Instead, he said, they were able to pay each worker R450 a day to promote economic empowerment in the

community.

Efficient work

Austin Davids, one of the painters on the

project, said he was amazed by how much the team had been able to accomplish just 12 days into the project. This is despite what Phaldie Daniels called the "challenging condition of the building". Daniels, the project's site manager, is an experienced tour guide who has been out of work for seven months, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. "I appreciate the opportunity to put bread on the table again," said Daniels.

Once the project has been completed, Bruintjies said, he would like to assist the team to start their own company. "The lesson for all of us is not to look far ... but discover our own people in our own community and empower them economically. We found these exceptional artisans within 600 metres of our complex in an informal settlement," Bruintjies wrote in a post on the Kensington/Factretion UNITE Facebook page.

Hotel prices fall as Covid travel restrictions bite

NAIROBI

The prices of rooms in major hotels have fallen by up to a third ahead of the Christmas festivities due to the Covid-19 restrictions that have disrupted travel.

A spot-check across hotels including the EnglishPoint, Travellers, Sarova Whitesands in Mombasa and Crowne Plaza at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi shows that room rates had dropped compared to last year as hoteliers try to woo travellers.

Luxury beach hotel, EnglishPoint in Nyalı had given customers a 20 per cent discount and is charging Sh24,800 per person a night while Travellers Beach Hotel has also reduced prices by 40 per cent to

charge Sh19,000 single room a night.

PrideInn is charging Sh15,250 per person sharing on half board and Sh18,800 per person sharing for the new whole day dining concept. Last year's rate was Sh20,500 per person on half board, representing a 25.6 per cent drop.

The price cuts pile more pressure on an industry that has been one of the hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic and lost up to Sh11.59 billion (\$1 billion) in revenue between January and October when numbers of foreign visitors fell by two thirds due to travel restrictions.

"We have embraced a very flexible pricing strategy this year based on length of stay and number of rooms per family. Our rates are much lower than last year and so is

the occupancy," Ann Peggy Ashira, PrideInn Paradise Beach Resort Mombasa general manager said.

"This festive season rates - between December 23 to January 2- at all our properties are lower than 2019 by between 10-25 per cent depending on the room type booked...the daily themes and offerings have not been scaled down this year versus 2019," said Sarova managing director Jimi Kariuki.

Tourism ministry data shows that international visitors fell to fewer than 500,000 in the first 10 months from 1.7 million in the same period last year, knocking Sh110 billion off revenues that had been predicted to reach Sh147.5 billion. Tourism industry earned Kenya Sh163.5 billion last year.



Sarova Whitesands in Mombasa.

CONSTRUCTION

HONG KONG OFFICE RENTS COULD FALL 10PC IN 2021

HONG KONG

Despite hopes for a recovery after this year's pandemic-induced meltdown, property consultancies have issued cautious forecasts for Hong Kong in New Year, with office leasing in particular braced for a further decline after a battering in 2020. This year saw office rents in upmarket Central fall to their lowest since 2015, while tenant withdrawals in the city overall reached the highest level on record, according to a recent JLL analysis.

New lettings in Central fell about 39 percent compared with 2019 levels. The vacancy rate in the overall office market rose to 8.8 percent, the highest level since 2004, and the amount of leased space relinquished prematurely reached 1.6 million square feet (148,645 square metres), a high since 2001.

Squinting for the silver lining "Despite subdued leasing demand in the near term, gross leasing volume is expected to pick up in 2021 as tenants start making longer-term real estate decisions," said Alex Barnes, head of markets at JLL in Hong Kong. "The vacancy



Eastern Hong Kong projects such as Swire's One Taikoo Place weathered 2020 better than most locations.

rates will continue to rise in 2021, albeit at a slower pace. The rental fall would be less significant next year compared with 2020."

JLL expects rents to drop in a range of 5 to 10 percent in 2021 across all office submarkets – except for Tsim Sha Tsui,

where leasing rates are seen falling 10 to 15 percent in the southern Kowloon area's aging buildings as district faces growing competition from emerging business locations in the city.

JLL's Oliver Tong (left), Joseph Tsang and Alex Barnes are predicting less pain

for 2021. The rental decline in traditional business districts has been steeper than in decentralised locations as more tenants seek cost-effective options, JLL said.

In Central, office rents this year fell an estimated 22.7 percent to an average of HK\$93.80 (\$12.10) per square foot, the sharpest drop among submarkets. Rents in the hard-hit financial district are now down 28 percent from their peak in the second quarter of 2019.

Up and coming Kowloon East, which thanks to newer buildings and lower rates than Central has attracted tenant titans like JP Morgan in recent years, took less of a hit but still saw rents fall 10.5 percent this year, JLL said. Still, the steep correction in rents could give bargain-hunting firms the push they need to consider taking up more space in Hong Kong.

"Lower rents can increase the city's competi-

tiveness, potentially positioning Hong Kong as a more attractive location to conduct business," Barnes said. "The secondary listings of PRC firms in Hong Kong and GBA Wealth Management Connect would attract more mainland financial institutions and related industries to set up offices in the city, which could help support office demand in the medium term."

Sentiment vaccine needed

Cushman & Wakefield also sought to temper 2021 expectations in its Hong Kong forecasts released last week. The agency said that while the full-year outlook remains gloomy, the availability of a COVID-19 vaccine by mid-year should support the beginnings of an office demand recovery.

Cushman estimates that the amount of office space under lease in Hong Kong fell by 2 million square feet during 2020, roughly

in line with JLL's findings. Overall vacancy in the fourth quarter climbed to 12.1 percent, the highest level since the first quarter of 2005. That degree of empty offices climbed into double digits across Hong Kong's major commercial hubs during the quarter, with the exception of Hong Kong East, where lower rents and new projects such as Swire Properties' One Taikoo Place have helped to draw multinational tenants.

"Net absorption is forecast to remain in negative territory, ranging from -650,000 to -700,000 square feet, as demand is set to remain weak in 2021," said John Siu, managing director of Cushman & Wakefield Hong Kong. "Despite the limited new supply scheduled for 2021, the 4.2 million square feet in new supply from nine projects planned in 2022 is expected to continue to weigh on rentals."

Curbing executive travel helps Jacobs achieve net zero carbon emissions in 2020

NEW YORK

US engineering giant Jacobs says it has fulfilled its commitment to transition to 100% renewable energy for its operations this year, and has achieved net-zero carbon emissions for its operations and business travel, in part by encouraging executives to stay put and in part by buying renewable energy and carbon offsets (RECs).

2020 saw a 33% reduction in the company's total calculated carbon emissions compared to 2019, down to 116,753 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e), and a 50% reduction in travel-related carbon emissions. The company declined to say how much of the emissions reduction came from buying offsets.

A Jacobs spokesperson told GCR: "We purchased a proportion of RECs to help meet our 100% renewable energy commitment in 2020. Our dependence on carbon offsets and RECs will diminish over time through emission reductions and other investments."

Business travel represents 60% of Jacobs' quantified carbon footprint, and the company aims to cut business travel emissions by 20% by 2022 against its FY2019 baseline. It acknowledged the pandemic's role in reducing travel emissions in 2020, but said it was working to prevent a post-Covid bounce-back.

"While our FY2020 has been impacted by Covid-19 and will no



An executive jet is airborne.

doubt show a dip in emissions versus FY2021 if normality resumes, we will explain this reduction in our reporting and continue to compare progress against our baseline year FY2019," the spokesperson said.

"We are working to ensure that when travel restrictions are lifted and normality resumes, our business travel emissions do not rebound to pre-pandemic levels. The pandemic resulted in fast-tracking IT improvements to enable better virtual

connectivity with co-workers and clients, along with a cultural and behavioural shift to better connect virtually, which we strive to continue to grow.

"Our senior leaders have pledged to reduce in-person meetings that require travel; we have increased promotion and awareness of web conferencing tools; and we have implemented employee and manager travel dashboards displaying their progress towards meeting the 20% reduction. These measures

have already helped reduce our business travel emissions pre-Covid-19." Jacobs said its real estate operations team is cutting energy use in offices by optimising office space and focusing on sustainable office buildings.

Company chair and chief executive Steve Demetriou said: "Reaching our goal to become carbon neutral is a major step in improving the way we run our operations at Jacobs. And our biggest opportunity to affect

climate change is through the work performed for our clients – helping them to achieve change and create a better tomorrow for all. Together, we are pushing the limits of what is possible and staying ahead to create the new standards of our future."

Jacobs said it would be carbon negative for its operations and business travel by 2030. The company is also helping five of its clients do a climate-risk assessment. Its climate action plan is here.

Damac Properties to discuss increasing stake in London's Nine Elms project

DUBAI

Damac Properties, the UAE's third-biggest property developer by market capitalisation, is looking to increase its shareholding in the Nine Elms project in London, the company said on Sunday.

The company will discuss the matter during a board meeting on Wednesday, it said in a statement to the Dubai Financial Market, where its shares trade. Damac Properties owns 20 per cent of the Nine Elms project, with the majority owned by Dico Group, a private company owned by Damac Properties' majority shareholder Hussein Sajwani.

"The company confirms that to date there are no other acquisition deals that have been submitted to the company's board of directors for the purposes of consideration and discussion," the developer said.

Nine Elms is a 50-storey tower located in London's South Bank. It has 450 one, two and three-bedroom apartments for sale. About 60 per cent of the units have been sold and the project is due to be completed by the end of next year, a senior executive from the company told The National in October. Damac is continuing to look at new opportunities in Europe as well as in the US and Canada, Niall McLoughlin, senior vice president at Damac Properties and Dico Group, said.

"We are always looking for opportunities and there are various ways we can finance any acquisition, through debt, a loan or equity," Mr McLoughlin said. "So we can look at that as and when an opportunity arises."

Damac, which owns and operates the Middle East's only Donald Trump-branded golf club – the Trump International Golf Club in Dubai – swung to a loss in the third quarter of this year after declaring almost Dh580 million in writedowns amid the coronavirus pandemic. The company reported a third-quarter loss of Dh544.6m, compared with a Dh51m profit in the same period in 2019, it said in November. Revenue increased by 43 per cent to Dh1.28bn.

Dubai's real estate market slowed after a drop in oil prices that began in 2014, in tandem with an oversupply in the market as projects are completed. JLL's third quarter UAE Real Estate Market report said about 26,000 new homes were scheduled for completion in the final quarter of this year. The total stock at the end of the third quarter was 585,000 homes, the consultancy said.

Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway 64 per cent complete

JAKARTA

Indonesia's \$6bn Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway was said to be 63.9% complete this month after its fifth tunnel, 1.88km in length, was bored through on 15 December, reports The Jakarta Post.

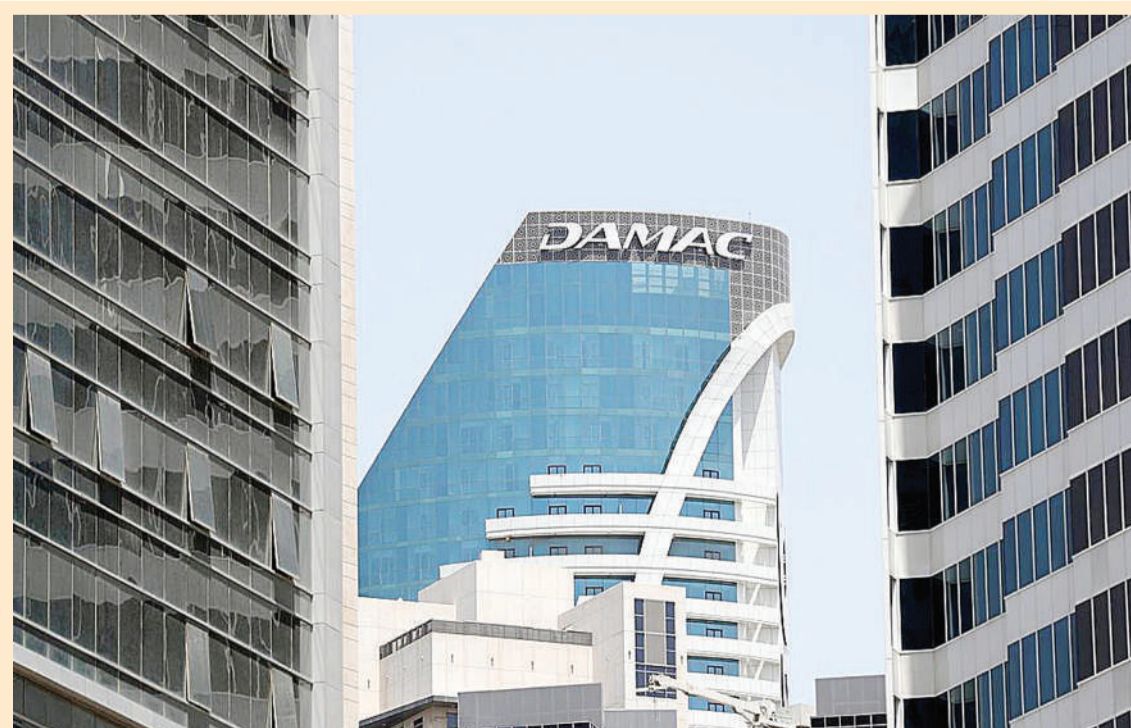
The 142.3km railway, financed by China and with construction led by China Railway Engineering Corporation, will carry people from the capital to Bandung in West Java province at 350km/h in around 40 minutes.

After a fierce bidding war for the project between China and Japan, which China won, construction began in 2016. After a number of delays, including a stoppage owing to the coronavirus, the railway

is scheduled to begin operating in the second half of 2021, the Post reported.

There are 13 tunnels and sub-grade sections on the railway, and some 80km of it runs on elevated structures (pictured), says PT Kereta Cepat Indonesia China (KCIC), the joint venture of Chinese and Indonesian state companies responsible for the line.

The breakthrough of No. 1 Tunnel, as it is called, drew praise from Ning Jizhe, deputy head of China's powerful National Development and Reform Commission. In a video address to the ceremony, Ning called the railway a landmark project under the Belt and Road Initiative, reports Xinhua. Tunnels number 5, 3 and 7 have also been completed this year.



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

WORLD

Rich nations said to order 53% of COVID-19 vaccines

By May Zhou in Houston

IT looks like money can put a country at the front of the line when it comes to getting the COVID-19 vaccine, and some wealthy individuals are taking the same approach.

With both Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines approved by the United States and other countries for emergency use, the vaccines are being spoken for, with the wealthiest Western countries snatching up most of the initial doses.

The US has already secured the first 100 million doses of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and another 100 million doses from Moderna. Both vaccines require two doses per person treated.

The US, which has the option to buy an additional 300 million doses from Moderna and 100 million to 500 million doses from Pfizer, has a population of 331 million.

The US also has the most coronavirus cases, more than 18 million, and the most deaths, over 322,800, as of Wednesday, according to the Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center.

Globally, there are more than 78 million reported cases and over 1.71 million COVID-19 deaths.

According to Oxfam, a confederation of 20 independent charitable organizations focusing on alleviating global poverty, wealthier nations have bought enough doses to vaccinate their entire populations nearly three times over by the end of 2021. Canada tops the list with enough doses to vaccinate each citizen five times.

In total, rich nations representing 14 percent of the world's population have bought 53 percent of all the most promising vac-

cines so far. Oxfam estimated that only 10 percent of the populations in 70 poor countries will get vaccinated in 2021.

COVAX, or the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access Facility, aims to accelerate the development and production of vaccines through global cooperation and ensure that all countries can obtain them. The initial goal of COVAX is to distribute 2 billion doses of the vaccines by the end of 2021. China joined COVAX in October as a self-financing country, which helps the facility aid poorer countries.

Trying to pay for priorities

While the wealthier countries have moved to the front of the line for the vaccines, well-off individuals in the US also are trying to do the same, with some reportedly offering to pay as much as five figures in US dollars to bypass government-mandated priorities.

According to the Los Angeles Times, doctors offering concierge medical care to wealthy individuals are getting hundreds of inquiries a day to see if they can jump the line to get the COVID-19 vaccines.

With the vaccines initially in short supply, priorities are to first vaccinate health-care workers and nursing home residents. A panel advising the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended on Sunday that the next in line should be people age 75 and over plus frontline essential workers such as emergency responders, teachers and grocery store employees. So far, more than a half million people in the US have gotten their first shot, which needs to be followed by a second shot a few weeks later.

Some people, however, don't want to wait.



A bottle reading "Vaccine COVID-19" next to US pharmaceutical company Pfizer and German biotechnology company BionTech logos is viewed on Nov 23, 2020. (File photo)

According to the Los Angeles Times, doctors offering concierge medical care to wealthy individuals are getting hundreds of inquiries a day to see if they can jump the line to get the COVID-19 vaccines.

Hollywood celebrities and Silicon Valley executives accustomed to getting preferred treatment with their money are instructing their assistants to find out how they can get better treatment, the newspaper reported.

"Their people are calling me literally every day," the Times quoted one doctor, who requested anonymity. "They don't want to wait. They want to know how they can get it more quickly."

Dr Jeff Toll, at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, one of the first hospitals to receive the vaccine, said a patient asked him: "If I donate US\$25,000 to Cedars, would that help me get in line?" Toll said he replied no.

California Governor Gavin Newsom has warned that California will be "very aggressive in making sure that those with means, those with influence, are not crowding out those that are most deserving of the vaccines".

"Those that think they can get ahead of the line and those that think because they have resources or they have relationships that will allow them to do it... we also will be monitoring that very, very closely," Newsom said.

STAT News, which covers biotech and pharmaceutical news, reported that athletes, politicians and well-connected or wealthy people have managed to get special treatment during the pandemic, "including preferential access to testing and unapproved therapies. Early access to coronavirus vaccines is likely to be no different".

STAT said it could happen in different ways: fudging the definition of "essential workers" or "high-risk" conditions, physicians caving to pressure to keep their patients happy, and even through outright bribery or theft.

"When we talk about the concept of individuals being able to get to the front of the line, that's not difficult, because our system is designed to advantage those people with means like that," Glenn Ellis, a visiting scholar at the National Center for Bioethics in Research and Health Care at Tuskegee University and a bioethics fellow at Harvard Medical School, told STAT.

Agencies

Youth unemployment: A scourge of the COVID-19 economy

AS 2020 was dawning, the oldest members of the world's youngest generation - Generation Z - were preparing to emerge into one of the strongest global job markets in decades.

That promising landscape was shredded in a matter of months with the onset of the global coronavirus pandemic. Unemployment soared everywhere, but it visited with a fury on the ranks of the youngest workers, often over-represented in service industries like restaurants and travel that were struck

hardest by business shutdowns and restrictions on consumer movement and activities.

When the pandemic struck in the first quarter of 2020, the youth labor market bracket - 15-to-24-year-olds in most economic statistics - had only just begun to claw back some of their share of the job market lost during the 2007-2009 Great Recession.

In the Group of 7 advanced economies, young workers went from accounting for 11.2 percent of all those employed at the end

of 2019 to just 10 percent at the end of June, according to data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. More than 6.4 million youths lost work across the G7 in the first half of 2020.

In the United States, Gen Z members were more likely than any other age group to report being affected by unemployment or lost income.

A Pew Research Center survey from the spring found that half of those aged 23 or younger said they or someone in their house-

hold had lost their job or had their pay reduced because of the pandemic. That compared with just 40 percent of Millennials, 36 percent of Gen Xers and 25 percent of Baby Boomers.

While the US unemployment rate has dropped to 6.7 percent from a post-World War Two high of 14.7 percent in April, it remains well into the double-digits for teens and workers in their early 20s, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Beyond the immediate damage to education and job pros-

pects is the risk of what economists call "scarring," where the knock-on effects do long-term harm to income levels, access to training, career prospects and even mental well-being.

Data show that periods of youth unemployment cause serious long-term damage. A study by the London-based Centre for Economic Policy Research found that even one month of unemployment for those aged 18-20 knocked 2 percent of total lifetime income.

Agencies

Nigeria school abductions sparked by 'cattle feuds, not extremism'

LAGOS

THE kidnap of 344 schoolboys in northwest Nigeria had the appearance of an Islamist militant attack. There was even a video purporting to show some of the boys with members of Boko Haram, the extremists behind the 2014 kidnapping of more than 270 schoolgirls in the northeast.

But four government and security officials familiar with negotiations that secured the boys' release told Reuters the attack was a result of inter-communal feuding over cattle theft, grazing rights and water access - not spreading extremism.

The mass abduction of children in Katsina state would mark

a dramatic turn in clashes between farmers and herders that have killed thousands of people across Africa's most populous nation in recent years, posing a challenge to authorities also battling a decade-long Islamist insurgency in the northeast.

Negotiations

Officials in Katsina and neighbouring Zamfara, where the boys were released after six days, said the attack was carried out by a gang of mostly semi-nomadic ethnic Fulanis, including former herders who turned to crime after losing their cows to cattle rustlers.

"They have local conflicts that



they want to be settled, and they decided to use this (kidnapping) as a bargaining tool," said Ibrahim Ahmad, a security adviser to the Katsina state government who took part in the negotiations through intermediaries.

Such groups are known more for armed robberies and small-

scale kidnappings for ransom.

Cattle herders in the northwest are mainly Fulani, whereas farmers are mostly Hausa. For years, farmers have complained of herders letting their cows stray on to their land to graze, while herdsmen have complained their cows are being stolen.

Dozens of gunmen arrived on motorcycles at the Government Science Secondary School on Dec 11 in the town of Kankara in Katsina. They marched the boys into a vast forest that extends from Katsina into Zamfara.

Officials in both states told Reuters they established contact with the kidnapers through their clan, a cattle breeders' association and former gang members who participated in a Zamfara amnesty programme.

The intermediaries met the kidnapers in Ruga forest on several occasions before they agreed to release the boys, according to Zamfara Governor Bello Matawalle and security sources including Ahmad.

The gang accused vigilante groups, set up to defend farming communities against banditry, of killing Fulani herders and stealing their cows, Matawalle and Ahmad said. They also made similar accusations against members of a Katsina state committee set up to investigate cattle theft, Ahmad added.

Agencies

China, Russia criticise US sanctions

BY ZHANG YUNBI

UNILATERAL sanctions and unjustified crackdowns imposed by Washington have drawn strong criticism from both Beijing and Moscow, and were discussed in a phone conversation between State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Tuesday.

In their second phone conversation since November, Wang said the United States runs counter to this era's trends and frequently threatens and imposes unilateral sanctions, which could only leave it with one of the more disgraceful records in the world.

China is willing to work with Russia and with the global community to staunchly protect the basic norms of international relations and ensure world fairness and justice, Wang said.

During the talks, Lavrov stressed the need to resolutely oppose US moves that sabotage multilateralism and boycott the US crackdown on Russia and China.

The Russian senior diplomat called for championing international law, safeguarding the common interests of the two countries and safeguarding international stability and cooperation. Both Wang and Lavrov noted that next year marks the 20th anniversary of the signing of China-Russia Treaty of Good-Neighborhood, Friendship and Cooperation, and both sides stated their readiness to deepen strategic cooperation and promote each other's development.

Wang said the two countries achieved many hard-won results by helping each other through the COVID-19 pandemic and offering mutual support in pragmatic cooperation.

Also, they led international cooperation in the fight against the pandemic, resolutely fought the "politicization of the virus", and jointly safeguarded world and regional security and stability, Wang said.

The great frequency of recent official contacts between the two countries serves as a clear response to the urgency of advancing multilateralism, recovery and justice at a time when the world is still trapped in the pandemic and overshadowed by protectionism, officials and experts said.

Cheng Guoping, the Foreign Ministry's external security commissioner, said the China-Russia comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership in the new era, as led by President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin, has reached a record high and is a model for a new type of great power relations. The two leaders have engaged in frequent contacts through video links and telephone conversations.

The bilateral relationship manifests strong dynamism and serves as a strong pillar amid a changing global landscape, Cheng said when meeting with Russian Ambassador to China Andrey Denisov on Dec 3.

Denisov said the two sides should bolster policy communication and coordination to jointly tackle shared global and regional security challenges.

The two countries also conducted their second joint aerial patrol in the Asia-Pacific region, the two defense ministries announced on Tuesday. The patrol, part of the annual cooperation plan between the two militaries, does not target any third party, and the warplanes did not enter the territorial airspace of any third country, Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said on Wednesday.



Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi (left) meets with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Sochi, Russia, on May 13, 2019. (File photo)

China's response to COVID-19 pandemic lays foundation for global control of pandemic - top epidemiologist

CHINA'S response to the COVID-19 pandemic was "scientific," "timely" and "transparent" which "laid the foundation for the global control of the pandemic," Chinese top epidemiologist said on Saturday, rebutting US accusations that the pandemic was caused by China's lack of transparency.

Virus isolation, genome sequencing, specifying the average incubation period, and determining the main modes of transmission were the most important contributions made by Chinese scientists to the world, Wu Zunyou, chief epidemiologist of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, said in an address to the virtual meeting of the Beijing Forum held in Peking University on Saturday.

China's early response laid a scientific founda-

tion for China and the international community to prevent and control the epidemic, he noted. At the forum, Wu restated how Chinese officials and scientists reacted quickly to the pneumonia of unknown cause when it first broke out in Wuhan, Central China's Hubei Province.

China only spent three weeks from the discovery of the epidemic to making the decision of locking down Central China's Wuhan. It only took about a week since China discovered the epidemic and isolated the pathogens, the shortest time on record for scientists to recognize a new infectious disease, Wu pointed out.

Chinese scientists made another record-breaking achievement in history by successfully isolating pathogens to creating diagnostic reagents for clinical diagnosis in days, he said.

He stressed that Wuhan's seafood market was closed despite the fact that there were only 27 infections linked to the market and the main transmission mode of this virus was still a mystery. The decision of locking down Wuhan, a city with more than 10 million people, was made in January when only around 500 cases were reported in the city.

"The lockdown of Wuhan prevented 1.5 million people from being infected with the virus and 60,000 people from dying from it in China."

The forum that Wu attended comes at a time when a special UN session this week addressed the COVID-19 pandemic and pushed for a COVID-19 vaccine to be made available to all nations and for rich countries to assist developing countries fight against and recover from

the pandemic.

The Global Times found that, during the UN session, the US did not give up their political narratives by pointing fingers at China and asserting it was because of the lack of transparency by China that led to the subsequent pandemic. An unnamed US official quoted by Reuters even called the UN meeting of world leaders on the COVID-19 pandemic a "stage for Chinese propaganda."

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stressed at the Beijing Forum that the pandemic is a "wake-up call" to solve the ills - inequalities and divisions - facing the world, calling for a global "ceasefire" and getting back to the track of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Wu also warned of a more severe pandemic

in winter and called for international collaboration on the pandemic, saying China's success in containing the virus cannot turn around the global pandemic. Effective anti-epidemic measures will work only when coordinated actions are taken by all, he stated.

With the theme "The harmony of civilizations and prosperity for all," the one-day meeting of the Beijing Forum on Saturday gathers some top experts, former governmental officials and representatives from international organizations online, including Guterres and Jerome Kim, the Director General of the International Vaccine Institute (IVI), and American economist Joseph Stiglitz.

Global Times

Value of talks stressed for East Africa peace

BEIJING

EAST AFRICAN countries have been urged to explore dialogue in an effort to resolve the conflicts that some nations are experiencing and improve the prospects for peace and stability in the region.

Calls for such efforts were made at the 38th extraordinary summit of the assembly of heads of state and government of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, or IGAD, on Sunday. Representatives of the eight-member bloc were meeting in Djibouti.

African Union Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat, in particular, pointed to tensions between Kenya and Somalia.

Mahamat called for talks between officials of the two countries, saying that, for long periods, the neighbors had enjoyed good relations. He cited Kenya's contribution of troops to an African Union mission in Somalia and its host-

ing of many Somali refugees.

"I would, therefore, like to call on the two parties to open dialogue with a view to the resumption of these relations, and ask IGAD to strongly encourage them in this regard," Mahamat said.

Somalia cut off diplomatic relations on Dec 15, when it accused Kenya of interfering in its internal affairs.

Exports limited

Somalia recalled its ambassador to Kenya and expelled the Kenyan ambassador. It also limited some exports to Kenya.

"In recent weeks, it has become apparent to Somalia that the Kenyan government is placing great political pressure on Axmed Maxamed Islaan, the regional president of Jubaland, in order to pursue its political and economic interests in Somalia," the Somali Ministry of Foreign Affairs had said in a statement on Nov 29, referring to a region of the country.



Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (left) meeting with his Sudanese counterpart Abdalla Hamdok on the sidelines of the 38th Extraordinary Summit of the Assembly of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Djibouti. (File photo)

Kenya denied the claims. "The government of Kenya respects and upholds the cardinal international principles of self-determination, sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of all countries, and in particular those in Africa," the country's Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Nov 30.

The tensions in Ethiopia, including the displacement of thousands, were also discussed at the meeting on Sunday.

Mahamat urged IGAD members to assist the country in dealing with the humanitarian crisis arising from the conflict in its Tigray region.

He said the Ethiopian government had taken bold steps to preserve the unity, stability and respect for constitutional order in the country.

However, Mahamat noted the outpouring of refugees resulting from the conflict.

On South Sudan, Mahamat said peace and reconciliation in the country require greater efforts from what he called national stakeholders and the region.

These efforts were necessary to defend the gains made so far. He said the IGAD is expected to play a strategic role in Africa.

UN 'deeply concerned' by US presidential pardon for convicted Blackwater guards

GENEVA

The UN human rights office on Wednesday said it is deeply concerned by the recent U.S. presidential pardons for four security guards from the private military firm Blackwater who were convicted of killing 14 Iraqi civilians.

In a statement issued Wednesday, Marta Hurtado, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, commented that pardoning them contributes to impunity and has the effect of emboldening others to commit such crimes in the future.

The statement stressed that these four individuals were given sentences ranging from 12 years to life imprisonment, including on charges of first-degree murder.

"By investigating these crimes and completing legal proceedings, the U.S. complied with its obligations under international law," the statement said, adding that victims of gross human rights violations have the right to see perpetrators receive punishments proportionate to the severity of their conduct.

The UN human rights office calls on the United States to renew its commitment to fighting impunity for gross human rights violations and serious violations of international humanitarian law, as well as to uphold its obligations to ensure accountability for such crimes.

According to media reports, U.S. President Donald Trump on Tuesday granted full pardon to 15 people, including four Blackwater security guards convicted of killing 14 Iraqi civilians.

Xinhua

Ethiopia: Forces have been sent into Benishangul-Gumuz region

ADDIS ABABA

ETHIOPIA'S Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said yesterday he had deployed forces to the western Benishangul-Gumuz region, a day after gunmen killed more than 100 people in the area, which has seen regular ethnic violence.

On Wednesday, the state-run Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) said gunmen had killed over 100 people in a dawn attack in the village of Bekoji in Bulen county in the Metekel zone, an area where numerous ethnic groups live.

"The massacre of civilians in Benishangul-Gumuz region is very tragic," Abiy said on Twitter. "The government, to solve the root causes of the problem, has deployed a necessary force."



Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed

The EHRC old Xinhua in a statement that the gunmen set fire and shot at residents while they were asleep.

The incident revealed "the ever deteriorating human rights protection in the region" and that "attacks have intensified in appearance and scale recently", the commission said.

Investigations showed no police or security forces were assigned in the vicinity of the attacks, the commission added, noting that it had been monitoring and investigating the incident in consultation with victims and concerned stakeholders.

Africa's second-most populous nation has been wrestling with outbreaks of deadly violence since Abiy took office in 2018 and accelerated democratic and economic reforms that have loosened the

state's iron grip on regional rivalries.

Residents on Wednesday described to Reuters seeing dozens of dead bodies and being chased by unknown gunmen shooting at locals.

Abiy and senior officials had visited the region on Tuesday to call for calm after multiple deadly attacks in recent months, such as a Nov 14 assault in which gunmen targeted a bus and killed 34 people.

In a separate part of the country, Ethiopia's military has been fighting rebels in the northern Tigray region for more than six weeks in a conflict that has displaced close to 950,000 people. The deployment of federal troops there has led to fears of a security vacuum in other restive regions.

Agencies

Village in Xinjiang develops featured industry, bids farewell to poverty

POVERTY reduction efforts have paid off in a county on the southwest fringe of the Tarim Basin, China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, as the county pursues a path of agricultural and husbandry industrialization.

Keping county has 72.4 percent of its territory covered by the Gobi desert and mountains, and was once a priority on China's poverty alleviation scheme. Developing industries that suit local conditions, the county has turned the table and embraced prosperity.

In Keping county's Yuerqi village, pitaya fruits are hanging on trees in greenhouses of a professional agricultural cooperative. These pitaya trees were introduced from southern China's Hainan province.

"Pitaya fruits are fruits of money for us," said Du Xiaoyan, an employee of the cooperative. She noted pitayas are easy to grow and manage, and feature low input and high output.

Upon market investigation, the cooperative started trialing the pitaya business since 2018. So far, 26 pitaya greenhouses have been built in Keping village, where over 10,000 pitaya trees are planted. The cooperative has 45 employees, including 39 impoverished, who can earn as much as 30,000 yuan



Employees of an agricultural cooperative in Keping county, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous county remove the ears of pitayas in a greenhouse, July 17, 2019. File Photo

(\$4,594) each year.

Villager Memet Selam, receiving training from the cooperative, has planted pitaya trees in his vegetable greenhouses. His fruits are now sold under the assistance from the cooperative. "Each of my vegetable greenhouse could only make three to four thousand yuan a year in the past, but now the pitayas alone are earning me at least 30,000 yuan," he told the People's Daily.

The changes happening to Yuerqi village is a miniature of Keping county's poverty alleviation efforts. In a camel shed in Klakuti village, 10 female camels are kept, together with

several camel cubs. According to Zebirguli Mirz, who owns the livestock, she has 50 more in the mountain. "Camel breeding is a tradition here, as camels are very adaptive to the dry climate in the Tarim Basin, and they seldom suffer from diseases," said Wu Lin, deputy director of Keping's department of agriculture and rural affairs, adding that camel breeding is taken as a major industry driving poverty alleviation in the county.

"Due to the lack of information and poor transportation, camels were kept by individual farmers. However, we are now actively industrializing the business, centralizing the livestock

of minor herders and encouraging major ranchers to expand their stocks," said the youngest son of Zebirguli Mirz.

According to him, Keping county now has a total of 9,200 camels, and is planning to introduce camel milk processing enterprises to increase the added value of the product and extend the industrial chain. He told the People's Daily that his family can earn around 1,000 yuan per day from camel milk, which adds up to 200,000 yuan a year. In addition, his family can also gain an extra 10,000 yuan from camel hair business, he added.

People's Daily

Time to steer China-US relations back to right course

WASHINGTON

In retrospect, the year 2020 has regrettably seen China-U.S. relations being trapped in a downward spiral amid the evolving COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the past year, by smearing China's anti-epidemic efforts, interfering in China's internal affairs and sanctioning Chinese hi-tech companies, Washington hawks have dragged down relations between the two countries to the lowest point since the establishment of bilateral diplomatic ties.

For the benefits of the two countries as well as the whole world, the time has come to reset the right course of the giant vessel of the China-U.S. relationship and steer clear of disruptions for its smooth sailing.

Risks and challenges facing the global community are unprecedented. China and the United States, as the world's two major countries, need to work together with each other as well as the rest of the world to overcome difficulties, meet challenges and pursue development.

Defeating the COVID-19 pandemic requires joint efforts of the international community. Countries with stronger capabilities, such as the United States and China, should shoulder greater responsibilities and lead by example.

Leading the world with most COVID-19 cases and deaths, the United States is still grappling with the continuous resurgence of the pandemic, while China, the country that sounded the first alarm, has effectively controlled the spread of the virus domestically, gaining considerable clinical experience in containing the virus. It is thus evident that by cooperating in areas such as treatment, vaccine and the supply of critical medical equipment,

China and the United States as responsible members of the international community will contribute more to the global fight against the pandemic.

In addition, as the world economy is staggering along amid the pandemic, the world's top two economies need to stabilize their economic and trade ties to help get the global economy back on the track of growth at an early date.

In its latest World Economic Report released in October, the International Monetary Fund projected that the global economy will contract 4.4 percent in 2020 and warned that a road out of the crisis will likely be "long, uneven and highly uncertain."

Being projected to be the only major economy to see positive growth in 2020, China has been committed to promoting global trade and further opening up its domestic market, which will bring tangible benefits to other economies that have been pummeled hard by the pandemic, including the United States.

In this sense, decoupling with the Chinese economy, which some China-bashing politicians in Washington have been peddling, is nothing else but isolating oneself from one of the most important consumer markets in the world, as well as the opportunity for a speedy recovery from the pandemic.

As a matter of fact, despite Washington's obstructions, the people of the United States have made their stance clear.

A recent report by The New York Times revealed that despite the imposition of tariffs by the U.S. administration on Chinese imports, Americans have actually been buying more Chinese-made goods during the pandemic, with items such as furniture, appliances and toys driving the surge amid lockdowns.

Xinhua

Technologies improve information accessibility for China's disabled

"Turn on the table lamp," as Gao Peiyou, a visually-impaired man, gives the command to a smart eye-care table lamp at China's first smart home experience store for persons with disabilities in Beijing's China Braille Library.

Surprised by the smart device, Gao told People's Daily Online that various technologies have made his life easier over the past few years.

"Since I began to use smart home products last year, I have bought dozens of devices. Most of them have sensors and can directly tell things like the humidity and temperature in the house, making the living environment more comfortable," he said.

Smart devices like these help the visually-impaired enjoy a smarter,

more convenient life.

China is moving faster to improve information accessibility and close the digital divide, providing a good digital living environment for those with disabilities.

The country has achieved good results in improving information accessibility, said Wang Li, a senior engineer at the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, at a seminar held on Dec. 3, coinciding with the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

More than 20 provinces and cities have introduced policies to provide more



Gao Peiyou, a visually-impaired man, experiences smart devices in a study at China's first smart home experience store for persons with disabilities, Dec. 3. (File photo)

preferential rates for the disabled, and over 800 units have joined in efforts to enable them to access

information on websites, Wang noted.

Some social media, online shopping and news

apps are also making their services barrier-free, the senior engineer added.

Promoting the integration of new technologies, such as AI and the Internet of Things, with information accessibility is becoming an important means in helping the disabled, according to Wang, explaining that the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology is working with the National Medical Products Administration to enable the visually-impaired to recognize common drugs just by listening.

At the seminar, the China Braille Library, Zhe-

jiang University and Chinese tech giant Alibaba launched a program based on Alibaba's OCR product Duguang to help the visually impaired.

The smart home experience store in the China Braille Library, as one of the results of the program, connects over 30 smart home products such as sensors, eye-care table lamps and robot vacuums, all controlled by a smart voice assistant.

Li Qingzhong, president of China Association of the Blind, said that China has more than 17 million visually impaired people, and

smart home products are their "eyes" to improve their lives.

People's Daily

“Since I began to use smart home products last year, I have bought dozens of devices. Most of them have sensors and can directly tell things like the humidity and temperature in the house, making the living environment



Sudan's Al Hilal El Obeid's keeper, Yonis Hassan, punches away an attempt by one of Tanzania's Namungo FC players during the first leg of the first round of this season's CAF Confederation Cup, which took place at Azam Complex in Dar es Salaam on Wednesday. Namungo FC won 2-0. PHOTO: CORRESPONDENT JUMANNE JUMA

Academies, sports facilities and the new ministerial direction

By Correspondent Michael Eneza

CHANGE might be in the air for a number of things concerning the way education is delivered in Tanzania, raising hope that talent will be captured or identified when it is still tender and be placed on the right direction.

This comes out of remarks by the responsible minister, Joyce Ndalichako, in address to an annual gathering of regional and district education officers via their national association in the capital lately.

There were areas of emphasis that have not been habitual in the past few years, and indeed for the past two decades or so, and in a sense, for the whole period of the post-1967 system of education.

There was emphasis in that speech of the need to ensure quality education, which was not just academics or science in particular as is habitually the case but also including sports and agriculture, and other talent generating subjects which may need to be rekindled after years of stagnation or forgetfulness.

These include learning drama (short stories and actual plays staged in schools), gymnastics, woodwork, boy scouting and scaling mountains (in the past centred in Loitoktok in neighbouring Kenya), etc.

The main beneficiary of this orientation would be sports, since its importance for the country's image is quite vivid.



Juniorsoccer players that are groomed by the Tanzania Football Federation (TFF) participate in a recent training at Karume Stadium in Dar es Salaam. PHOTO: CORRESPONDENT JUMANNE JUMA

While this new map for education was being put across - and it is possible ministerial experts are starting to understand not just that talent has to be developed from the beginning but that traditional education as received first from the Greeks and then in the 'capitalist' period by the British, is indispensable.

With the chances of formal employment diminishing each passing year, it is clear that young people need to learn to use talents when they pass through school, and exposure to all sorts of different types of learning is the best way.

Subjects meant to pass exams ought to be part of the issue not total compass of school business.

When traditional education is in place again, where exams decide who goes on to pursue higher education but everyone has learnt

something that is useful for life as such, the spectrum of too many young people lining up the streets without much to do will diminish.

Such changes ought to be taken up in tandem with other reform measures like the 'climate of doing business,' where conditions to start schools or special academies looking for talent and making other subjects optional - their pupils or students sitting as private candidates - are eased.

The problem of starting such facilities ought to be whether there is a market for the products offered - gymnastics, sports and drama, and some evening tuition in other areas.

Other facilities could focus on agriculture, woodwork, bricklaying, fabrics, etc and also take up other concerns especially language and elementary maths, for which ordinary school leaving certificates are

provided mentioning the areas that the pupil covered.

Young people do not need eight subjects to go into elementary occupational training, it is like the government, or the parents for that matter, are playing a sort of lottery with the youngsters where they buy plenty of tickets. One of them would win a profession.

While still on the issue of returning sports, gymnastics, drama to main curriculum in schools, what academies can offer was on display lately during the CECAFA U-20 regional championships where Tanzania inched to the finals, despite losing the regional final tie 4-1 to Uganda.

The tournament was held in a little known facility at Karatu, which was in the past a citadel of athletics until the community or say stakeholders lost ability to maintain perennial camps or those lasting a

month or two in a space of six month or one year.

The government was pulling out of these spheres as productivity steadily dropped in the years following 1967 structural changes, though not too many people will be ready to admit as much.

With the nearly total disappearance of the country in just about all spheres of regional creative life with the possible exception of abysmal music, some rethinking is taking place.

It is not yet time to sing some sort of 'halelujah' that light is seen at the end of the tunnel. Negative attitudes to private schools linger on.

There was a time that the government, through the military, sought to create facilities for the nurturing of sports talent, via two military secondary schools, Dar es Salaam's Jitegemeo and Makongo.

For a time a cream of newly fangled soccer talent came up from there but this tendency (or predominance) tended to fade with time, which has not been explained if the scope of sports was diminishing in favour of routine academic focus, or there are other institutions also producing good talent.

There is also the Jaka-ya Kikwete Youth Centre in Gerezani area of the commercial capital, which has excellent facilities for camping and training.

Still the question remains whether there are adequate sponsoring organizations for camping or contest events.

Olympics-Domestic sponsors agree to extend contracts for delayed Tokyo games

TOKYO

TOKYO 2020 organisers said on Thursday that all 68 domestic sponsors for the Summer Olympics have agreed in principle to extend their contracts for the delayed games, as growing coronavirus infections in Japan overshadow the event.

The Tokyo Olympics had originally been scheduled for 2020 but were postponed by a year because of the pandemic.

"Partner companies told me about the difficult situation they are in because of the pandemic," Tokyo 2020 President Yoshiro Mori told a news conference.

"But they also told me they definitely want the games to be held, and that they are willing to offer as much support as they can."

Tokyo 2020 organisers expect more than 22 billion yen (\$212 million) in additional contributions from them, Mori said.

The domestic sponsors include companies hit hard by a steep fall in travel demand amid the pandemic, such as Japan Airlines Co Ltd, All Nippon Airways Co Ltd and travel agency JTB Corp., which plans to cut its workforce

by 6,500.

"There must have been various debates within each company ... I believe they have decided to continue cooperating with us upon realising the historical significance of what may be a once-in-a-hundred-year event."

Besides tourism and transportation companies, the list of sponsors also includes Canon Inc, Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corp and other Japanese household names.

Recent Japanese newspaper polls show two-thirds of the public believe the game should be postponed again or cancelled altogether.

But Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has repeatedly said he is determined to hold the Olympics as proof that humanity has defeated the virus.

On Monday, national associations of medical professionals declared a state of medical emergency as the country's medical system creaks under the strain of the pandemic.

On Wednesday, Japan's daily records of cases and fatalities both exceeded their previous records to reach 3,271 and 56, respectively, according to public broadcaster NHK.

(\$1 = 103.6300 yen)

REUTERS

Jamie Foxx puts some 'Soul' into Christmas at the movies

LOS ANGELES

"SOUL" takes animated movies to new heights, not just with its philosophical themes about the meaning of life but as the first in Pixar's 25-year feature film history to feature a predominantly Black cast.

Starring Jamie Foxx as an aspiring jazz pianist whose life has not turned out as he wished, family film "Soul" premieres on the Disney+ streaming service on Christmas Day.

Its cast of voice actors includes Phylicia Rashad, Questlove, Angela Bassett and Daveed Diggs, with Jon Batiste playing the jazz music.

Co-director and writer Pete Docter said "Soul" did not set out to be centered around a Black person.

"It was just a film that was very resonant with my own experience. And then the choice to make him a jazz

musician made us feel like that was the right and appropriate choice to also to make him Black," said Docter.

Foxx, who won an Oscar in 2005 for playing musician Ray Charles, welcomed the chance to take the role.

"I was itching for people to see this - the first Pixar Disney African American lead. That's what we need, you know?" he said.

After an opening set in New York City, Foxx's character falls down a manhole and finds himself in the Great Before, where he has to mentor another lost soul, voiced by Tina Fey.

Docter said the film was sparked by his own musings about life.

"A lot of us have to figure out what the heck's going on, what are we doing with our lives... why are we here and what should we be doing to make the most of it?"

REUTERS



Tanga's Handeni District Administrative Secretary, Mashaka Mgeta (front row, 3rd R), takes part in fitness training with Handeni Jogging Club's members in the district recently. PHOTO: CORRESPONDENT

S.Africa seek red ball revenge in first test v Sri Lanka

PRETORIA

SOUTH Africa return to the test arena for the first time in 11 months on Saturday hoping to arrest a dismal slide in the five-day game and with revenge on their minds as they host Sri Lanka in the first of a two-test series at Centurion Park.

They have lost eight of their last nine tests, a run that began in February 2019 with a shock 2-0 home defeat by Sri Lanka who became

the first Asian side to win a series in the country.

They have slipped to number six in the world, behind fifth-placed Sri Lanka, and have a host of questions to answer, not least around a brittle top six and the balance of the side.

"We've got a young team," captain Quinton de Kock said this week. "We need our younger guys to come through and learn fast so we can have a structured team.

"That's what I would hope for from this season, for the new guys to come in and start scoring runs and putting up their hands."

They start the first test without key fast bowler Kagiso Rabada, who has a groin problem, but will be buoyed by the fact both matches will be played on fast, bouncy Highveld pitches.

Left-arm seamer Beuran Hendricks has been withdrawn from the squad along with batsman

Keegan Petersen. Neither player entered the tour bubble when the players gathered on Saturday, after two positive COVID-19 results were detected last week.

Hendricks' absence means Glenton Stuurman is almost certain to make his test debut at the age of 29, with his ability to move the ball both ways off the pitch and his excellent recent domestic form putting him ahead of rivals.

The retirement of Vernon Phi-

lander suggests Wiaan Mulder or Dwaine Pretorius are likely to play in an all-rounder role.

The make-up of Sri Lanka's side is much harder to predict after they brought a squad of 21 players "to cover all positions", according to coach Mickey Arthur.

They are missing injured stalwart Angelo Mathews and Oshada Fernando in their top-six batting lineup, but Arthur is upbeat about their ability to cope with South Af-

rica's quicks.

"We have had camps and intra-squad games and have tried to keep the players as sharp as they can be," he said.

"We've got good seam bowling, good spin bowling and I am confident our top six batsmen can handle the conditions."

Sri Lanka have not played any tests since a victorious tour to Zimbabwe that ended in late January. REUTERS

How will Brexit rules affect the Premier League?

LONDON

THE Premier League has become the world's richest league based on its staggering global appeal, with millions tuning in to watch the best talent from around the globe week by week.

But a change of rules as a result of Brexit means English clubs will not have the same freedom to hoover up the best of European football's young players.

From January 1, a points-based system will be in place, meaning players from the European Union will now need to gain a Governing Body Endorsement (GBE), subjecting them to the same criteria as other overseas players.

Points will be awarded on the basis of the number of international appearances made, as well as club appearances in domestic and continental competitions and the standard of the club and league the player is coming from.

Getting a GBE will not be a problem for the vast majority of the Premier League's big-money arrivals but the changes will have a bigger effect on the recruitment of youth players and further down the football pyramid.

Premier League chief executive Richard Masters sounded confident earlier this month when the English top-flight, the Football Association and the English Football League announced post-Brexit arrangements.

"Continuing to be able to recruit the best players will see the Premier League remain competitive and compelling and the solution will complement our player development philosophy of the best foreign talent alongside the best homegrown players," he said.

The same rules will also apply to managers and coaches based on the level they have previously worked at. For example, under the new criteria, Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer would not have been granted a GBE, having spent most of his coaching career in Norway.

However, players and coaches who do not automatically qualify for a work permit can appeal to a panel of experts for an exemption.

As with much surrounding Brexit, however, the rules will be constantly reviewed.

- No new Fabregas or Pogba -

Britain's withdrawal from the EU means Premier League clubs will no longer benefit from an exception to world governing body FIFA's rules on the signing of minors.

FIFA bans all overseas transfers for under-18s but makes an exception for movement within the European Economic Area. That allowed Cesc Fabregas and Paul Pogba to move to England as 16-year-olds in the past but this will now no longer be possible.

- Connected clubs -

One way of getting around the new rules is for British-based clubs to have a link to a feeder or associate club in Europe.

Manchester City's network of clubs under the City Football Group (CFG) umbrella is the most high-profile example. CFG has stakes in lower-league sides in Spain, France and Belgium.

Leicester's owners King Power own Belgian club Leuven while Sheffield United's Saudi chief, Prince Abdullah, has an ownership stake in Belgian side Beerschot and is closing in on French Ligue 2 side Chateauroux.

These clubs could be used to 'park' young EU players until they turn 18 and also help build up the requisite number of appearances to obtain a GBE.

- Boost for British players -

The Football Association's key objective in coming to an agreement with the Premier League and English Football League was to create more opportunities for young British players.

The number of overseas under-21 players Premier League clubs can sign will be restricted to three in the upcoming January transfer window and thereafter be capped at six per season.

Speaking about the overall agreement, the FA's CEO Mark Bullingham said: "Despite having different starting perspectives on how Brexit should impact football, this is another example of how the football authorities can work effectively together for the greater good of the game."

He added: "We will also discuss improvements to the player pathway for the mutual benefit of football clubs and homegrown talent in this country."

The limits on signing young players from overseas will have a particular impact on EFL and Scottish league clubs, where a far higher degree of imports from Europe will not meet the criteria for a GBE.

Celtic manager Neil Lennon said he thought the rules would make a clear difference.

"We're probably looking at the British market more than anything else (for new players)," he said. "I think it's going to be difficult after the end of the year to get players in from the continent."

AFP

Transfer window principles: Seven things to remember in January

By Gabriele Marcotti, Senior Writer, ESPN FC

THE transfer window reopens on Jan. 1 and to judge by what we're hearing from clubs and agents, the twin forces of COVID-19 and bad contracts will dominate. The former because the global pandemic has left clubs short of immediate cash (zero or few spectators in the stands, rebates on TV money) and mid-term revenue (less money in the pockets of sponsors and fans, which translates into less cash from broadcasters). The latter because the impact of paying somebody far more than they're actually contributing weighs heavier when there's less money coming in. (In fact, they were less of an issue pre-pandemic where, at some clubs, revenue was growing by 10 percent or more every year.)

Gareth Bale became the epitome of this at Real Madrid. Last season, his contract paid him more than \$40 million, easily making him one of the 10-highest-paid players in the world. He started a total of 14 games in all competitions, scoring three goals and playing 1,258 minutes. His salary was so high that the club couldn't find a buyer last summer and so he ended up going to Tottenham on loan, with the proviso that Real Madrid are still paying a considerable chunk -- some reports suggest more than half -- of his salary.

Bale's struggles may or may not be his fault. He's had injuries, he's had managers who perhaps didn't rate him, he's been unlucky... but nobody would dispute the fact that, from Madrid's perspective, they're not getting what they paid for. So here are seven principles to remember when assessing contracts and transfers, some of which are too often ignored by media and commentators.

1. If you're acquiring a player, you need to look at cost + wages together

Club accountants already do this; we in the media too often forget. When Juventus signed Cristiano Ronaldo from Real Madrid in the summer of 2018, they paid €100m (\$120m) in transfer fees and €12m (\$14.6m) in commissions to agents, solidarity payments to his previous clubs (in accordance with FIFA regulations), and a commitment to pay him €54.25m (\$66.3m) in annual wages through June 2022. The total cost (we'll leave bonuses out of it for the sake of convenience) over four years: €329m (\$402m). That works out to €82.25m (\$100.5m) a season.

The most basic criteria in judging whether that was a good deal is this: Is he offering Juventus \$100m worth of value?

2. Value comes in different forms

At the most basic level,



Soccer's transfer window opens on Jan. 1 and with it should come a flurry of deals. (Agencies)

players earn money for a club by generating box-office revenue (which can mean selling out stadiums, allowing you to increase ticket prices or, ideally, both), by improving the team's performance in the league and cups (which generate more prize money), and by driving sponsorship and commercial revenue. Some will have more of an impact than others -- Ronaldo may help sell x amount of club merchandise at Juventus, Alex Telles less so at Manchester United -- but everybody will have some. (And, by the way, that commercial value isn't absolute: Telles will generate more at United because they're a bigger club than he would at, say, Brighton.)

There are also intangibles in this. Some players may be good leaders, some may appeal to supporters and some may simply help a team play better. Some might make your coach happy, and a happy coach tends to coach better. In the case of some signings, your club can make a quantum leap forward as a brand: again, Ronaldo at Juventus is often cited as such an example.

It's difficult to put a numerical value on this, but it's something a good club considers.

3. Opportunity cost matters... but not always in the way it is presented

Last September, Arsenal signed Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang to a contract extension through 2023 and gave him a big raise, up to a reported £18m (\$24m) a season. It made him one of the highest-paid players in the Premier League. Two of the justifications were that if they hadn't extended it, they would have lost him for nothing as a free agent in July 2021, and that bringing in a player of comparable quality would have cost at least £60m (\$80m).

If you assume that a £60m forward will expect to earn at least £10m a season, then even if that player signs a five-year deal, it's cheaper to keep Aubameyang, who is already settled and productive.

The argument holds merit if certain conditions are met.

One, you want to win straight away, and you're less worried about what happens in a few years' time when you'll still need to replace

Aubameyang. Maybe you think Eddie Nketiah or somebody else in-house can replace him, or maybe you think conditions are ripe to challenge straight away.

Two, you don't think you can get a cheaper, younger alternative to Aubameyang, whether this past summer or in the summer of 2021 (when his previous contract expired). Not necessarily somebody who will be as good as Aubameyang straight away, mind you, but who you think will become as good eventually.

Three, you're not worried that his presence (and his minutes on the pitch) will stunt the growth of the young players you already have at the club: Bukayo Saka, Gabriel Martinelli, Nketiah, Emile Smith Rowe, and so on.

Four, you're not overly concerned that giving him a big contract will hurt your leverage in other contract negotiations with forwards at the club, like, say Alexandre Lacazette. (Or you don't want to keep him anyway.)

All of the above are things Arsenal would have thought about when extending Aubameyang's deal. They would have weighed up the factors and come to their own conclusion. Whether right or wrong, time will tell.

4. You're not paying for what a footballer has achieved, you're paying for what folks believe they WILL achieve

It's like the disclaimer when buying mutual funds: "Past performance is not an indicator of future results." Obviously, somebody signing Harry Kane will expect him to continue scoring a ton of goals since he's 27 years old and has scored them continuously throughout his career.

But it's not guaranteed. In fact, it's much harder to predict what will happen the further you get from a player's peak years (usually 23 to 30).

Young players have a limited track record and can be affected by events like, say, becoming adults (or not: see Balotelli, Mario for more information). Older players often become less productive and more injury-prone as they age. This is something many observers seem to forget when they say stuff like, "but X is a former Footballer of the Year and top scorer in 2017!" Discussing what happened in 2017 is only marginally relevant when you're guessing what will happen in 2022.

5. Resale matters, which means age matters and wages matter

At some point, clubs will need to sell players, either because they haven't been good enough, because they've done extremely well and somebody bigger and better wants to sign them, or because clubs can no longer afford to keep them. When that happens, buyers look at two things: age and contract. If the player is still on the younger side, he's more attractive. If the player doesn't have a long-term contract with massive wages, he's more attractive.

Think back to the opportunity cost argument above and the Aubameyang case. What if Arsenal had elected not to extend his deal and, instead, acquired, say, Marcus Thuram instead? I'm not suggesting they're like-for-like players, though they're both the sons of professionals of similar status, both are right-footed forwards who cut in from the left, and Thuram isn't far off from what Aubameyang was at age 23. This is just an example to

a whopping €15.86m (\$19.3m) in commissions to sign Emre Can when he left Liverpool, as well as lesser fees on Adrien Rabiot (€1.4m/\$1.7m), Sami Khedira (€1.3m/\$1.6m) and Aaron Ramsey (€3.6m/\$4.4m).

The argument is that since you're not paying a transfer fee, you can pay more in wages and more to the agent for "delivering the player." Sometimes it's worth it. Other times, less so.

7. No such thing as a "going rate"

The Transfermarkt website has a nifty tool that tells you how much a player is "worth." They've been around for 20 years and have a ton of credibility to the point that some clubs have cited them in their fiscal reports. But ultimately, they're just assessments made by individuals, often volunteers who do this for fun. The fact of the matter is that so much goes into determining a player's price that any notion of treating them like commodities, and putting a "valuation" on them, is going to be both an inexact science and a moving target.

A player with 18 months or less on his contract will have his valuation depressed.

So too, relative to one of equal ability, will a player who is on big wages with many years left on his contract. (All things being equal, a player with a long-term contract and more manageable wages should see his valuation rise.)

Beyond that, much depends on the clubs involved. How badly does the club want or need to sell? How badly does the player want to leave? How badly does a club want or need to buy? And -- people often ignore this -- where is the player going?

If Manchester City come calling for a player, they will be quoted a far higher price than if, say, West Ham ask for the same guy. The seller will assume that City wants the player and because they can afford to pay more, they will charge more. This happens all the time.

It's basic psychology. If a guy with a \$100,000 watch rocks up in his Bentley and wants to buy your house, you will probably try to charge him more than the guy in ripped jeans and dirty baseball cap who hops off a city bus.

Gwiji by David Chikoko



Vandenbroeck points out why Simba SC lost to FC Platinum

SPORT

Transfer window principles: Seven things to remember in January

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT, PAGE 19



Simba SC midfielder, Hassan Dilunga (L), dribbles past Zimbabwe's FC Platinum's players, midfielder Tatenda Chikwende (C) and defender William Stima, when the teams met in the first leg of their 2020/21 CAF Champions League first round clash, held in Harare on Wednesday. Simba SC suffered 1-0 defeat to FC Platinum. PHOTO: COURTESY OF SIMBA SPORTS CLUB

By Correspondent Michael Mwebi

COACH Sven Vandenbroeck voiced his disappointment after Tanzania's Simba SC suffered a frustrating 1-0 defeat in the first leg of their 2020/21 CAF Champions League first round tie against Zimbabwe's FC Platinum, which took place in Harare on Wednesday.

A first half goal from FC Platinum midfielder, Perfect Chikwende, left Simba SC needing a 2-0 victory in the second leg, to be held in Dar es Salaam, to make it to the group stage for the third time.

Failure to do so will see Simba SC drop to the 2020/21 CAF Confederation Cup play offs.

Vandenbroeck stated: "I'm disappointed, a bit frustrated because we did not have to lose the game. I think we controlled the game especially in

the beginning but were missing some explosivity, the final touch to score a goal today. On the break, they scored, 1-0 is not a drama but it makes our life difficult and we have to be careful in the second game. We were missing that extra quality touch to kill the game."

"The performance of players, I think a few ones were below their levels, a few ones on their level. As a team or individuals, we could do better, have better performance. As I said, this is a game we did not have to lose."

"We managed to control the game

most of the time and create chances, just not enough quality to draw or to win."

Vandenbroeck also revealed his thoughts when asked why he had taken off midfielder Erasto Nyoni and striker Meddie Kagere at half-time and praised the performance of goalkeeper Aishi Manula who was doubtful for the game due to an injury.

He noted: "I wanted to have in midfield someone who goes up and down, not two holding midfielders, one who can make the bridge between attack and defense. Secondly we changed

the striker because I felt he was not strong enough to keep the ball or to create something and Chris was doing well in training. I made the two changes after half time."

"Also Erasto was injured in the muscles so that helped me a bit in making the decision. Aishi was injured for five or six days but today he had a good performance."

Simba will remain in Zimbabwe for two more days before coming back to Dar es Salaam for two crucial Vodacom Premier League games against Azam FC and Namungo FC.

5 EATV FRIDAY
TONIGHT @ 9:00
11:00 DADAZ LIVE
12:00 Mid Week Movie (r)
13:30 Kall Za Wana
14:00 Bongo Hits
15:00 Funguka
15:30 Wakilisha (r)
16:00 Ujenzi (r)
16:30 #HASHTAG
17:00 S3ELEKT
17:55 Kurasa
18:00 eNewz
18:30 Skanga
19:30 EATV SAA I
19:45 MJADALA
20:00 DADAZ (r)
21:00 Friday Night Live
23:00 Kurasa (r)

Friday Night Live The Weekend begins here! Listen to upbeat mixed music by the hottest DJs, Gossip, showbiz updates and exclusive interviews with celebrities from home and abroad. Don't you dare miss this.

eastafrika RADIO
88.1FM DAR ES SALAAM
06:00 Supa Breakfast
10:00 MAMAMIA
12:00 Kipenga Xtra
13:00 Planet Bongo
14:00 EA Drive
20:00 Kipenga
21:00 Friday Night Live



Azam FC's newly signed forward, Mpiana Mozizi (L), pictured with the outfit's Chief Executive Officer, Abdulkarim Amin, after the former had signed a contract with the squad in Dar es Salaam on Tuesday. PHOTO: COURTESY OF AZAM FC

Azam FC ropes in new striker

By Correspondent Nassir Nchimbi

AFTER posting a series of poor results in this season's Vodacom Premier League (VPL), Azam FC has signed Congolese forward, Mpiana Mozizi, from FC Saint Eloi Lupopo of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on a one-year deal in an effort to reinvigorate the former's striking force.

The VPL squad's officials stated they hope Mozizi will solve the club's attacking problem, which has been haunting them since their striker, Prince Dube, sustained an injury and missed several matches.

Mozizi, who arrived in Dar es Salaam on Tuesday, has finally signed a one-year contract with his new club after passing medicals.

He is poised to fill the boots of 24-year-old Cameroonian striker, Thierry Alain Akono, who had left Azam FC for Malaysian side, Negeri Sembilan.

Azam FC, which has experienced a winless streak in the outfit's recent six games in the VPL, hopes the Congolese striker will help to boost the squad's confidence by banging in goals and bringing his experience into the team.

Mozizi is a top goal scorer for FC Saint Eloi Lupopo in this season's Linafoot League 1 (DRC Premier League) as he left with 13 goals under his belt already.

The goal getter has left FC Saint Eloi Lupopo six months before the end of his contract with the squad.

According to the DRC outfit, their agreement was expected to expire on June 31, 2021.

After sealing his contract with Azam FC, the 32-year old goal poacher began his training sessions with the club on Wednesday in preparations for the Azam Sports Federation Cup (ASFC) that is set to take place on Saturday.

Azam FC information officer, Thabit Zakaria, said that the striker's arrival will increase the team's strength and speed.

The squad is vying for the VPL top honour and Zakaria said the club's plan is to see to it that it returns to its best by getting the right players.

Azam FC is currently preparing for the third round match of the ASFC, with the team set to confront Magereza FC in the stage.

The match will be played at Azam FC's venue, Azam Complex, in Dar es Salaam tomorrow.

KMC FC stretches poor away record in 2020/21 VPL



Kinondoni Municipal Council (KMC) FC assistant coach, Habibu Kondo.

By Correspondent Nassir Nchimbi

DAR ES SALAAM's Kinondoni Municipal Council (KMC) FC has stretched its poor performance in away matches in this season's Vodacom Premier League (VPL) after conceding a 2-0 defeat to JKT Tanzania at Jamhuri Stadium in Dodoma on Wednesday.

A brace by JKT Tanzania forward Daniel Lyanga on the 51st and 74th minutes was the difference between the two teams on the day's early afternoon fixture.

In the JKT Tanzania's first goal, KMC FC defenders failed to clear a shot by JKT Tanzania midfielder, Jabir Aziz, the ball bounced off one of the defenders and Lyanga pounced on it and tapped it in to put the army side 1-0 up.

Lyanga slotted in the second goal after KMC FC defender Ismail Gambo failed to clear an aerial ball that bounced in front of the JKT Tanzania forward, who connected with a powerful shot that went in via the top corner, securing JKT a 2-0 victory.

It was KMC FC's fourth loss in the team's away clashes in the domestic top flight.

They had also lost to Mtibwa Sugar, Ihefu FC and Simba SC, with Dar es Salaam club losing

1-0 to the three opponents.

The poor results have put KMC FC's search for successful spell in the VPL in jeopardy.

The KMC FC has more-over faced misfortune as the squad's assistant coach, Habibu Kondo, was banned from participating in six matches on December 23 by the Tanzania Premier League Board (TPLB) as the tactician had made accusations against the board and sarcastic remarks during a post-match interview, held when KMC FC suffered 1-0 loss to Simba on December 16.

Their last victory in the domestic top flight came on December 4, they recorded 1-0 win over Dodoma Jiji FC.

The win came after KMC FC edged Azam FC 1-0 on November 21.

Their next match will see them confront Mbeya City FC at Sokoine Stadium in Mbeya.

The KMC FC will later play Tanzania Prisons at Nelson Mandela Stadium in Rukwa.

After their loss to JKT Tanzania, KMC FC sits 10th in the VPL standing with 21 points after 16 games, whereas JKT Tanzania have registered 17 points after taking part in 17 games and sit 15th thanks to their win.

Flexibles by David Chikoko

