



National Pg 3 Heavy rains flood Bunda



National Pg 4 New seed variety for sunflower



National Pg 5 Road accidents decline in Mbeya



THE MANAGEMENT AND STAFF OF THE GUARDIAN LTD WISH THEIR ESTEEMED READERS AND ADVERTISERS A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

JPM to sack Natural Resources minister, PS if conflicts persist

Dr Magufuli commended the Tanzania National Parks Authority (TANAPA) for a job well done in conservation initiatives and promotion of tourism activities which have led into increased government revenues

By Guardian Reporter

PRESIDENT John Magufuli has threatened to sack Natural Resources and Tourism Minister Dr Hamisi Kigwangalla and Permanent Secretary, Prof Adolf Mkenda if they don't end their differences which he said affects performance of the ministry.

"I am aware of the misunderstanding between top officials in the Natural Resources and Tourism ministry. I once directed Chief Secretary to talk to both of them, failure to end their differences will lead to their dismissal," the president affirmed to ministry employees yesterday.

He was addressing officials and game wardens at the Rubondo Island National Park in southwestern corner of Lake Victoria where he also visited some tourist attractions, the first sitting president to have visited the park.

Dr Magufuli commended the Tanzania National Parks Authority (TANAPA) for a job well done

in conservation initiatives and promotion of tourism activities which have led into increased government revenues.

He expressed concern that misunderstanding between the minister and the PS has affected a number of activities because the two don't sit together and agree.

"This cannot be tolerated. I am giving them five days to end their differences and start greeting each other and conduct meetings together," he said, hinting that he had detailed information about their conflicts.

He also extended the working period of the TANAPA board under the chairmanship of retired Chief of Defense Forces, General George Waitara, lauding him for superb management of the authority, especially for the training of a paramilitary unit for the protection of wild animals and forest reserves.

He reminded the public that Tanzania with a

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President Dr John Magufuli embarks on a pontoon heading to Rubondo national park in Chato district yesterday. Photo: State House



UN chief: Young people inspire hope for future of the planet

GENEVA

IN his New Year's message, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has presented a gloomy assessment of the past year and pinned his hopes for a better future in the year to come upon the world's young people.

Guterres said he looks forward to 2020 and the decade to come with a mixture of dread and hope. While welcoming the New Year, he said the uncertainty and insecurity of what lies ahead prompts reflection and concern.

He said he considered persistent inequality and rising hatred, a warring world and a warming planet as ever present threats to stability and peace. He said climate change is not only a long-term problem but a clear and present danger. He said the world cannot afford to see the present generation fiddling around while

the planet burns.

"But there is also hope. This year, my New Year's message is to the greatest source of that hope: the world's young people. From climate action to gender equality to social justice and human rights, your generation is on the frontlines and in the headlines. I am inspired by your passion and determination. You are rightly demanding a role in shaping the future and I am with you. The United Nations stands with you – and belongs to you," Guterres said.

In September, the United Nations presented its top environmental award to a global student movement known as Fridays for the Future. The movement, inspired by Swedish teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg, is demanding action to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that are leading to climate change.

Guterres, who views global warming as a grave threat to life on earth, champions the young activists who are agitating to forestall such a catastrophic outcome. He said the world needs young people to keep speaking out and to keep thinking big. He urged young people to keep pushing boundaries, to keep up the pressure.

He ended with "I wish you peace and happiness in 2020. Thank you."

National debt has reached 54.8trl/-

By Guardian Correspondent, Dodoma

FINANCE and Planning minister Dr Philip Mpango says the National Debt has risen to 54.8trillion/- as of November 30 2019, an increase of 11.7 percent compared to 49.087trillion/- as of end November 2018.

He made this affirmation yesterday when speaking to reporters here on the country's economy during 2019 and initial evaluation on the implementation of the Government Budget for FY 2019/20.

Dr Mpango said in the debt the foreign component amounts to 40.39trillion/- and internal debt stand at 14.44trillion/-.

Higher debt was occasioned by more interest on loans whose agreements were entered by the government a long time ago and new debts with easy commercial conditions for servicing various development projects.

He said the government will continue to ensure



The loans were used for the construction of roads, railways, airports, hydropower stations and water projects

the money it loaned will be used to build resources to propel economic activity for developing the nation and enhance the country's ability to repay the loans.

The loans were used for the construction of roads, railways, airports, hydropower stations and water projects, the minister stated.

However, evaluation of debt containment conducted in December 2018 showed that it is controllable for the medium and long term, using international yardsticks, he affirmed.

He said in the circumstances Tanzania can continue to ask for and receive loans from domestic and foreign sources to cover its development commitments and pay out matured debts.

Dr Mpango said domestic revenue including revenue from local government authorities for July to November 2019 reached 8,502bn/- that is

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Maalim Seif, Zitto Kabwe lay out plans for next general elections

By Henry Mwangonde

THE Alliance for Change and Transparency (ACT)-Wazalendo has said it is ready to involve other opposition parties in spearheading a process to form a strong coalition which will challenge the ruling CCM in this year's general election.

Speaking at a press conference yesterday as 'New Year greetings', the party's chief advisor Self Sharif Hamad said ACT- Wazalendo and himself are determined to initiate a process to form a sincere coalition with parties, religious and academics groups, civil societies and other interested parties to bring genuine change in the country.

"Let me call upon my fellow leaders in the opposition that despite the challenges within



our parties, the interests that unites us to remove CCM from power remain bigger than our differences. Therefore this is the right time to put our differences aside and unite Tanzanians as we head to elections," he said.

The former Zanzibar First Vice President said for the last four years Zanzibar is at the crossroads following the election misunderstanding in 2015.

He said 2020 will be a year where Tanzanians are going to overcome their various points of suffering as it is a year of change and principled actions towards giving them a truly representative government which they chose in 2015.

Maalim Seif (pictured) said the coalition would among other things go hand in hand with advocating for reform of electoral laws and push for a strong and independent judicial system.

He said his party's aim upon being elected is to put Zanzibar to where it belongs economically, elaborating that he will make it a transport hub

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Deputy Permanent Secretary Ministry of Information, Culture, Arts and Sports Dr. Ally Possi (L) visits sculptures pavilion at Mwenge area in the outskirts Dar es Salaam yesterday. Right is secretary general of sculptors association Mintanga Ramadhani. Photo: Information Services

Maalim Seif, Zitto Kabwe lay out plans for next general elections

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the way Singapore is to Malaysia or Hong Kong in China and Dubai in United Arab Emirates (UAE).

In his remarks, party leader Zitto Kabwe said 2020 is a great year for ACT-Wazalendo, as it is a year in which

people will make decisions to choose leaders to lead the country for the next five years.

He said the year ending was a tough year for opposition parties and him personally as he kept attending court sessions, slept in police cells for nearly

a quarter of the year.

The opposition was ready to face CCM in the local elections but sadly the ruling party grabbed the whole election process and made it irregular, a move that brought the opposition to boycott the poll.

"Despite being banned from practicing politics for four years, the opposition is prepared to face CCM in the coming general election," he reiterated, emphasizing that 2020 is a year of hope and likely to be a year of success.

Angola freezes assets of ex-president's daughter Isabel in graft probe

JOHANNESBURG

AN Angolan court has ordered assets of Isabel dos Santos, daughter of the country's former leader, to be frozen in the highest-profile move of an anti-corruption drive launched by President Joao Lourenço.

Since ending ex-President Jose Eduardo dos Santos' nearly 40-year grip on power in 2017, Lourenço has been trying to reduce the influence of the former first family, recover lost assets and privatise state firms.

Africa's wealthiest woman, Isabel dos Santos amassed a fortune widely estimated at more than \$2 billion through stakes in Angolan companies including banks and telecoms firm Unitel, earning her the nickname "the Princess".

She chaired state oil company Sonangol - the lynchpin of Angola's flagging, oil-dependent economy - before being sacked by Lourenço months after he came to power.

A court order dated Dec. 23 which was seen by Reuters said the government believed Isabel dos Santos, her husband Sindika Dokolo and Mário Filipe Moreira Leite da Silva, chairman of Banco de Fomento Angola (BFA), had caused the state losses of more than \$1 billion.

"The state through its companies (diamond marketing company) Sodiam and Sonangol transferred enormous quantities of foreign currency to companies abroad whose beneficiaries are the defendants, without receiving the agreed return," the court said. "The defendants recognise the existence of the debt but allege that they do not have the means to pay."

A Lisbon-based spokesman for Isabel dos Santos said the billionaire businesswoman had not yet issued an official statement on the court ruling.

Reuters was unable to reach Dokolo or da Silva, and BFA did not answer

calls seeking comment.

Isabel dos Santos has previously denied wrongdoing during her father's time in office.

She tweeted late on Monday: "I would like to leave a message of tranquility and confidence to my teams ... We will continue, every day, in every business, doing our best and fighting for what I believe in for Angola. The road is long, the truth will prevail. United we stand stronger."

The asset freeze applies to personal bank accounts of dos Santos, Dokolo and da Silva in Angola and stakes they hold in Angolan firms including Unitel, BFA and ZAP MIDIA.

The order said the central bank would ensure that no funds leave the personal bank accounts of the three accused.

The boards of each company affected by the asset freeze must ensure that the stakes affected are not sold on and that no profits from the shares are transferred to the accused.

The court said Isabel dos Santos had hidden "wealth obtained at the cost of the state" by trying to transfer some of her businesses to Russia. Portuguese police had blocked a transfer of 10 million euros (\$11 million) from one of her business partners to Russia, it said.



... We will continue, every day, in every business, doing our best and fighting for what I believe in for Angola. The road is long, the truth will prevail. United we stand stronger



Dar es Salaam residents queue in for registration of the national identity cards at Mnazi Mmoja grounds yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma

MOGADISHU

THE Africa Union condemned the terrorist attack which killed at least 79 people and injured 149 others in Mogadishu on Saturday and vowed to step up efforts to stabilize the Horn of Africa nation despite increased attacks.

Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission said the pan African body will not relent in the face of such heinous crimes against humanity, stressing that it will not be intimidated by cowardly acts of violence by terrorists who do not want a peaceful Somalia.

"Our support to the Federal Government of Somalia, and our mission in Somalia will maintain its resolve and commitment to see

AU pledges to step up efforts to stabilise Somalia despite attacks

through its mandate and to fulfill the legitimate desire of the people of Somalia to live in freedom, peace and security," said Mahamat in a statement issued by the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) on Sunday.

A suicide bomber early Saturday detonated a car bomb at a busy checkpoint where several vehicles had lined up for security check in the outskirts of Mogadishu.

Among the lives lost were university students, women and children as well

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total of 22 national parks has set aside 32.5 percent of its land for conservation activities, noting that this is intended to benefit Tanzanians and people around the world.

The president said Tanzania has also a total of 23 zoos, 20 zoological gardens and six ranches. He called upon retired officials in the conservation and wildlife sectors to establish private zoological gardens and ranches to enhance the tourism sector and boost government coffers.

He praised TANAPA Director General Dr Allan Kijazi and the head of Rubondo Island National Park, Assistant Commissioner for Conservation Fredrick Mofulu for controlling poaching at the park, conserving fish breeding sites and ensuring existence of natural vegetation for the various wild animals.

The government will provide two

billion shillings for purchase of a ferry with capacity to carry 100 people and four vehicles to ease transport services for visitors to the park, he declared.

In his welcoming remarks, TANAPA Director General Dr Allan Kijazi applauded President Magufuli's efforts to improve the tourism sector as well as enhancing conservation activities. He said those initiatives have led into increased number of national parks and conserved areas from 16 in 2015/2026 to 22 in 2019.

Conservation commissioner Mofulu said the park measuring 456.6 square kilometers has a wide variety of wild animals including chimpanzees, giraffes and elephants.

He said the island is one of Lake Victoria's fish breeding sites along with a number of birds, including parrots.

Rubondo park tourist visits have been rising, as in 2018/2019 it received 5,700 visitors and contributed 1.4bn/- to the national income, he added.

National debt has reached 54.8trl/-

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equivalent to 94.4 percent of the set target of collecting 9,010.2bn/- during the period.

He said revenue from taxes amounted to 7,179.2bn/- or 95.5 percent of estimates for the period, set at 7,514.4bn/-.

He said non-tax revenue reached 1,012.8bn/- or 86.5 percent of the target of 1,170.3bn/-.

Likewise, revenue from dividend pay outs by parastatals for 2018/19 reached 1.053trl/- from 79 firms out of 266 state institutions and corporations. The dividends total was submitted to

President John Magufuli on November 24, 2019.

He said revenue from local government authorities was 309.4bn/- or 95.0 percent of the set target of 309.4bn/-.

Dr Mpango asserted that in September 2019 tax revenue broke the collection record by attaining 1.7trl/-.

On the Tanzanian currency, the minister assured that it continues to be stable especially for the period July to November 2019, where one USD was exchanged at an average of 2,291/- Tshs compared to 2,276/- for the same period in 2018.



Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa inspects double deck beds at Lucas Maria School in Ruangwa district during his inspection of the council's projects yesterday. Photo: PMO

Heavy rains flood Bunda, over 70 families homeless

By Guardian Correspondent, Bunda

At least 75 families at Serengeti Street in Bunda town council, Mara region have no place to stay after their houses were washed away by flood following heavy rains which continues to pound in the district.

The rainfall has also brought a lot of destruction as most of the residents' properties were also swept away by water.

Bunda District Commissioner Lydia Bupilipili said this here during the councilors meeting.

According to her, the banks of one of the river located near Serengeti National Park also ruptured forcing the water find its way in people's settlements.

"I have visited the areas and witnessed the destructions, many families have lost their houses and properties, they are now living in their relatives or friends' houses. We have provided emergency help by handing over some food which is issued by the government," she said.

She warned people to stop constructing in flood prone areas for their safety.

Kabarimu ward councilor Pastory Ncheye said that the rainfall has also affected some of the infrastructures in the ward.

"One of the bridges in the Mwanza-Musoma road has been washed away by floods thus affecting those using the road, the situation is real terrible and immediate measures are needed," he said.

Meanwhile, DC Bupilipili said that Bunda Town Council is facing a serious shortage of classrooms in various primary and secondary schools.

"This will affect most of pupils and students who are expected to be enrolled next year (2020)," he added.

He urged residents to join forces and start constructing the classrooms to serve the children who will be enrolled.

"We are in dire need of 31 classrooms in our secondary schools, so without constructing them more than 17,000 students who have been selected to join form one in 2020 may miss classes," she said.

The district commissioner further warned those who were doing political campaigns saying that it was not the right time to do so.

Abraham Mayamaya, the council's chairman, also called upon the general public to contribute for their children's education.

"Education is vital for our children's future, so we should all tighten our belts to ensure they acquire education to achieve their dreams," he said.

Majaliwa directs officials to terminate leaves, supervise classrooms building

By Guardian Reporter

PRIME Minister Kassim Majaliwa has directed all responsible government officials who are in holiday to terminate their leaves and supervise school infrastructures to ensure that all projects are timely completed for children to begin their studies at the scheduled time.

The premier made the directive yesterday when he visited construction of various development projects in Ruangwa district, Lindi region.

"The government will not entertain seeing children commence studies in different times, so strengthen supervision for the buildings to be completed immediately and make sure that all students and pupils begins studying at a go," he said.

The prime minister visited construction of Ng'au Primary School which is in final stages to its completion, construction of the Vocational Educational Training Authority (VETA) College, Lucas Maria secondary school and the Ruangwa District Hospital Project.

"The government spends a lot of funds to finance the projects, so responsible leaders have to ensure that they supervise well for them

to last long and bring positive impacts to the communities," he added.

The premier pointed out that it is crucial for all Form One students to start classes by January 2020. He said officials should ensure all the important infrastructures are completed to allow students to join secondary schools this month.

When at Lucas Maria secondary school, Majaliwa directed Ruangwa district executive director, Andrea Chezue to ensure the contractor works day and

night to complete the remaining job.

"Schools will be opening soon but you have not completed construction of some infrastructures including dining hall, laboratory and teachers houses. There are no reasons for this delay because the government has already disbursed all the funds," he noted.

Meanwhile, Ruangwa residents have applauded President John Magufuli for implementing a number of flagship projects at different places across the country.

The residents, including youth constructing the vocational training center in Ruangwa said the flagship projects will take Tanzania into another level of development. The vocational training center will offer a number of courses such as tailoring, carpentry, masonry driving, mechanics and information and communication technology (ICT).

The youth called upon their fellows to grab job opportunities at the ongoing construction projects countrywide.

By Guardian Reporter

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has announced appointment of Sierra Leone's Zainab Hawa Bangura (pictured) as director-general of the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON).

In a statement on Monday, Guterres thanked Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), who has been serving as acting director-general.

He said she will continue to hold the office until Bangura takes over.

Guterres described Bangura as a "relentless advocate for conflict resolution and reconciliation, and human rights champion".

He noted that she was the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict from 2012 to 2017.

UN-Habitat is the United Nations

UN appoints Sierra Leone's Bangura to head Nairobi office



Canada, in 1976.

UN-Habitat maintains its headquarters at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, Kenya. It is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. It is a member of the United Nations Development Group.

The mandate of UN-Habitat derives from the Habitat Agenda, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1996. The twin goals of the Habitat Agenda are adequate shelter for all and the development of sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world.

programme for human settlements and sustainable urban development. It was established in 1978 as an outcome of the First UN Conference on Human Settlements and Sustainable Urban Development held in Vancouver,

SHUKRANI



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Familia ya Marehemu **Deogratias H. M Kilala**, inapenda kuwashukuru Ndugu, Jamaa na Marafiki wote kwa namna ambavyo mljitoa kwa hali na mali katika kufanikisha shughuli zote za mazishi ya mpendwa wetu Deogratias H. M Kilala aliyefariki alfajiri ya tarehe 25/11/2019 na kuzikwa 27/11 2019. Tutakuwa wachoya wa Fadhila tusipowashukuru ndugu jamaa na marafiki kwa kuwa pamoja nasi katika kutufaraji tangu kipindi cha kumuuguzwa mpendwa wetu, hadi safari yake ya mwisho.

Tunatoa shukurani binafsi kwa Tume ya Taifa ya Uchaguzi, Wana-Rotary Klabu ya Mzizima (ambako marehemu alikuwa mwanachama mwanzilishi), Mikocheni, Bahari; Uongozi wa Klabu ya Gymkhana pamoja na Wanachama Chama cha Wanasheria Wanawake Tanzania (TAWLA), Chama cha Majaji Wanawake Tanzania, pamoja na Chama cha Wanawake Vijana wa Kikiristo Tanzania (YWCA); madaktari na wauguzi waliomhudumia katika hospitali za Sali, Aga Khan na Muhimbili ambako marehemu alitibiwa kwa nyakati tofauti. Katika kukamilisha, pia tunapenda kutoa shukurani za dhati kwa Baba Paroko wa Parokia ya Mt. Imakulata ya Upanga; wakijumuishwa Watawa wa Parokiani, bila kuwasahau Mwenyekiti na wanajumuia ya Mt. Petro kwa ibada wakati wa kumuuguzwa mpendwa wetu, na hata baada ya mazishi.

Kutakuwa na Misa ya Shukurani itakayofanyika Kanisa la Mt. Imakulata tarehe 04/01/2020, kuanzia saa 3:00 asubuhi ambayo itatanguwa na mksha tarehe 03/01/2020 kuanzia saa 2:00 usiku nyumbani kwa marehemu nyumba Na.18 Mtaa wa Kitonga, Upanga.

Karibuni mtakaoweza kushiriki.

Bwana ametoa Bwana ametwaa jina lake lihimidiwe.
Mwenyezi Mungu awabariki sana.
Tunakukumbuka daima baba/babu yetu mpenzi.

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 KATIKA MAHAKAMA YA WILAYA TEMBE
 KIYOPO TEMBE
 SHAJARI LA MADAO NO. 1972019
 SG STAR PHARMACEUTICAL LTD
 Didi ya
 HARSHA SURVANA
 DIAMOND TRUST BANK TANZANIA LTD
 MAJEMBE AUCTION MART LTD
 Kwa: HARSHA SURVANA
KUITWA SHAURINI
 Shauri tajwa hapo juu limepingwa kusikizwa tarehe 27/12/2019 saa 2:00 asubuhi, hivyo basi unatakuwa kufika hapo Mahakamani kwa tarehe na saa iliyopangwa hapo juu bila kukosa wewe mwenyewe au Wajili wakiolewa na walelezo vyote vya kesi hi.

ANGALUZO: Kama hukuhuduria siku iliyotwa hapo juu, Mahakama itareza kutoka usanzuhumu kuwa wewe umehudhwa. Hali hi imetolewa kwa amri yangu na chapa ya Mahakama hi leo tarehe 27/12/2019.

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Finance and Planning minister Dr. Philip Mpango presents the statement on the national economic situation in 2019 and initial valuation of the implementation of the first half of financial year of 2019/2020 in Dodoma yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Ibrahim Joseph

Govt advised to fund TANROADS and TARURA projects uniformly

By Guardian Correspondent, Simiyu

ROADS Committee members in Simiyu Region at their sitting recently have advised the government to allocate funds proportionally for road repair projects by Tanzania Roads Agency (TANROADS) and Tanzania Rural Roads Agency (TARURA).

The members have issued the advice yesterday following reports that said TANROADS had received 70 percent of allocation while TARURA got only 30 percent, saying that the figure was not adequate for road repairs.

Speaking at the sitting, they said it was better for the government to issue the funds proportionally between TANROADS and TARURA.

Simiyu Region Ag. TANROADS Manager John Mkumbo said implementation of TANROADS projects in the second quarter of FY 2019/20 road repair work that is still in the implantation stage is 108,12 kms and 14.3 bridges equivalent to 54,3 percent.

TARURA Coordinator for Simiyu Region Dr Philemon Msomba said they have implemented a total of 30

projects that are valued at 3.6bn/- without VAT.

He said TARURA is working on a total of 4,038.16 kms of roads of which 66.08 kms (or 16.52 percent) are first grade roads; 1,555.91 kms (38.53 percent) are second grade roads and 1,815.17 kms (44.95 percent) are poor roads.

Meanwhile, the Meatu District Commissioner Joseph Chilongani and the District's DED Fabian Manzo said it would be better for TANROADS and TARURA to see the need to repair and strengthen bridges in the district by building over bridges instead of those

underneath.

They said many roads in the district are in poor conditions causing many vehicles using them to break down from time to time and that this issue should be looked into.

Simiyu Regional Administrative Secretary Jumanne Sagini called upon development directors in the region to ensure they deal with issue of classrooms and reminded that all students selected to join Form I in 2020 are supposed to report to their respective schools on January 6 and start lessons without any excuse.

FAO provides African states with platform to confer on the private sector's role in agricultural transformation

ADDIS ABABA

EXPERTS from African countries stressed that good policies and strong leadership that ensure the full participation of the private sector and financial institutions are a prerequisite to meeting the aspiration of hunger free Africa by 2030.

In a regional workshop held recently, dubbed: "Accelerating Progress Towards SDG2 Zero Hunger", participants emphasized that ending hunger requires a political commitment to stimulate the private sector and financial institutions to unleash their full potential in support of large, medium and small-scale agriculture development in Africa, through investment, knowledge and technology transfer, and agripreneurship.

FAO Strategic Programme Leader for Hunger Eradication, Food Security and Nutrition Programme (SPI), Brave Ndisale reminded participants that agriculture has a huge potential to reduce food insecurity and malnutrition; and also to create jobs and raise incomes in Africa.

"Major policy interventions and good governance are required to unlock this potential. National policies and programmes should ensure the full and active participation of the private sector and financial institutions. FAO considers these partners as key allies in the fight against hunger. Through technological innovations, knowledge transfer and better governance, the private sector is instrumental in driving agricultural transformation," she noted.

"If we are to end hunger in Africa by 2030, we need to find a way to accelerate and sustain productivity at scale among smallholder farmers while protecting the natural resource base -

for which the private sector has a great role to play," added Ndisale.

Africa is simultaneously blessed and challenged by a large youthful population which offers great and innovative minds, but at the same time is strongly affected by unemployment and distress economic migration, said David Phiri, FAO Subregional Coordinator for Eastern Africa and Representative to the Africa Union and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

"If agricultural or food system policies do not look at the youth and their needs, little change will be achieved. Hence, our priorities should rest on sustainable production intensification to feed the growing population, while managing the effects of climate extremes, desertification, soil degradation, and conflicts. At the same time, we need to develop sustainable and profitable value chains to create more jobs for the increasing young population. It is therefore imperative for national governments to have the right policies that boost the participation of the private sector in agriculture," Phiri stressed.

Dominique Davoux, Rural Transformation Team Leader at the Delegation of the European in Ethiopia noted that food and nutrition security is about ensuring that everybody is able to access sufficient, affordable and nutritious food. "The private sector and other stakeholders can foster agricultural and food systems transformations towards more positive outcomes for good nutrition, poverty reduction, gender equality, and environmental sustainability. Through its support, the EU seeks to build resilience to food crises and help countries ensure that no one is left hungry in Africa," he said.



Police force in Arusha performs drills to combat crimes in welcoming the New Year eve yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Cynthia Mwilolezi

Govt responds to sunflower farmers' cry for better seeds

By Guardian Correspondent, Dodoma

IN an effort geared to increase production of edible oil, the government has come up with a new seed variety for sunflower which guarantees 48 percent of oil when processed.

The efforts are part of various initiatives undertaken jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Industry and Trade to improve the crop's value chain.

Crop Development Director in the

Ministry of Agriculture, Nyasebwa Chimagu told this paper that the new sunflower seed variety will be a solution to the long time cry by farmers who have been complaining of lack of quality sunflower seeds.

"Having a seed that guarantees farmers of 48 percent of oil when processed is an achievement. Farmers will no longer complain of poor seed varieties", said Chimagu insisting the government will continue to work closely with stakeholders and private sector in finding solutions to challenges

facing farmers in the country.

He said the government has been meeting with stakeholders in the private sector to chart ways to improve sunflower cultivation and making sure that farmers have access to quality certified seeds. He said farmers should expect more better sunflower seed varieties in future.

The official linked poor production of sunflower oil with poor refining process. He said there is a need for farmers to ensure quality refining plants to get enough oil.

Manager of Sunflower Framers Association, Stephen Henry commended the government for coming up with the new sunflower seed variety insisting farmers stand to benefit more with sunflower cultivation. "We are glad that the government has responded to our cries for better seeds. We are now sure of getting enough oil since the seed guarantees 48 percent of oil when refined", he said.

According to him, sunflower is one the major crops used for production of edible oil in the country.

Studies advise using ocean climate to predict diarrhea epidemic outbreaks

By Guardian Reporter and Agencies

STUDIES suggest that ocean climate studies offer new ways to predict outbreaks of diarrhea. Spikes in cases of life-threatening diarrhea in young children across the world may be associated with climate conditions linked to the oceans, according to a study which may lead to new early-warning systems to prepare for diarrhea epidemics.

The study, published in the journal *Nature Communications*, noted that diarrhea is the second leading cause of death in children younger than five years of age in low- and middle-income countries, with 72 percent of the deaths occurring in the first two years of life. The findings might pave the way for advance alert systems for diarrhea epidemics as early as seven months before it emerges.

The researchers, including those from Columbia University in the US, said El Nino-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is a coupled ocean-atmosphere system spanning the equatorial Pacific Ocean.

They said the ENSO oscillates in a 3-to-7-year cycle between two extremes, El Nino-warmer ocean temperatures-and La Nina-cooler ocean temperatures, affecting local weather patterns around the world, including temperatures, and rainfall.

Analysing the links between ENSO, and cases of diarrhea among children under age five in northeastern Botswana, the scientists found that La Nina is associated with cooler temperatures, increased rainfall, and higher flooding during the rainy season.

Their assessment revealed that La Nina conditions lagged 0-7 months are associated with about a 30 per cent increase in incidence of diarrhea in the early rainy season from December through February.

"These findings demonstrate the potential use of the El Nino-Southern Oscillation as a long-lead prediction tool for childhood diarrhea in southern Africa," said study first author Alexandra K. Heaney from the University of California, Berkeley in the US.

"Advanced stockpiling of medical

supplies, preparation of hospital beds, and organization of healthcare workers could dramatically improve the ability of health facilities to manage high diarrhea disease incidence," Heaney said.

Earlier studies had linked El Nino events to diarrhea outbreaks in Peru, Bangladesh, China, and Japan, but until now the effects of ENSO on diarrhea disease in Africa had been limited to cholera—a pathogen responsible for only a small fraction of diarrhea cases in the continent.

However, the researchers said infectious diarrhea is caused by many different pathogens like viruses, bacteria, and protozoa.

They said climatic conditions can have a critical influence on pathogen exposures, particularly those associated with waterborne transmission.

Citing an example, the scientists said extreme rainfall events may contaminate drinking water by flushing diarrhea-causing pathogens from pastures and dwellings into drinking water supplies.

They speculated that centralised water disinfection processes currently used in the studied regions may be insufficient to deal with changes in water quality brought on by extremes of wet and dry weather.

Plastic pollutes the ocean's larval fish superhighways: Study

"West Antarctic ice collapse may be prevented by snowing ocean water"

According to the researchers, similar studies assessing links between climate systems and infectious disease also provides insights into long-term changes in weather patterns resulting from climate change.

"In Southern Africa, precipitation is projected to decrease," said Jeffrey Shaman, said study co-author from Columbia University.

"This change, in a hydrological dynamic region where both wildlife and humans exploit the same surface water resources, may amplify the public health threat of waterborne illness. For this reason, there is an urgent need to develop the water sector in ways that can withstand the extremes of climate change," Shaman explained.

Deaths from road accidents in Mbeya fell in 2019 - RPC

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbeya

TOTAL number of deaths from road accidents in Mbeya Region since January 2019 fell by 56.5 percent compared to the same period in 2018, the situation that show that fatal road accidents have been greatly curbed.

This was revealed yesterday the Mbeya Regional Police Commander SACP Ulrich Matei when speaking to reporters in his office on various issues on road accidents for the region for the two-year period ending December

2019.

Matei said in 2018 92 people lost their lives in road accidents while in 2019 40 people died, 52 less.

"But also in the period starting January 2018 132 people sustained injuries from road accidents, but for the same period this year 78 people sustained injuries - less by 54," said Matei.

He said even incidents on contravention of road traffic rules also fell by 11 percent; therefore revenue from fines fell as well.

He said in 2018 there were 84,191 reported traffic violations which netted a total of 2.5bn/- in fines, but in 2019 only 74,601 traffic offences were reported that netted 2,2bn/- fines.

He said in 2019 there wasn't any major road accident that cost a huge human toll compared to 2018 when major road accidents cost 20 lives.

Matei further said in 2020 the police in the region will be beef security in various areas to ensure traffic offences are further reduced.



The leader of Alliance for Change and Transparency (ACT-Wazalendo) Zitto Kabwe addresses journalists about the party's 2020 focus to welcome the New Year. The event took place in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala

Municipal councils urged to consider ample land for Tabora's investments

By Guardian Correspondent, Tabora

MUNICIPAL councils in Tabora region have been urged to consider the types of investments when allocating land for construction of industries and other development projects.

An expert from the Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF), Dr Hoseana Lunogelo gave the advice when speaking at a consultative meeting aimed to collect stakeholder's views on how to enhance investments in Tabora region. The stakeholders also discussed implementation of the region's second investment plan.

Dr Lunogelo said there some types of investments which require huge pieces of land to implement such as establishment of dairy farm, construction of universities and industries, shopping malls and agricultural activities.

He said it was important for municipal councils to consider the types of investments they want before allocating land. He urged that each of the investments should be placed at specific areas instead to avoid inconveniences.

He said officials must ensure they have all the required information on particular type of investment before deciding where the project should be established.

Dr Lunogelo claimed that some municipal councils have allocated eight acres for establishment of a dairy farm, without knowing such kind of investment requires a huge piece of land and should be allocated far from the residential areas.

"Eight acres are not enough for establishment of a dairy farm, the piece of land can be used for a single livestock keeper", said Dr Lunogelo

adding when allocating areas for construction of industries, officials should also consider availability of raw materials for specific factories.

Putting factories at areas where the raw materials are plenty, assures the investor of reliability of the basic products but also reduce costs.

Tabora Regional Commissioner, Aggrey Mwanri gave ten days for municipal council officials to make sure that the second regional investment draft is completed on time. He said completion of the regional investment plan will be followed by its launch and promotion.

Mwanri informed that each of the municipal council had been directed on the type of industries they should construct, calling upon officials to include such plans in their marketing strategies and start promoting them within and outside the country.

Radio programme to benefit 7,000 herders

By Guardian Correspondent, Arusha

MORE than 7,000 herders from four regions - Arusha, Tanga, Mwanza and Dar es Salaam are to benefit by training on better and modern livestock keeping that will unshackle them from their economic woes.

Speaking here yesterday at a meeting to lay strategies to reach the said herders through education by radio programmes, project coordinator from Farm Radio International, Eliakunda Urio said they have been working with

farmers and herders at project's sites to enable them attain their goals through such education.

Urio said the herders to benefit have been conducting their activities in livestock keeping - cattle, goats, poultry and sheep and they will be educated on their better keeping including the use of medicines against diseases.

He said they have resolved to use education through radio as it is an important communication medium and solves the issue of the shortage of

extension officers.

Farm Radio International Senior official Clara Moita said the education to be given in the project's six month period will be on health of the livestock.

A poultry keeper from Nyamagana in Mwanza Region Betty Masumbigana said for a long time they have been faced with many challenges in poultry keeping including diseases and through the radio programmes they now see the benefits of the education received.



National Investments PLC
11 Serengeti Road
Mikocheni "B"
P.O. Box 7465
Dar Es Salaam

Phone: +255 22 2701436/2701348
0682 720 679

E-mail: invest@nicoltz.com

INFORMATION TO THE SHAREHOLDERS

This relates to the news reports recently being disseminated in print and electronic media indicating that Honorable Luhaga Mpina (MP), Minister for Livestock and Fisheries revoked the Assets Sale Agreement between the said Ministry and NICOL on the grounds that NICOL failed to comply with some of the conditions in the said agreement. Furthermore, the Honorable Minister is reported to have ordered the immediate take-over of Tanzania Meat Company Ltd (TMCL) by the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, and the payment by NICOL of a total of TZS 15 billion to the Ministry and Tanzania Meat Company Ltd.

In order to avoid confusion, NICOL hereby wishes to clarify that Tanzania Meat Company Ltd is an independent legal entity incorporated under the Companies Act R.E 2002 (Registration No.66751), with its own Board and management. As of now, TMCL has two shareholders; namely, National Investments Plc (NICOL) as majority shareholder with a 51% stake, and National Ranching Company (NARCO) - representing the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries - with a 49% stake. Under the law, shareholders are not allowed to manage a company, **and at no time has NICOL ever done so with respect to Tanzania Meat Company Ltd.** Consequently, the information disseminated alleging that NICOL had been managing Tanzania Meat Company Ltd was incorrect, misleading and legally untenable.

It was also reported that NICOL was in breach of some provisions of the Assets Sale Agreement, consequent to which the Minister ordered immediate termination of the said agreement and directed a number of actions to be taken, including placing TMCL and its activities under the Ministry and appointing an acting General Manager. In the process several unsubstantiated allegations were also made against NICOL, including alleged misappropriation / misuse of funds. It should be pointed out that the Assets Sale Agreement referred to by Honorable Minister was fully discharged and ceased to exist after the incorporation of TMCL. All the assets associated with the said sale Agreement were subsequently bequeath to the TMCL and are fully owned by it. Therefore, neither NICOL nor NARCO could thereafter have any ownership interest in those assets and the Dodoma Abattoir, since they are a constituent part of the Tanzania Meat Company Ltd (TMCL).

The Shareholders will recall that in 2012, they had taken action to dismiss the first NICOL Board for failure to comply with the Regulatory Authorities' requirements of good governance and Companies Act. This situation in NICOL also negatively impacted on the activities and operations of TMCL Board. The situation was aggravated by the insistence of NARCO Board to recognize and work with the dismissed Directors and past NICOL Board members in their individual capacities.

Efforts of the new NICOL Board to establish a functioning TMCL Board of Directors were equally frustrated by the refusal of the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries to cooperate at ministerial level.

All allegations against NICOL in the published statement were directly linked to the poor performance and mismanagement of the dismissed NICOL Board in collusion with NARCO Board and condoned by the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries. The new TMCL Board reported these anomalies to the relevant law enforcement authorities for their necessary actions. The new TMCL Board further instituted various measures including discharge of government obligation, rationalization of labour force, rehabilitation of production facilities and turning the TMCL from a mere slaughterhouse to a fully productive meat processing facility. To that end a recommendation was made to the Shareholders to restructure the TMCL with the view to ensuring long term viability for which an Administrative Receiver was appointed, whose Report was recently approved by the shareholders on 27th November, 2019.

Against this background, it should be understood that NICOL does not in any way owe the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries the alleged TZS 9.7 billion or TMCL TZS 5.4 billion, insofar as it could not have been responsible for the affairs of TMCL, an independent corporate entity. After all, it was the new TMCL Board that for the first time prepared the long overdue financial statements, after five years of non-compliance, for the period 2009 to 2015 and had them audited by an independent reputable external auditor. There were no such debts identified in these and subsequent audited statements. Thus the source of the debts alleged to have been reported by the Honorable Minister is a complete puzzle.

Consequently, being a listed company under strict supervision of the Regulatory Authorities, NICOL refutes all the allegations in their entirety and puts the Ministry of Livestock to strict proof.

In the meantime, Shareholders are hereby assured that NICOL will continue to exercise its full responsibility in good governance and strict observance of the law, and it will do all that is possible to protect their interests, especially those among the 30,000 shareholders whose livelihood emanates from humble beginnings and have placed their trust in NICOL's investment opportunity as a source of livelihood.

National Investments Plc
31st December, 2019.
BY Order of the Board

Utengule-Usongwe villagers set to build nine classrooms

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbeya

VILLAGERS in Utengule-Usongwe ward in Mbeya District Council have started building nine classrooms at Usongwé secondary school in efforts to complement the government's drive to end the shortage of classrooms in the area.

According to education report in Mbeya region, Mbeya Rural District Council is in need of 11 classrooms for the 550 Form One students who are joining secondary education this year.

The building exercise has started a day after the Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa ordered regional commissioners all over the country to supervise the construction of classrooms to be completed early so that all children required to start form one should start together.

Speaking during the construction exercise, villagers have said that, they have decided to collaborate with the government for the benefit of their children who had to start their studies early next year.

One of the villager, Juma Athuman said some people have been misinterpreting the government's decision to provide free education and cancel donations to schools, the factor that lead them to refuse to contribute any of the development issues at school.

"Despite the fact that President Dr. John Magufuli cancel school donation but on infrastructure issues we should support the government by

contributing", Athuman explained.

For his part, the Chief Executive Officer of Utengu - Masongwe, Daudi Mbembela said a total of 400 students missed classrooms in his ward, more nine classroom should be constructed for all students to be accommodated.

He said that in order to address the classrooms challenges, they have decided to come up with a special campaign to build the classes in the school the efforts that will hundred per cent should solve the problem.

"I urge all people to join efforts in order to complete it on time and allow our children to start their studies together as scheduled",

However, the chairman of Mbeya district council, Mwalingo Kisemba, commended on villagers for their willingness to participate in development activities and that the rooms they started to build would greatly address the problem.

He said they have decided to launch a campaign to build new classrooms in the school due to the fact that the number of children who miss classrooms is very high.

The chairman said the villager's efforts will eliminate the classes' problem by 100 per cent.

For his part, Mbeya Rural MP Oran Njeza, pledged to donate 100 bags of cements for the construction of the classes.

He said in addition to the donation, he would also collaborate with the council's leaders to look for vehicles for carrying the construction materials.



Commissioner of the Ethics Secretariat, Judge (rtd) Harold Nsekela looks at public servants presenting declaration forms at the commission's office in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala

By Guardian Correspondent, Arusha

STAKEHOLDERS in tourism have hailed the government for major improvements at Kilimanjaro International Airport (KIA) which has started attracting various international airlines to increase their direct services to the country through the airport.

Speaking soon after landing of Air Israel plane at the airport, the stakeholders said the improvements will also see an increase to the number of tourists visiting Tanzania as they will now short travel time and at lower cost.

Tourism stakeholders hail govt for enabling Israel-KIA direct flights

"This will also be a relief to Tanzania travelling to foreign countries for business or religious trips due to reduced cost and reliability," said Samson Keshama, a tourism stakeholder.

Keshama who works for a tourist

company - Excellent Guides, said as of now time of travel from Tanzania to Israel has been reduced from nine hours to four and half.

He said tourists companies have devised a procedure to connect Tanzanians travelling to Israel for

religious trips.

Duncan Ludovic, a priest is among the wananchi who stand to benefit from the trips to Israel for annual pilgrimage.

He said travel costs to Israel continue to fall with time as well as travel time

because of Israel-KIA direct flights.

Arnold lema, a religious leader based in Dar es Salaam said the reduction of travel cost to Israel is attributed to the government efforts in improving its various institutions dealing with tourism, transport and travel and

specifically mentioned the Tanzania Tourist Board (TTB) which has attained great achievement in advertising Tanzania tourist attractions in partnership with tourism stakeholders.

Others who spoke about these achievements include Deus Kurwa and Danford Ludoivic Mwankiraa who advised for more efforts in the improvement of the tourism sector.

Yet others hailed the government for these efforts and advised that similar improvements should also be made to the country's other areas with potential tourism opportunities.



Dar es Salaam Special Zone Police Commander Lazaro Mambosasa says police will be deployed around city's suburbs to keep New Year's eve revellers safe as they gather to welcome 2020. He was addressing journalists yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma

By Guardian Correspondent, Dodoma

THE National Audit Office of Tanzania (NAOT) has cited poor management as one of the factors that thwarts implementation of many development projects in the country.

This was said recently by Henry Naiman, an auditor from NAOT when commenting on the local government authorities audit report published on the Controller and Auditor General (CAG) reports for the 2017/2018 financial year.

He said the report has identified 27 completed projects worth 5.24bn/- in

NAOT cites poor management thwarting implementation of development projects

16 district in the country but it is not official used, led by Mtwara region with the project worth 1.96bn/-.

Naiman said the report has also revealed that a total amount of 5bn/- was spent on unintended activities in 40 local government authorities.

Also the development projects worth 41.9bn/- were not implemented by local government authorities due

to the lack of funding from the central Government as well as poor revenue collections from local authorities.

The auditor added: the development project worth 8.27bn/- were not implemented despite the fact that the fund was released.

The CAG office has advised the local government authorities to ensure that the incomplete and abandoned

projects are completed as scheduled.

Addition to that, Naiman said the audit also revealed 62 local government authorities which is equivalent to 33.5 percent of all 185 councils did not send the 20 per cent of the grants received from the central government totaling 32.3bn/- to the villages, wards and street, as benefits for the internal sources of revenue which was removed.

Value addition key to unlocking Africa's economies - experts

By Bertrand Byishimo

As 2019 draws to an end, there have been several critics on African governments' hesitance to develop trade, especially when it comes to integration.

At no point in recent history have calls for Africa to grow its economies been stronger. Across the continent, economic growth is arguably the most talked-about subject among policymakers.

So why has action on the ground failed to move the needle on this important development marker?

Economic growth has been a campaign promise across the African continent, with its acknowledged ability to bring prosperity, new jobs and better incomes for all.

Yet the continent is still struggling to develop its economy, experts confirm.

Experts warn that Africa's manufacturing industry is likely to remain small throughout the remainder of these coming years if no immediate interventions are made.

Experts say that high commodity prices triggered by foreign markets seemingly insatiable appetite for natural resources have fueled rapid economic growth in Africa since the 1990s.

Adding that many thought the boom would revive Africa's waning manufacturing industry. Yet to the dismay of analysts, it failed to live up to expectations.

Had African leaders heeded advice from experts and pumped profits from the commodity boom into stimulating manufacturing companies, the results could have been different. So what are the options for Africa over these coming years?

At the recent KUSI IDEAS meeting, big names like Raila Odinga the African Union infrastructure representative

in Africa and Dr. Agnes Kalibata the President of the Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa weighed in on value addition as a significant thing for the African economy.

Experts unanimously conclude that the only viable option is to add value to products and provide transport and production of African goods.

Experts agree that one of the main reasons for Africa's slow economic growth is that its producers have failed to add value to products before exporting.

The experts said that whenever we export processed goods, we create jobs for the youth and add value to local economies as opposed to spending it abroad. That is what they termed moving slowly but deliberately.

For instance, they said it's better for Africa to learn how to export copper cables instead of copper and aluminum sheets

"Let's start thinking in terms of value addition in Africa. We make coffee, it's great, we export coffee, it's great, but we need to figure out how we add value to what we produce. We cannot take unprocessed products to the market and expect high profit," said Eric Chinje, a former World Bank Senior Manager during an interview with Business Times.

According to Kalibata, Africa imports every year \$35 billion worth of food which is projected to rise to \$110B in coming years if nothing is done to add value to our exports and decrease exports.

Transportation and logistics development for Africa's industries could be responsible for lifting the region's economies out of poverty, according to Raila Odinga, the High Representative for Infrastructure Development at African Union Commission.

System of rice intensification gains traction in Bagamoyo

By Beatrice Philemon

RAJAB Chejo is among the Bagamoyo District Council farmers who have started benefiting from system of rice intensification (SRI) methodology, which has been introduced in the Bagamoyo Irrigation Development Project (BIDP).

A 35-year-old farmer and father of three, Chejo said for the past 15 years he had been engaging in rice and maize farming, but production remained low.

"But now I'm so excited with this project, which is expected to transform agriculture in this area," Chejo said. He is one of the beneficiaries of BIDP, where he had one acre of rice farm. The area is about 8km from the historical town of Bagamoyo.

Rajab was among farmers at BIDP project who have benefited from soil health analysis and testing which was conducted by Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute's Mlingano Centre (TARI) whereas he was given 25kg of NSP fertiliser for planting per acre, 100 kg of UREA fertiliser and 15 kg of SARO 5 rice seeds to plant in his farm, as a result he end up getting 66bags weighing 80kgs each and he managed to get more than 5.7m/-.

"This is a lot to me as in the past when I was using traditional farming practices I used to get between 20 and 30 bags of 100kgs per acre," he said,

commending TARI-Mlingano and OCP Africa for training them with the new rice farming system.

Chejo used the money he got from this farming season to build a modern house (by village standards), paying school fees for his son and other petty businesses.

An expert from TARI- Mlingano Centre Dr Sibaway Mwangi described the new farming system as crucial in scaling up rice production in the country as it creates a triple-win situation for agriculture, climate security, and food security because it sustainably increases rice production and farmers' income, strengthens crops' resilience to climate change and variability and reduces rice production's contribution to climate change.

Dr Mwangi who is a national coordinator of soils research said SRI encourages limited use of water with high productivity as well as mitigating the impact of climate change.

With the new system, small-scale farmers in their irrigation schemes are encouraged to adopt SRI, so that they can reap more benefits that range from food security to climate change adaptation.

"As researchers we want farmers to shift from traditional farming system with low productivity to commercial farming system with high productivity."



Prisons Commissioner General Phaustine Kasike chairs a special forum to bid farewell to year 2019 and welcoming 2020 held in Dodoma yesterday. Photo: Prisons

Six killed, seven injured in western Uganda road accident

KAMPALA

AT least six people were killed and seven others critically injured in a Monday evening road accident in the western Ugandan district of Ntungamo, a police spokesperson said on Tuesday.

Samson Kasasira, Rwizi regional police spokesperson said in a statement that the fatal accident involved a

passenger van and a commercial motorcycle rider at Rubanga along the Ntungamo-Kabale Highway.

At least four occupants aboard the van belonging to Glory Boarding Primary School in the central district of Wakiso, a motorcycle rider and its passenger perished in the accident.

"The cause of the fatal accident was a tire burst of the front tire of the

school van. The driver of the vehicle lost control and hit the motorcycle," said Kasasira. "The motor vehicle and motorcycle were taken to Rubaare police station pending inspection by the inspector of vehicles," he said.

He said the injured were in the van. The injured and bodies of the deceased were rushed to Rubaare Health Center IV for treatment, postmortem and

management respectively.

Uganda registers about 20,000 accidents each year, with some 2,000 deaths, making it one of the countries with the highest traffic death rates, according to police statistics.

The police attribute the high rates of road accidents to reckless driving, speeding, human error, drink driving and overloading.



State University of Zanzibar graduates enter at the graduation ceremony in Zanzibar yesterday. Photo: State House

US aviation agency warns of threat on Kenyan airspace

NAIROBI

The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has warned American air carriers to "exercise caution" when flying over Kenyan airspace, citing possible attacks by extremists.

In an advisory directed to civilian airliners and all operators of US-registered aircraft issued last week, the agency said: "Those persons are advised to exercise caution when flying into, out of, within, or over the territory and airspace of Kenya East of 40 degrees East longitude at altitudes below 12600 due to the possibility of extremist/militant activity."

FAA said it will review the advisory by February 26, 2020.

"Aircraft may encounter various anti-aircraft weapons, including manpads, small-arms, and indirect fire weapons such as mortars and rockets, which could target aircraft at low altitudes, including during the arrival and departure phases of flight and/or target airports and aircraft on the ground," it said.

Kenya has battled terrorism in recent years especially along the restive northeastern border where Al-Shabaab militants have executed several attacks.

US President Donald Trump's administration has also imposed sanctions on several Kenyans over alleged support to terrorist groups.

Two years ago, the US government cleared the sale of 12 new American-made light attack helicopter gunships as Nairobi continues to build up its military arsenal in the face of mounting security challenges.

In 2017, the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) achieved the Category One status that paved way for direct flights between Kenya and the US, bringing to an end the long search for express connection between the two countries.

The FAA granted Nairobi the top status after carrying out a series of assessment audits in the country.

In 2002, two missiles were fired at an Israeli holiday jet that had taken off from Mombasa city's airport.

AGENCIES

Scientists trying to find ways to stop mycotoxins in crops, commodities

By George Jared

THE United States is the top food exporter in the world, and scientists are constantly studying ways to protect the ag sector from the field and into the storage bins that hold crops, according to the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture.

Mycotoxins, a family of toxins generated by fungi attacking grains, nuts and other foods and commodities, impact public health and international trade. Researchers at the UA are leading some of the world's most cutting-edge efforts to stop the prevalent toxins.

Burt Bluhm, associate professor of plant pathology for the University

of Arkansas, is primary investigator and director of the Mycotoxin and Seed Borne Disease Research Lab. After operating out of the Rosen Alternative Pest Control Center on the UA Fayetteville main campus, the lab relocated in 2018 to the newly-constructed Don Tyson Center for Agricultural Sciences, several miles north.

Bluhm said that mycotoxins, while pervasive, are still relatively unstudied, compared to other dangers faced by producers.

"Mycotoxins in particular have been overlooked in some corners of the research world," Bluhm said. "There are a lot of reasons for that. In some

ways, especially in corn, and in the United States, it's historically been perceived as a 'Southern problem.' Mycotoxins haven't been as common in the big corn-producing states through the Midwest."

Countries worldwide try to minimize an influx of foods that have these fungi. The European Union has stringent intolerances for the presence of mycotoxins in any grain shipment, especially imports, leading to the rejection of exports that would otherwise meet or exceed safety standards at the point of origin. In other areas of the world dealing with elevated food scarcity, mycotoxins are sometimes tied to severe illness.

"For the E.U., it's primarily a trade issue," Bluhm said. "But in developing nations in Asia and Africa, mycotoxins are a more serious problem. Where food security is an issue, where people have to eat whatever's available, if the food is contaminated with mycotoxins, you'll see outbreaks of extreme illness and death."

Mycotoxins are a family of toxins created when fungi feed on grain, either during the growing season, or when grain has been improperly stored. The fungi feed off the available carbohydrates, then secrete toxins into the colonized grain. In addition to corn, mycotoxins are found in other grains, tree nuts and cotton. There is

a concern, Bluhm said, about possible mycotoxins in rice. "There are really two issues at play," Bluhm said. "One is that 'a little bit of mycotoxin goes a long way,' so to speak. So even if you have a low percentage of infected kernels, the 'mycotoxin-per-kernel' can be very high. So at the level of a truckload, when that grain is eventually homogenized, even a relatively low incidence of infection can lead to serious problems."

Mycotoxins are relatively stable, and can easily survive the food making process, according to the World Health Organization. These fungi can cause liver damage, several types of cancers, kidney damage, can compromise a consumer's immune system, and

ingestion in some cases can lead to death, the World Health Organization reported. The fungi can be visible to the naked eye in the form of mold, but often it goes undetected.

Bluhm received his training in pathology, and mycotoxins specifically, at Purdue University in Indiana. When he arrived in Arkansas, he said, it was clear that the problem was more widespread in the state's (and the region's) corn crops that he had realized.

Over the past decade, Bluhm's lab has worked to map the genetic layout of the 20-30 fungi involved in creating mycotoxins around the world, searching for specific weaknesses to attack. The lab is also working to develop biological control agents to combat mycotoxins.

The Guardian

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WEDNESDAY 1 JANUARY 2020

Taking A New Look
At The News
ESTABLISHED IN 1995

Happy New Year, even better than the last

NEW Year is the time or day at which a new calendar year begins and the calendar's year count increments by one.

Many cultures celebrate the event in some manner and the 1st day of January is often marked as a national holiday.

In the Gregorian calendar, the most widely used calendar system today, New Year occurs on January 1 (New Year's Day). This was also the first day of the year in the original Julian calendar and of the Roman calendar (after 153 BC).

During the Middle Ages in western Europe, while the Julian calendar was still in use, authorities moved New Year's Day, depending upon locale, to one of several other days, including March 1, March 25, Easter, September 1, and December 25. Beginning in 1582, the adoptions of the Gregorian calendar has meant that many national or local dates in the Western World and beyond have changed to using one fixed date for New Year's Day, January 1.

Other cultures observe their traditional or religious New Year's Day according to their own customs, sometimes in addition to a (Gregorian) civil calendar. Chinese New Year, the Islamic New Year, the traditional Japanese New Year and the Jewish New Year are the more well-known examples. India and other countries continue to celebrate New Year on different dates.

January 1: The first day of the civil year in the Gregorian calendar used by most countries. Contrary to common belief in the west, the civil New Year of January 1 is not an Orthodox Christian religious holiday. The Eastern Orthodox liturgical calendar makes no provision for the observance of a New Year. January 1 is itself a religious holiday, but that is because it is the feast of the circumcision of Christ (seven days

after His birth), and a commemoration of saints. While the liturgical calendar begins September 1, there is also no particular religious observance attached to the start of the new cycle. Orthodox nations may, however, make civil celebrations for the New Year.

Those that adhere to the revised Julian calendar (which synchronises dates with the Gregorian calendar), including Bulgaria, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Romania, Syria, and Turkey, observe both the religious and civil holidays on January 1. In other nations and locations where Orthodox churches still adhere to the Julian calendar, including Georgia, Israel, Russia, the Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Ukraine, the civil new year is observed on January 1 of the civil calendar.

2019 was quite a remarkable year as far as Tanzania's relations are concerned. The African Union reform team headed by President Paul Kagame of Rwanda unveiled an ambitious plan that will see countries impose a 0.02 per cent levy on imported goods in order to finance the organisation.

And that was not the end with the AU reforms: the continental free trade treaty was signed in Kigali that will bring the continent's 1.2 billion people under one common market.

Milestones continued to pile up last year and by all indications, they are bound to continue this year. All the achievements are a result of hard work and capable leadership that should make every Tanzanian proud.

We have seen that hard work and dedication pays off, it is our wish, as your partner in this journey, that we will continue to document achievements by an incredible people. Our partnership with our readership is a treasured element within our publication and we hope to see it grow stronger this year.

Happy New Year.

Govt should take leading role in job creation

LAST week the government - through the Permanent Secretary, President's Office (Public Service Management and Good Governance) Dr Laurean Ndumbaro said it plans to employ more than 40,000 people of various cadres in various government sectors for the 2019/2020 Financial Year.

He said the employment exercise will begin in February 2020, and gave an example of immense opportunities in the country's health sector that, with new opportunities, will alleviate shortage of staff at various health centres and other hospitals that have been built during the Phase Five Administration.

We welcome the government step which we believe should be viewed not merely as an appreciative gesture, but essentially as a responsibility to its citizens.

Job creation is a responsibility of the government which past administrations were shrewdly trying to distance from, un mindful of the oft given warning that unemployment is a ticking time-bomb but instead elected to walk towards a cliff.

We had even reached a point when officials started redefining the term 'job creation' - as including the 'machinga business' - the preoccupation of hundreds of thousands of our poorly educated, futureless youth that schools churn out every year - by making it a government policy.

For example a decade or so ago a Labour minister would stand in Parliament and announce that the government had surpassed (sic) its target of job creation in the private sector by more than so and so percent - it created more than a million plus jobs.

But closer look showed the more

than one million jobs 'created in the private sector' were mainly machinga traders with their 'nguvu kazi' licenses. Few others included labourers at construction sites or job a bob day worker engagements at markets, transportation industry and other numerous economic outlets and trading centres that lack social welfare, insurance and assurance cover.

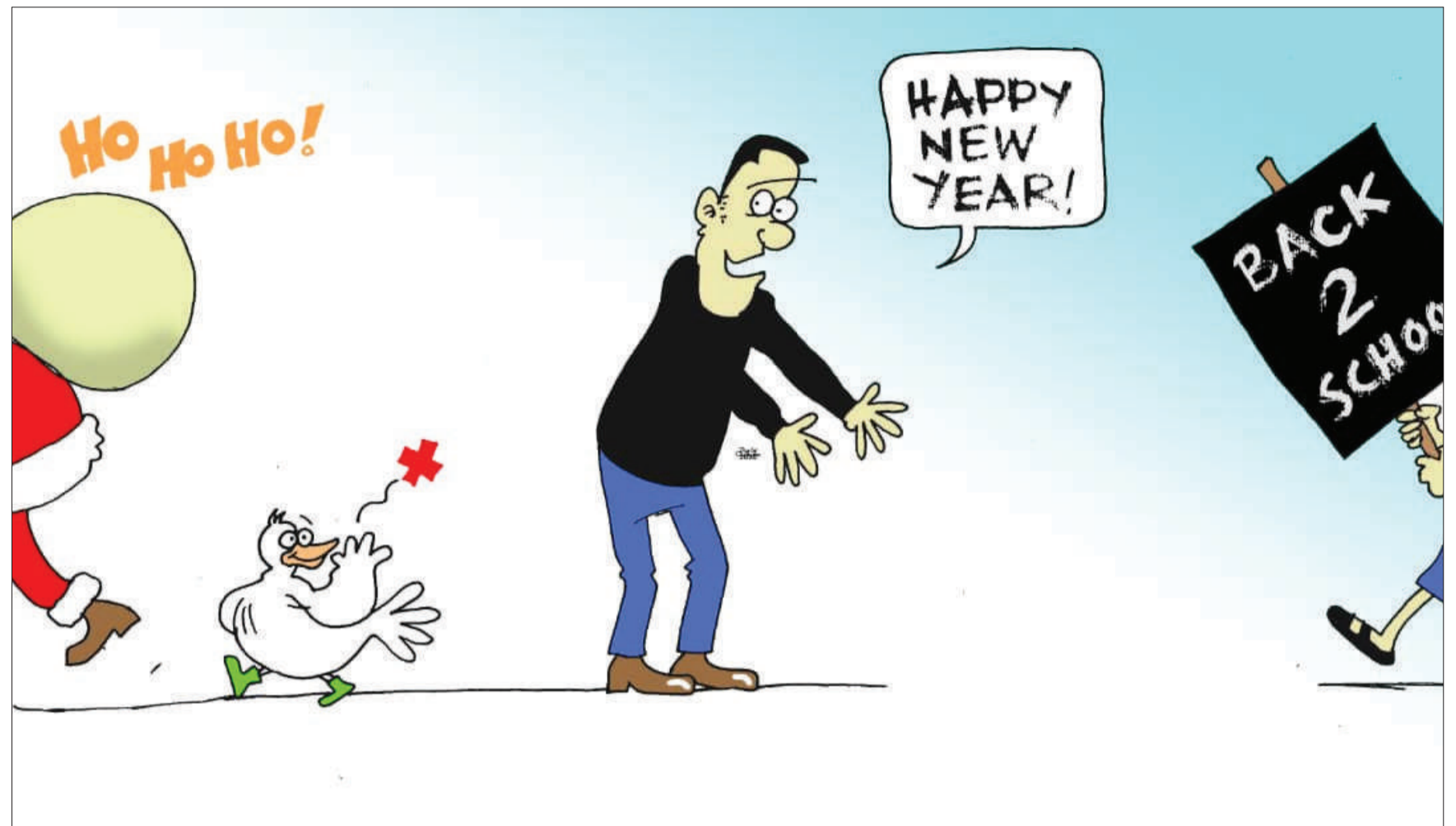
We believe our definition of employment, in socio-economic terms is still the same as that of say, the US or other countries, or as it were in this country four decades ago. If in the US it is a huge proposition even to create 200,000 jobs, how come Tanzania could create them at will and at ease?

Machinga business being conducted by thousands of our youths is hardly a preoccupation of choice - however gainful it may be to them. It is essentially pursued because there are hardly any formal jobs for them to do.

However we may be seeing some changes following the current Fifth-Phase Administration's quest to make Tanzania develop into a middle-income industrial nation as industries is where many jobs can be created.

It would suffice if we delve a little bit into history. Mindful of the unemployment problem, Nyerere created scores of parastatals and state owned industries that provided jobs for thousands of school leavers. State owned firms like Tanzania Shoe Company (Bora Shoes), UFI, textile mills (eg Urafiki, Mbeyatex, Mwatex, Mutex, Kiltex etc), KAMATA, Tanganyika Packers, RTCS, NDL, Kibo Paper, DABCO, GEFCO were among the job providing parastatals that made school leavers proud of their government.

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Kilwa district investing in people for nature

By Dr Felician Kilahama

FOR the period of December 18th to 30th, 2019 I had an opportunity to visit Kilwa district and upon arrival paid courtesy-call to Christopher Ngubiagai, District Commissioner (DC) who fortunately was present in his office.

Accompanied by Njabha Lyatura, District Forest Officer and Makala, Jaspar, Chief Executive Officer of Mpingo Conservation and Development Initiative (MCDI) went to DC's Office.

Secretary informed him about my presence and the DC immediately allowed us in with overwhelming welcome. Thanks to the Almighty God because this happened without prior scheduled time.

The Kilwa DC started sharing his experiences narrating that Kilwa district is located in Lindi region occupying about 13,347km² of surface land and 1794km² of aquatic land along the Indian Ocean.

Again, the District is administratively divided into six Divisions, 20 Wards with 97 Registered Villages. The average population density is 14 persons per km². The highest density recorded in Songo songo Ward (454 persons per km²). However, experience show that Kilwa District is still virgin as far as human occupation is concerned.

Accordingly, there are designated Forest Reserves in Kilwa District covering a total area of 228,400 ha and about 15,410 ha of Mangrove Forest Reserves; all under the central government.

Additionally, 11 villages have gazetted Village Land Forest Reserves amounting to 287,384.9 ha. Exploitation of the forestry resources in Kilwa is primarily for fuel (firewood and charcoal); poles, logs and timber. Most preferred species include: Mhongo, Mpangapanga, Mninga, Msekeseke, Mpingo, Pamosa, Msufi and Mtondo/Mtondoro. In most cases, inadequate and reliable sources of income forces the youths to venture into harvesting trees mainly for charcoal production as an alternative employment opportunity.

According to Ngubiagai, the district has benefitted a lot from remaining natural forests on village lands. He explained that since 2004 to-date, Kilwa District Council (KDC) has been investing in local communities for nature conservation while at the same time enabling them to become main beneficiaries of well-managed forests.

The DC also thanked the government for adoption of the national Forest



Dr. Felician Kilahama

Policy (1998) and the Forest Act (Cap323 RE: 2002. These are key instruments that support village communities to own, manage and utilize sustainably forest resources for socio-economic development.

The villages can gazette and/or declare Village Land Forest Reserves; in so doing they become primary beneficiaries through the Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM)-initiatives. Additionally, the communities can also enter into agreement with the government through the Tanzania Forest Services (TFS) to undertake joint forest management (JFM) where territorial Forest Reserves are applicable.

According to the District Executive Director, Kilwa District Council, with support from MCDI (NGO operating in Kilwa); the Council has managed to implement Participatory Forest Management (PFM) initiatives on the ground since 2004.

Implementation of community-based forest management (a subset of PFM) started slowly in Kikole Village where the Village Government agreed to set aside 454ha of Village Land Forest Reserve. Additionally, MCDI with support from development partners rendered to the district council and recipient villages; needed technical and

from sustainable utilization of mature forest tree like "Mpingo" or "Miombo" species, the communities in villages are further taking steps to plant them and other valuable indigenous trees in order to maintain ecological balance of nature.

Through support and dedication from the District officials in collaboration with MCDI and other partners like WWF, the communities in Kilwa District have earned about 1.6billion shillings from the sale of wood products mainly Mpingo (Dalbergia melanoxylon). The income earned used by supporting 236 expectant mothers with maternal materials (Tshs. 50,000 each); 15 people treated at the Kilwa District Hospital; constructed a house for the village nurse and 10 insurance cover for vulnerable people. Also built three villages' offices with furniture and electricity installed; constructed Village Guest House and built a Marketplace to facilitate trade amongst the village community. Furthermore, paid school fees for 42 students and provided school uniforms to 323 pupils; constructed primary and secondary schools; constructed the village grain store and contributed towards purchasing the village grain milling machine; repaired 12 villages' water boreholes/installed electric water pumps.

Additionally, provided bursaries to 20 high performing primary school pupils; built a teacher's house and bought bricks for new classroom as well as purchased 100 desks and various schools' supplies. Additionally, all the villages' Forest Committees' members are facilitated with uniforms and allowances to undertake patrols in forests.

Whereas the communities through community-based forest management are supported to generate revenues and improve the villages' financial capacities while incentivising people to protect "Mother Nature", MCDI in collaboration with District Council are further supporting the villagers to venture into alternative income generation activities like beekeeping practices. For instance, in Kisangi Village, seven villagers trained and installed 23 beehives for production of honey. Let us all invest into nature for the good future. Failure to do so nature will irreversibly revenge to us leading to very miserable life conditions.

Dr. Felician Kilahama is a former Director of Forestry and Beekeeping in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism

Why 2019 was Afghanistan's best and worst year since US invasion

By Shereena Qazi

The year 2019 began with hopes for peace in war-torn Afghanistan, the first time since the 18-year conflict in the South Asian country started following an invasion by the United States.

In January, expectations of a peace agreement between the US and the Taliban were high after the two sides agreed in principle to its framework.

The deal stated that the Taliban will not allow foreign armed groups and fighters to use Afghanistan as a launchpad to conduct attacks outside the country, a complete withdrawal of US and NATO forces, an intra-Afghan dialogue, and a permanent ceasefire between the US and the Taliban.

Afghans believed that their country, which has suffered through decades of conflict in which tens of thousands have been killed, would finally see peace this year.

US-Taliban meetings in Qatar's capital Doha continued for the next few months against the backdrop of continuing attacks by the armed group across Afghanistan and US-led air attacks.

In another significant move towards peace, Doha, in July, hosted a two-day intra-Afghan meeting between Taliban and Afghan

officials. A call to reduce civilians casualties to "zero" was made at the meeting even as the death toll continued to rise.

"At first we had really high hopes for peace, but then we realised there are a lot of hurdles," Abdul Wali Sadiq, 23, from Afghanistan's Kunar province told Al Jazeera.

In September, just as the US-Taliban talks were believed to have reached the final stage, US President Donald Trump abruptly announced the deal was "dead", citing an increase in violence in which a US soldier was killed.

The Taliban said the announcement came as a "shock".

Landmark elections

Two weeks after Trump's decision to freeze the talks, on September 28, Afghanistan went to the polls to elect a new president.

The Taliban threatened to target election rallies and polling stations, while US-backed Afghan forces stepped up air and ground attacks.

Abdul Wali Sadiq, who considered the elections a stepping stone to peace, headed to the polling station despite threats by the Taliban.

"My house was caught in conflict between the Taliban and the Afghan forces. I lost my 19-year-old brother Mohammed Wali and my 12-year-old sister Nadia,"



President Ashraf Ghani after he won a slim majority of votes in preliminary results of presidential election. File photo

Abdul Wali said, adding that he still voted.

Abdul Ghani, 43, a driver also from Kunar, lost his daughter and son after their house was caught in heavy fire on the voting day. The children were home while he had gone out to vote.

"There was intense fighting between the security forces and the Taliban, but I still went out to vote, so that we have peace in our country and a good future for our children," Ghani said.

Year of record casualties

The year, which saw the biggest push for peace in Afghanistan, also witnessed a spike in violence.

The United Nations said the months of July, August and September this year saw "an unprecedented number of civilian casualties".

Between January and September, there were more than 8,200 civilian casualties - 2,563 people killed and 5,676 injured - according to the UN Assis-

stance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

July was documented as the bloodiest month on record, with more than 1,500 civilians killed or wounded.

In a report published in April, the UN said Afghan and US forces had killed more civilians in Afghanistan than the country's armed groups had. Some 717 civilians were killed by Afghan and US forces, compared with 531 by rebel fighters.

In October, a UNAMA re-

port said the September election campaign saw nearly 460 civilian casualties, including 85 deaths.

The report blamed more than 80 percent of those casualties on the Taliban's campaign to disrupt polling.

"I think the existence of foreign troops in Afghanistan is the main reason of this never-ending war in our country," Abdul Wali said.

"The Taliban have also killed many people. They

need to work for peace because the act of killing has never brought peace."

Peace talks revived

On Thanksgiving Day this year, Trump made a surprise visit to the US troops in Afghanistan and declared that the peace talks with the Taliban had been resumed.

The November 28 announcement came a week after two Western hostages were swapped for three Taliban commanders, an exchange partially brokered by the US.

On December 4, US special envoy for peace, Zalmay Khalilzad, arrived in Kabul, three days before he met a Taliban delegation in Doha for a fresh round of talks.

The renewed Doha talks focused on steps that could lead to a ceasefire that would end the 18-year conflict.

"The US rejoined talks today in Doha. The focus of discussion will be reduction of violence that leads to intra-Afghan negotiations and a ceasefire," a US State Department spokesperson said on December 7.

The Taliban has so far refused to engage with the Afghan government, calling it a "US puppet".

On December 11, the armed group launched a suicide attack outside a hospital near the Bagram military base in Parwan province, north of the capital Kabul, killing two civilians.

Khalilzad expressed "outrage" over the attack and said the Doha talks would resume after the Taliban "consult their leadership" on continuing violence.

Delayed election results

On December 22, Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission (IEC) announced the preliminary results of the presidential polls after a two-month delay, which the electoral body blamed on technical issues, allegations of fraud and protests from candidates.

In the results, incumbent President Ashraf Ghani was seen on track for a second five-year term after preliminary results showed him winning 50.64 percent of the votes.

Ghani's nearest rival, Abdullah Abdullah, was second in the race with 39.52 percent of the 1.9 million votes in an election marred by protests and allegations of fraud.

"I don't know what the next year will bring for us, but I am at least hopeful because of the push for peace and elections in our country," Waris Ghamgin, 43, a resident of Ghani Khel village, southeast of Jalalabad, told Al Jazeera.

"These are two good signs despite so many innocent people losing their lives. We have sacrificed enough for our nation, peace should come now."

Agencies



Thousands of students walked out of class around the world as part of a global student strike to demand urgent political action on climate change. File photo

2019: Year of environmental catastrophe, global protests

By Anil Kija

AS the year 2019 bows out of the stage, each individual will have his or her own recollections and sentiments on the outgoing year, from being the happiest year in memory to the worst possible scenario. On the whole though each year looks pretty much like the previous on average, but nations, like individuals, experience highs and lows that take time to pale away. That is why the world is likely to remember this passing year for its environmental catastrophe rather than its violence, as the world has never lacked warlords out to make some demonstration.

Since the coming year

is likely to see even more severe storms coming from the legendary dragons of the sea, known by names of wives of senior officers of the US Pacific Fleet during World War II, like Katrina, Doreen and other monster water mountains, 2019 will not go down in history in that context. Rather it will be remembered for the sharp escalation in global protests with different sources and intensities, but often a hidden cause wasn't openly admitted. It was the changed policies of the United States towards the rest of the world, for better or even for worse. Perhaps the most prominent illustration of protests that occupied television screens around the world

was the scenario in Hong Kong, where a chess move by Mainland China to draw Hong Kong into its criminal procedure orbit was quickly translated as political. Ability to transfer criminal suspects to the Mainland would put Hong Kong under the same laws as China, and university students and other youth were keen to see to it that this would not happen. Yet history is there is to demonstrate that eventually it is the youth who will tire out, not the Chinese system.

However these tremors inside the 'one country, two systems' format arise from a major event in 2019 that also shook 2018, and will largely lapse into the background in the coming

year. It is the fact of reaching an interim trade agreement between the United States and China about which more than a year has been spent in haggling, with the US actually making substantial alterations to the world trade system as agreed within the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The clear view of how US President Donald Trump battled rising Chinese hegemony strengthened his sway in US politics, such that it's hard to see a formidable challenger as the US enters into election cycle.

Africa did not perhaps see its worst year in living memory in 2019 as catastrophes were by and large timid by phenomenal

standards of what often comes to pass in the continent, but we had our fair share of ravages as a continent. Ebola continued to be a huge threat but strangely never went out of its Goma-Beni vicinity as if the rest of the zone had been vaccinated against the fatal epidemic except for that zone. The change in government in Kinshasa virtually had no effect on the violent chess game on the eastern side, as warlords continued to control territory, mining and transporting gemstones - and brooking no nonsense from central authorities, as long as they can.

Welcome change to many came from protests

in the Sudan, where the veteran administration of strongman Omar al-Bashir and his radically divisive Sudan National Front were thrown out of power as his own army could not defend him. The country neared paralysis and shooting down or crushing demonstrators with tanks in the old South Korea style in 1978 wasn't possible, so eventually the army took over. They attempted to organize a military-led transition and the demonstrators refused, and sufficiently persisted to get a professional who is acceptable to both sides - thus implying the military continues to pull strings from behind but can't actually govern.

Much less happy was the tug of war between South Sudanese leaders, where President Salva Kiir and former vice president Dr Riek Machar continued the most drawn out waiting for the formation of a national unity government in living memory. The key point is that the world, as well as President Kiir, wants the former vice president to merely participate in the government in Juba, for

instance as the first of four vice presidents, while he understands that he is going back to his former position. And more so this time the president shall let him work, nothing else.

Otherwise the most unheralded change in 2019 was the start of success of President Trump's policy on Iran, succeeding to destabilize Iran by sanctions while making little headway with North Korea. The Iranian-anchored political system was in tatters in Lebanon and Iraq with the country's prime ministers resigning and in the case of Iraq, even the president had moved to resign, and in Lebanon the popularity of Hezbollah was rapidly waning but the architecture of the power structure remained intact. A Hezbollah-backed candidate took over as new premier....

South America continued being polarized by opposed winds, with a conservative change over in Brazil and Mexico, while Bolivia's leftist leader fell to crowd pressure and military withdrawal of support, but the leftist regime in Venezuela defied mass demonstrations and

parliamentary revolt to remain firmly in the saddle. President Trump failed in his much trumpeted building of a wall along the Mexican border as the Democrat controlled House of Representatives vetoed that plan and its appeal waned, in which case the president shifted to putting up new tariffs against Mexico for letting in hordes of migrants. This worked and a sharp drop in flows was registered.

Perhaps the most lasting event in the memory of many Africans shall be stick wielding crowds of Zulu fanatics breaking into shops owned by immigrant Africans, looting and burning, to put an end to a fabled intellectual concept of pan-Africanism. Britain spent the year voting down Brexit formulas until the Labour opposition was shown the door with the loss of 59 seats in a mid December poll, and the way cleared for ratification. A year long discussion for a free trade pact with the European Union however wasn't billed to succeed by EU officials; waiting isn't over.



Flooding from Cyclone Idai and Cyclone Kenneth affected 2.2 million people in Mozambique. File photo

Polio makes a comeback in Pakistan amid vaccine boycotts

By Ali Zai

Clad in a colourful floral shalwar kameez, her head draped in a brown shawl against the winter chill, Kainat Mohmand goes door to door to make sure no child in this northern Pakistani village is left behind.

"If we are nice and well-mannered, then the people are convinced and they accept us," says the 19-year-old polio vaccinator in the village of Ali Zai, about 10km south of Peshawar, the capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

"But this area is very dangerous," she adds, quickly. In April, that danger crystallised. After a false rumour spread during a polio vaccination campaign that the drops were making children sick, hundreds of parents rushed their children to hospital, while thousands across the province refused to take part in the campaign at all.

In Ali Zai, dozens formed an angry mob that attacked a local government hospital, tearing down walls and, later, burning it to the ground. The violence led to the vaccination campaign being suspended across the province, an epicentre of polio infection in Pakistan.

The incident here was illustrative of Pakistan's struggle to contain the spread of polio in 2019, with cases rising to a five-year high amid suspicions of the vaccine and, officials say, a new trend: that of parents deprioritising polio vaccination due to the myriad other dangers to their lives that are of more immediate concern.

Political transition

Since 1988, worldwide cases of poliomyelitis have dropped by 99 percent, from more than 350,000 to just 33 cases in 2018, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). The near-eradication of the disease has been the result of a sustained campaign of oral and injected vaccines targeting children under five, who are at risk of contracting the debilitating, highly infectious disease that



Rana Muhammad Safdar, the coordinator at Pakistan's National Emergency Operations Centre on polio eradication, believes Pakistan can reach zero cases of polio in 2021. FILE PHOTO

can lead to paralysis and death.

Today, polio remains endemic in just three countries: Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria (which has not reported a case in three years). This year, however, has seen the disease bounce back, with at least 125 cases reported, according to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI). The vast majority - 111 cases - have been reported from Pakistan, mostly in its northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, according to government data.

So what has gone wrong for Pakistan's polio programme, which brought cases down from 306 in 2014 to just 12 last year?

Rana Muhammad Safdar, the coordinator of the country's National Emergency Operations Centre on polio eradication, says the main obstacle was a complete breakdown in national coordination after a general election in mid-2018

that saw a new government, led by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) Imran Khan, brought into power for the first time.

"[Last year] was a year of political transition in Pakistan, and the way that political transition happens here, we have three governments in a short span of time: the outgoing, the interim and the incoming," he said. "Whenever a government comes, they conduct transfers on a large scale [...] These people, they kept on changing like anything."

For a programme that relies on more than 265,000 polio vaccinators going door to door to reach more than 35 million children, guarded by a further 100,000 security personnel, that kind of widescale bureaucratic change across almost every district in the country can be fatal.

"That affected the dynamics of our teams and the kind of oversight which was there, that dipped," said

Safdar.

Mass misinformation campaigns

Further, as the number of cases began to rise, opposition political parties began to use the polio infections as a political issue to criticise the government, he says. The resulting political pressure pushed vaccinators to skew their results.

"When there is unnecessary pressure on them, and they feel that these are the kinds of results that [authorities] want to see, then they start providing those kinds of results, instead of focusing on real vaccinations," he said.

Hamid Jafari, the director of the WHO's polio eradication programme in the eastern Mediterranean region, agrees that there were technical shortcomings in the programme's ability to reach every child.

"The programme had underestimated the number of children [that] missed vaccination repeatedly in core polio infected

areas," he explained. "At its core, polio eradication is straightforward. If you vaccinate enough children in a given area, poliovirus has nowhere to hide and dies out. When not all children are reached poliovirus continues to find susceptible children." Also, mass misinformation campaigns were launched regarding the use of the vaccine, urging parents to refuse to give the drops to their children for fear of health concerns.

"They would take anti-vaxxer videos from Europe, then dub them in Urdu, professionally, and then they'd be promoted [online]," said Safdar. "And they would be timed so that they would circulate about a week before our immunisation campaigns."

This year, Pakistan has successfully had at least 174 pieces of content promoting misinformation removed by websites including Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, the government says.

A bargaining chip

There has, however, been a new trend emerging among all of this: that of communities linking their use of the polio vaccine to other basic demands from the state, leveraging the international community's focus on eradication of the disease to achieve local governance outcomes. (Last year, international donors spent more than \$800m on global polio eradication efforts, according to GPEI.)

"They see the importance [that the government] attaches to the polio vaccines, that is why they are making counter demands," said one polio programme official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to the media. "They know that if they do not accept the polio drops, there will be pressure on government officials, and if the pressure comes then they will have to provide those other services."

"People say that you are providing us [polio vaccine] services, fine, but we also need these services along with them. Electricity, water and natural gas, jobs."

This year has seen numerous boycotts, with thousands of families in the Kurram, Orakzai, Bannu, North Waziristan and Peshawar districts refusing to give their children polio drops unless their local needs are met.

Protest organisers told Al Jazeera that while they had no doubt the polio vaccines were necessary for their children, they were using the polio campaign as a bargaining chip to address longstanding grievances.

"[We boycotted] because there was a lot of focus from the government on polio," said Khalil Wazir, a protest organiser in North Waziristan

district. His village refused to give their children polio drops for eight months until their demands - for government compensation owed to them to rebuild their homes - were met.

Wazir's village of hundreds of residents had been flattened during the Pakistani military's operation to retake North Waziristan from the Pakistani Taliban in 2014. For the last two years, residents had been living in tents out in the open, he said.

Within weeks of the boycott, government officials who Wazir had been unsuccessfully lobbying for years agreed to fulfil their obligations, he said.

"One day a woman died in our village from cold. Another was killed by a mad dog bite. Another died from a snake bite. We felt that our children were dying of heat, cold and other things, it was not polio," he said.

In Ali Zai, that sentiment echoes in the words of Mazhar Khan, a 32-year-old religious school administrator who had refused to give his three children the drops due to concerns about health implications.

"We see all these diseases, diabetes, blood pressure, jaundice," he said, sitting with a team of polio vaccinators on a rope-bed in the winter sun. "These are the diseases we see most often here. As far as polio is concerned, I don't think there would have been a single case of polio in our whole neighbourhood. But to treat it, police are being brought here [to force us to take the drops]."

"These questions regarding the polio vaccine are coming about because we have bigger problems than polio in our society, why is the government not solving those?"

It is a tricky problem to

resolve, government officials admit.

"We work with the parents ... we tell them that we understand that their requests are genuine, but if you go towards a boycott because of this, then you are depriving your children further," said Safdar, the polio programme chief.

Attacks on vaccinators

The polio programme in Pakistan has long been the subject of misinformation and rumours, with many linking it to an unspecified "Western" conspiracy to sterilise or otherwise harm Muslims. Many cite the US Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) use of a fake vaccination campaign through a Pakistani doctor, Shakil Afridi, to verify the identity of Osama bin Laden before the raid to kill him in 2011 as proof of these theories.

The conspiracy theories do not just result in increased refusals, they also come at a far greater cost. Since 2012, at least 98 people have been killed in attacks on Pakistan's polio vaccination campaigns, according to an Al Jazeera tally.

The latest attack took place on December 18, with two policemen killed while on their way to join a vaccination team in the northern district of Lower Dir.

Out in the streets of Ali Zai, Kainat Mohmand is still trying to convince parents who had earlier refused the vaccine for their children to change their minds. There are no policemen here, despite the attacks in April.

"Usually, they look at us with suspicion," she says. "They ask me to clarify things for them, about the vaccine. Many of them get convinced, then." She smiles, broadly, and adds: "We try to make the impossible, possible."

AGENCIES

Hong Kong's year of protest set to continue into 2020

Hong Kong, China

In Hong Kong's predominantly Chinese society, 2019 kicked off in earnest when the fortune-tellers revealed their predictions for the Year of the Pig, the year according to the Chinese zodiac.

But none foretold the political upheavals that would come to define the year.

About two weeks after the Lunar New Year break, Chief Executive Carrie Lam floated a little-noticed amendment bill with the stated purpose of ensuring a local teenager who had confessed to murdering his girlfriend in Taiwan face justice there.

Hong Kong has no extradition agreement with the self-governing island, nor with mainland China, a move designed to preserve an independent judiciary in the semi-autonomous territory.

The bill, which would have allowed suspects to be sent for trial in China, triggered anger in a city where many felt the Communist-ruled mainland was already encroaching onto the freedoms guaranteed when it reverted to Chinese rule in 1997.

Worse, the bill's passage into law was all but ensured in a legislature controlled by Beijing loyalists. Barely

two years before, several popularly elected opposition legislators had been removed after Beijing reinterpreted the city's constitution to disqualify them from office.

Mass marches
As the government forged ahead with the bill, people took to the streets in their hundreds of thousands in largely peaceful marches.

Then on June 12, protesters amassed outside the legislative building succeeded in stopping the bill from being passed, despite encountering what they saw as aggressive police action.

By the time Lam shelved the bill - stopping short of withdrawing it - on June 15, the confrontations between police and demonstrators had escalated and the demands had expanded to five - including an independent inquiry into police conduct and the right to elect Lam's successor.

From then on, wrongs and wounds compounded as police ratcheted up their response to week upon week of at times violent protests that had spread across many neighbourhoods.

Over the last seven months of civil unrest - the worst to rock Hong Kong in half a century, the apparent intransigence of authorities in Beijing and Hong Kong



More than 6,000 people have been arrested, and nearly 3,000 people injured since protests began in June. File photo

fuelled resistance and set in motion a downward spiral of clashes between police and protesters.

"Beijing had to back Carrie Lam all the way because they chose her to run Hong Kong. To back down is to admit to the mistake," longtime China-watcher Ching Cheong told Al Jazeera. "To a dictatorship, any political conciliation is a sign of weakness. Any dissent is viewed through the prism of power struggle."

But for all the sabre-rattling

just across the border, and even as protesters committed themselves to a scorched-earth strategy - storming the airport, smashing storefronts and plunging the local economy into recession - the 12,000 troops of the People's Liberation Army stationed in the city remained mostly out of sight.

"Canary in the coal mine" Instead, it is the Hong Kong police who have been on the front lines, deploying tear gas, water cannon and

rubber-coated bullets against petrol bombs and other makeshift weaponry from the protesters.

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

In November, in some of the most intense clashes, a siege at Polytechnic University dragged on for more than a week and shut down the nearby tunnel connecting Kowloon with Hong Kong Island.

The confrontations fuelled support for an independent inquiry into alleged police brutality but even as some pro-Beijing politicians backed the call, the administration has refused to budge.

"Beijing likely has been involved in the policing decision, which will come to light in any inquiry," said Dixon Ming Sing, an associate professor at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology who studies

political culture in Asia.

"That'll prove too dangerous and embarrassing for the Communist Party and also undermine the legitimacy of Carrie Lam's administration."

As Beijing insisted Hong Kong was responsible for its domestic affairs and inveighed against criticism from foreign countries, defiant protesters appealed for support abroad and found a receptive audience at a time when China's rise has increasingly sharpened diplomatic tensions.

"In Hong Kong's struggle, other countries could see the handiwork of Beijing's manoeuvre," Ching said.

"In a way, the city is the canary in the coal mine of the free world."

A month ago, Washington enacted laws to sanction officials who commit human rights abuses against Hong Kong protesters and even remove Hong Kong's trade privileges if Beijing is found to have further eroded the territory's autonomy.

"This may incentivise other countries to follow suit, resulting in a domino effect," Sing said.

Next move
Even if potentially Pyrrhic, the legislation was hailed as a victory by the protesters.

They are betting Hong Kong remains crucial to

China as the nominally socialist country's only internationalised financial hub and stock market.

But on the 20th anniversary of Macau's return to China earlier this month, like Hong Kong under the "one country, two systems" framework, President Xi Jinping paid an extended visit to the former Portuguese-ruled enclave and praised its patriotism and loyalty.

At least two Hong Kong residents were detained by mainland Chinese officials, not far beyond Hong Kong's territorial waters on a bridge that links the city to the mainland, as a security cordon was tightened around Macau.

For now, Hong Kong's opposing sides are watching warily to see what the other will do.

Beyond the complete withdrawal of the extradition bill in late October, authorities appear unwilling to entertain further concessions.

Lam and her Beijing bosses might be hoping the protests will eventually run out of steam, but the protesters show no sign of giving in.

In what now appears to be predictable Hong Kong fashion, 2020 will be rung in with protests and a march.

AGENCIES

WFP calls for increased support as eight million in Zimbabwe face hunger threat

HARARE

Nearly eight million people, or roughly half the population, are not getting enough to eat, the UN agency said on Monday.

WFP plans to double the number of Zimbabweans that it assists, up to 4.1 million, but will require over \$200 million to meet needs in the first half of 2020 alone.

"As things stand, we will run out of food by end of February, coinciding with the peak of the hunger season - when needs are at their highest," said Niels Balzer, WFP's Deputy Country Director in Zimbabwe.

"Firm pledges are urgently needed as it can take up to three months for funding commitments to become food on people's tables."

Declining harvests due to ongoing drought

Zimbabwe, once known as an African breadbasket, has been hit hard by three consecutive years of drought.

As a result, the maize harvest dropped by 50 per cent this year when compared to 2018.

To meet increasing needs, WFP was forced to launch an emergency lean season assistance programme in August, months earlier than expected.

Hilal Elver, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, visited Zimbabwe in November where she witnessed how women and children are bearing the brunt of the crisis.

"In a desperate effort to find alternative means of livelihood, some women and children are resorting to coping mechanisms that violate their most fundamental human rights



and freedoms. As a result, school drop-outs, early marriage, domestic violence, prostitution and sexual exploitation are on the rise throughout Zimbabwe," she said in a statement following her 11-day mission.

Runaway inflation affecting food prices

The hunger crisis comes as Zimbabwe is facing its worst economic downturn in a decade.

Runaway inflation is just one of the symptoms, and it has put the price of basic goods beyond the reach of

the average citizen. WFP reported that bread is now 20 times more expensive than it was six months ago.

Increasing hardship is forcing families to skip meals, take children out of school, or sell off livestock, among other desperate measures.

Gladys Chikukwa sells tomatoes at the second largest market in the country, Sukubva, and is finding it hard to survive.

"Just because we are selling tomatoes in this market doesn't mean that

we have enough food for ourselves. We are seriously struggling," she said.

"Our produce is rotting in this market because of prices. Today, tomatoes will go for 250 Zimbabwe dollars, tomorrow 300 dollars, the next day 400 dollars and people don't have that money."

Funding is essential

The drought shows no signs of letting up, and forecasts indicate another poor harvest in April, according to WFP.

The UN agency also faces challenges in scaling-up its operations in Zimbabwe as the shortage of local currency coupled with rapid inflation requires switching from cash-based assistance to food distributions.

And with other southern African countries also gripped by drought, food stocks must be sourced outside the continent and then shipped to neighbouring South Africa or Mozambique before being transported to landlocked Zimbabwe.

WFP will require nearly 200,000 metric tons of food to assist the 4.1 million Zimbabweans it plans to target. Mr. Balzer, the agency's Deputy Country Director, underlined why financial support from the international community is so desperately needed.

"While WFP now has the staff, partners, trucking and logistics capacity in place for a major surge in Zimbabwe, it is essential that we receive the funding to be able to fully deliver," he said. "The lives of so many depend on this."

SA leading in sub-Saharan African food security index

By Lloyd Phillips

DESPITE facing challenges in its agricultural production and socio-economic environment, South Africa's food security ranked first out of 28 sub-Saharan African countries, and 48 out of 113 countries surveyed worldwide.

This was according to the results of the 2019 Global Food Security Index (GFSI) report recently released by The Economist Group with support from Corteva Agriscience.

This annual index considers the core issues of food affordability, availability, quality and safety, and uses 28 indicators that measure the drivers of food security across both developing and developed countries.

The index also includes a category that assesses countries' exposure to the impact of climate change, their susceptibility to natural resource risks, and how countries were adapting to these risks.

Bolstering South Africa's overall score of 67.3 out of 100 in the 2019 report were its nine "strengths", which achieved highly favourable scores of 75 and above.

These were presence and quality of food safety net programmes (100); nutritional standards (100); change in average food costs (97); food safety (90.6); food loss (90.1); volatility of agricultural production (87.8); agricultural import tariffs (86.3); proportion of population under global poverty line (78.1); and access to financing for farmers (75).

The two biggest challenges undermining South Africa's food security were government expenditure on agricultural research and development (5.3 out of 100), and GDP/capita in terms of US dollar purchasing power parity (10.3 out of 100).

In addition, South Africa's ranking in terms of its natural resources and resilience for the purposes of food security ranked 82 out of the 113 countries surveyed, according to the report.

In this category, and with a score of 50.4 out of 100, South Africa lagged behind many of fellow sub-Saharan Africa countries, namely Niger (68.5), Cote d'Ivoire (67.1), Uganda (65), Burundi (64.2), Burkina Faso (62.6), Rwanda (62.6), Mali (61), Zambia (61), Botswana (58.3), Tanzania (57.7), Madagascar (56.3), Togo (56), Nigeria (55.2), Senegal (55), Ghana (53), Chad (52.9), Angola (52.1), Sudan (52.1), Cameroon (52), Ethiopia (51.2), and Kenya (50.6).

A statement issued by Corteva Agriscience in response to the findings said that all surveyed countries showed a vulnerability of their individual and collective food systems to threats such as drought, flood and rising sea levels.

The statement also highlighted that residents of more than 30% of surveyed countries had insufficient

access to Vitamin A, which was needed for normal vision, a healthy immune system and organ function.



In addition, South Africa's ranking in terms of its natural resources and resilience for the purposes of food security ranked 82 out of the 113 countries surveyed,

Residents of approximately 25% of surveyed countries had insufficient nutritional access to zinc, which was essential for maintaining a healthy immune system and functioning metabolism.

Dana Bolden, Corteva Agriscience's senior vice-president of external affairs and sustainability, said: "The insights revealed by the 2019 [index] allow all stakeholders in the food ecosystem to clearly understand the current challenges that are hindering our progress towards a more food-secure world. We all play a role in the food value chain, from farmers, governments and industry leaders to retailers and consumers, and as such, it is our shared responsibility to use these findings as a catalyst for action, and drive progress towards a more sustainable food system. In doing so, we can produce more nutritious food, improve food accessibility and ultimately, achieve global food security."



Kigoma MP Zitto Kabwe (2nd) talks to mourners at the residence of Erick Kabendera's mother at Chang'ombe Maduka Mawili on the outskirts of Dar es Salaam yesterday. Kabendera's mother died yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma

Researchers shed light on how sleeping sickness causing parasite multiplies inside its host body

By Guardian Reporter

HUMAN African Trypanosomiasis or sleeping sickness, only occurs in Sub-Saharan Africa where an estimated 60 million people in 36 countries are at risk.

According to the World

Health Organisation (WHO), more than 95 percent of reported cases are caused by the parasite Trypanosoma brucei gambiense, which is found in western and central Africa. The other 10 percent of cases are caused by Trypanosoma

brucei rhodesiense, which is found in eastern and southern Africa.

Both subspecies are harboured by both wild and domestic animals which provide a reservoir of infection for Tsetse flies which then bite humans.

The infection attacks

the central nervous system, causing severe neurological disorders. Without treatment the disease is fatal.

Research led by Dr Mick Urbaniak with Dr Corinna Benz of Lancaster University reveals that the parasite's cell division

differs from that of humans and animals.

The paper published in PLoS Pathogens has identified many hundreds of proteins that were not previously known to be involved in the cell division cycle.

Dr Urbaniak said:

"Differences in the control in cell division may be exploited to create drugs that target the parasite but do not affect the human or animal host."

This is the first in-depth quantitative analysis of changes in the phosphoproteome that

occur across the cell cycle in T. brucei. The identification of many hundred CCR phosphorylation sites confirms the importance of many known cell cycle proteins and implicates many more as having a potential role in the cell cycle.

"The data presented here will be of value to the trypanosome research community, and provides an important insight into mechanisms of post-transcriptional gene regulation that are likely to prove of relevance to the wider community as well."

Southeast Asian farmers need cheaper agritech

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

At Shinnou Farms, a vegetable grower located an hour's drive from the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur, rows of eggplants, long beans and cucumbers dot the hilly countryside.

Business appears to be booming as trucks are loaded with produce for distribution but the farm's founder, Markus Chin, is not entirely satisfied.

"We would love to get our hands on automated hardware such as a robotic harvester, which would cut down our labour costs, or a weather station device that can tell us the best time for planting, fertilising and irrigation based on historical data," he told Al Jazeera.

Topping his wish-list is a precision spraying machine that uses artificial intelligence, which promises to decrease pesticide use through more efficient allocation and prevent herbicide resistance.

"But all this is just too expensive right now," Chin said.

Across Southeast Asia, farmers like Chin are waiting for agriculture technology - or agritech - to become more affordable. They also need help raising funds to buy such solutions.

And startups are listening. A small but growing number of Asian tech firms - specialising in both hardware and financial technology - are now rolling out innovative products tailored to the specific needs of farmers in the region.

Disruptive solutions - such as smart sensors that collect data on soil and crop growth, or drones that provide imagery of field conditions - are believed to increase farm productivity. But they all carry hefty price tags, with some drones costing more than \$1,000 each.

That price is unrealistic for many average-sized farms in the region, which are not as big as their Western counterparts and have significantly smaller budgets.

Grow Asia, a partnership platform established by the World Economic Forum and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Secretariat, found that its 60 proposed digital technology solutions are used by just 2.5 percent of Southeast Asia's 71 million smallholder farmers.

Experts, however, say there is an urgent need for the region to adopt agritech.

Asia is urbanising faster than any other region and, by 2030, it will house 65 percent of the world's middle-class population, according to a report by PwC, Rabobank and Singaporean state investment firm Temasek released in November.

But the agriculture industry may be unable to keep up, it warned.

Climate change and environmental degradation will exacerbate current food production challenges by reducing available arable land, crop yields and farm output, the report said.

New technologies must be deployed "to increase



Crop growers such as Shinnou Farms in Malaysia say they need help to invest in cutting edge technologies that will boost their yields and profits. File photo

yields, reduce the environmental impact of farming, improve the safety, traceability and nutritional value of food, reduce waste, shorten the supply chain and bring food to consumers in their increasingly urban settings", it recommended.

In-demand solutions

Entrepreneurs are paying close attention to the issue of food security. A wave of Southeast Asian agritech start-ups have launched products and solutions in recent years, with nearly half of existing players founded in the last three years, according to Grow Asia.

Businesses range from hardware-focused models such as Myanmar's Tun Yat, an app that allows farm-

ers to rent equipment from machinery suppliers, to service-oriented solutions such as Brunei's AgromIQ, whose software provides farms with business intelligence.

Agriculture-focused e-commerce is another growing sub-industry in the region. Indonesia's TaniGroup runs a platform called TaniHub that enables farmers to connect directly to businesses and consumers.

"A lot of the opportunities for digitisation in Southeast Asia are in the downstream sector, where there are more inefficiencies than upstream," Paul Voutier, director of knowledge and innovation at Grow Asia, told Al Jazeera.

Downstream activities include the production and distribution of crops,

while inputs such as seeds and fertilisers constitute upstream activities.

Voutier views agrifinance as the most valuable area for startups. "Farmers don't have access to a variety of loan products. They typically pay high rates of annualised interest, around 40 percent, when they get credit for items such as fertilizer because their only source of capital is the retailer selling them the product or the trader who will buy their crops."

Peer-to-peer (P2P) lending platforms such as Cropital in the Philippines and Indonesia's CrowdE are now bridging that gap by making financing more affordable for farms, Voutier said. Once farms have access to more sustainable loans, they can

afford drones and other hi-tech solutions, he added.

Aside from the cost of agritech, farmers point to other hurdles that hinder widespread adoption.

A shortage of skills is a big challenge, said Shinnou Farms' Chin. Farms need to train workers to use advanced technology and may also need to hire experienced agronomists to convert raw data to usable information, all of which are additional costs, he told Al Jazeera.

Moreover, agritech may only be valuable for certain kinds of crops.

"Agritech makes sense for high-value vegetables such as salad greens and herbs like basil but the kind of greens that our local markets demand are

quite low-value," said Mandi Foo, principal personal secretary to the director of Bollywood Veggies, a Singaporean farm that runs educational tours as well as a farm-to-table restaurant.

For example, kailan (Chinese broccoli) and bokchoy (a type of Chinese cabbage) fetch \$7 to \$11 per kilogramme in markets, while kang kong (water spinach) is priced even lower, she told Al Jazeera. "Farmers don't really need agritech to increase productivity for these crops, they can get by with low-cost solutions and still have good results," she said.

Investment boom

As agritech boosts efficiency and reduces labour costs, food prices are expected to fall. Once farms are able to reduce their pesticide use through devices such as drones, consumers will also reap the benefits of better quality food. These long-term advantages have attracted venture capital (VC) investors to Southeast Asia's market.

Last year, Singapore's Vanda Global Capital and Raffles Capital, along with Shenzhen-based Dayshine Fund Management, launched a \$1.5bn fund to invest in startups focused on introducing blockchain and information technology to farmers.

This year, Grab Ventures Velocity - an accelerator programme for startups run by ride-hailing app Grab - focused its second edition on Southeast Asian agricultural businesses.

Shashvat Rai, a senior investment manager at Mumbai-based impact VC firm Aavishkaar, told Al Jazeera that the region could produce a \$100m or \$200m company in the next two to five years.

Aavishkaar is interested in Indonesia and Vietnam, with a particular focus on start-ups that target the relationship between farmers and buyers.

The company is also keen on investing in high-value farming technology such as hydroponics as well as businesses that provide direct linkages between producers and supermarkets.

"The beauty of all these models is the potential for massive replication," said Rai. "Once a business clicks in a certain region, it can scale [up] extensively."

But Southeast Asia's market still lags behind India and China, where mobile e-vendor Meicai secured \$600m in a funding round last year. In comparison, the largest amount raised by a Southeast Asian firm in a funding round is TaniGroup's \$10m from earlier this year.

For Southeast Asian agritech to really blossom, it requires more professionals from other areas, Rai noted. "Successful agritech ventures aren't necessarily run by people in agriculture, they also include techies who have worked for companies like Amazon or Google and hold a product mindset."

Agencies

'Look how strong we are': North Korea's message for 2020

Seoul, South Korea

Images from North Korea have a near superpower ability to go viral, whether it be a photo of Kim Jong Un watching shirtless men soak in luxury hot springs or a shot of the North Korean leader riding a white stallion through the snow.

The images might appear absurdly staged, but they are vital clues to experts who use them to decipher Pyongyang's hidden messages - especially in 2019, a year of tough diplomatic ups and downs between Kim Jong Un, South Korean President Moon Jae-in and United States President Donald Trump.

"Historically speaking, it has been a long, incredible past year," said C Harrison Kim, a professor of the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

"And still, there are many long-term goals that are left to achieve."

With diplomacy so uncertain, analysts are parsing through North Korea's state media for hints of what the world can expect in 2020.

North Korea and the US are just days away from Kim Jong Un's end-of-year deadline for progress in denuclearisation talks, which have fizzled since the Hanoi summit collapsed in February. The North has carried out a number of missile tests in recent months in contravention of United Nations sanctions, and experts fear the next move will probably not be more of the "beautiful letters" exchanged between Trump and Kim.

"North Korea has left room for what exactly has to happen, but they said

the US needs to make a concrete proposal to them," said John Delury, an associate professor at the Yonsei University Graduate School of International Studies in Seoul. "Kim Jong Un clearly has been clear about it - he has a deadline."

The recent photos of Kim Jong Un riding a white horse across Mount Paektu, for example, evoke far more than a strongman reminder of a shirtless Vladimir Putin astride a stallion.

In these images, Kim rides solo for a reason, experts say: He is trying to show that he can stand alone despite souring relations with Seoul and Washington.

Symbolism of Mount Paektu

"The last time Kim Jong Un had been on Mount Paektu was with Moon at

the Pyongyang Summit back in September 2018, and it was to create the optics that North and South Korea were going to build prosperity together," said Jenny Town, a fellow at the Stimson Center in Washington and managing editor of North Korea analysis website 38 North.

"This time around, I think it was really deliberate to have Kim Jong Un on the horse by himself. It says, 'I am going to seek prosperity by myself, without Moon'."

Mount Paektu is regarded as sacred land in Korean history. Folklore deems it the birthplace of Dangun - the legendary founder of the first Korean kingdom - and North Korea propaganda has since named it the birthplace of the country's second leader, Kim Jong Il,

who died in 2011.

"I think it was meant to attest to his energy and his vigour - it was meant to show that he is a very capable, well-rounded person who has some kind of natural leadership," C Harrison Kim said. "You see this as a common theme in leaders of post-socialist countries like Russia and China," he added, comparing the image with a 1966 photograph of Mao Zedong swimming with bodyguards in the Yangtze River.

Economic sanctions have had a severe impact on North Korea's economy, but while China and Russia are calling for the relaxation of some restrictions to entice Pyongyang back to the table, the US has refused to budge.

Human rights abuses also continue, but both Trump and Moon have dithered on addressing the issue.

"That's why we see Kim Jong Un out connecting with factory workers in one photo, but riding a white horse in another. He's trying to portray himself as a leader who is able to deal with a variety of situations and people," C Harrison Kim said.

"Kim Jong Il's leadership was an era of very extreme economic and material hardship, and Kim Jong Il was mostly known for his connection to the military. He was not photographed out in the streets walking about. But Kim Jong Un is really trying to evoke the golden period of North Korea - the period of Kim Il Sung."

Picturing prosperity
Images published in state media hardly make North Korea look like a country suffering under economic sanctions.



Kim Jong Un rides through snow-covered landscapes on Mount Paektu. Experts say such photos are released to show him as a man powerful enough to bring prosperity to his country without anyone else's help. File photo

Earlier this month, the Korean Central News Agency released photos of its new socialist "utopia" town called Samjiyon, complete with thousands of homes wedged in between ski slopes.

"North Korea's agenda is really an economic development agenda, and so I think there's great importance to this project," Town said. "It shows the economy is still strong despite the pressure and hardship the country is under."

North Korean media also released images of

Kim Jong Un at a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Yangdok Hot Spring Cultural Recreation Center, a resort complex equipped with ski slopes, a horse-riding park and outdoor spas.

"Of course, North Korea wants sanctions lifted, but these photos are trying to show that they will always find a way to survive and even thrive," C Harrison Kim said.

Ultimately, North Korea's flashy photos of new facilities or Kim Jong Un on horseback are meant

to project resilience ahead of his New Year's speech. Every year, the North Korean leader addresses his country and the world from Pyongyang.

"Last year, the speech was very much about peace with South Korea and the US. But this year, I doubt you'll see any of that," Town said.

"Rather, [Kim Jong Un] will say, 'We tried diplomacy and it didn't work, but look how strong we still are.' That's probably the message for 2020."

AGENCIES



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has set a year-end deadline for the US to make concessions as a way to resume nuclear talks. File photo

Sikonge allots 495m/- for honey processing plant

By Guardian Correspondent, Tabora

SIKONGE District is set to establish a honey processing and packaging plant, which is expected to offer direct and indirect employment to peasants and bee keepers in the area.

Sikonge District Commissioner, Peres Magiri revealed this yesterday here when speaking to journalists soon after the meeting which was meant to get opinions on how increase investments in Tabora Region.

He said that the proposed plant will be built at the area which formerly was known as Tulu Youth Development Centre in the district.

So, far he said that 495m/- has been allocated for that purpose.

According to the DC, the money

is part of Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) for companies implementing different projects in the district such as roads from Tabora through Sikonge to Mpanda.

"The decision to establish honey processing plant came after realizing that in that area where we're planning to set up the factory has all infrastructures needed such as warehouses and buildings," he said.

So, we'll use those buildings after seeing that they aren't in use for long time. We want to utilize the facility for the benefit and development of people of Sikonge and Tabora Region as a whole, he said.

DC Magiri said the idea to establish the plant in the area is viable due to the fact that Sikonge District has 1.9million ha of forest reserve, which is an important aspect in

beekeeping. "Having such large chunk of natural forest is one of the key aspects in beekeeping, something that will end up producing enough raw materials for the honey making plant," he said.

It is the hope of the district authorities that the plant will be used to add value of honey produced in the area. "And this will promote Sikonge District, Tabora and the country at large," Magiri said, adding that the pro-

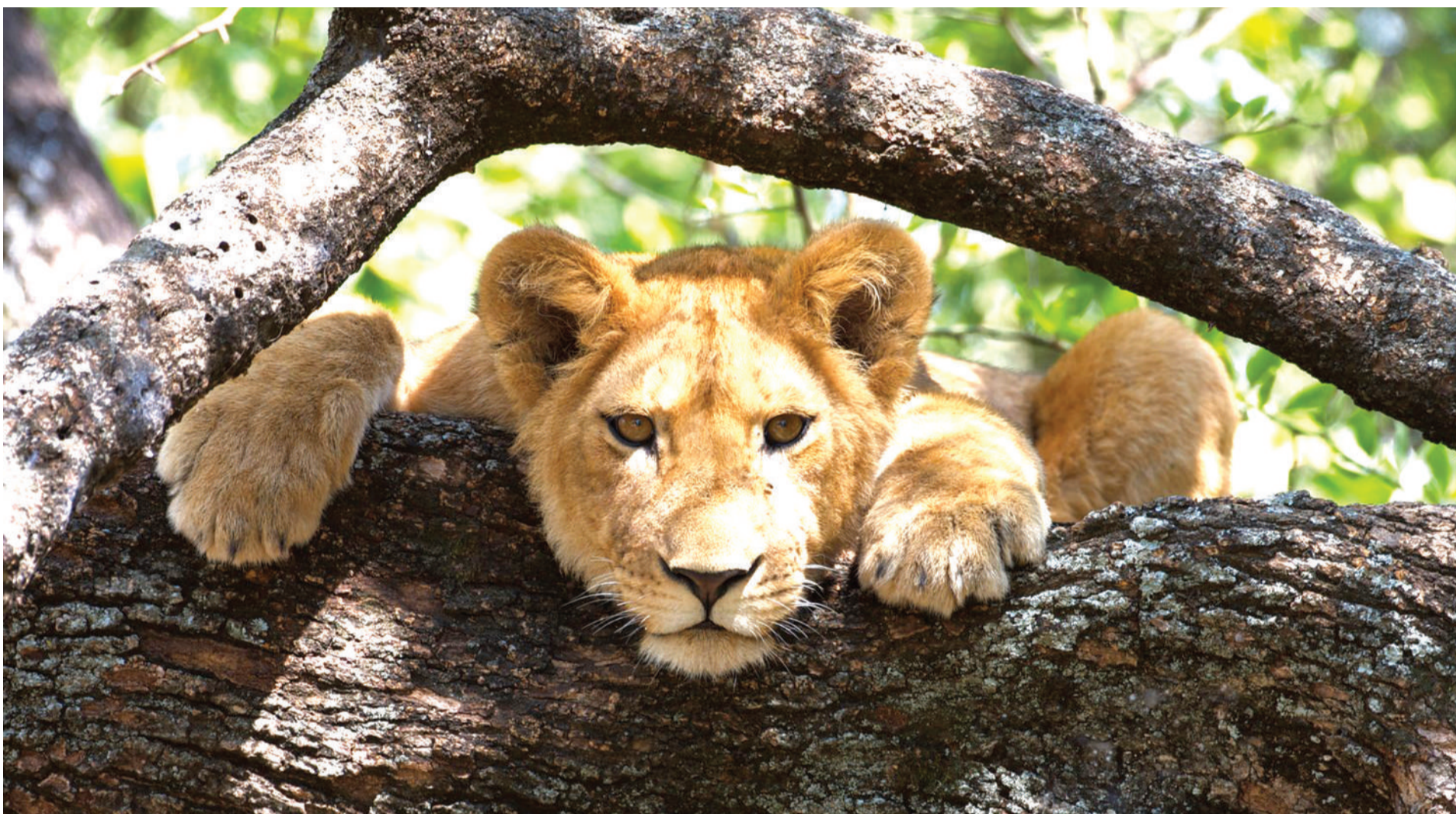
posed plant will transform beekeeping sector in the area and it will also make beekeepers to venture into modern beekeeping practices.

"This in turn will increase District Council revenues."

Sikonge District is one of the areas in Tanzania which are covered by natural forests.

The new drive will contribute to Tanzania's share in the global honey and wax market.

It is estimated that Tanzania has about 9.2 million honeybee colonies where production potential of bee products is about 138,000 tons of honey and 9,200 tons of beeswax per annum.



Over 200,000 Tanzanians visited the Ngorongoro crater in 2018, DC says

By Guardian Correspondent, Arusha

TANZANIANS have been challenged to continue visiting national parks to see the various wild animals and participate in promoting the country's tourist attractions.

"By visiting the parks Tanzanians will be aware of what the country offers in tourism sector and be in a better position to market our tourist attractions within and outside the country", Ngorongoro District Commissioner, Joseph Meng'oru told this paper in a recent interview.

According to Meng'oru the visiting by locals promotes domes-

tic tourism, hence an increased number of tourists.

He said the district has this year planned to implement a number of initiatives geared to promote the available tourist attractions including the various tribe traditions and culture as well as the wild animals within the Ngorongoro Conservation Authority Area (NCAA).

The District Commissioner highlighted that in 2018 more than 200,000 Tanzanians visited the Ngorongoro crater and witnessed the various cultural traditions from people surrounding the park. He said the number is expected to be high in 2019 since

many people have visited the area.

He noted that visiting the Ngorongoro crater gives opportunity to tourists to also explore the vibrant culture and traditions through cultural tourism where some tribes such as Maasai, Hadzabe and Barabaigi offers the best experience of exploring the people's local culture and traditions.

Meng'oru said considering the importance of cultural tourism, the district authority has decided to introduce an annual cultural tourism festival to promote tourism as well as to encourage more people to visit national parks.

"We are endowed with variety

tourist attraction and animals, we should visit the parks in big numbers instead of only letting tourists from outside Tanzania enjoy them", said the DC noting starting this year, the district will use the media and other platforms to promote available tourist attractions.

Currently, Tanzania is one of the fastest growing economies in Africa and one of the most successful wildlife conservation countries in the world and in East Africa with 28 percent of its land set aside for conservation purposes.

Last year, the government up-

graded 15 National Parks and 31 game reserves as part of efforts to improve the tourism sector.

Tanzania is the home of the highest mountain in Africa, the legendary Mt Kilimanjaro, Serengeti National Park, home to the "Great Animal Migration" that was named the New 7th Wonder of the World by USA Today and ABC TV's Good Morning America, the world acclaimed Ngorongoro Crater, often called the 8th Wonder of the World and Olduvai Gorge, the cradle of mankind.

Other tourist attractions include Selous Game Reserve, the world's largest game reserve, Ruaha National Park, now the second largest National Park in Africa; the spice islands of Zanzibar; and seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

UN warns of another poor harvest in Zimbabwe next year

HARARE

THE United Nations warned on Tuesday that Zimbabwe faced another poor harvest in 2020 because of patchy rains, compounding problems for millions of people already grappling with a drought and the worst economic crisis in a decade.

Soaring inflation, shortages of foreign exchange, fuel and electricity have brought back memories of the hyperinflation of a decade ago, amid criticism that President Emmerson Mnangagwa has failed to turn around the economy.

"This season's rains are again late and inadequate, with planted seeds having failed to germinate in many areas," the World Food Programme (WFP) said in a statement.

"Forecasts of continuing hot and dry weather in the weeks ahead signal another poor harvest in April, putting lives and livelihoods at risk."

Output for the staple maize fell 50% to 900,000 tonnes this year, according to official data. The government has said it plans to

import 800,000 tonnes to make up for the deficit.

Facing soaring prices for seeds, fertiliser and chemicals, some farmers have reduced planting during the summer cropping season that started in November, farmers' unions said.

A majority of Zimbabweans live in rural areas and survive on farming. But the southern African nation has only had one year of normal rainfall in the past five, according to WFP officials.

WFP says it needs \$200 million in the first half of next year to assist 4.1 million Zimbabweans.

Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube said the government will spend \$133 million next year on subsidies for maize meal to keep the price of the most consumed food affordable.

The economic crisis has led to growing political tensions, with police clamping down on dissent, leading to opposition claims that Mnangagwa is reverting to the harsh tactics seen under the late Robert Mugabe's rule.

Kenya's Mombasa port surpasses target to post 1.4 million TEUs in 2019

MOMBASA

Kenya's port of Mombasa has so far recorded container traffic of 1.4 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) in 2019, which is the best performance ever, sur-

passing a target of 1.35 million TEUs that had been set at the beginning of the year.

Daniel Manduku, managing director of Kenya Ports Authority said while briefing journalists at the port on Monday that the 1.4 million

TEUs represent a growth of 7.3 percent over last year's 1.304 million TEUs.

Manduku said that the performance was boosted by unprecedented growth in both transit and transshipment business.

He said that between January and November 2019, the port has handled a total of 31,479 million tons of cargo compared to 28,550 million tons handled over the same period in 2018, indicating that the port will

attain over 34 million tons by the close of the year."

He added that cargo throughput at the Inland Container Terminal in Nairobi grew by 61.1 percent from 257,972 TEUs as of December 2018 to 415,650

TEUs as at Dec. 28, 2019.

This performance, he said, is attributable to an increased number of Standard Gauge Railway daily cargo trains between Mombasa and Nairobi where an average of 10 trains leave daily

for the Inland Container Terminal in Nairobi.

In 2019, the ship waiting time also reduced from 0.47 days in 2018 to 0.27 days currently, while ship turnaround time at present is at 3.4 days for all vessels.

Kenya's largest port of Mombasa handles cargo for the eastern and central African regions, which include Uganda, northern Tanzania, South Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi and eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Over 1bn/- loans given to various entrepreneur groups in Ilemela

By Guardian Correspondent, Mwanza

LOANS of over one billion shillings will be given to women and youths groups and people with disabilities in the Ilemela Municipal Council in Mwanza Region come 2020 to enable them engage in activities to generate their own incomes and for the nation.

This was revealed by the Ilemela Member of Parliament Dr Angeline Mabula during her visit to various groups of women, youths and people with disabilities in the Municipality's five wards including Kawekamo, Kiseke, Ilemela, Pasiansi and Nyasaka.

She said so far 600m/- has already been loaned while 538m/- more is expected to be disbursed, hence by 2020 a total of one 1.38bn/- will be

given.

Dr Mabula said a total of 671 groups from the Ilemela Municipality were given training on loans and business management from her office, but added that the persisting challenges include many groups lack offices, non-payment of loans in time. She stressed those qualified to get loans should be 18 to 35 years of age.

"If you do not want to get stuck in your businesses a group should select one business, must know one another in habits and make goods that are different to those of other groups so as to be certain of reliable markets," Dr Mabula said.

Ag. Lands and Urban Planning Director for Ilemela Municipality Shukurani Kyando said the government had issued

directives for the loans, the money of which is in a special account - being 10 percent of its revenues hence the account is ready and whoever repays the loans, will be issued with another one.

Ilemela Community Development Officer and Coordinator for Women Development Amina Bululu called on members of the three main groups to ensure to have their bank accounts live at all times, to have one project, pay groups levies and provide statements every three months.

She said to register group costs 30,000 and the task of writing a group's constitution falls on the group itself, but are advised to seek guidance from the Ward's Development Officer.

Councillor for Kawekamo Ward Japhet Rwehumbiza said the loaned

money set by the government is still small and does not cover business needs for the groups.

Some of group members, Kudra Nyahonge, Richard Kashinje and Godfrey Julius who attended the meeting said for the women, the men have been the hindrance as they take the money and fail to repay because they do not inject the money into business, some abscond after taking the money while the dept remains and is borne by the whole group.

"We, the youths would prefer to be given training and tools for our business as many youths after receiving the loans they embezzle it without putting it to good use," said one Godfrey Richard a young man with disability.



French Development Agency supports African SMEs with USD30 million

tween the two entities, by providing AGF with a counter-guarantee of USD 30 million, using the ARIZ risk-sharing mechanism: a support for the risk of financing private investment.

A document made available to the Ghana News Agency in Accra explained that the risk-sharing mechanism consisted in a final loss guarantee offered to financial institutions by AFD to cover 50 per cent to 75 per cent of an individual loan or a loan portfolio for SMEs and microfinance institutions (MFIs).

It explained that through its leverage effect, this counter-guarantee would enable AGF to extend guarantees of USD 60 million to local financial institutions, thereby allowing the latter to lend a total of USD 120 million to African SMEs.

It is estimated that such an amount of loans would benefit 1,800 SMEs and support 5,400 jobs.

After the signing ceremony, Mr. Rioux and Mr. Bikpo discussed further areas of collaboration in the near future.

Special emphasis was placed on increasing African women's access to finance through the Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa (AFAWA) initiative that will be implemented through AGF.

AFAWA was officially launched at the Global Gender Summit having already received com-

mitment from the Government of France during the Biarritz Summit in August 2019.

AFD and AGF are currently exploring different modalities of support for this initiative.

AGF is a non-bank financial institution whose objective is to promote economic development, increase employment and reduce poverty in Africa by providing financial institutions with guarantee products and capacity development assistance specifically intended to support SMEs in Africa.

It was founded by the government of Denmark through the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the government of Spain through the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development (AECID) and the African Development Bank (AFDB).

Other shareholders include: French Development Agency (AFD), Nordic Development Fund (NDF), Investment Fund for Developing Countries (IFU) and KfW Development Bank (KfW).

AFD Group funds, supports and accelerates the transition to a fairer and more sustainable world focusing on climate, biodiversity, peace, education, urban development, health and governance.

It carries out more than 4,000 projects in France's overseas departments and territories and another 115 countries.

Cellulant deploys technology to eliminate inefficiency in agriculture

By Ife Ogunfuwa

A pan-African technology company, Cellulant Corporation, has affirmed its commitment to eliminating inefficiency and wastage in Nigeria and Africa's agric value chain.

With its improved payment and market place solutions, Tingg and Agrikore, Cellulant pledged to simplify payments and connect all stakeholders in the agriculture sector.

The agritech company made this known at its inaugural partners' summit themed 'Technology For Transformation: Connecting Everyone to Nigeria's \$50bn Agribusiness Opportunity and Creating Jobs For Africa's Youth' in Lagos.

In his presentation entitled 'Payments Laying Down the Foundation for Connecting Africa', the Co-Chief Executive Officer of the agritech company, Ken Njoroge, explained that Africa had a comparative advantage in agriculture but needed improved efficiency in its value chain.

According to him, improved performance in the agric value chain will bring about desired impacts of food security, job creation

and economic development.

He explained that this was what motivated the company to research and invest in the two solutions operational in 20 African countries, including Nigeria and involving several strategic partners.

Njoroge said, "If you bring efficiency into the Agric value-chain, ensure that crops don't rot on farms, trucks operate regularly, there are no unemployed youth in rural areas, and no factory produces below capacity, if we can connect these dots, we can bring efficiency that can power the transformation of Nigeria and Africa across the board."

The co-founder further explained that Cellulant was building a business model called 'farm to plate' that involved connecting all players in the agric sector with technology to ensure that the processes were optimised.

He added that both Agrikore and Tingg had been tested and confirmed to be connecting everyone in the agric farm place while boosting transparency. "The market place and payment platforms

are connecting everyone. The payment platform ensures that everyone gets paid in real-time as transactions happen. We know it's working, we are working with 120 banks on the continent; large businesses are our customers. This is a collaboration that continues to benefit all parties," Njoroge said.

Corroborating his partner, Co-Chief Executive Officer, Cellulant Corporation, Bolaji Akinkboro, said Tingg and Agrikore 2.0 provided access to the marketplace, increased transparency and simplified the agric business.

"Farmers are producing, but access to the market is the issue. Our payment platform allows both the farmer, aggregator, supplier, everyone to see how money is flowing in the system. It is for people who want to be part of an ecosystem that is profitable for them and which also provides jobs for hundreds of people," he said.

The Cellulant summit was attended by development partners such as African Development Bank, Shared Agent Network Expansion Facility, Flutterwave, banks and the DFID.



PARIS

The French Development Agency (AFD) is to provide about USD30 Million through the African Guarantee Fund for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

(AGF), to improve access to credit to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) throughout Africa.

Rémy Rioux, AFD Chief Executive Officer, and Félix Bikpo, AGF Group Chief Ex-

ecutive signed a sub-participation agreement of USD 30 million, recently in Paris.

The sub-participation agreement signed between AFD and AGF broadens the existing cooperation be-

More than 27,000 South African businesses will have to show the salary gaps between top and bottom earners

JOHANNESBURG

SOUTH Africa's Department of Employment and Labour recently amended the Employment Equity regulations to include an updated EEA4 form applicable to 'designated employers'.

The objective of the EEA4 form is to collect information

for the assessment of the remuneration gap between the highest-paid and lowest-paid employees and at the same time assess inequalities in remuneration in relation to race and gender in the various occupational levels.

The EEA4 income differentials report now requires that employers average the earn-

ings of the top 10% of their workforce, the average of the earnings of the bottom 10% of their workforce and then calculate the multiple difference between the two, said John Botha, COO of Global Business Solutions.

"It is our view that most employers will report between an 8x and 15x multiple. The higher

the multiple, the greater the vertical inequality," he said.

He noted that this is the same basis that is used to calculate the Gini Coefficient (GC) across countries.

The National Development Plan aims to decrease the GC to 0.6%. In 2006 it stood at 0.67, where one represents perfect inequality and 0 perfect equal-

ity. StatsSA recently stated that the GC in SA in 2015 stood at 0.65. In addition to this overall vertical inequality, the horizontal earnings differential reflects that women with tertiary education earn 70% of their male counterparts, said Botha.

This differential becomes even worse at lower levels of

education where women earn 65% of their male counterparts income, he said.

"The racial and gender income differentials, both vertically and horizontally, are underpinned by systemic drivers such as only 58% of Africans having access to the internet compared to white individuals with a 90% access.

"Similarly, white and African individuals have a 75%:10% access to medical aid respectively," said Botha.

"There is no doubt that employers and business in general will have to revisit their remuneration and benefit policies as more than 27,000 employers will be reporting their horizontal and vertical income realities

WORLD

Biden says he would consider a Republican running mate

WASHINGTON

FORMER Vice-President Joe Biden, a leading contender for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination, said on Monday he would consider choosing a Republican running mate if he is the party's nominee next year.

However, even as he raised the possibility of a Republican running mate while speaking to a crowd at a campaign event in Exeter, New Hampshire, Biden said, "But I can't think of one right now."

Biden has premised much of his presidential bid on appealing to moderate Democrats, independents and Republicans who have been alienated by President Donald Trump. On the campaign

trail, Biden has regularly spoken about the need to work with Republicans in Congress should he prevail in the November 2020 general election.

In response to a question by an attendee at the event, Biden elaborated on his answer, contending that Trump's party has not done enough to hold the president accountable. "There are some really decent Republicans that are out there still, but here's the problem right now," he said. "They've got to step up."

Biden, 77, who served two terms as vice-president to former President Barack Obama and spent 35 years in Congress, has been criticized by progressive Democrats who say he is out of touch with the party's leftward drift



Democratic presidential candidate, former Vice President Joe Biden, speaks in Washington

and is not interested in reforming the US political system.

Biden has previously said he would like to name a woman and/or a person of color as his running mate if he is the nominee.

National opinion polls continue to show Biden the favored choice among Democratic voters ahead of his more liberal rivals, US Senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren. Biden's chief argument for his candidacy is that he is best positioned to beat Trump next year because he

can appeal to centrist voters in key battleground states.

Past presidential nominees have flirted with the idea of crossing party lines. In 2008, the Republican pick, the late US Senator John McCain, wanted his close friend US Senator Joe Lieberman, a Democrat-turned-independent, on the ticket. But pressure within the party pushed McCain to make former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin his vice-presidential choice, a move that backfired and helped Obama win election.

Agencies

Giuliani associate asks court to allow handing over documents sought in Trump impeachment

WASHINGTON

LEV Parnas, an indicted associate of U.S. President Donald Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani, has asked a court for permission to turn over the contents of Parnas' phone and other documents to a House of Representatives panel for use in the Trump impeachment inquiry, his lawyer said on Monday.

Lawyer Joseph Bondy said in a tweet that the Justice Department on Tuesday would be producing the documents and the contents of the phone seized from Parnas when he was arrested in October.

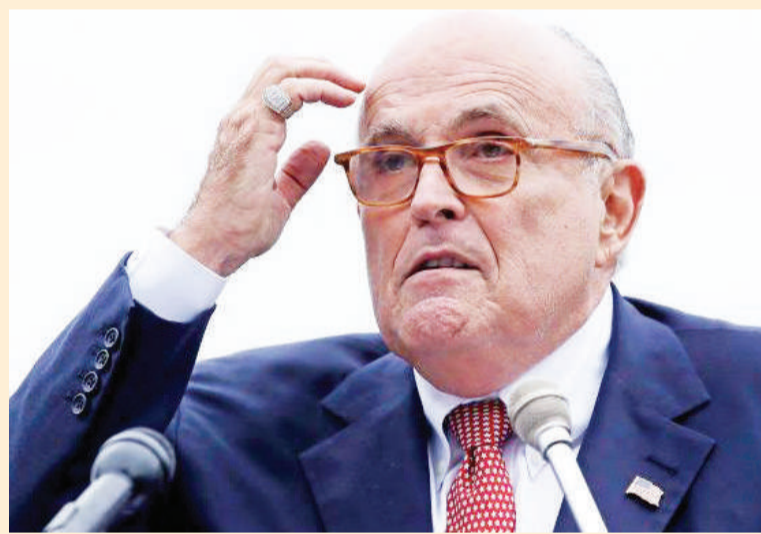
The government "does not object" to Parnas handing over the documents to the House Intelligence Committee, subject to approval by

the court, Bondy wrote in a letter to U.S. District Judge Paul Oetken in New York.

Parnas, a Ukraine-born U.S. citizen, was charged alongside another Florida businessman, Belarus-born Igor Fruman, with illegally funneling money to a pro-Trump election committee and other politicians. Both have pleaded not guilty.

Giuliani has said Parnas and Fruman assisted him in investigating one of the Republican president's political rivals, former Democratic Vice President Joe Biden, and Biden's son Hunter, who served on the board of a Ukrainian energy company.

Trump was impeached by the Democratic-led House on Dec. 18 on charges of abuse of power and ob-



struction of Congress.

The House intelligence panel played a leading role in the investi-

gation, which focused on Trump's effort to push Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to open in-

vestigations into Biden, a leading contender to run against Trump in the 2020 election, and a debunked theory on election interference.

In the letter to Oetken, Bondy said review of the material, which the House panel had subpoenaed, was essential for its "ability to corroborate the strength" of Parnas' potential testimony.

Bondy said he and Parnas did not know "whether we intend to produce the entirety of the materials, or a subset filtered for either privilege or relevancy."

Bondy said in early November that Parnas was prepared to comply with requests for records and testimony from congressional impeachment investigators.

Agencies

Russia's response to US' sanctions against Nord Stream-2 to be well-balanced - deputy PM

MOSCOW

RUSSIA'S response to the United States' sanctions against Russian gas pipelines will be well-balanced and adequate, and the construction of the Nord Stream-2 gas pipeline will be completed despite Washington's sanctions, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Kozak said on Sunday.

"We will take a well-balanced and adequate decision," he said in an interview with the Vesti Nedeli weekly news round-up on the Rossiya-1 television channel when asked about Russia's possible response to the American sanctions against Nord Stream-2.

"The gas pipeline will be built, despite the sanctions and restrictions. We know how to do that," he stressed.

According to the Russian deputy prime



minister, the United States "has different considerations when it comes to others' energy security." "If it were about its own energy security, I think its decisions would have been quite different," he added.

The US Senate approved the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year

2020, which obliges the administration to target the Russian pipelines Nord Stream 2 and TurkStream with sanctions. On December 11, the House of Representatives voted for it. On December 20, US President Donald Trump signed the bill and it came into force. Following this bill,

Alseas, a Swiss company laying the pipes for the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, suspended its work on the project and recalled its ships.

Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said earlier that Nord Stream 2 AG, the project operator, was able to finish the construction of the pipeline without foreign contractors and their pipe-laying vessels. However it would take several months to finish organizational works. According to Novak, the ministry expects Nord Stream-1 to be commissioned by the end of 2020.

Nord Stream-2 is an international project for the construction of a gas pipeline that will run across the bottom of the Baltic Sea from the Russian coast to Germany bypassing transit states, such as Ukraine, Belarus, Poland and other Eastern European and Baltic countries.

The new 1,200 kilometer pipeline, basically following the same route as Nord Stream, will traverse economic zones and territorial water of five countries, namely Russia, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and Germany. The pipeline's capacity will be 55 billion cubic meters of gas a year.

Agencies

Losing no time in progressing—grasping the historic opportunity for common development

ON the last day of 2019, People's Daily published an article titled "Losing no time in progressing—grasping the historic opportunity for common development of China and the world" under the byline of Guo Jiping.

Looking back at the China-U.S. trade frictions over the past more than one year, the article pointed out that the confidence, calmness and composure of the Chinese people to pursue their beautiful dreams remains unshakable however severe the external challenges and risks may become.

As the article pointed out, the world is confident about the Chinese economy, and expects to join hands with China to grasp the historic opportunity for common development as the country is promoting economic transformation and upgrading and expanding opening-up.

China is a 5000-year-old oriental civilization, as well as a socialist country that has achieved glorious achievements through the past 70 years of hard work. Is it a partner or an opponent, an opportunity or a threat of the world? That is a question that has been frequently contemplated on by the world.

In answering this question, facts have proved that China's development is beneficial to the world and its increasingly closer cooperation with global countries will make the world better.

At present, the world is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century, as economic globalization becomes an unstoppable trend while unilateralism and protectionism pose as the counter-currents. Against such a backdrop, only those who are firm about their development course and can grasp the op-

portunities are able to ride the tides of the global economy, the article stressed.

One unusual fact about economic globalization is that it is accompanied by the need for cooperation and win-win opportunity, as well as the risk of escalating frictions and confrontations.

Because of this, the world has had a deeper understanding of Chinese President Xi Jinping's keynote speech delivered at the opening plenary of the 2017 annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

"Economic globalization resulted from growing social productivity, and is a natural outcome of scientific and technological progress." "No one will emerge as a winner in a trade war."

"No difficulty, however daunting, will stop mankind from advanc-

ing." "When encountering difficulties, we should not complain about ourselves, blame others, lose confidence or run away from responsibilities. We should join hands and rise to the challenge."

These words of Xi about China's pledge to adapt to and push for economic globalization are of significant realistic meaning.

Rising to challenges and becoming braver in front of frustrations, the Chinese people are turning external pressure into the power to deepen reform and expand opening-up, said the article.

At present, the Chinese economy is constantly creating opportunities for development, constantly expanding the space for development, and maintaining the basic trend of stability and long-term improvement.

The Chinese dream is closely connected with the world dream, and the

period of strategic opportunities for China's development is also a period of strategic opportunities for China and global partners to develop together.

As international observers put it, a stable China is the biggest source of stability in this world full of uncertainty. This is true today, and it will remain so for a long time in the future.

For years, China has ranked first in the world in terms of the economic contribution to global growth, the article pointed out.

The World Investment Report 2019 by the UN indicated that in the first half of 2019, China attracted \$73 billion in foreign investment, maintaining its position as the second largest destination of foreign investment and the largest developing-economy recipient of foreign investment.

During the second China International Import Expo, deals worth

\$71.13 billion were agreed.

The two "\$70 billion" represented the global recognition of the amount of dividends delivered by the Chinese market and level of opening-up of China, as well as the world's confidence in China's economy.

Opening its arms, China is providing more opportunities of market, investment and growth for all countries in the world for common development, the article stressed.

The Chinese people aspire for a better life for their own, as well as one for people in other countries. Promoting a higher level of opening-up, China has delivered tangible mutual beneficial and win-win results to the world.

This has reflected the grand vision of China to live in harmony with all countries and manifested its confidence and sense of responsibility, the article concluded. *People's Daily*

Xi, Putin exchange New Year greetings

BEIJING

CHINESE President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin exchanged New Year greetings yesterday, pledging to further cement their countries' close and fruitful partnership.

In his message, Xi, on behalf of the Chinese government and people, extended sincere greetings and best wishes to Putin and the Russian people.

Pointing out that 2019 is an extraordinary year in the history of the development of China-Russia relations, Xi recalled that in the friendly and celebratory atmosphere on the 70th anniversary of bilateral diplomatic ties, he and Putin jointly announced that China-Russia relations had entered a new era, opening a new chapter of bilateral friendship.

"We signed and issued a joint statement on strengthening contemporary global strategic stability, which demonstrates our firm determination to jointly safeguard global strategic stability," Xi added.

Xi said bilateral cooperation in such fields as economy and trade, energy, people-to-people exchanges, and science and technology, as well as at subnational levels, has witnessed a series of highlights and borne rich fruit, not only bringing tangible benefits to the two countries and their people but contributing greatly to world peace and development.

Xi pointed out that 2020 has been designated as the Year of Scientific and Technological Innovation between China and Russia, and the two sides will jointly celebrate the 75th anniversary of the victory of the World Anti-Fascist War and the founding of the United Nations.

Xi said he stands ready to maintain close contact with Putin, work together to lift bilateral relations and cooperation in various fields to new levels, and jointly safeguard multilateralism and the international system with the United Nations at the core, so as to boost the momentum of the respective development and revitalization of China and Russia, and inject more stability and positive energy into a world that is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century.

For his part, Putin extended his sincere New Year greetings to Xi, and wished the Chinese people happiness and good health.

With joint efforts, Russia and China achieved great progress in 2019 in advancing their comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era, Putin said.

Putin said that he and Xi met for several times and reached a series of important consensus, which opened new prospects for mutually beneficial cooperation in various fields.

The governments, legislative bodies and various departments of the two countries conducted productive coordination, and the Russia-China east-route natural gas pipeline was completed and put into operation, noted Putin.

The two sides, he added, successfully carried out the year of local cooperation and exchanges, which further promoted mutually beneficial cooperation at local levels.

Next year, the two countries will embrace another large national themed-year program, namely the Year of Scientific and Technological Innovation, he said, adding that the Russian side attaches great importance to the event.

Putin said he firmly believes that with joint efforts, the comprehensive cooperation between Russia and China as well as their constructive coordination on international issues will be upgraded to higher levels.

On the same day, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and his Russian counterpart, Dmitry Medvedev, also exchanged New Year greetings.

In his message, Li said the year of 2019 is of special and great significance to the development of the China-Russia relationship, which has been upgraded to a comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era.

The two countries successfully held the 24th prime ministers' regular meeting and reached a series of new consensus on cooperation, he said.

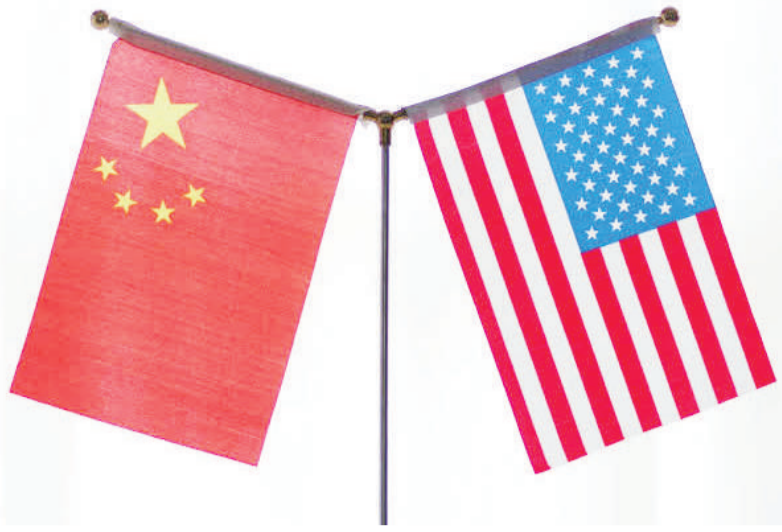
Li said he will work with Medvedev to give full play to existing mechanisms and platforms and inject more impetus into the common development and revitalization of the two countries.

For his part, Medvedev said the Russia-China comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination is at its best in history, and he believes that the two sides will achieve more fruits in cooperation in various fields in the new year.

Xinhua



This combo photo shows Chinese President Xi Jinping (left) and Russian President Vladimir Putin. (PHOTOS / XINHUA AND AP)



Stability of China-US ties benefits world

PEOPLE'S Daily published an article under the penname of Guo Jiping on Dec. 31, saying that the phase-one trade deal reached between China and the U.S. is beneficial for China, U.S. and the peace and prosperity of the globe, especially when the world is in an extremely complicated environment.

The article pointed out that both sides of the Pacific, and even the whole world at large made immediate responses and welcomed the two countries to make a further step toward a solution as soon as China and the U.S. reached the phase-one trade deal upon the principle of equality and mutual respect.

It stressed that rains and storms are inevitable in major-country relations, but what makes the relations last is cooperation and mutual promotion, rather than confrontation and containment.

The article presented a fact - one that's much easier to see after one year of trade frictions between the two major countries: as economy and technology make the world integrated, China and the U.S. see more intertwined interests.

Disputes are natural in cooperation, but supremacy cannot overthrow justice and rationality will always remain in existence. As a result, cooperation is always the best choice.

Facing the trade war initiated by the U.S., China will never surrender to any extreme pressure, and is always committed to safeguarding the core national interests and the fundamental interests of its people.

China never fears a trade war and is always open to trade talks. It has always stayed rational and calm. For the good of the common interests of the two countries and global trade order, and in a strenuous effort to push forward the economic and trade consultations, China remains committed to resolving issues through dialogue and consultation, responding to U.S. concerns with the greatest patience and sincerity, properly handling dif-

ferences while seeking common ground, and overcoming obstacles to practical solutions.

The article reviewed the trip to China paid by late U.S. President Richard Nixon in 1972, saying the visit was an important enlightenment that marvelous strategic vision and remarkable political wisdom are a must for both the "ice-breaking" handshakes between the two sides of the Pacific and the current dispute control and management.

Referring to the win-win results of the Ping-Pong Diplomacy 40 years ago, the article cited remarks once made by the U.S. side that what matters more than to win table tennis games is the friendship between the Chinese and American people. It is a wise conclusion that is able to guide future generations.

Practices over the past 40 years proved that to create opportunities to maximize the common interests between China and the U.S. is the right choice, and to achieve common good for the world is the most worthwhile cause.

The article stressed that the phase-one trade deal between China and the U.S. explains that as long as the two countries stay committed to the general trend of cooperation and win-win results, and respect each other's national dignity, sovereignty and core interests, they can overcome difficulties, promote the development of China-U.S. trade relations in new historical conditions, and benefit the two countries and their people.

China and the U.S. agreed on the text of a phase-one economic and trade agreement based on the principle of equality and mutual respect on Dec. 13, 2019.

Spokesperson of China's Ministry of Commerce said on Dec. 19 that the two sides were working on necessary procedures regarding their phase-one trade deal and closely communicating on other follow-up matters.

People's Daily

Sanders campaign releases medical info, claims candidate fit

WASHINGTON

U.S. Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders' campaign on Monday released letters by his doctors claiming that the oldest contender in the Democratic race is in good health and "fit and ready to serve as president."

"You are in good health currently and you have been engaging vigorously in the rigors of your campaign, travel and other scheduled activities without any limitation," Brian Monahan, the attending physician for members of Congress and Sanders' long-time primary physician, said in one of the three letters.



Sanders, 78, (pictured) briefly left the campaign trail in early October as he suffered a heart attack, but has recovered and engaged himself in a robust campaign.

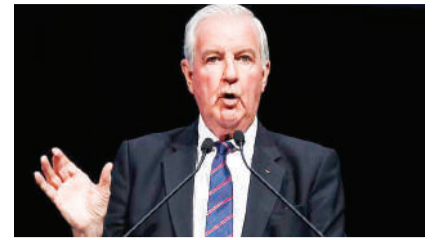
An examination in December found that the senator "was able to exercise to a level that is approximately 50 percent

higher than other men his age with a similar diagnosis," Philip Ades, director of cardiac rehabilitation at the University of Vermont, said in a separate letter.

"While he did suffer modest heart muscle damage, he has been doing very well since," said Martin LeWinter, the attending cardiologist at the University of Vermont Medical Center.

"I am confident he has the mental and physical stamina to fully undertake the rigors of the presidency."

Sanders is currently among the top three favorites in the Democratic primary race, along with former Vice President Joe Biden - who is leading in recent polls - and Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren. **Xinhua**



WADA's clampdown on doping in Russian sports was success, says outgoing President Reedie

MOSCOW

SIR Craig Reedie, the outgoing president of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), said one of the main achievements during his six-year presidential term in the organization was the fight against doping abuse in Russian sports.

"A little more than 20 years ago, WADA was founded to promote, harmonize and regulate the fight against doping in sport," Reedie, 78, stated in his 'End of term message' posted on WADA's official website.

"Considering the last six years in particular, I am especially pleased to see how WADA responded to the challenges it faced since 2014, in particular the Russian doping crisis that led to the development and implementation of a world-class Intelligence and Investigations (I&I) team, which now boasts 11 members and could easily be considered the best such team in sport."

"The work of individuals within that department, among others, has been instrumental in WADA's response to the Russian doping crisis, the most recent chapter of which culminated in December with the Executive Committee decision to recommend non-compliance for the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA) along with a range of strong consequences," Reedie continued.

On December 19, the RUSADA Supervisory Board recommended the agency's Founders Council to disagree with WADA's sanctions against Russian sports and to take this case to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Switzerland's Lausanne. On December 27, RUSADA sent an official notification of its disagreement to WADA and the global anti-doping body will now have to submit this case to the Swiss-based court.

"Ultimately, it will be for the Court of Arbitration for Sport to rule on it but throughout this process, WADA has shown it has the will, the expertise and the legal tools to stand up effectively to this unprecedented level of cheating and corruption," Reedie said.

On December 9, the WADA Executive Committee (ExCo) approved the recommendations of its Compliance Review Committee (CRC) to revoke the compliance status of the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA) and to strip Russia of the right to participate in major international sports tournaments, including the Olympics, Paralympics and world championships, for a period of four years.

The WADA ExCo also ruled that Russia must not host, or bid for hosting any major international sports tournament in this four-year period. Russian state officials, as well as the staff of the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) and the Russian Paralympic Committee (RPC), were banned from attending all major international sports tournaments for this four-year period.

number of Chinese companies were willing to invest overseas.

For overseas companies that want to invest in Africa, these industrial parks can help them understand the destination countries' business environment, get better access to local resources, simplify the examining and approving formalities and reduce legal risks.

He also said that these parks could speed up building of African countries' industrial capacity. "For example, if a vehicle manufacturing factory comes up in an industrial park in Africa, downstream enterprises, including auto parts makers, are very likely to follow suit. Thus, an African country could rapidly build up a complete supply chain for the auto industry," he said.

Metwally said that many African countries attached great importance to the BRI as they want to get involved in mega-infrastructure projects financed and implemented by China, as these projects have a positive impact on boosting economies and contributing to growth. **Xinhua**

Ghosh in Lebanon, says he left Japan because of 'injustice'

TOKYO

NISSAN'S former Chairman Carlos Ghosn said yesterday from Lebanon he was not fleeing justice but instead left Japan to avoid "injustice and political persecution" over financial misconduct allegations during his tenure leading the automaker.

Ghosh had been released on bail by a Tokyo court while awaiting trial but was not allowed to travel overseas. He disclosed his location in a statement through his representatives that did not describe how he left Japan, where he had been under surveillance. He promised to talk to reporters next week.

"I am now in Lebanon and will no longer be held hostage by a rigged Japanese justice system where guilt is presumed, discrimination is rampant, and basic human rights are denied, in flagrant disregard of Japan's legal obligations under international law and treaties it is bound to uphold," the statement said. Japanese media quoted prosecutors speaking anonymously who said they did not know how Ghosn had left.

Ghosh, who is of Lebanese origin and holds French, Lebanese and Brazilian passports, was arrested in November 2018 and was expected to face trial in April 2020.

Prosecutors fought his release, but a court granted him bail with conditions that he be monitored and he could not meet with his wife Carole, who is also of Lebanese origin. Recently the court allowed them to speak by video calls.

Japan does not have an extradition treaty with Lebanon. It is unclear what steps the authorities might take.

Ghosh has repeatedly asserted his innocence, saying authorities trumped up charges to prevent a possible merger between Nissan Motor Co and alliance partner Renault SA.

He has been charged with under-reporting his future compensation and of breach of trust.

During his release on bail, Ghosn



Carlos Ghosn

had been going daily to the office of his main lawyer Junichiro Hironaka to work on his case. Hironaka told reporters Tuesday afternoon he was stunned that Ghosn had jumped bail and denied any involvement in or knowledge of the escape. He said the lawyers had all of Ghosn's three passports and was puzzled by how he could have left the country.

The last time he spoke to Ghosn was on Christmas Day, and he has never been consulted about leaving for Lebanon, Hironaka told reporters outside his law office in Tokyo.

He said the lawyers still need to decide on their next action, besides filing a required report to the judicial authorities. His office was closed for New Year's holidays in Japan.

"Maybe he thought he won't get a fair trial," Hironaka said, stressing he continues to believe Ghosn is innocent. "I can't blame him for thinking that way."

He called the circumstances of Ghosn's arrest, the seizure of evidence and the strict bail conditions unfair.

Ghosh had posted 1.5 billion yen (US\$14 million) bail on two separate releases. Ghosn had been rearrested on additional charges after an earlier release. Earlier, Ricardo Karam, a television host and friend of Ghosn, told The Associated Press that Ghosn arrived in Lebanon on Monday morning.

"He is home," Karam told the AP in a message. "It's a big adventure."

Karam declined to elaborate. Lebanon-based newspaper Al-Joumhouriya said Ghosn arrived in Beirut

from Turkey aboard a private jet. Ghosn was credited with leading a spectacular turnaround at Nissan beginning in the late 1990s, rescuing the automaker from near-bankruptcy.

The Lebanese took special pride in the auto industry icon, who speaks fluent Arabic and visited regularly. Born in Brazil, where his Lebanese grandfather had sought his fortune, Ghosn grew up in Beirut, where he spent part of his childhood at a Jesuit school.

Before his fall from grace, Ghosn was also a celebrity in Japan, revered for his managerial acumen.

Nissan did not have immediate comment. The Japanese automaker of the March subcompact, Leaf electric car and Infiniti luxury models, has also been charged as a company in relation to Ghosn's alleged financial crimes.

Japanese securities regulators recently recommended Nissan be fined 2.4 billion yen (\$22 million) over disclosure documents from 2014 through 2017. Nissan has said it accepted the penalty and had corrected its securities documents in May.

Its sales and profits have tumbled and its brand image is tarnished. It has acknowledged lapses in its governance and has promised to improve its transparency.

Another Nissan former executive Greg Kelly, an American, was arrested at the same time as Ghosn and is awaiting trial. He has said he is innocent.

Hiroto Saikawa, who replaced Ghosn as head of Nissan, announced his resignation in September after financial misconduct allegations surfaced against him related to dubious income. He has not been charged with any crime.

The conviction rate in Japan exceeds 99% and winning an acquittal through a lengthy appeals process could take years. Rights activists in Japan and abroad say its judicial system does not presume innocence enough and relies heavily on long detentions that lead to false confessions. **Agencies**

China-Egypt ties solid with brilliant prospects, says Egyptian official

CAIRO

HANI Azer, a member of the advisory board of Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi, said the relations between Egypt and China are very strong and have excellent prospects.

"The bilateral relations between the two countries are solid, and there is a mutual coordination in many important

fields," Azer told Xinhua in a recent interview.

He added that China has large investments in Egypt and is already implementing mega projects in several fields, such as railways, energy, construction and infrastructure.

"We welcome Chinese investments in Egypt because they reflect confidence in President Sisi's policy, in security and

stability in Egypt, and in the ongoing industrial and economic development in the country," said Azer, who is a world-renowned tunnels expert.

By 2018, the total Chinese investments in Egypt exceeded seven billion U.S. dollars, providing about 30,000 direct job opportunities to Egyptians, according to official Chinese statistics.

The trade exchange between China

and Egypt hit a record high of 13.87 billion dollars in 2018 when Egyptian exports to China rose to 1.8 billion dollars. Tianjin Economic-Technological Development Area (TEDA), a Chinese industrial developer operating in Egypt's vital Suez Canal economic zone, has altogether 84 enterprises, including 42 manufacturing companies, and has attracted investment worth more than one billion dollars.

Meanwhile, Azer stressed that the program implemented by Egypt to develop the country's infrastructure is very important.

"For example, after the World War II, countries such as Germany started to rebuild itself by building new infrastructures, which helped the country much to reach its current economic status," the Egyptian engineer said. **Xinhua**

BRI industry parks bolster African links

CHINESE-BUILT industrial zones under the Belt and Road Initiative, or BRI, have become effective platforms for African countries to learn about China's development experiences and realize their industrial transformation.

Hisham AbuBakr Metwally, an economics researcher with the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Trade and Industry, said that while African countries are striving to catch up on the industrialization front, such joint economic zones with China give them opportunities to attract investment as well as to learn about best practices when it comes to China's economic development.

"Such industrial zones under the BRI support growth in Africa and help the continent achieve employment goals," he said.

Data from the General Administration of Customs showed that Chinese companies invested \$34 billion in overseas economic and trade cooperation zones in BRI related countries, and about 4,500 Chinese companies have established

operations in the zones. And they have paid \$2.8 billion as taxes and fees to local governments and created more than 300,000 jobs for locals.

On the Africa continent, there are currently 25 Chinese-built industrial zones, which have created more than 40,000 jobs for locals and paid nearly US\$1.1 billion of taxes to local governments, Qian Keming, vice-minister of commerce said at a news conference in June. And he said that China is encouraging the construction of more industrial zones in Africa.

These industrial zones are defined by the Ministry of Commerce as industrial parks that are independent legal entities established overseas by Chinese companies. They have complete infrastructure, clear industrial development strategies, and provide public services to companies in it.

One of the flagship projects is the Chinese-built Eastern Industry Zone, which is 30 kil-



An Ethiopian works at a shoe factory in the Eastern Industry Zone, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. (Xinhua)

ometers from Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. It is also Ethiopia's only overseas industrial zone at the national level.

Founded in 2007, the zone has 83 manufacturers and has created over 10,000 jobs for locals. The companies there are mainly engaged in sectors like cement, footwear, automobile assembly, and textiles & garments, according to its website.

Another model for development is the China-Egypt TEDA Suez Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone, which is located in a desert 50 kilometers south of the seaport city Suez and 120 kilometers east of Egypt's capital Cairo.

The zone has 84 enterprises, including 42 manufacturing companies, and has attracted more than US\$1 billion invest-

ment. It has also generated about US\$58.2 million in taxes, according to the Egypt-TEDA SEZone (Suez Canal Economic Zone) Development Co.

The industrial park hosts companies involved in manufacturing, logistics, technology development, commerce, and finance.

Metwally said that this industrial zone has not only attracted Chinese companies, but also investments from other countries. For example, Russia has been attracted to invest in the same region with a big industrial zone.

"The China-Egypt TEDA Suez Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone is a breakthrough and offers a model for Egypt's industrialization," he said.

Zhang Jianping, the director-general of the Institute of West Asia and Africa at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation under the Ministry of Commerce, said that the BRI is a huge platform for global cooperation and

development under which China and Africa can work together to realize the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Offering a model

Zhang said that the building of industrial parks under the BRI is critical to Africa's development. The African countries' infrastructure is relatively poor, and their development capacity is relatively weak. So, if they try to realize industrialization project by project, it will be slow.

"But industrial parks could quickly pass China's experiences to African countries, helping them bring industries together, improve efficiency and reduce risk amid development," he said.

Moreover, industrial parks can help improve infrastructure, offer jobs and vocational training to local workers, and generate taxes for local governments.

Jiang Hao, a partner at global consultancy Roland Berger, said that with the BRI, an increasing

The
Guardian

SPORT



Mikel Arteta



Ole Gunnar Solskjær

Arsenal against United recalls brighter times for faded giants

LONDON

AT the start of this decade, clashes between Arsenal and Manchester United were still potentially title-deciding affairs, but when the pair meet on New Year's Day at the Emirates they will have more modest goals in mind.

United have not won a league title since Alex Ferguson's final season in charge seven years ago, while Arsenal have to go back to 2004 for the last time they raised the Premier League trophy, during the reign of Arsene Wenger.

Both clubs entered this season hoping to finish in the top four, but while Ole Gunnar Solskjær has guided United to fifth place, just a point off the Champions League spots, Arsenal languish in 12th, 11 points behind fourth-placed Chelsea after their home defeat to Frank Lampard's side on Sunday.

Arsenal's poor form led to the dismissal of their Spanish manager Unai Emery and the arrival of his compatriot, former Gunners midfielder Mikel Arteta.

Having left his role as Pep Guardiola's assistant at Manchester City, Arteta is talking big despite beginning with a draw at Bournemouth before Sunday's loss.

"We are the biggest football club in England, and we have to play a little bit with that arrogance, that belief," Arteta told Sky Sports, urging the club's fans to make the Emirates a fortress again.

"This stadium has to create fear again. I used to hate coming here as an opponent, and we need to use that power. The opponent must be uncomfortable playing here," he said.

"It was incredible to play here as an Arsenal player. It's one of the most beautiful, exciting stadiums in the world. When this crowd gets going, and you feel them right behind the team, it's an incredible place," he added.

United head to London on the back of wins over Newcastle and Burnley, and with French forward Anthony Martial and England's Marcus Rashford having struck five times in those games.

French midfielder Paul Pogba is expected to be part of the United squad for the clash with the Gunners as he continues his return from a three-month injury absence.

Runaway leaders Liverpool host Sheffield United on Thursday, looking to maintain their unbeaten run and 13-point advantage over second-placed Leicester City.

Brendan Rodgers' Foxes are at Newcastle, while third-placed Manchester City have a tricky test at home to Everton, who have won both their games since appointing Carlo Ancelotti as their new manager.

David Moyes begins his second spell as West Ham United manager, following the dismissal of Chilean Manuel Pellegrini, in the Hammers host fellow strugglers Bournemouth.

REUTERS

Booker, Oubre rally Suns from 19 down past Blazers 122-116

PORTLAND, ORE.

IN the first half, the Phoenix Suns trailed by 19 points. By the final seconds, Kelly Oubre Jr. was blowing goodbye kisses to the Portland Trail Blazers and their fans.

Devin Booker scored 33 points, Oubre had 29 and Phoenix came back from way behind to beat Portland 122-116 on Monday night.

A 3-pointer by Oubre gave the Suns a 120-114 lead with 43.8 seconds left. After the shot, he blew kisses to the crowd while jogging around the court as Portland called a timeout.

"I think I feel like the first two I blew 'em some kisses, they booed me. And then after I hit 'em, they expected the kisses," Oubre said. "It's love all the way around the world."

Ricky Rubio added 18 points and 13 assists for the Suns, who won their second consecutive game and handed Portland its fourth straight defeat.

"Terrible loss," Blazers guard CJ McCollum said.

Phoenix coach Monty Williams liked the fight his team showed in sticking to its plan.

"If you're a boxer, you box your way," Williams said. "You don't switch up and go south-paw in the middle of the fight. You have to fight your style and I think that's how we have to be. We have to play our style of basketball, make adjustments as we go along. I thought we started the game in a bit of a laze."

Williams also was proud of the effort from Deandre Ayton, who had 12 points in 20 minutes off the bench in just his third game of the season.

"I thought he gave us juice," Williams said. "Guys had confidence in him to not only plug the middle, but just having that size and athleticism. We haven't had a hand above the rim in a long time."

Damian Lillard scored 33 points and McCollum added 25 for Portland. Hassan Whiteside had 16 points and 22 rebounds.

"It hurt from the standpoint that we were winning the game, we came out extremely well," Carmelo Anthony said after shooting 4 for 16. "This is one of those games that we let slip away from us."

Lillard hit his first five 3s and scored 16 points in the opening period. Portland led by 19 multiple times, but Phoenix went on an 8-0 run to close the first half down 64-55. The Blazers

were up 89-83 after three.

Oubre's 3-pointer cut Portland's advantage to 108-107 with 3:31 left, and a tip-in by Ayton with 2:48 remaining gave Phoenix its first lead since the opening quarter. Booker's jumper put Phoenix up 115-110.

Meanwhile, in Washington, Garrison Mathews couldn't believe what he was hearing. With the Washington Wizards holding an insurmountable lead, the home crowd began chanting "MVP! MVP!"

Mathews, an undrafted guard from tiny Lipscomb University, scored 28 points in his 11th NBA game to help the depleted Wizards beat the Miami Heat 123-105 on Monday night. Still, he doubted the fans were yelling for him.

"I thought they were saying, 'Go Heat,'" Mathews said.

Mathews played big minutes because the Wizards were missing leading scorer Bradley Beal. Jordan McRae and Ian Mahinmi, also filling in for key members of the rotation, had big games for Washington as well. McRae scored a season-high 29 points and Mahinmi had a career-best 25.

McRae, a third-year player, and Mahinmi, a 13-year veteran, enjoyed nights to remember against Miami (24-9), which had its five-game winning streak snapped. The Heat entered with the second-best record in the East and lost for just the third time in 20 games against conference opponents.

"We were a step behind and playing on our heels," Miami coach Erik Spoelstra said. "We end up fouling or just getting beat off the dribble too many times."

Jimmy Butler led the Heat with 27 points and Duncan Robinson scored 16. Bam Adebayo had 14 points and 14 rebounds.

"It shows how tough this league can be night to night," Spoelstra said. "Anything you do before doesn't guarantee what's going to happen in the future."

Mathews, whose previous NBA high was six points, scored 20 in the second quarter. Mahinmi had 19 in the first half as Washington (10-22) took a 71-63 lead at the break and won going away. Mahinmi shot 10 for 11 from the field.

"We were completely destroyed at both ends," Miami guard Goran Dragic said. "Our offense was not there. Our defense was not even slightly there. It was tough."

Year in Review - II



Magereza Club's Mohamed Chibuibui (R), connects a punch on JKT Club's Selemani Kidunda in a recent National Club Championship, which took place in Dar es Salaam.

BY CORRESPONDENT LLOYD ELIPOKEA

UNDOUBTEDLY, it would have been giganantically hard not to notice that this column's first attempt at penning a year in review last week had a distinctly cheerful and upbeat tone.

Seeing as that is the case, it follows then that this very commentary in our continuing 'Year in Review' series will focus more on the setbacks and disappointments which also marked this year on the domestic sports patch.

Let us set the ball rolling then by engaging in a sober contemplation of what went so horribly wrong for Team Tanzania at the August All Africa Games, which took place earlier this year.

As usual, Team Tanzania ventured forth into the All Africa Games spectacle with great optimism and high hopes that they would be capable of making an impeccable impact on the whole event.

Sadly though, matters definitely did not unfold according to the

script.

In fact, one could justly contend that things unfolded in quite a calamitous fashion for Team Tanzania as our contingent shamefully returned home from the games with absolutely no medal to speak of.

In other words, Team Tanzania featured at the All Africa Games simply to make up the numbers.

As if that were not enough, our participation at the World Athletics Championships this year yielded completely zilch.

Indeed, what makes the aforesaid humiliating failures so tough to swallow is the fact that the electrifying sporting event of mammoth global significance which is the Olympic Games are now no longer safely two or three years away but will actually commence next year in arguably the 'Hi-tech' capital of the world, Tokyo.

Thus, viewed against the deeply dissatisfying and grim backdrop of our twin epic flops at the All Africa Games and the World Athletics Championships, it becomes much easier to understand why a swelling number of quarters on the domestic scene

are growing increasingly worried about our medal prospects come Tokyo next year.

Let us now move away from our justifiable trepidation regarding the 2020 Tokyo Olympics to consider another longstanding and irksome problem, that of our societal neglect of Disability Sports.

Right from the very literal start of the year on January 1st, there have been scarcely any positive developments to report on the Disability Sports front.

Except, perchance, for just a couple of weeks ago when a foreign instructor was in town to train coaches in the sporting discipline of Paralympic swimming or for the benefit of those who may have never come across that particular term before, swimming for sportsmen with disabilities.

Dear reader, I am eager to ensure that you don't misunderstand me.

Rest assured that I find no fault with the Paralympic swimming coaches training course which was held here in the ever-bustling city of Dar es Salaam lately.

Far from it. In fact, my trenchant criticism is reserved only for the various bodies that govern sports in the country because at the heart of the matter, a crucial question hanging in the air still goes unanswered, which is, in the wake of that praiseworthy training course for Paralympic swimming coaches, when next will we witness another laudable measure aimed at improving domestic disability sports?

Unfortunately, if our history is any guide, that awaited developmental measure aimed at boosting disability sports may take an especially lengthy period of time to be witnessed again.

Nevertheless, as the New Year is literally upon us, perhaps it would be incumbent on us all, to deliberately adopt an attitude of optimism and positivity; two emotions which I might add would be in keeping very much with the famous spirit of this festive season.

Hopefully then, 2019 was a blast for you, Dear Reader. Whatever the case, I'd like to wish you all a prosperous, rewarding and ultimately Happy New Year.

Antetokounmpo scores 23 in return, Bucks beat Bulls 123-102

CHICAGO

WITH an NBA-best 30-5 record, the Milwaukee Bucks are off to a great start.

Giannis Antetokounmpo, though, is more concerned with the team's finish this season.

The reigning MVP had 23 points and 10 rebounds after missing two games with a sore back, and Milwaukee pulled away in the second half for a 123-102 victory over the Chicago Bulls on Monday night.

Antetokounmpo, the league's second-leading scorer with an average of 30.5 points per game entering this one, played only 27 minutes and sat out the final 51/2 because of the lopsided score. He was 8 for 14 from the field with six assists.

"We won 30 games before January; it's cool, but we can always do better," Antetokounmpo said. "We've got to keep improving because the goal is to play late in the season." Khris Middleton scored 25 points for the Bucks, and Eric Bledsoe had 15 points in 16 minutes after missing the previous eight games with a fractured right leg.

"We move way faster with him," Antetokounmpo said of Bledsoe. "He's like a sports car. He goes so fast, and we've got to follow him. It's always good to have him back."

Zach LaVine scored 19 points for Chicago but shot just 7 for 23 from the field. Lauri Markkanen and Coby White had 18 points apiece and Wendell Carter Jr. added 10 points and 11 rebounds for the Bulls.

"In the first half, I think

were there, but I think in the second half, we weren't playing our best basketball," Markkanen said. "We've shown we can play with anybody, but obviously we've got to do it for 48 minutes to actually win the game."

"We can't have those lapses we did in the third. We're capable of getting those wins."

Milwaukee jumped out to an 8-0 lead as Chicago missed its first six shots. The Bucks led 31-20 at the end of the first quarter and stretched it to 33-20 early in the second on a basket by Robin Lopez.

But the Bulls – after shooting 9 of 29 in the first – suddenly got hot from behind the 3-point arc. White and Markkanen each had three 3-pointers in the second to trim the Milwaukee advantage. Chicago was 8 for 14 on 3s in the quarter.

With just under two minutes left in the first half, White hit a driving scoop off the glass to give the Bulls a 52-51 lead, their first of the game.

Antetokounmpo quickly answered with a putback on the other end to put the Bucks back on top. Milwaukee led 55-52 at halftime thanks in part to a 15-0 advantage in free throw attempts (making 12).

Any chance of a Chicago upset was quickly dashed in the third. The Bucks opened with a 17-4 run for a 72-56 lead – with Antetokounmpo capping the spurt with a thunderous dunk that drew a loud roar from the United Center crowd.

"There's momentum



Milwaukee Bucks forward Giannis Antetokounmpo (34) dribbles away from Chicago Bulls forward Lauri Markkanen (24), center Wendell Carter Jr. (34) and guard Tomas Satoransky (31) during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Monday, Dec. 30, 2019, in Chicago. (AP Photo)

plays, there's things that just give your team energy and may be deflating for your opponent," Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer said. "It was great. For him to miss a couple of games and come back and have a dunk like that was impressive."

Milwaukee led 95-77 after three quarters. Kyle Korver hit a 3-pointer 2 1/2 minutes into the fourth for a 105-81 advantage, the Bucks' biggest of the game.

Meanwhile, in Salt Lake City, amid early offensive struggles, the Utah Jazz never wavered on defense.

The surging Jazz pulled away for a 104-81 victory over the Detroit Pistons on Monday night by leaning on their trademark rugged defense. Utah ran the Pistons off the 3-point line, holding Detroit to 4-of-14 shooting from the perimeter. The Jazz also forced 17 turnovers and scored 25 points off those miscues. In the end, Detroit managed a season low in points.

Getting stops revived a sluggish Utah offense. The

Jazz shot just 33.3% from the floor in the first half, but connected on 59% of their field goal attempts after halftime. They made 26 baskets over the final two quarters after totaling just 13 through the first 24 minutes.

"The biggest thing in the first half was just the offense getting stagnant," guard Donovan Mitchell said. "We did what we wanted on defense."

Mitchell scored 23 points and Jordan Clarkson added 20 to lead the Jazz. Rudy Gobert added 13 points and 19 rebounds, and Bojan Bogdanovic scored 17 as Utah won for the eighth time in nine games.

Derrick Rose had 20 points to lead the Pistons, and Andre Drummond added 15 points and 13 rebounds. Detroit has dropped seven straight against Utah.

"It's the tale of two halves and until we grow up and understand that, that's our cross to bear," Pistons coach Dwane Casey said.

Utah never found much of an offensive rhythm in the

first half. The Jazz did not score their first basket until five minutes into the game. Detroit did not fare much better, shooting 38% in the half. That opened the door for Utah to keep things close.

The Pistons carved out a 38-31 lead late in the second quarter when Tim Frazier capped a 9-2 run with a driving layup. Detroit never trailed during the period, but could not pull away. Utah closed the gap in the final two minutes, cutting the deficit to 40-39 going into halftime when Mitchell and Gobert each scored on a dunk and Mitchell added a pair of free throws.

The Jazz really got rolling on offense in the third quarter. Utah opened the second half with a 16-2 run to take a 55-42 lead midway through the period. Mitchell sparked the surge with back-to-back baskets, and Joe Ingles punctuated it with consecutive buckets as well.

"In the first half, we just came out with a lot of energy," Drummond said. "We just lost our groove coming out of halftime. That's a good team so they broke it down, they watched what we're doing and found ways to exploit what we were doing and they got themselves going."

Detroit cut the deficit to 70-63 early in the fourth on a driving floater from Rose. The Jazz pulled away for good behind a 20-6 run. Bogdanovic fueled the spurt with three baskets. Mitchell capped it with a step-back jumper that gave Utah a 90-69 lead with 5:17 remaining.

AP

Eyes now turn to Premier League relegation dogfight

LONDON

LIVERPOOL appear to have the Premier League title wrapped up with a 13-point advantage over second-placed Leicester but the fight to avoid relegation looks like being a down to the wire tussle.

Just nine points separates ninth-placed Crystal Palace and third from bottom Aston Villa.

Here AFP Sport picks out three pivotal matches in Wednesday's action:

Arteta needs to get Gunners firing The old adage 'too good to go down' should apply to Arsenal, who have been a fixture in the top tier since 1919/20. However, they are just six points above the drop zone and new boss Mikel Arteta would probably have preferred an easier opponent than Manchester United as he bids to win his first game after a draw and defeat in his opening two matches in charge.

The United attack will be licking their lips at the thought of giving the weak Gunners defence a thorough test with goalkeeper Bernd Leno and defenders Skohdran Mustafi and David Luiz far from reliable. Arteta will want to see more of what his side produced in the opening half hour of the 2-1 defeat by Chelsea if they are to avoid a fifth successive home loss in all competitions -- their present run of four is their worst since 1959.

"Individual errors cost you games but I can't fault the effort, commitment and for putting in place what we practised," said Arteta.

However, with confidence at a low ebb defeat for Arsenal on Wednesday and victory for third from bottom Aston Villa at Burnley would suck them deeper into the relegation battle.

Hammers pray Moyes delivers in second coming

David Moyes may not be welcomed back universally by West Ham fans but if the 55-year-old saves them from relegation for a second time like he did in the 2017-18 season, before being dispensed with, then all will be forgiven. A home game for the side fourth from bottom against Bournemouth, who are just a point above them in 16th, represents a seemingly ideal first challenge.

However, their home form has been as woeful as Arsenal's with four successive defeats -- equaling their worst run in the Premier League since November 2005 -- and

it would not be a surprise to see Moyes energise their attack by selecting both Michail Antonio and Sebastien Haller.

The Cherries have largely escaped attention in their terrible run -- just one win in nine -- but the pressure may begin to mount on Eddie Howe with a defeat.

"It feels great to be home," said Moyes. "I feel like I've got unfinished business."

Watford's revival faces stern Wolves test

Nigel Pearson engineered a remarkable rescue act for Leicester in the 2014-15 season -- at the time they were only the third side to escape the drop having been bottom at Christmas -- arguably laying the foundations for their even more miraculous title win the following campaign.

The 56-year-old -- who was relieved of his duties prior to the league winning season -- could be on course to do the same for second from bottom Watford. Their third manager this term has guided them to two wins and a draw in four matches since taking over.

This new found confidence was reflected in easing to a 3-0 win over third from bottom Aston Villa on Saturday -- scoring two of their goals after they had been reduced to 10 men -- and this will be a much needed weapon when they host Wolverhampton Wanderers.

Wolves arrive sitting pretty in seventh place and on the back of an impressive win over champions Manchester City and considered unlucky to have lost to Liverpool on Sunday.

Pearson for his part will be looking for more of the same of what he witnessed against Villa: "We showed good intensity. We showed incredible unity on the pitch and bench. We have to make sure that remains high on our agenda -- to keep the players together."

Fixtures

Today (1500 GMT unless stated)
Brighton v Chelsea, Burnley v Aston Villa (both 1230), Newcastle v Leicester, Southampton v Tottenham, Watford v Wolverhampton Wanderers, Manchester City v Everton (1730), Norwich City v Crystal Palace (1730), West Ham v Bournemouth (1730), Arsenal v Manchester United (2000)

Tomorrow

Liverpool v Sheffield United (2000)

Pogba's agent says he won't leave Man United

LONDON

MANCHESTER United midfielder Paul Pogba is not leaving the club, says his agent Mino Raiola.

Pogba has been repeatedly linked in the media with a move away from United, but Raiola told Sky Sports on Monday that the midfielder will be staying at Old Trafford.

"Paul has always respected Manchester United just as Manchester United has always respected Paul. And the only one that talks for Manchester United and for Paul is Ole [Gunnar Solskjaer]..."

"I go by what he [Solskjaer] says. He [Pogba] will not move, and that's OK. We are good with them."

"As long as Paul is at Manchester United he wants to win trophies... he wants to give it 100%."

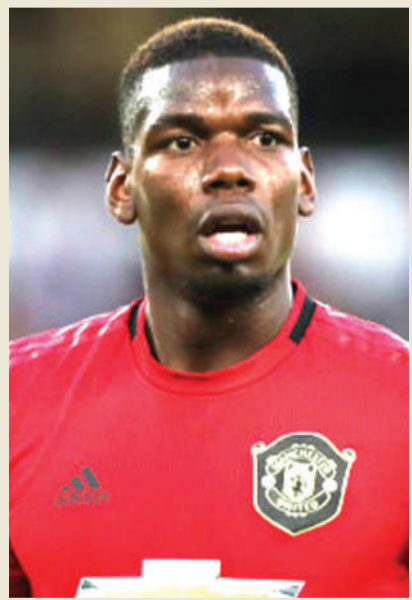
"Paul is struggling a little bit with his injury that we tried to resolve and I think that's our main interest now."

Pogba is set to return for their Premier League visit to Arsenal on New Year's Day after sitting out Saturday's 2-0 win over Burnley as a precaution, Solskjaer has said.

The France international returned from a long injury layoff as a substitute in a 2-0 defeat at Watford on Dec. 22 and played 45 minutes in the 4-1 win over Newcastle on Boxing Day.

Pogba felt pain in his ankle after the Newcastle game but Solskjaer said the 26-year-old would be ready for Arsenal.

"He's been out for a long while and he didn't feel right," Solskjaer



told reporters. "When you've been out for such a while it's always going to take time until you're 100%."

"He wasn't ready [to face Burnley] because he's not really done too many games and he's had two in a few days and he just needed another day's recovery."

United midfielder Scott McTominay damaged knee ligaments in the win over Newcastle and Solskjaer said the 23-year-old could be out of action for about a month.

"I wouldn't expect him to be back within a few weeks," the Norwegian added. "I don't know if it's three or four weeks... We've just got to find a way through it."

United's win over Burnley lifted them to fifth in the table, while Arsenal dropped to 12th after losing to Chelsea on Sunday.

(Agencies)

VAR should be Premier League triumph, but it's an embarrassment

BY MARK OGDEN, SENIOR WRITER, ESPN FC

WHERE do you start with VAR? Seriously: which is the biggest problem with the video assistant referee system that has brought the Premier League to the brink of meltdown this season?

Is it the repeated disallowing of goals because of assorted body parts straying millimetres offside? Is it the endless wait for key decisions, such as penalty calls, to be resolved? Is it the absolute failure of a single match referee this season to walk a few yards to the side of the pitch to watch a replay of a contentious incident before deciding himself whether he was right or wrong in the first place? Or is the biggest problem, just maybe, the supporters inside the grounds who have started to rage at decisions against their team even when they are proven to be correct?

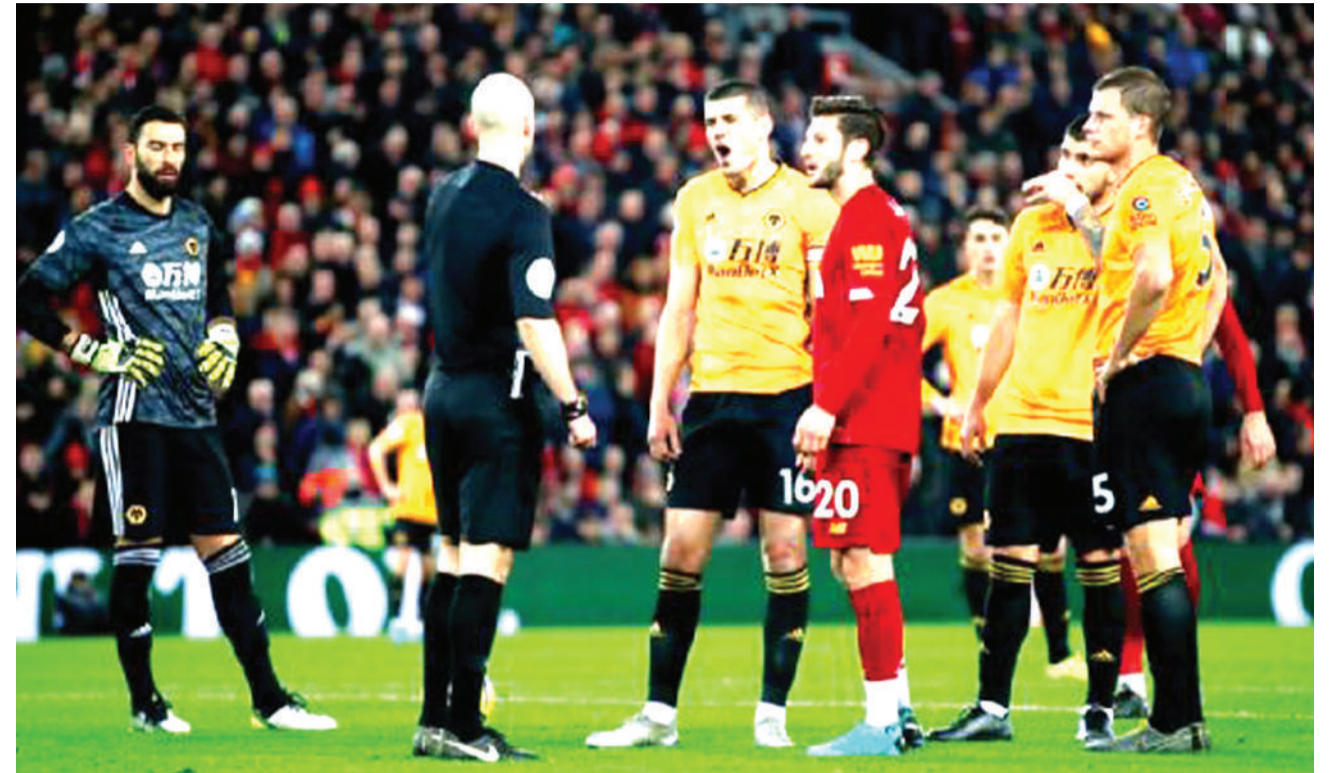
The answer, of course, is that all of the above have become major issues in their own right during this VAR-dominated Premier League season.

You can add complaining players and managers, too. Everyone has a right to moan when they have been on the wrong end of a bad decision, but we are now hearing players and managers complain when VAR gets it right, too.

"Some people are saying it gets the right decision, but we're the players on the pitch and it doesn't feel right to me," Wolves defender Conor Coady said after his team had lost 1-0 at Liverpool on Sunday following two key VAR decisions.

The first, when referee Anthony Taylor's decision to disallow Sadio Mane's goal for Liverpool following a handball call against Adam Lallana was overturned, and the second, when VAR ruled out Pedro Neto's goal after Jonny had strayed marginally offside in the build-up. Both decisions were correct, so what does Coady want? Decisions that keep everybody happy even if they are wrong?

Wolves were also on the receiving end of a tight VAR call during Friday's 3-2 win against Manchester City, when the visitors were awarded a penalty after Leander Dendoncker had stepped on Riyad Mahrez's foot. Match referee Martin Atkinson missed the foul, but when



Premier League officials are yet to rule on VAR decisions by using pitchside monitors. (Agencies)

VAR reviewed it and told Atkinson to award a penalty, Molineux erupted into loud indignation even though VAR had got it right.

The Wolves fans, Coady and many more before them are now using the old excuse of the villain in "Scooby-Doo" who, after being unmasked, claims he "would have gotten away with it but for those meddling kids." VAR has become those meddling kids.

Fans, players and managers have to accept that if a system has been introduced and it's getting decisions right, then complaints about it being unfair -- or, to paraphrase Coady's words, not feeling right -- are just excuses and a desperate attempt to pass the buck. Yes, VAR is proving to be unforgiving, like a speed camera set at 31 mph in a 30 mph zone, but how can it be fixed so that it becomes an acceptable addition to the game?

First of all, those involved in the game have to stop looking to blame VAR when it has proved to have been correct. Nothing will change until the temperature is lowered and the rants begin to subside.

Then there are obviously areas where VAR can, and should, be amended to make it workable and realistic. The offside rule is the first place to start because with VAR, it's

become a trap that only catches attacking players. In its current form, the offside rule is being allowed to suffocate the life and enjoyment from the game, with Neto's goal at Anfield a good example of the rule being stretched to the absolute limit of interpretation. Offside is offside and there will always be a line -- whether it comes in the form of a toe, shoelace or armpit -- but by changing the rule to favour the forwards, VAR could then reward attacking play and allow more goals.

Graeme Souness, the former Liverpool captain, suggested on Sky Sports at the weekend that a tweak to the law, whereby a player is offside if any part of his body is inside, would cut out the kind of controversies that we have seen so often this season. If that change was to be implemented, it would surely be more palatable for a goal to be given because a player's armpit or toe was fractionally offside rather than have it ruled out for the same reason. Football is about entertainment after all, and fans want to see goals.

Another change that's desperately needed is for match referees to consult the pitchside monitor for reviews rather than be left standing, finger in ear, waiting for a decision to be passed down by a fellow

referee watching on a video screen in a windowless room in Stockley Park. It would be quicker and would ensure that the referee on the pitch takes charge of the situation. It would also give a visible signal to supporters, players and managers that a review is underway and allow everybody to know precisely who is making the decision.

Accountability is crucial, but right now, the image that comes to mind is of a group of protracting boffins high-fiving each other in a video room whenever they catch another player offside or rule out another goal. The referee on the pitch has become a lightning rod, despite being taken out of the decision-making process once it goes to review at Stockley Park. Pitchside monitors are in place at every stadium, cutting lonely figures every time, but they work, as was proved during the 2018 World Cup and the Champions League.

Things must change with VAR, that is clear, but VAR in itself is not the problem. Those implementing it in the Premier League are making it look dysfunctional because of the way it is being used, but the fans and players also need to step back and stop blaming VAR when it is getting decisions right.

Emery: I wanted Ozil to play alongside Aubameyang and Lacazette at Arsenal

LONDON

UNAI Emery says he wanted Mesut Ozil to play alongside Alexandre Lacazette and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang at Arsenal, but he had to prioritise finding the right balance for his team.

The Germany international looked a forgotten man at times during Emery's tenure, but has been reintroduced in recent weeks under Freddie Ljungberg and Mikel Arteta.

The inability to find the right blend from the Gunners' roster of attacking talents was a source of frustration for Arsenal fans under Emery, but he believes he did what he could to make it work.

"There are games in which you see Mesut's brilliance, linking with the attack," he told BBC Sport.

"But also I had to find players around him in which he felt comfortable."

"Also, the team needed to feel solid and you have to, bit by bit, build a team that is aggressive, intense, as well as structured for good pressure."

"We also have to find a space for Mesut so he gives us an important part of the game which is his brilliant talent. To do so, I have to find the right connections between players, the right tactics."

"I was very motivated to try to find that. I wanted Lacazette, Aubameyang and Mesut to work together, each one of them with their own characteristics. But there were times when

I had to leave one of them out of the XI."

Emery also pointed to the impact of former Arsenal midfielder Aaron Ramsey, whose more energetic displays he felt were better suited to his pressing game.

The Wales international left at the end of the 2018-19 season, joining Serie A champions Juventus on a free transfer.

"We had Mesut or Ramsey playing. Ramsey was very capable of applying the pressure we demanded," Emery added.

"With Mesut there was less pressure but we had more capacity of having the ball and his brilliant combinations with the ball."



"I used to play tactically depending on the characteristics of our players. If the pressure was higher or not so high, aggressive or less aggressive."

"You try to find a team that is competitive and I found it last season, but sometimes, for one reason or another,

for instance, the injury of Lacazette, or Mesut being out for almost a month with the problems he had with the recent attempted robbery he was less available.

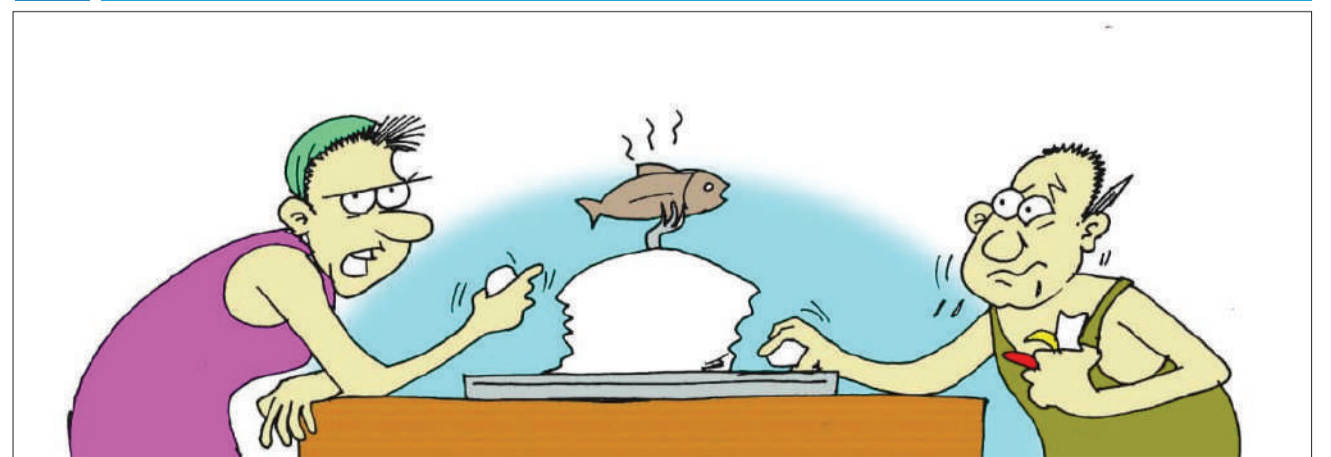
"There was a time when I couldn't use the three of them. The capacity to try to find how to put together the three different qualities of these players was a tactical motivation for me."

"Ozil is a very important player if you can find a way to make it work with other players."

"He has the talent that allows other players to be better, but when you want more aggressive pressure, he does not have the best qualities for that."

(Agencies)

Gwiji by David Chikoko



SPORT

VAR should be Premier League triumph, but it's an embarrassment

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT, PAGE 19

Singida United FC unveils six new players

By Correspondent Jumbe Ismailly, Singida

VODACOM Premier League's Singida United FC has unveiled six new players, including keeper Owen Chaima from Malawi, roped in in the current transfer window with a view to seeing to it the side stays in the domestic top flight.

Abdulrahman Sima, the outfit's Secretary General, was adamant they have started registering players believed to have what it takes to put the outfit in better position in the top flight.

"We are recruiting players we feel they can help us get out of the position we are presently in given it isn't in good position," Sima disclosed.

Sima pointed out players roped in include Athuman Iddi, Chaima, Ame Ally and Tumba Swedi that had previously been a Ruwu Shooting player.

"The players have completed terms with us and if the rest of the regulations will be completed, they will feature in our league encounter with Azam FC that will take place on Wednesday," he said.

The official disclosed his club will see to it the team completes registration of new players as of January 15, which has been set as the end of the transfer window.

The new players will include forwards from Burundi and Ghana.

A soccer lover in Singida, Saad Mhando, pointed out he supports Singida United efforts as most of the players are quite experienced.

Sima was adamant the squad's leadership has felt there is need for transforming the outfit via working on weaknesses which have led to the outfit's poor showing.

Rage: Yanga not ready to compete with Simba SC

By Correspondent Michael Mwebe

FORMER Simba Sports Club Chairman, Ismail Aden Rage, has said Young Africans SC (Yanga) are not ready to compete with their rivals.

Ahead of a derby clash with rivals Simba at National Stadium in Dar es Salaam on Saturday, Yanga are 10 points behind Vodacom Premier League leaders Simba, although they have played two matches fewer.

"Based on how they played against Biashara United and the past recent matches, I don't think Yanga are serious to compete with Simba," Rage told reporters when he was asked about the coming weekend's derby match.

Yanga interim head coach Charles Boniface Mkwasa will be involved in his yet another Dar derby but this time he is desperate to end Jangwani Street outfit's three years' winless streak against their bitter rivals.

Rage believes Mkwasa's task is nearly impossible and he warned the Jangwani Street-based squad not to expect anything from the contest. He advised them to go for dam-



Former Simba SC Chairman, Ismail Aden Rage.

age limitation.

"They need to be very cautious to avoid unforgettable embarrassment. If they are not careful, we could witness a shocking result never seen before in the history of the

derby," he confidently explained.

In a related development, Yanga's information officer, Hassan Bumbuli, said they are unlikely to use newly signed striker, Ditr

Nchimbi, in the derby match.

This comes after Nchimbi former club, Police Tanzania, had lodged a complaint to Tanzania Football Federation (TFF) Players' Status and

Legal Committee over Azam FC's decision to sell Nchimbi to Yanga when he was serving a season long loan at the Kilimanjaro-based club.

"We expect Nchimbi won't be eligible to play in the derby and a few more games. We were told his license was withheld due to a complaint," Bumbuli told reporters when questioned why Nchimbi did not play against Biashara United.

However, Bumbuli was quick to dismiss Nchimbi ineligibility as a big blow to Yanga pointing to the fact that they have a competitive squad as a result of good recruitment in the ongoing transfer window.

"We have good players, our squad is competitive enough to cope without Nchimbi. We have recruited well this time, you have seen Tariq Seif who scored in his debut yesterday," he disclosed.

The skillful goal getter came off the bench to notch the winner for Yanga in the side's encounter with Biashara United at National Stadium a day back.

"We also have the latest addition, Yikpe Gnamien from Ivory Coast," Bumbuli disclosed.

AT dismayed by low turnout of runners in National Championships

By Correspondent Joseph Mchekadona

ATHLETICS Tanzania (AT) has lamented that the low number of regions, which competed at the just ended National Championships, has affected the association's plans.

Ombeni Zavalla, AT Acting Secretary General, disclosed in an interview that the National Championships geared towards assessing athletes from all of the 31 regions of the country, but to their dismay, only 15 regions competed.

Prior to the championships, AT had announced each region's quota and said they will pay for accommodation for the athletes and officials who will attend the event which was held at Butimba Teachers Training College venue in Mwanza.

She said although athletes from the 15 regions competed AT did not get what they had hoped for.

Fifteen regions which competed at the event are Tabora, Dar es Salaam, Singida, Ruvuma, Geita, Morogoro, Mara, Dodoma, Simiyu, Urban West, South Unga, North Unga, South Pemba, North Pemba and hosts Mwanza.

"To be honest, we are not happy because the championships did not meet its purpose, our aim was to see athletes from all regions compete, but that was not the case as only athletes from 15 regions competed, this is not good development," she said.

Zavalla said there is no any penalty for regions which absconded the two-day event



Athletes compete in the 10km race of the 17th edition of the Karatu Sports and Cultural Festival which took place in Karatu, Arusha.

but she disclosed this will not portray a good picture to the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF).

The official pointed out AT will represent the report of the National Championships to the world athletics governing body.

She promised that this year AT will start preparations early on so that many regions are to compete.

"Of all the regions which did not attend the National Championships, there was no region which informed

us on the reasons for their failure to attend the event, but I think our late announcement is one of the reasons so next year (this year) we will try to host it early," she said.

The AT top official also said there was no any athlete who met qualifying time for the 2020 Olympics at the National Championships.

"First of all the field which hosted the event is not certified by IAAF and the athletes themselves did not meet the qualifying time," she disclosed.

"We selected those

who were at least better so that they can start camp to improve their time and if there is any Tokyo Olympics' qualifying event, they can go to try their luck," she said.

The National Championships, which was named Ngorongoro Crater National Athletics Championships, was opened by Nyamagana Constituency's Member of Parliament Stanslaus Mabula and closed by Mwanza Regional Sports Officer Mohamed Bitegeko.

South Unga were the overall champions after winning 26 medals, including 12 gold medals, 10 silver medals and four bronze medals, Singida were runners-up with 13 medals, which included seven gold medals, three silver and three bronze medals.

The showdown's third place went to Tabora as they collected eight medals, which included eight gold medals, one silver and a bronze.

Flexibles by David Chikoko

