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TANZANIA

SATURDAY 22 JANUARY, 2022

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## PRODUCTION



**FARMERS IN KAGERA ADVISED ON BEAN VARIETIES PG 6**



## Entrepreneur's journey to hospitality business



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# Minister, hunting stakeholders consulting at world convention

By Guardian Correspondent, Las Vegas

EIGHT Tanzanian companies are participating in the 50th annual hunting convention here where decision makers from across the globe have gathered to discuss policy issues aimed at developing the hunting sector. Dr Damas Ndumbaro, the minister for Natural Resources and Tourism led the Tanzanian delegation arriving on Tuesday to attend the event organized by Safari Club International (SCI). In

**“The convention offers an opportunity for Tanzania to market its tourist destinations and exposure to government officials attending, where about 200 hunting companies are participating in the convention, from Europe, America, Canada and Africa**

his remarks, he commended the companies for a job well done to market Tanzania at the gathering, one of the highest platforms to attract investors in the sector. The convention offers an opportunity for Tanzania to market its tourist destinations and exposure to government officials attending, where about 200 hunting companies are participating in the convention, from Europe, America, Canada and Africa, he said. The participation of eight local companies in the gathering was

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# ‘Roads to major industries vital’

By Selemani Mpochi, Kagera



Works and Transport minister Prof Makame Mbarawa (3rd L) inspects Kitengule bridge connecting Misenyi and Karagwe districts in Kagera region shortly after visiting the Kagera Sugar factory yesterday. Left is KSL board chairman Seif Ali Seif and (2nd R) is Misenyi District Commissioner Col. Denis Mwila. Photo: Selemani Mpochi

THE government has promised to improve road infrastructures connecting major industries in the country, to boost production and promote local investment.

Prof Makame Mbarawa, the minister for Works and Transport, made this affirmation here yesterday when visiting Kagera Sugar Ltd (KSL) to view its operations and hear of its progress and challenges.

He also inspected progress in the construction of a bridge connecting Misenyi and Karagwe districts crossing the Kagera River, noting during the visits that the government is conducting major rehabilitation of road infrastructure in many areas to open up economic opportunities, improve people's lives and fight poverty.

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**The government is committed to transforming the country's major infrastructures by connecting districts, regions and neighbouring countries with**



Vice President Dr Philip Mpango pays last respects before the body of his elder brother, the late retired Bishop Gerald Mpango of the Anglican Church of Tanzania during the funeral mass at the Saint Alban's church in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: VPO

# Artful hawkers trading at night

By Correspondent Mary Kadoke

AUTHORITIES in the commercial hub of Dar es Salaam are back to the drawing board in the campaign to keep hawkers out of view in most city streets after it emerged that hawkers are sidestepping the roadblocks erected.

The operation led by Regional Commissioner Amos Makalla three months ago saw petty traders being removed from areas in the central business district as well as all major roads branching out, to the far reaches of the city suburbs.

But the 'marching guys', popularly known as Machingas did not leave for good. They employed hide and seek tactics with guards during the day and operated more or less freely after dusk in a variety of locations.

Ila District Commissioner Ng'wilabuzu Ludigija said yesterday that the city authorities are aware of the fact that the traders operate partially during the day and at will during the night, explaining that there is laxity by SUMA JKT security guards contracted to cover those areas.

The DC suggested that the guards were friendly with the

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# Alternative protein feeds to replace soybeans, fish

By Henry Mwangonde

RESEARCH conducted in Tanzania has come up with alternative new sources of proteins for animal feeds to replace costly and scarce soy beans and sardines.

The local project was coordinated by Larive International, a biotechnology company based in the Netherlands, collaborating with Transcend Co. Ltd of Dar es



**While soy is a popular mainstay in protein as a meat and milk alternative, the main part of soybeans produced in the United States and elsewhere is actually used for animal feeds.**

Salaam with Prof Faustin Lekule, a veteran researcher with the Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) as consultant for the project.

If scaled-up countrywide, the technology is billed to revolutionize poultry and aquaculture subsectors which suffer heavily due to lack of protein-rich raw materials, on the basis of remarks by Mashimba Ndaki, the minister for

Livestock and Fisheries.

He told a workshop in Dar es Salaam yesterday to launch the study on the new technology, that there is need to transfer the technology to farmers so that the gap on animal feeds is filled.

The production of soybeans is insufficient because it is also a

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## Alternative protein feeds to replace soybeans, fish

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regular food product while also needed for fish farming, therefore there is a gap for raw materials which affects the whole animal feed sector, he said.

The poultry and aquaculture industries employ about 4.5m people with Tanzania being among top producing countries of aquaculture and poultry products in Africa, he stated, underlining that the ministry would provide expertise on scaling the technology so that it trickles down to farmers. Prof Lekule said the technology involves developing new local sourcing strategies and to improve self-sufficiency of feed resources, pointing out that the main raw materials used in the technology are fresh cattle blood, black soldier fly larvae, beer brewers' yeast and cashewnut rejects.

The report, 'Unlocking the

potential of circular proteins in animal feeds' is funded by the Netherlands embassy working with a number of organizations, with ambassador Wiebe de Boer saying the Netherlands has a long history of working with Tanzanian institutions in developing poultry and aquaculture. While soy is a popular mainstay in protein as a meat and milk alternative, the main part of soybeans produced in the United States and elsewhere is actually used for animal feeds.

In an agricultural economy that's highly focused on the environment, experts are calling for a look beyond traditional animal proteins used in livestock feed to more sustainable alternatives. This leads to insect farms and even single-cell proteins, with the future of feed additives in rapid evolution, the consultant



Former Prime Minister Mizengo Pinda (3rd L) explains a point about fish farming to the delegation from Lesotho Independent Electoral Commission led by Dr Karabo Mokobocho Monlakoana (2nd L) during their visit at his farm in Dodoma yesterday. Fourth (L) is National Electoral Commission (NEC) member Asina Omar. Photo: Mroki Mroki of NEC

## Minister, hunting stakeholders consulting at world convention

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a huge step for the local hunting sector, he stated, elaborating that discussions held with various executives offer lessons on taking a closer look at hunting tourism.

If well managed it can play a bigger role in economic development, the minister underlined, pointing at the need to market Tanzania's hunting blocks to investors as Tanzania is among the leading nations

globally in wildlife conservation and tourism hunting.

Michael Mantheakis, a participant who runs a hunting business in the country, said the annual convention has been helpful to his company in connecting with customers.

The ministry's team at the discussions included the Director for Wildlife, Dr Maurus Msuha; board chairman for the Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority (TAWA) Major General (retired) Hamis Semfuko

and the TAWA Acting Director, Mabula Misungwi.

Others were TAWA board member Lulu Ng'wanakilala and the TAWA chief conservationist Segolin Tarimo, with the minister being received by Elsie Kanza, ambassador to the United States.

Upon departure, the minister said ministry would use the 50th annual hunting convention to market its hunting blocks among other tourism sector products.

## 'Roads to major industries vital'

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better roads to boost development. We want industrialists to conduct their operations smoothly by facilitating a conducive environment including quality roads," he declared.

The construction of the bridge to the Kagera Sugar factory in Misenyi district will enable the firm to expand its farms, as it cultivates 16,000 hectares in Karagwe district and another 14,000

hectares in Misenyi district.

The bridge would be used to transfer sugarcane from KSL plantations in Karagwe, producing 150,000 tonnes of sugarcane for 16,000 tonnes of sugar.

The minister also inspected the construction of a section of an 18-km tarmac road leading to the bridge and directed the regional manager for the Tanzania National Roads Agency (TANROADS) to conduct a feasibility study of the 16km road from the bridge to Bunazi.

Last year, the Kagera Sugar factory produced 120,000 tonnes of sugar, with the completion of the bridge expected to stimulate production by easing transportation.

Seif Ali Seif, the KSL board chairman, commended President Samia Suluhu Hassan for current efforts to ensure a conducive investment environment, as this has enabled the private sector to operate smoothly.

He applauded strategies taken up to develop the local

economy, underlining that the private sector and the sugar industry, in particular, cannot grow if infrastructures are poor or wanting.

"This bridge is very important as it connects the two districts of Karagwe and Misenyi, so its construction is vital and will further open up opportunities and stimulate economic development," he stated.

Kagera Sugar Co. has created 10,000 direct jobs and 60,000 informal jobs, he added.



Inspector General of Police Simon Siro (R) bestows a medal of honour to the Force's head of Operations Commissioner Liberatus Sabas during the 60th anniversary of Tanganyika Independence ceremony held in Dodoma yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Ibrahim Joseph

## Artful hawkers trading at night

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traders such that some cash changes hands, explaining the presence of hawkers in proscribed areas manned by the guards.

"We make unannounced visits to check if SUMA JKT guards really do their job. When they see us, they do it but when we leave, they don't and we believe they behave so because of bribes," he said.

"We have since decided to engage another security company and we have already signed a contract."

Capt Veronica Mushi, the Acting Director of information, protocol and relations at National Service Headquarters, denied that the company had been contracted to do the job. "We'll be happy to get such a tender and we will perform our duty with utmost integrity which we are known for," she affirmed. "But as of

now, there is no such thing as contract with us to guard areas where hawkers have been removed."

She said the bribe allegations were untrue since the guards hired by the company run by the National Service, a component of the Tanzania People's Defence Force (TPDF) are rigorously drilled on security and also ethics.

"Our guards are disciplined. Unlike those of private security firms, they are trained at JKT camps and some of them are military reservists," she elaborated.

Pastory Magodi, a trade officer at Kinondoni municipality, said they are aware of on going trading at proscribed areas mostly at night, airing the view that a multisectoral approach can resolve that matter more effectively.

There are other bodies such as the Tanzania National Roads Agen-

cy (TanRoads), the Tanzania Rural and Urban Roads Agency (TARURA), the district health department and environmental authorities which need to be involved in the exercise, he stated.

"As these traders operate on road reserves and open spaces, if all these bodies enforce regulations governing areas they administer, the problem of hawkers will be over," he specified.

His Temeke counterpart Ramadhan Gurumukwa acknowledged the maneuverings by traders but said that SUMA JKT guards and militias were overwhelmed by the number of hawkers, recommending hiring an additional security company.

He said the hawkers need awareness training because their main problem is fear of starting afresh in a new place hence the tendency to stick to one place even if that in-

volves breaking the laws.

"We have noticed that the majority of these people have fear. They are afraid of embarking on new ideas, thinking that shifting to new places or starting a new business may ruin everything," he stated.

Officials list designated areas for petty traders in Temeke municipality as Mwembe Bamia, the Kijichi modern market which can accommodate up to 1500 traders, along with Chamazi market whose capacity is 2000 to 3000 traders.

In Kinondoni district the hawkers are being asked to crowd at Bunju B market and Wazo Kizinga market at Ununio area on the northern beach.

As for Ilala municipality, designated areas include Mchikichini (razed in a fire outbreak at the weekend), Ilala clothes market and Minazi Mirefu market in Ukonga, officials noted.

## Explosion in Ghana kills 17 and destroys hundreds of buildings

ACCRA

ROAD collision involving explosive-laden truck and motorcycle leaves at least 17 people dead and injures 59 others.

A vehicle carrying explosives used in mining collided with a motorcycle and blew up in a town in western Ghana, leaving at least 17 people dead and injuring dozens, according to the government.

Videos from the scene posted on social media on Thursday showed a large blast area in Apiate, near the

official told local media he had seen 10 dead bodies.

Fatal road accident in Ghana in West Africa transpired when a car full of mining explosives was traveling to the mine and collided with a motorcycle. The explosion blew everything for tens of meters around. It is assumed that there are numerous victims. [pic.twitter.com/v7VpqLgQbD](https://pic.twitter.com/v7VpqLgQbD)

The explosion occurred when a motorcycle went under a truck carrying explosives that was on route to the Chirano gold mine, run by Canada-based Kinross.

A Kinross spokesperson confirmed the incident, saying it occurred 140km (87 miles) from the mine.

Francis Abeiku Yankah, a NADMO coordinator for Prestea Huni-Valley, told TV3 broadcaster: "I saw complete devastation of the community called Apiate. As we speak, the community is dead; it cannot be inhabited by anyone."

The police released a statement advising the public "to move out of the area to nearby towns for their safety while recovery efforts are under way".

Nearby towns have been asked to open up public spaces including classrooms and churches to survivors, the police said.

"It is a truly sad, unfortunate and tragic incident, and I extend, on behalf of Government, deep condolences to the families of the deceased, and I wish the injured a speedy recovery," President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo tweeted.

Our hearts and prayers are with the victims and those injured in the terrible explosion in Apiate, near Bogoso.

**A total of 17 people have unfortunately been confirmed dead, and 59 injured people have been rescued**

city of Bogoso some 300km (180 miles) west of the capital, Accra, with dozens of buildings reduced to piles of wood, brick and twisted metal.

"A total of 17 people have unfortunately been confirmed dead, and 59 injured people have been rescued," Information Minister Kojo Opong Nkrumah said in a statement released overnight.

Seji Saji Amedonu, deputy director general of the National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO), said 500 buildings had been destroyed. A regional emergency





Minister for Information, Communication and Information Technology Nape Nnauye (3rd L) and Zanzibar Minister for Works, Communication and Transport Rahma Kassim Ali (4th L) witness the signing contract for the construction of 42 communication towers in Zanzibar yesterday between the Universal Communications Service Access Fund (UCSAF) CEO Justina Mashina (seated R) and Zantel Chief Financial Officer Azizi Said (L) Photo: Correspondent Rahma Suleiman

## 'Provided funds for implementation of water projects across the country'

By Guardian Correspondent, Dodoma

WATER Minister Juma Aweso has said no Tanzanian should continue drinking water from sources that are used by animals as the government has already provided funds for implemented of water projects across the country.

Aweso made the statement in Dodoma yesterday when he witnessed signing of contracts for the purchase of 301 water pumps to be fixed at different regions countywide.

The contracts were signed between the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (RUWASA) and four companies owned by local contractors. The government has disbursed 8.89bn/- for the purchase of water pumps.

He said that as the minister responsible, he is not ready to continue seeing people sharing water sources with animals. He said the government is determined to make sure every citizen access clean and safe water at their localities.

"Tanzanians cannot share water with donkeys; we have funds for improvement of water services, we do not only implement new projects, but repair old water infrastructures and look for new sources," said the minister.

Aweso added: "The Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (RUWASA) should make sure all the water projects are com-

pleted on time and at required standards. The agency must also ensure timely payment to contractors to avoid delays."

He said the ministry is planning to convene a meeting with water stakeholders as well as contractors to discuss on how the projects can be implemented properly.

"We will first meet with contractors in February; we want to hear their challenges, but also tell them on what we need from them. The government is looking for value for money in its projects' we want them to ensure standards," he said, urging contractors to implement the projects in accordance with terms provided in the contracts.

He directed water engineers to make sure pumps are installed even before completion of water tanks to allow people to start fetching water from the available sources. He said fixing of pumps has always been taking long because of delayed construction of water tanks.

RUWASA Director, Clement Kivegalo said they are prepared to pay all the contractors to ensure they start implementing the projects as soon as possible. He assured the minister that the project would be completed within schedule and that water woes will remain a history. He said the contractors are also expected to work day and night to make sure everything goes as planned.

## Mwananyamala regional referral hospital expresses its determination to improve customer care services

By Getrude Mbago

MWANANYAMALA regional referral hospital has expressed its determination to improve customer care services by training its staff with supportive skills to enable them to provide quality services for patients and other people.

Speaking yesterday when closing the five-day customer care training to the hospital's staff, medical officer in charge Dr Zavery Benela said having friendly customer services will help cure various challenges facing patients

and guests even before getting treatment.

He acknowledged that previously customer services at the hospital were not favourable and many people were complaining about that but with the new move, things will change for the better.

"We have embarked on a programme to train our staff, and this is a serious decision, we have so far trained about 200 staff out of the 371 staff that we have, we will train all of them, our aim is to ensure that patients and all guests entering our hospital are well served. We want our staff to

always be friendly to patients and all other people," he said.

He said that the hospital's vision is to be the leading hospital in the provision of quality health services in the country by 2025.

"We thank the Muhimbili National Hospital (MNH) for supporting us on this, they once took some of our staff to Morogoro to train them on good customer care services," he said.

Dr Benela said the training is being held in phases and it involves all staff including security guards on

the entrance gates.

"Apart from training the staff with the required skills on customer care, the hospital is also implanting various projects to improve infrastructures and increase medical equipment and workers. We are expected to commence construction of an ICU and emergence buildings so as to further improve health services provision," Dr Benela explained.

He further said that the hospital also has a system of visiting relatives of patients at the hospital and asking them how they are being

served and taken care of.

"We ask them if the health attendants take good care of them and their patients and what they recommend to be improved, this helps us to address various challenges and thus improve customer care and relationship with the people," he added.

Dr Baldina Beda from the dental health department said the training was vital and is going to transform customer care services at the Mwananyamala hospital thus making those who seek services at the facility to be comfortable and satisfied.

"Participants have learned a lot of things to enable them to provide good customer care; this includes mental health and psychology, self hygiene, teamwork and communication," she said.

Tuswege Mwamwaja, assistant nurse officer at the hospital commended the facility's management and trainers for feeding them with the important skills and techniques to enable them to handle patients and other guests at the hospital well.

"We have been trained on mental health, how to control stress and anger, self-cleanli-

ness and many other things which will help us serve patients well," she said.

Martha Natumwa, one of the trainers urged the staff to go and apply what they have learnt as doing so as it will enable the hospital to be among the best places which people love to go to get medical services.

"Good customer care in hospitals is the most important thing, so I believe the training will change a lot of things and challenges and thus improve service delivery at the hospital," she said.

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# PUBLIC NOTICE

**BONITE BOTTLERS LTD** would like to inform the general public on our compliance of the government ban on the use of **plastic seals** on all **Kilimanjaro Drinking Water** bottle caps. This is inline with adhering to the ongoing government green policy on conserving the environment.

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**TANZANIA REVENUE AUTHORITY**

## PUBLIC NOTICE

### REQUIREMENT TO UPGRADE ELECTRONIC FISCAL DEVICES TO ALIGN WITH ELECTRONIC FISCAL DEVICE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

**Dar es Salaam, 20 January, 2022**

Tanzania Revenue Authority reminds all traders who are using Electronic Fiscal Devices (EFDs) that, they are required/obliged to upgrade their devices to abide with the improvements made on EFD system, in line with "QR Code" features that allows automatic verification of receipts and invoices issued by the devices.

Thus, all taxpayers are advised to contact their respective EFD suppliers to upgrade their devices and configure them with Protocol 2.1 that is in line with current EFD communication requirements for generation of verification code for receipts and invoices.

Further, take note that this Public Notice is a reminder following an earlier Public Notice issued on 7th December, 2020, through newsletters, on the improvements made on EFDMS and the requirement to upgrade the devices within the period of thirty days (30) from the date of the advertisement. In addition to that TRA announced another 30 days for those who have not complied with the requirement to upgrade or acquire new device which align with the improvement of the EFDMS.

After the given deadline, TRA made analysis and noted that implementation of the directive to upgrade their devices to Protocol 2.1 was not effectively effected by some traders.

This notice serves as a last reminder that 28th February 2022 is the new deadline for all traders who have not yet upgraded their devices. Please also note that, failure to comply with this new deadline will compel TRA to take administrative actions including but not limited to blocking the un-upgraded devices.

**"Together We Build Our Nation"**

Issued by:  
**DIRECTOR OF TAXPAYERS SERVICE AND EDUCATION**  
**TANZANIA REVENUE AUTHORITY**



## Minister challenges National College of Tourism graduates

By Beatrice Philemon

MINISTRY of Natural resources and Tourism, deputy minister Mary Masanja has challenged graduates from the National College of Tourism to use the acquired knowledge and skills to provide high quality services in areas they will be employed.

She added that provision of quality hospitality services would lure more foreign tourists into the country.

She made the remarks in Dar es Salaam yesterday at the National College of Tourism 19th graduation ceremony held at the Julius Nyerere International Conference Centre (JNICC).

"It's your task to go and apply all the gained skills and knowledge in improving services. The good services you offer would see Tanzania receiving more foreign visitors, thus boosting revenue collections," said the deputy minister.

She called on graduates to organize themselves and start small projects instead of waiting for formal employment at major companies.

"We have domestic tourism, the market is huge and you can make money from it. You can also engage in promotion of our tourist attrac-

tions locally and internationally," she said, adding the government has put in place a good environment for the private sector to operate.

Masanja commended all the players in the hospitality and tourism sectors for accommodating the students during internships and make sure they learn practically.

National College of Tourism Chief Executive Officer, Dr Shogo Mlozi added that a total of 541 students in different fields were conferred with certificate and Diploma.

Among the graduates, 104 were in the hospitality industry, 66 food production, 17 food and beverage services, 23 front office operations, 6 housekeeping, 33 event management, 15 pastry and bakery, 105 travel and tourism operations, 92 tour guiding operations and 75 tour guide.

The college has four campuses in Dar es Salaam, Mwanza and Arusha regions. It has a total of 10,003 students in all its four campuses and 187 staffs.

She called upon graduates to be good ambassador for the college in areas where they will be employed to attract more students to enrol for tourism courses.



A florist (C) gives information to customers who visited at his garden at Usariver in Arumeru district, Arusha region on Thursday. Arumeru is one of the leading horticulture places in the country. Photo: Correspondent Woinde Shizza

## Science, mathematics teachers urged to be friendly to pupils and students

By Getrude Mbago

THE government has urged teachers especially those teaching science and mathematics subjects to be friendly to pupils and students, so as to enable the children to love the subjects and perform well in their examinations.

Commissioner for Education from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology Dr Lyabwene Mutahabwa made the call yesterday in Dar es Salaam during the handover ceremony of curriculum support materials on life skills-based sexual and reproductive health (SRH), HIV/AIDS and Gender Based Violence (GBV).

The curriculum support materials have been prepared

by the Tanzanian Education Institute (TIE) in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and other stakeholders.

Dr Mutahabwa said the majority of mathematics teachers were not friendly to students as they are the ones who make the children see the subject as a special one and most difficult to take.

"Let us try to be friendly to children, we should tell them that the subject is not that hard and they can perform well if they are serious, we should not threaten them but be friends to them," he said.

He said that research has shown that, in order for a student to focus on lessons of

the teacher, love and respect is one of the most important things as this will make the student to like the teacher and the subject and thus concentrating well in the studies.

He wanted teachers to change and adhere to what they learn in colleges on how to take care of the children in schools so as to fight the mass failures especially in mathematics in national examinations.

"The government will continue doing its role of ensuring that the learning and teaching environment are improved, all the required infrastructures and equipment are there, so another role now remains to the teachers to ensure that children love subjects and the

school," he said.

He added some teachers were so rude to students and have always been walking with loads of sticks to punish students who fail mathematics but they forget that they do not apply the friendly teaching techniques in classes.

Speaking on the newly launched supporting materials and guidelines, the commissioner said training on the use of the materials should be sent to schools and teachers so as to obtain the intended goals.

UNESCO regional director Prof Hubert Gijzen said the organization has been working with broader range of partners to supporting government efforts in particular realize positive health, education

and gender equality outcomes through sustained reductions in new HIV infections, unintended pregnancy and sexual and gender-based violence.

"We work collaboratively with the government through the multi-partners programme: Our rights, Our Lives, Our Future" commonly referred to as the O3 project whose purpose is to improve the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) outcomes of adolescents and young people (10-24 years) in Tanzania through increased access to high quality, age appropriate and gender transformative life skills-based sexual and reproductive health & HIV education," he said.

He said there are notable

and significant investment by the ministries and partners around life skills-based HIV, SRH & GBV education (CSE) in both primary and secondary schools.

"The on-going Covid-19 pandemic has made one thing painfully clear; we need to invest more in health and well-being via the education sector. UNESCO's interventions intend to empower adolescents and young people through developing skills, knowledge, attitudes and competencies required for preventing HIV/AIDS, reducing early and unintended pregnancies and eliminating GBV," he explained.

Prof Gijzen applauded the government's commitments and efforts in particular in

the implantation of fee-free basic education and more recently allowing students who dropped out of school due to different challenges to resume studies.

Dr Fika Mwakabanga, director of curriculum Training at TIE said the team has spent over one year preparing curriculum support materials and they hope that they are going to bring huge challenges in the education sector.

"We believe that these guidelines and support materials will transform the sector as will help equip students and young people with the necessary knowledge and skills to make informed decisions regarding sexual practices, prevent HIV and fight GBV," she said.



NMB Bank customer service officer Suzan Manga (R) speaks to one of the winners during the third draw of the NMB 'MastaBata Kivya ko vyako' promotion raffle in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Others are the bank senior officer card department Said Kiwanga (C) and Gaming Board of Tanzania inspector Elibariki Sengasenga. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

## WHO says 2.6 billion people lack access to clean cooking

By Guardian Reporter

THE World Health Organisation's (WHO) new global data on the use of clean and polluting fuels for cooking by fuel type indicates that one third of the global population, equivalent to 2.6 billion people still remain without access to clean cooking.

The use of inefficient, polluting fuels and technologies is a health risk and a major contributor to diseases and deaths, particularly for women and children in low- and middle-income countries.

It makes cooking with polluting fuels one of the largest environmental contributors to ill health. Shedding further light on the extent of the problem, the WHO has recently released new data on the use of different types of fuels used for cooking at global, regional and country levels.

Breathing the smoke produced from cooking with polluting fuels can lead to heart diseases, stroke, cancers, chronic lung diseases and pneumonia.

Millions of people continue to die prematurely every year from household air pollution, which is produced by cooking with inefficient stoves and devices paired with wood, coal, charcoal, dung, crop waste and kerosene.

Without rapid action to scale up clean cooking, the world will fall short of its goal to achieve universal access to clean cooking

by 2030.

WHO just published new data in its Global Health Observatory including detailed global, regional and country estimates of the percentages and number of people using polluting or clean fuels between 1990 and 2020 with a focus on six fuel types: electricity, gaseous fuels, kerosene, biomass, charcoal, and coal.

The data also include urban versus rural disaggregation.

WHO's Air Quality and Health Unit is supporting countries to address household air pollution by providing normative guidance, tools and advice to tackle the issue.

The unit also monitors and reports on global trends and changes in health impacts of air pollution at national, regional and global levels. Such estimates are used for official reporting like the World Health Statistics, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Access to clean fuels and technologies for cooking is distributed unevenly across the globe.

From 2010-2019, the rate of access to clean cooking fuels and technologies only increased by about 1.0 percent per year.

Much of this increase was due to improvements in clean cooking access in the 5 most populous low- and middle-income countries - Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and Pakistan; the rate in other low- and middle-income countries has seen little change.

## Rwanda picks three former African leaders to lead conservation meeting

KIGALI

THREE former African heads of state have been selected to lead the inaugural upcoming international conservation conference in Kigali, the Ministry of Environment said.

Hailemariam Desalegn, the former Prime Minister for Ethiopia, Issoufou Mahamadou the former President Niger, and Festus Mogae - former President of Botswana were unveiled on January 20, as patrons for the upcoming conference.

The IUCN Africa Protected Areas Congress (APAC) conference slated to take

place in Kigali from March 7 to 12 comes at a critical time when Africa needs more than \$700 billion for biodiversity.

Taking place in Africa for the first time, the summit will be convened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Rwanda and the Africa Wildlife Foundation.

It is expected to enhance the status of conservation in Africa by engaging governments, the private sector, civil society, indigenous peoples and local communities, and academia to shape Africa's agenda for protected and conserved areas, the ministry said in a statement.

Desalegn described it as an opportunity to chart a path that balances economic growth with the conservation of Africa's natural capital.

"This will need to be done through strategic choices and investments driven by the best available knowledge and long-term thinking," he said

Rwanda's Minister of Environment, Jeanne d'Arc Mujawamariya said that this has come at the right time though there is still a way to go.

"The APAC comes at a time when there is growing global attention on our strained relationship with nature

but we are not investing enough in the natural systems we depend on," she said.

She said that Africa spends less than 10 percent of what is needed to protect and restore nature.

"Protected areas must have access to the financing required for effective management and thus fulfil their role in providing essential biodiversity protection and ecosystem services for people and development," she noted.

Mahamadou, one of the conference leaders, said that the ability of leadership should shape decisions that will

affect Africa's future.

"APAC seeks to deliberately foster dialogues that build and empower the current and the next generation of leaders to realize an African future where biodiversity is valued as an asset that contributes to development," he said

He added that the inaugural congress is intended to change the face of conservation and spearhead climate change mitigation efforts on a large scale.

Mogae, the congress leader, reaffirmed that APAC must be a turning point for the relationship between the global community and African institutions.





**Tanzania Electrical Supply Company (TANESCO) Mirerani manager Zacharia Masatu (L) hands over a box of soaps to child Mary Maro during the firm's visit at 'Light in Africa' orphanage and vulnerable children centre at Mirerani township in Simanjiro district, Manyara region yesterday. The company also donated variety of items including food stuff and sanitary pads. Photo: Correspondent Gift Thadey**

## Rare elephant twins born in Kenya

NAIROBI

AN elephant has given birth to twins in Kenya's north in a moment rarely witnessed among the endangered species.

Conservationists call the moment unique said on Friday they said an elephant had given birth to twins in Kenya's north. Among the endangered species twins form about one percent of births.

Conservation group Save the Elephants said the twins were born to a mother named Bora and were first spotted by lucky tourists on a safari drive at the weekend in Samburu reserve.

The days-old calves were seen getting accustomed to their savannah surroundings with their doting mother and an older sibling. However, the next few days will be crucial; quite often mothers of twins don't have enough milk to support the calves.

"We all have our fingers crossed for their survival", Save the Elephants' founder Iain Douglas-Hamilton said.

The births brought joy in the country where an increase in elephant population has been observed. According to the country's first-ever national wildlife census conducted last year, there are an estimated 36,280 elephants in Kenya.

By Guardian Correspondent,

## TOSCI records impressive stride in variety registration, seed certification

Dodoma

AT LEAST 482 plant varieties have been certified by the Tanzania Official Seed Certification Institute (TOSCI) in a period between January and November 2021, a move which is aimed to heighten the performance of the agriculture sector in the country.

The certified plant varieties were based on a total of 79 crops.

According to TOSCI director general, Patrick Ngwediagi, the development is part of the on-going chain of in-

terventions by the organ to ensure that indigenous farmers are adopting the use of improved seeds for better yields.

The director expressed that the state-owned seed institute was implementing a special strategy to equip the country's agricultural sector with abundant improved plant varieties, saying the move is aimed also at cutting-down mass importation of seeds from outside the country.

"The focus however, is also to motivate local and

foreign investors to chip-in and invest largely in the seed production sub-sector," he revealed.

He said TOSCI was continuing to encourage and assist available seed producers to increase production levels in order to cater for the increasing demand of seeds within the country.

Ngwediagi said the country currently has at least 586 plant varieties from 33 different crops registered by the institute.

He disclosed the crop species with number of avail-

able varieties as maize (160 varieties), rice (20), wheat (25), sorghum (15), beans (30), cowpea (5), pigeon pea (6), sesame (4), sweet potato (15) cassava (15) and sunflower 7 varieties.

Others are vegetables (210), coffee (15), cashew nuts (40), sugar cane (7), tea (7), and round potato 7 varieties.

"The institute is also working closely with Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute (TARI) which has mandate on variety development as well as other private breed-

ers so that new plant varieties can be released and registered by TOSCI to provide better choices to farmers," he assured.

Despite making a major stride in the seed sector, Ngwediagi however observed that Tanzania was still importing seeds of a number of plant varieties.

He said: "For instance, in 2019 the quantities of seeds importation in terms of tonnes were, maize (9267), sunflower (152), paddy (4) round Potatoes (970) and vegetables seeds 482 tones."

The DG informed that, in recent years the amount of seeds produced within the country has been increasing and currently it amounts to 81percent of the total of certified seeds used.

In an effort to scale up seed production, he said TOSCI is running a special program to disseminate useful training to stakeholders (seed breeders) on professional seed production for them to produce quality seeds.

TOSCI is recognized internationally since it has been accredited to Interna-

tional Seed Testing Association (ISTA) admitted to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Seed Certification Schemes, whereby seed produced in Tanzania and certified by TOSCI can now be sold in the country and the excess can be exported to other countries.

The seed regulatory organ, TOSCI, is responsible for field and seed inspection, sampling, seed testing, variety evaluation and verification through National Performance Trials (NPT), Distinctness, Uniformity and Stability tests (DUS) and control plot testing.

## '1.7 million people living with HIV in Tanzania as of 2019'

By Correspondent James Kandoya

THE government is working to ensure that all people who are currently unaware that they are living with HIV/AIDS, get tested, know their status, and begin lifesaving treatment.

Ummu Mwalimu, Minister for Health said this yesterday in Dar es Salaam at the official launching of the symposium and the strategic plan for Africa academy for public health (AAPH) 2022-2026.

Mwalimu said Tanzania is currently estimated to have 1.7 million people who are living with HIV/AIDS, out of those 1.5 million people know their status and are taking the lifesaving treatment.

According to her, there are 200,000 people who are currently living with HIV/AIDS in the country but they are unaware of it.

She said the government plan was to see all people know their status and get treated to avoid new infections, especially in young generations.

"We want to see all 200,000, people, 'missed cases' are reached, tested and start using the Antiretroviral Treatment (ARTs). This will support the government's efforts to eradicate the disease and fight spread of new infections," she said.

She acknowledged the U.S government through the President's Emergency Plan

for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) for implementing various programs and being key players in improving delivery of quality HIV services in Tanzania.

She said by 2019 over 83 percent of Tanzanians living with HIV had been identified, 90 percent were on Antiretroviral Treatment, among which 92 percent achieved viral suppression.

Mwalimu said tremendous results were contributed to by the training of healthcare personnel in clinical practises, development and equipping of facilities like laboratories, as well as support in establishing guidelines for quality assurance in provision of HIV care.

She said despite the success, there were opportunities to improve the health sector as a whole by identifying training needs in quality service provision and implementation of science research; addressing the provider - patient ratio in healthcare facilities; and building capacity for the currently serving healthcare professionals.

"The government is committed to further collaborating with local and international partners in addressing the remaining challenges in the healthcare system," she said.

Mwalimu added: "We welcome further collaboration with AAPH, Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Science (MU-

HAS) and Harvard University as well as other partners on improving the health of the Tanzanian population as we strive to realise the Sustainable Development Goals."

Dr Mary Sando, APH chief executive officer (CEO) said the 2nd strategic plan was launched covering between 2022-2026.

The symposium will provide an opportunity for the public health experts where local and international scientists in the health sectors, development partners and government agencies to discuss priority public health field, and iron challenges.

The strategy also aims at improving the organisation and streamlined priority interventions to best serve the clients-the community.

Dr Sando said the goals set include; improve health systems through training and provision of technical support, promote health systems research, innovation, and use of evidence improving the health and wellbeing of the people in Tanzania.

US Ambassador to Tanzania, Dr Donald Wright expressed his government commitment to continue supporting Tanzania in the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

"Our commitment to the government of Tanzania is to continue supporting Tanzanians through PEPFAR to ensure there was enough viral suppression," he said.



**Dar Rapid Transit Agency (DART) Chief Executive Officer Dr Edwin Mhede speaks at the opening of media editors seminar on the development of Dar Rapid Transit project in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala**

## Stakeholders call for international action to control plastic chemicals to curb growing crisis

By Correspondent Geoffrey Nangai

HEALTH and environmental groups have called for international action to control plastic chemicals, and the scaling down of plastics production, to curb growing crisis

This follows two joint studies by the International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN) and International Pellet Watch (IPW) that showed that plastics pose significant threats to human health and ecosystems throughout their life cycles.

"For some toxic chemical

additives, any exposure can trigger health impacts, such as certain cancers or changes to hormone activity (known as endocrine disruption), which can lead to reproductive, growth, and cognitive impairment," the report noted.

The report added that the safety of many chemical additives is not complete, and there is little to no knowledge about the risks associated with exposure to the complex mixture of toxic chemicals currently transported and released from plastic pellets.

Report lead author and

IPEN science advisor Dr Sara Brosché said the widespread use of toxic chemical additives in plastic products makes a lot of recycled plastic waste an unacceptable raw material for making new products.

"Continued use of toxic chemical additives in plastics renders most plastics in use today 'non-circular', thus excluding plastics from any circular economy," Dr Brosché said.

Commenting on the beach pellet study, Professor Hideshige Takada said "the study demonstrates how

the plastics industry caused problems even before products enter the marketplace and reach the consumer by acting as a vector for toxic chemical additives like BUVs, and existing toxic chemicals"

To get a global picture of the role plastics play in transporting toxic chemicals around the world, IPEN and IPW in partnership with local Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) partners in 35 countries including Tanzania to investigate hazardous chemicals and pollutants present in spilled or lost pre-production plastic pellets

found on beaches; and recycled plastic pellets purchased from recycling facilities.

The studies revealed the presence of toxic chemical additives and pollutants that pose multiple health threats to humans and the environment. The toxic chemicals assessed included: UV Stabilizers, PCBs, Flame retardants among others.

PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) were banned under the Stockholm Convention in 2001, but because of their widespread use, are still found in the environment.

The study in Tanzania was

commissioned by the Tanzania Alliance for Biodiversity (TABIO) in partnership with Agenda for Environment and Responsible Development (AGENDA) around the beach areas in Dar es Salaam Tanzania.

Speaking to reporters in Dar es Salaam mid this week, the (TABIO) Coordinator, Abdallah Mkindi said plastic pellet concentration is high in Africa even though the continent is not the biggest plastics producer and do not have the capacity to manage the risks associated with toxic chemicals.

He noted that the study's findings indicated that Tanzania was moderately polluted by plastic pellets cautioning that if no deliberate steps are undertaken by the Government to address the issue of plastic pellets, the situation could get worse in the future.

"We are glad that Tanzania has already made a bold step to ban use of plastic bags as part of efforts to tackle environmental pollution. It is time for the Government to take action on toxic chemical additives and pollutants that pose multiple health threats," Mkindi noted.





Deputy minister for Works and Transport Atupele Mwakibete (2nd R) listens to Tanzania Port Authority (TPA) director general Eric Hamissi (2nd L) during his visit at the Dar es Salaam Port on Thursday. Photo: Correspondent Carlos Banda

## Iringa RC laud CDTI-Ruaha for the fight against stunting

By Guardian Correspondent, Iringa

AUTHORITIES in Iringa have commended the Development Training Institute (CDTI)-Ruaha for its efforts in the fight against stunting in the region.

Iringa Regional Commissioner, Queen Sendiga made remarks yesterday when she officially opened an innovation symposium at the institute saying its efforts have been useful in fighting malnutrition.

The RC was represented by Iringa District Commissioner, Mohammed Moyo who said the institute has played a key role in preparing experts who have been crucial in the war against stunting.

"I'm impressed with the increase in number of students from 504 in 2021 to 6770 we believe that the experts from here will help in the fight against stunting," he said.

According to the RC, the government was supporting efforts by the institute to make it important not only to the region, but to the nation as a whole.

He said the government will continue to support the institute's mostly on innovation by looking for more markets to let products which are produced by innovators from the institute.

The Principal for CDTI Iringa Godfrey Mafungu said the institute has been preparing experts to be innovative so that they employ themselves upon completion of their studies.

Mafungu said due to the innovation training being offered at the institute, students are able to overcome challenges which most of them face upon graduation.

The principal named some of the innovative programmes as construction of dams and fish ponds

# SADC continues to seek peace and stability in Mozambique

By Kester Klomegh

REPORTS explained that Islamic-State linked militants wreaked serious havoc in the area when it broke out in 2017. The grave situation attracted international concern when they attacked the key port town of Palma in March 2021, killing dozens as thousands fled into surrounding forest.

The violence and attacks further threatened the economy including both local and foreign businesses in Cabo Delgado and, of course, the entire Mozambique.

For instance, the violence forced France's Total Energies to declare force majeure and evacuate staff from a nearby multi-billion-dollar natural gas project located about six kilometers away from the city.

Valued at €20 billion, it is the largest on-going private investment in Africa.

That however, Total expresses its solidarity with the government and people of Mozambique and wishes that the actions carried out by the government of Mozambique and its regional and international partners will enable the restoration of security and stability in Cabo Delgado province in a sustained manner.

This 16 member regional organization, with its unique and clear goals took up the challenge to enforce and bring back durable security necessary for promoting economic growth and socio-economic development as it is one of the goals, among others.

With the common goals at hand, the Southern African

countries jointly put together a standby military force that is effectively working, besides the special force from Rwanda. The forces are contributing to defend Mozambique.

Chairperson of the SADC's Organ on Politics, Defence and Security and South African President, Cyril Ramaphosa told the gathering in Lilongwe, capital of Malawi, where the regional bloc held its extraordinary summit and reviewed progress in Mozambique, described SAMIM as highly successful in defeating the militant groups particularly in Cabo Delgado.

"I would like to express my appreciation and commend SAMIM for its work on the ground, as well as recognize the member states that have supported this work finan-

cially and in the deployment of military personnel and equipment," the final report quoted Ramaphosa.

The communiqué also approved the framework for support to Mozambique in addressing terrorism outlines, among others, comprehensive strategic actions for consolidating peace, security, and the socio-economic recovery of Cabo Delgado.

The Maputo daily Noticias wrote after the SADC summit that a budgetary allocation of US\$29.5 million has been set aside for the three-month extension, after high-level consultations and this would mean until at least mid-April. The second phase of the SAMIM extension set from mid-January.

Addressing the opening session of the summit, the current

SADC Chairperson, Malawian President Lazarus Chakwera, urged regional bloc member states to stick together and ensure that SAMIM remains multidimensional and comprehensive. He entreated SADC member countries not to relent, regress or even retreat on their commitments.

"What remains now is for us to stay the course and stick together. We cannot relent. We cannot regress. We cannot retreat. Our approach to this mission must continue to be multidimensional and comprehensive. It must not only focus on neutralizing the threat, but also have post-conflict plans to rebuild," said Chakwera, added that the collective mission is paramount and the stakes for all the Member States are high because what they are fighting

for is regional stability, and the sustainability of the quest for the bloc's integration and socio-economic development.

Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi however expressed high optimism about the current military situation in Cabo Delgado. He said that all the bases from which the terrorists used to plan their actions are now in the hands of the Mozambican forces, and 2022 would be a decisive year to support the regional standby force in the final fight against terrorism in Mozambique.

For Mozambican President Nyusi, the extension of the SAMIM mission demonstrates the spirit of unity and solidarity that the Southern African Development Community members have readily and

warmheartedly shown with the people of Mozambique.

Mozambique has grappled with an insurgency in its northernmost province of Cabo Delgado since 2017, but currently fast improving after the deployment of joint military force with the primary responsibility of ensuring peace and stability, and for restoring normalcy in Mozambique.

SADC has consistently maintained that all problems especially relating to conflicts and crises should be resolved largely based on the approaches of Africans, and of course with moral, political and material support from regional blocs such as SADC itself and the continental organization - African Union, and the involvement of United Nations with its UN Security Council.



Ushetu constituency legislator, Emmanuel Cherehani speaks to residents of Misayu village at Ubagwe Ward in Ushetu Council, Kahama district, Shinyanga region yesterday during the launching of a new dispensary worth 289m/- built by JTI Tanzania. Photo: Correspondent Shaban Njia

By Guardian Reporter and Agencies

THE East African Community (EAC) has achieved full economic integration and is a customs union and a common market.

The community in reality is beset by all manner of trade wars and uncoordinated policymaking, the lack of a common response to Covid-19 being one of them.

The adoption of a testing requirement for all truck drivers entering Uganda from Kenya two weeks ago sparked a strike which has led to an acute fuel shortage in

## Covid-19 policy mismatch stifles East Africa trade

Uganda. It has rattled supply chains and caused businesses millions in losses.

Uganda is the channel through which cargo to Rwanda, Burundi, and South Sudan is trucked from the East African coast.

Each member of the bloc has adopted unique pandemic regulations. While Tanzania, Burundi, and South Sudan have been less strict, Uganda and Rwanda's

rules have been seen as punitive for trade.

Pandemic measures have more than doubled the number of days it takes to transport goods, as well as the cost, according to the Shippers Council of Eastern Africa.

EAC member states lost \$3.36 billion worth of trade due to Covid-19, according to a trade and investment report for the bloc for 2020.

The lack of a common pandemic policy and the unending political tensions has undermined further integration and cross-border trade.

Martin Luther Munu is a trade analyst. He joins the show with insights on how members of the bloc can increase intra-community trade. Millions of people in Nigeria are food insecure. Africa's most populous country still doesn't produce

enough to feed everyone. In 2019, Abuja closed borders with its neighbours, ostensibly to control smuggling and to protect domestic food production.

Through a credit scheme, Nigeria's central bank is lending to rice farmers to help them increase acreage and production.

The crop is at the centre of the country's ambitious goal of achieving food and nutrition self-sufficiency.

Did you know that 80 percent of intra-African transactions are settled outside the continent?

## Adopt, grow newly researched bean varieties, farmers in Kagera advised

By Correspondent Mutayoba Arbogast,

Bukoba

TANZANIA Agricultural Research Institute (TARI) has urged residents in Kagera Region to adopt and grow the newly researched bean varieties as they are full of Iron and Zinc, to increase income and help fight malnutrition among children.

TARI acting manager at the Ministry of Agriculture Training Institute (MATI) Maruku, Innocent Ndyetabura made the call here at the "Farmers Field Day" held at Kenya village, Kilimilile ward in Misenyi District.

Organised by TARI, the event aimed to promote the new technology in farming to increase bean productivity.

Ndyetabura said a research conducted in the districts of Bukoba, Misenyi, Muleba and Karagwe, revealed that 14 percent of under-five children suffer from malnutrition and stunting.

He said farmers should increase productivity, using new varieties of beans which have been researched and are rich in Iron and Zinc, essential minerals to children but will also raise the income.

The new researched bean varieties are Jessica, Taribeana 2, Taribeana 3, Taribeana 4 and Taribeana 5 and they are all said to be disease resistant with maximum of Iron and Zinc. He said it is very alarming to find Kagera region among the last re-

gions which are under poverty line, while the region has been bestowed with good weather which allows two agricultural seasons in a year, saying that this could now be allowed to continue.

"This is your day; we insist farmers to use the new varieties of beans, you can use a very small portion of land and get more harvests," he added.

Julius Mbiu, a researcher with TARI, said Kagera and Kigoma are leading regions in bean agriculture, but was still insufficient due to lack of agricultural basic knowledge or taking things as usual.

"If you adhere keenly to the principles, you will benefit from the farming. A farmer is recommended to sow 80,000 plants in terraces in one acre, but if you sow in a zigzag system you can have more than 100,000 plants, this will later affect the crops thus leading to poor harvests," he said. Mulokozi Salvatory, one of the beans farmers at Kenya village said they are struggling to change their lives through agriculture but have no reliable market for their crops.

He said the awareness campaign of new farming technology should go simultaneously with finding a reliable market of the produce.

According to TARI, if a farmer abides to the advised farming principles will harvest eight to ten of a 100-sack of beans compared to the current two or three sacks.





Simanjiro district commissioner in Manyara Region Dr Suleiman Serera (R) presents a certificate of recognition to a prominent environmentalist Edward Loure at ceremony in Orkesumet township on Wednesday. Looking on (2nd L) is Simanjiro legislator Christopher Ole Sendeka. Photo: Correspondent Gift Thadey

## Iringa DC faults commercial sex work among university students

By Correspondent Friday Simbaya, Iringa

IRINGA district commissioner Mohamed Moyo has warned students of the University of Iringa (UOI) from engaging in sex work, saying the acts tarnishes the university image.

Sex work refers to providing sexual services indirectly or directly in an exchange for money and other consumables.

Speaking during a welcoming ceremony for first-year students, DC said the government is aware that some students engage in sex work, and legal actions will be taken against them.

Moyo said the government relies on higher education scholars to be the catalyst for development by conducting productive research and advising the government on development issues.

He said the practice tarnished the image of the university as well as the region. He urged the few students accused of being sex workers to stop the habit and instead concentrate on their studies.

"If you go through various recreation centres at certain times of the

day you come across a big number of university students taking alcohol. This shouldn't be entertained, it has to stop," he said, adding the government has been providing loans to university students to make sure they learn comfortably and be able to purchase their basic needs.

President of the UOI students' government, Elius William said they will continue to educate students on the dangers of becoming a sexual worker.

William urged the students to remain focused on their educational dreams and avoid posh life styles that are likely to force them into doing dangerous things to get money.

"Since you came here to learn; you must ensure you achieve your educational goals. Engaging in sex works would result in you ending up getting diseases and ultimately fail to fulfil your dreams," he added.

Chancellor of the University of Iringa, Prof Ndelilio Urio, thanked the District Commissioner for educating students on various issues including the effects of engaging on sex work.

## Kenya's wildlife society warns against planned repeal of forest conservation law

By Special Correspondent, Nairobi

CONSERVATIONISTS are raising alarm over an attempt by Parliament to repeal a section of Forest Conservation and Management Act (2016).

In a statement, the East African Wild Life Society (EAWLS) claimed that plans are under way by Parliamentary House Committee to repeal Section 34(2) of the Forest Conservation and Management Act (2016).

Section 34(2) was inserted into the Act to ensure that the delineation of public forest boundaries is carried out

through a structured and consultative process.

The Section reads: "(2) A petition under subsection (1) shall demonstrate that the variation of boundaries or revocation of the registration of a public forest or a portion of a public forest or a portion of a public forest does not -- (a) endanger any rare, threatened or endangered species; or (b) adversely affect its value as a water catchment area; and prejudice biodiversity conservation, cultural site protection of the forest or its use for educational, recreational, health or research purposes."

Section 34 (1) provides for a mechanism through which "a person may petition the National Assembly or the Senate, for the variation of boundaries of a public forest or the revocation of the registration of a public forest or a portion of a public forest."

EAWLS noted that the deletion of Section 34 (2) gives powers to the Parliament to unilaterally excise forests without public consultation, environmental impact assessment and the authority given to the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) to provide technical input in such processes.

"The passing of this amendment would mean that the country will lose its forest cover through dubious variation of boundaries and excision of forests thus wiping out gains made in decades to restore forest cover while mitigating the effects of climate change. The timing of the amendments also raises suspicion," EAWLS Executive Director Nancy Ongoje said.

"We call upon all Kenyans to stand up for conservation and speak out against attempts to water down the protection of our forests. The East African Wild Life Society

is also calling upon members of parliament to withdraw this proposed amendment as it is in bad faith," she said.

The forest sector in Kenya contributes to the social and economic development of the country.

According to the 2018 Taskforce Report on Forest Resources Management and Logging Activities in Kenya, the sector contributes about seven billion Kenyan shillings to the economy and employs over 50,000 people directly and another 300,000 indirectly.

Kenya's forest cover is es-

timated to be about 7.4 per cent of the total land area, which is a far from the recommended global minimum of 10 per cent.

Following the promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, the forest landscape has changed and requires that management and policy decisions on forests to involve stakeholders such as the communities, county governments, civil society and the private sector, among others.

The review of Forest Policy in 2018 and the Forest Conservation and Management

Act (2016) also recognizes the role of non-state actors in the management of this resource.

EAWLS, which is a conservation organization that prides itself on being the voice of conservation in the region, has taken note of efforts by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry and the Kenya Forest Service to ensure that the country attains 10 per cent tree cover through several projects such as the national tree planting programmes that aim to plant two billion trees by 2022 and the reforms in the sector therein.

## Africa nations face uphill battle against western emissions to combat climate change, say activists

By Special Correspondent

AFRICAN nations continue to hold the unenviable position of being disproportionately vulnerable to climate change, according to a recent report by Dr Margaret Kadiri, a lecturer in Physical Geography from King's College London.

The UN climate summit, COP26, held in November 2021, focused the world's attention on the urgent need to tackle climate change and concluded with 197 countries agreeing to the Glasgow climate pact. But opinions on the summit's success are polarised, say climate experts.

In a report first published in not-for-profit news media outlet The Conversation, Kadiri said we owed a profound gratitude to the developing nations - including those from Africa - who agreed to the pact.

"In doing so, they chose not to insist that richer developed nations, whose historical and ongoing greenhouse gas emissions have largely caused the climate crisis, pay reparations to them for the damage they've inflicted."

Although the continent accounts for the smallest share of global greenhouse gas emissions - only 3.8 percent - it's already heating faster than the rest of the world.

And if the target of limiting global warming to 1.5 above pre-industrial levels is missed, Africa could face catastrophic temperature increases of up to 3 by 2050, Kadiri said.

According to reports, the threat to GDP of African nations that are most vulnerable to these changes - meaning the amount of economic activity that stands to be lost if these changes are severe enough - is projected to increase from £660 billion in 2018 to more than £1 trillion in 2023. That's almost half of the continent's projected GDP.



Eggs vendors display their products at Kitunda in the outskirts of Dar es Salaam yesterday hunting for customers in various places. One tray of eggs goes for 6,500/. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma

## Society lauds government's move to cut fees for mountain tour guides

By Correspondent James Lanka, Moshi

THE Kili-Meru Mountain Guides Society (KMMGS) has hailed the government for eliminating fees for mountain tour guides special courses at the College of African Wildlife Management (CAWM)-Mweka.

The move, according to the society, will greatly help tour guides to have required skills and thus improve service provision to tourists visiting Mount Kilimanjaro and Meru as well as other mountains.

KMMGS chairman Faustine Chombo told this paper in an interview that the training is

vital for the sustainability of Mount Kilimanjaro and Meru's tourists.

He praised the government's move for removing the courses' fees which was 800,000/- per one tour guide per course, adding that with the decision, many guides will attend the courses for free.

He noted that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism is planning to implement a countrywide exercise on tour guides registration, certification and accreditation in compliance with the Tourism Act No. 11 of 2008, section 42 when read together with Tourism (Tour Guides) Regulations, 2013 and Guidelines on Regis-

tration and Licensing of Tourism Operations.

The Act stipulates that tour guides should be registered, certified and licensed in order to operate in the tourism industry.

In respect to this, CAWM has been chosen to train mountain tour guides. The training will be conducted through lectures and field practical.

According to the government announcement, the course will cover the following areas; introduction to tourism and protected areas, tour guiding skills and techniques, customer care skills and techniques, biological resources identification and general

mountain ecology, mountain physical resources identification and interpretation, first aid, emergency care and wilderness rescue.

"As you know, Tourism is the leading economic sector in Tanzania currently accounting for 17.2 percent of GDP, 25 percent of the total foreign exchange earnings and employs nearly two million people either directly or indirectly, tour guides are the key frontline players in the tourism industry and plays a big role in impacting memories and experiences for the tourists visiting our country and marketing our destination," he said.

Chombo said currently

there are more than 5,000 tour guides in the country in the categories of safari, mountain, cultural, marine and city guides.

He further explained that, the tour guides have been trained in various institutions both private and public owned which uses different curricula as there is no standardised and harmonised curriculum for the tour guides in the country.

"These guides are currently not registered; there is also a lack of professional ethics and standard operating procedures (SOPs) in the tour guiding profession in the country. This has resulted in incon-

sistent service delivery and sometimes complaints from tourists in regards to their performance, the situation of which hinders the growth of tourism," he enlightened.

Zainab Ansell, managing director of Zara Tanzania Adventures said her company sponsored the training to its 60 mountain guides to improve services.

"My Tours company has started providing special courses to the Tourist's Guides since 2016 to join government efforts through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism's planning to implement a countrywide system of tour guides registration, certifi-

cation and accreditation in compliance with the Tourism Act No. 11 of 2008, section 42 when read together with Tourism (Tour Guides) Regulations, 2013 and Guidelines on Registration and Licensing of Tourism Operators."

"The law permits tour guides to be registered, certified and licensed in order to operate in the tourism industry which is currently missing in the country," she explained.

She further said they are going to have another Special Guide's courses next month to standardise the quality of services and knowledge for mountain guides for sustainable tourism.



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

## Marsabit, Simanjiro disasters demand innovative solutions

THOUSANDS of cattle are reported to have died in Simanjiro district in Manyara Region and in Marsabit county in the far more arid zone in northern Kenya. Surprisingly the numbers are similar at over 60,000 cattle, which is an excessively high number for a locality with two or three wards. In both areas the extent of drought was higher than is habitually experienced, with cattle dying for lack of water and feed, while humans are basically under the shadow of famine, as much of their cash for purchasing grain or other supplies arises from selling livestock. Now they are mostly dead and those sold fetch scant market value.

News reports and broadcasts have focused on two aspects, one the need for food aid to help communities and another theme is the need for assistance to restock their cattle numbers.

Authorities are definitely looking to ferrying grain supplies and nutritional packages especially for children under the age of five, but restocking is a different proposition, as it would require a study to see how much is sustainable. Are droughts accidental occurrences as in the past or can they be predicted nearly with certainty these days?

There is obviously something of an accident- or bad luck - as to why it is Marsabit or Simanjiro that faces acute drought situations and not countless other wards or districts in the whole of northern Kenya or in Arusha and Manyara regions. Weather forecasting being what it is, such things can't be told a priori because what hap-

pens in one area is a result at a distant place of factors converging in the local sky and thousands of kilometers away. That includes the well explained La Nina condition in the southern Pacific Ocean that brings about a cold spell over much of the ocean, affecting precipitation in a worldwide belt.

What all the same is incontrovertible is that climate change as a phenomenon, occasioning acute droughts and infrequent heavy rainfall with often devastating results is part of the weather menu that the world must contend with. That is why such crises call for measures relating to the use of World Bank climate change adaptation funds, but not necessarily in the way stakeholders map out issues. The part relating to food aid doesn't call for use of World Bank funds but emergency coffers within the central government, but a restocking exercise has to be part of a wider strategy involving communities in such exposed areas.

It isn't early to say if such issues have even begun being addressed, for instance is the herd grazing mode of keeping cattle still relevant in the present situation. In the best of times, a rising population of cattle keepers and rising demand for agricultural land leads to intermittent conflicts that are often played down by officials at various levels. The reason is that they arise from personal behavior - like grazing on a farm - and officials don't wish to crowd remand prisons with such offenders. Restocking aid could address that kind of situation, as to what modality leads to fewer crises, or conflicts.

## Competitive stamp duty rates a plausible demand

MANUFACTURERS are appealing to the government to make an overhaul of stamp duty rates when the electronic tax stamp facility is applied, with a varied set of arguments that however have a valid core, unless someone says the opposite, that the rates make local goods relatively uncompetitive locally and regionally. This is asserted with the background aspect that the proper tax tariffs especially for imports are decided at the regional level and in that case aren't available for ministerial review save as agenda for the next round of budget discussions in East African Community context. Stamp duty is a localized affair.

One observation that Leodegar Tenga, the president of the Tanzania Confederation of Industries (CTI) pointed out is that alternative service providers for the stamping and duty collection collect half of the rate that has now been instituted by the Tanzania Revenue Authority. He said it was a marginal diminution of the rate applicable earlier, and thus appealed for a 75 per cent cut in what is now being imposed, so that it isn't a burden on manufacturers.

The costs incurred by the company that collects the duty charges were not tabled but alluding to alternative service providers taking half the charge implies monopoly effect.

There is all the same a complicating factor in the fact that there is an atmosphere of levies and tolls in this or that regard, so that every branch of industry or commerce contributes appreciably to development efforts, in ways that collective deliberation makes it impera-

But the fact that this levy isn't being collected by TRA and instead it goes directly to a franchised firm complicates discussion on the matter. The CTI president's remarks were suggesting in a sense that this is directly income for the company, and it is a foreign company apparently allowed to overcharge local manufacturers for the services it provides.

Another suggestion the CTI leader put forward is that the government conducts a review of the franchise and next time the tender be allocated to a local firm in open bidding. This goes back to the frequently leveled idea that major data control systems should be under local firms or those manning them should not be expatriates, and it is given as common sense - that it is for the national interest. Experience all the same doesn't instruct that local control is the same as efficiency, or whether it controls corruption better.

The difference is basically psychological, that a franchised operator is beholden to the government for instructions and has an international reputation to protect and avoid ethical contentions on how the work is conducted.

Local control of data opens doors to cartels of one sort or another holding a shield in the face of the government, incapable of ascertaining the facts in anything, unless by the use of auxiliary means of data collection.

So local firms need to have partial foreign ownership to enhance their level of internal controls and ethical disposition, otherwise an environment arises for a new anti-corruption drive.

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## Why I won't contest for president next year



By Uddin Ifeanyi

OF far more import is the hoary incoherence of the body of opinions that have consistently masqueraded as anti-capitalist in this country.

... the story of our failure as a country is this infatuation with ideas that we have tested time and again, but which continue to fail us. Unfortunately, we are witnesses to the same ideas tested and successfully dropped (China after 1979 is the poster child for this transition). The prevalence of this ideological narcolepsy is the main reason why I will not be contesting any election in this country.

It is official. Unlike a good number of my compatriots, I will not be contesting the office of president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in the general elections scheduled for next year. This is not because I am not qualified to contest. Beyond the constitutional requirements for throwing one's hat in that mix, there is really no consensus on what our ideal president should look, feel, or sound like. On this side of the conversation, I am probably in breach of softer, non-regulatory criteria. For example, did God reveal himself to me on this matter? No. I fear the burden of blasphemy too much to claim otherwise. Did my people call me? Unlikely. Even if they (whomsoever they are) recognise me as belonging to them, I doubt that they are acquainted with my address.

Nor is my decision not to run a consequence of my not being smart enough. Grey matter never was a requirement for being president of Nigeria. This has nothing to do with the quality of persons who have recently occupied that office. Indeed, I recall even now with nausea the response, several years ago, of a candidate for that office to a question on how he would manage the economy. The would-be president clearly hadn't a clue about what the main issues with the economy were. And he squared the

circle by promising, once in office, to employ the best economists to advise him on the matter.

His plaudits (it was a live telecast, and they were many) evidently were not familiar with the long running joke about the profession of economics. They were not aware, in other words, that "If you were to ask two economists for an opinion, you'd get three responses". And since just about every aspect of the Nigerian economy is not working, any one who makes it to that office next year would have a lot of questions to respond to. What sectors of the economy to reform (and by how much) in order to attract foreign direct investment? How much such inflows are required to boost domestic productivity? By how much would we need to grow productivity if we are to dent unemployment? Etc. My disgust, then, was because I felt that a candidate for office of president with no sense of where the economy ought to be, the direction in which it should be headed, and the pace at which it should be going, would waste advice, no matter how rich his team on the economy is.

Along with reforming revenue sources, we must also fix government spending. Would that involve moving monies away from subsidies on the naira's exchange rate, the pump-gate price of fuel, cost of money, etc. and towards improved spending on health and education? Without any doubt. Can we afford to continue to play fast and loose with property rights, while still expecting inward foreign investment? I don't think so.

Largely, though, I will not be contesting for the office of president next year, because I do not believe in a lot of the tosh that large sections of our echo chambers (and hence the Nigerian electorate) currently

level in. I still think there is much to be said in favour of the Washington Consensus. Increasingly, I am told that the local vote might be in favour of the Buenos Aires Consensus. Whatever the latter entails, I am so still in favour of governments at all levels maintaining fiscal discipline. No matter how well-intended our politicians are, we must deal with the question of improving government revenue. And we won't get traction on this without fixing our tax arrangements.

Along with reforming revenue sources, we must also fix government spending. Would that involve moving monies away from subsidies on the naira's exchange rate, the pump-gate price of fuel, cost of money, etc. and towards improved spending on health and education? Without any doubt.

Can we afford to continue to play fast and loose with property rights, while still expecting inward foreign investment? I don't think so. Without removing impediments to the entry and exit of suppliers (local or otherwise) in the respective sectors of our domestic markets, we can only continue to pretend to privatise state-owned companies.

Nor can we continue to erect monopolies around private businesses and still think that we can take advantage of liberalised trade agreements.

In fact, in our current environment, it would be hard to glean much advantage from pursuing a competitive exchange rate regime. And where did we learn that the solution to a large, uneducated, young population is to return to rain-fed subsistence farming? The whole point of redirecting public expenditure toward improved health and education outcomes, while structuring the domestic economy in support of

private supply responses is to hasten the transition from an agrarian to an industrial base in record time. Nor do I believe that out there are some interests in the developed economies hell bent on holding Nigeria down. And that the most appropriate response to this conspiracy against us is to trial home-grown responses to our economic challenges.

... one could argue that the main problem with politics and economics in Nigeria - of course, this ignores prebendal motives and the instincts in favour of primitive accumulation - is that despite the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and China's late 1970s pivot from Maoism, large swathes of the country remain on the "left".

In this sense, one could argue that the main problem with politics and economics in Nigeria - of course, this ignores prebendal motives and the instincts in favour of primitive accumulation - is that despite the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and China's late 1970s pivot from Maoism, large swathes of the country remain on the "left".

Still, this would be but a partial description of our main constraint. Of far more import is the hoary incoherence of the body of opinions that have consistently masqueraded as anti-capitalist in this country.

Because of these, we've been down these paths innumerable times. And the story of our failure as a country is this infatuation with ideas that we have tested time and again, but which continue to fail us. Unfortunately, we are witnesses to the same ideas tested and successfully dropped (China after 1979 is the poster child for this transition). The prevalence of this ideological narcolepsy is the main reason why I will not be contesting any election in this country.



# Covax, developing world's hope against Covid has made it only halfway

By Humberto Márquez

**T**HE Covax initiative, the hope of the countries of the developing South to immunize their populations against COVID-19, only met half of its goals in 2021. And as 2022 begins, and the omicron variant of the virus is spreading fast, the scheme still depends on the decisions of pharmaceutical companies and the goodwill of donor governments.

José Manuel Durão Barroso, president of the Gavi Vaccine Alliance, one of the entities leading the Covax initiative, warned at the outset that “as long as a large part of the world's population is unvaccinated, variants will continue to emerge and the pandemic will drag on.”

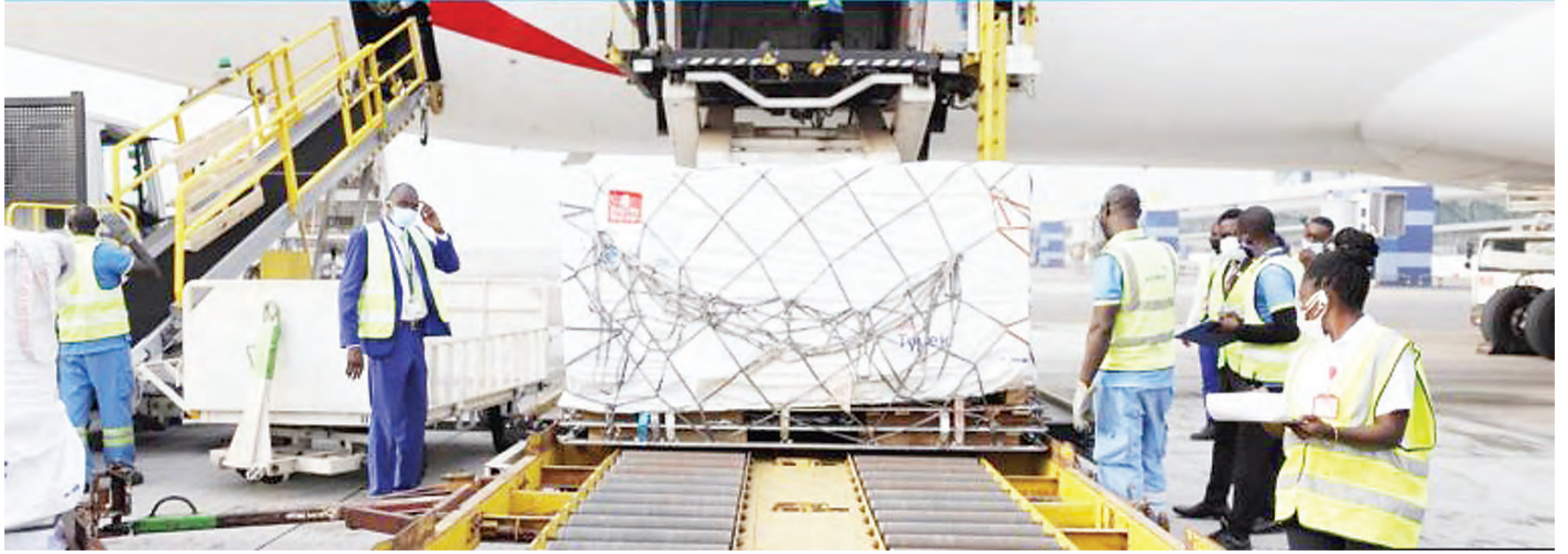
“We will only prevent variants from emerging if we are able to protect the entire world population, not just the rich areas,” added Durão Barroso, former prime minister of Portugal (2002-2004) and former president of the European Commission (2004-2014), in an email interview with IPS.

Covax, a global access fund for COVID-19 vaccines established in April 2020 as an alliance of countries, multilateral organizations and private foundations, had brought together 184 countries by October that year and set out to procure and distribute hundreds of millions of vaccines against the disease equitably in countries of the developing South.

Under the scheme, one group of countries self-funds and pays for the vaccines sent to it by Covax, while another, the poorest, are to receive the immunizations free of charge.

Shortly after the first vaccines were applied in industrialized countries in late 2020, an encouraging first shipment of 600,000 doses of the British Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine arrived at the international airport in Accra, Ghana, the first country to benefit from the Covax mechanism, on Feb. 24, 2021.

The initiative was launched to distribute and apply, in more than a hundred countries, two billion doses throughout 2021, to ensure equitable immunization of 40 per cent of the world's population, before reaching 70 per cent in the first



The first shipment of vaccines by Covax to a developing country arrived at the international airport in Accra, Ghana on Feb. 24, 2021. Credit: Krishnan/Covax

half of 2022 - figures aimed at curbing the pandemic.

But disaster lurked around the corner. India was hit by a sudden, devastating wave of COVID-19 infections, and the overcrowded country stopped exporting vaccines. And the Serum Institute of India (SII), the world's largest vaccine manufacturer, was to be the source of the vaccines for the Gavi-Covax mechanism.

While high-income countries such as the United States, Canada, European nations and Israel purchased large quantities of vaccines from pharmaceutical transnationals, sometimes in excess of their populations, it was logical for Covax to seek supplies from India's SII, where doses were also cheaper.

A dose prepared by the SII could cost three dollars, compared to 50 or 100 percent more in a Western pharmaceutical company.

Thus, while its recipients in the South awaited vaccines under great pressure from their local populations, Covax had to announce in April and May that there would be delays, which occurred in the following months, placing many countries in an uncertain and impatient wait while the virus variants raged.

By early January 2022, the number of infected cases exceeded 300 million worldwide and deaths surpassed 5.5 million, with two populous countries in the South, India and

Brazil, following the worst-hit country in absolute numbers: the United States.

Instead of two billion doses, Covax distributed less than half of that - 900 million - throughout 2021. And as of November 2021 it had delivered less than 600 million doses, although it reached 900 million thanks to donations of 310 million doses in December.

## What went wrong?

Durão Barroso explained that “the unfortunate epidemiological situation in India, combined with the fact that only a few vaccines had received the WHO emergency use listing and were available for global supply at that time, significantly delayed the launch of Covax.”

This situation “together with export restrictions, the hoarding of vaccines by many richer countries, and manufacturers who do not prioritize vaccine equity, meant that we could not access as many doses as we expected in the second and third quarters of the year,” added the head of Gavi.

When the race against the clock for vaccines began, “many governments in high-income countries made reference to global solidarity,” so that all nations would have access to immunizations, recalled Kate Elder, senior vaccines policy advisor at the humanitarian organization Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF).

“Pharmaceutical companies said they would do their part to ensure that the mistakes of the past were not repeated and that it was not just high-income countries that would have access to medical innovations,” Elder said in her response to a list of questions from IPS.

“However, this did not happen and calls to move away from the business-as-usual approach were ignored. High-income countries started buying up COVID-19 vaccine doses even before they were available,” she said.

The corporate behavior contradicted earlier assertions that antiviral vaccines should be global public goods, and pharmaceutical corporations, as in other circumstances in the past, prioritized sales to the highest bidder and sought primarily their own financial gain, according to MSF.

## Donations arrive

The result of the first few months was that Covax only delivered one million doses in February 2021, 23 million in March, 15 million in April, and 30 million in May. From early on it was clear that reaching the goal of two billion doses in 10 months was impossible.

Confidence in vaccine delivery mechanisms, and in immunization itself, eroded, for example in Gambia, Namibia or Nigeria in Africa, or in Afghanistan and Pakistan in Asia. Anxiety also escalated because,

having received the first dose of a vaccine, people demanded the second even more loudly.

The countries of the developing South then began or intensified their search for vaccines outside of Covax. And, in parallel, some made progress in the production of their own vaccines, as was the case of Saudi Arabia, India and Singapore in Asia, Egypt in Africa and Argentina, Brazil, Cuba and Mexico in Latin America.

In the second half of 2021, donations began to appear, like a lifeline. Rich countries, having vaccinated large segments of their population and with vaccines or supplies such as syringes available, began to donate, often under the Covax umbrella, millions of doses to countries in the developing South.

Donor countries have so far offered Covax 591 million doses to be delivered in 2021 and the first half of 2022, and the scheme has sent 259 million doses to recipient countries, which partially explains the acceleration of deliveries in November (155 million) and December (310 million) 2021.

The main donors to Covax have been the United States (145 million doses), a group of 16 European Union members (81 million), the United Kingdom (11.5 million) and Canada and Japan (8.4 million doses each).

However, in some cases the doses arrived very close to

their expiration date - or with a shortage of syringes or freezers to preserve them, as in Somalia and East Timor - forcing them to be discarded or sometimes sent back, as happened in the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan.

## The road ahead

Covax, in Elder's view, was “naively ambitious,” and its success “was tied to unground assumptions. Foreseeable challenges were not factored into the design of the mechanism and some poor policy decisions were made.”

“From its design to its governance and accountability mechanisms, the exclusion of meaningful participation of key stakeholders has undermined Covax's ability to succeed,” the MSF vaccines policy expert argued.

The hoarding of vaccines and medicines by high-income countries has already happened on other occasions, such as during the HIV/AIDS epidemic or with regard to access to vaccines against pneumococcus, human papillomavirus or rotavirus.

For Elder, “if we want to learn from this experience to improve access to vaccines, the first step is to make a radical change. This basically means making the technology and innovation of medical tools public to guarantee an equitable model and decentralize production.”

“Technology born of public investment cannot be owned by corporations, it must be a global public good,” she said.

In addition, “it is necessary to strengthen multilateral organizations and regional platforms, since each region knows best what its needs are, instead of public-private alliances based on the goodwill of pharmaceutical companies, which, at the end of the day, we already know what their interests are going to be.”

Durão Barroso said that Covax “has reached a point where it can now meet the demand of the countries it serves. However, there is a real risk that the supply disruption will continue in 2022.”

So “we have asked manufacturers to be more transparent about when they will make doses available, and from donor governments we have asked for larger and more predictable donations. This is finally happening,” added the head of Gavi.

Durão Barroso stressed that in the face of the spread of different variants “it is absolutely critical that we avoid a scenario of vaccine nationalism 2.0, where rich countries immobilize the supply of new vaccines.”

“We depend on countries' commitment to multilateralism and manufacturers' commitment to transparency to ensure that we don't fall behind again,” he stated.

# West raising red flags over Wagner's expanding mercenary reach in CAR and other African nations

By Peter Fabricius

**R**USSIA has established a strong military presence in the Central African Republic (CAR) over the past four years, clandestinely using dubious actors like the military company Wagner, which is allegedly close to President Vladimir Putin. Wagner has become the deniable vanguard of a major Russian push into Africa, many analysts believe.

Wagner, supposedly run - or at least funded - by oligarch Yevgeny Prigozhin, the man often called “Putin's chef”, may already have made itself indispensable to President Faustin-Archange Touadéra. This raises serious questions about whether it can be - or indeed should be - dislodged.

A force of about 1,200 to 2,000 Wagner operatives plus a contingent of some 300 crack Rwandan troops prevented the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) rebel army from capturing Bangui a year ago. The CPC comprised six signatories to the failing 2019 Khartoum agreement and was led by former president François Bozizé. The rebels advanced on Bangui after Touadéra won the December 2020 elections, from which Bozizé had been excluded and which were widely believed to have been rigged.

The Russians then advanced into the countryside, routing more re-



A soldier stands guard in Bangui, Central African Republic. In 2021, the AU aimed to continue its security sector reform support in the Central African Republic as well as The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau. There are growing fears that Russian private military organisation Wagner Group has become an indispensable asset to CAR president Faustin-Archange Touadéra. Photo: REUTERS

bels as they marched. They restored more security to the CAR than it has seen for a long time, achieving what other outsiders - including France, Libya under the late Muammar Gaddafi and even South Africa (in 2013) - had failed to do.

And so the Russians were at first widely welcomed by CAR citizens. However, their popularity later waned as they increasingly committed severe human rights abuses against civilians, according to the United Nations (UN) and others. And the Inter-

national Crisis Group and Africa Confidential say they have targeted not only members of the Fulani and Gbaya ethnic groups - Bozizé is a member of the latter - but also Muslims in general. (Some rebel groups in the CPC alliance predominantly profess that faith.)

From his perspective, Touadéra's greatest dilemma may be that his heavy reliance on Wagner and Russia more generally has poisoned his relations with Western countries, particularly France.

The United States (US) is also annoyed and had already sanctioned Prigozhin for his alleged role in trying to influence its 2016 elections. The US and the European Union also recently slapped sanctions on Wagner for a suspected range of human rights abuses, not only in the CAR but in Libya, Syria, Sudan and Ukraine. Wagner also briefly joined the fight against insurgents in northern Mozambique, though it quickly withdrew after setbacks.

Western disapproval mat-

ters because the CAR relies primarily on Western donors to provide more than half its \$496-million annual state budget. The country doesn't acknowledge Wagner's presence, and no one has seen a contract between them, though few doubt they have a deal. No visible contract means no evidence of legitimate pay, fuelling allegations that Wagner is being reimbursed instead with lucrative mining contracts.

A UN Panel of Experts found Wagner and Russia's Lobaye Invest SARLU - which has won gold and diamond mining concessions - were “interconnected”. And the ICG points out that “Russian media have linked Lobaye directly to Prigozhin.”

A similar standoff between France and the West on the one side and Russia and particularly Wagner may be occurring in Mali. A Russian force of some 450, mainly Wagner, operatives is reportedly starting to fill a vacuum created by the partial withdrawal of France's 5,100-strong Barkhane force from the Sahel region. Mali's government denies Wagner's presence, admitting only to “Russian instructors”.

Nevertheless, Wagner's alleged presence has also provoked strong protests by France, which essentially saved Mali from being overrun by jihadists and separatists in 2013. France has threatened to completely withdraw military support to Mali. Sweden has already announced its exit from the European force Takuba because of Wagner's arrival. Such decisions are difficult because they may further weaken the fight against the common enemy - violent extremism.

Nevertheless, the CAR and Mali cases raise some stark questions about Western responses to Wagner and Russia's interventions there and elsewhere. Are these just fits of hypocritical pique by the West because

Russia is beating it at its own game of exerting influence and exploiting commercial opportunities in Africa? Or are there significant differences between Western and Russian intervention?

A security analyst who requested anonymity noted that Russia - and for that matter China - are in many respects doing what Western countries have done for much longer. And that is securing access to African resources and markets and seeking stronger diplomatic and strategic alignment with the continent in global fora.

He says complicating any analysis or comparison is that Russia's involvement in the CAR and elsewhere in Africa is probably more covert, so it's hard to know just where it is and what it's doing. (There are rumours that Russia has its eyes on Burkina Faso, for example.)

But he added that Wagner's growing presence is clearly problematic on two points. The first is that, like most private military companies, its military doctrine seems to converge around annihilating the enemy with little regard to civilian collateral damage. So human rights abuses are a big problem.

The second point is that Wagner and Russia seem to have no regard for democracy when choosing who to support. Some even suggest Putin seeks out African partners who have fallen out with the West because of their undemocratic behaviour, as this makes them vulnerable to such blandishments. And perhaps also to stick his finger in the West's eye. In Mali, for example, Russia and Wagner evidently moved in only after the 2021 coup by Colonel Assimi Goïta and his reluctance to return the country to democratic civilian rule.



# Chinese vaccines help humankind build 'Great Wall of Immunity' against COVID-19

By Yu Yichun, Zhou Zhou, Wang Xinping

**S**INCE the outbreak of COVID-19, China has never stopped working together with the rest of the world to fight against the pandemic and weather the trying times.

Convinced that vaccines are a powerful weapon to prevail over the pandemic and revive the economy, the country has so far provided over two billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines for over 120 countries and international organizations, which account for one-third of the total number of doses administered outside China, becoming the biggest provider of outbound vaccines among all countries in the world.

China was among the first to commit to making COVID-19 vaccines a global public good, to support waiving intellectual property rights on the vaccines, and to start joint production of vaccines with other developing countries.

The country has always adhered to the vision of building a community of common health for mankind and joined hands with various parties to improve the availability and affordability of vaccines in developing countries, helping address the global vaccine "distribution deficit" and close the "immunity gap".

## I. China proposes Global Vaccine Cooperation Action Initiative to promote global solidarity against the pandemic

Over 300 million people have been diagnosed with COVID-19, among whom more than 5 million lost their lives; only 5 percent of the population in low-income countries are fully vaccinated against the coronavirus. The COVID-19 epidemic that is wreaking havoc across the world has deeply changed the human society.

Amid the major public health crisis, Chinese President Xi Jinping has actively promoted international anti-epidemic cooperation during important diplomatic events he chaired or attended via video link and his meetings and phone conversations with foreign leaders and heads of international organizations, enhancing global solidarity for fighting the pandemic.

"COVID-19 vaccine development and deployment in China, when available, will be made a global public good. This will be China's contribution to ensuring vaccine accessibility and affordability in developing countries," Xi solemnly promised at the opening of the 73rd session of the World Health Assembly in May 2020.

"At the moment, several COVID-19 vaccines developed by China are in Phase III clinical trials. When their development is completed and they are available for use, these vaccines will be made a global public good, and they will be provided to other developing countries on a priority basis," he said at the General Debate of the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) held in September 2020.

In May 2021, the Chinese leader announced at the Global Health Summit five measures taken by China to continuously support global solidarity against COVID-19. China supports its vaccine companies in transferring technologies to other developing countries and carrying out joint production with them, and the country, which has already announced support for waiving intellectual property rights on COVID-19 vaccines, also supports the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other international institutions in making an early decision on this matter, he pointed out.

At Session I of the 16th G20 Leaders' Summit held in October 2021, Xi proposed a Global Vaccine Cooperation Action Initiative, which includes supporting vaccine companies in conducting joint R&D and production with developing countries, providing more vaccines for developing countries to meet the global vaccination target for 2022 as set by the World Health Organization (WHO), supporting the WTO in making an early decision on waiving intellectual property rights on COVID-19 vaccines, scaling up cross-border trade cooperation to ensure smooth trade in vaccines and related raw and auxiliary materials, advancing mutual recognition of vaccines in accordance with the WHO's Emergency Use Listing (EUL) as well as providing financial support for global vaccine cooperation, especially for developing countries to access vaccines.

China's proposals are never empty promises. These are always turned into concrete actions.

The country ranks top in the world in terms of the speed of vaccine R&D and the number of vaccines developed. Its two inactivated COVID-19 vaccines have been included in the EUL and the COVAX procurement list.

Batches of Chinese vaccines have traveled a long journey to other countries, infusing confidence and strength into global solidarity against COVID-19.

As the epidemic continues to rage across the world, China has provided COVID-19 vaccines and medical resources for many countries and regions in the world, making important contributions to the global response to the epidemic, according to Ban Ki-moon, former Secretary-General of the UN.

Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), believes that China's vaccine support and assistance effectively boosted ASEAN members' response to COVID-19.

Leaders of 37 countries went to the airport to welcome the arrival of Chinese vaccines, and leaders of 32 countries have received Chinese vaccine shots publicly. The country's vaccines have established a good reputation in the world, with their safety and effectiveness widely acknowledged.

After receiving a dose of Chinese vaccine against COVID-19, Chilean President Sebastian Pinera gave a victory gesture in front of the camera.

"Today is an important day because (on) this day we are starting to vaccinate with Chinese vaccines," Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said in a video message on his Facebook page.



The first meeting of the International Forum on COVID-19 Vaccine Cooperation is held via video link on Aug. 5, 2021. Chinese President Xi Jinping addressed the meeting, which was hosted by Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, in a written form. (Photo courtesy of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic praised Chinese vaccines as the best ones in the world. He has received injections as well as a booster shot of Chinese vaccine against COVID-19.

For many developing countries, Chinese vaccines are the first batch of vaccines they have received, and the only ones they could get for a long time afterward. Chinese vaccines came just in time and effectively helped many developing countries in urgent need of vaccines with epidemic prevention and control.

Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi believes the arrival of Chinese vaccines marked a historic moment for Mozambique; Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa described the vaccines donated by China as the light at the end of the tunnel; Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen said several times that strategically relying on Chinese vaccines is the most correct decision; and Laureano Ortega Murillo, advisor to Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, called a batch of Chinese vaccines donated to his country "a great Christmas gift from the Chinese people".

Because of China's unremitting efforts, many countries in the world are marching steadily toward the goal of universal vaccination, which is a remarkable achievement, pointed out Faisal Sultan, Special Assistant to the Pakistani Prime Minister on Health.

Now is a critical moment for the world to join hands to fight the epidemic, according to Alexandre Ganan de Brites Figueiredo, director of the Global South Institute in Brazil, who called China the backbone of global solidarity against the virus.

## II. Chinese vaccines, being accessible to people around the world, are a light of hope for mankind

The COVID-19 pandemic has once again proved that all human beings belong to a community with a shared future. There's nothing more important than the lives of human beings.

President Xi has reiterated that China will honor its commitment of giving assistance and support to other developing countries, and work to make vaccines a global public good accessible and affordable to people around the world.

Chinese vaccines, being accessible to people around the world, are a light of hope for mankind, which forms a sharp contrast to some countries that are excessively hoarding vaccines and resorting to vaccine nationalism.

The first meeting of the International Forum on COVID-19 Vaccine Cooperation was held online in August, 2021. It was joined by senior officials and representatives from over 20 countries, officials of the UN and other international organizations, as well as representatives from 29 Chinese and foreign vaccine manufacturers. Participating parties reached intended deals of over 1.5 billion doses for the year.

In a joint statement that followed the meeting, to put people and their lives first, a guiding principle for China's COVID-19 response, was incorporated, calling for more solidarity and cooperation in the fight against the pandemic.

Even while under the tremendous pressure of coronavirus control, China still remains resolute in its commitment of making COVID-19 vaccines a global public product.

It has continued offering vaccines for the rest of the world to the best of its ability, and continued supporting Chinese vaccine enterprises in transferring technologies to and carrying out production cooperation with other developing countries, so as to make the vaccines accessible to more countries, especially developing countries, as early as possible, and join hands with all parties to build a global community of health for all.

China was among the first to join the WHO's "Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator" initiative, under which it has launched vaccine development cooperation with a number of countries. It has also participated in the COVAX program. Chinese vaccine manufacturers agreed to provide 250 million doses to the program.

The country has set up a national center as a part of the BRICS Vaccine R&D Center to advance collective vaccine research and production, and mutual recognition of standards. It is also a member of the Group of Friends on the Safety and Security of UN Peacekeepers and donates vaccines to UN peacekeeping troops.

China has launched the Initiative for Belt and Road Partnership on COVID-19 Vaccines Cooperation together with over 30 countries that call for fair global distribution of vaccines. It has also constantly improved the "China-ASEAN Vaccine Friends" cooperation platform, initiated a "health shield" for ASEAN countries and donated an additional 150 million doses of COVID vaccines to ASEAN.

To continue its offer of vaccines for Pacific Island coun-

tries in need, China put into use the China-Pacific Island Countries Reserve of Emergency Supplies. The country also announced to provide another one billion doses of vaccines to Africa, including 600 million doses as donation.

With concrete actions, China is charting the course for the world in the darkest hours and bringing a spark of hope to the people in developing countries suffering from the rampant virus.

Serrana, a small town in Brazil's state of Sao Paulo, launched a mass immunization campaign for adults with Chinese-made vaccines from Feb. 17 to April 11 the last year. The campaign soon put the pandemic under control and brought life back to normal, making the small town a leader in recovery performance in the state.

The town now enjoys a sound environment of social health, and local residents are living with dignity thanks to the Chinese-made vaccines, said Serrana Mayor Leonardo Capitelli.

Right by the Manila Bay, which is adjacent to the Philippine capital of Manila, Philippine young man Melvin Chua inserted a letter into a drift bottle and then threw it into the sea. In the letter, he expressed his thanks to China for the assistance it has provided to his country, saying the Chinese vaccines have saved the Philippine people and their families.

"We could not feel more saved and protected. I trust that you will continue to supply the world with the vaccine it needs to save lives and bring the world to its normal state again," he wrote in the letter.

Under the assistance of Chinese vaccines, the Zimbabwean resort city of Victoria Falls became one of the earliest few towns in the world that have achieved mass immunization. The mayor councilor of the city Somveli Dhlamini sent to China a postcard depicting the most representative view of the Victoria Falls. On the back of the postcard, he wrote: "The Chinese vaccines, Sinopharm and Sinovac, have contributed immensely to the recovery of tourism in Victoria Falls. Thanks to the Government of China for the support."

In March, 2021, Iraq was hit by a ferocious second wave of COVID-19, and vaccines were plunged into short supply. On March 2, a shipment of COVID-19 vaccines donated by the Chinese government arrived in Baghdad, capital of the country, and the health ministry of the country announced a national vaccination plan just hours after the receipt.

In August 2021, the first batch of COVID-19 vaccines totaling two million doses that China provided to the COVAX facility arrived in Pakistan's capital Islamabad and Bangladesh's capital Dhaka. Mushtaq Hussain, an adviser to Bangladesh's Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research, expressed his thanks to China on behalf of the Bangladeshi people.

Two months later, mobile vaccination vehicles were deployed on the streets of Argentina, giving shots of the Chinese-made single-dose CanSino COVID-19 vaccines to many local scavengers, a vulnerable group to the disease. These vaccines from China were a great relief for local residents.

Mexican Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard noted that his country will never forget China's friendly assistance offered at such a hard time.

Charles Onunaiju, director of the Nigeria-based Center for China Studies said China's promises are a genuine response to the concerns of African countries. A netizen from Sri Lanka also said on social media that he feels closer to China with Chinese vaccine in his veins.

## III. A global production network of Chinese vaccines that serves all mankind is taking shape

The Chinese often say that giving a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.

Today, Chinese bulk vaccines are being filled in vials in Asia, Europe, Africa and Latin America, and then shipped to countries in and around these regions, injecting Chinese confidence and strength into the building of a global immunological barrier.

In March 2021, the first batch of CanSino COVID-19 vaccines produced in Mexico were bottled and delivered. The production line co-built by China's CanSino Biologics Inc. and Mexican firm Drugmex is the first overseas fill-and-finish facility for the CanSino COVID-19 vaccines.

Chairman of the board of Drugmex noted that China has helped Mexico break its bottleneck in localized production of vaccines, and the CanSino has made vaccines accessible to remote areas. "We can constantly improve our techniques and optimize our procedures through the experience shared by China. We appreciate the generous support from the Chinese side," he said.

In March 2021, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) welcomed the first batch of locally-manufactured COVID-19 inactivated vaccines under license from Chinese vaccine producer Sinopharm. The vaccines were nicknamed "vaccines of life."

Thanks to the China-UAE vaccine cooperation, the Expo 2020 Dubai was successfully held, said UAE Ambassador to China Ali Obaid Al Dhaheri. China and the UAE have contributed their strength to world peace and development by offering mutual support and making joint efforts to safeguard people's health and lives.

As of July the last year, one million doses of COVID-19 vaccine licensed by Chinese firm Sinovac had been produced in Egypt. After an inspection tour to a factory that produced the vaccines, one co-built by China and Egypt, Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly noted that his country has taken an important step on its path to independent vaccine production. WHO representative in Egypt Naeema Al-Gasseer said the move will further advance Africa's anti-pandemic progress.

In September 2021, the first Chinese vaccine factory in Europe was commenced in Serbia, which was called a "proof of friendship" by Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic. He noted that the facility is of important significance for the fight against the pandemic in Serbia and even the region at large.

In the same month, a recombinant protein vaccine co-developed by the Institute of Microbiology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and China's Anhui Zhifei Longcom Biopharmaceutical Co., Ltd. was put into production at Uzbek pharma Jurabek Laboratories. It marked the first time for Uzbekistan to produce a Chinese COVID-19 vaccine at a local facility. At present, around 300,000 doses are being produced by the pharma each day, and the annual production is expected to hit 100 million doses.

A global production network of Chinese vaccines that serves all mankind is taking shape. COVID-19 vaccine projects launched in cooperation with China have entered official or trial operation in 12 countries, and eight countries have signed agreements with Chinese firms on COVID-19 vaccine cooperation, hoping to produce the jabs locally as early as possible. Besides, many other countries are currently negotiating with Chinese firms for cooperation.

China has been providing vaccine aid to other developing countries in need since its vaccines were launched, said He Yaqiong, head of the Department of Industry of Consumer Products, Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. On the basis of meeting domestic demand for vaccination, Chinese enterprises have well coordinated the supplies at home and abroad, He added.

"From launching international cooperation on clinical trials to vaccine aid and exportation, and to the international cooperation on vaccine production, Chinese vaccine enterprises have resolutely practiced the principle of making Chinese vaccines a global public product. Advancing global vaccine equity and accessibility with concrete actions, they are literally delivering the shots to all mankind," said Liu Jingzhen, chairman of Sinopharm.

"It's believed that through joint efforts and cooperation, we'll finally defeat the pandemic that has impacted the whole world," said Yin Weidong, chairman and CEO of Sinovac.

According to open statistics, Chinese vaccines take a dominant share in some 60 countries, and they are also widely used in half of the top ten countries in terms of total vaccinations or shots per capita.

"China has already made tremendous contributions to the global effort through the rapid development of a number of vaccines and through sharing those vaccines globally. They have made contributions to the COVAX effort and we're very grateful for the contributions that China has made," said CEO of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations Richard Hatchett.

In the eyes of Raquel León de la Rosa, professor at the Autonomous University of Puebla, Mexico, China's efforts to promote technology transfer from its vaccine producers to other developing countries, to advance cooperation on vaccine production, and to help other developing countries achieve vaccine accessibility and affordability, mirror the country's commitment to its promises.

Only through unity, solidarity and cooperation can countries around the world write a new chapter in building a community with a shared future for mankind. China, always among the most active countries to advance international anti-pandemic cooperation, always upholding the public product nature of vaccines, and always contributing to the fair distribution of vaccines, is fully demonstrating a responsible major country's commitment to justice and its sense of mission.

No winter lasts forever, and every spring is sure to follow. It is believed that the mankind, joining hands to fill the immunity gap, will finally defeat the virus and embrace a brighter future.



# Empowering people with disabilities through organic agriculture

By Getrude Mbago

A group of people living with disabilities at Mvomero village in Mvomero District, Morogoro Region have joined forces and embarked on organic vegetable farming so as to improve individual and family income.

Dubbed 'Tevan', the group which consists of 11 PwDs at the village was established in August 2021, after being trained and supported by experts from the ward, district and the Sustainable Agriculture Tanzania (SAT).

The farmers have started to experience positive results from the project through harvesting and selling the vegetables to the villagers and in other market places.

"We were previously staying home waiting for family members and relatives to take care of us, life was so difficult, as we felt sometimes as a burden to the family, so we are really happy with this project," said Christina Aloyce, secretary of the group.

In an interview with journalists late last year at the village, Christina said they were first taken to SAT's centre in Morogoro for a week-long training on organic farming and economic empowerment and then come back to the village to educate and encourage fellow PwDs to join the group and commence the farming.

She said: "Being disabled is not the end of everything, it doesn't guarantee that you cannot wake up and engage in income generating activities, SAT opened our eyes and mindset, we all together agreed to work in synergy and here we are, our farm is going well and we have started harvesting vegetables for sale but also take at home to improve our meals."

Christina said if empowered,

persons with disabilities can do big things and shock the public with positive results due to their commitment and hard work.

She hailed the implementation of the Farmers and Pastoralists Collaboration (FPC) which has transformed the income and lives of the majority of people in the district.

The six-year project (2017-2022) has so far helped to install organic farming knowledge and skills as well as smart livestock keeping to thousands of farmers and pastoralists in Morogoro Region.

"SAT has supported us with training as well as equipment, through having all these, has helped us to engage in farming effectively and we hope that our income will improve as we will be harvesting more in the coming months," she added.

She also expressed their gratitude to the Sustainable Agriculture Tanzania (SAT) for implementing the project which has brought transformation in the area.

"The project has totally changed our mind-set and we are now engaging in organic farming while using things which we have at home or near our surroundings to grow our vegetables well and protect them against diseases and pests," she said.

Christina further recommended the mainstreaming of concerns of PwDs in agriculture in order to ensure all-inclusive and disability sensitive agricultural services provision.

Dorothea Oscar, chairperson of the group said they consider the farm as their office by working from morning to noon hours and sometimes come back during the evening.

"Instead of working up in the



morning and waiting to be given food by someone, we now wake up in our farm and we enjoy this job because we all come early and work hard, this is our office," she said.

She also commended SAT and experts from the government for supporting and ensuring that they adhere to all farming practises so as to get best yields and increase income.

"After SAT had supported us with the training and equipment, the district council also gave us a 2.5m/- loan which have also helped us to expand our farm so as to cultivate more vegetables and earn more," she asserted.

Erasmus Lupenza, agriculture officer in Mvomero ward said they have been working and serving

over 8000 farmers in the ward.

"We educate farmers on best farming practises, encouraging them to form groups so as to be easy for them to access capital and loans so as to achieve their goals," he said.

He also hailed SAT for supporting the government efforts by instilling important farming skills to the farmers including special groups.

Supported by Biovision and Liechtensteiner Development Service (LED), the FPC's project's major goal is to enhance sustainable livelihoods of farmers and pastoralists through agro-ecological practises creating a solution where both parties can create local circular economies, everyone benefits, and conflicts are drasti-

cally reduced.

Rashid Mallya, FPC project manager said the organisation has been implementing various projects to support farmers with adequate knowledge and skills especially in organic farming.

"We have been training farmers on conservation farming as well as smart livestock keeping, thousands of farmers and herders from Morogoro and other parts of the country have benefited from the organised trainings and changed their mind-sets, we have projects that touches all groups and bringing positive impact in the communities and nation at large," he explained.

Mallya said the FPC project has instilled organic farming knowledge and skills among the groups

thus promoting natural and conservation farming which eventually helped to improve income and reduce farmers and pastoralists conflicts.

He said that it was high time now farmers should now start engaging on high valued crops like vegetables, short-time fruits, mushrooms, aquaculture and poultry in the areas where they are and they can experience good profit thus transforming their lives.

He further said that the country needs to undergo youth mind-set transformation to change their negative perceptions towards agriculture in a bid to attract more youths in agribusiness undertakings, a move that will curb the current unemployment challenge.

By Special Correspondent

EXPANDING nature preserves will not be enough to stem a rising tide of extinctions, a panel of experts have warned, taking aim at a draft treaty tasked with rescuing earth's animal and plant life.

Setting aside at least 30 percent of both land and oceans as protected zones is the cornerstone target of the so-called global biodiversity framework to be finalized in May at UN negotiations in Kunming, China.

But a report by more than 50 top experts said the draft plan still falls far short of what is needed.

"We're in the middle of a biodiversity crisis, with a million species at risk of extinction," lead author Paul Leadley, a professor at Paris-Saclay University said.

"There's good evidence that we will fail again to meet ambitious international biodiversity objectives if there's too much focus on protected areas at the expense of other urgent actions."

The plan, under negotiation by

nearly 200 nations, sets a score of targets for 2030 and aims by 2050 to reverse biodiversity loss and be "living in harmony with nature."

The world failed almost entirely to reach a similar set of 10-year objectives set a decade ago at UN talks in Aichi, Japan.

"We keep trying to treat a critically ill patient with plasters. That has to stop," said Leadley.

Echoing a similar warning issued by the UN's science advisory panel for climate change, Leadley and his colleagues said reversing the damage done to nature will require "transformative change" in society, starting with the way we produce and consume food.

Policymakers must also realize that all the drivers of extinction, including habitat loss and fragmentation, over-hunting for food and profit, pollution, the spread of invasive species, must be tackled at once.

"Biodiversity loss is caused by multiple direct drivers in nearly all cases, meaning that actions on only one or a few will be insufficient to halt continued loss," the

## More protected areas will not save biodiversity, warns experts



report said.

Climate change is also rapidly emerging as a major

threat to many animal and plant species on land and in the oceans, outpacing their ability to adapt.

Limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels is not adequately reflected in the draft targets, the authors say.

Earth's surface has already warmed 1.1C, enough to unleash a crescendo of climate-enhanced storms, heatwaves, droughts, and flooding. And it works both ways, the report warns: "Protecting and restoring biodiversity is a key to achieving the climate mitigation and adaptation goals of the Paris Agreement."

As with climate, there's no time to lose. "The sooner we act the better," said co-author Maria Cecilia Londono Murcia, a researcher at Humboldt Institute in Colombia.

"Time lags between action and positive outcomes for biodiversity can take decades."

The report also takes the draft treaty to task for not spelling out how goals will be achieved and enforced.

Targets are all well and good, it suggests, "but it is how these targets are implemented ... that will determine success."

By Special Correspondent

AT the COP26 climate summit, the leaders of Tanzania, Estonia and Bangladesh were the first to sign the Glasgow Women's Leadership statement, calling for countries to support the leadership of women and girls on climate action at all levels of society and politics.

Yet these three women comprised nearly a third of all female leaders at the conference, out of 140 heads of delegation.

On Gender Day at the COP, countries including the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada pledged to further integrate gender into their climate finance arrangements.

While the pledges reflect a growing awareness of "gender-responsive" finance, which promotes gender equality, the amount of money

mobilised so far falls short of what is needed around the world.

Attention to gender in climate finance negotiations remains negligible. Making the Glasgow Women's Leadership statement a reality will require scaled-up funding for women's capacity-building and community-level climate action.

The negative impacts of climate change disproportionately affect women and girls, especially in the global south. This is not due to inherent vulnerability but the result of gender inequalities in the political, social and economic realms that intersect with other axes of social disadvantage, such as race, sexuality, gender identity and disability status.

For example, during and after climate-related events, women and girls are more exposed to gender-based violence, and girls are less

## Why women's leadership is vital to climate action

likely than boys to continue their education.

The Malala Fund estimates that in 2021, climate-related events will prevent at least four million girls in developing countries from finishing their education.

When it comes to employment, women in developing countries are more likely to work in the informal sector, making their livelihoods more vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks.

Despite these challenges, women and girls have a crucial role in achiev-

ing the climate targets set at COP26. As valuable members of society, they deserve to participate equally in public life.

It is also notable that their participation generates more effective and equitable climate outcomes, from sustainable land management to last-mile solar panel deployment.

Research demonstrates that due to socially-prescribed gender roles, women assess risk differently to men and typically prioritise the welfare of their families and communities in resource

management decisions.

Such differences in decision-making extend to national politics: a 2019 study found that national parliaments with more women pass more stringent climate policies.

Measures that improve women's access to healthcare, education and political representation strengthen their adaptive capacity, enabling their societies to adapt more quickly and easily to the effects of climate change.

Unfortunately, women continue to face barriers to equal participation in environmental decision-making, and women-led community organisations commonly struggle to access climate finance. Support for women's initiatives and access to resources can drive effective climate action that meets the needs of communities.

While women, especially indigenous women and women in the global south, are leading frontline climate action and activism,

they are underrepresented in environmental decision-making at all levels.

Gender-differentiated tasks, including women's responsibility for most unpaid household labour, and unequal power relations within families and communities, can limit women's opportunities to participate in local environmental governance.

The common prerequisite of land tenure for community natural resource decision-making also limits women's input. UN Women estimates that 64 per cent of women globally do not have equal land rights to men in practice.

At national and international levels, women continue to face glass ceilings that prevent them from reaching environmental leadership positions. Gender parity in national-level environmental decision-making is rare, and employees of environmental ministries are on average one-third women.







## BUSINESS

## BANISHMENT

## Vaccine mandate for pro riders in France

PARIS

France is an epicentre of global cycling, and the country's latest Covid rules will impact professional cycling. The new law requires all people who use public buildings to be vaccinated. Applied to cycling events, that would require all athletes, support staff and most spectators, to be vaccinated at the Tour de France.

A negative Covid test will no longer be sufficient for freedom of movement and access to venues in France. Those riders, team members and fans who want to experience the return to normalized cycling events, will have to be compliant with the vaccine pass rules. Novak Djokovic's issues in Australia could have influenced this new approach by French authorities, which allows for no vaccine exemptions.

Nearly all French professional athletes have been vaccinated and most of the elite cycling teams, scheduled to ride in this year's Tour de France, have close to 100% vaccine compliance. The

defending Tour de France champion, Tadej Pogacar, was vaccinated precisely a year ago.

For some teams, the broader theme of support staff could become challenging. Vaccine status might be a privacy infringement in certain jurisdictions. It is also unknown how current employment contracts are structured, relating to vaccine compliance being a condition of employment. Global cycling was expecting a regular schedule this year, but omicron intervened, cancelling the Tour Down Under and Argentina's Vuelta a San Juan.

Most elite teams and riders will now see France as the start of their competition season, with a selection of short events in southern France, during February. The Tour de France is scheduled to start in its traditional slot, during the final week of June. The UCI is yet to announce its new protocols for events this season, covering all competition disciplines, from road to mountain biking.



Kagera Regional Administrative Secretary, Professor Faustin Kamuzora (R) sampling one of the 50 desks donated by Tanzania Commercial Bank to Kitunga Primary School in Muleba districts mid this week. In addition to the desks, TCB also spent 36.3m/- to rehabilitate two classrooms and build toilets at the school. Left is TCB's director for corporate banking, Adolphina William. Photo courtesy of TCB.

## CREATIVITY

## Entrepreneur's journey to hospitality business

KIGALI

Peace Izamukuza Mugabo is the mastermind of Remera-based Ori-on Maker Vantures Ltd, a firm that offers skills growth and hospitality management services to diverse institutions to enable them to provide the best customer services.

The company also offers cleaning, fumigation, and disinfection services to different companies and hotels. While at the university, Mugabo had no idea she would end up in a hospitality business considering she was pursuing a course in Business Management in Accounting. Her dream was to be an accountant, but her path diverted along the way.

Her journey into the hospitality business started while she was still studying. She recalls someone connecting her to a café where she was given a waitress job that she desperately needed as she wanted to cater for her tuition, although there were relatives paying her tuition, she anticipated contributing as well.

Some of Mugabo's employees while fumigating an office. As a waitress in the café, one thing she had in mind was to make clients happy, by giving them the best services and in case of complaints, she handled them professionally and amicably.

At that time, she worked in the morning and studied in the evening. Little did she know that one of her clients was intrigued by her services. She kept her smile on and did her work with passion. He ap-



Peace Izamukuza Mugabo

proached her and asked whether she would be interested in an offer to work in a hotel because he had no doubt she would manage.

Mugabo was stunned and excited at the same time. Of course, she liked the offer as she believed it came with exposure and more skills. She therefore immediately placed her resignation letter at the café where she had worked for five months.

She started working at the local hotel as a waitress, being a small hotel, she says she at times did more than one role, juggling waitress duties, with the receptionist, among others. Within a few months, she was conversant with how the hotel operated as she was ea-

ger to learn.

Although she was given some training, she stresses that some other skills she taught herself, included how to attract more clients, the do and don'ts in a hotel, challenges encountered by hotel workers, how to be better at her job, among others.

Since the hotel was receiving more clients in the evening, as compared to morning hours, the entrepreneur notes that her boss requested her to change her course from evening to morning, a thing she did for the love of her job.

"The hotel was growing tremendously and we received more clientele. At that point, my boss believed I would manage the whole hotel, as he had seen

## ILLEGAL

## South Africa halts an 'unfathomable' Nelson Mandela auction in New York

NEW YORK

Established in the 1970s, Guernsey's has built its reputation as a credible auction house. From selling the Mark 'Big Mac' McGwire baseball for \$3 million, pre-Fidel Castro Cuban Cigars, significant John F. Kennedy documents, to the record setting sale of Jerry Garcia's guitars, the auction house is no stranger to big-name auctions.

However prominent, it was jarring when Guernsey's announced that it would on 28 January 2021 host a 33-lot sale titled Important Artifacts from the Life of Nelson Mandela. Those interested in the auction could expect personal effects like one of his Madiba shirts; gifts from Harvard University, the Obamas, and George W. Bush and a pair of his RayBan aviator sunglasses. These in addition to a quilt with his name on it, "a powerful bronze cast of Mandela's fist", a tennis racket and exercise bicycle that he used while imprisoned, as well as a copy of the 1996 Constitution that he signed.

To top off this list of "Important Artifacts" Guernsey's big-ticket item for the sale was the former president's Robben Island cell key. "In a world divided between the oppressed and the oppressors, few items rival the importance of Nelson Mandela's Robben Island Cell Key," read the statement announcing the auction. "It was this key that unjustly held Mr. Mandela captive, and it was this key that ultimately led to his freedom and ascendency to the office of President. And with Mandela's rise, so rose the hopes and dreams of countless millions around the world."

According to Artnet News, the sale's value was estimated at \$5 million. Since then Guernsey's has called off the auction. Under the National Heritage Resources Act, Minister of Sports, Art and Culture Nathi Mthethwa led arrangements to suspend the auction. "It is unfathomable for Guernsey's, which is clearly aware of the painful history of



Nelson Mandela in Soweto, South Africa in 1990.

our country and the symbolism of the key, to consider auctioning the key without any consultation with the South African government," Mthethwa told the Associated Press.

"The key symbolises South Africa's painful history whilst also representing the triumph of the human spirit over evil," read the ministerial statement explaining the suspension. "This key is living proof of South Africans' long walk to freedom and belongs to the people of South Africa. It therefore must rightfully be returned to the country."

Speaking to Page Six, Guernsey's president, Arlan Ettinger confirmed this saying when the South African Heritage Resources Agency contacted them, the agency said that the key "requires permits

to leave South Africa."

Soon after it was determined to have been illegally exported, arrangements for its return were made. Considering how personal these items were, the auction brings up questions of provenance. In the auction industry, provenance refers to the record of ownership of a work of art or artifact. It is used as a guide to authenticate the item in question while proving that it was not stolen. In order for any items to be auctioned, auction houses like Guernsey's need to determine the possession's provenance and the validity thereof.

Cosigned by Mandela's family members, the sale is said to have been a fundraiser for a memorial garden and museum dedicated to the revolutionary's life. The key, tennis racket and exercise bike

however were reportedly consigned by Christo Brand, a former Robben Island guard who became close friends with Mandela. So too was the copy of the constitution which Mandela made out to Brand when signing it. Responding to the consignment, Brand's business manager, Andrew Russell told EWN that Brand was not the person they were making him out to be.

"Anyone who knows his journey with Nelson Mandela from 1981 right through to when Nelson Mandela passed away, Christo was a guest of the Mandela family at his funeral, his book was published on the insistence of Nelson Mandela because he wanted Christo's story to be told. Ahmed Kathrada wrote the foreword to Christo's book, so Christo is an incredible man."

one as an accountant in Trust Engineering solutions Ltd.

The managing director of the company coached her on her personal values and pushed her to go for what she wanted. Taking on the job offer, she wanted to be sure of the choices she had made. However, she was pushed to find her best attribute and use it to the best of her knowledge and efforts.

Mugabo was sure that she wanted to be her own boss. She went back to the other hotel where she had quit and asked to rent it because at that time it wasn't doing well financially and was put on sale. She, therefore, opened up her company, got a team and rented the hotel, and started managing it and other facilities. She wanted to offer professional services to rentals, and other properties.

Along the way, she thought of other services that these facilities could need, such as thorough cleaning and fumigation. Her company offered such services to both the facilities they managed and those they didn't. According to her, business was moving on well as they had started acquiring clients. They also added an Air bed and breakfast.

She stresses that when Covid-19 hit the country, everything crumbled, and most businesses were requested by the government to close, apart from essential workers. Since cleaning

and fumigation services were still needed by some companies, they continued providing them even during the lockdown. Though she says it was hard operating during that period as her company lacked money, they requested for 50 percent discount before starting the job and that's how they managed to work. As they say, the rest is history.

Some of the challenges she encounters are once the client's trust is broken, regaining it back is hard. Since she didn't have the financial capital at the start, it was hard to invest in her business, therefore, she utilised the minimum resources available.

According to the businesswoman, you can use what you have and do what you can as it can give you more. She managed to get good quality machines to clean, fumigate, and train workers on how to do the services.

"We now have a growing team, the company can provide jobs, we have seven permanent workers, and about 25 temporary workers. We have developed connections with different people—a thing that has enabled us to get more knowledge and become better. I now see a broader opportunity to grow," she says. Her message to people who want to start a business is to start anyway, and learn on the job because some lessons can't be learned until you start.



## COUNSELLING

# Tackling persistent high blood pressure

NAIROBI

Hypertension or high blood pressure is a condition that affects many adults in Kenya. Indeed, the ailment is a major contributor to the high non-communicable (NCD) disease burden in the country.

A 2020 study conducted in Kenya and published in the BMC Public Health Journal, indicated that close to a quarter of adults in Kenya (about 21 percent) suffer from the condition. These are people with a blood pressure reading of 140/90 mmHg or higher. The normal measurement for healthy people is 120/80 mmHg.

In addition, the research found that about one in every two adults in the country has pre-hypertension. These are individuals whose blood pressure is slightly above what is considered normal (140/90 mmHg or higher) but is not high enough to warrant a hypertension diagnosis. This 'middle-ground' group is at great risk of suffering from the disease if interventions aimed at lowering the pressure are not put in place.

In its initial stages, high blood pressure or hypertension may appear



Dr Carole Aubert from University of Michigan.

harmless as people having it may not exhibit any noticeable symptoms. But as the pressure intensifies, it predisposes those affected to life threatening ailments such as strokes, heart attacks, kidney failure, vision loss and memory problems.

To avert these challenges, prompt diagnosis and treatment with approved drugs are recommended. This approach usually works well for most people. But there are some individuals who may continue to have high blood pressure levels

irrespective of taking the drugs administered to them in recommended

doses. In such situations, doctors usually have to weigh many factors, to determine the way forward so as to offer care to patients in a manner that will solve the problem without jeopardising their health.

A new study published in the Internal Medicine Journal offers insights into this matter. The researchers note that its findings may help affected patients and their doctors to decide whether to increase the dose of one of their existing drugs, or add a new one, with the aim of bringing down their blood pressure and lowering their risk of

future health problems. Based on the results of the study, patients have a better chance of sticking to their medication regimen if their doctor maximises the dosage of one of the drugs they are already taking.

"Both strategies decrease blood pressure. But adding a new medication has a very slim advantage over increasing the dose of an existing medication, despite some of the patients being unable to stay on the new medication," noted the researchers from the US based University of Michigan and the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System

that conducted the study.

Dr Carole Aubert, the lead author of the study stated that the study is the first to directly compare the effects of the two strategies - increasing doses of existing medication or introducing new ones altogether - so as to intensify the treatment for patients struggling to lower their blood pressure. The researchers further note that findings of the study could add to discussions between physicians and patients whose blood pressure remains elevated despite starting medication treatment.

Deciding on the best approach to take is important because the intensification of blood pressure treatment can come with risks for the patients. These include adverse reactions to new stronger drugs, electrolyte imbalance of body fluids caused by higher drug doses or fainting and falling if a person's blood pressure gets too low

During the study, the researchers analysed data of nearly 179,000 individuals, aged 65 and above, who had been receiving hypertension treatment for over two years. The analysis enabled them to see patterns in treatment and blood pressure readings over time, among patients that received more intense treatment.

"There's increasing guidance on approaches to starting treatment in older adults, but less on the next steps to intensify treatment, especially in an older and medically complex population that isn't usually included in clinical trials of blood pressure medication," said Dr Aubert.

"So, the challenge we have been grappling with, is how to increase medications safely in a population already taking many medications for hypertension and other conditions."

Dr Lilian Min, a senior author of the study noted that treatment guidelines suggest starting treatment with multiple medications, and that clinicians are usually comfortable with an approach of 'starting low and going slow' in older patients.

But based on the findings of the study, she stated that clinicians now have a further opportunity to tailor choices in intensifying drug therapy for hypertension, depending on the individual patient's characteristics when dealing with older populations.

"Is the patient more likely to stick to a simpler regimen? Then increase an existing medication. Or is the blood pressure very high and the clinician is more concerned about reducing it? Then consider starting a new medication now," said Dr Min, who is also a geriatrician at the Division of Geriatrics and Palliative Care at the University of Michigan's academic medical centre, as well as the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Centre

For older adults who already take a range of medications, the research indicates that the added complexity of having to take one more kind of pill may be too much, hence requiring clinicians to carefully think through the best approach for managing them.

## WIRED

## World Mobile rolls out internet initiative to boost Zbar's e-govt

ZANZIBAR

Blockchain network operator World Mobile, in partnership with The eGovernment Agency of Zanzibar (eGAZ), has announced the launch of free-metered WiFi internet access across the public domain.

According to the partners, internet coverage will include all state agencies, Ministries, local Government offices, bus stops, the airport, ports, fish markets, municipal offices/markets, municipal/state housing estates, hospitals/clinics, and any other public facing government institutions. The development is part of World Mobile's ambition to provide connectivity to all of Zanzibar's population by the end of 2023.

In the first 60 days, the partnership will aim to connect the airport, ports and properties owned by the National Housing Corporation of Zanzibar within the main island of Unguja. The partners add that this is the first stage of an ambitious partnership and five-year plan which they claim will drastically boost Zanzibar's GDP.

The plan includes a Blockchain Centre of Excellence, an eGov solution providing digital identities and integration with government systems, revolutionising the Blue Economy (enhancing how the local fishing economy works) and then taking this enhanced business approach to other industries.

Micky Watkins, CEO of World Mobile, said, "Zanzibar is on its path to becoming Africa's blockchain hub, and we are thrilled to help make it a reality, sending ripple effects across the region. Together with IOG, our efforts to connect the unconnected will enhance Zanzibar's economy in multiple ways."

Said Seif Said, Director General of Zanzibar's E-Government Agency added: "We are excited to shine a spotlight on Zanzibar's emerging potential as the technology and blockchain centre of the future, starting with providing connectivity to people and businesses in the region. On this, we will build innovative new ways of conducting local government and boosting businesses, and we are looking forward to reaping the fruits of this spectacular initiative."

RJ Katunda, CXO of World Mobile also added: "We are here in Zanzibar to listen, learn and assist, and with that mantra we already have an agreement with the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training in Zanzibar whereby we have been given access to all government owned schools and Educational Institutions to install internet connectivity.

This will allow the schools to directly communicate through the EMIS system to the ministry and at the same time act as a World Mobile Node where the schools will earn a revenue share from all users connected to the node. This not only solves the connectivity issues for the schools, it also creates a new source of revenue for them."

## RECOGNITION

## Rwandan filmmaker selected for international award

KIGALI

KIVU RUHORAHOZA, a Rwandan filmmaker, has been selected among 15 filmmakers whose artistic movies are set to be premiered in the Berlin International film festival, a platform that aims at developing innovative filmmakers.

He was selected due to his recent movie, 'Father's Day' and he is the only African film maker in the competition. Ruhorahoza is internationally known for his feature film 'Grey Matter' which won the Jury Special Mention for Best Emerging Filmmaker at the 2011 Tribeca Film Festival and the Ecumenical Jury special mention at the 2011 Warsaw Film Festival.

He also scooped the Grand Prize of the Tübingen French Film Festival, Best Director and Signis Award of the Cordoba African Film Festival as well as the Jury Special Prize of the Khouribga African Film Festival in Morocco. Carlo Chatrion, the Artistic Director at Berlinale, said that the competition is bringing together writers from different corners of the world, after two

years of the affected global health efforts.

"After a year and a half spent in not-so-splendid isolation, we are moved by seeing that many filmmakers have chosen dialogue as the most appropriate form to overcome fences, distances and confinements, and they are keen to keep mapping the land we called cinema," he said.

"We consider the competition to be a vibrant section and a safe haven for a community, as we have invited filmmakers that do not consider cinema as a predefined art form, with a standard that has to be reached, but rather as a field in an ongoing expansion - like the universe we inhabit," added Carlo.

Among 15 movies from 15 different countries where Africa is only represented by Rwanda, the jury will award the best film and the best director, each receiving a golden bear plaque as their trophy. Having started in 1951 after the Cold War, Berlinale brings together thousands of movie makers around the world to create a platform of intercultural exchange.



Mediatrice Kayitesi and Aline Amike in the film 'Father's Day' by Kivu Ruhorahoza (inset).

## IMPRESSIVE

MASERU

## Meet Lesotho's best mountain bike mechanic

Lesotho has fantastic mountain biking terrain. The country's steep and rugged topography regularly draws adventurous South African riders, from across its border. Despite the excellent trails, until late last year, Lesotho did not have trained specialists in the art of bicycle repair and maintenance. But 29-year old Nthati Letsie has changed all that.

Nthati Letsie started her career in cycling back in 2014, as part of the Lesotho Sky events team. She handled aspects such as branding, tents and hospitality. It was a healthy first contact, with mountain biking, but did not involve riding. "Before working for Lesotho Sky, I had no exposure to cycling and didn't even know how



Nthati Letsie (L) mending a mountain bike at her workshop in Maseru.

to ride a bicycle," quips Letsie.

"In 2018 Lesotho Sky opened a bike shop in conjunction with the Mikes Bikes foundation in California, as a way to give back to the community. The foundation donated containers full of second-hand bikes. We had to service and refurbish these bikes before they could be handed over to local children."

"From spending time in the bicycle shop, I became interested in the mechanical side

of cycling. How bikes work. And I was also shown how to ride," added Letsie. In 2021 Letsie took her bicycle repair skills to the next level by attending the Torq Zone Academy in Pretoria.

At the Torq Zone academy Letsie completed the entire Cytech technical training programme. The syllabus included Pro Levels 1,2 and 3. This course covers all aspects of bicycle maintenance, including wheel building, electronic

groupsets and suspension servicing. Torq Zone is the only facility in South Africa that offers accredited training for bicycle mechanics, using the international Cytech curriculum.

"The training was really interesting and humbling as I was the only girl attending the course. But even though many of the concepts were not foreign to me, I learnt a lot from the course and also from my fellow classmates," Letsie recalls.



## DEPOPULATION

# Cash incentives fail to boost childbirth in South Korea

SEOUL

Having a baby is not even a question for Lim Ji-yeon, 34, as she and her husband made the decision that it was not for them years ago.

Both Lim and her husband thought having a child would be nice, but that was before they had to really consider the idea of becoming parents after getting married in 2018. They quickly gave up on that dream, vowing to devote the remaining years of their lives solely to themselves.

"Why have a baby to voluntarily go through all the struggles? There's not much merit in having and raising a child nowadays," she said. "Ask everyone around my age whether he or she is excited about being a parent. I guarantee you that most of them will say no."

Lim is one of many Koreans who are committed to a childfree life, which has led the country to report last year its "population death cross," whereby the annual number of deaths surpassed the number of births for the first

time. According to government data, the number of registered residents in Korea reached 51.83 million people as of the end of last year, down 20,838 people, or 0.04 percent, from a year earlier.

In 2020, Korea registered a record low of 275,815 births, down more than 10 percent from 2019, but the country also recorded 307,764 deaths, up 3.1 percent from a year earlier. The Ministry of Interior and Safety and experts say the trend is likely to continue for the time being, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic disrupting job and income security for young adults.

"The year 2020 is sending a message that we need an overarching change across the socio-economic sphere due to the start of a population fall, the explosive increase of single- or double-member households and the lowest number of births," said Seo Seung-woo, head of the ministry's local administration bureau.

What the population death cross suggests for the future of Korea is quite catastrophic, experts say, as schools and hospitals



A breast feeding South Korean young mother in Seoul on Jan. 3.

will close, jobs will be lost and the burden of providing welfare to the elderly population will grow.

In response to the alarming situation, the government last month released its 4th Basic Plan for Low Fertility and Aging Society, laying out the country's plans to pour 196

trillion won (\$179 billion) to boost the fertility rate over the next five years to 2025.

Starting in 2022, the country will provide families 2 million won for each child born, and until the baby turns 1 year old, his or her family will receive an incentive of 300,000 won per month, which will be hiked

to 500,000 won per month in 2025. Couples will also be provided with 3 million won a month for their three-month parental leave.

But experts believe that creating a "habitable" environment for parents and babies should be prioritized over increasing and introducing

new cash incentives. "You can't simply force people to have babies; that's just not going to happen," said Chung Ick-joong, a social welfare professor at Ewha Womans University.

"If the environment is right and when people feel they are protected and encouraged to have children, they will have babies even if they are told not to. Cash incentives alone can't really make much progress in boosting child births." Cash-incentive policies have failed greatly over the years, he said, which should serve as a reason to rethink the whole approach in fertility rate and the number of births.

From 2016 to 2020, South Korea injected 150 trillion won into boosting the fertility rate, but as seen by the population death cross, no progress was made toward boosting the number of child births. Chung said people

tend to care more about whether they will be provided with time and resources without having to worry about long-term prospects of going on parental leave.

According to a 2019 survey from the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs of men and women aged 19 to 49, 37.4 percent of respondents cited economic instability as the biggest reason for not having a baby.

Some 25.3 percent cited child-rearing as a reason, followed by inadequate housing arrangements at 10.3 percent and lack of proper child care services at 8.3 percent. For Kim Min-seok, a 37-year-old accountant based in Seoul, who got married in 2017, the problem was more with uncertainty of whether he would be able to provide a stable income for at least 20 years of parenting.

## ECO-FRIENDLY

## How to stop single-use plastic in the bathroom

DUBAI

In some ways, the pandemic has been good for the environment. Heavy industries slowed down and there have been fewer cars on the road. But environmentalists have also sounded the alarm about the increased use of single-use plastics, as more people buy disposable items out of concern for their safety.

In the home, this has meant more plastic water bottles, hand sanitisers and wipes, packaged foods and the ubiquitous disposable face mask. While the recycling movement has gone from strength to strength, picking up converts along the way, studies show that most people are still unaware of the amount of plastic waste they generate in their bathrooms.

With a wooden toothbrush, you won't even be able to tell the difference while brushing, but it has such a big environmental impact. According to Recycle Now, while 90 per cent of packaging is recycled in kitchens in the UK, only 50 per cent is being recycled in the bathroom and, consequently, accounts for 30 to 40 per cent of total landfill waste.

It is time, then, to turn to alternative and eco-friendly personal-care products - from shampoo and toothpaste to deodorants. Thankfully, to help us with this, a number of brands and websites have sprung up in the UAE to cater to those looking for sustainable products that are good for the environment as well as overall well-being.

Eco-friendly shops in the UAE Sukriti Verma and Namrata Budhbraja launched Shift Eco, a website that sells eco-friendly products in the UAE, in October 2020, after they discovered how easy it was to make small changes that have a big environmental impact.

"It all started when Namrata picked up a wooden toothbrush from a supermarket," Verma recalls. "Then we started thinking if this were such an easy change to make, why aren't more people doing this?" The problem, they found, was availability, or the lack thereof. "There was no place where you could find plant-friendly products. And if we did find them, a lot of them were extremely expensive or of poor quality," says Verma. Also, she adds, many of them were greenwashed.

"Greenwashing is basically false claims companies make about their eco-friendly products, while in reality they aren't, from production techniques to ingredients and packaging," says Verma. "It's a huge problem." Shift Eco now stocks more than 1,000 products, spanning personal care, home care, baby products, accessories and food. Pallavi Santhapuram, a civil engineer who founded the Eco Loop online shop four years ago, made the shift to a more eco-friendly lifestyle after studying environmental design for green buildings.

"When I was trying to change my habits, I couldn't find much in terms of products to help me make the shift," she says. "That's what made me start sourcing these products, first for myself, then my friends. Once I realised there was a demand, the website was born." The products on Eco Loop touch every aspect of your life, she says, from kitchen products to organic cotton bags and storybooks for kids about eco-friendly warriors, made from recycled paper.

Making your bathroom plastic-free is easier than you think, says Verma. "First look at some of the products you use every day and consider the alternatives," she says. "Then, you can slowly start working your way to all the products in the home."



Some bamboo made bathroom products.



ITV

## MONDAY 17 Jan

5:30	Uwanja wa Mazoezi
6:00	HABARI
6:40	Kumekucha
7:30	HABARI
8:00	Kumekucha Michezo
8:55	Habari za saa
9:00	Kumekucha Kishindo
9:30	Soap: Uzalo
9:55	Habari za saa
10:00	Watoto wetu
10:55	Habari za saa
11:00	ITV Top Ten
11:55	Habari za saa
12:00	Al Jazeera
12:30	Kipindi Maalum: Huru Talk Show rp
12:55	Habari za saa
13:00	Mjue Zaidi
13:45	Art and Lifestyle rpt
13:55	Habari za saa
14:00	Art and Lifestyle rpt
14:15	Soap: Love to Death
14:55	Habari za saa
15:00	Meza Huru
16:30	Watoto Wetu
17:00	The Base
18:00	Jiji Letu
18:10	Albu yako rpt
18:15	Mapishi
18:30	DWTV: Kesho leo
19:00	Alya ya Jamii
19:30	Soap: Uzalo
20:00	Habari
21:05	Dakika 45
22:00	Kipindi Maalum: Bundesliga na DW
22:15	Soap: Love to Death
23:00	Habari
23:30	The Base
00:30	Al Jazeera
02:00	DWTV

## TUESDAY 18 Jan

5:30	Uwanja wa Mazoezi
6:00	HABARI
6:40	Kumekucha
7:30	HABARI
8:00	Kumekucha Michezo
8:55	Habari za saa
9:00	Kumekucha Kishindo
9:30	Soap: Uzalo
9:55	Habari za saa
10:00	Watoto wetu
10:25	Jagina rpt
10:55	Habari za saa
11:00	The Base rpt
11:55	Habari za saa
12:00	Al Jazeera
12:30	Alya ya jamii
12:55	Habari za saa
13:00	Ripoti Maalum rpt:
13:30	Shika Bamba rpt
13:55	Habari za saa
14:00	Soap: Love to Death
14:55	Habari za saa
15:00	Meza Huru
16:30	Watoto wetu
17:00	The Base

18:00	Jiji Letu
18:10	Yu wapi
18:15	Igizo: Mizengwe rpt
18:30	Uchumi na biashara
19:00	Jarida la wanawake
19:30	Soap: Uzalo
20:00	Habari
21:00	Kipindi Maalum: Reflexology
21:10	Kipindi Maalum: Maisha ni Nyumba
21:45	Chetu ni chetu
22:20	Soap: Love to Death
23:00	Habari
23:30	The Base
00:30	Al Jazeera
02:00	DWTV

## WEDNESDAY 19 Jan

5:30	Uwanja wa Mazoezi
6:00	HABARI
6:40	Kumekucha
7:30	HABARI
8:00	Kumekucha Michezo
8:55	Habari za saa
9:00	Kumekucha Kishindo
9:30	Soap: Uzalo
9:55	Habari za saa
10:00	Watoto wetu
10:25	Uchumi wetu
10:55	Habari za saa
11:00	The Base rpt
11:55	Habari za saa
12:00	Al Jazeera
12:30	Jarida la wanawake
12:55	Habari za saa
13:00	Dakika 45 rpt
13:55	Habari za saa
14:00	Soap: Love to Death
14:55	Habari za saa
15:00	Meza Huru
16:30	Watoto Wetu
17:00	The Base
18:00	Jiji Letu
18:15	Mapishi
18:30	Igizo: Rebeca
19:00	Ijue Sheria
19:30	Soap: Uzalo
20:00	Habari
21:00	Albu Yako
21:05	Kipindi Maalum: Tanesco
21:35	Ripoti Maalum
22:10	Soap: Love to Death
23:00	Habari
23:30	The Base
00:30	Al Jazeera
02:00	DWTV

## THURSDAY 20 Jan

5:30	Uwanja wa Mazoezi
6:00	HABARI
6:40	Kumekucha
7:30	HABARI
8:00	Kumekucha Michezo
8:55	Habari za saa
9:00	Kumekucha Kishindo
9:55	Habari za saa
10:00	Watoto wetu
10:25	Shamba lulu
10:55	Habari za saa
11:00	The base

11:55	Habari za saa
12:00	Al Jazeera
12:30	Ijue sheria rpt
12:55	Habari za saa
13:00	Shamsham za pwani
13:55	Habari za saa
14:00	Soap: Love to Death
14:55	Habari za saa
15:00	Meza Huru
16:30	Watoto Wetu
17:00	The Base
18:00	Jiji Letu
18:15	Igizo: Mizengwe rpt
18:30	Jagina
19:00	Usafiri wako
19:30	Soap: Uzalo
20:00	Habari
21:00	Malumbano ya hoja
23:00	Habari
23:30	The Base
00:30	Al Jazeera
02:00	DWTV

## FRIDAY 21 Jan

5:30	Uwanja wa Mazoezi
6:00	HABARI
6:40	Kumekucha
7:30	HABARI
8:00	Kumekucha Michezo
8:55	Habari za saa
9:00	Kumekucha Kishindo
9:55	Habari za saa
10:00	Watoto wetu
10:25	Uchumi wetu
10:55	Habari za saa
11:00	The Base rpt
11:55	Habari za saa
12:00	Al Jazeera
12:30	Kipindi Maalum rpt: Tanesco
12:55	Habari za saa
13:00	Kipindi Maalum: Maisha ni Nyumba rpt
13:30	Chetu ni Chetu rpt
13:55	Habari za saa
14:00	Chetu ni Chetu rpt
14:15	Igizo: Rebeca rpt
15:00	Meza Huru
16:30	Watoto Wetu
17:00	The Base (DJ Show)
17:30	Kiisiam
18:00	Jiji Letu
18:15	Korean: Jumong
19:00	Shamba lulu
19:30	Soap: Uzalo
20:00	Habari
21:05	Kipima Joto
23:00	Habari
23:30	The Base
00:30	Al Jazeera
02:00	DWTV

## SATURDAY 22 Jan

5:30	Uwanja wa Mazoezi
6:00	HABARI
6:40	Kumekucha
7:00	Habari
8:00	Al Jazeera
9:00	Watoto wetu
10:00	Shika Bamba 5
10:30	Mjue Zaidi rpt

11:10	Chetu ni chetu rpt
11:50	Hawavumi lakini wamo
12:50	Korean: Jumong
13:30	Soap: Love to Death rpt
15:45	Igizo: Mizengwe
16:15	Igizo: Rebeca
17:00	Shamsham za Pwani
18:00	Jiji Letu
18:30	Kipindi Maalum: Huru Talk Show
19:00	Jungu Kuu
19:30	Shika Bamba
20:00	Habari
21:00	Igizo: Rebeca
21:30	Art and lifestyle
22:00	ITV TOP 10
22:45	Hawavumi lakini wamo
23:45	Soap: Uzalo rpt
01:15	DWTV

## SUNDAY 23 Jan

5:30	Uwanja wa Mazoezi
6:00	HABARI
6:40	Kumekucha
7:00	Habari
8:00	Al Jazeera
09:00	Watoto Wetu
10:00	Soap: Uzalo rpt
11:35	Bongo Movie rpt:
14:00	Tamasha la Michezo
15:30	Mwanga
16:30	ITV Top 10
17:20	Kipindi cha Kikristo
18:00	Jiji Letu
18:15	Mapishi
18:30	Malukio ya wiki
19:30	Igizo: Rebeca
20:00	Habari
21:00	Kipindi maalum: Biko
21:05	Kipindi Maalum: Reflexology
21:10	Mizengwe
21:30	Mjue Zaidi
22:15	Bongo Movie:
00:00	Soap: Love to Death rpt
02:05	Al Jazeera

## CAPITAL

## Tues 18 Jan

06:00	Al Jazeera
07:00	Deutsche Welle
09:00	Al Jazeera
13:00	Telenovela rpt: Lover her to death
14:00	Club 101 (via Capital Radio)
16:00	Series rpt: Beats of Love
16:30	Capchat rpt
17:30	Meza Huru
19:00	Innovation
19:30	Our Earth
20:00	Series: Beats of Love
20:45	Telenovela: Laws Of love
21:30	Capital Prime
22:00	Turning the spotlight rpt
22:30	EcoAfrica
23:00	Al Jazeera

## Wed 19 Jan

06:00	Al Jazeera
07:00	Deutsche Welle

09:00	Al Jazeera
12:00	Our Earth Rpt
12:30	Innovation Rpt
13:00	Telenovela rpt Laws Of love 14:00
	Club 101 (via Capital Radio)
16:00	Series rpt: Beats of Love
16:30	Culinary delight rpt
17:00	Innovation rpt
17:30	Meza Huru
19:00	Sports Gazette
19:30	Chetu ni chetu
20:00	Series: Beats of Love
20:45	Telenovela: Laws Of love
21:30	Capital Prime News
22:00	Dakika 45:
22:45	The Decor
23:15	Al Jazeera

## Thurs 20 Jan

06:00	Al Jazeera
07:00	Deutsche Welle
09:00	Al Jazeera
12:00	Our Earth rpt
13:00	Telenovela rpt: Laws Of love
14:00	Club 101 (via Capital Radio)
16:00	Series rpt: Beats of Love
16:30	Business edition rpt
17:00	In good shape
17:30	Meza Huru
19:00	Turning the spotlight
19:30	Tanzania yetu
20:00	Series: Beats of Love
20:45	Telenovela: Laws Of love 21:30
	Capital Prime News
22:00	Capchat rpt
23:00	Al Jazeera

## Frid 21 Jan

06:00	Al Jazeera
07:00	Deutsche Welle
09:00	Al Jazeera
12:00	Shamba Lulu rpt
12:30	Dw News Africa rpt
13:00	Telenovela rpt Laws Of love 14:00
	Club 101 (via Capital Radio)
16:00	Series rpt: Beats of Love
16:30	The Monday Agenda rpt
17:30	Meza Huru
19:00	Rev
19:30	EcoAfrica
20:00	Albu Yako
20:15	Local Pgm: Business Edition
20:45	Telenovela Laws Of love 21:30
	Capital Prime News
22:00	Malumbano ya hoja rpt
00:00	Al Jazeera

## Sat 22 Jan

08:00	Al Jazeera
09:00	Rev rpt
09:30	Turning the Spotlight rpt
10:00	Culinary delight rpt
10:30	Innovation rpt
11:00	Our n'about rpt
11:30	Sports Gazette rpt
12:00	Shamba Lulu rpt
12:30	Our Earth rpt
13:00	Business edition rpt
13:30	Korean Drama rpt Emperor of the Sea



## WORLD

## UK minister: Claims of lawmaker blackmail unlikely to be true

LONDON

BRITISH Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said yesterday that claims that lawmakers had been intimidated and blackmailed by representatives of the government seemed strange and were unlikely to be true.

A senior Conservative lawmaker accused the British government on Thursday of intimidating and attempting to "blackmail" those lawmakers they suspect of wanting to force Prime Minister Boris Johnson out of power.

William Wragg, chair of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, said some lawmakers had faced intimidation and blackmail be-

cause of their desire to topple Johnson.

"I have been an MP for 12 years now and I have never heard of the kind of allegations that are being made - blackmail," Kwarteng told Sky. "I find it strange."

"I find it very unlikely that these allegations are true."

He said he had never heard that money could be withheld from communities on account of the behavior of the lawmaker by the whips, who enforces party discipline.

"I find it strange because the whip's office doesn't actually have the power over spending in that way," he said.

Johnson, who in 2019 won his party's biggest majority in more than 30 years, is now fighting to shore up his authority



A handout photograph released by the UK Parliament shows an unmasked Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson (center) sitting between Britain's Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng (left) and Britain's President for COP26 Alok Sharma (right) during a discussion about the COP26 climate conference in the House of Commons in London on Nov 15, 2021. File photo

after a series of revelations about parties in his Downing Street residence during COVID-19 lockdowns.

Johnson has repeatedly apologized for the parties and said he was unaware of many of them.

However, he attended what he said he thought was a work event on May 20, 2020 to which staff had been told to "bring their own booze". Johnson said on Tuesday that nobody had told him the gathering was against COVID-19 rules.

Leading rivals within the Conservative Party include Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak, 41, and Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, 46.

Truss, on a visit to Australia, said she supported Johnson.

"The Prime Minister has my 100 percent support," said Truss. "I want the Prime Minister to continue as long as possible in his job. He is doing a fantastic job. There is no leadership election."

## COVID-19 disrupts aid flight to tsunami-hit Tonga

WELLINGTON / SYDNEY

AS aid trickles into the South Pacific nation of Tonga, devastated by a volcanic eruption and tsunami, an Australian aid flight was forced to return to base due to a positive COVID-19 case onboard, a defense official said yesterday.

Tonga is COVID-19 free and has a strict border control policy, and is requiring contactless delivery of aid that began arriving by plane on Thursday.

The Australian aid flight left Brisbane on Thursday afternoon but was turned around midflight after being notified of the positive COVID-19 case, an Australian defense spokeswoman said.

All crew had returned negative rapid antigen tests before departure, but PCR tests later showed the positive result. The supplies were moved to another flight that took off yesterday.

The Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano eruption last Saturday triggered tsunami that destroyed villages, resorts and many buildings and knocked out communications for the nation of about 105,000 people, and sent shockwaves and tsunami across the Pacific.

Three people have been reported



In this photo provided by the New Zealand Defense Force, volcanic ash covers roof tops and vegetation in an area of Tonga on Jan 17, 2022. AP

killed, authorities said.

Almost a week since the eruption and Tongans are struggling to find clean drinking water with their island homes shrouded in volcanic ash.

"We are cleaning the ash and have been since Monday," said Branko Sugar, 61, who runs a bottle shop and fishing charter business from the capital Nuku'alofa.

"Everything is so dusty, and we are running out of water," he said over a

patchy telephone line.

"We only have the tap water, and it's been contaminated. We're just cleaning, cleaning, cleaning and can hardly breathe for all the dust."

The first aid flights from Australia and New Zealand landed in Tonga on Thursday with much-needed supplies of water for sanitation and hygiene as well as shelter, communication equipment and power generators.

A New Zealand maritime sustain-

ment vessel HMNZS Aotearoa carrying 250,000 liters of water and able to produce 70,000 liters per day through a desalination plant, is expected to arrive yesterday.

Australia's HMAS Adelaide en route from Brisbane is due in Tonga next week.

## Urgent assistance request

United Nations spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric said in a briefing that Tonga has asked for urgent assistance and the agency is in close contact with the authorities.

"Assessment teams have reached most parts of the country, including remote and isolated islands," Dujarric said.

"We remain seriously concerned about access to safe water for 50,000 people throughout the country. Water quality testing continues, and most people are relying on bottled water," he said.

Some 60,000 people have been affected by damage to crops, livestock, and fisheries due to ashfall, saltwater intrusion and the potential for acid rain, Dujarric said.

Agencies

## EU nations urge Israel to stop construction in East Jerusalem

PARIS

THE foreign ministries of France, Germany, Italy and Spain urged Israeli authorities on Wednesday evening to stop the construction of new housing units in East Jerusalem.

Earlier in the month, Israeli authorities approved plans for the construction of around 3,500 homes in occupied East Jerusalem, nearly half of which are to be built in the controversial areas of Givat Hamatos and Har Homa.

In a statement, the European countries said that the hundreds of new buildings would "constitute an additional obstacle to the two-state solution," referring to international peace efforts to create a state for Palestinians.

They said that building in this area would further disconnect the West Bank from East Jerusalem and that these settlements are a violation of



In this Nov 1, 2021 photo, the Dome of the Rock in the al-Aqsa mosque compound is seen from the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.

international law.

The Israeli ministry of foreign affairs did not immedi-

ately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

Israel captured East Jerusa-

lem including the Old City in a 1967 war and later annexed it, a move not recognized inter-

nationally.

Palestinians want East Jerusalem for the capital of a state they seek in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, which abuts the city, and the Gaza Strip. Israel views the entire city as its indivisible capital.

Most world powers deem the Israeli settlements illegal for taking in territory where Palestinians seek statehood.

The four countries also expressed concern about the evictions and demolitions in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, where residents say they are being displaced.

Earlier Wednesday, Israeli police evicted a Palestinian family from their East Jerusalem home - which they say they had lived in for decades - before a digger tore down the property, prompting criticism from rights activists and diplomats.

Agencies

## Russia to devise action plan depending on reaction from US, NATO - Foreign Ministry

MOSCOW

RUSSIA will draw up a plan for action to protect its borders depending on US and NATO replies to its security guarantee proposals, the Russian Foreign Ministry said in its answers to questions timed for Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's news conference.

"There are reasons to expect that our partners have realized the issue must not be procrastinated on. In any case, we reserve the right to devise an algorithm for further actions to ensure Russia's interests depending on the reaction to our proposals from the United States and NATO," the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

It stressed that Russia's security guarantee proposals were a realistic vision of how it is possible "to normalize the situation in the field of European security in the long term and to create conditions for peaceful coexistence by Russia and the West."

"In the current situation, this is possibly the sole way of strengthening universal security on the continent, without harming the security of individual countries of the region," the Foreign Ministry said.

"Let us not try to forestall events. The negotiations have not begun in earnest yet. We hope that the promises our Western counterparts made at the meetings in Geneva and Brussels on January 10 and 12 respectively will be implemented. We expect that the United States and NATO will commit to paper their answer to the Russian initiative," the Foreign Ministry said.

On December 17, 2021, the Russian Foreign Ministry published drafts of a treaty with the United States on security guarantees and also an agreement on measures of ensuring the security of Russia and the NATO member-states. Consultations on these issues were held in Geneva on January 10.

On January 12, the Russia-NATO Council met in session in Brussels. And on January 13 Russia's permanent representative Alexander Lukashevich presented these initiatives at a session of the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna.

## US will not resume aid to Sudan without restoration of civilian-led government, say envoys

KHARTOUM

THE United States on Thursday said it would not resume suspended assistance to Sudan without an end to violence and the restoration of a civilian-led government, the U.S. embassy in Khartoum said in a statement.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Molly Phee and Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa David Satterfield on Thursday met with the different parties to the political crisis in Sudan, the statement said.

"In meetings with wide cross-section of Sudanese civil society, Phee and Satterfield shared the deep concern of the Sudanese people about the disruption of the democratic transition," the embassy said.

The two U.S. officials strongly condemned "the use of disproportionate force against protesters," the embassy said, adding that they called for transparent and independent investigations into the deaths and injuries that have occurred.

The U.S. envoys made clear that the United States would consider measures to hold accountable those responsible for failure to move forward on these goals, according to the statement.

Phee and Satterfield further urged the lifting of the state of emergency as a significant confidence-building measure, it added.

The two U.S. envoys endorsed the recently launched Sudanese-led political process facilitated by the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission to Sudan (UNITAMS) as a means to help Sudanese stakeholders identify a common way forward to overcome Sudan's political impasse, it noted.

Sudan has been suffering a political crisis after the general commander of the Sudanese Armed Forces Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan declared a state of emergency on Oct. 25, 2021 and dissolved the Sovereign Council and the government.



## In meetings with wide cross-section of Sudanese civil society, Phee and Satterfield shared the deep concern of the Sudanese people about the disruption of the democratic transition

CHINA became the country that has carried out the most space launch missions in the world over the past year.

The country's Long March series carrier rockets, Kuaizhou series carrier rockets, as well as those developed by private space firms have made 55 launches and sent over 100 spacecraft into space.

Among the missions, 48 launches were made by the Long March series carrier rockets, all successful. It was the first time in history that the Long March series completed more than 40 launch missions within a year. The 400th launch of the series also came last year.

The Long March-5B, Long March-2F and Long March-7 completed

## China makes world's most space launches in 2021

the missions for China's space station construction in five launches, carrying the Tianhe core module of the space station, two batches of astronauts, and two cargo spacecraft into space.

The Long March-3A rocket family, also known as the "gold medal rocket" family, completed 12 launches last year, and all of the launches were successful.

In 2021, the in-orbit construction of China's space station commenced. Two batches of Chinese astronauts entered the space station, and some of them are expected to have a record-setting six-

month stay in orbit.

China's Tianwen-1 Mars probe, launched by the Long March-5 carrier rocket in 2020, landed on the red planet last year, too, and successfully orbited the planet.

On Oct. 14, 2021, China's first solar observation satellite Xihe entered its planned orbit, which marked that the country has officially entered the era of solar exploration.

China, making high frequency of space launches regularly, still maintains a high success rate.

In 2018, 109 of the 114 space launches recorded in the world

were successful, while China scored a 38 for 39 success rate. A year later, a total of 103 launches were made around the world and 95 succeeded. China, in the same year, made success in 31 of its 34 launches.

In 2020, 114 space launches were conducted in the world, and 39 were from China. The 39 launches sent 89 spacecraft into space, making China rank second in the world in terms of both the number of launches and weight of payloads. Last year, China made a record of conducting 55 space launches.

The Long March series is the

backbone supporting China's space launches. It has shouldered 92 percent of China's launch missions since a Long March rocket placed the Dongfanghong-1 satellite in orbit 51 years ago. In the past half century and more, the series has sent over 700 spacecraft into space, with a success rate of 96 percent.

According to a plan of the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation, the developer of the Long March series, China will see more than 40 launch missions this year, including six manned space flights that are expected to send two cargo craft, two Shenzhou

spaceships and two laboratory modules of China's space station into space.

This year, China's space station will be fully completed, and a number of major rockets will also make their maiden flights, including the Long March-6A carrier rocket.

After the space station enters operation stage, the Long March-2F and Long March-7 rockets will both be launched twice a year. Besides, a series of major projects is expected to start in the near future, including the fourth phase of the lunar exploration program, asteroid exploration, Jupiter explorations, manned lunar landing and the first Mars sampling returns.

People's Daily



## State Department materials on Russian disinformation on Ukraine false - diplomat

MOSCOW

THE US Department of State has published a report on Russia's alleged disinformation on Ukraine which contains "passages of simply inhuman lies," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova wrote on her Telegram channel yesterday.



"For example, Moscow's assertion that a redeployment of Russian armed forces on Russian territory is declared as false. This is a masterpiece," she wrote.

The diplomat added that claims by the Department of State that Russia is not being surrounded by NATO bases and that nobody promised not to expand NATO in the eastward direction are even more absurd.

"Out of 20,000 kilometers of Russia's land border only 1,200 kilometers border NATO; out of 14 Russia's neighbors by land, only five are NATO members. So this is not an encirclement if one can exit from it," she noted, calling the State Department's arguments "ingenious."

The spokeswoman added that she was not going to sort out whether there were "more lies or ignorance" in the published material. "I know one thing for sure, this could only be published by 'the Ministry of Truth,'" she concluded.

On January 20, on its website, the US Department of State published the examples of Russia's alleged disinformation as well as a report on the role of Russia's RT TV channel and the Sputnik agency in "disinformation and propaganda."

According to the diplomatic agency, Moscow "creates and spreads disinformation in an attempt to confuse and overwhelm people about Russia's real actions in Ukraine, Georgia, and elsewhere in Europe."

In its 33-page report, the State Department insists that RT and Sputnik "play a crucial role in how Russia uses disinformation to advance its foreign policy."

## UN, partners have to scale down aid in Ethiopia's Tigray

UNITED NATIONS

THE United Nations and its nongovernmental organization partners are having to reduce, postpone or cancel critical distributions of assistance, including food, medicine, and nutrition interventions in Ethiopia's restive Tigray region, said the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on Thursday.

This is because the transport of humanitarian supplies into Tigray, via the Semera-Abala-Mekelle corridor, remains suspended since Dec. 14, due to ongoing fighting in Abala in Afar region, said the office.

No fuel for humanitarian operations has been allowed into Tigray along this route since Aug. 2, 2021, and organizations are also unable to secure sufficient fuel locally, it said.

Between Jan. 6 and 12, about 10,500 people received food assistance in Tigray under the current food distribution cycle while over 800,000 people should be assisted each week.

This is the lowest level of food assistance since operations expanded in March 2021. UN partners also reported that remaining food stocks can only assist 28,000 people, said OCHA.

A measles vaccination campaign launched in the first week of January continues to reach more than 145,000 children to date, out of nearly 800,000 in need.

However, health partners report that the campaign is facing serious challenges, including a lack of fuel and cash, limited cold chain capacity, and shortages of health care workers, it said.

The humanitarian response is being scaled up in accessible areas in Amhara and Afar, two neighboring regions that have been affected by the military conflict in Tigray, said the office.

In Amhara, more than 578,000 people received food assistance in the past week, and more than 40,000 received shelter and non-food items.

Internally displaced persons continue to return to their places of origin in Amhara, with hundreds of thousands of people estimated to have returned. Assessments of returns and the humanitarian situation in areas of return are ongoing.

In Afar, more than 47,000 people received food assistance in the past week. And 30 mobile health and nutrition teams continue to provide essential nutrition services in remote and conflict-affected communities, said OCHA.

Xinhua

## UN agency says severe drought affects 3.2 mln people in Somalia

MOGADISHU

MORE than 3.2 million people have been affected by worsening drought which is ravaging several parts of Somalia, the United Nations humanitarian agency said on Thursday.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) said the 2021 Deyr (October to December) rainfall season failed, aggravating severe drought in parts of Somalia.

"The worsening drought has affected over 3.2 million people in 66 out of the 74 districts, of whom 245,000 are internally displaced," UNOCHA said in its latest report on drought situation, warning that the drought is projected to intensify as Somalia faces the risk of the fourth consecutive failed rainy season in early 2022.

The UN agency said the drought is compounding severe vulnerabilities and humanitarian needs caused by decades of protracted conflict and insecurity, climate shocks and disease outbreaks.

# US politicians' decoupling from China rhetoric 'ignorant' and 'arrogant,' say experts

WASHINGTON

SOME U.S. politicians have recently ramped up the "decoupling from China" rhetoric, as both Democrats and Republicans look ahead to the midterm elections amid surging COVID-19 cases and a bumpy economic recovery.

Such rhetoric, according to experts, revealed the ignorance and arrogance of some American politicians, who have been attempting to stir up anti-Chinese sentiment among Americans for their own political gains.

Decoupling with China will significantly hurt U.S. businesses and undermine U.S. productivity and innovation, experts have said, noting that the United States should avoid self-inflicted harm from decoupling and boost cooperation with China in a wide range of areas.

FEARMONGERING

On Friday, Republican Senator Tom Cotton and Democratic Senator Mark Kelly introduced a bill that would prohibit Chinese rare-earth metals from being used in sensitive Department of Defense systems by 2026, taking fearmongering over China to new heights.

Cotton, one of the most vocal China hawks, said ending America's dependence on the Communist Party of China for extraction and processing of these elements is "critical to winning the strategic competition against China and protecting our national security."

The Arkansas senator, who has repeatedly attacked China, floated the conspiracy theory in April 2020 that the COVID-19 virus originated in a Wuhan lab, an unfounded allegation that has drawn wide criticism, both domestic and abroad.

"The U.S. political system is home to many loudmouthed nationalists who are as ignorant as they are arrogant," Jeffrey Sachs, director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University and senior United Nations advisor, told Xinhua via email.

"They believe that the United States has the right and the need to dominate the world, and they view China as an affront to U.S. dominance," said the renowned economist and bestselling author.

Sachs noted that it is easy to "stir fear" in American people, "who are generally not well informed about the rest of the world," adding that the U.S. media "has a long tradition of stirring such nationalist sentiments."

The two senators' decoupling remarks came just a few days after some members of the House of Representatives voiced their discontent when "MADE IN CHINA" KN95 masks were given to them amid an Omicron wave, arguing that the House shouldn't publicly advertising U.S. dependency on China.

"Many of the current members of Congress continue to embarrass me with this infantile behavior, and this is but



Photo taken on May 4, 2021 shows the White House in Washington, D.C., the United States.

one more sad example," Greg Cusack, a former member of the Iowa House of Representatives, told Xinhua.

"The reaction is simply idiotic." "We should, instead, be grateful that China was able and willing to export so many of these masks to assist Americans (and others around the world), who otherwise would not have had access to such devices," said the former U.S. state lawmaker.

Cusack said certain people, not limited to Americans, seem to need an enemy or adversary in order for them to make sense of the world. "Not rivals, opponents, but enemies. This, too, is part of our problem," he said.

POLITICAL CHOICE

The renewed "decoupling from China" rhetoric came as no surprise, especially as both parties are gearing up for the midterm elections in November, when the entire House and about a third of the seats in the 100-member Senate will be up for grabs. Democrats control both the House and the Senate right now, but that could change after midterms.

Amid lingering pandemic, high inflation, a slowing economic recovery and

ongoing legislative struggles, the Democratic Party's hopes of maintaining its narrow majority are fading.

When asked whether the ramped-up China-bashing rhetoric from both Democratic and Republican lawmakers has anything to do with the upcoming midterm elections, Cusack gave a definite yes. "It is also worth noting that the very persons working to widen and harden divisions among American citizens are eager to drive wedges between the United States and other nations too, and right now China is the country of choice," said Cusack.

Noting that "self-reflection and self-recognition remain, sadly, rare commodities," Cusack said American manufacturers, given the green light by previous U.S. administrations decades ago, decided to downsize their American operations and relocate off-shore in order to save on labor costs. "Rather than look at the cause of our manufacturing inabilities, we, of course, have preferred to blame China rather than our predecessors," Cusack said.

Sachs, meanwhile, noted that the Biden administration has so far largely followed the Trump administration behavior on China front. "In my inter-

pretation that this is mainly a political choice, to avoid being attacked by right-wing nationalist politicians," said Sachs. "The Biden administration is going along with a Trump-era policy that is relatively low-cost in domestic politics though it is very risky in geopolitical terms," he said. "I hope that the Biden administration adopts a more cooperative approach."

ECONOMIC FACTS

Despite some politicians touting the benefits of U.S.-China decoupling, economists and business leaders say otherwise.

According to an analysis by U.S. Chamber of Commerce's China Center in partnership with Rhodium Group released in February 2021, American businesses would be significantly impacted, with hundreds of billions of losses in foregone GDP and capital gains and U.S. productivity and innovation undermined if the two countries were to fully decouple.

Michael Zielenziger, managing editor of Oxford Economics, said in a blog published in October that despite the cry of some politicians that U.S. companies should decouple from China, "there's no evidence that it is happening." "It is remarkable to witness the growing antipathy towards China in the political realm when U.S. dependence on Chinese-produced goods seems as significant as ever," Zielenziger said. "This political and economic contradiction is not only self-defeating, it can damage U.S. interests."

Xinhua

## Amid mounting criticism, US strengthens COVID-19 battle with better masks, free tests



File photo taken on May 17, 2021 shows a woman wearing a KN95 face mask at a restaurant in San Mateo, California, the United States.

NEW YORK

U.S. President Joe Biden's administration will start shipping 400 million free non-surgical N95 face masks to distribution sites nationwide this week as part of efforts to fight the surging Omicron COVID-19 variant, USA Today on Wednesday quoted an official source as saying.

Americans will be able to pick up their masks at one of "tens of thousands" of pharmacies, thousands of community centers and other locations across the country, beginning late next week, according to the report.

As Omicron cases have been overwhelming across the country, Biden is facing criticism over his ability to contain the pandemic, noted the newspaper, adding that the White House expects the program to be fully up and running by early February.

HOME TESTS

The Biden administration's new website allowing people to order up to four free at-home coronavirus tests quietly went live on Tuesday, a day in advance of its formal launch, and demand already appeared to be significant.

A combined total of more than 1 million visitors were on the home page and the ordering page of covidtests.gov at one point Tuesday evening, more than 40 times as many as were

on the government site with the next highest traffic, the U.S. Postal Service's package-tracking page, according to official data.

The test-and-mask moves show that the Biden administration "is trying to step up its coronavirus response as the highly infectious Omicron variant drives a spike in cases across the nation," reported The New York Times, noting that the administration at first resisted the idea of sending tests to Americans' homes.

STRICTER TRAVEL ADVISORY

On Tuesday, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) moved a whopping 22 destinations into its highest-risk travel category for COVID-19.

Adding to the impact, the CDC also moved 22 additional destinations to its Level 3 category, which is considered "high" risk for COVID-19.

By contrast, it moved only two nations to Level 4, or "very high" risk, last week. This week, among the nations moved to Level 4 were Argentina and Australia, which have maintained some of the strictest border controls during most of the pandemic.

Level 2 and 1 respectively mean

"COVID-19 Moderate" and "COVID-19 Low."

The CDC advises travelers to avoid travel to Level 4 destinations, where more than 500 cases per 100,000 residents have been registered in the past 28 days. In its broader travel guidance, the CDC has recommended avoiding all international travel until fully vaccinated.

PANDEMIC SURGE

As of Tuesday, more than 66,000,000 COVID-19 cases were reported across the United States, which is about one fifth of the U.S. population, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

In addition, over 851,000 COVID-19 deaths have been reported in the country so far, according to the latest CDC data, adding that nearly 800,000 new cases and nearly 1,800 new deaths are now recorded on a daily basis, up significantly week by week.

Meanwhile, nearly 9.5 million children in the United States have tested positive for COVID-19 since the onset of the pandemic, and child COVID-19 cases have "spiked dramatically" across the country, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Children's Hospital Association.

## Vatican website gives space to group demanding female priesthood

VATICAN CITY

THE Vatican has given space on its website to a Catholic group that demands the ordination of women priests during consultations ahead of a key meeting next year.

While the Church remains opposed to women priests, the inclusion of resource material from the Women's Ordination Conference (WOC) is part of an opening up of debate on a range of issues that has pleased liberals but angered traditionalists.

It follows the publication last month of material from a Catholic gay rights advocacy group on the same part of the website dedicated to the meeting, which is known as a synod.

That publication was criticized by Catholic conservatives who have accused Pope Francis and the Vatican of sending mixed signals on traditional teachings.

"The courageous dialogue called for by the synodal process must include open conversation about women's ordination," WOC said in a Tweet welcoming the inclusion of its material on the synod website.

The US-based organization's package of background material is called "Let Her Voice Carry - a Synod Toolkit for Ordination Justice Advocates".

The group calls itself the "uncompromising feminist voice for women's ordination and gender equity in the Roman Catholic Church" and its leaders assist at the ordinations of female priests, which Church leaders say are illegitimate and invalid.

The 2023 synod, called "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission" is already steeped in division.

Supporters see it as an opportunity to change the Church's power dynamics and give a greater voice to lay Catholics, including women, and people on the margins of society.

Pope Francis has said he wants the long consultative phase to be broad and inclusive, but conservatives say the three-stage process of dialogue - local, national and international - may erode the hierarchical structure of the 1.3 billion member Church and, in the long run, dilute traditional doctrine.

The Catholic Church teaches that only men can be priests because Jesus chose only men as his apostles.

Supporters of a female priesthood say Jesus was merely conforming to the customs of his times and that women played a greater role in the early Church than is commonly recognized.

The pope has ruled out a female priesthood, saying the "door is closed" on the issue.

He has allowed women to have greater roles in a number of Vatican departments.



**The group calls itself the "uncompromising feminist voice for women's ordination and gender equity in the Roman Catholic Church"**





Kagera Sugar's new forward, Hamisi Kiiza. PHOTO: COURTESY OF KAGERA SUGAR FC

## Kagera Sugar lauds new signing

By Jonas Amos, TUDARCO

KAGERA Sugar has made a significant move during the January transfer window, roping in Ugandan forward, Hamisi Kiiza.

The NBC Premier League outfit's decision to register the attacker, according to its officials, aimed at strengthening its attacking force.

Kiiza had successful professional stints at Premier League's big guns, Simba SC and Yanga, before heading elsewhere.

Kagera Sugar's information officer, Hamisi Mzanzara, noted: "We have made a good signing that we believe will get us out of lower position in the Premier League."

Mzanzara insisted the outfit's supporters should be confident it will start notching good results in upcoming matches.

The official noted: "Our team had started badly, the coach though has seen our team's weaknesses and has recommended registration according to the team's needs."

He stated: "We can expect major

changes in our squad because we have as well roped in a striker, Fred Cosmas, who has started training with the team."

"We are continuing to work hard... our team's supporters should not give up."

"We are going to fight to ensure we get good results in our assignments."

Kiiza had been a free agent after featuring for Uganda's Second Division League outfit, Proline.

The attacker returns to Tanzania following two earlier spells in the country with Yanga (2011-2015) and Simba SC (2015-2016).

The former Uganda player of the year 2011 has also previously featured at Kooki Ssaza, Nalubaale, Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) FC, Free State Stars (South Africa), Al Hilal El Obeid (Sudan), Fassil Kenema (Ethiopia), Vipers SC, and lately Proline.

Kagera Sugar now languishes at the bottom of the Premier League's standing with 10 points from 11 matches played.

## Kilimanjaro Premium Lager Marathon launched in Moshi

By Guardian Correspondent

THE 20th Anniversary edition of the prestigious Kilimanjaro Premium Lager Marathon was yesterday launched in Moshi town barely about one month before the much-awaited race.

The event, which brought together various stakeholders, was hosted by the Kibo Palace Hotel, one of the official suppliers of the Kilimanjaro Premium Lager Marathon.

Speaking during the launch, the Kilimanjaro Regional Commissioner, Stephen Kagaigai, lauded the sponsors and organizers for putting together a big event that has been in existence for 20 years now and attracts thousands of participants and spectators.

Sponsors for this year's 20th Anniversary event include Kilimanjaro Premium Lager- Main sponsor, Tigo- 21km, Grand Malt -5km.

Water table sponsors are Absa Tanzania, Unilever Tanzania, TPC Sugar, Simba Cement, and Kilimanjaro Water.

The marathon's official suppliers are GardaWorld Security, Keys Hotel, Kibo Palace Hotel, CMC Automobiles, and Surveyed Plots Company Ltd (SPC).

"This is a big event that benefits Kilimanjaro region, its neighbouring regions, and the nation as a whole as there is a lot of foreign exchange earned through the activities they undertake before and after the marathon," the Regional Commissioner disclosed.

He said the regional government will continue to work closely with the organizers and sponsors to ensure the event continues to grow in a bid to improve sports tourism in the country as he appealed to other marathons to emulate the good work by Kilimanjaro Marathon.

"We appreciate the way you are very organized as this gives us easy time as government to chip in since you plan most of the things early in advance and have been briefing us accordingly."

"This makes our job easy as we can prepare well in terms



Kilimanjaro Regional Commissioner, Stephen Kagaigai (2nd L), and Kilimanjaro Premium Lager's Brand Manager, Irene Mutiganzi (3rd R), cut the ribbon to officially launch the 20th edition of the Kilimanjaro Premium Lager Marathon at the Kibo Palace Homes in Moshi on Thursday evening as other dignitaries look on. PHOTO: CORRESPONDENT

of security and other logistics before, during, and after the marathon," he said.

Kilimanjaro Premium Lager's Brand Manager, Irene Mutiganzi, who also doubles as the Grand Malt's Brand Manager, said this is a milestone for her brand which has been sponsoring the event since its inception 20 years ago.

Irene pointed out they have been inspired by, among other issues, the kind of support that the Kilimanjaro Marathon has for tourism and Tanzanian culture as a whole.

She said they are well prepared for the 20th Anniversary of the Kilimanjaro Premium Lager Marathon with exciting events throughout the marathon weekend.

According to her, the main sponsor has set aside 22m/- in prize money, with the top winners in both male and female categories walking home with 4m/- apiece.

The first Tanzanian male and female athlete in the 42km race will receive a motivational prize of 1.5m/- apiece.

She called on participants to register on time through the race's website, www.kilimanjaronmarathon.com, and via Tigo

Pesa by dialing \*149\*20#.

Irene also appealed to the 5km Fun Run participants to register early for the race as numbers will again be limited.

The Tigo Northern Zone Director, Henry Kinabo, said: "As the sponsors of the 21km category, famously known as the Tigo Kili Half Marathon, for over seven years now, we are looking forward to an exciting 2022 race which will bring together over 5,000 runners, including elite runners from across the African region since we have upped the prize money."

The Tigo official commended Kili Marathon organizers for 20 years of coordination.

He called on participants to use Tigo Pesa to register as this has made the registration process easy and fast.

"Runners who do not have Tigo lines can request their friends to register for them," he said.

The organizers also called on participants to register early as registration will be closed either on February 7, 2022, or when entries are full but entries for the 5km Fun Run will be available up to February 26, 2022.

"There will be several collection centers in Dar es Salaam (Mlimani City), Arusha (Kipo Palace), and Moshi (Moshi Co-operatives University-MoCU)," the organizers said.

The organizers added that the race number collection will begin during the last week of February.

According to the organizers, for the first time, they will host the Kili Expo (The People's Expo) where sponsors and other stakeholders will get the chance to showcase their products and services for three days from February 24-26, 2022 at the MoCU grounds.

"The expo is also meant to give the public a true Kili Marathon experience and we will also have number collection this time happening at MoCU and not Keys Hotel as it used to happen in the previous years," the organizers revealed.

The Kilimanjaro Premium Lager Marathon, which will be held on February 27 at the Moshi Cooperative University (MoCU) ground, is organized by the Kilimanjaro Company Limited and locally coordinated by Executive Solutions Limited.

## How rival outfits help NBC Premier League players bag plenty of cash

By Correspondent Nassir Nchimbi

ZAMBIAN midfielder, Clatous Chama, who recently made his way back to Simba SC, has bagged enough notes in the last few months. Some human beings are born out of luck.

Fellow midfielder, Salum Abubakar 'Sure Boy', who joined Yanga from Azam FC in the January transfer window, is also one of the most successful domestic players in the last 12 months.

Chama knows how to calm the hearts of Simba SC bosses and the club's fans.

Before the midfielder was sold to Morocco's RS Berkane in August last year, the footballer had, a few months earlier, stirred the hearts of Simba SC fans.

His contract with Simba SC was about to expire and rumours of the midfielder moving out of the club were rife.

In March last year, Simba SC officials managed to secure the footballer's signature a few months before the end of his previous contract.

He signed a two-year contract and had been presented with a large sum of money to sign the contract.

The news that Simba SC's rival, Yanga, was eager to rope Chama in for any sum of cash had hit Simba SC.

It is alleged that he received more than 300m/- for signing a new contract with Simba SC.

It is probably the contract he has served for the shortest time at Simba SC.

Five months later Chama headed to Morocco's RS Berkane. The outfit had offered a sign-on fee to the player.

Leaving aside the transfer fee agree-

ment between Simba SC and RS Berkane, Chama still got the transfer money. It is a common thing for North African outfits.

A footballer must get money and his agent must also be presented with money to complete the transfer.

Sometimes a club might also find a coach and the latter can receive his cash through his agent without the club's bosses knowing.

It means within five months, Chama had withdrawn money from Simba SC and RS Berkane and, after that, soccer fanatics began to hear the news of Chama not being at peace with Moroccan life.

As was the case with Ugandan forward, Emmanuel Okwi, who turned out for Simba SC for several seasons, the club's officials began to do the same to Chama.

It was not an easy task. There was a lot of pressure on Chama's link with the move to Yanga.

Although Chama's contract with RS Berkane indicated that Simba SC would be the first choice, if the footballer resorts to make his way back to Tanzania, Yanga was insisting that the outfit could bring Chama back.

For the second time in a few months, Simba SC was forced to face the pressure of the club's age-old rival through Chama.

It had been less than a year since Simba SC had given Chama so much money through this pressure and the club still found itself in a difficult time once again.

Chama's contract with RS Berkane was finally terminated after the player



Simba SC midfielder, Clatous Chama.

expressed dissatisfaction with Moroccan life.

Simba SC has been forced to bring him back to the club and soccer fanatics should not think he just came back for free.

Yanga had put pressure on Simba SC and Chama was aware of that.

Chama was reading news on his transfer online and saw how some people posted pictures showing the midfielder wearing Yanga jersey.

It was, to him, vital considering he stood chance to make a lot of money in the contract, let alone salary issues.

I do not know how much

Simba SC has given Chama but the footballer did not need to play for the outfit if it came up with a little offer.

Simba SC, for that matter, has given back money to a player who, even before the end of the year, had received a lot of money from the club.

In just 10 months, Abubakar wrote two letters to Azam FC asking to leave the outfit.

I do not know if he was mentioning where he wanted to go but we all know that he had planned to join Yanga.

Abubakar had written to his club, Azam FC, asking to leave the outfit, Yanga had submitted a 70m/- offer for the foot-

baller's services.

Azam FC went on strike. The outfit later made it clear that Abubakar was not for sale at all.

The player was dragged in and held a meeting with Azam FC leaders, yet he did not agree to remain at the club.

It did not end there, he signed a new two-year contract with the side.

Soccer fans should note that at the time of Abubakar's plan to join Yanga, he only had one year left on his contract with Azam FC.

Even though Azam FC had managed to keep the midfielder, he was expected to

leave for free at the end of this season.

Azam FC gave the footballer money and he signed a two-year contract. It was no small amount of money, I am told it was more than 80m/-.

Abubakar returned to wear Azam FC's jersey until he was suspended alongside teammates Aggrey Morris and Mudathir Yahya.

Soccer fanatics do not need to repeat how these players got into conflict with Azam FC but it is clear that the outfit seemed more tired of Abubakar's presence. Both sides decided to terminate the contract.

Yanga used the opportunity, the outfit offered him a two-year contract. It was not a free contract.

The club had to work hard to get his signature, although here Abubakar's case was somehow different from Chama's.

Simba SC did not need Abubakar's signature so the player missed an opposition that would have benefited him as much as it did for Chama.

If Simba SC had entered the race for Abubakar's signature, the player would not have missed out on over 100m/-.

However, Abubakar found himself earning less than Chama because the former is said to be a diehard Yanga fan. I however know he was given a lot of money by Yanga.

This though means that within just six months, Abubakar had missed two sign-on fees.

However, the footballer cannot surpass Chama, who has, within just one year, received three sign-on fees. Life has done them justice.



## 'Incredible': Nigerian refugee girls join football fiesta

YAOUNDE

WORDS are not enough to describe the fun and passion in their eyes as Nigerian refugee girls cheer on their side at the Africa Cup of Nations.

The girls, ranging in age from 15 to 20, fled with their families to Cameroon years ago, as Boko Haram jihadists wreaked havoc in their country.

At a refugee camp in Minawao, in Cameroon's Far North region, the girls took up football, forming a team with whatever equipment came to hand.

Last weekend, thanks to an initiative of the UN refugee agency UNHCR, the girls got the treat of their lives: they were taken to a match between Nigeria and Sudan.

They boarded a bus on Friday for the 200-kilometre (120-mile trip) and spent the night in a hotel -- a totally new experience for them -- before heading to the stadium in Garoua on Saturday.

As they left, the girls stopped at the hotel entrance, coquettishly checking their reflections in the glass.

En route to the match, they marvelled at the hordes of Nigerian fans flocking to the stadium.

In the event, Sudan put up little resistance, scoring only one goal to Nigeria's three.

With each goal, the refugee girls erupted in joy, dancing and waving little Nigerian flags.

In an added treat afterwards, the girls were invited to pose on the field with officials of the African Football Confederation.

"It's so incredible. I'm so happy," enthused 20-year-old Salamata Timothy, with stars in her eyes.

- Camp heroines -

The next day the girls returned to the Minawao camp, greeted as heroines by hundreds of children who had seen them on television.

The camp, the largest in the region, opened in July 2013 at the height of the Boko Haram insurgency, which prompted a massive influx of Nigerians into Cameroon.

Today, housing some 70,000 people, it resembles a little city, with a hospital, several schools, a dispensary and even a market some 50 kilometres (30 miles) away where the refugees sell produce from their farm plots and can buy merchandise from home.

The camp's football pitch is an expanse of compacted earth with blue-coloured goals at either end.

Saratu Yakubu, 19, said that when she arrived in 2013, the players had jerseys and shoes, but they no longer have proper equipment.

"It's become nearly impossible to play even though it is so important for us, for our health and well-being," she said.

A recent donation from the German government financed jerseys and balls for the boys, but there was nothing for the girls.

- Never left camp -

Luka Isaac, who represents the Minawao refugees, told AFP: "Going to the stadium was an unforgettable experience for these girls. They realise that they can dream too. Most arrived here as children and it was the first time they left the camp."

AFP

## Man United out of Haaland race

LONDON

MANCHESTER United are out of the race to sign Erling Haaland, sources told ESPN, with the club ready to focus on alternative attacking options having been made aware the Borussia Dortmund forward favours a summer move to Real Madrid.

Haaland, 21, is expected to leave Dortmund at the end of the season due to a €75 million release clause becoming active in his contract at the Bundesliga club this summer.

United failed to sign Haaland from FC Salzburg when he moved to Dortmund in January 2020, despite the club maintaining a long standing interest dating back to his emergence as a 16-year-old at Molde in Norway. Sources told ESPN that senior figures at Old Trafford believe that Haaland is destined for Real this summer and that United are not in a position to convince the player or his advisors to reconsider his options.

With Edinson Cavani out of contract and likely to leave at the end of the season and Cristiano Ronaldo 37 next month, United are focusing on other options to solve their search for a proven goalscorer.

ESPN reported in December that Real are attempting to sign both Haaland and Paris Saint-Germain forward Kylian Mbappe this summer, although the LaLiga champions face strong competition from Manchester City for Haaland, who will command wages of £30m-a-year at whichever club he decides to join.

But despite City's interest and ability to compete with any financial package presented to Haaland by Real, the Premier League champions lag behind favourites Real in the battle to sign the Norway international.

The turmoil at Old Trafford has severely damaged United's prospects of signing Haaland, although sources have said that the dismissal of Ole Gunnar Solskjaer as manager in November -- Solskjaer gave Haaland his debut at Molde -- has not contributed to their diminishing hopes.

(Agencies)

# Real Sociedad's secret to LaLiga contention? Basque pride, soccer passion and a taste for life - 2

SAN SEBASTIAN, Spain

THESE days, Real Sociedad relies on its youth system for approximately two-thirds of its first-team players. Others, typically, are Basques who started with other clubs. The rest are sourced from around the region, the country and the world.

Isak was acquired after a disappointing tenure at Borussia Dortmund. Sorloth, who'd spent time at Crystal Palace, was secured on loan from RB Leipzig. In the most striking addition to the team since Alguacil has been in charge, Man City's Silva was rumored to be on a plane to sign a three-year deal at Lazio in August 2020 when Real Sociedad somehow convinced him to reoute.

Mostly, Alguacil has found his players on the seven fields at the Zubietra Training Ground, and they come to the first team remarkably well equipped. "This is something the club has always done well, and we are known for it," says Barrenetxea. "By the time a player gets promoted to the top team from the B team, he is ready to compete at this level. That gives us a huge advantage."

Real Sociedad B is currently the only developmental team playing in Spain's second tier; all the other B squads, including Barcelona's and Real Madrid's, are at least a level below that. The coach is Xabi Alonso, who started at Real Sociedad and then starred for Liverpool, Real Madrid, Bayern Munich and Spain.

Until this season, the B team's games were held at Zubietra. The sizable grandstand along one touchline was nearly always full. But in the Segunda Division, the rules demand a larger capacity, so now Real Sociedad B plays at Anoeta, the same stadium used by the first team. (Anoeta is now Reale Arena because of a sponsorship deal, but nobody calls it that who doesn't get paid for doing so.)

On a recent Sunday evening there, the blanquenegros of Burgos CF were in town. Other than the corner of visiting supporters who had made the trip from Burgos, the crowd was scattered around the stadium. The game had a small-town feel, like minor league baseball. At halftime, teenage girls gathered in the front of the grandstand. When some players emerged from the tunnel for the second half, the girls called to them. The players answered.

Real Sociedad B lost that game 1-0, its third loss in a row. The fans didn't care. They applauded as the team came off the field. Then put on coats and hats, and headed out in the rain.



Real Sociedad's players celebrate after their last-minute winner to beat Mallorca. (Agencies)

For many of them, the best part of the evening was still to come.

The hills that surround downtown San Sebastian are dotted with restaurants that have earned Michelin stars. Eleven of the restaurants have been recognized -- more than anywhere else with a similar population. If locals aren't dining at one of them on a given night, they might be at one of the city's 120-odd txokos, "social clubs" at which men (and now, finally, a few women) cook elaborate meals for each other, then critique them late into the night. Or sitting at a high-top table beside a gleaming bar while sampling pintxos, painstakingly constructed small plates that can accumulate to make an extraordinary meal.

"We are proud to have great, great gastronomy here," Merino says. "It's just amazing, and we take advantage of it. Our nutritionist isn't as happy as we are, but it's not like we're eating fast food. This is special food. And people here care about it. It is an important part of our culture."

Residents of the Basque Country spend more than twice as much of their discretionary income on restaurant meals as Americans do. In San Sebastian, the percentage is said to be the highest in the world. "The food culture here is extremely serious," says the chef and restaurant owner Hilario Arbelaitz. "Going out to eat is a big part of who we are."

Arbelaitz was born in a 500-year-old stone farmhouse on the side of a hill in Oiartzun, a town of 10,000 southeast of San Sebastian. In 1981, when he was 30, he converted the farmhouse into a restaurant. Called Zuberoa, it remains one of the best in Spain.

Zuberoa's connection with football is strong. Most of Real Sociedad's official lunches and dinners are held there, and not only because Arbelaitz's son is married

to the daughter of the club's president. Even after he moved to Liverpool, Alonso would sometimes fly back for meals there because he missed the food and the atmosphere. Jorge Valdano, the former sporting director and manager at Real Madrid, remains a frequent guest. When Real Sociedad was negotiating the transfer of Antoine Griezmann to Atletico Madrid in the summer of 2014, representatives of both parties met over meals at Zuberoa for three consecutive days. Only after a third dinner was the deal consummated.

Especially during the off-season or a break, Real Sociedad's players are often seen dining at Zuberoa, or at Arzak, Martin Berasategui, or Akelarre, three of fewer than a dozen restaurants in Spain that currently hold Michelin's highest, three-star rating. They're also easily spotted on the streets, strolling with their families or friends, or with a plate of pintxos -- idazabal cheese with quince and walnuts, perhaps, or a baguette slice topped with shrimp, red pepper and minced fish paste in the shape of a tiny eel -- at one of the intimate bars that line the narrow streets of the Old Town. Wherever they go, they're seldom bothered.

"You've seen the places where the fans are on top of you all the time, asking you this and that, telling you how they think you played," Merino says. "It isn't like that here. We get treated gently."

The city considers the players not quite as siblings or their children, but something close to that: cousins or nephews, maybe. They'll wave, maybe give a quick greeting, wish them luck, and then move on. "Almost all of us are from here," says Oyarzabal. "We're part of the community. So in the street, people behave differently than in other places. We also feel that when we come to the stadium."

"Our supporters are calm when it comes to the results," Merino adds. "Maybe you lose a game, but they don't get frustrated. You never hear, 'These guys don't do enough' or 'They don't run hard enough.'"

Real Sociedad's games are more like art films than action flicks. Its teams rarely have the talent of their strongest opponents; a careful approach gives them their best chance for success. Until a disastrous 3-1 loss to Villarreal in its last game of 2021, Real Sociedad had scored a total of five goals at home all season in LaLiga. It had allowed just three. That meant more than a few uninspiring halves of scoreless football, but shortening the game to a few essential minutes allowed the team to compete. "Our fans are smart

people," Merino says. "They understand."

The relations between this place, its fans and the team they support can make Anoeta a particularly perilous place to play. "Real Sociedad is a special club," Roger Schmidt, the PSV Eindhoven manager, told me. From 2014 to 2017, Schmidt managed at Bayer 04 Leverkusen, in a situation that was almost the diametric opposite. Bayer is derided as one of Germany's "plastic clubs." Set in a city that essentially serves as a corporate campus, it had almost no natural constituency. Its relationship with its players felt transactional. Schmidt appreciates the symbiosis that can occur when players and supporters see themselves in each other.

"If you have that approach, with a lot of players from the area, it means their identification with the club will be very high," he says. That, in turn, often helps to motivate the players. "They will fight," he says. "They will work hard for their club. They will have great spirit." Even though PSV needed only a draw the next evening in order to advance, Schmidt acknowledged that the game the following evening would be difficult.

And that was before the weather took a turn for the worse. When I woke up Thurs-

day morning, a severe weather watch had been issued for Spain's northern provinces. It predicted lashing rain and wind gusts as strong as 45 miles an hour. It sounded like a bad day even by San Sebastian standards, but a good day for Real Sociedad.

In the game that followed, PSV Eindhoven was better by most metrics: 68% possession, more shots, more than double the completed passes. One of the shots hit the crossbar. Another was saved at the near post by a defender. And by the second half, the weather appeared to have had a numbing effect. I couldn't help thinking that all PSV's players wanted to do was get out of the rain and back on the team bus.

Real Sociedad's 3-0 win wasn't pretty. It consisted of a converted penalty after a handball, a loose ball at the attacking end opportunistically won by Oyarzabal, and a spurious goal during stoppage time. But it felt like the whole city of San Sebastian was there cheering as the game ended, a heartfelt acknowledgement of a task accomplished.

Schmidt believed his team could have won, maybe should have won. When he was questioned by a particularly blunt Dutch journalist at the news conference after the game, he bristled. "Did you think they outplayed us?" Schmidt asked. The journalist replied that he did, and Schmidt stared back open-mouthed. To me, both of them were correct. PSV Eindhoven executed its game plan and looked like the classier side. Real Sociedad merely scored all the goals.

The following Monday, Real Sociedad would get RB Leipzig in the Europa League draw, a talented opponent with a season of their own to salvage. By then, that 3-1 defeat to Villarreal, the club's fourth consecutive loss in LaLiga, would drop it down to sixth place, lower than it had been in months.

For now, the hardy spectators who had nearly filled the stadium headed out into the swirling rain in high spirits. Their club had won to advance to the knockout phase, and the bars were filled with pintxos waiting to be eaten.

When I woke up Thurs-

ESPN

Gwiji by David Chikoko





