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ISSN 0856 - 5434 ISSUE No. 9383 • PRICE: Tsh 1,000, Kenya sh100 TANZANIA THURSDAY 23 JANUARY, 2025

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1,000 acres of crops dry due to overlong drought

Observers' take on Chadema's 'historic polls, golden standard'

He also credited Mbowe for leading the party from having only five MPs to becoming the largest and leading party in the country, marking significant success for Chadema

By Guardian Reporters

DESIRE for change within the leading opposition party explains the victory of former Chadema Mainland vice chairman Tundu Lissu over veteran politician Freeman Mbowe, analysts say.

Lissu himself described what happened as a "historic election", adding that with its level of transparency and fairness, the party had set a "golden standard."

Dar es Salaam-based analyst Hamduni Maliseli said in an interview that Lissu's victory reflects Chadema members' desire for leadership change, meanwhile as the closely election shows deep rifts and the need to heal those cleavages.

The outcome shows divided support for the incoming chairman, which implies need for careful attention to fostering party unity in moving forward, he stated.

The two former contestants must now fulfill their promises of cooperation to ensure that party unity is maintained, he said

Vincent Mpepo, an assistant lecturer at the Open University of Tanzania, said that Chadema's internal election process is a positive example for other parties as it was transparent and fair, a mood that should characterise the party beyond its election period.

> **He emphasized the importance of building a party that respects democracy and holds free and transparent elections, while the incoming party leader...**

Dr Joshua Mwaipape, a lecturer at the University of Dodoma, was emphatic that democracy had triumphed, with Lissu emerging as the leader that members and other party supporters wanted.

This election has encouraged party members, especially the youth, to be courageous and is rejuvenating Chadema for future growth, he suggested.

Alex Simoni, a resident of Kahama municipality, said the election showed Chadema's political maturity, expressing the hope that Lissu's win bodes well for members' faith in the

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Tundu Lissu (C), Chadema newly elected National Chairman, addresses national electoral assembly shortly being declared the winner in Dar es Salaam early yesterday. Others are John Heche (L) the party's Vice Chairman (Mainland) and outgoing National Chairman Freeman Mbowe. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala

Work to stem viral scares, Samia directs chief medic

By Guardian Correspondent, Dodoma

THE government has demanded the Chief Medical Officer to the government to work round the clock to stem disease outbreaks that could bring about the risk of international travel restrictions.

President Samia Suluhu Hassan issued this directive at the swearing-in ceremony for newly appointed top government. Laying accent on the role of the chief medical officer, she urged the incoming office holder Dr Grace. Magembe to closely work with her team to control disease outbreaks especially on the country's borders.

The team must diligently carry out their duties, she said, asserting that the role of the chief medical officer is crucial to forestall disasters, so it demands considerable alertness.

> **Let the independence of the judiciary be observed effectively to deliver justice for all Tanzanians**

Disease outbreaks could result in our country being labelled by other nations as a disease hotspot, potentially leading to travel restrictions, she reminded the audience

She similarly asked the newly sworn-in judges of the Court of Appeal to uphold the independence of the Judiciary and ensure the fair and impartial administration of justice.

"Let the independence of the judiciary be observed effectively to deliver justice for

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President Samia Suluhu Hassan addresses various leaders shortly after swearing in judges of the Court of Appeal at Chamwino State House in Dodoma yesterday. Photo: State House

UHI: Minister tasks NHIF with reaching out to targeted groups

By Guardian Correspondent, Dodoma

EMPLOYEES of the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) need to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of all citizens by ensuring access to essential healthcare services, the government has demanded.

Jenista Mhagama, the Health minister, stated this need when inaugurating the NHIF board of directors here on Tuesday, asking the board to ensure the effective implementation of the new Universal Health Insurance (UHI) Act of 2023.

NHIF conduct needs to meet expectations and needs of the people, spelling out a series of instructions, including the need for the board to establish robust strategies to expand the fund's reach to more citizens within six months.

One of the immediate tasks is to ensure efficient implementation of the universal health insurance law and its proper execution to advance its objectives, she stated.

The minister asked board members to work closely with the NHIF management, the Health permanent secretary and the relevant parliamentary committee to ensure the successful implementation of what the Act stipulates.

Its implementation needs to meet expectations of Tanzanians, she stated, stressing the need to create a strong universal health insurance system.

The government wishes that Tanzania becomes a global model for managing insurance systems through universal insurance cover, she stated.

She was of the view that board members can safeguard current achievements if they exercise sufficient diligence, using the surplus funds wisely.

"If we continue on this path, the fund

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Horn of Africa zone set for below-average season's rains

NAIROBI

THE Greater Horn of Africa will experience below-normal rainfall during the March to May rainy season as the region passes through a spate of climate variability, a regional organisation has stated.

Dr Abdi Fidar, an officer in charge at the International Climate Prediction and Application Center (ICPAC) tied with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), said the IGAD region faces increasing climate variability and extremes, including droughts, floods, and rising temperatures.

Understanding these risks and fostering collaboration to mitigate their impacts is vital, he said, urging all ICPAC stakeholders to take proactive steps to reduce the impacts on the most vulnerable populations.

The seasonal climate forecast issued by ICPAC asserts that below-average rainfall is expected in much of Somalia, eastern and northern Kenya, southern and north-eastern Ethiopia, in particular.

The same prediction largely applies for Djibouti, coastal Eritrea, western South Sudan, southern and western Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and north-western Tanzania, the statement indicated.

"This season is critical for the equatorial

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Horn of Africa zone set for below-average rains season

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part of the Greater Horn of Africa region and usually contributes up to 60 percent of the annual rainfall in many parts," it explained.

ICPAC further forecasted a higher likelihood of warmer-than-normal conditions across most parts of the Greater Horn of Africa, with the highest probabilities -- more than 75 percent -- over Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, northern Somalia, and northern Kenya.

The predicted climatic conditions for the season are likely to have gender-differentiated impacts on the affected populations, with more adverse effects expected to be pronounced among women, children, older persons, and persons with disabilities, the statement stated.

Observers' take on Chadema's 'historic polls, golden standard'

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stressed the opposition's role in holding the government accountable, urging Lissu and vice-chairman John Heche to tour the country to unite the party, dissolve factions and recruit potential election candidates.

Mabula Shija, in Mwanza, expressed gratitude to the former chairman for facilitating a peaceful transition, urging him to assist in uniting the party.

Marwa Mniko, resident in Musoma, was of the view that the Lissu and Heche leadership was a prelude to greater success in the general election late this year.

In his farewell speech, Mbowe handed over responsibilities to the new leaders, urging them to "heal the wounds" caused by the election.

He emphasized the importance of building a party that respects democracy and holds free and transparent elections, while the incoming party leader, in his remarks, declared that the former chairman will be a lifelong member of the central committee.

He also credited Mbowe for leading the party from having only five MPs to becoming the largest and leading party in the country, marking significant success for Chadema.

UHI: Minister tasks NHIF with reaching out to targeted groups

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will have reserves sufficient for 10 to 15 years. This requires patriotic decisions aligned with our national interests," the minister intoned.

The board needs to educate the public on the new insurance packages recently introduced, she said, pointing out that up to the start of this month, the government had disbursed 8.9trn/- to the health sector cumulatively since 2021.

Elibariki Kingu, the chairman of the parliamentary committee on Health and combating HIV, advised that implementing UHI Act o requires collaboration with a number of ministries.

He cited Agriculture and Mining ministers as essential in liaison work to include small-scale miners and farmers via cooperatives in the fund to reach membership targets, he said.

Dr Irene Isaka, the NHIF director general, had earlier noted that the outgoing board had a vital contribution in drafting the universal health insurance bill and oversaw an increase in members from 1.2m in 2020 to 1.24m last year.

The board put up efforts in verifying members and retirees, approving benefit packages and oversaw the rollout of information and communication technology to promote the universal health cover project, she stated.

Challenges faced by the previous board included rising o expenditure on non-communicable diseases, lack of insurance culture among citizens and the voluntary nature of health insurance enrolment, she stated.

Other challenges being faced are delayed repayment of loans issued to the government by the fund and increased costs of serving retirees, she stated.

Despite these challenges the board had reduced deficits, raised the fund's surplus from 47bn/- in 2020 to 111bn/- at the start of this month, enhanced the registration of participating service providers and reduced claim processing times, she explained.

Dr Baghayo Saqware, the Tanzania Insurance Regulatory Authority (TIRA) commissioner, stated that NHIF accounts for more than 80 percent of health insurance services in the country, with the private sector contributing less than 20 percent.

The insurance sector was growing due to favourable policies introduced by the government, he added.

Finance minister Dr Mwigulu Nchemba (L) receives samples of new 10,000/-, 5,000/-, 2,000/- and 1,000/- banknotes from Governor of Bank of Tanzania Emmanuel Tutuba in Dar es Salaam yesterday. The banknotes will circulate alongside the existing ones starting February 1. Photo: Courtesy of Ministry of Finance

Work to stem viral scares, Samia directs chief medic

FROM PAGE 1

Tanzanians," she said, demanding that judges be a catalyst for change in their respective spheres of service.

Chief Justice Prof. Ibrahim Juma, noted that appointing additional judges to the Court of Appeal will help address challenges such as case backlogs.

Increasing the number of judges from 35 to 39 will assist in reducing the backlog of cases and similarly cut the number of inmates in remand prisons, he said.

He cited remarks from the Prisons commissioner general last year that appointing more judges had significantly reduced overcrowding of remandees.

With the prison system's capacity set at 29,000 inmates, the number has been cut significantly to allow for 2,000 more inmates, the service chief had asserted.

Dr Magembe, appointed to replace Prof Tumaini Nagu, previously served as deputy permanent secretary for Regional Administration and Local Governments in the |President's Office (PO-RALG).

Meanwhile, the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) has announced plans to mobilize immediate support to help Tanzania combat its latest Marburg virus outbreak.

In a statement issued yesterday, Africa CDC confirmed the deployment of a team of 12 public health experts within the next 24 hours.

"This followed Tanzania's declaration of an outbreak in the north-western Kagera region, with one confirmed case and 25 suspected cases reported." the statement affirmed.

The multidisciplinary team will include epidemiologists, risk communication specialists and experts in infection prevention, control and laboratory diagnostics, it said.

Their mission is to assist in surveillance, diagnostics, case management and community engagement efforts to curb the spread of the highly infectious and often fatal disease, it elaborated.

Africa CDC emphasized its collaboration with Tanzanian authorities to ensure coordinated efforts and to secure high-level political commitment for the response.

Jean Kaseya, the Africa CDC director general, said the continental public health agency is committing $2m to bolster Tanzania's immediate response measures, for deploying experts, enhancing diagnostic capabilities and supporting case management systems.

"Africa CDC stands firmly with Tanzania in this critical moment. Building on Tanzania's commendable response during the 2023 outbreak, we are confident that swift and decisive action, combined with our support and those of other partners, will bring this outbreak under control," he said.

The latest outbreak marked the East African country's second encounter with the deadly virus, following a previous outbreak in March 2023 that resulted in nine cases and six deaths, on the basis of Africa CDC data.

Lawyers representing former Ambassador Dr Willibrod Slaa, Peter Madeleka (C) and Edson Kilatu (L) along with the ACT-Wazalendo Secretary General Ado Shaibu (R) leave at the High Court in Dar es Salaam yesterday shortly after filing a petition seeking bail for Dr Slaa. Photo: Correspondent Imani Nathaniel

Critical minerals, climate action: South Africa's G20 set priorities

DAVOS

SOUTH African President Cyril Ramaphosa outlined the objectives and priorities for the country's G20 presidency.

Addressing delegates at the World Economic Forum (WEF), he stated that a significant focus for South Africa will be to utilise critical minerals to foster inclusive growth and development.

He stated, "As we confront the challenges of the 21st century - from climate change to pandemics, to addressing the challenge of from poverty to terrorism, from migration to artificial intelligence – we are in many ways once again called upon to harness that most powerful, and that most enduring of human attributes: mutually beneficial cooperation and collaboration."

Ramaphosa stressed the importance of the G20 creating its own framework for green industrialisation and investment.

Having taken over the leadership from Brazil in December, South Africa will hand it over to the United States at the end of 2025, working closely with both nations throughout the upcoming year.

He also pledged to highlight the challenges posed by climate change to developing countries during this landmark G20 presidency, the first ever held by an African nation.

The 2025 Davos gathering is centred on the theme, 'Collaboration for the Intelligent Age'. South Africa that holds the G20 presidency the first by an African Nation will pass on the rotational leadership of the world's top economies to the United States at the close of 2025.

Uganda, China hold symposium to elevate tourism, cultural exchange

KAMPALA

UGANDA and China hosted a one-day symposium in Kampala to promote tourism development and cultural exchange between the two sides.

The inaugural Uganda-China Tourism and Cultural Symposium, held on Tuesday under the theme "Bridging Cultures, Enhancing Cooperation: Unlocking Uganda-China Tourism Potential," brought together government officials, tourism industry stakeholders, and tour operators from Uganda, China, and the East African region.

Highlighting the vast opportunities for Uganda and China to collaborate in boosting tourism, Ugandan Minister of Tourism, Wildlife, and Antiquities Tom Butime said both sides could tap the potential of their cultural heritage and scenic attractions to advance the development of the two countries.

Uganda is eager to tap into China's booming outbound tourism market, drawing inspiration from China's successful domestic tourism strategies while exploring investment opportunities in the sector, the minister said.

"Uganda places great importance on the Chinese market, which represents a valuable opportunity to grow our tourism sector. China's rich cultural heritage and rapidly growing outbound tourism make it a natural partner for us as we strive to develop new tourism products," the minister said.

Chinese Ambassador to Uganda Zhang Lizhong said the symposium represents a significant milestone in Uganda-China cooperation within the tourism sector, infusing new vitality into the China-Uganda friendship. Despite different traditions, both countries share a vision of integrating history, culture, and modern civilisation into tourism development.

He said that in China, tourism plays a crucial role in alleviating poverty, creating employment opportunities, and boosting foreign exchange earnings, all of which drive economic growth and social progress.

"China is willing to work with Uganda closely to deepen tourism cooperation, tap the potentials of tourism in promoting social economic transformation, and encourage more Chinese tourists to visit Uganda to further enhance cultural and people-to-people exchanges," Zhang said.

Dai Bin, president of the China Tourism Academy, presented a paper on cultivating a Ugandan model for China-Africa tourism cooperation, noting that with the rapid recovery of global tourism, China-Uganda tourism exchange and cooperation is entering a new phase of strategic opportunity.

He emphasized the need for Uganda to enhance efforts in tourism promotion and policy coordination targeting the Chinese market, including organising tourism exhibitions, seminars, and promotional events in China. Dai also suggested that Uganda leverage the "friendly cities" mechanism of cooperation between Ugandan and Chinese cities to bolster tourism promotion.

The symposium also featured an exhibition with Ugandan tour operators showcasing their products. Cultural performances, including a traditional Chinese lion dance and display of traditional Ugandan and Chinese attire, added vibrancy to the event.

Tourism is Uganda's leading foreign exchange earner, contributing over one billion U.S. dollars annually, according to the Ugandan ministry.

Corporal Gladness Sizya of Mbozi District Police Gender and Children's Desk in Songwe Region speaks to pupils at Nsenya Secondary School yesterday on the dangers of gender-based violence and child abuse as part of the ongoing campaign dubbed 'Tell Them before They Are Ruined'. Photo: Courtesy of Issa Mwadangala of Songwe Police

2024 hottest year ever on record, notes TMA

By Guardian Reporter

THE Tanzania Meteorological Authority (TMA) has reported that the year 2024 broke global temperature records with an increase of 1.55°C.

Speaking at a media workshop on the seasonal rainfall forecast for the main rainy season (Masika), TMA Acting Director General, Dr Ladislaus Chang'a, noted that the temperature rise was observed globally, while Tanzania experienced a 0.7°C increase–the highest recorded locally.

"This is all due to climate change that the world is currently facing. Records since 2023 show that global temperatures will continue to rise," said Dr Chang'a.

He emphasised the need for intensified global efforts to mitigate climate change and reduce the rising temperatures.

In another development, the acting Director General expressed gratitude to the government for continued investments in meteorological infrastructure and human resources.

"Last year, the government facilitated the completion of two radar systems in Kigoma and Mbeya, making Tanzania a regional leader in meteorological infrastructure within East Africa," Dr Chang'a said.

Regarding expertise, he highlighted that TMA has a workforce of 560 employees, with 80 (15 percent of the staff) currently undergoing training both locally and internationally.

"With this investment, we have the opportunity to continue being a hub of excellence in meteorology in Africa. We have the reasons and the capability, thanks to the government's commitment. I mentioned this before Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa during the launch of the World Meteorological Organisation's 'Systematic Observation Financing Facility' project in Dodoma," he added.

Meanwhile, TMA has deployed two meteorology experts to Burundi to build the capacity of their counterparts in that country.

"Our colleagues in Burundi requested assistance, and we are sending two experts to help train their staff at the Burundi Meteorological Authority. This demonstrates how far we have come in developing skilled professionals, thanks to the government's investment in TMA's capacity-building initiatives," Dr Chang'a concluded.

Govt pledges to elevate investment climate in gambling industry, says finance minister

By Guardian Reporter

THE government has pledged to enhance the investment climate in the gambling industry, recognising it as a significant revenue source for supporting economic and social development.

Deputy Finance Minister, Hamad Hassan Chande, made the announcement in Dar es Salaam yesterday during the introduction of ITHUBA Company as the new operator of the National Lottery, following its successful bid in a tender process conducted by the Gaming Board of Tanzania (GBT).

Chande expressed pride in the steps taken to implement the National Lottery transformation project, describing it as a symbol of hope, opportunity, and development. He noted that every lottery ticket purchased not only offers a chance to win but also contributes to national development.

He emphasised ITHUBA's appointment as a reflection of its expertise and strong track record in running national lotteries across Africa, including in South Africa, Uganda, and other countries.

"I believe ITHUBA is well-prepared to manage the National Lottery effectively and achieve the anticipated success. This marks a new chapter in transforming Tanzania's gambling sector," Chande said.

Globally, national lotteries have demonstrated their ability to generate revenue for national priorities, and Tanzania's National Lottery will follow suit by ensuring its proceeds directly benefit the nation. Chande called on the GBT to uphold transparency, accountability, and integrity in overseeing the lottery's operations.

"The National Lottery is more than a game–it's a vital tool for economic empowerment and community development, including nurturing sports talents. As noted by GBT Chairman Ambassador Modest Mero, 50 percent of the revenue from this lottery's will support development of sports in Tanzania. This partnership unites the government, operators, and participants in building a brighter future for all," Chande said.

GBT Chairman Ambassador Modest Mero praised ITHUBA for its solid reputation and experience in managing national lotteries across Africa. He expressed confidence in ITHUBA as a reliable partner for operating Tanzania's National Lottery.

"This company has demonstrated the capability and commitment needed to deliver the National Lottery we envisioned. We, as the board, are grateful for the government's support in this initiative through the Ministry of Finance," Mero stated.

ITHUBA will operate the National Lottery for eight years, during which it will invest over $20 million in the business. The initiative is expected to create diverse development opportunities and sustainable employment, boosting the economy and uplifting communities.

Nigerian regulator endorses hike in mobile phone tariffs

LAGOS

THE Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) has approved up to 50 percent increase in mobile phone tariffs.

This is, however, far short of the 100 percent hike telecommunications operators have been requesting for the past six years.

Mobile phone tariffs in Nigeria have remained unchanged for over 10 years.

Analysts say the depreciation of the naira combined with inflation have significantly increased operational costs for telecoms companies.

However, the regulator said it had to cap the increase in order to reach a balance between enabling sustainable industry growth and the need to protect consumers.

It added that higher tariffs will allow operators to invest in infrastructure and fund innovation projects which will ultimately benefit users through improved services.

Telecoms companies have also been told that they need clearly communicate their price changes to customers.

They also have to demonstrate what the NCC described as "measurable improvements in service delivery" alongside the increases.

As the cost of living soars in Nigeria, consumer advocacy group, the National Association of Telecommunications Subscribers, has vowed to contest the decision.

Rwanda hosts conference to promote digital transformation in Africa - govt

KIGALI

DELEGATES at the Annual Conference of the African Engineering and Technology Network (AFRETEC) on Tuesday called for concerted efforts to accelerate inclusive digital transformation across Africa.

Joseph Nsengimana, Rwanda's minister for education, said that inclusive digital growth would enable Africa to respond to challenges by accelerating job creation, improving service delivery, and fostering sustainable and inclusive growth.

"As we embrace this new era of technological advancement, we must prioritise inclusiveness, ensuring that every individual, regardless of their background, is equipped to contribute to and benefit from the collective transformation of our society," he said.

The minister urged for strong collaboration between African economies and the African Engineering and Technology Network to identify skills gaps and develop solutions needed for the digital revolution in Africa.

"As the world goes digital, African policymakers and leaders must make concerted efforts to bridge the digital divide by ensuring inclusive and sustainable digital growth. We are proud to work with universities across the continent to drive inclusive digital growth," said Raymond Ndikumana, deputy vice chancellor of strategic planning and administration at the University of Rwanda.

Conrad Tucker, director at Carnegie Mellon University Africa, said that the core of AFRETEC's mission is to advance the next generation of tech leaders across Africa.

He explained that the technology network is not just about bringing people together but also about driving innovation and creating new solutions critical for Africa's future.

"We are here to create, to ensure that the next generation of young talent has meaningful, dignified jobs that advance the continent's innovation and provide opportunities for generations to come," he said.

Held from Monday to Tuesday, the annual conference dubbed "Inclusive Digital Growth Through Collaboration," brought together engineers, technologists, policymakers, and industry leaders in Kigali, Rwanda's capital city, for discussions about innovative solutions for bridging the digital divide and leveraging technology to drive inclusive and sustainable growth on the continent.

Justin Nyamoga (L), Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Regional Administration and Local Government, chairs a meeting with government officials in Dodoma yesterday. Looking on (2nd R) are Mohamed Mchengerwa, Minister of State in the President's Office (Regional Administration and Local Government) and his Deputy Zainabu Katimba (R). Photo: Correspondent Ibrahim Joseph

Minister attributes influx of tourists in Zanzibar to peace

By Guardian Reporter, Zanzibar

ZANZIBAR Minister for Tourism and Heritage, Mudrik Ramadhan Soraga, has said the government recognises and takes pride in the tourism sector, saying that many tourists choose Zanzibar due to peace and stability prevailing in the archipelago.

Speaking to tourism stakeholders here yesterday, Soraga emphasised the need for everyone's responsibility to protect the peace in the country.

He mentioned that one of the successes, such as the first tourism and investment exhibition held in October 2024 at the Nyamanzi grounds, was a result of the peace and stability present in Zanzibar.

However, he acknowledged that occasionally, there may be a few incidents of breach of peace even in tourist resorts; however the security and defence committees in various regions and districts are vigilant in controlling the incidents.

"For example, our ministry was not pleased with the incident involving tour guides and officers performing their duties at Fumba Marine Reserve. We appreciate that the authorities took action, and we held several meetings to provide the appropriate guidelines, and we have since been informed all is well," he explained.

He emphasised that in preparation for the second exhibition, which will take place at the end of May, this year instead of October, all citizens should continue to maintain peace and demonstrate hospitality to ensure that Zanzibar remains attractive and major destination for tourists from various countries.

"We all know that peace is a treasure that should not be tested because once it is lost, no amount of money can buy it back. Losing it might be easy, but restoring it is difficult. Let us fulfil our duty to maintain peace for the economic benefit of individuals and our nation," he stated.

Marketing Director at Tourism Commission, Rahma Sanya, mentioned that the second tourism and investment festival will have an even greater appeal, with exciting events being underway, which will be announced later.

In addition, Sanya, who is also Acting Executive Secretary of the commission, revealed that in June, this year Zanzibar will host a major conference for aviation organisations in Africa for the first time.

She said the event, which will have 500 participants and bring together airlines from around the world, is very important for Zanzibar's tourism development. It is expected to encourage more airlines to start flights to the island.

"Let us remember that when the heads of these organisations arrive here, they will explore various opportunities related to air travel, including the possibility of starting flights and landing at our airports. We must be ready to welcome them, show them hospitality, and provide the cooperation they will need," said Sanya.

The meeting was also attended by leaders and representatives of tourism and hotel associations who said they were prepared to create a conducive environment and provide the necessary support to make the exhibition a success.

> **...Losing it might be easy, but restoring it is difficult. Let us fulfil our duty to maintain peace for the economic benefit of individuals and our nation**

China, AU see achievements in diplomatic, economic ties

ADDIS ABABA

CHINA and Africa have enjoyed remarkable achievements in their diplomatic and economic relations amid deepening collaboration in international and regional affairs, Chinese and African Union (AU) officials have said.

They made the remarks on Monday at the new compound of the Mission of China to the AU in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, where a gala is held to celebrate the start of Chinese New Year, or Spring Festival.

The Spring Festival falls on Jan. 29 this year, ushering in the Year of the Snake, according to the Chinese lunar calendar.

Hu Changchun, head of the Chinese Mission to the AU, told the event that the overall characterization of China-Africa relations has been elevated to an all-weather community with a shared future for the new era.

"No matter how international and regional circumstances change, China is always Africa's most reliable friend, the most reliable partner in African pursuit of development, and Africa's strongest supporter on the international stage," he said.

The Chinese government is committed to working with African friends to implement the outcomes of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Beijing Summit, carry out the "10 partnership actions," and work together on the path toward modernization, Hu said.

Monique Nsanzabaganwa, deputy chairperson for the African Union Commission, said AU-China cooperation has achieved gratifying and fruitful results during the previous years, noting China's 35-year-long tradition of dispatching its foreign minister to Africa on their first overseas trips at the start of a year.

"In recent years, the political mutual trust between the African Union and China has continued to deepen, and the two sides have closely cooperated in international and regional affairs," Nsanzabaganwa said.

She noted that China has always firmly supported Africa's struggle against colonialism, power politics and racial discrimination, for which the African Union is deeply grateful.

According to Nsanzabaganwa, 2025 marks the first year for the implementation of the outcomes of the 2024 FOCAC Beijing Summit, and the AU is committed to strengthening the deep synergy of development strategies with China and working together to set a benchmark for international cooperation.

Akili Platform Tanzania (APT) Executive Director Roghat Robert speaks with leaders of Tanzania Women Chamber of Commerce (TWCC) from Tabora Region and Western Zone who visited at the organization's offices in Tabora on Tuesday to exchange ideas on uplifting youth, women and special groups economically. Photo: Correspondent

Police hold over 5,000 drivers over various road safety issues

By Correspondent Elizabeth John, Njombe

POLICE in Njombe Region have arrested 5,920 drivers for various road safety violations, with one having his licence revoked.

Njombe Regional Police Commander Mahamoud Banga said this here yesterday when speaking to journalists during his monthly press briefing.

"One driver was issued with a warning, and 5,927 drivers were fined," he said.

Banga explained that the arrests resulted from an operation conducted by the police across various areas in Njombe Region.

He also urged Njombe residents to refrain from sabotaging national infrastructure, including water systems, and condemned acts of cruelty and the pursuit of quick wealth, which often lead to criminal activities.

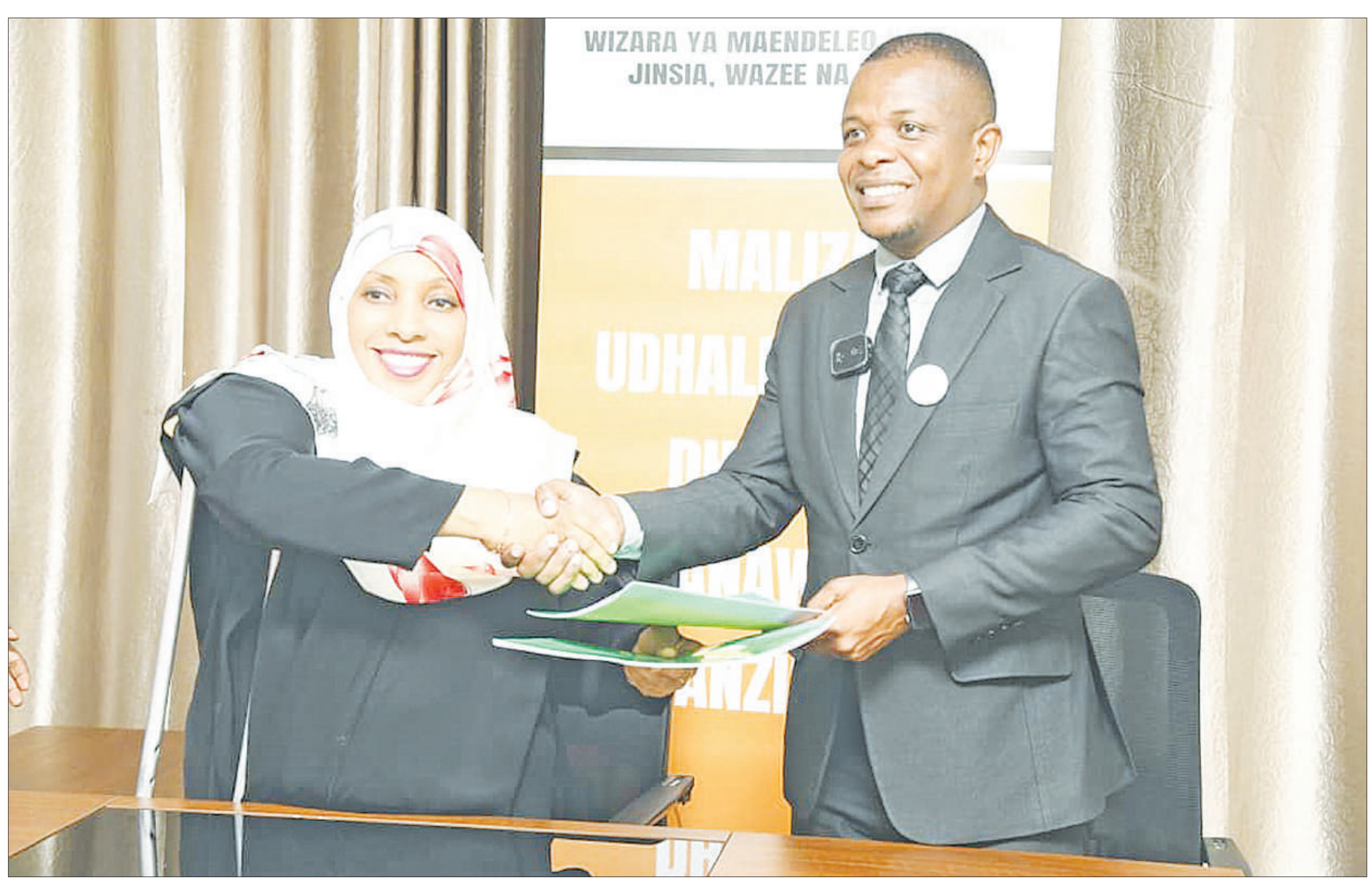
Furthermore, Banga highlighted the efforts of the police force in preventing traffic-related incidents by providing education to drivers, vehicle owners, schools, communities and the general public.

He emphasised that the educational programmes aim to remind drivers of motor vehicles about the laws and regulations necessary to ensure their safety while on the road.

However, Banga called on drivers to adhere to road safety regulations to avoid accidents that result in injuries or loss of lives.

Meanwhile, some residents of Njombe Region, including Ibrahim Mbata, expressed concern over certain drivers who continue to ignore road safety laws.

"We urge the police to continue educating drivers and conducting regular vehicle inspections because the violations are still costing people's lives," said Mbata.



Abeida Rashid Abdallah (L), Permanent Secretary in Zanzibar's Ministry of Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children and Tengeru Community Development Institute Rector Dr Bakari George exchange documents in the isles yesterday shortly after signing a cooperation agreement on experience exchange. Photo: Correspondent

UN seeks $910 million for humanitarian crisis in Nigeria's northeast - documents

ABUJA

THE United Nations will this week appeal for $910 million to help tackle a humanitarian crisis in northeastern Nigeria, which has been in the grip of insurgency since 2009 and was hit by flooding last year, documents made public on Wednesday show.

The UN documents seen by Reuters showed that 7.8 million people need help in the three northeastern states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe, and the UN aims to help 3.6 million of them.

At $910 million, it is the most expensive humanitarian crisis in West and Central Africa, ahead of Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, the documents showed.

Nigeria is also grappling with a cost of living crisis that has seen inflation accelerate to its highest level in nearly three decades, propelled by skyrocketing food prices.

The UN has previously said Nigeria's northeast risks becoming a forgotten crisis as the humanitarian focus has shifted to crises elsewhere such as Ukraine, Gaza and Sudan.

A joint report by the government and UN in November said Nigeria faces one of its worst hunger crises with more than 30 million people expected to be food-insecure this year.

President Bola Tinubu's economic reforms, including scrapping a fuel subsidy and foreign exchange controls, have been blamed for worsening Nigeria's economic troubles. He says the reforms will put the economy on a stronger path to growth.

A three-wheeled rider carries pieces of mattress at Bagamoyo-ITV roads intersection in Dar es Salaam yesterday. The luggage hinders his rear view which is against road safety regulations. Photo: John Badi

'Let's all work together to prevent child abuse'

By Correspondent Elizabeth John, Njombe

PARENTS and guardians in Makambako Town Council, Njombe District, have been urged to work together to raise children and combat child abuse, particularly rape and sodomy to protect them from psychological and physical harm.

This appeal was made here recently by Samweli Kombe, Head of Early Childhood and Primary Education Department at Makambako Town Council, during a press briefing on the enrolment and commencement of early childhood and primary education.

Kombe stressed the urgent need for the community to address incidents of violence against young children to prevent mental trauma.

"We continue to face significant challenges with child abuse in Makambako. I strongly urge parents, guardians, and the wider community to take action on this alarming issue. Our children are losing their peace of mind. Let us work together to reduce cases of child abuse," Kombe stated.

He also reported that the council had surpassed its first-grade enrolment target, achieving 100.3 per cent, while enrolment for early childhood education stood at 70.1 per cent. Kombe attributed the shortfall in early education enrolment to many parents choosing to send their children to day care centres instead of pre-schools.

"Many parents prefer to enrol their children in day care centres, and by the time they turn six, they are unable to join our pre-schools. This is primarily because most of these centres are privately owned, often run by organisations or religious institutions. We are collaborating closely with social welfare officers to address this issue," he added.

Kombe also noted that Makambako Town Council continues to excel academically. In the 2023 national exams for fourth grade, the pass rate was 97 per cent, which rose to 98.2 per cent in 2024. Similarly, the seventh-grade pass rate improved from 92.6 per cent in 2023 to 94 per cent in 2024. He urged parents and the community to maintain their support for teachers, aiming for a 100 per cent pass rate in the future.

Some parents in Makambako, including Silvesta Sanga, highlighted that the tendency to enrol children in day care centres was the main challenge to increasing pre-school enrolment.

"We also call on the government to ensure that those accused of child abuse face legal action to end such acts," Sanga said.

Fish farmers appeal to TIC to address investment challenges in L. Victoria

By Guardian Reporter, Ilemela

SOME people engaged in cage fish farming in Lake Victoria have called on the Tanzania Investment Centre (TIC) to address their various challenges in order to help them make investments in conducive and supportive environment.

This request was made recently in Ilemela District by Simon Nzumbi, Human Resources and Administration Officer at Big Best Fish Cage Investment Company, during a presentation of the challenges faced by the company to the chairman of the TIC Board of Directors, Dr Binilith Mahenge.

Nzumbi outlined several issues, including frequent power outages, the encroachment of fishing areas by illegal fishermen, and the limited space available for constructing fish ponds.

He also emphasised the shortage of fish feed, which depends on costly imports, as well as delays in clearing project containers at the port, even though agents have already paid the required fees.

"The lack of 20,000 square metres of space has become a significant obstacle to our plans to produce 900 to 1,200 tonnes of tilapia per month by 2026," Nzumbi stated.

He further revealed that the company has so far stocked one million fish fingerlings in large cages, which are expected to mature and be ready for harvest by July 2025. By 2026, the company aims to expand from the current 112 cages to a total of 200 cages.

Addressing these concerns, Dr Binilith Mahenge, Chairman of TIC board, assured the company that the issues would be resolved, given the strategic importance of the investment to the region and the nation. The project is expected to generate 400 temporary and permanent jobs, as well as contribute to advancements in technology and capital inflow.

"Regarding the container delays, my team will prepare a report, and we will explore ways to expedite cargo handling. I believe that once you are registered with TIC and provide the necessary documentation, the process can be streamlined. Do not handle this alone—our office is here to support you," said Dr Mahenge.

Minister wants close inspection, supervision of govt employees

By Guardian Correspondent, Singida

MINISTER of State in the President's Office (Public Service Management and Good Governance) George Simbachawene has directed regional and district administrative secretaries across the country to supervise and monitor public service workers to ensure efficient service delivery.

This comes after a tendency whereby employees posted to certain areas are neither assigned tasks nor monitored to determine their daily performance.

Speaking yesterday during his one-day visit to Singida Region to receive a report on the state of public service delivery in the region, the minister said that a public service officer who fails to assign duties to an employee hampers the government's service delivery as the employee is still receiving the salary.

"There are people who fail to assign duties and at what time an employee is supposed to report at his or her work station," he said.

He stressed that public service officers must recognise that among their other responsibilities include assigning duties to any employee, ensuring they are productive from morning until the end of the working day. Otherwise, it is a loss to the government while the employee continues to receive a salary.

Simbachawene noted that some people wrongly think that matters related to public service are the sole responsibility of the Minister of Public Service, the Secretary-General of Public Service, and the Employment Secretariat. However, he emphasised that this is everyone's responsibility, and if managed properly, work performance and accountability will improve.

"The regional commissioner will receive an employee, but the employer refuses to assign duties. Research shows that some people are placed in positions but not task lazy workers," he said.

He also stated that regional commissioners should include public service matters in their development discussions, rather than leaving it solely to public service officers, some of whom mistreat employees.

"There is a lot of friction at the lower levels, but there are also very lazy employees who should not even be in public service, yet they are allowed to remain," he added.

Singida Regional Administrative Secretary, Dr Fatuma Mganga said that in the eight councils of the region, there are 11,690 employees out of 20,653 which is the workforce needed, leaving a shortfall of 8,693 employees.

She also mentioned that 4,497 out of 4,701 employees have been promoted, and the remaining 204 are still undergoing the necessary procedures for promotion.

Singida Regional Commissioner, Halima Dendego, assured the minister that all the directives he had issues will be dealt with accordingly without fail.

Workers continue with construction of new secondary school classrooms at Butata Village, Bukima Ward in Musoma Rural Constituency, Mara region as captured yesterday. The school is expected to open next month. Photo: Correspondent

Visit registered financial service providers only, residents advised

By Guardian Correspondent, Arusha

KARATU District Commissioner, Dadi Kolimba, has urged residents to utilise registered financial institutions that comply with laws and regulations to avoid unregistered service providers.

Speaking here yesterday during a visit by a team of experts from the Ministry of Finance to Karatu District, Arusha Region, Kolimba emphasised the importance of financial education for citizens in line with the government's directive to empower citizens with financial knowledge.

Kolimba highlighted ongoing complaints about some institutions offering loans without adhering to legal requirements, which resulted in the loss of collateral by borrowers.

"We have engaged financial service providers in the district, emphasising that their loans should not harm borrowers. Any violations will result in legal action. I urge residents to use formal financial services to avoid exploitative loans," he stated.

He added that the education campaign aims to help citizens understand their rights and the responsibilities of lenders, including interest rates and loan terms, before taking loans.

"I commend the government for ensuring its implementation. This programme will help citizens address economic challenges," Kolimba said.

He also advised borrowers to involve their spouses when taking loans to foster cooperation in case of repayment challenges and avoid family disputes.

Stanley Kibakaya, financial management officer at the Ministry of Finance, explained that the programme seeks to educate citizens and encourage the use of formal financial services.

In Karatu, the initiative targets traders, workers, financial service providers, microfinance promoters, tourism stakeholders, and beneficiaries of the 10 percent municipal loans.

"The third phase of this financial education programme began in January 2025 and will cover Arusha, Kilimanjaro, Mwanza and Mara regions," Kibakaya said.

He noted that the programme aligns with the Financial Sector Development Master Plan 2020/21-2029/30, aiming to reach 80 percent of citizens by 2025/26.

The team plans to visit areas in Karatu, including Endabash, Mang'ola, Baray, Rhotia Kati and Mbulumbulu. Topics will include personal financial management, savings, loans, insurance, investments, and retirement planning.

The first phase, which began in May 2024, reached 12 regions and 62 municipalities, targeting diverse groups such as entrepreneurs, public and private employees, farmers, students, microfinance promoters, and financial service providers.

> **The third phase of this financial education programme began in January 2025 and will cover Arusha, Kilimanjaro, Mwanza and Mara regions**

Police Sergeant Rojas Mmali (hiding his face) and militiaman Thomas Mkembela (R) are being escorted by police officers at Iringa District Court on Tuesday shortly before they were charged with the murder of Nashon Kiyeyeu. Photo: Correspondent Francis Godwin

Over 1,000 acres of various major crops dry due to overlong drought

By Guardian Correspondent, Arumeru

OVER 1,000 acres of various key crops have withered due to drought in Makiba Village, Arumeru District, Arusha Region,

For several years, Makiba canal has been a lifeline for over 5,000 farmers in the village and neighbouring areas, supporting the cultivation of maize, beans, bananas, cassava, and vegetables.

Speaking at different times yesterday, some farmers, including Athanas Sumari, expressed concern about their worsening livelihoods due to their crops drying up.

Sumari alleged that some influential individuals had diverted the canal's water for use on their large farms, leaving smallholder farmers in Makiba to suffer.

"The situation is extremely difficult for us farmers because our crops have dried up. If no action is taken, the impact will be severe, and we will be completely devastated," Sumari said.

Another farmer, Joseph Justo, explained that they were preparing to protest and take their grievances to Arumeru District Commissioner to demand restoration of the water supply from Makiba canal.

Justo added that some large-scale farmers at Doli had diverted the canal's water to irrigate their farms.

Pius Mmassy, another affected farmer, said that he had taken loans from banks and financial institutions but feared defaulting due to crop losses because of drought.

"We plead with the government to intervene because we farmers will be impoverished as we won't be able to repay the loans we took," Mmassy said.

Secretary of Makiba canal, Elieza Kisaka, claimed that a certain irrigation department official from the district (name held) had ordered the canal's water to be diverted.

He alleged that the official's instructions hampered water flow from the Doli canal to Makiba village resulting in the current crisis.

When contacted, Makiba Ward Executive Officer Godlisten Lema commended the farmers for peacefully demanding their rights through proper channels.

"I have reported this issue to Mbuguni Divisional Officer's office for further investigation so that action is taken against those responsible for diverting water from the source," Lema said.

Makiba Ward Councillor Samson Laizer stated that four proposals had been made to address the challenge, calling for their implementation to resolve the issue effectively.

New initiative creates 40,000 jobs in Kenya

NAIROBI

KENYA'S business process outsourcing (BPO) sector has created over 40,000 jobs recently, driven by the entry of new investors attracted by an enabling policy and regulatory environment, senior officials said yesterday.

John Tanui, principal secretary in the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Digital Economy, said that Kenya is leveraging its skilled workforce and supportive infrastructure to spur the growth of the BPO sector and generate employment opportunities for the youth.

"As an emerging space for our country, BPO is providing opportunities for digital workers. We have multinational companies that have set up shop here, and we expect to see increased demand for BPO services in the near future," Tanui said.

He made the remarks in Nairobi during the launch of a policy briefing on revitalizing the digital economy, an event attended by senior policymakers, industry leaders, regulators and founders of technology start-ups.

According to Tanui, Kenya is among Africa's leading economies, including South Africa, Egypt and Nigeria, that have developed vibrant BPO industries to combat youth unemployment and boost foreign exchange earnings.

The government has amended existing legislation to enhance the welfare and safety of local youth employed by multinational firms investing in outsourcing services, he added.

Highlighting major companies like Teleperformance, CCI and Samasource as key investors in Kenya's BPO sector, Tanui said that the government aims to create 500,000 jobs in this sector in the near future.

Dennis Itumbi, head of creative economy and special projects at the Executive Office of the President of Kenya, said that state interventions to stimulate the BPO sector's growth include governance reforms, skills development and improved access to electricity, computers and high-speed internet.

Additionally, the government has increased investments in digital hubs, introduced zero-rating for imported computers, and eliminated bureaucratic barriers to facilitate investments in the sector, which promotes remote work opportunities for the youth, Itumbi said.

He said that a presidential roundtable on accelerating BPO growth will be held in the first quarter of the year.

The Kenyan government is also reforming the tax regime and investing in training on emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, to promote online work opportunities, Itumbi added.

> **...We have multinational companies that have set up shop here, and we expect to see increased demand for BPO services in the near future**

Workers continue with expansion of Morogoro Road at Kimara Bucha area in Dar es Salaam yesterday by converting it into a six-lane highway. Photo: Correspondent Sabato Kasika

Farmers asked to plant trees, make money in carbon trade

By Correspondent Elizabeth John, Njombe

RESIDENTS of Njombe Region have been encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to plant trees to tap into international carbon credit market and boost their economy.

Maxon Msigala, Environmental Officer at Njombe Town Council, made the call yesterday during a tree-planting event at Lunyanywi wetland. The exercise was organised by Njombe Union of Women Miners. The initiative aims to combat climate change impact.

Msigala explained that carbon credits offsets are a lucrative business whereby those who plant sufficient trees could attract international companies, including big polluters like airline involved in purchasing carbon credits.

"They assess the volume of trees planted and calculate the amount of carbon absorbed, for which you receive payment," Msigala said.

He emphasised that this opportunity could significantly improve the economic status of farmers in Njombe.

"I urge everyone to participate actively to embrace development aligned with current global demands," Msigala added.

Saada Msangi, Secretary of women miners' association in Njombe Region, stated that planting trees is part of their efforts to support her fight against environmental degradation.

The opportunity to plant trees for carbon credit market is a crucial economic and environmental initiative for Njombe Region.

Call for collaborations to eradicate NTDs in Africa

KIGALI

HEALTH experts and researchers attending the second International Conference on Neglected Tropical Diseases Research in Africa in Kigali, Rwanda, on Tuesday called for effective collaboration and strong investments to eliminate neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) in Africa.

Speaking at the conference's formal opening, Noella Bigirimana, deputy director of the Rwanda Biomedical Center, emphasized the need for multi-sectoral collaboration through a One Health approach to eliminate NTDs.

"I call for strengthened multi-sectoral collaboration through the One Health Approach, which will not only contribute to the elimination of NTDs but also help achieve the World Health Organization (WHO) NTD Roadmap targets, the Sustainable Development Goals, and other continental and global strategic objectives," she said.

John Amuasi, executive director of the African Research Network for NTDs, highlighted that NTDs continue to pose significant threats to rural communities across Africa, perpetuating cycles of poverty and hindering socioeconomic development.

He said that these diseases, often overlooked and underfunded, disproportionately affect vulnerable populations in remote and underserved areas with limited access to basic healthcare, sanitation, and clean water.

Patrick Lammie, director of the Neglected Tropical Diseases Support Center, underscored the importance of a multi-faceted approach to eliminate NTDs, involving strong collaboration, robust research, and sustained investment. "Collaboration is crucial at all levels, from international partnerships and governmental initiatives to community engagement and local healthcare delivery," he said.

The conference, which brought together over 500 researchers, academics, and policymakers, aimed to explore innovative strategies to bridge the gap between research and implementation. It sought to ensure that knowledge translates into impactful solutions to combat NTDs.

Running from Jan. 20 to 22 under the theme "Partnering to Eliminate NTDs," the conference focuses on showcasing research that enhances NTD program implementation, prioritizing operational research to drive targeted funding and policy action, and fostering partnerships between African researchers and global stakeholders.

Speaking at the event, Mosoka Papa Fallah, acting director of Science, Research, and Innovation at the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, commended Africa's progress in eliminating NTDs.

"When a country has a clear target, a dedicated government approach, and robust collaboration mechanisms, we can successfully eliminate these diseases," he said, emphasizing the critical role of national targets, strong governmental leadership, and effective collaboration in achieving elimination goals.

The three-day conference features plenary sessions, technical symposia, breakout discussions, workshops, an innovation lab, and a poster tour. Areas of focus include integrating NTD programs for sustainability, advancing trachoma and onchocerciasis elimination, research on skin-related NTDs like Buruli ulcer and leprosy, a One Health approach for human and animal health, and leveraging geostatistical tools and artificial intelligence for better surveillance and intervention.

NTDs are a diverse group of conditions prevalent in tropical areas, thriving among impoverished communities. Caused by various pathogens, including viruses, bacteria, parasites, fungi, and toxins, NTDs have devastating health, social, and economic consequences, according to the WHO.

Significant progress has been made over the past decade. The population requiring NTD interventions decreased 31 percent between 2010 and 2023, from 2.19 billion to less than 1.5 billion. By the end of 2024, 54 countries had eliminated at least one NTD, according to the WHO.

> **Collaboration is crucial at all levels, from international partnerships and governmental initiatives to community engagement and local healthcare delivery**

Namibia's tourism occupancy rebounds, says chief executive

WINDHOEK

THE Hospitality Association of Namibia (HAN) has released its 2024 annual tourism occupancy report, showcasing continued growth in this vital sector of the southwestern African nation's economy.

With the national room occupancy rate reaching 54.48 percent, the industry surpassed 2019 levels, demonstrating a remarkable recovery from the pandemic's devastating impact.

"This is a significant achievement," HAN Chief Executive Gitta Paetzold said, adding that occupancy is nearly 3 percent higher than in 2023 and even surpasses the 2019 figure by 1 percent before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Paetzold highlighted the continued growth of key markets like Central Europe, the United States and Britain.

"Central Europe, as Namibia's most established and biggest source market, has even shown continued growth over the past two years, as are the markets of the United States and Britain," she noted while acknowledging that African and Asian markets are still recovering.

Paetzold, however, observed a decline in domestic tourism compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Looking ahead, Paetzold emphasised the importance of air connectivity to the country's tourism sector. She said that the strong performance of the Central European market is directly linked to easy access to Namibia through the direct airline connectivity between Windhoek, the Namibian capital, and the international hub in Frankfurt, Germany.

"While we look forward to seeing Windhoek connected directly to Munich as from April, as a hub for southern Germany/Austria and other southern European markets, it is imperative to add to Namibia's air access capacity, if we want to see the arrival numbers to Namibia grow in the future," she said. "We sincerely hope that very soon Namibia will pronounce itself clearly and prominently about its new visa policy envisaged to be introduced on April 1, to reassure our established and new potential travel markets that Namibia remains open and easily accessible for travellers from across the globe."

> **Central Europe, as Namibia's most established and biggest source market, has even shown continued growth over the past two years, as are the markets of the United States and Britain**

Children with disabilities attend a meeting on their rights organised by legal aid organisation Kaya Foundation at Tabata Segerea in Dar es Salaam, on Tuesday. Photo: Correspondent Sabato Kasika

UN provides $33.3m humanitarian support to Somalia in 2024, OCHA

MOGADISHU

THE United Nations (UN) relief agency has said that $33.3 million have been allocated for life-saving humanitarian assistance in Somalia in 2024.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said the funds allocated by the Somalia Humanitarian Fund (SHF) have focused on life-saving interventions targeted at underserved and hard-to-reach areas.

The OCHA said the funds have enabled 58 humanitarian partners to provide immediate response to predicted flooding, devastating drought conditions, and the need to enhance safety, security, and coordination.

The OCHA said the SHF had allocated funds through three reserve allocations and one standard allocation, complemented by three Central Emergency Response Fund allocations amounting to 10 million dollars that offered critical resources to respond to the cholera outbreak, provided urgent response to displacement, and helped mitigate the impact of projected below-average rains and La Nina conditions.

According to the OCHA, the 25-million-dollar standard allocation piloted the Integrated Response Framework and implemented multi-sectoral responses to prevent the deterioration in the severity of needs.

It added that the inclusion of women and girls and people with disabilities is ensured in every allocation, noting that 90 percent of the projects contribute in various ways to gender equality.

The SHF is a multi-donor, country-based pooled fund, established to support the timely allocation and disbursement of donor resources to address the most urgent humanitarian needs.

A sanitation worker cleans debris from a rain water trench along Bagamoyo Road at Mwenge area in Dar es Salaam, yesterday. Photo: John Badi

Kenya treasury wary of credit rating downgrade

NAIROBI

THE National Treasury of Kenya has said that the recent downgrade of the country's credit rating has significantly impacted its ability to borrow commercial loans from various credit sources.

"Rating downgrades lead to increased borrowing costs, limiting access to credit markets, low investor confidence, currency depreciation, and debt sustainability risk," the Treasury said in its 2025 Public Debt Management Strategy released in Nairobi yesterday.

In August 2024, the global credit ratings agency Standard & Poor's downgraded Kenya's long-term sovereign credit rating to B- from B due to weaker fiscal consolidation and increasing public debt.

The National Treasury said that Kenya's public debt remains sustainable but with a high risk of debt distress, as the nation's present value of public debt was 63 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP), against the benchmark debt threshold of 55 percent of debt to GDP.

The institution stated that it has to bring the present value of the public debt within the threshold until Nov. 1, 2028.

It also said that due to the downgrade, it intends to borrow 25 percent of its gross borrowing from external sources and 75 percent from the domestic market during the period.

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Taking A New Look At The News
ESTABLISHED IN 1995

Intent to cease use of NIN will hit govt more than individuals

THE notice has been posted that individuals who are yet to collect their national identification cards have 30 days to do so at district offices, The National Identification Authority (NIDA) is getting weary on the situation, and had lately moved the cards from village and street or ward offices to district headquarters. The surprising aspect is that if they don't turn up this will result in the suspension of using national identification numbers (NIN), now the sole element that the public desires.

It is unclear if there is no auxiliary legal empowerment or provision in law as to the use of the number, as different from holding the card itself, as the institution's CEO was intimating. The idea that those who do not collect the cards would find themselves blocked from use of NIN, the key component of identification for essential public services, Not picking up one's identity card in law can be called a tort, that is, an ordinary error, whereas freezing the NIN is potentially a breach of individual right.

Contrary to what the CEO stated that the NIN can be withdrawn at will, it isn't the holder of NIN who would fail to use the number but NIDA would be blocking access to confirmation of that number by public institutions when the need arises.

The idea that this blocking of access is punishment for not having picked up the card in which the number is embedded might not be really convincing for this or that public entity. They would resort either to other forms of identification or use earlier access to validate identity for that individual, that the lack of access isn't their fault.

Explaining the move as intended to address the backlog of uncollected cards is valid only up to a point, as this is substantial to the issuing agency rather than the public, In that context, there is a risk for NIDA to lose its day to day relevance as most of those who need the number for mobile phone registration in particular already have them. They would be satisfied with the identity number they have, and don't have to carry another card.

Surprisingly, looking at what President Samia Suluhu Hassan has been saying about national identification numbers, the fact that NIDA still has many such cards ought not to pose problems. What the president has been saying is less on the card as NIDA states but more on the numbers which people already hold, and the sort of improvements that the president was suggesting, are better on the numbers than on the cards. In other words, NIDA has an opportunity to build a databank with numbers, where cards will be made available if one really needs them, on request.

At that point all particulars relevant to an individual will have been updated, and even if no person seeks out cards, the agency could still keep an updated stock of information by means of interoperability of government information technology systems, what is known as e-government. When an individual registers anything, say a house, a matrimonial engagement or a bank loan, and there is a setting in which the name will click on systems that are interoperable with NIDA, or click something like an SMS on the name for NIDA attention, it will silently be updating those national identification numbers without ever issuing new cards.

US reinstating 2017 withdrawal from Paris climate pact also an opportunity

NEWS chroniclers have a traditional way of evaluating a new presidency, habitually talking about what has been done or the image of that presidency after 100 days. In the case of the second term of US President Donald Trump, there is plenty to be said on the first day in office, and 100 days looks like it will be ages before the world arrives there. Reports say that the US will again withdraw from the Paris Agreement of 2015, having done so during the president's first term in 2017, a controversial step.

Analysts say that as the US is the world's top carbon polluting nation, withdrawing from the landmark climate agreement deals a crushing blow to worldwide efforts to combat global warming. It by and large cripples climate financing in distancing the US from all such efforts, and by implication, these efforts need to be tailored in ways that are consonant with business demands. There is something known as carbon trading that can be improved to enable US firms to do environmental work for revenue gains.

Going back to the chronicle issue, instead of taking one step at a time for instance in departmental initiatives or an occasional executive order as they say in the US, the incoming president signed upward of 100 executive orders just on the first day in office, after being sworn in at midday or thereabouts. Even when he took office for the first time there are a number of executive orders signed, for things which don't need prior legislative action. Withdrawal from the climate agreement was one of them; it would have been expected the issue is raised with allies, first.

A chronicler said on the new development that the withdrawal process from the Paris accord takes one year if a country opts to follow the correct procedure, which means raising issues with the pact and seeking consensus about amendments. Anyone familiar with the haggling and recriminations in global climate conferences until a collective decision is reached can understand how it would be impossible to roll back commitments on the issue. At most the US would wait for this year's event to raise objections, or initiate withdrawal action maturing at that point.

What this means for instance if it were local strategists making decisions is that the multilateral climate financing facility is for all intents and purposes being derailed, and its replacement is business tied with environmental work. It means that we seek out public-private partnerships for projects that we would otherwise table for climate financing, as unless the private sector is part of such a design, no grants or concessional loans will be extended in replacement of climate financing per se. Reclaiming an ancient maxim, founder president Julius Nyerere was emphatic in his 1964 introductory remarks to the first five year plan, that 'it can be done if you play your part,' in redesigning all into business. This is one among issues for which additional revenue is largely warranted, or reallocation of funds, to be part of a PPP design.

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Trillions in dirty money: How veiled loopholes fuel corruption, inequality

By Baher Kamal


Transparency International revealed alarming findings in December 2024 about the siphoning of public funds in Africa.

IT is no longer a secret that at major global summits there are more lobbyists than official delegates. There, they participate as 'guests,' and most of them work for big business corporations. Their goal? To deter the adoption of policies that conflict with their employers' interests.

Their persuasion exercise quite often helps water down the urgency of taking decisive actions, the need to cut the private business staggering profits, the financial dues of the industrialised powers to the impoverished nations that bear the heaviest brunt of their policies, and so on.

To achieve such a purpose, lobbyists often quietly show different sorts of 'gratitude.'

The big financial gap in climate action

A clear evidence is what the global movement working in over 100 countries to end the injustice of corruption: Transparency International (TI) informs on the occasion of the International Anti-Corruption Day 2024: Time to tackle the murky world of climate negotiations:

"Every year billions of dollars are mobilised to finance initiatives that curb emissions, fund climate adaptation, and protect crucial conservation areas.... But without strong anti-corruption measures in place, these essential resources are at risk of being diverted, and the current finance gap is at risk of never being closed."

"We can already see evidence of this taking place."

In the carbon credits market, it explains, where the inherent tension between reducing emissions and providing financial returns has led to land grabbing, bribery, projects being double-counted and the prices of carbon credits being kept secret.

"Last year we saw that in total over 90 percent of carbon credits should not have been approved."

Estimates of total global anonymous and potentially illicit wealth range from $7 trillion to $32 trillion (around 10 percent of total global wealth).

Such an amount is more than 100-fold the $300 billion promised by the world's major climate carnage promoters in the concept of "reparation" to the most impacted poor countries.

Responding to the COP29 climate finance agreement in Baku's climate summit in November 2024, in which rich countries agree to mobilise $300 billion a year to help Global South countries cope with warming temperatures and switch to renewable energy, Oxfam International's Climate Change Policy Lead, Nafkote Dabi, said: "The terrible verdict from the Baku climate talks shows that rich countries view the Global South as ultimately expendable, like pawns on a chessboard.

The $300 billion so-called 'deal' that poorer countries have been bullied into accepting is unserious and dangerous –a soulless triumph for the rich, but a genuine disaster for our planet and communities who are being flooded, starved, and displaced today by climate breakdown. And as for promises of future funding? They're just as hollow as the deal itself.

The money on the table is not only a pittance in comparison to what's really needed –it's not even real "money", by and large, added Nafkote Dabi.

"Rather, it's a motley mix of loans and privatized investment –a global Ponzi scheme that the private equity vultures and public relations people will now exploit.

Africa's stolen wealth

"Imagine billions of dollars siphoned from public funds - money meant to build schools, hospitals and infrastructure - vanishing into a web of offshore accounts, luxury real estate and shell companies..."

"This isn't fiction; it's the stark reality of how corruption drains resources from Africa and other regions, leaving people to bear the cost," Transparency International unveiled in December 2024.

TI analysis is based on cases of corruption confirmed by court decisions, as well as credible allegations of corruption and hiding of wealth offshore.

The following are just some of the findings that Transparency International has just uncovered:

There is a staggering network of companies, properties, bank accounts and luxury goods, notably, close to 80 percent of assets were held abroad, often far from where the corruption originally occurred:

Companies: the ultimate anonymity tool: In 85 percent of cases, companies and trusts were used to obscure the ownership of assets. Often, complex cross-border corporate structures or multiple shell companies were used to distance corrupt individuals - and their dirty funds - from the asset in question.

Real Estate: The laundering favourite. If companies are the preferred tool for anonymity, real estate ranks among the top choices for laundering stolen funds. In one-third of the cases we analysed, properties played a central role.

France, the United Kingdom (UK), the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the United States (US) were the preferred locations for purchasing properties connected to suspicious activities.

Bank Accounts: Hong Kong, Switzerland, the UK, the UAE and the US appear as key destinations for bank accounts used to pay bribes, move or store dirty funds.

EU Golden Passport, Visa Schemes: Many countries run golden passport and visa programmes which offer fast-track citizenship or residency to foreign nationals in exchange for substantial investment in the country - often in real estate.

Member states of the European Union (EU) are particularly attractive, as citizenship or residence in one country grants access to the whole EU.

Golden passports and visas are highly desirable for those associated with corruption because they offer access to a safe haven for their stolen wealth.

A high percentage of the golden visas exchanged money proceed from the 'mafias' of trafficking in drugs and toxic substances, let alone the business of trafficking and smuggling migrants.

Transparency International listed the major destinations of the 'dirty money': British Virgin Islands, France, Hong Kong, Panama, Seychelles, Singapore, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates and United States.

Ever growing inequality

TI, the international movement working to speed up global progress in tackling illicit financial flows and abusive practices that perpetuate economic inequalities and undermine sustainable development, warns: "Inequality is a key impediment to sustainable development and social justice. This is particularly true in the case of Africa, where the COVID-19 pandemic has further aggravated social and economic inequalities.

Despite two decades of high economic growth, resource-rich Africa is home to 10 of the world's 20 most unequal countries.

"While extreme poverty is rising, three African billionaires have more wealth than the poorest 50 percent of the population across the continent."

For its part, the World Bank considers corruption a major challenge to the twin goals of ending extreme poverty by 2030 and boosting shared prosperity for the poorest 40 percent of people in developing countries.

"Corruption has a disproportionate impact on the poor and most vulnerable, increasing costs and reducing access to services, including health, education and justice."

Furthermore, the World Bank explains that corruption in the procurement of drugs and medical equipment drives up costs and can lead to sub-standard or harmful products.

As the global community continues its struggle against climate change, addressing corruption remains critical to ensuring that resources reach those who need them most and that climate finance fulfills its promise of justice and equity.

How working conditions can demoralise teachers, lead to burnout

By Telesphor Magobe

TEACHERS as facilitators of learning play a big role in guiding learners to develop critical and innovative thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, socio-emotional skills, and digital competencies for life and work.

However, when their needs are inadequately addressed they are demoralised, and consequently be emotionally, physically and mentally exhausted. World Health Organisation (WHO) defines burnout as "a syndrome conceptualised as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed."

Today, the teaching profession is somewhat disregarded and teachers are not as respected as they used to be in the past for various reasons. The Tanzania Development Vision 2025 envisages Tanzania as a well-educated and learning society, thanks to the facilitation and contribution of teachers.

Furthermore, the Vision envisages "a nation with high quality of education at all levels, which produces the quantity and quality of educated people sufficiently equipped with the requisite knowledge to solve society's problems, meet the challenges of development and attain competitiveness at regional and global levels." There cannot be competitiveness at regional and global levels without the facilitation and contribution of teachers.

Bruce Maxwell from the University of Québec Trois-Rivières in 2019 made a review of a book titled 'Demoralised: Why Teachers Leave the Profession They Love and How They Can Stay' authored by Doris Santoro in 2018.

In his book, the author says "teachers become demoralised when they cannot do what they believe a good teacher should do in the face of policies, mandates or institutional norms. The source of the problem is dissonance between educators' moral centres and the conditions in which they work."

Contributing factors to this situation include large class size, low pay, inadequate spending on education, teacher shortages that make schools employ inexperienced or unqualified teachers and poverty. All these lead to a psychological condition known as 'teacher burnout' through which a teacher becomes ineffective. The author says behind 'teacher burnout' lies what he calls demoralisation.

When some people fail to secure well-paid jobs they join teaching as they wait for a lucrative opportunity or as the last resort. In this way, even those who are not supposed to be teachers join the teaching profession. As a result, they join teaching not as their first choice, but because they have failed to secure a job in other sectors of the economy.

This has partly contributed to the deterioration of the teaching profession and consequently the quality of education because some teachers are teaching not because they have such a calling, but because if they don't teach they will be jobless. But with this state of affairs we cannot improve the quality of education to match the rapidly evolving world of the 21st century.

In a study conducted in the US, Matthew Kraft and Mellisa Lyon in their paper titled 'The Rise and Fall of the Teaching Profession: Prestige, Interest, Preparation, and Satisfaction over the Last Half Century' published in 2024 found that there was "a rapid decline of teaching in the 1970s, a swift rise in the 1980s extending to the mid-1990s, relative stability, and then a sustained decline beginning around 2010. The current state of the teaching profession is at or near its lowest levels in 50 years."

Rose Matete from the University of Dodoma, who conducted a study on teaching profession and educational accountability in Tanzania in Dar es Salaam and Mbeya regions in 2021, found out that some head teachers had been demoted for the poor performance of the schools they managed. Her study involved 90 classroom teachers, 10 head teachers, 6 school committee members and 2 district education officers.

The researcher says arbitrary demotion of teachers because of the schools' poor performance is unfair and undermines the teachers' professional credibility and status. She says learners' academic performance is a combination of many factors and it cannot be determined by teaching alone.

She argues that the teaching profession has been somewhat disregarded in at least all countries across the world. The researcher also mentions appalling incidents in which teachers were caned by police officers before schoolchildren because of poor academic performance.

The researcher recalls a human rights report of 2010 depicts an appalling incident that occurred in Bukoba in Tanzania in 2009, "where police officers caned teachers in front of their pupils because of the pupils' poor performance in the national examinations [under the directive] from the District Commissioner (DC)."

There is also evidence of some Regional Commissioners (RCs) who have arbitrarily demoted four head teachers due to schoolchildren's poor performance in national examinations in Morogoro Region, according to a media report of September 7, 2006.

She says the teaching profession has not been respected and given the attention it deserves. The researcher says some people with poor academic credentials have been joining the teaching profession and posted to teach at various schools.

On teachers who quit the profession, the researcher says attrition is caused by poor working conditions and lack of professional growth. Yet, she says if the teaching profession gets the attention it deserves it will rise to its original glory as a noble profession.

Without adequate investment in quality education, including the teaching profession, envisaging a well-educated and learning society will remain an illusion. Teachers should be respected and not tossed up by some government authorities.

By Evans Rubara

Transforming Africa's energy landscape with power to energy AI

Africa stands at a pivotal juncture in its energy journey, confronted by a staggering reality: approximately 600 million people lack reliable access to electricity. This pervasive energy poverty not only stifles socio-economic development but also exacerbates health crises and limits opportunities for millions.

While innovative technologies, particularly those leveraging artificial intelligence (AI), promise to revolutionize Africa's energy landscape, a critical analysis reveals the complexities and challenges inherent in this transformation.

Energy poverty is fundamentally defined as the inability to access modern energy services, which impedes individuals from meeting basic needs such as cooking, heating, lighting, and powering essential appliances.

In Tanzania, for example, the disparities between urban and rural populations are stark. Recent estimates indicate that around 90 percent of rural households lack electricity, compared to roughly 20 percent in urban areas.

The peri-urban regions, which exist in a transitional state, reflect a troubling middle ground where about 50 percent of households remain without reliable energy access. This situation highlights the urgent need for inclusive energy policies that can bridge these divides.

Historically, Africa's energy infrastructure has been inadequate, with many communities relying heavily on traditional biomass for cooking and heating. This reliance not only poses severe health risks but also contributes to significant environmental degradation.

The World Bank estimates that the lack of electricity results in annual productivity losses of about $5 billion across the continent. Thus, addressing energy poverty transcends moral obligations; it is crucial for economic resilience and the well-being of countless individuals.

The emergence of power-to-energy systems presents an opportunity to alter this narrative. By converting surplus renewable energy - generated from sources like solar and wind - into storable forms such as hydrogen, these systems aim to create a more reliable energy supply.

For instance, solar panels can generate excess electricity during peak sunlight hours, which can be transformed into hydrogen through electrolysis. This stored hydrogen can then be utilized during high-demand periods, thereby ensuring a consistent energy supply. However, despite the potential benefits, one must question whether these technologies can be implemented equitably across different regions.

The promise of power-to-energy technologies aligns with the African Continental AI Strategy, initiated by the African Union to harness AI for socio-economic advancement. Integrating AI into energy systems holds the potential to optimize generation, distribution, and consumption. AI-driven analytics could facilitate accurate predictions of energy demand and enhance overall efficiency.

Nonetheless, this optimistic outlook must be tempered with the recognition of the technological divide that exists within the continent. If access to these advancements is limited to urban or wealthier populations, rural communities could be further marginalized, deepening existing inequities.

Transitioning to power-to-energy systems brings forth critical challenges. Initial investments for these technologies can be prohibitively high, particularly in nations grappling with budget constraints. The lack of existing infrastructure for energy storage and distribution complicates the deployment of these systems. Furthermore, there is a pressing need for clear and comprehensive energy policies to foster innovation while ensuring equitable access to energy resources.

Power security is another significant concern. The reliability of renewable energy sources can lead to vulnerabilities, particularly during periods of low production. Solar energy generation, for instance, suffers at night and can be disrupted by adverse weather conditions. Effective management strategies are essential to prevent over-reliance on stored energy, which could jeopardize supply during peak demand periods.

Cybersecurity emerges as a pressing issue amidst the digital interconnectivity of power-to-energy systems. The potential for cybercriminals to exploit vulnerabilities inherent in these technologies poses a severe risk to critical energy infrastructure. Many African nations are still developing their cybersecurity frameworks, leaving them exposed to threats that could result in power outages and economic turmoil.

To bolster the resilience of power-to-energy systems, public-private partnerships (PPPs) can play a crucial role. These collaborations can pool resources and expertise to enhance cybersecurity measures and establish robust frameworks for energy management. Coordinated response teams are essential for ensuring rapid and effective responses to cyber incidents, thereby minimizing damage and restoring services promptly.

Investment incentives in power-to-energy technologies are paramount. A comprehensive policy framework that addresses financial, regulatory, and infrastructural challenges can create an environment conducive to investment.

Financial incentives, such as tax breaks or subsidies, could enhance project viability, while streamlined regulatory frameworks can instil confidence in investors. Additionally, investing in grid infrastructure is critical to accommodate new power-to-energy projects, particularly in rural areas where access is most pressing.

Successful case studies from countries like South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, and Morocco demonstrate that meaningful progress is achievable. These nations have implemented robust cybersecurity strategies and policies that not only enhance resilience against cyber threats but also foster innovation in energy systems. By examining these examples, other African countries can adopt best practices to strengthen their energy infrastructure.

In conclusion, while power-to-energy systems offer significant potential to combat energy poverty in Africa, a nuanced approach to planning, investment, and collaboration is essential. Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have a pivotal role to play in facilitating initiatives that promote energy access and sustainability.

By prioritizing an inclusive approach that emphasizes capacity building and innovation, Africa can harness the transformative power of power-to-energy technologies to create a more sustainable and equitable energy future.

The road ahead is fraught with challenges, but the prospect of an energy-secure future for Africa is attainable. It is imperative to convert surplus energy into solutions that uplift communities and empower individuals across the continent.

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$9,650 for 500 grams of old tangerine citrus peels? Welcome to Xinhui, where 'gold' grows on trees

By Maggie Hiufu Wong

On the surface, Xinhui is just your average sleepy district in a "third-tier" city in China.

Yet every year, over the fall and winter months, its streets fill with a unique fragrance that hints at its ancient history – and a bright future: drying tangerine peels, or chenpi.

For residents, it's the smell of gold.

In fact, the word for "tangerine" in Cantonese, the local dialect, is pronounced the same as the word for "gold" – "gam." And just like the precious metal, some of those peels can be worth enormous amounts of money.

Xinhui is located on the eastern side of Jiangman, a city in southern Guangdong province. Rows of trees, characterless factories and farms flank new highways. The occasional shiny glass skyscraper looms above, a symbol of the area's economic rise.

"This is Jiangman Wanda Plaza, the tallest skyscraper in Jiangmen," says Zhou Zhiwei, a native of the district, as he drives his visiting friend, chef Li Chi Wai, around Xinhui in his gleaming white Porsche.

"Of course, it's nothing compared to Hong Kong's skyscrapers but still impressive – almost 200 meters tall. Look at all the well-paved expressways, too. Xinhui has developed so much."

The city's success can largely be attributed to its peels.

While tangerines can be grown in other regions, only the ones harvested in Xinhui – and specifically, only their peels – are valued as highly as gold.

The health benefits of aged tangerine peels

The health benefits of aged tangerine peels, a Chinese medicinal herb, have been documented since the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279).

"Xinhui is at the confluence of the Xijiang River and the Tanjiang River in the heart of the Pearl River Delta region (in Guangdong province)," says Li, executive chef of Hong Kong's one Michelin-star restaurant The Legacy House, in the Rosewood Hong Kong hotel.

Li left Xinhui for Hong Kong when he was a teenager. After working as a Chinese cuisine chef in the bustling city for the last few decades, he has a renewed respect and passion for the produce from his hometown.

"The water and soil composition have made it an ideal place for tangerine farming," he says. "It's therefore believed that peels from here are richer and packed with more micronutrients than others."

Tangerine peels can only be called "chenpi" (aged peels, which are scientifically known as Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium) if they've been sun-dried every fall and winter, consecutively, for at least three years. (For the rest of the year, they are carefully stored away.)

There are four major types of peels: green tangerine peels (harvested before ripening); light/second red tangerine peels (harvested in November); large red tangerine peels (fully ripe around December); and post-winter large red tangerine peels (harvested after winter when there's more sugar content in the tangerines).

Chenpi was said to have been used in dishes served to emperors and empresses living inside Beijing's Forbidden City. Today, the ingredient is largely found in traditional medical prescriptions and daily cooking, especially in southern China.

Different types and ages of chenpi have various medicinal uses, but in traditional Chinese medicine they're generally believed to strengthen the spleen, aid in digestion and enhance the respiratory system.

While tangerines are grown across China, only peels from Xinhui are considered as valuable as gold

Modern research suggests chenpi boasts anti-oxidants and flavonoids (an anti-cancer component) and has the potential to stabilize blood pressure and prevent obesity.

And like fine wine, the older the chenpi, the more precious it becomes.

Similar to Li, Zhou moved to Hong Kong briefly in the 1980s to look for better opportunities. But seeing the potential in tangerine peels, he returned to Xinhui in 1996. He is now a key player in the trade – a certified chenpi appraiser, vice president of the Xinhui Chenpi Industry Association as well as a proud tangerine peels producer.

Farm owner Zhou Zhiwei says chenpi trading was once considered a backward industry.

"My father and my grandfather both grew tangerine trees. When I started in the aged tangerine trade, it was looked down upon. We were considered country bumpkins or 'scrap' dealers. But I knew it had potential," says Zhou.

He was right. In the last two decades, the chenpi industry has flourished.

In 2023, a kilogram of dried tangerine peels produced in 1968 auctioned in Hong Kong sold for HKD 75,000 ($9,646). That same year, Xinhui became the first and only district in Jiangmen to rake in 100 billion yuan ($13.8 billion), accounting for about a quarter of the city's GDP. The chenpi industry was valued at RMB 23 billion ($3.2 billion) last year.

"The city has developed so much thanks to tangerine peels," says Zhou, who now produces and acquires around 163 tons of chenpi annually.

Revolutionizing the market

Chef Li isn't in town just to catch up with his old friend, Zhou. He's been traveling between Hong Kong and Xinhui regularly for the last few years to research and source ingredients for his annual aged tangerine peel banquet at The Legacy House in Hong Kong.

In Xinhui, chenpi is utilized in many dishes, such as steamed fish garnished with chenpi oil and powder, and duck stewed with sanbaoza (a bundle of chenpi and salted olives that's tied up with reed grass).

Chenpi wine, drinks and candies are ubiquitous.

At The Legacy House, Li curates an annual aged tangerine peel banquet.

"It's been an important ingredient in Cantonese culinary culture – so common that we stop thinking about it. I hope to elevate it by refining how we see it," says Li, who pays close attention to harvest times and ages when sourcing chenpi.

unknown outside of China, dried tangerine peels have been treasured for their medicinal benefits for centuries. Chef Li Chi Wai of Hong Kong's one-Michelin-star restaurant The Legacy House wants to draw diners' attention to their unique flavors, too.

"If terroir and age matter for wine, why won't they for tangerines?"

After tasting hundreds of tangerine peels, Li launched his first tangerine peel banquet in late 2022, offering diners a booklet to educate them on the ingredient. The seven-course tea-pairing menu began with a trio of starters – minced fish dumplings, deep-fried beef balls and scallops – made with different forms of 10-year-old chenpi from Xinhui's Tianma district, and ended with a pillowy glutinous rice dessert stuffed inside a young green tangerine.

In December 2024, a new "Dried Tangerine Peel Gastronomy" menu was launched, featuring peels aged from six to 50 years, sourced from various Xinhui farms.

The highlight of this menu, which costs HKD 2,280 ($294) per person, is a braised fish maw soup with lamb head and hoof made with tangerine peels that are more than five decades old.

"This thick soup is a rare traditional Cantonese dish that few people are still making. We think it's a good dish both to highlight the 50-year-old chenpi, which has a deep agarwood taste, because of its rarity and rich flavors," says the chef.

The preparation is laborious: the lamb's head and hooves are stewed with chenpi, sugarcanes, water chestnuts and ginger till the meat is tender. It's then stewed in a stock made with matured chicken, pork bone, red meat and more chenpi for more than six hours with additional ingredients like fish maw, shredded chicken, mushrooms, conpoy and more pre-soaked chenpi.

The result is a soup thick in collagen and bursting in flavors.

'They're for my daughter's dowry'

Currently, 500 grams (nearly 18 ounces) of 50-year-old chenpi costs about HKD 75,000 (around $9,650), hence the price of the chef's banquet.

Hearing Li talk about the inclusion of the aged peels in his soup, Zhou gets excited.

"I have some 50-year-old chenpi as well, bought when one of the government's produce departments shut down," he says. "Want to see?"

Leading us through his company's headquarters, he takes us to a series of storage units filled with labeled boxes. In the last room, he pulls out a sack of tangerine peels.

"These are valued at about RMB 100,000 ($13,700) per catty now. This column could sell for about RMB 3 million ($410,000)," he says, referring to the traditional Chinese unit of weight, which equals 500 grams. "But they aren't for sale – they're for my daughter's dowry."

Zhou Zhi Wai (L) takes Li Chi Wai (R) through his chenpi warehouse.

But Li says his menu, available till the end of February, is about more than the age and cost of the chenpi. He hopes diners can appreciate the ingredient beyond its health benefits.

"People often assume all chenpi tastes the same. But they actually have very different characters," he says.

For instance, the chef's braised spotted grouper fillet is paired with a six-year-old peel. Harvested and dried after the winter, the peels retain more sweetness from the sugar in the fruits. The slight rock sugar taste pairs well with the fish.

The lobster roll wrapped in bamboo pith is cooked with a 13-year-old tangerine peel from Meijiang, a riverside farming region on the northern side of Xinhui, which has a tinge of oyster flavor due to its location in a river delta that connects to the sea.

By pairing different chenpi to a dish's flavor profile, Li's approach differs from traditional methods, which often only state the year of the peels without further information. The feast becomes an educational journey into chenpi.

A hopeful future for Xinhui

At 3 p.m., the duo heads to Zhou's farm in Shuangshuizhen, a Xinhui county, where workers are bringing hundreds of young chenpi indoors after hours out drying under the gentle autumn sunlight. Others sort the peels into different categories.

The tangerines, which produce good-value chenpi for mass consumption, are still green.

Zhou picks a few of the fruits and carefully cuts them open. He takes the flesh out while the peels stay intact, resembling a three-petal flower.

"You see Zhou cut away from the stem," explains Li. "The small stub is important as it indicates that the fruits are harvested from the tree directly instead of falling off the tree – which will have a dent where the stub would be and be considered less desirable."

The tangerine flesh isn't sweet yet. In the past, they were discarded – only the peels were seen as having value – but that has changed, too.

"The flesh is used to make enzymes and health products," says Li.

Zhou is hopeful that the industry will flourish even further.

"There are more young entrepreneurs nowadays, exploring innovative business opportunities," he says. "It's the direction I think Xinhui should head – deepening our manufacturing and diversifying the product development of chenpi."

Xinhui may not be a widely developed tourist city yet, but visitors can enjoy attractions like the historic Chakeng Village, known as the "hometown of chenpi."

From fall onward, thousands of white and golden peels fill the plaza.

A stone's throw away from Chakeng Village is Chenpi Village, a relatively new cultural and recreational landmark that will meet all travelers' tangerine needs. The café sells tangerine ice cream and coffee garnished with savory and sweet peel powder. Shops sell a wide range of chenpi as well as related edible souvenirs. Restaurants like Hengyi Shao E serve Xinhui's famous roasted goose, which is coated with a secret chenpi sauce as it's barbecued over a wood fire.

As we pass the rows of tangerine farms on our way back to the Jiangmen high-speed railway station to make the journey back to Hong Kong, Li reflects on his own childhood in Xinhui.

"I remember strings of chenpi hanging above every kitchen stove. It's so common I didn't really care for it. As a hungry poor kid, I'd steal tangerines from farms on my way to school and throw away the peels. Who knew the peels would become so valuable? I was so wasteful back then," he says with a smile.

After spending decades away from his birthplace, Li's appreciation for this once-humble ingredient goes beyond pride or the monetary value it possesses.

"Bitterness is not common in most culinary cultures...the bitterness in a good chenpi, when designed properly, is a delectable taste that dissolves quickly – leaving a sweet aftertaste," says Li, who hopes his creations can help introduce the ancient Chinese ingredient to a wider, international audience.

"As an old Chinese saying goes, 'bitterness and sweetness are one.' Understanding the necessity of bitterness in life is important for one to truly appreciate and savor the sweetness."

To him, that is the true beauty of chenpi.

FAO-led initiative enables farmers to lift restoration

KPALIMÉ, Togo

A NEW programme empowering forest and farm producers to accelerate restoration-based value-added innovation, focusing on Africa, was launched today by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Togo, one of six countries that will participate in the initiative.

The four-year, multi-partner programme will support the implementation of the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100) of the African Union with EUR 40 million from the Government of Germany. It will enable local communities, smallholder forest and farm producer organizations and Indigenous Peoples to lead restoration efforts and develop value-added opportunities by providing them with direct financial and technical assistance.

"By officially launching the AFR100 programme, Togo showcases its strong commitment to restoring forests and landscapes while addressing the pressing challenges of climate change," said Djiwa Oyetounde, Assistant FAO Representative in Togo, at a signing ceremony in Kpalimé, Togo.

"Together with our partners, we are committed to building a more resilient and equitable future for the most vulnerable communities."

The programme will build on several years of work by the FAO-led Forest and Farm Facility (FFF) with smallholder farmers and forest producers to link forestry and agriculture, restore degraded landscapes and increase rural livelihoods.

Empowering communities

The programme will support communities to restore and improve management of 27,000 hectares by the end of 2027. Similar work will be launched in coming months in five other countries - the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi and the United Republic of Tanzania.

In Togo, this programme focuses particularly on the southern area of the Plateaux-Ouest region, recognized as a biodiversity hotspot but also an area facing many environmental, ecological and socio-economic challenges.

The programme will also support forest and farm producers in restoration-related business incubation, access to funding and investment, and access to markets for value added products.

Boosting restoration efforts across the region

While Africa is naturally rich in resources, up to 65 percent of productive land in Africa is degraded, while desertification affects 45 percent of Africa's land area.

Under the African Forest and Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100), 34 countries have pledged to restore at least 100,000 ha by 2030.

The new FAO-led programme aims to support the ambitions of AFR100. It is organized in collaboration with the AFR100 Secretariat, which is hosted by the African Union Development Agency - New Partnership for Development (AUDA-NEPAD), the World Resources Institute (WRI), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, and the governments of the six participating countries.

Potential benefits

Degraded forest landscapes intensify the effects of climate change and severely threaten the ecological functions vital to building prosperous and resilient economies.

Rural smallholder farmers and households suffer the most as their activities depend on healthy soils, tree cover, and clean water.

Restoring degraded forests and land can improve food and water security, protect biodiversity, build resilience to climate change, and boost economic growth, helping achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and contributing to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

The FAO-led initiative will foster value-added innovation, the creation of restoration-based businesses, and access to funding for forest and farm producers, including blended finance solutions. This will stimulate economic growth, improve livelihoods, and create green jobs, especially for women and youth.

Gavi, partners pioneer new approach to deliver critical vaccinations in humanitarian situations

GENEVA

A new report, Gavi's Humanitarian Partnerships: achievements and learning, 2022-2024, shows how Gavi and humanitarian partners are bridging immunisation gaps to reach children and infants living in crisis-affected settings across 11 countries in Africa, paving the way for solutions that address the needs of some of the most vulnerable populations - while improving health security around the world.

According to the report, integrating humanitarian and immunisation services through Gavi's Humanitarian Partnerships (ZIP) has enabled the delivery of life-saving vaccines to children in hard-to-reach and conflict-afflicted communities, without compromising quality. By addressing and overcoming various equity barriers that have long hindered global vaccination progress, Gavi and partners have helped protect hundreds of thousands from life-threatening and highly contagious diseases like measles.

With new access to vaccinate children in these communities, the partnership has also pioneered new ways of working for the Vaccine Alliance, partnering with nongovernmental humanitarian organisations for the first time. ZIP has additionally delivered routine childhood vaccines to children up aged up to five years who previously missed out - an unprecedented achievement in humanitarian contexts.

"Gavi is unwavering in its commitment to ensuring every child, no matter their circumstances, has access to life-saving vaccines," said Thabani Maphosa, Chief Country Delivery Officer at Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. "Our partnership with humanitarian actors is a testament to this commitment, enabling us to reach communities affected by instability, insecurity, conflict and crisis. With the continued support of our donors and partners, we can redefine what is possible in humanitarian immunisation, ensuring full vaccine coverage even in the hardest-to-reach places."

With protracted crises unfolding across the world, access to vaccines remains critical to avoid immunity gaps that leave communities vulnerable to preventable outbreaks and pose risks to global health security. Launched as a pilot in 2022, Gavi's Humanitarian Partnerships (ZIP) were designed to address inequities in vaccine access, prioritising communities that were previously left behind. Working in partnership with the IRC, World Vision and consortia of local civil society organisations, the initiative has proven that effective immunisation programmes can succeed in even the most complex humanitarian contexts, including semi-autonomous or separatist areas, non-state armed group locations, refugee camps and among marginalised populations.

With millions of children missing out on routine vaccines every year, ZIP has addressed the urgent challenge of reaching 'zero-dose' children - those who have never received a single vaccine - and under-immunised children. Equally vital in the effort to sustainably protect communities is the task of rebuilding routine immunisation systems in these crisis-affected areas. ZIP is working to strike this balance, ensuring that both immediate needs and long-term health system resilience are addressed, while maintaining a coordinated approach with ministries of health in a manner that preserves ZIP's independence and neutrality.

As Gavi looks to 2025 and beyond, the insights drawn from ZIP will shape new commitments to expand immunisation services to reach even more children. By leveraging the learnings from the last two years, Gavi aims to set a new standard for delivering comprehensive vaccination coverage in the most challenging environments - a critical step toward achieving vaccine equity and health security worldwide.

Children undergo heart surgeries with new tech

By Special Correspondents

TEARS of joy flowed freely as Husna Shabaan Kingwande learned that her three-year-old son Ikram's heart surgery had been a success.

The procedure at the Chinese-built Jakaya Kikwete Cardiac Institute (JKCI) in Dar es Salaam, marked a significant step in introducing advanced Chinese medical technology to Tanzania.

Ikram was one of five children, aged between three and seven, who underwent cardiovascular surgeries using the PAN-Procedure, a minimally invasive technique pioneered by Professor Pan Xiangbin of China's Fuwai Hospital.

This revolutionary procedure, which relies on ultrasound imaging rather than traditional fluoroscopy, treats cardiovascular diseases through peripheral blood vessels without requiring open-heart surgery or radiation exposure.

The surgeries were conducted by a team of five Chinese medical experts, six Tanzanian specialists from the JKCI, and one member of the 27th Chinese medical team stationed at the institute.

For Kingwande, a 22-year-old native of Tanzania's Coast region, her son's successful surgery means a brighter future for the boy, who was diagnosed nine months ago.

"I wholeheartedly thank the Chinese doctors and their Tanzanian counterparts for giving my son a new lease on life," she said, tears streaming down her face.

Her gratitude was echoed by Ajili Anthony Msunza, a father of two from the Mbeya region, whose five-year-old daughter Noreen was among the young patients.

A young Tanzanian father holds his daughter before her heart surgery at Jakaya Kikwete Cardiac Institute in Dar es Salaam.

"This new technology has rekindled hope for heart patients in Tanzania," he said.

Violet Samuel Mkonwa, a 40-year-old mother from Shinyanga, a northern-west region of Tanzania, expressed relief that her five-year-old son Emmanuel could now look forward to attending school without health complications.

The PAN-Procedure represents a significant advance in interventional cardiology.

During a training session at the JKCI, Pan explained that the technique allows patients to remain conscious during treatment, eliminating the need for radiation-intensive catheter labs.

"This procedure is not only safer and more effective but also makes cardiac intervention accessible in community clinics," he said.

The training session attracted about 50 Tanzanian cardiologists, including Theophylly Ludovick, a paediatrician at the JKCI who was recently trained in China on PAN-Procedure techniques.

Ludovick emphasized the procedure's potential in addressing Tanzania's significant burden of cardiovascular diseases, with one in 100 children suffering from congenital heart defects.

"This collaboration between China and Tanzania is a vital step in saving lives and strengthening bilateral ties," he said.

Peter Kisenge, JKCI executive director highlighted the institute's longstanding partnership with China, formalized through a memorandum of understanding with Fuwai Hospital.

The agreement includes screening and treating children with congenital heart diseases and advanced training for JKCI staff. Over 1,000 children have since been screened, with several undergoing successful PAN-Procedure interventions.

Kisenge said the new technology could significantly boost the institute's capacity, increasing the number of annual procedures from 783 to over 2,000.

"This innovation not only addresses the high prevalence of cardiovascular diseases but also strengthens the bond between China and Tanzania," he said.

Since its establishment in 2013, with support from the Chinese government, the JKCI has become the largest and most advanced cardiovascular treatment center in East Africa. The introduction of cutting-edge technology like the PAN-Procedure continues to build on its legacy, offering hope to thousands of Tanzanian families and fostering a deeper connection between the two nations.

When humanitarian aid has borders: The politics of disaster relief

By Kaitlyn Waring

HUMANITARIAN aid in recent years, despite its basis in principles of morality and helping those in need, has increasingly tailored to political agendas rather than providing impartial international relief efforts to alleviate global suffering.

The result is a humanitarian response that often falls short of what the most vulnerable people across the globe require, especially in the urgent aftermaths of natural disasters.

As the impacts of climate change accelerate and outpace mitigation efforts, natural disasters are becoming more frequent and severe, disproportionately targeting large groups of vulnerable people. Natural disasters have proven to have an outsized impact on already-vulnerable populations due to a number of economic, social, and environmental factors and will continue to ravage these groups, giving them increasingly less time and resources to bounce back from devastation.

These same groups of people are most often not the ones responsible for the vast majority of CO_2 emissions and other climate change catalysts, yet they consistently fall victim to its impacts on a large scale.

Lack of resources and infrastructure in communities results not only in less protection against natural disasters meaning greater loss of life and destruction of land and infrastructure, but also in less of an ability to recover and rebuild the critical infrastructure that is needed to move forward in everyday life.

Humanitarian aid in an international setting is intended to address this disconnect and provide these vulnerable communities with outside resources for disaster

Yet, despite the larger goal of humanitarian aid, its real-time implementation has faced many challenges, leaving some of the most in-need people unaccounted for and struggling. All too often, the ones left behind are those in lesser developed countries who have contributed little to the very climate phenomena that are impacting them.

Gaps in funding and awareness

One reason for the ineffectiveness and inefficiency that often comes from humanitarian aid across certain regions of the world is the large gap between the needs of the people and the funding that is available and provided by donor countries. This has resulted in just a handful of crises receiving a majority of funding and attention from international actors.

In recent years, nearly half of humanitarian funding has been directed towards causes in Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Palestine. While the humanitarian and environmental crises in these countries certainly necessitate high levels of relief and aid, insufficient levels of overall funding have left other critical countries such as Sudan, Burkina Faso, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo neglected.

Not only are these places not receiving adequate humanitarian funding, they also do not receive the high levels of international attention and news that could encourage greater aid. One study by CARE International found that in 2023, the top ten most under-reported humanitarian and environmental crises in the world are in Africa.

From hunger, to conflict, to natural disaster and climate change impacts, millions of people are in need of the relief that proper levels and types of humanitarian aid can provide, yet they are not receiving widespread attention in news and media.

One example given highlights how the 2023 Barbie movie was applauded in over 273,000 articles across the world for its messages on women's rights and empowerment while the abuse of these same rights in multiple countries across the African continent have gone unreported. Similarly, in Angola, for example, there are around 7.3 million people in need of humanitarian aid, but this crisis only received 1,049 media mentions in 2023. Compared to the 273,421 articles written alone about the newly released iPhone 15, these numbers are significantly lacking.

Politics of humanitarian aid

The lack of funding of the humanitarian needs and natural disasters of certain regions of the world is also often a symptom of geopolitical prioritizations. Certain countries, even while receiving higher amounts of media coverage, are also often deprioritized compared to areas of greater geographic and political significance for donor countries.

Some discussions surrounding humanitarian aid suggest that disaster relief favors high-profile emergencies at the expense of others suffering farther from the political spotlight. Because just 11 countries provide around 90% of humanitarian aid, countries that have historical ties, that lie geographically closer, or that are more important from a foreign policy perspective to this group of donors may receive greater attention.

In one instance, it was found that donor-recipient distance reduces funds to African disasters by 21% compared to disasters in Europe. Therefore, countries in regions such as Eastern Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, and Caribbean islands are in geographically more ideal locations for many North American and European donors compared to those in Sub-Saharan Africa, the South Pacific, and South America.

Infrastructure challenges

When countries are less ideally located, politically strategic, or media-grabbing, their humanitarian aid appeal can suffer. They may also suffer from a lack of necessary infrastructure that makes humanitarian aid and disaster relief optimal, delaying aid or reducing its effectiveness, particularly in rural and remote regions. Ensuring access to relief resources can be extremely difficult where there is a lack of infrastructure.

Isolation can result from a number of factors. The physical environment of a country or region, such as a mountainous region, remote island, or remote indigenous community, creates physical barriers to humanitarian aid implementation.

Additionally, the presence of conflict and insecurity in a region will largely decrease the appeal of aid and the ability to carry out relief operations. In a similar way, political and administrative practices of countries can also put restrictions on the operations, or even acceptance, of humanitarian aid. All of these factors may discourage large scale humanitarian relief efforts due to higher costs and less ease of implementation and effectiveness.

Unfortunately for regions in Africa that experience one or more of these physical barriers, instability in government, or conflict, natural disaster impacts are exacerbated by the lack of responsive, effective relief capacity.

Additionally, while most African governments have already embraced the importance of disaster risk reduction, many have not yet integrated this concept into the actual laws and policies that govern in disaster situations. In the absence of these frameworks for preparation and response, the networks of community organizations and NGOs that operate in Africa have less resources to successfully respond and are more likely to lack coordination.

In general, the existing laws in many African countries give little emphasis to the engagement and empowerment of communities themselves to strengthen the local resiliency that results in more effective disaster recovery.

What does the future look like?

Going forward across all international climate agreements, the consideration for greater and more responsive humanitarian aid in the wake of natural disasters will be critical for supporting the local communities of vulnerable people around the world.

International climate talks have already introduced the concept of a loss and damage fund to support communities who are experiencing or will experience effects of climate change that are unavoidable and irreversible.

This type of aid, along with a strengthening of disaster risk reduction and response systems globally, are required in order to ensure that adequate humanitarian funds exist and are directed towards all of the regions of the world that need them, without leaving anyone behind to deal with disasters alone.

A critical deciding factor in the success of relief efforts is their basis in local decision making and community empowerment. Top-down approaches will often result in a failure of recovery progress if they don't address the top priorities of those impacted by disasters.

As people tend to know what is in their own best interest, humanitarian aid can then act as a way to facilitate these recovery goals and ensure a long-lasting and resilient community rebuilding process.

S.A in 2025: Eight key factors that will shape the future, test the government

By Theo Neethling

SOUTH Africa's political and economic landscape shifted significantly after the 2024 national elections. The ruling ANC's dramatic loss of support resulted in a government of national unity – a pivotal moment in the country's political history.

It is still too early to assess the unity government's success. But it signifies an effort by political parties to agree on the values and principles that should guide behaviour and decision-making in the national government.

The unity government presents new possibilities for South Africa. In the words of President Cyril Ramaphosa:

However, a key question remains: will it hold? The question arises because the unity government demands that its constituent parties cooperate, even though their respective constituencies may want different things.

Certain issues will put pressure on the coalition. Consequently, the unity government raises uncertainties about the country's political stability and direction. Particularly given the coalition's heavy reliance on President Cyril Ramaphosa's facilitating leadership.

As a political science researcher, I have studied South Africa's political landscape for the past two decades, and analysed its political risk.

Here I outline eight key factors – among others – that will shape the country's short and medium term trajectory and test the strength of its unity government.

Supporters of Jacob Zuma's MK Party express their rejection of the government of national unity (GNU).

Depth of democracy

It was necessary to form the unity government to stabilise governance. But its durability is uncertain. The coalition's middle ground may be strained as conflicting priorities arise among its members. Key are ideological differences over National Health Insurance and conflicting foreign policy issues.

At the same time, legitimacy and confidence in governance need to be restored. Voter turnout has declined – from 89% in 1999 to 58% in 2024.

If this democracy experiment fails, it could dent the confidence of voters and business. Forming the unity government improved business confidence to "cautious optimism".

Incumbency and succession

Divisions in the ANC continue to threaten its unity. These were highlighted at the party's 2017 elective conference. Ramaphosa narrowly secured re-election as ANC president, exposing serious rifts within the party. These internal divisions cast uncertainty over Ramaphosa's effective leadership of his party. His successor might affect the ANC's future role in the unity government.

The ANC's national elective conference in 2027 will set the party's direction and mark the end of Ramaphosa's leadership.

Early jostling for positions in the ANC has begun, amid ideological differences over the future of the party, the unity government and the country.

Trust in government

Public confidence in government institutions has eroded since 1994, particularly at the municipal level. Protests at the poor – or lack of – delivery of basic services, including water and sanitation, are pervasive. Violent protests reflect growing dissatisfaction.

Declining trust in parliament and other governmental bodies – starting during former president Jacob Zuma's term (2009-2018) – is a major concern.

Much of the electorate feels that voting changes nothing.

It's uncertain whether the unity government can boost public confidence and trust.

Disparities and unemployment

Stark wealth disparities and unemployment exceeding 30% add to societal tensions. Youth unemployment is even higher.

The risk of large-scale political unrest has decreased since democracy in 1994. But frustration among the poor, unemployed and marginalised still carries the risk of sporadic riots and instability.

The violent protests in July 2021, mainly in the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, are a reminder. The underlying factors for over 300 fatalities, looting and destruction stemmed from the state's failure to address poverty.

The unity government needs to power economic growth, create jobs and reduce poverty.

Safety and security

Safety and security rank among South Africa's most pressing issues. Crime rates remain alarmingly high, including organised crime and violence.

Trust in police is low, fuelling growth in the private security sector. There are now over 2.7 million registered private security officers and 150,000 police officers.

The "oldest and simplest justification" for government is to protect citizens from crime and violence.

The unity government must restore public trust in the police and enhance security.

Economic sentiment

Despite the country's numerous challenges, the economy attracted nearly R100 billion (US$5.3 billion) in foreign direct investment inflows in 2023, equivalent to 1.4% of GDP.

Against expectations, inflows have exceeded outflows every year since the 2008/9 global financial crisis.

The country offers several advantages to foreign investors. These include world-class financial services and communication sectors, robust capital markets, quality tertiary institutions and a transparent legal framework.

It also has abundant natural resources, a strategic geographic position as a gateway to sub-Saharan Africa, and a degree of political and policy stability.

Crime remains perhaps the greatest deterrent for potential tourists. It's also a pressing concern for business leaders.

Addressing crime must thus be among the top priorities of the unity government.

Government competence

Poor governance and a crisis of competence plague public administration, particularly at the local level. Service delivery failures, such as water provision, stem from inadequate skills and from corruption and maladministration.

State-owned enterprises also pose governance challenges. Eskom, the power utility, seems to be turning around. However, the Post Office, Transnet – the transport utility – and others exemplify systemic inefficiencies and corruption.

The July 2021 unrest underscored the state's institutional weaknesses. The report on the riots stated that inadequate service delivery, bad living conditions, economic challenges and persistent poverty created fertile ground for unrest.

The unity government must foster a professional and effective public service that delivers tangible improvements.

Regional landscape

South Africa is not threatened by any neighbours. However, illegal migration has become a major cause for concern since the economic crisis in Zimbabwe began in the 1990s. Perceptions are growing that migrants are overwhelming the resources of the country, and take jobs from South Africans and engage in crime.

The presence of illegal miners, many from impoverished neighbouring nations, heightens social tensions.

The jihadist conflict in Mozambique and current political instability there pose regional security concerns for South Africa.

The country was recently forced to shut its primary border crossing with Mozambique, a hub for coal and chrome exports, amid the latter's election-related protests. Addressing these regional dynamics requires a strong foreign policy stance and robust measures to pursue peace in Mozambique.

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Central banks buying likely to remain important to gold's 2025 performance

By Sabrina Jardim

Driven by factors such as strong global gold exchange-traded fund inflows and over-the-counter (OTC) demand, gold's record-breaking year of 2024 saw the gold price rising by more than 28 percent in US dollars, trading 22 percent higher on average last year than during 2023, the World Gold Council's (WGC's) 'Gold Outlook 2025' states.

The precious metal's performance across other currencies was equally strong, with the WGC noting that the precious metal reached 40 new record highs during the year and that total gold demand in the third quarter surpassed $100-billion for the first time.

The WGC explains that the market consensus of key macro variables such as gross domestic product, yields and inflation, if taken at face value, suggests a positive but much more modest growth for gold in 2025.

It explains that an upside could come from stronger than expected central bank demand, or from a rapid deterioration of financial conditions leading to flight-to-quality flows. Conversely, the WGC says a reversal in monetary policy, leading to higher interest rates, will likely bring challenges.

"In addition, China's contribution to the gold market will be key: consumers have been on the sidelines while investors have provided support. But these dynamics hang on the direct – and indirect – effects of trade, stimulus and perceptions of risk."

WGC chief market strategist John Reade notes that central bank buying remained strong throughout 2024. There was also strong emerging market demand in the first half of the year, particularly for investment and jewellery from China at the beginning of the year.

One of the major drivers of the record gold prices has been moves by central banks to diversify their foreign reserve holdings away from the US dollar in large emerging markets, including China, Russia and Turkiye, adds Minerals Council South Africa chief economist Hugo Pienaar.

This process of reserve diversification has included the aggressive buying of gold.

"Central bank gold buying is a function of countries not wanting to be overly exposed to dollar assets should they fall foul of the US amid rising geopolitical tensions. As a result, we have seen strong physical demand for gold. In fact, central bank gold buying was at a record high in 2022 and close to that level in 2023," Pienaar adds.

The WGC says central banks will remain an "important part of the puzzle" this year, noting that central bank demand will continue to "provide a boost" to gold, should it remain at a healthy level.

"Central bank buying is policy driven and thus difficult to forecast, but our surveys and analysis suggest that the current trend will remain in place. In our view, demand in excess of 500 t – the approximate long-term trend – should still have a net positive effect on performance. And we believe central bank demand in 2025 will surpass that. But a deceleration below that level could bring additional pressures to gold."

Moreover, Reade says the performance of the gold price will depend on the direction of US and other Western interest rates, as well as the strength or weakness of the US dollar against major currencies. The US dollar has strengthened since the US election results, which is one of the reasons why gold "has corrected" from its all-time highs.

"If US dollar strength continues, that will be a headwind for gold. But if interest rates come down and the dollar weakens somewhat, then that will help to boost the gold price in 2025," he says.

Safe-haven asset reaffirmed

An increase in global uncertainty and turmoil – resulting from factors such as the escalation of tensions in the Middle East, the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and periodic concerns about Chinese aggression towards Taiwan – has created conducive conditions for gold, reaffirming it as a safe-haven asset, says Pienaar.

He posits that general anxiety about geopolitical tensions, uncertainty about the economic policy environment after the US election and the start of interest rate reductions by developed-country central banks have supported investor demand for gold.

"Gold is a non-interest-bearing asset, implying that lower interest rates tend to be positive for gold. Particularly now that Donald Trump has returned to the White House in 2025, many non-US central banks may feel obliged to continue buying gold because they are concerned about Trump's policies."

Although a stronger US dollar in the wake of Trump's victory initially weighed on the gold price, Pienaar adds that the outlook for gold remains positive, noting that it is not always clear how responsive the gold price is to higher global inflation.

"A Trump Presidency could result in higher inflation if he follows through on threats to dramatically increase import tariffs on Chinese and non-Chinese goods.

In addition, a Trump clampdown on immigration into the US will reduce the supply of labour in the US and drive up labour costs. This will also be inflationary, or at least slow the rate at which US inflation moderates towards the Federal Reserve Bank's 2 percent target," Pienaar explains.

Additionally, Reade argues that Trump's election as US President is expected to be positive for gold demand over the medium to long term.

International holders of US dollar assets, such as central banks, will regard the prospects of another Trump Presidency as a reason to accelerate moving away from the US dollar and US dollar assets, owing to fears or expectations of further weaponisation of the US dollar by the Trump administration.

Reade adds that there are likely to be tax cuts, higher government spending in certain areas and potentially lower economic growth during the new Trump administration, as a result of some of the economic and political policies that the incoming President spoke about during his campaign.

He notes that the imposition of tariffs on imports and the expulsion of millions of illegal or undocumented migrants could be negative for the US economy, while tax cuts would cause the budget deficit to widen.

"One of the motivations behind high-net-worth individuals buying gold is concerns about the size of the US debt and the size of the budget deficit each year. Both are likely to grow under a Trump Presidency, and I expect to see more demand from people looking to protect themselves against the economic policies of the US. I think it's going to be a year in which US economic and political actions are more important for gold than they have been in the last two or three years," he elaborates.

Gold Fields corporate affairs VP Sven Lunsche agrees that central bank buying and political volatility, rather than the global economic environment, have been the main drivers of the recent rise in the gold price.

While lower interest rates have traditionally been perceived as bearish for gold, the current market trends do not reflect this pattern. Higher gold prices, coupled with a stable rand, have boosted the rand gold price, which has been positive for South African gold miners.

Global ESG Sukuk to cross $50bn in 2025

By Guardian Reporter

Global Environment Social Governance (ESG) sukuk is set to cross US$50 billion outstanding in 2025, and be one of the key US dollar funding tools among some Islamic finance markets - Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Indonesia and Malaysia.

In Africa, countries like Nigeria, South Africa, and Morocco have explored Islamic finance instruments, with Nigeria issuing several sukuk to fund infrastructure projects.

While not all are explicitly ESG-labeled, there is momentum toward integrating ESG principles.

However, many African countries lack established regulatory frameworks to support ESG sukuk issuance. Harmonizing Sharia-compliant and ESG standards is critical.

In emerging markets (EMs), sukuk is likely to remain a key ESG funding tool, with around 20 percent of all EM ESG dollar debt issued in 2024 (excluding China), with the rest bonds.

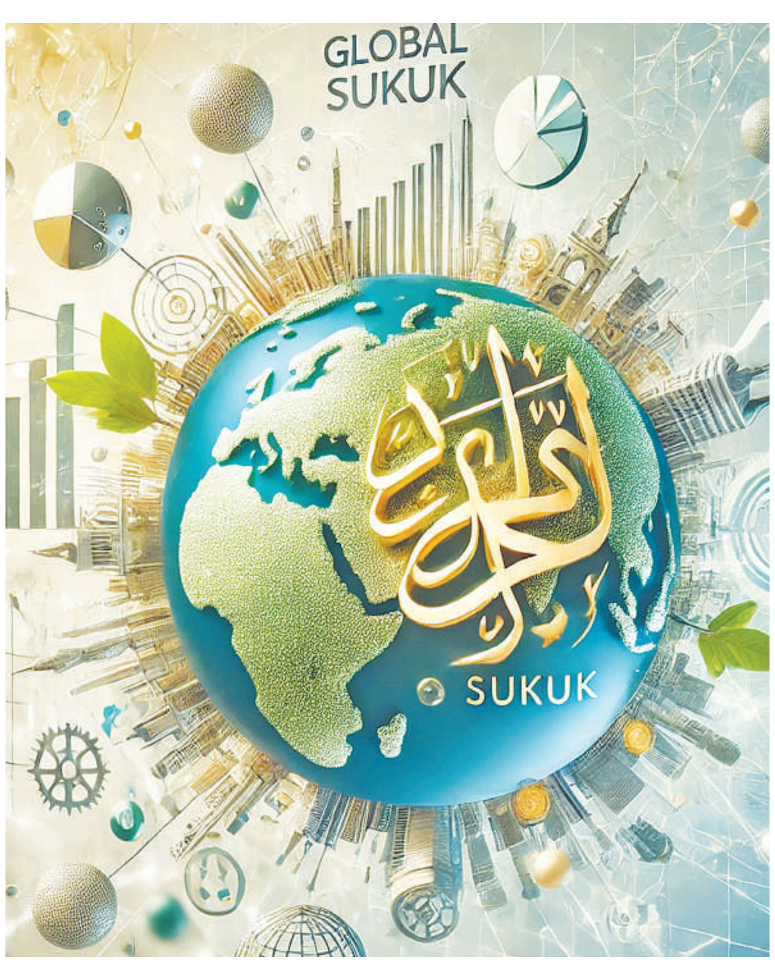
ESG sukuk support sectors such as clean energy, education, healthcare, and affordable housing.

Global ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) sukuk are Islamic bonds structured to comply with Sharia principles, designed to finance projects that align with sustainable and responsible investment (SRI) criteria.

These instruments combine the ethical foundation of Islamic finance with ESG objectives, making them an attractive option for investors seeking to balance financial returns with positive social and environmental impact.

Funding environment is generally favourable, with the Fed expected to cut rates by 100bp to 3.5 percent by 4Q25.

Growth drivers also include issuers' funding diversification goals, enabling ESG regulations, sustainability and net zero strategies by a number of sovereigns, banks, corporates, supranationals, and GREs.



Lower oil prices (2025F: US$70/barrel; 2026F: US$65) could increase funding needs in some OIC markets.

Fitch Ratings expects ESG sukuk to cross15 percent of global dollar sukuk issuance in the medium term (2024: 12.3 percent).

Risks include sharia-compliance complexities, such as linked to AAOIFI Sharia Standard No. 62, weakening sustainability drives, geopolitical risks, and oil volatilities.

Most OIC countries – including in Africa and Asia – have not issued ESG sukuk or bonds despite varying funding needs, perhaps due to ESG goals taking lower priority.

The financial sector and debt capital market in general also remains underdeveloped in many OIC countries, with gaps in the necessary regulations, infrastructure, and incentives. This might change in the long term.

Global ESG sukuk expanded 23 percent yoy to US$45.2 billion outstanding, with 68 percent in hard currencies.

It outpaced global ESG bonds, which were up 16 percent at end-2024.

It also surpassed global sukuk growth (10 percent), but represented only 5 percent of global sukuk outstanding (all currencies).

ESG sukuk issuance in 2024 reached US$11.1 billion (up 3.8 percent yoy), mostly driven by Saudi Arabia (39 percent), Malaysia (22 percent), United Arabs Emirates (UAE) (20 percent), and Indonesia (8 percent).

Among Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, the ESG debt capital market (US dollars) reached USD46.3 billion outstanding, with 44 percent sukuk.

The largest listing venue for ESG sukuk globally is Nasdaq Dubai with 35 percent share of global outstanding volumes at end-2024.

Fitch rated about 80 percent of the global hard-currency ESG sukuk, or US$24.2 billion outstanding, at end-2024 (up 18 percent yoy). ESG sukuk represent about 13 percent of all outstanding Fitch-rated sukuk.

Almost all (99 percent) of Fitch-rated ESG sukuk are investment grade with no defaults. About 80 percent of Fitch-rated ESG sukuk were from the Middle East, followed by Asia (19 percent).

Green and Sustainable sukuk could help issuers tap ESG-sensitive international investors from the US, Europe, and Asia, as well as sukuk-focused Islamic investors from the GCC.

The demand from ESG-sensitive international investors could help address the funding gap, including for longer-tenor maturities.

A recent example is the Indonesian sovereign sukuk (BBB).

The 30-year green sukuk tranche attracted 90 percent investors from Europe, the US and Asia (excluding Malaysia and Indonesia), with more than 85 percent coming from non-bank investors.

However, lack of universal ESG and Sharia compliance standards complicates sukuk issuance and investor decision-making and enhanced disclosure requirements and impact reporting remain critical to maintaining investor trust in ESG claims remain the major challenge facing ESG sukuk.

New banknotes to start circulating on Feb 1,'25

By Correspondent Benny Mwaipaja

The Governor of the Bank of Tanzania (BoT), Emmanuel Tutuba, has announced that the new Tanzanian banknotes bearing the signature of the Minister of Finance, Dr. Mwigulu Nchemba (MP), and his own, from the 2010 series, will enter circulation starting February 1 this year.

Governor Tutuba (pictured) made this statement yesterday while presenting Dr. Nchemba with sample banknotes of 10,000/-, 5,000/-, 2,000/-, and 1,000/- at the Ministry of Finance's offices in Dar es Salaam, in accordance with the laws and regulations governing financial matters in the country.

"Our exercise to reprint banknotes for the 2010 series has been completed, and we have already informed the public through a notice I issued in the Government Gazette," said Tutuba.

The governor explained that these banknotes will be used alongside the currently circulating banknotes, which were issued in 2010 and feature the same appearance, including security features, size, color, and other elements, with the exception of updated signatures of the minister of finance and the BoT governor .

"The signature of the former Minister of Finance, who is now the Vice President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Dr. Philip Isdor Mpango, has been replaced with your signature and the signature of the retired Governor of the Bank of Tanzania, Prof. Florens Luoga, has been replaced with the signature of the current Governor, Emmanuel Tutuba," added Mr. Tutuba.

Speaking after receiving the samples of the new banknotes, the finance minister expressed gratitude to President Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan for approving the initiative and commended the Governor of the Bank of Tanzania, Mr. Emmanuel Tutuba, for overseeing the printing process with great professionalism and integrity.

"Reaching this stage is a great honor for our nation and continues to uphold the reputation of our experts in managing issues of significant national interest with precision," said Dr. Nchemba.

Dr. Nchemba approved the new banknotes to be circulated and begin usage as planned on February 1 this year.

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Banks ditch net zero as climate alliances crumble

By Tsvetana Paraskova

Major US and Canadian banks have withdrawn from the Net-Zero Banking Alliance following pressure from Republican-led states and the election of President Trump.

BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager, has also left the Net Zero Asset Managers initiative due to legal concerns and confusion surrounding its practices.

European banks are reevaluating their participation in net-zero alliances, and the future of climate finance initiatives is uncertain.

A few years ago, the world's biggest banks and asset managers raced to commit to funding the energy transition and drop fossil fuel projects from portfolios as they came under shareholder and market pressure to join net-zero alliances.

But after years of scrutiny and blacklisting from Republican states in the US and lawsuits from Republican attorney generals, North American banks and asset managers began quitting net-zero alliances en masse following President Donald Trump's election victory.

The top US banks and four of Canada's largest banks are no longer part of the Net-Zero Banking Alliance (NZBA), a group of leading global banks committed to aligning their lending, investment, and capital markets activities with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Now several European banks are considering withdrawing from the NZBA, too, while the leading figures of the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero (GFANZ) - the umbrella group for the finance institutions that have pledged net zero goals - are struggling to hold their regular annual meeting this month, the Financial Times reports, citing sources with knowledge of the situation.

Some of Europe's biggest banks are rethinking their membership and involvement in net-zero initiatives as Donald Trump returns to office and Republican-led U.S. states are going after "woke capital." This, they say, discriminates against America's oil, gas, and coal industry by committing to net-zero portfolios and adopting principles that could reduce financing for fossil fuel projects.

Since early December, the biggest U.S. banks - Goldman Sachs, Citigroup, Bank of America, Morgan Stanley, Wells Fargo, and JP Morgan - have all quit the NZBA.

Commenting on the banks' withdrawals, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton said,

"More and more financial institutions are taking a major step in the right direction by leaving the radical and anti-energy Net-Zero Banking Alliance.

"The NZBA seeks to undermine our vital oil and gas industries, and membership could potentially prevent banks from being able to enter into contracts with Texas governmental entities," Paxton added.

BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager, early this month quit the parallel Net Zero Asset Managers initiative in the latest exit of a major financial institution from a climate finance alliance since Trump was elected US President.

BlackRock has decided to leave the voluntary Net Zero Asset Managers initiative, which launched in December 2020 and aims to "support the asset management industry to commit to a goal of net zero emissions in order to mitigate financial risk and to maximize long-term value of assets."

The world's top asset manager has quit the initiative because its membership has "caused confusion regarding BlackRock's practices and subjected us to legal inquiries from various public officials," Vice Chairman Philipp Hildebrand wrote in a letter to institutional clients.

Net zero under scrutiny

BlackRock and major banks have come under increased pressure from Republican politicians and Republican-governed states over their pledges to scale back funding for fossil fuel projects.

Texas authorities, for example, have decided to withdraw $8.5 billion in assets of the Permanent School Fund from the asset manager. The Texas legislature passed a law in 2021 to penalize financial firms that, according to state authorities, discriminate against energy companies.

At the end of November, a group of Republican states led by Texas sued BlackRock and fellow asset managers Vanguard and State Street for alleged violation of antitrust laws. The states allege that the asset managers have been pressuring coal firms to lower output to cut emissions, thus driving up electricity prices in America.

Since leaving the net-zero asset managers' alliance, BlackRock has reached a settlement with the state of Tennessee, which had sued the world's biggest asset manager for misleading consumers regarding the role of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) factors in its investment practices. The settlement concluded a lawsuit filed by the State of Tennessee under the Tennessee Consumer Protection Act (TCPA).

"The Americans are totally obsessed about not being sued by Texas. The banks have been the worst," a European executive involved in the Glasgow initiative told FT.

Canadian banks BMO, National Bank, TD Bank Group, and CIBC also quit the net-zero banking alliance last week.

European lenders have threatened to follow suit unless NZBA eases rules and ends "all formal tracking and any issues that are perceived contrary to US antitrust", according to FT's sources.

The asset managers' net zero alliance is already struggling under the pressure. A week ahead of President Trump's inauguration, the Net Zero Asset Managers said it was launching a review of the initiative.

"Recent developments in the U.S. and different regulatory and client expectations in investors' respective jurisdictions have led to NZAM launching a review of the initiative to ensure NZAM remains fit for purpose in the new global context," the alliance said.

While the review is ongoing, the initiative is suspending activities to track signatory implementation and reporting.

European banks want the net-zero banking alliance to undergo a similar overhaul. Otherwise, they have threatened to quit and follow in the footsteps of the biggest U.S. and Canadian banks.

"Several banks have said that unless the banking alliance goes the same way [as] the asset management initiative, they will begin the process to leave," a source familiar with the banks' thinking told FT.

Tsvetana Paraskova writes for Oilprice.com

How edutainment, digital skills can transform learning in schools

By Godfrey Boniventura

As a parent or teacher, you've likely wondered why some children struggle in school, even when they're attending classes regularly.

Despite Tanzania's progress in enrolling children in primary schools, many are still not learning as they should.

Four years ago, I was shocked to read that the Uwezo Tanzania study of 2019 revealed that out of every 10 students in Standard 3, only 6 were able to read a story in Kiswahili at a Standard 2 level.

While 96 percent of children start primary school, only 58 percent finish. What is more interesting is that children drop out of school in early primary than in higher grades. So, what's going wrong? Why aren't our children learning effectively?

One major challenge I see in our education system is the traditional and rigid teaching methods that often leave little room for creativity and engagement. Children are expected to memorize facts, but rarely get to enjoy the learning process.

Over the years, I've come to realize that one of the best ways to improve learning outcomes is to make learning fun. Children are naturally curious, wanting to explore and ask questions.

But when education is presented in a strict, repetitive manner, learning feels like a chore, and the desire to learn fades quickly.

This is why the concept of learning through play–using cartoons, stories, and interactive games–can make a huge difference.

Imagine classrooms where children laugh, participate, and actively engage in their lessons.

When learning feels like play, children get easily connected to the subject, are more likely to retain what they've learned and develop a genuine love for education.

I've had the privilege of seeing this firsthand during the Ubongo Building Brains Tour 2024 in Arusha. The tour brought edutainment right to the community, with lively activities combining learning with fun. As students watched educational cartoons and took part in interactive storytelling, their enthusiasm was undeniable. They were not just passive listeners; they were eager to share what they learned. This kind of active learning keeps students coming back for more.

In today's world, digital skills are no longer optional–they're essential. Unfortunately, many schools in Tanzania lack the technology and tools needed to prepare students for the digital age.

However, some solutions are already making their way into classrooms. The e-Fahamu platform from Vodacom Tanzania Foundation is a great example of how digital literacy can bridge this gap.

Through e-Fahamu, students have access to a wide range of online resources that make learning more interactive and engaging. Teachers are also benefiting from the platform, which offers digital tools that enhance lesson plans and create more dynamic classroom experiences.

It's no longer just about teaching math or reading; it's about preparing students for a future where digital literacy is an essential skill in every profession.

However, we must acknowledge the value of traditional teaching methods. Discipline, structure, and hard work are important elements of any learning process. On the other hand, we must also accept that these methods need to evolve to fit into today's digital world.

The world is changing fast, and we can't expect our children to succeed in tomorrow's world if we don't prepare them today.

The key is to blend the best of both worlds. We can keep the valuable lessons from traditional schooling, such as the importance of respect for teachers, while also integrating modern approaches like digital learning and interactive tools.

This ensures students are not only disciplined but also motivated and ready to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.

Another lesson I've learned from my years in education is the power of community. It's not just teachers who influence a child's future–parents, caregivers, and neighbors all play a role.

When children see that their learning is valued by those around them, it gives them a sense of purpose. Communities need to embrace these new ways of learning.

As parents, encourage your child's curiosity. Let them explore educational games, participate in storytelling, and engage with digital learning tools. As teachers, take advantage of the available technology to make your lessons more interactive.

Together, we can create an environment where learning is not seen as a chore, but something children look forward to each day.

Tanzania has a unique opportunity to build a brighter future for its children. The tools are already here–whether through engaging content, digital platforms, or community support.

But it's up to all of us to embrace these changes. By blending fun learning experiences with digital literacy, we can ensure that every child, no matter where they come from, has the opportunity to succeed in school and beyond.

Let's commit to making education not just a requirement but an exciting journey. When our children love to learn, their future–and the future of our nation–becomes infinitely brighter.

Godfrey Boniventura is an expert with over 15 years of experience in Policy Analysis and Advocacy in the education sector.

CBE trains 2,700 women, youth entrepreneurs

By Correspondent Joseph Mwendapole

THE College of Business Education (CBE), has successfully provided free quality business and entrepreneurship education to 2,700 women and youth groups in the academic year that ended last year.

This was said yesterday in Dar es Salaam by the rector of the college, Prof Edda Lwoga, when speaking at the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the college.

She said that the training was given to entrepreneurs and businessmen in the regions of Dar es Salaam and Mwanza and that it aimed to build their capacity in using social networks to find markets, serve customers professionally and keep business records.

Profr Lwoga said that they have been teaching the entrepreneurs the best way to prepare business analysis so that those who want to borrow to develop their business can write professional projects that are accepted by financial institutions.

She said the college has continued to provide training to other groups in the informal sector adding that to begin with they have prepared curricula as well as providing training to long-distance bus operators and brokers.

"These curricula and training have been prepared by CBE in collaboration with other stakeholders from the government and the private sector. We started in 2023 and until now they have trained about 290 bus operators and 45 real estate brokers and the training continues to be provided," she said.

In addition, she said that in order to ensure that the research area gains weight and citizens benefit from the results of these studies, the college has been organizing an international business and economic development conference (BEDC) from 2020 with the aim of presenting the results of various studies conducted by local academics and foreign.

"For the year 2024, we held the fifth conference which was launched by Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa, which had the theme business and an enabling environment for inclusive development, and more than 114 studies were presented at the conference," she said.

Prof Lwoga said the college has developed public debates and academic discussions focused on important issues such as business development, entrepreneurship and technological innovation which has helped the students of the college to learn in practice.

Regarding CBE's Vision 2075, she said they aim to strengthen the college to become an international institution recognized for excellence in business education, research, innovation and service to the public.

She said they plan to lead strategic changes through educational innovations that respond to national and international needs and adapt to the changing needs of the market by incorporating programs that focus on modern technologies and entrepreneurship.

"We also plan to strengthen the college's ability to address social and economic challenges through research and better training and promote national and international cooperation to improve the services provided by the college," she said.

FX markets 2025: US bull in the China shop

By Mark Sobel

Continued dollar strength and associated pressures on global finance may be the hallmark of 2025 foreign exchange markets, especially the first half of the year, notwithstanding the dollar's large 'overvaluation' and massive current account deficit.

The real trade-weighted dollar is extremely strong and getting stronger, though still shy of Plaza Accord-era heights (Figure 1). Given dollar strength and strong relative demand, the US is heading in 2025 towards a huge current account deficit, perhaps pushing 4% of gross domestic product.

Financing lofty dollar 'overvaluation' and a massive current account deficit might herald a major dollar reversal. But that is not in the cards as strong demand for dollar assets will underpin the buck. Don't bet on a Mar-a-Lago Accord or dollar 'devaluation'.

The Federal Reserve faces sticky services prices and a relatively robust economy, complicating efforts to cross the last mile in getting inflation back on target. With the Fed having already scaled back expected 2025 rate cuts from 100 to 50 basis points and financial conditions being arguably accommodative, some ask if any cuts can be expected.

Longer-term rates are rising. That is also due to expectations President Donald Trump will largely succeed in extending the 2017 tax cuts and promulgating others, swelling an irresponsible 7% of GDP budget deficit and associated financing pressures.

Additionally, tariff threats, even if partly implemented, will render exports to the US less competitive, dealing a blow to foreign currencies. Higher tariffs and deportations will prop up inflation. Trump's bluster will heighten global uncertainties and the dollar tends to appreciate in a risk-off environment.

In short, all signs point to continued extreme dollar strength. But in currency markets, it takes two to tango.

Prospects for euro strengthening are dim. Good progress is being made in getting inflation back to target, while the euro area economy languishes. Markets expect that the European Central Bank will cut its deposit rate by at least 100bps if not more over the next year, in contrast with the Fed's more restrained posture. France and Germany are in a weakened political state. Europe is unlikely to mount an effective response to Trump. Given a tepid global economy and cranked up Chinese export machine, a weak euro won't translate much into increased exports. Parity between the dollar and euro is in sight.

The yen should firm modestly over the year but it won't be smooth sailing. Many analysts project the official rate will be hiked from 0.25% to 1%, influenced by real wage gains, firmer activity and inflation sustained above 2%. They may prove right. But the Bank of Japan at times seems very cautious about lifting - higher rates will lift the government's interest bill and a stronger yen will push inflation down; fewer hikes put downward pressure on the yen via the carry trade. The BoJ is instinctively a free floater, but the Finance Ministry will unhappily jawbone if the yen is weak and if the yen rises. Sometimes the authorities appear schizophrenic.

The renminbi will be a tale of two currencies - the trade-weighted renminbi and the dollar-renminbi exchange rate.

The authorities have long and unconvincingly suggested analysts should focus on the trade-weighted renminbi. The real renminbi is extremely competitive, down sharply over the last three years (Figure 2). The International Monetary Fund and others suggest China's current account surplus is roughly 1.5 percent of GDP and the trade surplus some 3 percent. Those estimates are in all probability vastly understated given opacity in China's balance of payments data. China's manufacturing trade surplus is roughly 10 percent of GDP.

The renminbi-dollar exchange rate is more relevant as a gauge for financial flows. Notwithstanding the enormous current account surplus, capital account pressures weigh heavily on the renminbi given major domestic economic headwinds and looming Trump tariffs.

Authorities might be tempted to allow considerable renminbi depreciation in the face of any Trump tariffs. But given concerns about accelerated capital outflows and with the renminbi already hyper-competitive, they will most likely restrain depreciation through an array of opaque tools, without drawing lines in the sand.

A quarter of US trade is with Canada and Mexico. The Loonie is under pressure, having fallen some 7 percent since the summer following forceful Bank of Canada rate cuts amid a softening economy and weaker commodity prices. The central bank may not be finished. Trump's trade threats are a wild card. Canadian politics is in turmoil.

The Mexican peso also has fallen since the summer. But with core inflation under 4 percent and Banco de México's official rate at 10 percent, the authorities have substantial scope to react to market developments, while contending with Trump.

If Mexico and Canada can begin sorting out relations with Trump 2.0 over the year, their currencies may have scope to find renewed footing and firm. Otherwise, a rocky economic fallout could occur.

There is every reason the dollar will remain extremely strong for the first half of 2025. US slowing in the second half and greater clarity on Trump's trade policies might pave the way for some modest easing. But projecting exchange rates is a fool's errand!

Mark Sobel (pictured) is the US Chair of OMFIF.

How Trump's comeback threatens Nigeria banks

By Oluwatobi Ojabello, Lagos

When Donald Trump introduced tax reforms in 2017, the effects rippled across the globe, with emerging economies like Nigeria taking a direct hit. As Trump pushes for similar changes again, Nigeria's banking sector may face heightened risks, potentially curbing foreign direct investment (FDI) and disrupting key industries that banks depend on.

The proposed U.S. tax cuts and tariffs, including reducing the corporate tax rate from 21 percent to 15 percent, are intended to strengthen the U.S. economy. However, they may have unintended consequences for emerging markets, a phenomenon often referred to as the 'beggar-thy-neighbour' policy.

By incentivising US firms to repatriate capital, these reforms could reduce investment flows into countries like Nigeria. In 2017, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which lowered the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 21 percent, prompted US companies to bring back over $777 billion in foreign earnings, according to the US Federal Reserve.

This led to a dramatic drop in FDI into Nigeria– from $4.65 billion in 2017 to just $2.23 billion in 2018, as reported by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Along with tax cuts, Trump's tariffs could further strangulate trade between the U.S. and Nigeria, particularly in sectors like oil and agriculture. With tariffs raising costs for Nigerian exporters, banks that finance these industries could see reduced profits and liquidity pressures.

For Nigerian banks heavily reliant on foreign direct investment (FDI), these reforms present both threats and opportunities. As US firms prioritise bringing offshore earnings back to the country, fewer investments may flow into Nigeria's key sectors, including oil, agriculture, and manufacturing. This would result in less capital available for Nigerian banks, undermining their ability to sustain liquidity and growth.

These shifts in global investment and trade present both risks and opportunities for Nigerian banks. By offering specialised services to US firms looking to diversify into Africa, Nigerian banks could capitalise on new growth avenues. However, to stay competitive, they must adapt quickly, enhancing risk management and leveraging the region's strategic position to attract foreign capital amidst global uncertainties.

Trump's tariffs, in addition to tax cuts, could disrupt trade with Nigeria, particularly in vital industries like oil and agriculture. Nigerian businesses would face higher costs due to increased tariffs, leading to squeezed profit margins. The impact on businesses directly affects Nigerian banks, as financial institutions serving these industries may experience a drop in liquidity, further pressuring their bottom lines.

Despite these challenges, Nigerian banks have opportunities to diversify their portfolios and attract new investments, especially by capitalising on Africa's strategic importance. To succeed, they must offer tailored financial products, strengthen relationships with investors, and enhance their risk management strategies. In doing so, they can remain resilient amidst global shifts in economic policy.

As Nigeria faces the consequences of global economic trends, including those tied to U.S. policies, the country's financial institutions need to adapt quickly.

Abayomi Fashina, a finance and tax expert, noted that Nigerian banks could still thrive by offering tax-efficient financial products and taking proactive steps to diversify their portfolios. However, the key to success lies in agility, strong risk management, and leveraging opportunities arising from these policy changes.

The potential ripple effects of U.S. policy changes, particularly Trump's tax reforms and trade tariffs, pose significant risks to Nigeria's banking sector and its economy at large.

However, with strategic adaptation, robust risk management, and a focus on diversifying their financial offerings, Nigerian banks can mitigate these risks and seize emerging opportunities in Africa's growing financial landscape.

By positioning themselves to meet the needs of US firms seeking diversification, Nigerian banks could play a critical role in the evolving global economic environment.

Indian banks block Russian oil payments after US sanctions

NEW DELHI

Indian banks has begun blocking payments for Russian oil imports following the latest round of US sanctions against Russia's oil industry, according to a report from Energy Intelligence, an energy information company.

The US on Jan. 10 announced large-scale sanctions against major Russian oil companies and nearly 200 vessels of Moscow's "shadow fleet."

Following the new restrictions, financial institutions in India began blocking payments for Russian crude, Energy Intelligence reported on Jan. 20. India's state-owned banks, State Bank of India and Punjab National Bank, have exercised the most caution in avoiding US sanctions.

Private banks have adopted a less rigid approach, the report said.

India became the world's leading importer of Russian oil following the full-scale invasion of February 2022 and subsequent barrage of Western sanctions. India accounted for almost half of all Russian seaborne crude exports in 2024.

Approximately 20 percent of those exports originated from Surgutneftegas and Gazprom Neft, Russian oil companies targeted in Washington's recent sanctions, according to S&P Global. Sanctioned shadow fleet tankers reportedly transported 450,000 barrels of crude to India per day.

Sanctioned Russian tankers that were booked before the sanctions went into effect on Jan. 10 will be allowed to unload at ports in India until March 12, the end of a US grace period, an official told Bloomberg.

Refineries in India have already entered agreements to buy crude from Oman and the United Arab Emirates, Reuters reported on Jan. 21, citing industry sources.

The tightening sanctions prompted a sharp drop in Russian seaborne crude exports over the past week, according to Bloombirg. Since the Jan. 10 measures, dozens of tankers around the world have dropped anchor and suspended operations.

US 'likely' to sanction Russia if Moscow refuses peace negotiations, Trump says

According to S&P Global Commodity Insights, sanctioned Surgutneftegaz and Gazprom Neft accounted for about 20 percent of Russian oil exports to India, while tankers included in the sanctions "blacklists" transported 450 thousand barrels per day to the country, or a quarter of all deliveries.

The Indian authorities have decided that sanctioned tankers will not be able to enter the country's ports after March 12, the date when the period set by the US Treasury Department for completing all transactions with blacklisted individuals ends. Until that date, India is ready to accept tankers loaded before the sanctions were imposed, a high-ranking official in New Delhi told Bloomberg.

China orders payment cap at state-owned financial firms

BEIJING/HONG KONG

China is set to impose a 1 million yuan ($137,309) cap on the annual income of staff at central government-owned financial institutions, three sources said, expanding a campaign against excess against a backdrop of economic slowdown.

Those whose income already exceeds 1 million yuan will have their payout cut, such as middle and senior managers whose income will as much as halve in an overhaul of the compensation structure at 27 financial giants including the "Big Five" banks, six leading insurers and four major bad debt managers.

The bulk of cuts will be made by shrinking bonuses, said two of the three people, who have direct knowledge of the plan but declined to be identified due to the sensitivity of the matter.

The most sweeping wage reduction exercise in the $67 trillion finance sector will begin as early as next month though staff are yet to be informed of reasons, the people said.

The cap is in line with the government's "common prosperity" drive launched in 2021 to address social and income inequality as growth slowed in the world's second-largest economy.

Both state-owned and private financial firms have since proactively lowered salaries and bonuses and discouraged the show of wealth such as by asking staff to avoid wearing expensive clothes and watches.

Income caps at state-owned financial institutions, however, could make it harder to retain top talent when private-sector rivals offer competitive compensation packages.

The pay cap at central government-owned financial firms was first reported by news outlet Caixin citing unidentified regulatory and banking sources.

Wall Street's main indexes closed higher on Tuesday, as investors assessed Donald Trump's first actions as US president and appeared encouraged he didn't kick off his second term with blanket tariff increases.

Executive income at subsidiaries of the targeted firms, including investment banks and asset managers, will be capped at 3 million yuan, the three people also said.

Some senior executives at subsidiaries currently earn as much as 5 million yuan, stock exchange filings showed.

The Ministry of Finance - the targeted firms' biggest shareholder - and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security did not reply to Reuters' requests for comment.

China is also set to slash pay by about half at the central bank and two financial regulators as part of a revamp that began in 2023 to bring income closer to that of other civil servants, people with knowledge of the matter previously told Reuters.

The timing is at odds with government efforts to boost consumption to revive economic growth. Just this month, millions of government workers were given a surprise monthly increase of about 500 yuan on average, beneficiaries told Reuters, opens new tab.

The Guardian
www.ippmedia.com

WORLD

Germany to lobby Trump on WHO withdrawal, agency hopes for U-turn

GENEVA/BERLIN

BERLIN will try to talk US President Donald Trump out of his decision to withdraw the United States from the World Health Organization, Germany's health minister said on Tuesday.

The UN agency also said that it hoped that its top donor country would change its mind and looked forward to a constructive dialogue with Trump's team.

"The new US president's announcement to withdraw from the World Health Organization (WHO) is a serious blow to the international fight against global health crises," Karl Lauterbach said.

"We will try to persuade Donald Trump to reconsider this decision," he added.

Germany is the second largest national donor to the WHO, contributing around 3 percent of the agency's funding.

Trump announced the withdrawal on Monday, alleging that the global health agency had mishandled the COVID-19 pandemic and other international health crises.

In the UN agency's first reaction to the move, WHO spokesperson Tarik Jašarević told reporters in Geneva: "We hope that United States will reconsider, and we really hope that there will be constructive dialogue for the benefit of everyone, for Americans but also for people around the world." ***Agencies***

A picture taken on March 9, 2020 shows the logo of the World Health Organization at the entrance of their headquarters in Geneva. (PHOTO / AFP)

Xi, Putin vow to consolidate relations

BEIJING

PRESIDENT Xi Jinping has pledged to work with Russian President Vladimir Putin to take bilateral relations to greater heights in the new year and "cope with uncertainties in the external environment through the stability and resilience of China-Russia ties".

In a meeting via video link with Putin at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Tuesday afternoon, Xi also stated his willingness to work together to promote the development and revitalization of the two nations and to safeguard international fairness and justice.

As part of recent high-level interactions, Xi and Putin exchanged congratulatory messages on Dec 31.

With Chinese New Year coming up in a few days, the two heads of state also exchanged good wishes on Tuesday.

Xi expressed wishes for prosperous bilateral relations in the new year, while Putin wished Xi and the Chinese people a happy new year and all the best.

This year marks the 80th anniversary of both the victory in the World Anti-Fascist War and the founding of the United Nations, and the two anniversaries were high on the agenda of Tuesday's talks.

Xi said the two countries should take this opportunity to jointly safeguard the UN-centered international system and the outcomes of the World War II victory.

The two countries should encourage all nations to strictly observe the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, uphold the universally recognized basic norms of international relations and practice true multilateralism, he added.

Putin referred to the fact that Russia and China defended their state sovereignty and national dignity 80 years ago by resisting invaders with blood and lives.

The two countries should jointly celebrate the 80th anniversary of the victory this year and safeguard the outcomes of the victory in World War II, he said.

Also this year, China holds the rotating presidency of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Xi said that China is ready to work with Russia and other member states to take the SCO into a new phase featuring higher-quality development, greater commitment and better performance.

In addition, the two countries should work together to promote greater BRICS cooperation and write a new chapter of unity and self-improvement for the Global South, he added.

Putin said Russia is willing to strengthen cooperation with China in multilateral affairs and play an active role in world peace and development.

Last year, the two heads of state met three times and reached a number of important consensuses, and the two countries celebrated the 75th anniversary of their diplomatic relations.

Bilateral trade between January and November last year reached $222.775 billion, an increase of 2.1 percent year-on-year, according to the Chinese embassy in Russia.

As part of flourishing tourism cooperation, nearly 3 million visits by tourists were made between the two countries last year, Chinese Ambassador to Russia Zhang Hanhui said in a recent article.

Pragmatic cooperation is progressing steadily and the two sides have worked closely in multilateral platforms such as the UN, the SCO and BRICS, observers said.

Xi said that China-Russia relations – characterized by permanent good-neighborly friendship, comprehensive strategic cooperation and mutually beneficial, win-win cooperation – "have witnessed constantly renewed vitality".

The two countries "provided more positivity for the reform and construction of the global governance system", he added.

He called on the two sides to further deepen strategic cooperation, firmly support each other, safeguard the legitimate interests of the two countries, consolidate and expand bilateral ties, and promote the in-depth growth of practical cooperation.

Putin said Russia firmly supports that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory, and it firmly opposes any form of "Taiwan independence". ***Xinhua***

At UN, Panama reminds Trump he should not be threatening force

UNITED NATIONS

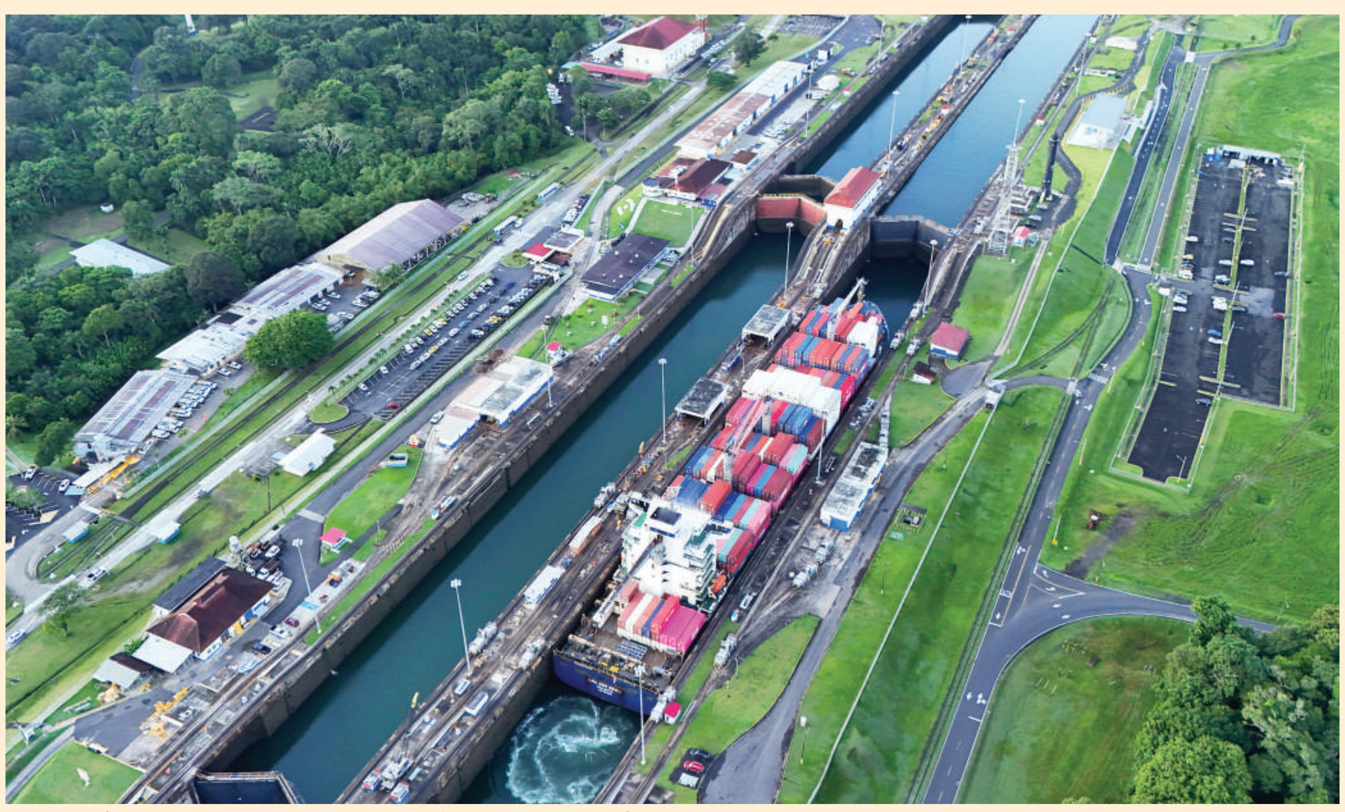
PANAMA has alerted the United Nations - in a letter seen by Reuters on Tuesday - to US President Donald Trump's remarks during his inauguration speech, when he vowed that the United States would take back the Panama Canal.

Panama's UN Ambassador Eloy Alfaro de Alba noted that under the founding UN Charter, countries "shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state".

The letter was addressed to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and circulated to the 15-member Security Council. Panama is a member of the council, which is charged with maintaining international peace and security, for 2025-26.

Doubling down on his pre-inauguration threat to reimpose US control over the canal, Trump on Monday accused Panama of breaking the promises it made for the final transfer of the strategic waterway in 1999.

Alfaro de Alba shared Panamanian President Jose Raul Mulino's rejection of Trump's remarks.



A cargo ship traverses the Agua Clara Locks of the Panama Canal in Colon, Panama. AP

"Dialogue is always the way to clarify the points mentioned without undermining our right, total sovereignty and ownership of our Canal," Mulino said.

The United States largely built the canal and administered territory surrounding the passage for decades. But the United States and Panama signed a pair of accords in 1977 that paved the way for the canal's return to full Panamanian control. The United States handed it over in 1999 after a period of joint administration. ***Agencies***

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is Boss Sahab, says Fijian PM Sitiveni Ligamamada

SUVA

PRIME Minister of the Republic of Fiji, Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka, has termed Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the real "Boss" of the world.

In a meeting with Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) and Indian Minorities Federation (IMF) Convener Satnam Singh Sandhu and IMF Founder Prof. Himani Sood in Fiji, Rebuka said PM Modi is a top global leader.

Praising PM Modi's mantra of 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas' for ensuring everybody develops and prospers together, the Prime Minister of Fiji said, "I believe Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas is a great governance model that PM Modi is practising, which ensures inclusive development for all. I think the world should adopt it for making it a better place to live".

"My friend (PM Modi) had been reelected (as PM) after we met (in 2023), so congratulations again and I would like to make sure that he gets the message that Fiji is still here. We are still committed to our journey of peace, on which he has been on that journey for long. Oneness' in our development, oneness in our progress and all these are great ideals for all world leaders," Fiji PM added.

The Fijian PM said PM Modi has become an icon for peace and Hindus all over the world. "Having the confidence of those in India is a big number. So, I congratulate him for that. The oneness in that journey of Hindus in the world will eventually translate into oneness in the peoples of the world," he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had met Rabuka in May 2023 in Port Moresby during his visit to Papua New Guinea on the sidelines of the third Forum of India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC) Summit.

On behalf of the Fijian President, Ratu Wiliame Maivalili Katonivere, Prime Minister Rabuka had then bestowed Prime Minister Modi with the highest civilian honour of the Republic of Fiji--the Companion of the Order of Fiji (CF).

This is not the first time that any world leader has praised the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Earlier in 2023, Prime Minister of Australia Anthony Albanese had called him (Modi) Boss. ***ANI***

To push China-US relations to make greater progress from new starting point

ON Jan. 17, 2025, Chinese President Xi Jinping held a telephone conversation with U.S. President-elect Donald Trump at the latter's request.

Xi said China and the U.S. share extensive common interests and broad space for cooperation. He expounded on the principles for China-U.S. relations, saying that China stands ready to push China-U.S. relations to make greater progress from a new starting point.

Trump said that he cherishes his great relationship with Xi, hopes to continue to maintain dialogue and communication, and looks forward to meeting Xi at an early date.

They agreed to establish strategic communication channels and maintain regular contact on major issues of common concern.

This conversation, drawing significant attention from the international community, has injected confidence into the smooth transition and a good start of China-U.S. ties in the new U.S. presidential term.

The China-U.S. relationship is one of the most important relationships in the world, which concerns not only the well-being of the Chinese and American peoples, but also the future and destiny of the entire humanity. Therefore, the two countries must adopt a long-term and strategic vision in developing their relationship.

The positive interactions between China and the U.S. have always been highly expected. Over five decades ago, leaders of the two countries made the handshake across the vast Pacific Ocean; the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries was called the "most striking and significant event shifting the international strategic landscape." Today, both Chinese and American people believe that the two countries "are compelled to work together if there is going to be a stable 21st century."

China's policy toward the U.S. is consistent, which is mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation. Both China and the U.S. are pursuing their own dreams and are committed to making the lives of their people better. They should work in the same direction for stable, healthy and sustainable development of bilateral relations.

China and the U.S. share extensive common interests and broad space for cooperation. The two countries should become partners and friends, contribute to each other's success, and enjoy common prosperity, which will benefit both countries and the whole world.

Eyeing on their common interests, China and the U.S. realized the "ice-breaking" of their relations in the 1970s. After 46 years of development, the two countries have become a community with a shared future in which their interests are closely interlinked.

Some issues in China-U.S. relations are "growing pains" brought about by the deep integration of their mutual interests, which should be relieved by mutually beneficial development. They should never lead to wrong strategic perceptions of the bilateral relationship.

Under the current international circumstances, the common interests between China and the U.S. are expanding rather than shrinking. The nature of China-U.S. economic and trade relations is mutually beneficial and win-win. The two countries should continuously explore new opportunities for economic and trade growth and make the "capillaries" of their economic exchanges unimpeded so as to provide stronger momentum for greater win-win cooperation.

It is inevitable that China and the U.S., two major countries with different national conditions, have some disagreements. The key is to respect each other's core interests and major concerns, and find appropriate ways to solve issues.

Over the past four years, the teams of the two sides have worked out through consultations a number of guiding principles for China-U.S. relations, bringing China-U.S. dialogue and cooperation back on track. More than 20 communication mechanisms have been restarted or established, and positive achievements have been made in many areas. This fully proves that cooperation and dialogue are better than friction and confrontation.

The Taiwan question concerns China's national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and it is hoped that the U.S. side handles it with caution. Containment and suppression will not impede China's progress, but will hurt the interests of the U.S. itself. The two countries should handle their differences properly by seeking common ground while shelving differences, so as to lay a solid foundation for the future development of their bilateral relations.

Against the backdrop of an international landscape fraught with instability, certainty has become a scarce resource in the world. China and the U.S. should blaze a trail for two major countries to get along well with each other in the new era with enough political wisdom and a sense of historical responsibility, so as to make the two peoples feel assured and set the world at ease.

China always has clear and definite strategic intentions and policies toward the U.S., and the China-U.S. relationship is always mutually beneficial and win-win in nature. It has been drawn from the historical experience that win-win cooperation is the sure way for the two countries to accomplish great things that benefit all.

China and the U.S. should view and handle their relationship from a strategic and a long-term perspective, and act in a way conducive to global unity in the spirit of "promoting global solidarity." They should strengthen dialogue and communication, properly manage differences, and expand mutually beneficial cooperation, so as to bring more certainty to a world overshadowed by instability. ***People's Daily***

Kenyan recycling firm revives EV batteries, drives green transition

NAIROBI

AN increasing number of electric vehicles (EVs) in Kenya are finding a second life, thanks to the innovative efforts of a local recycling firm.

By repurposing used batteries into affordable alternatives, Qtron Industries is accelerating the country's transition to green transport and renewable energy.

Qtron Industries, established in 2016, specializes in repairing and recycling batteries for vehicles and motorcycles. The company ventured into EV battery recycling to address the growing issue of discarded batteries littering Kenya's landfills.

According to the National Environmental Management Authority, Kenya generates about 51,300 metric tons of e-waste annually. EV owners with faulty batteries were previously forced to discard entire packs, even when the issue was confined to a few cells.

At Qtron's workshop on the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya's capital, technician Robert Kamau disassembles and refurbishes used batteries from hybrid and electric vehicles. These restored batteries are integrated into electric buses, motorbikes, and charging infrastructure, playing a pivotal role in Kenya's low-carbon future.

"The battery is the most expensive part of an EV, often accounting for over 50 percent of the vehicle's cost," Kamau explained, as he worked on a broken-down electric car. Advanced diagnostic equipment sourced from China allows Qtron to restore batteries at a fraction of the cost, making EV ownership more affordable.

Kamau's passion for electronics began in childhood, watching his father repair radios and televisions. Today, he channels that passion into breathing new life into EV batteries.

Consumers try an electric vehicle at Hanlin Africa New Energy Technology Company Limited in Nairobi, Kenya, on May 2, 2024. Xinhua

Qtron has refurbished over 100 EV batteries to date, preventing them from ending up in landfills. Kamau attributed the accessibility of battery repairs to Chinese technology and components from companies like BYD.

"Without Chinese technology, repair costs would be out of reach for most of our clients," he said, adding that innovations in Chinese EV battery technology enable technicians to replace damaged cells and extend the battery's life.

He revealed Qtron's plans to expand operations, spurred by government tax incentives that make importing battery accessories more affordable. Locally developed innovations, such as fire suppression systems that safely eject overheating battery packs, have also bolstered Qtron's success.

According to the state-owned Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority (EPRA), Kenya's EV adoption is growing, with around 5,000 electric vehicles, including two-wheelers, three-wheelers, passenger, and commercial vehicles.

EPRA Director General Daniel Kiptoo flagged EVs as a crucial solution for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, with transportation being a major contributor to air pollution. Kiptoo noted that while the high cost of new EV batteries has hindered widespread adoption, repairing and repurposing used batteries makes green transport more accessible. Kiptoo said EV batteries retain part of their original capacity after their automotive lifecycle.

These batteries can be repurposed for solar and wind energy storage, offering a cost-effective solution for powering homes, schools, and businesses in remote areas.

Recycled batteries cost around 1,500 U.S. dollars on average, compared to up to 10,000 dollars for new ones, making them a popular choice for EV owners facing breakdowns, Kiptoo added. Paul Kamano, an EV owner, turned to Qtron Industries when his car broke down after two years of operation due to a battery malfunction.

The affordability of refurbished batteries made restoring his vehicle feasible. Similarly, Kenneth Kibathi also opted for a recycled battery when the cost of a new one proved prohibitive.

Kibathi lauded advancements in Chinese EV battery technology, which have made addressing battery faults more manageable for owners like him.

By giving EV batteries a second life, Qtron Industries is not only reducing e-waste but also driving Kenya's transition toward sustainable transport and energy solutions.

The firm's efforts are a testament to the transformative power of local innovation and international collaboration in tackling global environmental challenges, Kamau concluded.

Int'l community worried about Trump's policy changes announced on Day One

WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump signed on Monday, Day One of his second presidency, a record number of executive orders spanning border security, immigration, energy, government efficiency, pardons for Jan. 6 rioters, pausing the TikTok ban and rescinding 78 Biden-era executive actions.

On international affairs, Trump signed orders to withdraw the United States from the World Health Organization and the Paris Climate Agreement, to rename the Gulf of Mexico to the "Gulf of America," and to pause foreign aid for 90 days pending review.

The global impact has already been felt as Trump returned to the White House on his first day of office. In response to the drastic U.S. policy changes, the international community has expressed deep worry, regret and even readiness to take counter-measures to hit back. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said on Monday that her country "does not have to bow its head" to the United States, and urged the public "to remain calm."

"We are a great country, a cultural power, and Mexicans are a hard-working, honest people, who are fraternal, supportive, and have a lot to boast about to the entire world. So, the relationship with the United States has to be between equals," the president said during her usual morning press conference at the National Palace in Mexico City.

Regarding Trump's threats to begin deporting undocumented migrants en masse, Sheinbaum unveiled a program called "Mexico embraces you," which aims to offer deportees help and orientation.

"Mexicans are very important to the economy in the United States and the Trump administration knows that. In the event of deportations, which would be a unilateral measure on their part, in addition to defending them in the United States through the consular network and the support of lawyers and other schemes, when they arrive in Mexico there is also a comprehensive program," she said.

The program establishes protocols at border crossings and airports for receiving those being repatriated, including offering "admission to the Mexican Social Security Institute, employment, transportation, so they can get to their places of origin, and a small initial support" should they arrive with no money, she said. Some 38.4 million people of Mexican descent reside in the United States, including 11.5 million first-generation Mexican-Americans, with 4.8 million lacking documents, according to official data. As for the U.S. exit from the Paris Agreement, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on her X account that "All continents will have to deal with the growing burden of climate change. Its impact is impossible to ignore."

"The Paris Agreement continues to be humanity's best hope. Europe will stay the course. And we'll keep working with all nations that want to stop global warming," she said. On Monday, a spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called on the United States to remain a leader on global environmental issues after Trump announced the withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement.

"The Paris Agreement was adopted by all the world's nations in 2015 because they recognize the immense harm that climate change is already causing and the enormous opportunity that climate action presents," the spokesperson said in a written statement.

"The last ten years have been the hottest in recorded history. We have to look no further than Los Angeles to see this human, ecological and economic disaster play out. The collective efforts under the Paris Agreement have made a difference, but we need to go much further and faster together," the statement said, urging world leaders to seize opportunities in this critical decade for climate action.

Despite the U.S. withdrawal, the UN chief "remains confident that cities, states and businesses within the United States -- along with other countries -- will continue to demonstrate vision and leadership" by working for the low-carbon, resilient economic growth that will create quality jobs and markets, it said. "It is crucial that the United States remains a leader on environmental issues," the statement stressed.

The first Trump administration officially let the United States, one of the world's top emitters of greenhouse gases, exit the Paris climate accord in November 2020, dealing a major blow to international efforts to combat the climate crisis. Joe Biden, who succeeded Trump to become the 46th U.S. president in 2021, signed an executive order on Jan. 20, 2021 -- his first day in office -- to bring the United States back into the Paris climate accord. As Trump was sworn into office on Monday, dozens of anti-Trump protests broke out across the United States.

In Washington D.C., several hundred protesters braved the frigid temperatures to hold a rally at Malcolm X Park in the northwest of the city as Trump was being sworn into office and moved to Dupont Circle by Monday afternoon, crying against what they called "Trump's billionaire agenda."

"A lot of people are feeling a lot of fear today and feeling kind of just like they want to give up. And so a lot of us were out here today to show people there are other organizations that are doing things that can get involved, and they're not alone in how they feel," one attendee told FOX 5. In downtown Chicago, thousands of protesters marched toward Trump Tower on Monday, carrying signs "Stop the Trump agenda", "Free Palestine Now," "Keep immigrant families together," etc. In Manhattan, New York City, thousands marched along Sixth Avenue, demanding a free Palestine, calling for the protection of immigrant families, and honoring Martin Luther King Jr.

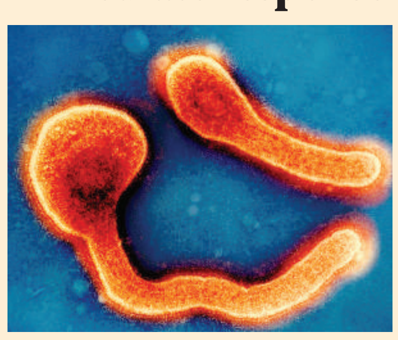
Agencies

Africa CDC launches immediate response to Tanzania amid Marburg virus outbreak

ADDIS ABABA

THE Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) has announced plans to mobilize immediate support to help Tanzania combat its latest Marburg virus outbreak.

In a statement issued Monday, the Africa CDC confirmed the deployment of a team of 12 public health experts within the next 24 hours. This followed Tanzania's declaration of an outbreak in the northwestern Kagera region, with one confirmed case and 25 suspected cases reported. The multidisciplinary team will include epidemiologists, risk communication specialists, and experts in infection prevention, control, and laboratory diagnostics.



Their mission is to assist in surveillance, diagnostics, case management, and community engagement efforts to curb the spread of the highly infectious and often fatal disease. The Africa CDC emphasized its collaboration with Tanzanian authorities to ensure coordinated efforts and to secure high-level political commitment for the response. Africa CDC Director-General Jean Kaseya said the continental public health agency is committing two million U.S. dollars to bolster Tanzania's immediate response measures, which will be used to deploy experts, enhance diagnostic capabilities, and support case management systems.

"Africa CDC stands firmly with Tanzania in this critical moment. Building on Tanzania's commendable response during the 2023 outbreak, we are confident that swift and decisive action, combined with our support and those of other partners, will bring this outbreak under control," Kaseya said.

The latest outbreak marked the East African nation's second encounter with the deadly virus, following a previous outbreak in March 2023 that resulted in nine cases and six deaths, according to the Africa CDC.

Marburg virus disease is a severe and often fatal hemorrhagic illness transmitted from fruit bats to humans. Human-to-human transmission occurs through direct contact with an infected person's bodily fluids or contaminated materials.

There is currently no vaccine or specific treatment for the virus. Infection prevention and control protocols similar to those used for Ebola are essential to limiting its spread.

Xinhua

Hotel in Nairobi to boost Kenya's economy and tourism

NAIROBI

IN a major development for Kenya's hospitality sector and economy, Hyatt Hotels Corporation yesterday unveiled its first hotel in the East African nation.

The five-star hotel is set to boost tourism and business opportunities in the region, further solidifying Nairobi's position as a leading destination for leisure and corporate travel.

Strategically located in one of Nairobi's premier commercial and tourist hubs, the hotel features 219 rooms designed to meet the growing demand from business travelers and tourists alike. Stephen Ansell, Hyatt's Managing Director for the Middle East and Africa, highlighted the hotel's anticipated impact:

"This debut marks a significant milestone in Hyatt's African growth strategy. We are committed to expanding into sought-after destinations to meet the diverse needs of modern travelers while offering our World of Hyatt members and customers enhanced options. This expansion underscores Kenya's rising appeal as a global travel destination."

Ansell also emphasized the hotel's proximity to some of Nairobi's most iconic attractions, including the Nairobi National Museum, Karura Forest, and Nairobi National Park. These landmarks showcase the cultural and natural wealth of Kenya and provide tourists with unparalleled experiences.

Igor Jovovic, the hotel's General Manager, elaborated on the facility's focus on delivering an authentic Kenyan experience:

"From our design, which reflects Kenya's vibrant landscapes, to our curated culinary offerings, the Hyatt Regency aims to encapsulate the rich flavors of Kenya. These immersive experiences are essential for travelers seeking meaningful connections with local culture, encouraging longer stays and repeat visits."

The hotel offers a mix of 147 guestrooms, suites, and 72 apartments, all equipped with modern conveniences such as high-speed Wi-Fi, smart TVs, and luxury bath amenities. The warm, earthy tones in the interior design, inspired by Africa's stunning landscapes, create a serene and welcoming atmosphere for global visitors.

For business travelers, the hotel features versatile meeting spaces, including one of East Africa's largest ballrooms on the top floor. With breathtaking views of the city, the ballroom provides an ideal venue for grand events and conferences. The hotel offers over 21,520 square feet of meeting space across ten distinct rooms, all equipped with state-of-the-art audio-visual technology to support high-profile corporate gatherings.

China continues expanding circle of friends in foreign trade

IN 2024, 88.38 million customs declarations were processed in China, which indicates a stable rise in the total volume, incremental growth, and quality of China's foreign trade.

According to data released by China's General Administration of Customs, the country's total goods imports and exports reached 43.85 trillion yuan (about $6 trillion) in 2024, up 5 percent year on year, hitting a record high.

China's foreign trade growth reached 2.1 trillion yuan in 2024, as the world's second-largest economy further consolidated its top position globally in goods trade. The structure of import and export products has also been continuously optimized and upgraded, with high-tech products reporting good growth numbers and a boom in new types of trade.

Despite the increasing challenges and uncertainties, China's foreign trade continues to show resilience, demonstrating the vitality and potential of the Chinese economy. This underscores that in the face of rising protectionism, openness and cooperation remain a strategic choice for global economic development.

The United Nations (UN) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have recently warned that rising tariffs could hamper global economic growth. As protectionism is on the rise, many countries are exploring ways to mitigate the impact of growing trade barriers on their economies.

While following an innovation-driven development approach and vigorously boosting consumption, China has been steadily advancing high-level opening up and enhancing its capacity for open and win-win cooperation amid the headwinds against globalization, with an ever-expanding "circle of friends" in foreign trade.

According to statistics, China has import and export records with almost all countries and regions designated in the UN Statistics Division. China's trade with over 160 trading partners around the world achieved growth, and the country has become a major trading partner for more than 150 countries and regions.

China's foreign trade with traditional markets, including the European Union and the United States, grew in 2024. Besides, for the first time, Belt and Road partner countries accounted for more than 50 percent of China's total foreign trade value. A significant portion of China's foreign trade last year came from emerging markets such as ASEAN. It is the continuous expansion of opening up that further strengthens the country's foreign trade resilience.

Providing high-end, green, and intelligent products to global trading partners

At the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) recently concluded in the U.S. city of Las Vegas, American journalist Patrick George tries on Chinese electric vehicles (EVs) for three times. He was drawn by what he described as "impeccable build quality" of the Chinese EVs. He attributed the progress of China's automotive industry to copious investments, a single-minded focus on electrification and software, learning from partners, a well-established supply chain, and intense internal competition.

The popularity of Chinese products at the CES demonstrated that the upgraded version of "Made in China" is a key driver for the high-quality development of China's foreign trade. Based on the complete industrial system, China continues boosting scientific and technological innovation to develop new quality productive forces.

The upgraded Chinese manufacturing provides China's trading partners with more high-end, green, and intelligent products. For instance, AI-enabled washing machines produced by Chinese companies can automatically identify the weight and materials of clothes to be washed and select the optimal washing mode. China's smart cooking machines are equipped with different types of menus and can prepare delicious dishes only within the time of a song. As China continues to enhance its innovation capacity, Chinese products are gaining more popularity and recognition worldwide.

Opening China's huge market to share development opportunities The vast Chinese market is another crucial factor behind the high-quality development and expanding "circle of friends" in China's foreign trade.

China has been steadily expanding voluntary and unilateral opening up as well as institutional opening up, unleashing the potential of the massive Chinese market. These efforts have contributed to the high-quality development of the country's foreign trade, providing more market opportunities to the world.

Via the cold-chain transportation of the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor, tripe from New Zealand, greenfin horse-faced filefish from Vietnam, and other products have been transported to China and featured on Chinese hotpot menus. Fruits like Thai durians and Lao bananas enter the Chinese market through the China-Laos Railway, enriching consumption choices of the Chinese people.

On December 1, 2024, China granted zero tariff treatment to 100 percent of tariff lines from all the least developed countries that have diplomatic relations with China, which led to an 18.1 percent growth in imports from relevant countries in the month, 5.8 percentage points higher than the first eleven months in 2024. This further demonstrates the immense potential of the vast Chinese market, which is bound to provide tremendous opportunities for more countries in the world.

China's economy has a stable foundation, multiple advantages, strong resilience and great potential. The dominating trend of a sound Chinese economy for the long term and the elements supporting it have not changed. This gives China more confidence in sharing opportunities and pursuing common development with the rest of the world.

People's Daily

The Guardian www.ippmedia.com

SPORT

Lions A posts first victory in 2024 TCA DC Super League

By Correspondent Japheth Kazenga

LIONS A cricketers have garnered their first victory in the 2024 Tanzania Cricket Association (TCA) DC Super League, trouncing Gymkhana by four wickets in Dar es Salaam early this week.

The ferocious bowling approach that Lions A had chosen proved to be fruitful as it had the team keeping their opponents in check.

Gymkhana batted first at the familiar backyard, Dar es Salaam Gymkhana Club's venue, and ended up notching 105/10 in 35.3 overs.

Arman Khan and Harsheel Shah were the ones who stood out of the rest, with Khan ending up as the cricketer with the most runs for the club.

The top-order batsman, Khan, secured 27 runs, whereas Shah, also slotted in at the top order, posted 26 runs.

The Lions A team cricketer Umar Shaikh (L) gets the Player of the Match prize from Tanzania Cricket Association (TCA)'s Ayzaz Jassani once the former's team faced Gymkhana in the 2024 TCA DC Super League tie at Dar es Salaam Gymkhana Club venue early this week. PHOTO: COURTESY OF TANZANIA CRICKET ASSOCIATION

There were further two digits garnered by fellow batsmen- opener Gulraiz Hydari, who notched 15 runs, as well as Dharmin Parmar and Mohamed Yunus, with the cricketers scoring 12 runs and 11 runs.

Gymkhana's efforts to take control of their innings and eventually amass a bigger total suffered an early blow following a brief stay by skipper Amit Raghuvanshi.

The skipper - one of the side's most competent cricketers - could so far score five runs in his short stint, leaving his team at 22-2 once the performer returned to the pavilion after 8.4 overs.

Arman propelled his squad to 65-3 at the time the cricketer exited the crease in the 17th over.

Shah also battled to make his presence count with a series of well-executed knocks, which had the batsman propelling his team to 84-4 upon his dismissal in the 24th over.

Failure by the remainder of the club's batsmen to hold off a bowling attack by Lions A, which was led by Umar Shaikh, frustrated efforts by the former to set up a more convincing figure.

Muthyam Pullamala scored four runs in his effort to improve his team's figure.

Lions A's bowler Shaikh orchestrated his squad's successful plan to neutralize Gymkhana, grabbing 4-24.

Shaikh, a promising all-rounder, bowled 7.3 overs, posting an impressive 3.20 economy rate.

He was ably assisted by the other gifted, youthful cricketer, Augustine Mwamele, in mercilessly tormenting Gymkhana's batting unit.

Mwamele wound up with equally great bowling statistics- posting 3-12 and the 1.50 economy rate.

Needing 106 runs to garner the win, Lions A cricketers zealously went on to successfully secure the victory, notching 106/6 in 25.2 overs.

Team captain Mohamed Salim looked to have got back his batting prowess, having solidly led the quest for the victory after notching 30 runs.

The opening batsman hammered four boundaries and pushed his team's figure to 93-5 at the time the cricketer returned in the 16th over.

Mohamed Jawed ended up with 14 runs once the cricketer batted alongside Salim.

Two further two-digit figures were recorded by youthful batsmen Karim Kiseto and Shaikh as Lions A pressed for the win.

Kiseto made his way back with 12 runs, whereas Shaikh chipped in with 11 runs later on.

Eighteen extras leaked by Gymkhana's bowling unit, six byes, one leg bye, 10 wides, and one no-ball somewhat made it easier for Lions A to chase the former's total.

Experienced spinner Tambwe Rashid ended with two wickets in eight overs, as was the case with fellow bowler Arman.

The duo's encouraging game, however, could hardly bail their squad out.

Lions A opened their campaign in the showdown on the wrong foot, given the cricketers went down to Caravans by three wickets on January 12.

Hosting the showdown is a continuation of TCA's efforts to develop the sport domestically.

The league, a TCA officer stated, has brought together the top cricket teams in Tanzania, put into two groups.

Group A teams are Aga Khan SC, Delaware Upanga SC- A, Patel Brotherhood A, Dar Indian Titans, and Pak Stars A.

Group B clubs are: Caravans, Strikers, Aces A, Gymkhana, and Lions A.

The showdown began on January 4, 2025, marking an exciting start to Tanzania's premier cricket competition.

Simba and Yanga: Balancing legacy and financial sustainability

By Kochecha Heriel

FROM the sunlit shores of Zanzibar to Mainland's sprawling plains, every two football fans you bump into in Tanzania are split between Simba SC and Young Africans SC (Yanga) not otherwise. It's a rivalry woven into the very fabric of the nation.

The clubs, with a rich history spanning nearly a century, were established over 80 years ago. For the past two decades, whenever the referee whistled to mark the end of the Premier League, it was either of the two clubs' fans in the name of Msimbazi Street-based Simba and Jangwani Street-based Young Africans who erupted in joy as they claimed the league title.

The lone exception transpired in 2014 when Azam FC made history by clinching the title for the first time. However, the dominance and fame of these iconic clubs bear little to their financial resilience.

Simba and Young Africans are navigating an intricate transformation journey to bolster their footballing prowess and financial sustainability.

For Simba, ownership is proposed to be structured, with 51% allocated to members and 49% to Mohamed Dewji. Similarly, Young Africans propose a 49% ownership stake for investors, with the remaining 51% retained by club members.

However, the transformation journey, winding and relentless, with hopes at the end of the tunnel, beckons a long way to go.

In 2021, Mo Dewji, an investor pursuing a 49% stake ownership of the Simba SC, publicly criticized the delays in the process, citing regulatory and procedural obstacles. The transformation process is still ongoing.

In the grand theatre of Tanzania football, despite delays in the transformation, Mo Dewji, owner of MeTL Group, and GSM deserve credit for their significant investments in Simba and Young African, respectively.

Yet, as the light shines brightly, there are whispers of concern. From operational framework to revenue models, the clubs' dependence on short-term strategies in their pursuits for glory raises eyebrows about their financial sustainability and long-term viability.

Contemporarily, Simba and Young African rely heavily on acquiring the biggest superstars in their prime as their primary player-acquisition strategy.

Despite boasting about football academies, their impact is shadowy. Nevertheless, such a strategy is too expensive and unsustainable for many reasons.

Identifying and securing elite talents requires scouting teams with vast experience and diverse specialties, capacities, and analysts supported by cutting-edge technological devices to evaluate the prospective players' performance, injuries, and potential.

Besides, it requires global outreach to uncover opportunities, significant time investment, and consistent monitoring to reach informed decisions.

On the flip side, clubs must understand the market dynamics intensely to negotiate effectively yet ascertain value for money. Unfortunately, our giant local clubs, Simba and Young Africans, lack these critical components to compete globally.

For instance, in 2023 and 2024, Young Africans signed Augustine Okrah and Jean Baleke - players previously dropped by Simba for underperformance.

Young Africans have since released Okrah. However, later on, FIFA ordered Young Africans to pay him $24,400 in a wage dispute, and Baleke is currently struggling, with the club considering loaning him to Dodoma Jiji FC.

Initially, the moves appeased the fanbase and taunted rivals; however, it backfired, stressing the perils of prioritizing short-term strategy over a strategic, data-driven approach that could reinforce long-term success.

In December 2019, Young Africans signed Yikpe Gislain Gnamien from Gor Mahia FC. However, in the process, a former Young Africans striker, Boniface Ambani, issued a warning about the prospective signing, insisting that; "I watched him at Gor Mahia. I am a striker, and I know the caliber of strikers Yanga likes. I knew he won't fit the bill.."

The warnings were brushed aside. Yikpe was successfully signed, but, as Ambani said, he failed to prove his worth and didn't even last an entire season, as in August 2020, Yikpe was among the 14 players axed by Young Africans.

The tales echo through time, each brushstroke on the same enduring canvas with Juma Balinya and Carlos Fernandez (Carlinhos) (pictured) in the equation.

Flipping the page, Simba, much like their rivals Ypung Africans, navigate a fair share of twists and turns in player signings.

In November 2014, the club signed Dan Sserunkuma (Ugandan international) with a $40,000 signing fee. However, just five months later, in March 2015, Simba and Dan agreed to terminate the contract mutually, with performance issues being the primary concern.

A similar pattern transpired in January 2024 when Simba signed Babacar Sarr, US Monastir FC, Senegal, on a two-year deal. However, the player lasted only six months, with his contract terminated in July 2024 due to performance issues.

The same year, the club signed Gambian striker Pa Omar Jobe. Despite high expectations, the player failed to prove his worth. In July 2024, the player's contract was terminated six months later.

It is worth noting that failed signings of 2024 are happening with Mels Daalder, an experienced Dutch scout, onboard hired by Simba in May 2023.

These repeated setbacks underline the need to alter the clubs' recruitment strategy to nurture talents through academies, expand scouting networks, and embrace data-driven decisions in player recruitment.

Acquiring top-tier players necessitates offering lucrative salaries, fringe benefits, bonuses, and long-term contracts. All these culminate in huge wage bills adversely impacting the club's finances and operations.

However, in most cases, club management overlooks this due to the pressure and myopic view for quick wins.

In the 2023/2024 season, Young Africans earned TZS 21.2 billion but spent TZS 22.3 billion, resulting in a TZS 1.1 billion loss. Player salaries consumed 34.91% of earnings (TZS 7.4B) and 33.18% of expenditures. Incentives added 12.26% (TZS 2.6B) and 11.66%, respectively.

Together, player costs took 47.17% of earnings and 44.84% of expenditures, straining operations.

Besides, Simba projected TZS 25.9 billion in revenue for 2023/2024. Still, TZS 6.8 billion (26.25%) on salaries and TZS 3.6 billion (13.89%) on bonuses laid bare the financial weight of ambition, with player costs consuming 40.14% of earnings. It is a gamble between glory and ruin.

However, ruins turn the tide.

With turbulence in the global economy and unpredictable pandemics like COVID-19, clubs should exercise prudent financial management.

Gurus in sports management and other sports bodies, such as CIES Football Observatory and Deloitte Football Money League, underscore that for clubs above the breakeven point, player salaries shouldn't at least not exceed 60% of their total revenue.

However, 30% - 40% is the most recommended threshold for clubs below the breakeven point to avoid deepening financial risks.

Unfortunately, delving into Simba and Young Africans revenues and expenditures figures, particularly bonuses and wag bills, beckons that ambition comes at a cost, and the wage bills tip the scale, leaving little room for sustainability.

These conundrums mirror the drawbacks global clubs like Manchester United, Chelsea, and Real Madrid face. Simba, Young Africans, and other local clubs should learn from these developments.

In Oct 2024, Man Utd ended an ambassadorial contract (multi-million pound) with Sir Alex Ferguson, the most successful manager in the club's history. The move came after axing 250 jobs as part of a cost-cutting programme.

In 2020, Real Madrid was forced to negotiate player salary cuts (10-20%) to stay afloat due to the coronavirus pandemic. Since then, Los Blancos has redefined its transfer strategy, signing very young players with significant potential before their value reaches exorbitant levels.

Players like Vinicius, Rodrygo, Militao, Camavinga, and Tchouameni were acquired under the new strategy.

Football leagues in developing countries like Tanzania have limited global exposure compared to Europe and Asia.

Hence, signing proven players brings an inherent risk of generating a limited return on investment (ROI). Although valuable on the field, they don't bring as much commercial value, such as increased shirt sales, lucrative media rights deals, substantial image rights, sponsorships and partnerships, and social media engagements.

Success in football transcends quantifiable metrics. It demands players that embody the club DNA, a trait often missing in players in their prime.

In retrospect, the Simba squad of the early 2000s, under the captaincy of Boniface Pawasa, that ousted Zamalek, Egypt, the then CAF defending champion, had no international signing.

Instead, they had players who epitomized the club's identity and core values. The team, as Pawasa several times recounted, possessed a fighting spirit and unwavering winning mentality.

Pawasa took an elbow from Hossam Hassan, got six stitches without anaesthesia, and still played on. It was usual for an injured player to insist on continuing regardless of their condition.

Sir Alex Ferguson, in his autobiography, explicitly exemplifies the power of nurturing homegrown talent, referring to his Class of 1992.

Nurturing homegrown players offers an opportunity to groom them with football skills and a deep-rooted comprehension of the club's DNA for long-term cohesion and success.

Of course, I was very young, a primary student then; however, SAF and Pawasa's words remind me of the Mtibwa Sugar squad (Wana tam-tam), the Back-to-back champions of 1999 - 2000.

It wasn't just a squad but a symphony of local brilliance featuring 25 men with Tanzanian IDs. Some notable figures in this squad included Steven Nemes (GK), Mecky Maxime (Defender), Zuberi Katwila (Midfielder), Yusuph Macho (Midfielder), and Monja Liseki (Defender).

Mtibwa Sugar was founded in 1988, played in the fourth division in 1989, and was promoted to the first division in 1996.

In 1998, the league was restructured into the Tanzania Premier League, and a year later, the team won back-to-back Tanzanian Premier League Champions in 1999 and 2000.

Its success culminated not from the wealth of giants but the pride of its soil. Two decades ago, Mtibwa vividly showed us that greatness isn't bought; it's nurtured.

Critics may point to glittering successes Manchester City and Chelsea garnered under Sheikh Mansour of Abu Dhabi and Roman Abramovich, a Russian oligarch, respectively.

However, it should also be remembered that Manchester City is accused of 115 breaches of financial rules spanning nine seasons and is grappling with inconsistency in 2024/2025 despite a roster of proven stars.

Equally, after its short-term triumphs under Abramovich, Chelsea is battling to regain its former dominance.

Hence, significant investments in academies nurturing homegrown talents with few additions of proven stars is feasible and a pragmatic strategy for long-term success.

Simba and Young Africans must rethink their approach to player recruitment and team development to remain financially competitive yet uphold their prowess beyond short-term success.

They should prioritize nurturing academy graduates and expanding scouting networks locally and globally to identify and recruit emerging talents early.

Adopting a data-driven approach, as exemplified by Brighton & Hove Albion, offers a blueprint for creating a cohesive and sustainable squad with clear tactical strategies and style of play.

These strategic shifts are crucial not only for Simba and Young Africans but also for bolstering the national team, and it's the only pragmatic model to transform from dominant local powerhouses into globally respected clubs.

As I conclude this article, I fail to comprehend that these touted football powerhouse and century-old clubs in East Africa stand without even a 30,000-seat stadium.

If our Tanzanian local clubs don't change their tradition in club operations, mainly player scouting and recruitment, they risk treading the same weary path endlessly.

And there lies a risk of reverting to stark financial constraints days of begging bowls and handouts.

***Kochecha Heriel is a sports analyst**

TRFA election slated for next month

By Correspondent Cheji Bakari, Tanga

THE Tanga Regional Football Association (TRFA) expects to hold its election in the region on February 15 to determine holders of key leadership positions.

Speaking on behalf of the Election Committee Secretary, Ramadhani Rutengwe confirmed in a statement to the press that nomination forms had been issued from January 15-18.

The positions to be contested include chairman, Tanzania Football Federation (TFF) General Assembly representative and two spots for the Executive Committee.

"Nomination forms were priced at 500,000/- for the chairman position, 300,000/- for the TFF General Assembly representative, and 200,000/- for the Executive Committee roles," he pointed out.

Forms, the official added, can be collected at the TRFA offices in Tanga, where preparations for a smooth election process are already underway.

According to the TRFA constitution, the body's election is done after every five years.

Barcelona boss Flick hails team mentality in 'unbelievable' win at Benfica

LISBON

BARCELONA manager Hansi Flick pointed to his side's mentality as key to their 5-4 comeback win at Benfica on Tuesday that secured their spot in the Champions League last 16.

Coming off a disappointing 1-1 LaLiga draw at Getafe, Barca were 3-1 down at halftime after Benfica's Vangelis Pavlidis netted a hat-trick, with the Greek pouncing on some sloppy defending from the visitors.

Although his men improved after the break, they were 4-2 down towards the end of the match before goals from Robert Lewandowski, Eric Garcia and Raphinha secured their comeback.

"It was a very crazy game. The most positive thing was the mentality we had. We came back and that's wonderful. That's football and that's why we love it," Flick told Movistar.

"I don't think I've ever experienced a comeback like this. It is unbelievable. We didn't play so well in the first half. They are very good and scored first.

"They made us defend very deep. We were not in the right position. In the second half we were better and substitutions helped us a lot."

Flick's decision to field goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny in place of Inaki Pena could have backfired after errors by the Pole led to two Benfica goals in the first half.

But the Barca boss stood by Szczesny, adding the 34-year-old looked better after halftime.

"Which player does not make mistakes? It is normal. Szczesny had some mistakes, but all the players made mistakes in the first half," Flick said.

"We win together, we lose together. We are a team. I liked what I saw in the second half, he saved a clear chance for Benfica."

Flick said his side would need to turn their attention to their next game at home to Valencia in LaLiga, where they are third, seven points behind leaders Real Madrid. They then face Atalanta at home in the Champions League.

"The victories give us time to keep believing in this project and send the message to the young players that we can and want to improve," he said.

"It's very important to focus on the Valencia game and we also want to beat Atalanta. We don't have to think that we are at ease."

REUTERS

Dortmund's shock loss to Bologna piles pressure on manager Sahin

BOLOGNA, Italy

BORUSSIA Dortmund coach Nuri Sahin said he still felt the trust from his players but would talk to club bosses after Tuesday's shock 2-1 loss to Bologna in the Champions League that stretched their losing run to four games across all competitions.

Sahin, who took over this season, had already been under mounting pressure going into the game with his team having lost all three of their Bundesliga matches in 2025.

After going 1-0 up in Bologna, Dortmund conceded two goals in two minutes midway through the second half to drop to 13th place in the league phase of the competition, with one match remaining.

The top eight teams advance to the round of 16, with the next 16 going into playoffs.

"The plan was definitely not to play passively," Sahin told a press conference.

His team played a solid first half but eased off after the break, allowing the Italians, who had scored just one goal in their previous six matches in the competition, to come back and earn their first ever victory in the Champions League.

"No," Sahin said when asked whether he had talked to Dortmund managing director Lars Ricken. "I think today or tomorrow we will sit down. The game is too fresh. It is clear we have to win games but now have lost four in a row. We will see."

Dortmund, finalists in the Champions League last season, have dropped to 10th place in the Bundesliga after their losing start to the year, putting next season's participation in Europe's premier club competition at risk.

"This is not about me. If I am the problem, if a coach change would solve all problems so be it. We have to deliver and the fact is we have now lost four matches in a row," Sahin said.

"Even a point would have been important on the road to a top-eight finish. It is not about me but about the club Borussia Dortmund."

Sahin said that despite the bad run he still felt he had the support of his players.

"I would not stay a second longer if the team did not trust me. In any club in the past or future, it is a fact that I would not stay a second longer if I felt the team was not behind me," he said.

REUTERS

Slot says avoiding Champions League knockout round more important than being top

LIVERPOOL, England

WHILE Liverpool narrowly missed clinching top spot with a game to spare in the Champions League despite a 2-1 defeat of French side Lille on Tuesday, manager Arne Slot said finishing in the top eight and avoiding two playoff games was the most important thing.

Liverpool's Darwin Nunez scores their third goal that was later disallowed for offside during their Champions League match against Lille at Anfield, in Liverpool, Britain on Tuesday. REUTERS

Liverpool's win guaranteed the Premier League leaders a top-eight finish and a berth in the last 16, thus avoiding the two-legged knockout phase facing the teams who finish ninth to 24th.

Barcelona, who staged a dramatic 5-4 comeback win over Benfica with a stoppage-time goal by Raphinha, are snapping at Liverpool's heels, three points behind with one round of the league phase to play.

"If in tennis you are the No. 1 seed it is better to face the No. 24 than the 12, but it is a ranking based on years," Slot said.

"Now we are in a new format when some teams are high in the league table because they had a lucky draw and some teams are low because they have a very difficult draw. It is far off to say it is an advantage to be one or two. You might be lucky, you might be very unlucky.

"For me, it doesn't tell me anything. The most important thing is we managed to skip a round."

Mohamed Salah scored his 50th European goal for Liverpool and substitute Harvey Elliott sealed the victory in the 67th minute after Jonathan David had levelled for Lille.

Liverpool set a club record for their longest spell without conceding a goal in European competition, with 599 minutes elapsing between Christian Pulisic's goal for AC Milan in the opening game and David's strike on Tuesday.

In between, Liverpool kept clean sheets against Bologna, RB Leipzig, Bayer Leverkusen, Real Madrid and Girona, and topped the 572 minutes without conceding in the 2005-06 season under Rafael Benitez.

"Very pleased," Slot said. "Where I put everything down to, first of all quality of the players and second those players have a quality work rate. If you combine those two things it is very difficult to score against the team. The nice thing for me is we keep clean sheets not by defending a lot, we keep clean sheets by attacking a lot."

Slot said patience was required against a Lille side that maintained their composure even after being reduced to 10 men in the second half, showing why they had been unbeaten in 21 successive games across all competitions.

"They don't have the best players in the world (but) it is how disciplined they are, how hard they want to work," Slot said. "We didn't force the pass, we kept the ball for as long as we could. The only thing I wasn't happy about was it was one chance for the other team."

Lille manager Bruno Genesio said that while he was frustrated by the loss, "it's a feeling that is mixed with pride as well. I think the display we put on, particularly the second half when we were one man down, I was pleased about."

REUTERS

Simeone delighted with 10-man Atletico's resilience in win over Leverkusen

MADRID

ATLETICO Madrid manager Diego Simeone said their 2-1 comeback win over Bayer Leverkusen would live long in the memory as he praised his side's bravery after they played more than an hour with 10 men in a thrilling Champions League clash on Tuesday.

Atletico Madrid's Julian Alvarez goes round Bayer Leverkusen's Matej Kovar before scoring their second goal during their Champions League match at Metropolitano, in Madrid, Spain on Tuesday. REUTERS

Atletico midfielder Pablo Barrios was shown a straight red card for a reckless studs-up tackle from behind on Jeremie Frimpong in the 24th minute.

Leverkusen then went ahead through Piero Hincapie's first-half header before the hosts recovered thanks to Julian Alvarez's brace to beat the Germans who also ended with 10 men.

"It was a match that will surely remain in the memory of the people who saw it for a long, long time," Simeone told Movistar Plus.

"Because it was an important match and an important win earned in a very exciting Champions League night. I'm happy with the joy that all the people who came to the stadium left with. They went home after living a nice, nice moment with us."

Atletico's victory -- the 16th in their last 17 games in all competitions -- lifted Simeone's side to third in the table on 15 points, three behind Barcelona and six off leaders Liverpool - with both of those teams having qualified for the last 16. Leverkusen, whose 11-game winning streak ended, are also currently amongst the direct qualifying spots in sixth with 13.

"The team (Atletico) didn't start well, they were just better than us," added Simeone. "They didn't create many scoring situations but there was one team that played and another that couldn't get into the game.

"We talked at halftime and it's no coincidence what happened in the second half. We played with courage a man short, performed intelligently, gaining metres on the pitch, taking advantage of everything that could happen in our favour."

Simeone heaped praise on striker Alvarez, who he said was everything they needed him to be when Atletico signed the Argentine in the close season in a deal worth around 75 million euros ($78.05 million) plus 20 million in potential add-ons.

"When we were thinking about Julian we were looking forward to this," Simeone said. "He's a player of the highest level. A footballer of the present who has an even better future ahead of him. Hopefully as a team we can help him improve, our coaching staff.

"And that he continues to have the humility he has shown running, working, fighting, going all out because that's what he's all about. I have no doubt that as the years go by he will be in a special place at the club."

Meanwhile, Bayer Leverkusen manager Xabi Alonso lamented his side's failure to hold onto a first-half lead at 10-man Atletico Madrid, who fought back to beat them 2-1 in the Champions League on Tuesday, saying his side lacked the maturity to cope with the pressure.

Alonso said his young team can learn from the defeat as the knockout stage approaches, with Leverkusen looking to reach the last 16 directly with a top-eight finish to avoid a playoff.

After seeing their 11-game winning streak end in Madrid, they are currently sixth in the standings with 13 points having been leapfrogged by Atletico who are now third on 15.

"I think when you're competing at the highest level you have to learn from these experiences," Alonso told Movistar Plus.

"In these situations, it's not just football that counts, it's also the maturity that we have at that moment and today I think we lacked that point at the highest level and we have to improve that if we want to compete in these matches.

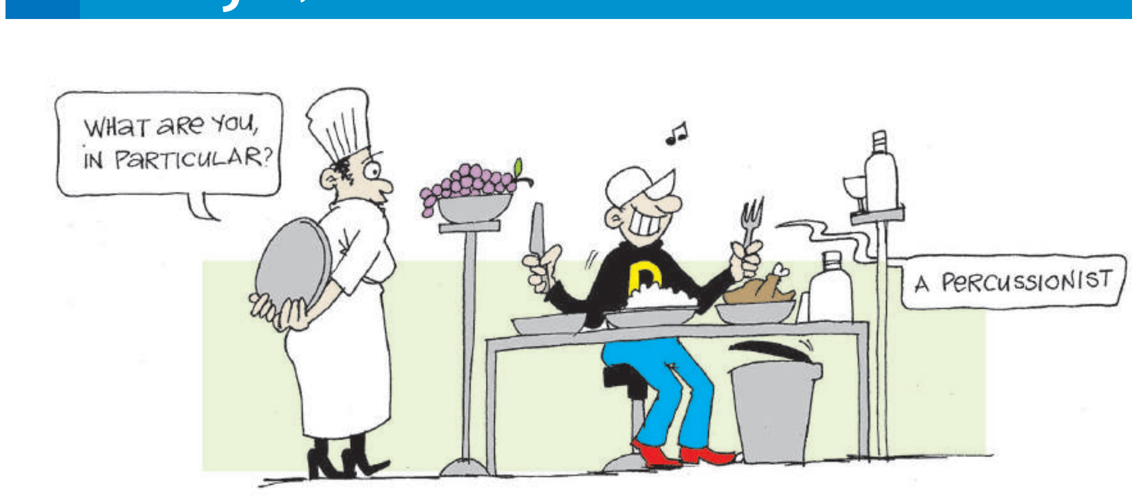
"We're still in the group stage but if you're in the round of 16, in the quarter-finals, especially when you play away from home, you have to learn from these moments, understand what it is that you need, not only in the game itself but the game's energy, reading the game and learning what to do when you're a bit overwhelmed by the situation, how to react.

"It's very easy to say it but the best thing is when you live it on the pitch that's where you learn how to read it, which sometimes is complicated. For us it's a good experience to be competing at such a high level."

Last season's German double winners host Sparta Prague in their final Champions League first phase game next Wednesday.

REUTERS

Gwiji by David Chikoko



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Slot says avoiding Champions League knockout round more important than being top

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Yanga aim for redemption in Federation Cup

By Correspondent Nassir Nchimbi

FOLLOWING their exit from the CAF Champions League, Young Africans have shifted their focus to defending the Federation Cup. Their first match in the round of 64 is against Copco FC on January 25 at KMC Complex.

Young Africans were eliminated from the CAF Champions League after a 0-0 draw against MC Alger of Algeria at Benjamin Mkapa Stadium on January 18.

This result placed Young Africans third in Group A with eight points after six matches. They were behind both MC Alger and Al Hilal Omdurman of Sudan, who both qualified for the next round.

Al Hilal finished first in the group with 10 points, MC Alger with nine points, while TP Mazembe of Congo finished last with five points.

This was a disappointing outcome for Young Africans, who had reached the quarter-finals of the competition the previous season under coach Miguel Gamondi.

Despite the underwhelming continental campaign, the club's Media and Information Manager, Ali Kamwe (pictured), stated that the team is approaching their upcoming matches with caution following their elimination from continental football.

Kamwe explained that the CAF Champions League exit has increased the pressure to achieve positive results in subsequent games.

"This game is very tough, in relation to our previous results in the CAF Champions League, and now we have to approach these games against lower divisional sides with so much attention.

"We understand that the FA Cup has tough, surprising results, but we need to be prepared," he said.

"Our defense of the competition cup starts on January 25, with the understanding that if we fail to win the FA Cup or the League title, the pain will be much bigger than the CAF Champions League elimination. We have to be prepared, and that is our aim," Kamwe added.

Last season, Young Africans secured their third consecutive FA Cup trophy, defeating Azam FC 6-5 in a penalty shootout after a scoreless 90 minutes.

Young Africans' morale is high, with coach Saed Ramovic named December's Coach of the Month, beating out Fadlu Davids of Simba and Rachid Taoussi of Azam FC.

Furthermore, their wide forward, Clement Mzize, earned the Player of the Month award.

Under Ramovic, Young Africans have won all four of their recent Tanzania Mainland Premier League matches.

With the majority of the squad in good form, this presents a strong opportunity for the club to return to winning ways.

Tabora United eye major upset against league leaders Simba

By Correspondent Nassir Nchimbi

TABORA United head coach Anicet Kiazayidi has expressed confidence in his team's preparations for their upcoming league match against Simba SC on February 2 at Ali Hassan Mwinyi Stadium in Tabora.

Since taking over as coach, the Congolese manager has led Tabora United in five matches, achieving four wins and one draw against Singida Black Stars. The team currently occupies fifth place in the league standings with 25 points.

Kiazayidi has overseen impressive results, including victories over Young Africans and Azam FC, as well as the draw against Singida Black Stars. Their last league match ended in a 1-1 draw against Coastal Union on December 17 of last year.

The Tabora United coach expressed satisfaction that his request for additional players was fulfilled, enabling him to bring fresh talent and energy to the squad for the second round of the season.

Among the new signings are Ugandan winger Joseph Akandwanaho from Mbarara City (Uganda Premier League), Gabonese international goalkeeper Jean-Noel Amonome, Ramadhan Chobwedo from KenGold, Cameroonian midfielder Cedric Martial Zemba (previously with Union Touarga Sports), and Tanzanian midfielder Emmanuel Mwanengo, who joined on a free transfer from Vakhsh Bokhtar of Tajikistan.

Under Kiazayidi's guidance, Tabora United have shown significant improvement after a slow start to the season under former coach Francis Kimanzi.

"I'm delighted to have my squad ready for the match against Simba SC. We have new players who are integrating well into the team. However, we know it won't be easy against Simba in our league return," Kiazayidi stated.

He added: "We need to be mature and ready for the game, ensuring we perform well on the day. Simba is leading both their CAF Confederation Cup group stage and the Premier League, which shows they've improved. We understand their strengths and will be prepared for the match."

After 15 matches in the first round, Tabora United sit fifth in the standings with seven wins, four draws, and four losses, accumulating 25 points.

The team has a zero-goal difference, having both scored and conceded 19 goals, a distinction they share with Mashujaa.

Last season, Tabora United only won five games, leading to a relegation/promotion playoff against Biashara United.

They won the playoff and maintained their league status. This season, they are currently on a six-game unbeaten streak.

Swiatek locks in Keys semi-final, Sinner sizzles at Australian Open

MELBOURNE

IGA Swiatek booked her second Australian Open semi-final with another spectacular display yesterday while Americans reached the last four of the men's and women's singles at Melbourne Park for the first time in 16 years.

Defending champion Jannik Sinner was also at his impressive best as he dismantled local favourite Alex de Minaur 6-3 6-2 6-1 for his 10th victory over the eighth seed in as many matches and returned to the last four at Melbourne Park.

Polish world number two Swiatek (pictured) mowed down eighth seed Emma Navarro 6-1 6-2 at Rod Laver Arena and faces another American in Madison Keys, who overhauled Elina Svitolina 3-6 6-3 6-4.

Ben Shelton wore down Italian Lorenzo Sonego 6-4 7-5 4-6 7-6(4) in a highlight-laden clash and ensured the United States has players in the men's and women's semi-finals for the first time since Andy Roddick and Serena Williams in 2009.

Searching for her first Grand Slam title, Keys will be hard-pressed to go further than Swiatek, who has crushed all five of her opponents at this tournament and is the only woman in the semi-finals to avoid dropping a set.

A throbbing ball of energy from the first point to the last, the five-times Grand Slam champion broke Navarro to love in the first game and was not prepared to concede a point - even when good sportsmanship might have warranted it.

In the fifth game of the second set and under pressure on serve, Swiatek bolted forward to retrieve a drop that bounced twice before her racket scooped it up.

Play went on, though, with Swiatek winning both the point and the game with a passing shot, leaving Navarro to remonstrate fruitlessly with the chair umpire.

Having not stopped the rally to dispute the non-call, Navarro had no recourse to challenge it - and Swiatek was not about to give the U.S. Open semi-finalist a break.

"I didn't see the replay after this point because ... I wanted to stay focused and didn't want this point to stay in my head for a longer period of time," Swiatek told reporters.

Most eyes have been focused on the top half of the women's draw, where title favourite and double defending champion Aryna Sabalenka booked a semi-final with Paula Badosa on Tuesday.

But it may be the free-swinging Swiatek in pole position for the title, having lost only 14 games in her five matches.

Keys had earlier blasted into a third Australian Open semi-final with characteristic aggression, 10 years after making her first at Melbourne Park.

The 29-year-old from Rock Island, Illinois had lost the last two of her three major meetings with Svitolina, most recently in the fourth round of the 2019 U.S. Open.

She appeared set for another setback as the counter-punching Ukrainian took advantage of Keys' early waywardness on a breezy morning on day 11 of the championships.

Keys dropped serve in the eighth game with an unforced error and then gifted the set with another mistake, as Frenchman Gael Monfils nodded approval at his wife Svitolina from the stands.

Keys raised her game, though, breaking Svitolina in both the final sets while staying rock-solid on serve.

Shelton, the 21st seed, is the last American in the men's singles draw, having carried on after the third round demise of U.S. Open runner-up Taylor Fritz and the quarter-final exit of 12th seed Tommy Paul.

Donning a white headband and a technicolour outfit, the 22-year-old brought a matching attitude to centre court as he yelled his way to victory in the first two sets and often cheered Sonego's mistakes.

Unseeded Sonego mounted a fightback to push the game deep into a fourth set but faltered in the tiebreak.

Shelton wrapped up the match with a booming cross-court forehand and high-fived his ecstatic father-coach Bryan Shelton, a former ATP title-winner.

"I feel relieved right now. Shout out to Sonego - that was ridiculous tennis," said Shelton.

"It was one of the favourite matches of my career."

A stern test awaits the American upstart, as top seed Sinner was at his brutal best to tear apart De Minaur in the late match and reach his second semi-final in Melbourne.

The early exchanges saw both players flex their muscles with heavy shot-making but there was only going to be one winner when Sinner broke for the first of six times.

"When you break so early in each set it's a bit easier," said Sinner. "These matches can go quickly, but things can (also) change fast."

Defeat extinguished local favourite De Minaur's ambitious bid to end Australia's 49-year wait for a men's champion since Mark Edmondson's triumph.

REUTERS

Flexibles by David Chikoko