



theguardiantz

theguardiantld

feedback@guardian.co.tz

+255 745 700710

LIKE & FOLLOW US

ISSN 0856 - 5434 ISSUE No. 9361 • PRICE: Tsh 1,000, Kenya sh100

TANZANIA

SATURDAY 28 DECEMBER, 2024

**Minister calls for expedite data collection on health**

Page 3



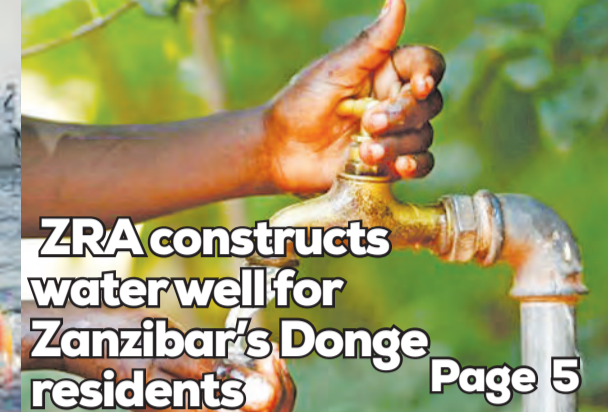
**At least 69 migrants dead after boat sinks off Morocco coast**

Page 4



**ZRA constructs waterwell for Zanzibar's Donge residents**

Page 5



**More than 450 migrants move to UK on Christmas Day crossings**

Page 7



# 10 dead in Boxing Day road accident

● *RPC says two of the dead came from Kenya*

By Guardian Reporter

TEN people died in a head-on collision between a Noah van and a passenger bus at Kibaoni village, Rombo District, Kilimanjaro Region on Thursday.

SACP Simon Maigwa, the regional police commander, told journalists yesterday that nine people died in the spot while one person later succumbed to injuries in hospital.

He said the accident was caused by reckless driving by the van driver, trying to overtake another vehicle without caution.

The crash occurred just before four o'clock in the afternoon along the Moshi-Tarakea road, with the van belonging to Ngesere Co. travelling from Dodoma to Tarakea, collided with a small passenger vehicle.

The latter was travelling from Tarakea to Moshi, resulting in the deaths of nine people in the Noah vehicle, he explained.

Six of the deceased have been identified while three others remain unknown, he said, listing those who were identified as Mamasita Lowasa (27) from Kamwanga, Damarisi Kani-ni Mwikau (22) from Elasti in Kenya, and Monica Mumbua (64), also from Kenya.

Others are one Liberatus (24), Peter Urrio (38) and Eligatanasi Kanje (30) from Tarakea.

Raymond Mwangwala, the Rombo district commissioner, confirmed the incident, stating that the bodies were taken to Karume Hospital mortuary.

TURN TO Page 2



MV Serengeti lies partially sunk from the rear, as found yesterday at Mwanza South port, where it has been docked for quite some time awaiting repairs. Details on the case are scanty but some sources say plans to set things right are going on, while the cause of sinking is still under investigation. Photo: Vitus Audax

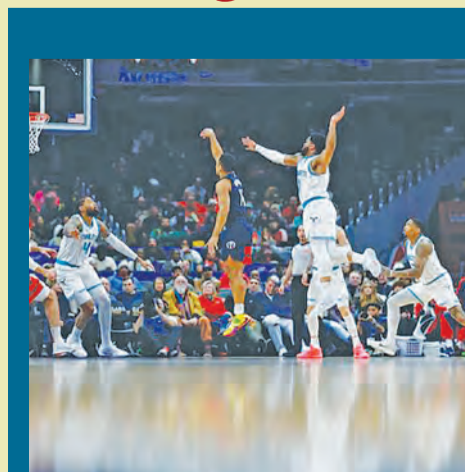
## SPORTS

Page 20



Yanga's winning streak under Ramovic sparks title hopes

Page 18



Grizzlies score franchise-best 155 points, rout Raptors

## Ministry testing WHO approved malaria jabs

By Guardian Reporter

THE Ministry of Health is awaiting recommendations from the national immunisation technical advisory group (NITAG), tasked to assess and provide feedback on the cost, quality and availability of two malaria vaccines.

Dr Samwel Lazaro, the national malaria control programme manager, said that two vaccines - RTS,S and R21 are yet to be introduced, following approval by the World Health Organisation (WHO) for R21 in October 2023 and RTS,S/AS01 back in 2021.

He said the two vaccines

*We are following the World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines on vaccine deployment and are awaiting the report from NITAG for expert advice on the quality, cost, availability, and safety of these vaccines,*

are currently under review and await approval from the ministerial panel before they are formally introduced in the country.

"The ministry is relying on expert advice from NITAG to support the rollout of the vaccines, particularly for children under five, who are most vulnerable to malaria," he stated.

Online entries say the R21 vaccine is a recombinant, adjuvanted malaria vaccine developed by the Jenner Institute at Oxford University and the Serum Institute of India.

Similarly, an entry by WHO dated October 2, 2023 says that the R21 vaccine is the sec-

ond malaria vaccine recommended by WHO, following the RTS,S/AS01 vaccine.

The RTS,S vaccine, developed by the Belgian firm GSK "has not yet met the required registration standards set by the Tanzania Medicines and Medical Devices Authority (TMDA) as the government is awaiting the manufacturer's completion of the registration process."

The R21 vaccine obtained ministerial registration back in July 2024, but it also requires further evaluation by NITAG

TURN TO Page 2

## 'Harvest rainwater to combat drought'

● *Tree planting efforts need experts for sustainable follow up, don says*

By Jenifer Gilla

ENVIRONMENTAL experts and stakeholders have urged the government to adopt a collaborative approach to combat the effects of drought, including the use of modern technologies for water harvesting and storage, food preservation and the promotion of natural habitat conservation.

The advice comes two weeks after a report by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), focused on the global land drying threat, examining regional and global drought trends and future prospects.

It highlighted that Tanzania and South Su-

TURN TO Page 2

## VPO, city council start plastic waste recycling

By Guardian Correspondent,

Dodoma

A CIRCULAR economy model to reduce plastic waste in urban areas while creating economic opportunities for local communities is being put on pilot stage at the capital city council.

Ally Mfinanga, the city environmental officer, told journalists here yesterday that this initiative is a major step towards sustainable waste management.

The Vice President's Office (Union and Environment) in collaboration with the city council is launching the pilot

project, being rolled out in Chamwino ward, to encourage innovative methods of plastic waste management by promoting recycling and reusing plastic materials.

He said the project is designed to address the growing waste problem while providing economic benefits for residents, by waste collection and recycling.

It is expected that the project will enable residents to realise the value of plastic waste, by using machinery to grind plastic bottles collected from various locations.

The materials will then be transported to Dar es Salaam, where they will be processed

into new plastic products, including household items, furniture and electrical components.

In addition to the environmental and economic advantages, the project aims to enhance community involvement in environmental protection, he stated.

While the new project expects those involved in waste collection being trained to participate in the recycling process, ordinarily isolated individuals collect such waste and deliver to processing centres for a usable fee.

The project is part of wider efforts to promote sustainable waste management practices

and combat environmental pollution, he said, pointing at government commitment to support recycling initiatives.

"The pilot project is expected to be evaluated in the coming months, with the goal of expanding the initiative to other regions of the country," he asserted.

"By focusing on recycling, the project aims to reduce the amount of plastic waste in urban areas and create a more sustainable, eco-friendly environment. It also provides a model that can be replicated in other parts of Tanzania and beyond, contributing to the global fight against plastic pollution," he added.



## 10 dead in Boxing Day road accident

FROM PAGE 1

An injured survivor was taken to Huruma Hospital for treatment, he said, pointing out that the accident occurred when the van, travelling from Tarakea, overtook a truck and collided with the bus.

"I pray for the souls of the deceased to rest in peace. My deepest condolences go to the grieving families, relatives, and friends, and I wish a swift recovery to those still

injured," the DC intoned.

He also urged drivers to exercise greater caution and vigilance on the roads, while the police force need to closely enforce road safety regulations during the end-of-year rush period.

President Samia Suluhu Hassan posted a message on social media to express grief and console affected families mourning the loss of their loved ones.

## 'Harvest rainwater to combat drought'

FROM PAGE 1

dan are facing rapid drought conditions compared to other countries in the East Africa sub-region, when launched on December 9 at the 16th UNCCD conference of the parties (COP16) in the Saudi capital of Riyadh.

It raised concerns on increasing global frequency of droughts, as the trend of worsening drought leads to significant ecological damage, including the loss of soil fertility, directly affecting agriculture.

Prof. Pius Yanda, a climate change expert at the University of Dar es Salaam, affirmed that preventing drought from occurring in Tanzania is challenging due to already existing impacts.

To mitigate effects of drought and desertification, the relevant departments need to develop strategies to enhance resilience across the country, he stated, pointing at the need for ensuring that when the rains are abundant, food production is maximized and preserved for periods when rainfall is insufficient.

He stressed the need for the government and stakeholders to map out the use of modern rainwater harvesting technologies to meet domestic and livestock water needs.

This could help prevent conflicts that arise due to drought, cattle deaths and widespread hunger, while the government gets prepared to handle potential conflicts arising from drought, he further stated.

Water needs between farmers and pastoralists ought to be handled in ways that benefit all parties equally, the don intoned in an interview.

He also pointed at the need for the government to address the issue of urban migration, contributing to overcrowding in cities and exacerbating urban water scarcity.

Fredy Kwezi, the Tanzania Sustainable Development Initiative (TSDI) director, noted that despite significant efforts by the government and environmental stakeholders to plant trees and combat climate change, the outcomes are massively unsatisfactory. The lack of success in the tree planting focus is poor follow-up on the growth and maintenance of the trees, a sentiment widely shared at the COP16 where he was part of the country's delegation.

Many tree-planting projects fail because stakeholders plant the trees, take photos and then abandon them without ensuring their survival, he asserted, hinting at the need to involve experts in tree planting initiatives.

They will help to ensure the right species are planted in the right areas, he said, elaborating that trees that thrive in Njombe may not do well in Dar es Salaam, and those suited for Coast Region may not survive in Mbeya.

He also suggested that land use planning could serve as a solution to mitigate climate change effects, as proper land management prevents soil erosion, thus lessening drought effects.

Nyendo Kinyonga, an acknowledged activist with the Human Dignity and Environment Care Foundation (HU-DEFO) and recently training communities in Pangani District, Tanga Region on circular economy, underlined the need for greater education on drought and its causes.

This should be conducted at the family and community level to enable numerous communities to take proactive measures rather than relying solely on centrally initiated projects, she said.

Everyone has a role to play in addressing the growing drought problem, she stated, urging that farmers return to traditional farming methods that do not rely on chemical fertilizers, as overusing pesticides damages the soil and accelerates drought.

Sarah Pima, the HU-DEFO director, highlighted the need for a collective effort to address drought across the sub-Saharan region, insisting that Tanzania needs robust policies to combat desertification.

This includes improving the conservation of natural vegetation and existing forests, rather than banking on tree planting, when the public takes up the issue of desertification and drought as an imminent threat.

She appealed for the implementation of climate change mitigation strategies in a rapid manner before the situation worsens further.

The UNCCD report notes that drought is a leading cause of land degradation, affecting upwards of 40 percent of the world's fertile land, resulting in reduced agricultural productivity and food shortages. It also links increasing droughts in Africa to a 12 percent decline in national GDP between 1990 and 2015, as an aspect of economic challenges caused by land degradation.

Under the nationally determined contributions (NDC) framework, Tanzania has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent to 35 percent across all economic sectors by 2030, compared to pre-declaration trends.



Despite the harsh conditions induced by a downpour, work continues yesterday in the implementation of Dar es Salaam's rapid bus transit (BRT) road project at the Bibi Titi Street/Azikiwe Street intersection. Photo: Correspondent Imani Nathaniel

## Ministry testing WHO-approved malaria jabs

FROM PAGE 1

before it can be used.

"We are following WHO guidelines on vaccine deployment and are awaiting the report from NITAG for expert advice on the quality, cost, availability and safety of these vaccines," the manager affirmed.

Data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) for 2022 showed that

only eight out of every 100 people countrywide were found to have malaria parasites, he said, profiling efforts to reduce malaria infections.

This represents significant progress compared to the 1990s, when 50 to 60 out of every 100 people were infected with malaria, he said, attributing the progress to prevention and treatment strategies.

Underscoring the need to combat

the disease particularly through vaccination, he said that the government is strengthening its efforts to prevent and treat malaria.

For the 2024/2025 financial year, 10bn/- has been allocated for the purchase of larvicides from the mosquito larvicide production plant in Kibaha, Coast Region, while 1bn/- has been earmarked for the purchase of biological mosquito spraying pumps.

WHO data indicates that malaria causes 75percent to 80percent of deaths in children under five, with local emphasis directed at the provision of mosquito nets for children and expectant mothers.

It also seeks to promote environmental cleanliness, fill stagnant water pools and use biological insecticides to control malaria-carrying mosquitoes, the manager added.



Ayub Fungo (seated, L) updates his biodata in the national Permanent Voters' Register in Iringa municipality yesterday in readiness for participation in upcoming elections. Photo: Correspondent Francis Godwin

## Prepare for heavy rains until New Year, Kenya agency warns

NAIROBI

The Kenya Meteorological Department has forecasted rainfall in various parts of the country from December 24 to December 30.

Director of Meteorological Services David Gikungu said the rainfall will affect regions including the Highlands East and West of the Rift Valley, the Lake Victoria Basin, the Central and South Rift Valley, the Southeastern Lowlands, and the Coast.

Gikungu noted that afternoon and nighttime showers and thunderstorms are expected in several areas, occasionally reducing to a few places during the first half of the forecast period.

However, Northeastern and Northwestern Kenya will remain generally sunny and dry, with nights expected to be partly cloudy. Some areas may experience light rains on Wednesday morning.

"Average daytime (maximum) tem-

peratures of more than 30°C will be experienced in several parts of the country, including the Coast, North-eastern, Northwestern Kenya, and parts of the Highlands West of the Rift Valley and Southeastern Lowlands," the forecast indicated.

Cooler nights are expected in the Central Highlands, Central and South Rift Valley, and parts of the Southeastern Lowlands, with temperatures dropping below 10°C.

Gikungu also highlighted an increase in rainfall amounts over most areas in the week of December 16 to December 22 compared to the previous week. However, the Coastal region experienced a decrease in rainfall during the same period.

Meanwhile, three French tourists were injured in a road accident on Tuesday in the Magina area while travelling from Nakuru to Nairobi.

According to police, one of the tourists sustained serious injuries, while the other two had minor injuries. "As

a result of the accident, one sustained serious injuries and two slight," said National Police Service spokesperson Resila Onyango.

All three were rushed to Kijabe Hospital, where they are receiving medical treatment. Authorities have launched an investigation to determine the cause of the accident.

This incident follows another tragic accident on Monday in which seven people died and several others were injured in a multi-vehicle crash at Matauro, Duka Moja, along the Narok-Suswa highway in Narok County.

The accident occurred when a trailer travelling from Narok towards Mai Mahiu suffered a tire burst and lost control, hitting a Toyota Premio, an Ena Coach bus, and a Narok Line matatu. Two occupants of the matatu died at the scene.

A second trailer, also travelling from Narok towards Mai Mahiu, arrived at the scene at high speed and collided head-on with a Toyota Prado travel-

ling in the opposite direction. Two Prado occupants died on the spot, while a third succumbed to injuries at Narok County Hospital.

These incidents underscore growing concerns about road safety in Kenya, where at least 4,000 people die annually in road accidents. Police attribute the high number of fatalities to careless driving, unroadworthy vehicles, and disregard for traffic regulations.

With increased travel during the festive season, authorities are urging motorists to exercise caution and adhere to traffic rules.

"The importance of discipline on the roads cannot be overstated. We urge all road users to observe traffic regulations to reduce such preventable tragedies," police said.

The government continues to emphasize the need for responsible road usage to prevent further loss of life during this busy travel period.

## Minister calls for faster collection of health data

By Guardian Reporter, Zanzibar

MINISTER for Health in Zanzibar, Nassor Ahmed Mazrui has urged Community Health Workers (CHWs) to carry out their duties professionally in order to obtain accurate data that will assist the government to plan health development programmes.

Minister Mazrui made the remarks early this during the launch of the Family Health Information System (ZANCHIS), which will allow health workers to collect health data for families they visit.

He also formally introduced health workers who had completed short-term training to provide community health services, during a ceremony held at Sheikh Idriss Abdul-Wakil Hall in Kikwajuni.

He stated that accurate and timely data would help the Ministry of Health in formulating strategies to improve health and respond promptly to emergencies.

He also encouraged the health workers to focus on areas with limited infrastructure, in order to identify health challenges and address them effectively.

The minister urged them to respect and maintain the customs, traditions, and values of the families they visit in order to build trust and ensure successful outcomes in delivering quality healthcare at the community level. "It is important to make good use of the training and equipment provided to ensure that citizen receive primary healthcare services in the community before they reach a health facility," minister Mazrui added.

He also took the opportunity to encourage Sheha leaders and health officers to support health workers in their duties within the respective areas.

Director of the Department of Preventive and Health Education, Dr Salim Slim, explained that the aim of CHWs is to help citizens access basic healthcare services at home and assist them to reach health centres when necessary.

Dr. Slim urged the workers to carry out their duties timely in order to bring about positive results to both the healthcare sector and society as a whole.

He stated that the CHWs' responsibilities include going door to door to gather health information about households to detect and control the spread of infectious diseases, and emphasised the importance of timely reporting to ensure effective action.

Community change officer from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Tima Twalipo, explained that CHW is a link between the community and the services provided by the government, helping to influence positive behaviour changes.

UNICEF will continue working with the government to ensure prioritisation of maternal, child, and disabilities in healthcare.

The health workers are committed to perform their duties properly by identifying health issues and provide the community with health advices on various conditions, including both infectious and non-communicable diseases, and promoting environmental cleanliness to enhance community welfare.

A total of 150 health workers completed the training and received certificates and tools for their work, including smartphones for data collection at the community level, glucose meters, blood pressure monitors, and other health equipment.



Zanzibar Revenue Authority Board chairman Prof Hemed Hikman (2nd-L, in cap) and Dr Saada Mkuya Salum (2nd-R), Minister of State in the Zanzibar President's Office (Finance), pictured in Zanzibar on Wednesday presenting a wheelchair from ZRA to Adam Suleiman Ali, who has disability. The event, which included the issuance of various forms of aid to people with disabilities, was held at Paje village in South Unguja in marking Taxpayers' Appreciation Week. Photo: Rahma Suleiman

## WHO warns on alarming surge in malaria cases in Ethiopia

By Guardian Reporter and Agencies

ETHIOPIA has reported 8.4 million malaria cases since the beginning of this year, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

This was the highest-ever number of cases reported within a year, the WHO said in an Ethiopia Health Cluster Bulletin report released

Monday.

Noting that "almost every district" in the East African country has reported a case, it said many of these districts have surpassed the epidemic threshold.

Malaria is endemic in Ethiopia with higher prevalence in areas below the 2,000-meter altitude, covering three-quarters of the country's

land mass. Around 69 per cent of the country's population residing in these areas face the risk of infection.

Typically, malaria peaks between September and December following the primary rainy season in the country, and from April to May after the secondary rainy season.

The international medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF)

recently called for an "urgent and targeted" response to control the ongoing malaria epidemic in Ethiopia.

The MSF said that in light of seasonal changes and population movements, it is critical to prioritize response preparedness in high-risk areas and among vulnerable communities for maximum impact.



This is a muddy section of a road in Dar es Salaam's Mvuti Mianzini suburb. This motorcyclist had it rough and tough riding along it, the situation having been made worse by a downpour that had just ended. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma

## Rain disconnects four wards after bridge collapse in Same

By Guardian Correspondent, Same

HEAVY rain has damaged the link between four villages in Same District, Kilimanjaro Region, after Kizangaze bridge collapse.

The severe weather has not only hampered communication but also caused loss of life and left some residents homeless.

The Kizangaze bridge, a vital link of Maore, Ndungu, Kihurio, Bendersa, and Miamba wards, was rendered impassable after heavy rainfall and flooding. More than 60,000 residents have failed to access essential services such as healthcare, education, and markets for nearly 72 hours.

Speaking early this week Rashid Juma who is Maore Ward Councillor, explained the difficulties the community was facing.

"Due to the bridge collapse, people

have been forced to walk more than 60 kilometres to access healthcare at Same District hospital instead of walking three kilometres to Ndungu health centre," he said.

He added: "This is not just inconvenience, but a serious challenge, especially for the elderly, the sick, and pregnant mothers."

The downpour had caused many problems. Many others have been left homeless because of floods.

Local residents, including Loveness Julias, expressed his dismay over the situation. "We have lost our loved ones, and our crops had been destroyed. For the past few days, we have had no communication, and it has been very difficult to travel," she said.

In addition the floods had left several families stranded and their homes destroyed.

Meanwhile, Tanzania National Roads Agency (TANROADS) has initiated efforts to restore communication.

Acting manager Benitho Mdzovela explained that plastic culverts had been placed temporarily to redirect the water and allow for safe passage.

"We are working on urgent measures to address the situation, and we expect to restore communication in the next two days. However, a permanent bridge solution will require more time and resources," Mdzovela said.

The temporary intervention aims to ease the flow of water and allow for essential services to resume.

However, full reconstruction of the bridge is necessary to prevent future problems and ensure safety of the community.

Kilimanjaro Regional Commission-

er Nurdin Babu visited the affected areas to assess the damage and offer support.

He expressed his condolences to the families who lost their loved ones and offered three million shillings in aid to assist those affected by the disaster.

"I am instructing leaders at all levels to ensure that residents in hazardous areas are relocated to safer areas to prevent further loss of life and property. We must act quickly to save our people from further harm," Babu stated.

The collapse of Kizangaze bridge has highlighted the urgent need for better infrastructure and disaster preparedness in the region. As the rains continue, officials and residents are calling for a more robust response to prevent such incidents from happening again in future.

## Plan empowers Arusha's youth to thrive in today's digital economy

By Guardian Correspondent, Arusha

YOUTH in Arusha Region have been urged to take advantage of the 10 per cent interest-free loans issued by municipal and district councils to boost their businesses.

The loan scheme, re-launched on July 1, 2023, is part of the government's ongoing efforts to empower youth with the resources needed to succeed in the digital economy.

The scheme was previously suspended after the government halted disbursements in April 2023, but it is now back with relaxed eligibility criteria, making it more accessible to aspiring entrepreneurs.

Speaking at the closure a two-month training programme for youth on digital business this week here, Richard Mwihechi, Arusha City community development officer encouraged the youth to take full advantage of the loan initiative.

He emphasised that the loans could be a game-changer for those looking to start or grow digital businesses.

"Now, a group of five can each take out a loan based on their individual projects, which is a significant change from the past when only group-based projects were considered eligible. The age limit for applicants has also increased from 35 to 45 years, which opens up more opportunities," Mwihechi said.

He urged young people to look beyond the challenges of traditional loans and seize this opportunity to develop their businesses and improve their economic standing.

The loans are part of a broader government effort to empower youth and support the growing digital economy in Tanzania. Youth have often complained about a lack of job opportunities, but the initiative aims to provide an alternative by offering financial support to start or scale digital ventures.

The training programme, which was conducted by Her Initiative, MasterCard Foundation, and DoT, focused on equipping young people with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the digital business space.

Baraka Joel, director of Tanzania Projects Organisations highlighted the importance of the skills in the current technological landscape.

"In our country, over 65 per cent of the population is young, and we want to ensure that they have the tools to thrive in today's technology-driven economy. So far, we have helped 50 youth, and we are confident that this training will significantly impact their economic lives," Joel said.

The organisations involved in the training aim to reach 1,500 young people in 2024-2025, helping them develop the necessary skills to manage and grow digital businesses effectively.

# At least 69 migrants dead after boat sinks off Morocco coast

RABBAT

At least 69 people died, including 25 Malian nationals, after a boat headed from West Africa to Spain capsized off Morocco on 19 December, Malian authorities said.

The makeshift boat was carrying around 80 people when it capsized. Around 80 migrants were on board the vessel heading for Spain, with "25 young Malians unfortunately identified among the victims", the government said in a statement.

Only 11 survived, the Ministry of Migrants abroad said in a statement on Thursday after collecting information to reconstruct the incident.

A crisis unit has been set up to monitor the situation and will report any further updates, it added.

The Atlantic migration route from the coast of West Africa to the Canary Islands, typically used by African migrants trying to reach Spain, has seen a surge this year.

Years of conflict in the Sahel region, which includes Mali, unemployment, and the impact of climate change on farming communities, are among the reasons people attempt the crossing.

The route, which traces the Atlantic coasts of Mauritania and Morocco up to Spain, is one of the deadliest in the world.

An unprecedented nearly 5,000 migrants died at sea in the first five months of 2024 trying to reach the Spanish archipelago, migration rights group Walking Borders said in June.

Thousands of migrants attempt perilous sea crossings from African shores each year, often in flimsy makeshift vessels, in hopes of reaching Europe.

Over 10,400 migrants have died trying to reach Spain since 2024, including a record number heading for the Canary Islands, the Spanish migration NGO Caminando Fronteras said in a report on Thursday.

That was an average of about 30 a day, making it the deadliest year in the organisation's records.

At their closest point, the Canaries lie 100 kilometres (62 miles) off the coast of North Africa.

The shortest route is between the coastal town of Tarfaya in southern Morocco and the Canary island of Fuerteventura.

But to avoid controls, smugglers sometimes take longer, more dangerous journeys, navigating west into the open Atlantic before turning north to the Canaries.

The Atlantic route is particularly deadly, with many of the crowded, poorly equipped boats unable to cope with the strong ocean currents.



Foundation for Disabilities Hope executive director Maiko Salali (L) speaks at training session aimed at empowering women with disabilities to participate in leadership and entrepreneurship. It was held in Kondo District earlier this week. Photo: Correspondent Gift Thadey

## Tanroads to reconstruct five bridges damaged by El Nino in Manyara

By Guardian Correspondent, Babati

THE government has started preparations for the reconstruction of five bridges in Manyara Region which were severely damaged by the El Niño rains last year.

The reconstruction is being overseen by the Tanzania National Roads Agency (Tanroads) - Manyara, with an estimated cost of 17bn/-.

Greyson Ndyamukana, the head of the communications unit at Tanroads-Manyara, stated that the

low national budget prompted the government to seek external funding, enabling them to address the urgent need for rebuilding crucial infrastructure destroyed by the storms.

he said this is part of a larger initiative, with the government requesting a soft loan from the World Bank (WB) for the reconstruction of 13 bridges, totalling 62bn/-.

The five bridges earmarked for reconstruction include Minjingu, whose contract has been submitted

to the Attorney General for review; Losinyai/Njoro, which is currently in the agreement stage; and Katesh, for which the contract was signed on November 1 this year.

Other projects include the construction of smaller bridges in the Dabir area of Dareda/Dongobesh and Msasani, where the contracts have already been signed.

In addition to the bridge projects, the government has allocated 11bn/- for the 2024/25 financial year to improve and rehabilitate roads, includ-

ing 83 bridges.

By September of this year, 95 percent of the projects were completed. Some of the completed works included the installation of road lights, repair of damaged roads, cleaning of drainage systems, and planting trees along roadsides.

Additionally, the government works on the construction of Langay bridge as part of broader efforts to restore and improve infrastructure in the region.

## Ghana lifts visa requirement for all African governments

ACCRA

GHANA has taken a major step by approving a visa-free entry policy for nationals from all African countries, aiming to promote unity and ease of travel across the continent.

The decision, made by President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, follows a promise made earlier this year and will be implemented before his term ends on January 7, 2025.

With this move, Ghana joins countries like Rwanda, Seychelles, The Gambia, and Benin in offering visa-free travel for African passport holders, becoming the fifth African nation to do so.

Previously, Ghana allowed citizens from 26 African nations to enter without a visa, while nationals from 25 other countries could get visas on arrival. Only two African countries required a visa to enter Ghana, showing the country's ongoing efforts to reduce barriers to free movement.

Reports show that Ghana ranks fifth in Africa for promoting policies that encourage free travel. This new decision highlights Ghana's dedication to fostering regional cooperation and addressing the challenges hindering integration within Africa.

The policy was formally approved by President Akufo-Addo on December 18, 2024, fulfilling a commitment made at the Africa Prosperity Dialogues earlier in January. This move is seen as a key step towards strengthening the African Union's goals for economic cooperation under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

The policy's introduction also supports Ghana's broader efforts to boost tourism. The Ghana Tourism Authority has launched a temporary Non-Pre-Approval Visa scheme from December 1, 2024, to January 15, 2025, as part of the "Beyond the Return" campaign. This initiative aims to reconnect Africans and members of the diaspora with their heritage and promote economic collaboration.

However, visa restrictions remain a significant challenge in many African countries. The African Development Bank notes that strict entry requirements in places like Libya, Equatorial Guinea, and Sudan hinder trade, tourism, and cultural exchange.



Former students of Singida municipality's Mwenge Secondary School gathered yesterday in an initiative meant to have 1,000 trees planted around the school's premises. Photo: Correspondent Thobias Mwanakatwe

## Samia gives 10m/- to support riders' association in Arusha

By Guardian Correspondent, Arusha

PRESIDENT Samia Suluhu Hassan has issued 10m/- to Motorcycle Riders' Association in Arusha District to support establishment of a cooperative society.

She has also donated two motorcycles to association's leaders to enable them visit members, addressing their concerns, and resolving issues at the district and regional levels.

The funds were officially handed over yesterday in Arusha by Mohamed Ali Kawaida, chairman of the CCM-Youth Wing (UVCCM),

during the association's general assembly. The event also marked the launch of a new digital identification system.

Kawaida explained that the President's decision to provide financial support was made after it was revealed that the motorcycle riders lacked the necessary funds to complete the cooperative society's registration process.

In a separate development, Kawaida instructed the police, in collaboration with the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB), to investigate the alleged misappropriation of over

200m/- by some members of the previous motorcycle riders' leadership.

The UVCCM leader also urged the riders to adopt self-regulation, avoid engaging in crimes, and refrain from using drugs or excessive alcohol while on duty. He called on the riders to report any criminal activity linked to the motorcycle industry to the police.

The motorcycle riders also appealed to the government to reduce the cost of acquiring a driver's licence to 30,000/-, citing the current cost of 99,000/- as a

significant financial burden.

Arusha City legislator Mrisho Gambo, pledged 10m/- to the association's fund and expressed concerns over the delay in arresting those responsible for the alleged theft of 200m/- from the association four years ago.

Gambo appealed to Kawaida to forward the issue to President Samia, offering a reward of m/- for information leading to the capture of the suspects.

Shwaibu Hamisi, Chairman of the Arusha District Motorcycle Riders' Association, reported that

there are 12,500 riders in the district, with 26,000 riders across the entire region.

National Chairman of the Motorcycle and Bajaj Riders, Said Chenja, praised the President for reducing fines for riders from 30,000/- to 10,000/- and for also lowering fines for three-wheeled motorcycle riders.

Dr Wilfred Solilel, CCM Chairman in Arusha District, urged the riders to be more responsible on the roads and avoid creating disturbances, including unnecessary noise, which he said contributes to public anxiety.



Water deputy minister Mathew Kundo (2nd-R, in specs) pictured earlier this week touring a plastic pipe manufacturing factory in Dodoma city's Nala suburb. Photo: Correspondent Ibrahim Joseph

## Dozens killed as passenger plane crashes in Kazakhstan

ASTANA

Dozens of people have died after a passenger plane crashed with about 70 people on board in Kazakhstan, local officials say.

Authorities in Azerbaijan, where the flight originated, say there were at least 30 survivors.

Azerbaijan Airlines flight J2-8243 caught fire as it attempted to make

an emergency landing near the Kazakh city of Aktau.

The plane was en route to Grozny in Russia but it was diverted due to fog.

Footage shows the aircraft heading towards the ground at high speed with its landing gear down, before bursting into flames as it lands.

The airline said the plane "made an emergency landing" about 3km

(1.9 miles) from Aktau.

It took off from the Azerbaijani capital Baku at 03:55 GMT on Wednesday, and crashed around 06:28, data from flight-tracking website Flightradar24 showed. Reports from

Russian media say the aircraft collided with a flock of birds before crashing, but this has not yet been confirmed.

Officials from the countries involved have stated different numbers for those who were on board and for those who survived.

The airline said 62 passengers and 5 crew members were on board the Embraer 190 but other reports put the total at 72.

The reported number of survivors ranges from 28 to 32.

## Chocolatiers hit by rising cocoa prices

BRISTOL

CHOCOLATIERS and chocolate makers say they are being severely affected by the rising price of raw ingredients.

Extreme weather and underinvestment in farms in West Africa has disrupted cocoa bean plantations, with reduced crop yields as a result.

In the last 12 months the wholesale price of cocoa has seen a four-fold increase, creating a challenging time for small businesses - even in the run up to Christmas.

Head chocolatier at Zara's Chocolates in Bristol, Helen Jones, said: "Our profit margins are small, and people think we're making lots of money but that isn't the case."

Christmas is the busiest time of the year for the company, which makes about 18,000 truffles over two weeks.

As a chocolatier, Zara's sources chocolate in its pre-tempered form from a supplier.

Jones said: "Our core ingredients have increased [in price] a lot.

"Some things by 25 percent, some up to 200 percent increases in the chocolate that we buy in."

The business tried to absorb the cost in order not to pass the price increases onto customers, but Ms Jones said that this "became impossible".

"Many of the problems affecting our chocolate were happening a year ago, and the effects are still being felt," she said.

"We put a little note in the

shop to explain why the prices were increasing, and thankfully people were really good about it."

Jacques Cöp working on a chocolate production line. He is wearing a yellow shirt.

Jacques Cöp has cut back on some product lines after rising costs

Cocoa trees, which only grow in a narrow band around the Equator, are particularly vulnerable to changes in the climate.

Severe drought conditions have hit the West Africa region this year, with temperatures above 40C breaking records in the Ivory Coast and Ghana, which are the world's two biggest producers of cocoa beans.

In December 2023, both countries also experienced intense rains, and the wet and humid conditions allowed a fungal infection called black pod disease to flourish, rotting cocoa beans on the trees.

The combination of extreme weather patterns has meant the price of the cocoa bean crop has shot up in recent months.

Head chocolate maker at Coco Caravan in Stroud, Jacques Cöp, said the price of cacao butter had risen from 4.5\$/kg to 12.5\$/kg, meaning it had to stop manufacturing some lines as it could not justify the cost.

"We can absorb some of the costs by changing our product lines, but we are just having to take it on the chin," Cöp said.

For Jones, she predicts the price of the chocolate she buys will hit a plateau in January and she is hoping it will fall again after that.

## Hartlepool volunteer spreads Christmas cheer 7,000 miles away in Tanzania

By Guardian Reporter and Agencies

A selfless woman from Hartlepool spread some Christmas cheer far away from home when she and her partner spent a month helping under-privileged children in Africa.

Abigail Weegram, 30, from town, and her partner Chris McCormick created a playground at a children's day care in Tanzania and raised money for toys, Christmas presents and teaching materials.

The couple ended up in Africa while travelling through Europe in a camper van on their way to Dubai.

But they were stopped in their tracks when they reached Turkey due to international tensions in Georgia and Iran.

"We thought 'What do we do now?'" said Abigail. "We decided with it being so close to Christmas it would be really good to use some of the money we saved up and volunteer in Africa and give our time to people who actually need it."

The Joyful Angels Day Care in the city of Arusha was recommended to them and they spent the next month working in the centre which provides free education to children aged three to five and is run entirely by volunteers.

They were humbled by

their lack of things that we take for granted in this country. There were few toys and children slept on the hard floor during nap time.

Abigail added: "They don't get much at all. The day care couldn't afford lunches.

"We took a ball in one day and they were buzzing as they had never had one at playtime."

"Exciting times are coming": Hartlepool church hosts third Christmas tree festi...

The couple raised around £1,200 in a GoFundMe page, which was well supported by people in Hartlepool, to provide toys, teaching materials and mattresses.

They also built the children a playground with swings and slides that were custom made.

With the money left over they bought Christmas presents for all 35 children including books, stationary and bubbles.

Abigail, an architect who went to English Martyrs School, said: "We can't tell you the impact it had and how grateful the teachers were for being there.

"It was such a humbling experience and very eye opening."

She and Chris, of Paisley in Scotland, want to spread the word about the need for volunteers in the country, and plan to return in the future.



Community Development, Gender, Women and Special Groups deputy minister Mwanaidi Ali Khamis (C) presents festive season gifts on behalf of President Samia Suluhu Hassan mid-this week to representatives of a children's home and a care centre for the elderly, both based in Zanzibar. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

## ZRA constructs water well to address shortage at Zanzibar's Donge village

By Guardian Reporter, Zanzibar

THE Zanzibar Revenue Authority (ZRA) has brought joy to residents of Donge Kiungani Village in the Unguja North Region by constructing a well, providing much-needed access to clean and safe water.

The initiative is part of ZRA's monthly efforts to express gratitude to taxpayers, highlighting the positive impact of their contributions on local communities.

During the well's inauguration yesterday, villagers expressed their relief, particularly women, who have been

struggling with the challenge of fetching water from distant sources.

Fatma Khamis, a resident of Donge, spoke on behalf of the community, sharing how the well has transformed daily life.

"Water is everything in human life. Before the well, fetching water was a time-consuming task that hindered our participation in farming and other economic activities," Khamis said.

Zanzibar's Minister for Finance and Planning, Dr Saada Mkuya Salum, highlighted the government's commitment to continuing development ef-

forts across Unguja and Pemba.

The initiatives, she explained, including improvements in water, electricity, health and education services, are made possible by taxes paid by the people.

She encouraged citizens to support national progress by requesting electronic receipts after their purchases, which ensure taxes are properly collected.

"Taxes directly fund infrastructure projects like roads, water, and electricity. The well is an example of how taxes contribute to the nation's development. Let's keep supporting the government by requesting

receipts whenever we make purchases," she said.

ZRA Board Chairman, Prof. Hamed Rashid Hikmany, echoed the importance of paying taxes and requesting receipts to help fund vital services.

He also urged traders to provide receipts to ensure taxes reach the government for national welfare.

Said Ali Mohammed, ZRA acting Commissioner General explained that the authority's role is to assist in revenue collection, supporting the government's large-scale development projects.

He said in the spirit of grati-

tude for taxpayers, ZRA has made it an annual tradition to celebrate taxpayers' contributions and promote public education about the importance of taxes.

Dr Khalid Salum Mohammed, Donge legislator, praised the government for the development work in the village, which includes a new school building, renovated health centre, communication towers, and road projects.

He emphasized the importance of collaboration to address ongoing water service challenges in Donge.

## Ethiopian, Somali intel chiefs meet amid warming relations

ADDIS ABABA

ETHIOPIAN intelligence chief Redwan Hussien met with his Somali counterpart Abdullahi Mohamed Ali on Tuesday to advance security cooperation and reinforce commitments outlined in the Ankara Declaration, a pact between the two countries reached through Türkiye's mediation earlier this month.

Announcing the meeting in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa on X, Hussien highlighted that the discussions focused on mutual security challenges and emphasized unity against detractors trying to derail progress.

"As a follow-up to the Ankara Declaration, we both vowed to move forward and keep detractors from near and afar who are bent on derailment at bay," Hussein said.

The meeting coincided with the ar-

ival of a Somali delegation led by Ali Omar, the minister of state for foreign affairs and international cooperation, also aimed at reinforcing commitments under the Ankara Declaration.

Signed on December 12, the Ankara Declaration marked a turning point in relations between the Horn of Africa neighbours, which have recently been strained by tensions.

In January, Ethiopia's agreement with Somaliland - a breakaway Somali region - to use the Red Sea port of Berbera reignited discord. Türkiye played a key mediating role in resolving the dispute.

In a joint statement, Somali and Ethiopian leaders emphasized that the Ankara Declaration "reaffirmed their respect and commitment to one another's sovereignty, unity, independence, and territorial integrity."



Representatives of Glory Temple Church pictured at Kange Juu on the outskirts of Tanga city on Thursday distributing Christmas-time gifts to people with special needs, among them the elderly, persons with disabilities, widows and drug addicts. Photo: Correspondent Boniface Gideon

## Madagascar's gold trade thrives on black market despite export reforms

ANTANANARIVO

MADAGASCAR'S government launched a one-stop shop in February to simplify export permits after a review of the gold mining sector.

But only 12 kilograms of gold have passed through the system. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Mines estimates that one tonne of gold is being smuggled out of Madagascar every month.

Insiders at the ministry blame the new system's failure on a tax having to be paid on gold. That levy was abolished in August in amendments to the finance bill for 2024.

Slow renewal of licences for the gold counters - the intermediaries between the gold collectors and the one-stop shop - has also been given as the reason for the initial hiccups.

"Encouraging people to use legal channels"

Nevertheless, Ernest Lainkana Zafivanona, Madagascar's director general of customs, believes the new set-up will prevail.

"I think that the one-stop shop should be an incentive for people who want to export gold," he told RFI. "It simplifies procedures."

"It's always costly when you're caught, because you lose all the gold, which means that smuggled gold is systematically seized by the state. The controls should encourage people to return to the legal channels."

A 2022 report by the U4 anti-corruption resource centre identified systemic issues in Madagascar's gold sector. These include corruption, illegal resource exploitation, gold laundering and poor coordination among state institutions.

"Some links in the chain are not playing their role," said the report. "Corruption, illegal exploitation of natural resources and gold laundering ... are identified as drivers of the increase in illicit practices in the gold sector."

"A lack of communication between state institutions, the poor distribution of roles between institutions, the practice of exploiting gold outside of authorised locations and counterfeiting in the gold sector were also identified," the report added.

Clément Rabenandrasana, national coordinator of the Extractive Industries Civil Society Organisation, was one of the authors of the report along with Ignace Harris and Daniel Rabemazava.



**It's always costly when you're caught, because you lose all the gold, which means that smuggled gold is systematically seized by the state. The controls should encourage people to return to the legal channels**

"The one-stop shop is a first step towards cleaning up the industry," Rabenandrasana told RFI. "But there is still a lot to be done."

"There are authorities and influential people behind the traffickers so showing political will mean fighting corruption in the gold sector."

"We need to identify the perpetrators of all the trafficking and punish them, and apply the law severely."

Rabenandrasana suggests setting up local smelting facilities near artisanal mines to improve traceability and ensure miners receive fair prices.

"This will enable better control of gold flows, to the benefit of gold miners, who don't even know the international price of gold," he added.

"It will also benefit the local authorities because if the industry is organised illegally, they won't collect any taxes. It's very important to trace the chain so that they can collect royalties and contribute to local development."

WASHINGTON

UNITED Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expressed concern about the unrest in Mozambique, his associate spokesman said on Thursday.

"The Secretary-General is concerned about the post-election violence, which has resulted in loss of lives and the destruction of public and private property," Stephanie Tremblay told report-

ers. Guterres continues to follow developments closely, Tremblay said.

"He urges all political leaders and relevant national stakeholders to defuse tensions, including through meaningful dialogue and legal redress, refrain from the use of violence, and redouble efforts to seek a peaceful resolution to the ongoing crisis in a constructive manner, which is essential to the collective future of Mozam-

bicans," she added.

Violent protests have rocked Mozambique since presidential polls were held on Oct. 9, resulting in the deaths of 248 people, including 33 in a prison break on Wednesday, according to Plataforma Decide, an election monitoring group.

More than 1,500 inmates fled Maputo Central Prison in Matola, located about 15 kilometres (9.3 miles) from the capital Maputo, where police reported the casual-

ties. Protests started in late October after Daniel Chapo of the ruling Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo) was declared the winner of the presidential polls, defeating main opposition leader Venancio Mondlane, who is in exile.

Mondlane has rejected the results, claiming widespread vote rigging and calling on his supporters to protest. He has vowed to install himself as president on January 15.



Special Seats legislator Aysharose Mattembe (R) presents construction materials to CCM women's wing officials in Mkalama District, Singida Region, yesterday. The contribution was meant to support the construction of a house for use by the wing's district secretary. Photo: Correspondent Thobias Mwanakatwe

## Tech Hub Africa to empower young innovators to succeed

ACCRA

TECH Hub Africa LLC, an organisation dedicated to building a thriving tech ecosystem across Africa is set to empower innovators on the continent to scale up and further bridge the digital divide, creating the path for Africa to be recognised as a global leader in technology.

According to Chief Operating Officer of Tech Hub, Jemima Prempeh, to achieve the organisation's aim, they seek to leverage their expertise and knowledge in the space to mentor, coach, nurture and fund the ideas of young innovators in the country and the continent.

She made this known at the launch of Tech Hub, emphasising the need to harness young people's tech skills to prepare Africa for its entry into the tech space.

Prempeh who doubles as the Co-Founder of the organisation noted that the uniqueness of Tech Hub is the partnership and funding it brings to the space describing these factors as the main hurdles for many young people preventing them from accessing the numerous opportunities in the sector.

"What we are bringing on board differently is a partnership; I think most African start-ups lack that opportunity. They have the idea but they don't have the support.

So, we are bringing on board mentorship, funding and investors," she said.

Tech Hub Africa co-founded by two sisters Doreen Awuku-Agyeman and Jemima Prempeh aims to foster a vibrant eco-system that nurtures creative ideas, offers funding and accelerates the growth of homegrown technologies.

The launch coincided with the grand finale of Tech Hub Africa's Startup Pitch Competition where CEO of Wobil Tech Ltd, John Wobil, took home \$1000 with mentorship and support from Tech Hub as the winner of the maiden edition of the competition.

Delivering the keynote address, CEO of Genesic and Global Sky Limited, Mavis

Leonards, described Tech Hub as a movement reiterating its main agenda to make tech innovation sustainable, inclusive and impactful by offering mentorship and funding to entrepreneurs who dare to dream.

Given the statistics on Africa's youthful population, drive to venture into the world of tech and some existing innovations making waves on the continent such as the fly doctors in Nigeria and other innovations, she expressed optimism about the continent's future in tech.

Leonards challenged women to let go of their fears and venture into the tech and securities space to collectively put Africa on the map.

"My background is management and not science. So, if I have been able to move into the sciences and technology, why can't you do the same? I encourage more women to come on board and become tech-savvy to put Africa on the map," she said.

In her opening remarks, Agyeman commended them for their tireless effort and dedication to their vision.

She urged everyone to partner with them and work together to empower African innovators and entrepreneurs.

Looking into the future, she announced their flagship programme dubbed "Tech Showcase" for July 2025 to celebrate African innovation and excellence.



Elderly citizens cared for at Mother Teresa Centre at Hombolo in Dodoma Urban come together for a Christmas Day meal a firm based in Dodoma city hosted for them on Wednesday. Photo: Correspondent Peter Mkwavila

## Scientists link record heat in 2024 to climate change

By Special Correspondent

PEOPLE around the world suffered an average of 41 extra days of dangerous heat this year because of human-caused climate change, according to a group of scientists who also said that climate change worsened much of the world's damaging weather throughout 2024.

The analysis from World Weather Attribution and Climate Central researchers comes at the end of a year that shattered climate record after climate record as heat across the globe made 2024 likely to be its hottest ever measured and a slew of other fatal weather events spared few.

This year, Earth experienced some of the hottest days ever measured and its hottest-yet summer, with a 13-month heat streak that just barely broke.

To do its heat analysis, the team of volunteer international scientists compared daily temperatures around the globe in 2024 to the temperatures that would have been expected in a world without climate change. The results are not yet peer-reviewed, but researchers use peer-reviewed methods.

Some areas saw 150 days or more of extreme heat due to climate change.

mate change.

This year was a warning that the planet is getting dangerously close to the Paris Agreement's 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) warming limit compared to the pre-industrial average, according to the scientists.

The researchers closely examined 29 extreme weather events this year that killed at least 3,700 people and displaced millions, and found that 26 of them had clear links to climate change.

The El Niño weather pattern, which naturally warms the Pacific Ocean and changes weather around the world, made some of this weather more likely earlier in the year. But the researchers said most of their studies found that climate change played a bigger role than that phenomenon in fuelling 2024's events. Warm ocean waters and warmer air fuelled more destructive storms, according to the researchers, while temperatures led to many record-breaking downpours.

Significantly more climate extremes could be expected without action, the United Nations Environment Programme said in the fall, as more planet-warming carbon dioxide has been sent into the air this year by burning fossil fuels than last year.

## AU calls for peaceful resolution of unrest in Mozambique amid crisis

KINSHASA

SEVENTEEN Chinese men have been arrested on suspicion of running an illegal gold mine in the Deming operations has fuelled fighting in the region that borders Rwanda.

In July, the province's

By Special Correspondent AFRICAN Union (AU) Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat has called for a peaceful resolution of the situation in Mozambique following media reports about injuries and casualties as a result of protests.

The Bloomberg News agency reported on Wednesday,

citing human rights organisations that a total of 186 people had died since the protests began in October.

"The chairperson of the African Union Commission continues to closely monitor the developments in Mozambique following the General Election held on 9 October 2024. The chairperson expresses deep

concern at the ongoing violence which resulted in scores of people losing their lives. The chairperson further urges the government and all the national political and social actors to seek a peaceful solution to resolving the current crisis to avoid further loss of life and destruction of property," the organization said in

a statement on Thursday.

Mahamat also called on local security forces to use force with restraint. In addition, he expressed deep condolences to those who lost loved ones as a result of the unrest.

The chairperson reiterated the union's readiness to cooperate with the Mozambican authorities to stop the vio-

lence and protect the country's democracy, the statement added.

A General Election was held in Mozambique on October 9, with preliminary results indicating Daniel Chapo, candidate of the ruling party FRELIMO, in the lead for the presidency.

Independent candidate Ve-

nancio Mondlane voiced his disagreement with the preliminary results and called for widespread civil disobedience actions.

On Monday, the Constitutional Council of Mozambique confirmed the results of the October election. Following the announcement, riots started across the country.

## More than 450 migrants move to UK on Christmas Day crossings

LONDON

A TOTAL of 11 boats made the journey to the United Kingdom from France on Wednesday morning, with more expected to follow in the coming days.

The total number of Christmas Day arrivals was 451, according to official government figures.

A Home Office spokesperson said: "We all want to end dangerous small boat crossings, which threaten lives and undermine our border security."

More than 35,000 people have made the journey so far in 2024, which is 20 percent higher than last year.

Those who arrived in Dover on 25 December broke a period of more than a week of no crossings.

The last time vessels carrying migrants were known to have made the journey was on 14 December, when 160 people in three boats arrived, according to the Home Office.

The 35,040 people to have arrived this year is fewer than the record high for a year in 2022, when 45,775 people made the crossing.

Home Secretary Yvette Cooper previously acknowledged that it would be "no comfort" to the public if numbers continued to remain at high levels.

Sir Keir Starmer said he had made "smashing the gangs" who facilitate the small boats crossings one of his top priorities.

The Prime Minister has set up a new Border Security Command, and is attempting to work more closely with the UK's European neighbours to pull apart organised crime gangs involved in people smuggling.



Newly built classrooms at Muoji Secondary School in Musoma Rural constituency ready for use by students selected for Form One classes come the countrywide reopening of schools for the impending new academic year. Photo: Guardian Correspondent.

## Morocco invests \$9 billion in railway development by 2040

RABBAT

MOROCCO has announced plans to invest \$9 billion in upgrading its railway infrastructure with focus to expand the network and improve transport accessibility across the country.

This was reported by the railway transport news portal Railway Supply.

The programme in-

cludes constructing new high-speed railway lines spanning 1280 kilometres by 2040. It will significantly increase the current network, which now covers 320 kilometres.

Additionally, regional railway routes will be extended to link Morocco's largest cities more effectively. Key hubs such as Casablanca, Rabat, and Marrakesh will experience

improved transport connections.

The number of cities served by railways is expected to rise from 21 to 43. As a result, 87 percent of the population will gain access to modern railway services, enhancing mobility.

This initiative aims to create new jobs and attract foreign investments to support economic expansion. It will also reinforce Mor-

occo's role as a major regional logistics and trade hub.

A 375-kilometre railway line between Kenitra and Marrakesh will reduce travel times significantly. This improvement is expected to enhance freight transportation and logistics efficiency.

This month, Morocco signed a \$232 million contract with China Gezhouba Group. The deal covers

construction work on nine out of ten planned sections of the route. The programme includes acquiring modern trains to improve passenger comfort, speed, and safety. These updates will reduce road congestion and contribute to lower carbon emissions.

Integrating Morocco's railway network with international transport corridors will increase trade

volumes and economic opportunities. This integration is vital for strengthening global connectivity and boosting growth.

Through infrastructure investments, Morocco will enhance transportation systems and unlock new development opportunities. These improvements will solidify its position as a leading logistics and transportation hub.

SATURDAY 28 DECEMBER 2024

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

## Focus by avocado traders ought to be more on marketing than on regulation

**S**TAKEHOLDERS in various spheres at times experience problems in either pricing generally or competition with foreign companies in particular.

Some raise complaints or expressing reservations laced with caution over loss of revenue by both traders and public authorities.

That sort of attitude looks normal in overly regulated economic environments, where a hidden code in regulating activity in a particular sphere controls a certain range of actors. These are then allowed with a grunt, with a short leash always ready to whip.

Ordinarily, there is something amiss when a trader assumes the role of an untrained tax inspector, as the reason is less his or her affinity with the government than distaste for other traders and the old-fashioned 'holier than thou' attitude.

It basically says that all local traders are good and should be applauded and all foreign traders are bad and should be closely monitored.

That kind of proposal elates souls in various alleys of tax administration, as it gives greater leeway for such action without expecting any official backlash.

Prior to 2016, when sugar imports were largely banned except by the same local public-private sugar planters, processors and marketers, a parliamentary campaign was being pursued for most of the period of that legislature, rather overly concerned with random importation of the sweetener.

There is an expression that those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it, and that is what we did from 2016 to 2023 on the whole, before the controls were more or less put aside. There is still some importing regulatory role, but not by the same price stakeholders.

That is partly why there is plenty to worry about in reported demands

by traders in Njombe Region, who are said to have appealed to the government to closely regulate foreign companies involved in the purchase of avocados, ostensibly in order to increase revenue.

They say that the foreign firms open foreign bank accounts to avoid paying taxes, effectively reducing the country's revenues.

There is plenty to discuss there if one is indeed interested, but at what point doesn't a foreign company have a foreign account while it is foreign? Is this an issue or wishful thinking?

The fact that the traders made the remarks during a meeting with Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) officials and within the climate of banning the use of foreign currency in all local transactions shows the source of this intrusion and the complication.

It would not be too strange if local sellers of avocados preferred to be paid in foreign exchange whereas the foreign firms could obtain Tanzanian shillings in a nearby country instead of changing dollars when they come over. That is in a sense straightforward, but it would mean that the dollars would not come here as well.

Njombe has scores of foreign companies, including at least 25 Kenyan avocado buyers noticeably operating there and said to have business accounts abroad while maintaining small local accounts solely for paying their employees.

Hardly anything strange about that, especially if they can't buy anything with Kenyan or US currency here. That means the Tanzanian currency is needed at various border points or in cities when they wish to trade with Tanzania instead of coming over with US dollars as was usually the case previously.

It still remains to be seen if our central bank will be convinced not exactly by what the traders said but by TRA reactions.

## Faith leaders enriching VPO on climate change initiatives

**N**EW horizons are being opened up in climate change plans of action with an accord between faith-based organisations and the Union and Environment wing at the Vice President's Office (VPO).

Reports talk of faith leaders having presented recommendations to the government on the urgent need for a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach to mitigate the effects of climate change. That means that the thrust is now on strategic inclusiveness as such.

An experienced activist and director of development and advocacy at the Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT) is understood to have presented proposals drawn up by representatives of CCT, the Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC), the Muslim Council of Tanzania (BAKWATA), the Seventh-Day Adventist Church (SDA), and the Tanzania Mennonite Church.

The strategic link between various levels of state authorities and faith-based groups could improve chances of acceptance of projects for consideration by various agencies.

The more a project is anchored in community wishes and expectations, the greater the chance it has of being accepted for funding, as civil society participation adds a layer of testimony on how far that idea is well grounded for wider community interest.

While the policy director was ebullient over the technical plausibility of the link-up idea, for instance that of facilitating the streamlining the translation of strategies into ac-

tionable measures, doubt will persist.

At what point do government agencies, or for that matter our development partners, need civic partners to streamline a policy objective into 'actionable measures'?

The utility of the proposal isn't that it will reach the stage of actually taking action but that it will be consonant with the expectations of broad sections of civil society, not just the bureaucracy. Nor is the conceptual paradigm of a standalone climate change policy a magic wand, meanwhile as it is possible to set off certain axes of policy as pivotal at a particular moment.

There are existing spheres of action even currently, most nearing completion and others on the starting block, with SGR just over half-way and JNHPP nearing completion.

An over-arching irrigation effort, fertiliser subsidies and seed research are at various levels of implementation as well, just as is carbon trading, etc.

What is changing is thus that there will be greater involvement of civic parties in addressing the growing impact of climate change, where a comprehensive coordination framework is work yet to be done.

Government functions will not be shifted to FBOs but the selection of projects, the support base for funding and the broad attitudes of various organisations may shift.

Those involved in financing climate-related interventions and the promotion of science and innovation in agriculture may find themselves among friends - and, why, anything the matter there?

### The Guardian Limited Key Contacts

Managing Editor: WALLACE MAUGGO  
Circulation Manager: EMMANUEL LYIMO,  
0716 500500

### Newsdesk

General Line: 0745 700710  
News Editor: LUSEKELO PHILEMON  
0757154767  
E-mail: guardian@guardian.co.tz

### Advertising

Mob 0782253676  
E-mails: advertise@guardian.co.tz  
Website: www.ippmedia.com,  
epaper.ippmedia.com



## Zimbabwe: Parole system will transform offenders

By Special Correspondent

**Z**imbabwe is moving ahead into the next stage of prison reform with the establishment of a parole system overseen by a State Parole Board, but needing the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service to be able to accurately measure just which individual prisoners have met the set parole criteria and to what extent.

The legal framework was approved by Parliament recently with a new Prisons and Correctional Services Act, and now the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs and the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service are converting this outline to a detailed system, a process that is likely to need special training for some staff plus provision of certain facilities.

Properly implemented, a parole system reduces pressure on a prison system, by allowing the better behaved prisoners who have been showing cooperation in their reform to be released early, although those who are reluctant to move towards reform will stay inside for their full term.

There will also be different parole standards for each type of crime, with violent criminals more likely having to wait longer for parole.

Prisoners out on parole are supervised, while they can enjoy a fair amount of freedom and return to their families and a relatively normal world, and will be encouraged to be productive and be earning their living, they will still have to report regularly to a designated officer and keep the authorities posted about where they live and who with, and probably need permission to change their address.

The sentence for a paroled prisoner still stands right to end of the term set by the courts, and is not reduced.

But what parole means is that the prisoner can be released, on set conditions, from prison earlier although still under sentence.

But in all jurisdictions where parole has been set up, the minute a paroled prisoner breaks the conditions, or commits any sort of new crime, back they go behind bars for the rest of the sentence, plus any new sentence that a new crime might bring.

Up to now extreme overcrowding in Zimbabwean prisons has been fixed with periodic blanket amnesties by the President using his prerogative of mercy.

This is in fact a Cabinet decision,



Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs minister Ziyambi Ziyambi

almost always on the advice of the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs.

These blanket amnesties reduce all sentences in the listed categories of offences, regardless of how cooperative or uncooperative a prisoner has been, and how likely they are to commit new offences on release.

The weakness of this approach of one size fits all has been seen with the fact that a significant minority of the early released do return to crime quite quickly, although a majority appear to have learned their lessons and keep themselves clean.

A parole system gets round these problems and many of the dangers by treating each prisoner as an individual, rather than as a member of a batch of convicted criminals.

The standards and the way of measuring how far a prisoner has met those standards must, obviously, be fairly applied and so be common for all. But once the measurements have been done the assessments are of individuals.

In most jurisdictions prison officers have to make many of the initial

paroled prisoner, raise the alarm if something is going wrong and generally overseeing the paroled person's reintegration into society.

Zimbabwe is moving further in having community correctional centres, a sort of half-way house between a prison and total freedom.

The State Parole Board will also be able to implement a parole in stages, allowing a prisoner to be released for example during the day, but returning to custody at night, although such a prisoner can obviously be kept in a very low-security environment since they are so unlikely to escape.

Zimbabwe has been moving ahead since independence on changing the whole system of prisons, placing far less stress on punishment, although that is obviously a factor, and placing more stress on reforming a criminal so they do not revert to crime on their release.

We have also been looking at alternatives to prison, at least for non-violent crime, so we have those prison sentences in many cases suspended so long as non-violent thieves and others perform community service and make restitution where property has been damaged or stolen; the double condition is normally required to avoid incarceration.

As we know from what judges and magistrates say when passing sentence, some criminals need to be locked up to protect the rest of us, generally when they have committed so terrible a violent crime or are a multiple repeat offender.

This is why in most countries where the death penalty has been abolished a judge, backed by an appeal court, can hand out a whole life sentence, where there is no possibility of parole. That is rare but the option is needed for exceptionally terrible killings.

Prisoners who reoffend either on parole or after they have moved from prison or parole to normal freedom not only are hit by any suspended sentences for past crime, and the usually longer term for a repeat crime, but are less likely to impress a parole board that they should be released early.

Often parole at this stage relies on the prisoner being too old to commit any sort of crime.

So parole is not a soft option. What it does do is reward prisoners making a determined effort to reform and committed to living a future crime-free life, and decongests prisons by releasing, on condition and under supervision, those who are highly unlikely to reoffend having learned their lesson.



# Uniting to empower communities: Fight against sexual violence gains momentum

By Correspondent Sabato Kasika

**S**EXUAL violence remains a critical challenge tormenting many societies. In response, various stakeholders are intensifying efforts to combat this scourge through targeted campaigns.

One prominent player is a women-focused organisation (WAJIKI) which is spearheading a campaign titled—'Safari Salama Bila Rushwa ya Ngono Inawezekana' (Safe Journey without Sexual Corruption is Possible). Similarly, the police have launched their initiative; 'Tumwambie Kabla Hajaharibiwa' aimed at raising awareness and curbing sexual violence.

During the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) that was commemorated recently in Dar es Salaam stakeholders united for demonstrations, carrying placards highlighting the consequences of such acts.

WAJIKI partnered with police officers in Ilala District on the first day and with police officers in Kinondoni District on the second day, where regional police leaders shared updates on their campaigns' successes and challenges.

## Recorded progress

Ilala Regional Police Commander ACP Yuston Mgonja reported notable decreases



WAJIKI works with police officers in Kinondoni, Ilala and Temeke districts in Dar es Salaam Region targeting groups such as 'boda boda' riders, bajaj drivers, 'daladala' operators, teachers, pupils and local leaders. Photo: Sabato Kasika.

in violent crimes this year compared to previous years. However, rape remains alarmingly prevalent whereas despite remarkable successes the number of cases reported this year was 77 compared to 198 cases in 2023.

According to Mgonja, there were 87 sodomy cases in 2023 compared to 51 in 2024.

Mgonja emphasized that a total of 25 culprits, mostly convicted of rape and sodomy, were arrested and arraigned.

He said some were sentenced for 30 years while others received a life imprisonment punishment.

Kinondoni Regional Police Commander, Mtatiro Kitinkwi echoed similar concerns, urging collective action to combat sexual violence.

Despite progress, hurdles remain said Mgonja highlighting challenges such as delayed reporting of incidents, loss of critical evidence, and reluctance from witnesses to testify

in court.

"Some parents and guardians opt to settle cases privately. When this fails, they report to the police too late, complicating investigations," he noted.

Janeth Mawinza is the Founder and Director of WAJIKI; she pointed to community resistance and lack of cooperation. "While people voice their concerns, they often fail to support legal processes when action is taken," she said.

## WAJIKI's campaign

WAJIKI has been running its campaign across Kinondoni, Ilala, and Temeke districts in Dar es Salaam Region targeting groups such as 'boda boda' riders, bajaj drivers, 'daladala' operators, teachers, students, and local leaders.

The initiative seeks to eliminate sexual corruption, a prevalent form of sexual violence.

The campaign's sixth phase, launched in Bunju A Ward, Kinondoni District focuses on

raising awareness to 100,000 pupils about the dangers of sexual corruption. Supported by Women Fund Tanzania Trust (WFTT) with a grant of 80m/-.

The two years campaign, will aim at providing education to 35,000 students, 100 teachers and 200 drivers in each ward within the targeted districts.

Apart from combating sexual corruption, WAJIKI is encouraging women to vie for leadership positions in the coming 2025 general elections, foster-

ing empowerment alongside awareness.

## A call for unity

As the campaigns continue, collaboration between community members, law enforcement, and organizations like WAJIKI underscores the importance of a united front against sexual violence. Their efforts serve as a beacon of hope, demonstrating that change is possible through education, vigilance, and collective action.

# Breaking the cycle: It's possible to develop smart thinking, reasoning skills, competence



By Telesphor Magobe

WHEN you listen to the way some people discuss issues the impression you get is that our education system has not yet produced intended outcomes.

During discussions one can hardly notice critical thinking and intelligent reasoning. Many tend to spend a lot of time on inconsequential issues, instead of addressing critical issues. As a result, critical issues are addressed simplistically.

This is also evident in what is going on in the main opposition political party—Chama

cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA). The supporters of two top opposition party leaders, who have announced to vie for the party's top position, exchange pointed remarks.

They lean towards derogatory remarks against their leaders, instead of showing what their leaders are going to do to transform their party so that it becomes more vibrant and contributes to improvement of the political landscape in the country.

Some businesspersons, especially those who did not finish their schooling, speak negatively about education, that they are

successful not because of education, but because of their hard-working pace. What comes out of this is the impression that education contributes nothing or very little to success in life.

We live in a rapidly evolving and competitive world, and undermining the role of education in success in life only proves blissful ignorance. There are some countries, which have invested heavily in their education system, and expect high returns in the future.

In the future labour market some people will be jobless not because there will be no jobs,

but because they will not have the skills needed to do new jobs. Although some jobs will be replaced with automation, new other jobs will be created, but these jobs will need new skills and competencies.

Namibia is an African country which spends more on education. In Global Innovation Index 2022 "Namibia leads worldwide in expenditure on education and performs well above the regional (sub-Saharan Africa) average on human capital and research." It is also ranked first in education expenditure in Global Innovation Index 2023 and Innovation



**Even countries which have excelled in industrial and social development and technological advancement are those which have spent adequately on education.**

Index 2024.

Although as a country we have missed out on some of the attainment targets for education, Tanzania Development Vision 2025 "envisages a nation whose people are ingrained with a developmental mind-set and competitive spirit."

Furthermore, the Vision provides that "Tanzania would brace itself to attain creativity, innovativeness and a high level of quality education to respond to development challenges and effectively compete regionally and internationally, cognisant of the reality that competitive leadership in the 21st century will hinge on the level and quality of education and knowledge."

The Vision stresses the importance of quality education that can produce competent people who can cope with the rapidly evolving world of the 21st century. So, a person who undermines what education does so out of blissful ignorance, and not informed judgement.

Even countries which have excelled in industrial and social development and technological advancement are those which have spent adequately on education.

The Vision further provides that Tanzania "should be a nation whose people have a positive mind-set and a culture which cherishes human development through hard work, professionalism, entrepreneurship, creativity, innovativeness and ingenuity and who have confidence in and high respect for all people irrespective of gender."

The Vision acknowledges high quality education produces "educated people who are sufficiently equipped with the requisite knowledge to solve society's problems, meet the challenges of development and attain competitiveness at regional and global levels."

The attainment of educa-

tion targets starts with quality early childhood education which provides the foundation for child development and lifelong learning. This is because as studies show "the first five years of children's lives are crucial to their development. During this period, children learn at a faster rate than at any other time in their lives, developing basic cognitive and socio-emotional skills that are fundamental for their future achievements in school and later on as an adult" (OECD, 2018).

Well-funded education includes having a friendly and enabling teaching and learning environment and grooming teachers who can facilitate learning at all levels of education.

Learners who excel in quality education are likely to excel in life in the sense that they will be able to find solutions to the problems facing them and society. So, transforming education is that which helps learners to find solutions to the problems facing them.

This is because well-educated people should in the real sense have problem-solving skills. Yet, sometimes we have educated people, but who can hardly offer any solutions to the problems facing them and society. These are the type of people who have been to school, but their education has not transformed them to be relevant to their society.

One of the priority areas of 'Agenda 63: The Africa We Want' is education and science, technology and innovation (STI) driven skills revolution. It is projected that by 2063 Africa will be the world's most populous continent with the largest population of the youth, of which at least 70 percent will be highly skilled. "The continent will have the largest concentration of middle class citizens as a percentage of the population with a significant spending power." It is quality education which can lead us to success in life.

By Benjamin Kurylo

IN November 2023, with 52% of the vote, Daniel Noboa became the youngest president in Ecuador's history, after being elected to finish the 18-month term of Guillermo Lasso, who resigned in the midst of an impeachment trial. Despite presenting himself as the president of the new politics in Ecuador, Daniel Noboa was trapped in the country's old dynamics of struggle and political backwardness, repeating the entrenched practices of a past from which he sought to distance himself. Largely unknown and with little previous political experience, Noboa ran as a new pragmatic candidate at the head of the National Democratic Action (ADN) coalition.

#### A successful start

His election epitomized the trend of political "outsiders" and "millennial" figures in Latin America, coming to power embodying political change and capitalizing on growing dissatisfaction with the status quo. Noboa represented new blood and the promise of ending the old politics that had paralyzed Ecuador. During his inaugural speech, the new president promised to break the cycle of political vendetta that was hindering legislative processes and delaying much-needed reforms.

Surprisingly, the new administration managed to put an end to the turbulent political crisis of the previous government, navigating a "calm political sea" during its first months and with virtually no opposition. The ruling ADN allied with the Social Christian Party (PSC) and the Citizen's Revolution (RC) in the National Assembly, establishing a relatively united bloc within the legislature.

Following the upsurge in criminal violence, Noboa declared a state of internal war, implementing a strong state of emergency, militarizing public security and labeling the gangs as terrorist groups. While human rights organizations criticized the government's security measures for suspending fundamental civil liberties, it received broad popular support, the backing of opposition parties and the

# Ecuador: President Noboa political dysfunctionality



Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa



**However, political stability collapsed in April 2024 following a police raid on the Mexican embassy to arrest former Vice President Jorge Glas on corruption charges, in violation of international law.**

sympathy of the international community. Noboa positioned himself as the main opponent of insecurity and his approval rating rose to 80%, making him the most popular president in South America.

#### The beginning of the debacle

However, political stability collapsed in April 2024 following a police raid on the Mexican embassy to arrest former Vice President Jorge Glas on corruption charges, in violation of international law. The move was intended, in part, to win public support ahead of a security-focused referendum by portray-

ing the government as committed to fighting the corruption of previous administrations. However, the event provoked a major domestic political crisis, as well as international condemnation. RC called for the resignation of President Daniel Noboa and joined the opposition in Ecuador's National Assembly, breaking the alliance with Noboa's ADN party. With the end of the legislative pact, ADN lost its ability to carry forward its agenda and pass laws with the support of the majority.

While the opposition parties declared that they would support the referendum's security reforms because of their over-

whelming popular support, the calm in which the Noboa government had managed to navigate turned into a storm. After the political pact fell apart, the Assembly went from organizing itself in alliances to a struggle of "all against all". Since then, Noboa has governed the country against the tide in a political landscape where even the consensus on public security collapsed and the once praised security strategy of the "Phoenix Plan" is the object of harsh criticism.

The use of impeachment as a weapon is also gaining prominence, as the parliament approved requests for the removal

of four sitting ministers filed by opposition members. Pending impeachment proceedings against officials of the previous government of Guillermo Lasso were terminated to allow for accelerated impeachment of sitting ministers.

Political disputes, lack of consensus and frequent clashes hamper governance and the implementation of legislation, and the president increasingly uses his veto power to shelve bills. In 11 months of government, the Executive vetoed six bills submitted by the Legislative Branch. The government twice vetoed articles of the Social Security Law, preventing its adoption even after the Assembly reviewed the bill. This controversial double veto, which had never happened before in the country's history, was labelled unconstitutional by opposition parties.

Ecuador's Constitutional Court has also declared Noboa's repeated states of exception unconstitutional, since the "internal armed conflict" that the government has invoked five times as the legal basis for its measure does not exist. Noboa recently had to change his justification to conditions of "serious internal disturbances," which defies his popular narrative of open warfare against organized crime.

Ultimately, Noboa's government was destabilized by infighting between the president and the vice president, Veronica Abad. According to the Ecuadorian Constitution, Noboa must resign 45 days before the election to campaign and hand over to Abad, with whom he has an enigmatic and contentious relationship. Upon assuming the presidency, Noboa "exiled" her to Tel Aviv on an Israeli-

Palestinian mediation mission and has recently called for impeachment proceedings to remove her before the 2025 election campaign. Opposition parties have supported Abad, despite her fierce criticism in the past, blocking legislative motions to strip her of her immunity.

In August, Abad filed a complaint against Noboa and other government officials with the Electoral Disputes Tribunal for political violence, a serious crime punishable by suspension of political rights for up to four years, which could prevent the president's re-election. The government responded by calling the action a coup attempt to overthrow the president as part of a broader conspiracy in collusion with opposition parties. In November, the government suspended Abad for 150 days for "unjustified abandonment" of his duties for the delay following the order for his transfer from Israel to Turkey.

Another dysfunctional government

While Noboa promised to put an end to "old politics" in Ecuador, in recent months he has perpetuated the same dynamic that paralyzes policy-making. His immediate goal, upon taking office, to garner the popular support necessary for his re-election and his lack of political experience prevented him from pursuing a pragmatic and stable program congruent with the political opposition, opting instead for drastic measures that would generate public attention.

Since then, the administration has been labelled as a "government of improvisations," relying on reactive stop-gap actions and improvised solutions rather than comprehensive planning to address the different crises. This has aggravated the institutional crisis in Ecuador, characterized by low levels of interpersonal and institutional trust, highlighting the conditions of a torn social fabric and a weakened political system lacking public legitimacy.

## Eating red meat may increase your risk of type 2 diabetes

By Gulshanara (Rumy) Begum

RED meat has been a part of diets worldwide since early man. It is an excellent source of protein, vitamins (such as B vitamins) and minerals (such as iron and zinc).

However, red meat has long been associated with increasing the risk of heart disease, cancer and early death. What may not be so well known is the link between red meat consumption and type 2 diabetes.

A paper published in the *Lancet* in September 2024 highlighted this link to type 2 diabetes using data from the Americas, the Mediterranean, Europe, south-east Asia and the Western Pacific (20 countries included).

This recent study, with nearly 2 million participants, found that high consumption of unprocessed red meat, such as beef, lamb and pork, and processed meat, such as bacon, salami and chorizo, increased the incidence of type 2 diabetes.

The researchers also highlighted a link between the consumption of poultry and the incidence of type 2 diabetes, but the link was weaker and varied across the populations.

Type 2 diabetes is a serious public health issue affecting 462 million people globally. It occurs when our bodies don't make enough insulin or can't use insulin well.

Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas, a small leaf-shaped gland that sits behind the stomach and just in front of the spine. Insulin helps blood glucose enter cells, which stops levels from rising in the blood.

In type 2 diabetes, due to



our body not having enough insulin or inability to use the insulin (also referred to as "insulin resistance" or "impaired insulin sensitivity"), blood glucose reaches high levels, causing symptoms such as extreme thirst, increased need to pass urine and feelings of tiredness. Long-term health issues include nerve damage, foot problems and heart disease.

The underlying mechanisms linking red meat intake with type 2 diabetes are unclear. Mechanisms could relate to the function of the pancreas, insulin

sensitivity or a combination of the two.

#### Possible mechanisms

Red meat has high levels of saturated fat and is low in polyunsaturated fats, which could disrupt insulin sensitivity.

Research has also shown that a high protein intake from animal sources (compared to vegetarian sources) can increase the risk of type 2 diabetes, possibly due to the high levels of branched-chain amino acids (BCAA) in animal protein.

BCAA include the amino acids

leucine, isoleucine and valine. In a small study, short-term BCAA infusions increased insulin resistance in humans. Similar findings were shown in larger human studies.

High levels of plasma BCAA can have various origins. These connections between red meat, BCAA, insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes are worth exploring further.

Another potential mechanism involves gut microbiota, the collection of microbes in our gut.

Our microbiota metabolises choline (a water-soluble essen-

tial nutrient) and L-carnitine (an amino acid found naturally in food), both of which are abundant in red meat, producing trimethylamine. Increased trimethylamine has been associated with a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

How we cook meat may also add to this conundrum. Cooking meat at high temperatures, such as grilling and barbecuing, can produce harmful compounds called "advanced glycation end products".

These compounds can damage cells due to oxidative stress



**And for those days you do eat red meat, try poaching, steaming or stewing it – it's healthier than grilling or barbecuing.**

(caused by unstable atoms called free radicals), lead to inflammation (which can be damaging if it occurs in healthy tissues or lasts too long) and insulin resistance.

Red meat is a great source of iron. But some studies have shown long-term iron intake or iron overload, particularly haem iron (iron from animal-based sources), may increase the risk of type 2 diabetes.

#### Eat less red meat

According to a World Health Organization report, in the last 50 years, global consumption of all types of meat has increased. In some wealthy countries, such as the UK, red meat consumption appears to be stable or declining. Although there is a lot of variation in meat consumption between and within countries.

In the UK, people are advised to consume no more than 70g (cooked weight) of red meat per day and to avoid eating processed meat. A similar recommendation is given across many countries.

With the winter holidays around the corner and the festive gatherings in full swing, reducing red meat consumption will be difficult, especially for those who really like the taste. So enjoy these moments without worrying, and where possible, try to consume fibre-rich vegetables with red meat.

Small steps can be taken to reduce your red meat intake by having smaller portions or choosing a day in the week that is meat free (meat-free Mondays, say), or substituting some (or all) of the meat in recipes with chicken, fish, beans, lentils or the like.

And for those days you do eat red meat, try poaching, steaming or stewing it - it's healthier than grilling or barbecuing.

## ADDIS ABABA

**E**THIOPEAN government has decided to rehabilitate the Alwero Dam, one of the most significant mega dams, which has been abandoned for over thirty years.

The initiative aims to enable both investors and smallholder farmers to utilize this vital resource.

The decision to revitalise the Alwero Dam, a popular project in the 1980s and early 1990s, has largely been sidelined since the government change in

May 1991. While the dam and some essential facilities were completed at that time, the large-scale irrigation project, a joint venture between the Ethiopian government and the USSR, has essentially been neglected for over 33 years.

The Ministry of Irrigation and Lowland (MILLS) has now committed to reviving the dam to ensure its benefits for the Baro Akobo River Basin, specifically the Alwero River, located approximately 49 kilometers south of Gambella city, the capital of the Gambella region, and 777 kilometers west of Addis Ababa.

In a recently released Amharic book titled 'Yesidetegnaw Meri Tirekawoch' by Yitagesu Getinet, former President Mengistu Hailemariam (CoI) noted that after USSR experts assessed the area's water catchment, his administration's powerful allies decided to invest in the project. "The catchment has the capacity to irrigate approximately one million hectares of land, according to the USSR study," stated the former head of state, who currently resides in Zimbabwe.

Mengistu also claimed that the group that overthrew his government had relocated some of the facility's equipment to

Eritrea, suggesting that the project was nearly operational. Initially, the initiative aimed to cultivate 60,000 hectares of land, starting with the irrigation of 10,000 hectares, as noted by Fasika Sidelil, a senior leader and chief of economic



## Ethiopia to revitalise Alwero Dam after three decades of neglect

and social affairs of the socialist governing Workers' Party of Ethiopia (Derg).

"The drive to initiate the Alwero Dam and similar projects, including Omo Ratti in Lower Omo, stemmed from the drought and hunger experienced in the mid-1980s," he told Capital, despite numerous studies advocating for irrigation agricultural practices.

According to Fasika, a corporation was intended to be established to manage the facility and support outgrower farmers, with plans to develop 10,000 hectares in the first phase.

Local farmers and resettled individuals were to serve as outgrowers and workers for the new joint corporation, as indicated by the chief economic

official at the time.

"The plan was to employ local and resettled laborers to cultivate crops using the irrigation system for the industry that would be established in the area," he explained.

He further stated that the USSR and Ethiopian governments collaborated to finance the dam's construction, primarily for cotton cultivation.

"The Agriculture Corporation was responsible for its administration," Fasika recounted.

According to Abraham Beley, Minister of MILLS, the ministry is working to maximize the use of the facility, which is currently managed by the central government. A year and a half ago, the Office of the Federal Auditor General reported that the Alwero

Dam, which cost 648 million birr to construct, was idle.

During a parliamentary session a week ago, Abraham addressed questions from members of parliament, stating that his ministry is implementing significant changes to rectify numerous ongoing disinfection projects, some of which have been in progress for over a decade.

"We are also conducting a study to revive some abandoned projects, such as Alwero, which have remained incomplete for decades," he continued.

Abraham informed Capital that the country stands to fully benefit from the facility that could expand to over 10,000 hectares and is currently assisting the local population in developing more than 3,000

hectares of land.

He stated, "We have completed the assessment needed for maintenance."

He explained to Capital that the ministry, responsible for overseeing the facility, is transforming it into a project to initiate the rehabilitation process and unlock its intended potential.

Abraham added that the facility will benefit not only the local population but also investors interested in agricultural ventures.

According to observers like journalist Wudineh Zenebe, who has closely monitored the dam's development for years, there are several private sector interests looking to utilize the dam for agricultural purposes, most of which have not been successful.

"Even though the government has granted them permission to use the public facility, I have noticed that investors are primarily focused on rain-fed agriculture," Wudineh told Capital.

Abraham noted that Alwero will soon undergo development.

### MILLS Effort

The current administration has placed greater emphasis on expanding irrigation-based agricultural methods compared to previous administrations.

When the former MILLS minister addressed the house in the fourth quarter of the last fiscal year, lawmakers expressed their dissatisfaction with the ministry's handling of projects. They urged the

government to take swift action to address the unfinished projects initiated by the previous administration.

During last week's meeting, lawmakers reiterated their concerns, raising several issues related to existing projects and MILLS activities.

Abraham, who took on the role months ago, stated that significant changes are being implemented to redirect the previous course.

With assistance from the FAO, around 30 standards for design, construction, and procurement have been established to ensure project consistency. Prominent universities and the Ethiopian Standard Institute have also contributed to the development of these standards, which "will be fully implemented in the coming budget year."

He pointed out that construction projects had been initiated without completing essential paperwork, such as pre-feasibility and feasibility studies, resulting in scope changes, delays, and increased project costs within the industry.

"We are quickly updating the designs of 21 active construction projects that cannot be halted or returned, but starting next year, we will initiate new projects in accordance with the new standards," the Minister stated.

The ministry is currently working on projects valued at 120 billion birr. While the actual budget allocation is eight billion birr, an estimated 40 billion birr is required to operate the projects for the current budget year alone.

Abraham, who appreciated the Ministry of Finance's efforts to maintain a strong cash flow through regular allocations, stated, "We prioritize completing projects that have faced delays for years over starting new projects, given our available resources."

He stated that, in addition to several instances of improper management, one of the main causes of the delays is the contractors' inability to effectively manage projects and contracts.

"We have evaluated the situation and made bold decisions

## Some amputees in Sierra Leone turn to farming to combat discrimination

## FREETOWN

LAHAI Makieu struck the bamboo with a machete until it cracked and fell. Balancing on his crutch, he reached to pick it up. But colleagues pulled the bamboo's other end, and he tumbled into the dense grass.

"They forgot I had one leg," the 45-year-old laughed. The trainer at a center for amputee farmers picked himself up and added: "We fall and we rise."

The phrase encapsulates his journey since the civil war in Sierra Leone. From 1991 to 2002, conflict in the West African country created some 28,000 amputees like him. Amputation by machete was one terror tactic by rebels.

But even now, amputation rates remain high in Sierra Leone due to motorbike accidents, poor medical care and delayed treatment by traditional healers, according to medical researchers. The government doesn't collect data on amputees, but the United Nations estimates there are about 500,000 disabled people in the country.

Makieu's left leg was amputated as a child after rebels shot him and he received no medical attention for a week.

More than 20 years later, in a nation ranked near the bottom of the U.N. development index, amputees still face discrimination, often regarded as a shameful reminder of the civil war. Many resort to begging and live in the streets.

"No one cares about you



**It's my dream to teach people about life. It's about changing your mindset,**

as an amputee in Sierra Leone," Makieu said.

The Farming on Crutches initiative where Makieu works near the capital, Freetown, offers a rare refuge. It aims to restore amputees' confidence and independence by teaching them skills to start a farm business. They've trained 100 amputees and want to expand their work.

The training has trans-

formed Makieu's life. After his amputation in 2002, he lived in a small room with a friend in Freetown, dependent on him for food, money and shelter.

At a displacement camp for 270 amputees in Freetown, he met Mambud Samai, the founder of Farming on Crutches and a pastor.

"Many (amputees) are being rejected by their

families and communities. They don't believe they have love," the 51-year-old Samai said. He felt moved to help after being a refugee himself in Guinea during the civil war.

First, Samai organized beach football matches for amputees in Freetown, boosting their confidence. During a visit to Sierra Leone, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon saw

the project and funded a site for an amputee football club outside the capital.

But Samai decided football was not enough. As a farmer, he saw agriculture as a path to self-sufficiency. In 2020, he set up a demonstration farm to teach amputees how to farm and become rural leaders.

His project's name reflects amputees' widespread use of crutches instead of prosthetic legs in Sierra Leone. Foreign donors distributed them after the civil war but many people say they don't fit well and cause sores. And the country's only prosthetic clinic is too expensive for many.

Makieu was one of the first Farming on Crutches trainees in 2022. He learned how to use farm waste for organic fertilizer and bamboo sticks for fences. He set up a small farm operation this year with his wife, Zanib, also an amputee. They met during the training and now have a child.

### Makieu wants to inspire future farmers.

"It's my dream to teach people about life. It's about changing your mindset," he said.

Morning mist rolled over the nearby mountains as the camp rose for exercises ahead of a strenuous day. They gathered in a circle, harmonizing on local songs before Samai spoke.

"We are created for fellowship, not isolation," he said. "When we return, we are not as we came. We go

home to serve our community as rural leaders."

Makieu interjected: "I sustain my life through farming, I met my wife here. This training can be a big package for you."

But the vast majority of amputees in Sierra Leone have no such support.

Alimany Kani, 30, lives in a camp built by the Norwegian Refugee Council for amputees on the outskirts of Freetown. He lost his leg when he was a baby, to the same bullet that killed his father in the civil war. Despite holding a master's degree in social work, he cannot find a job.

"Even if you have qualifications, an able-bodied with less education will always get the job," Kani said.

Sierra Leone's National Commission for Persons with Disability told AP that discrimination towards amputees has improved in the last decade since the Disability Act in 2011 aimed to provide equal opportunities and punish discrimination.

Kani firmly disagreed and called on the government to deliver reparations to victims of the civil war. Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2009 recommended that amputees receive pensions, access to healthcare, accommodation and education.

However, many of those pledges remain unfulfilled, including for Kani. According to the U.N.'s International Organization for

Migration, only 1,300 out of 32,000 have received a full reparations package due to a lack of resources.

"The government don't keep their promises. It's inhumane," Kani said.

There currently is no specific support for amputees from the government, the National Commission for Persons with Disability said.

Sierra Leone's health ministry, the president's office and the National Commission for Social Action office that manages the reparations program did not respond to questions.

A farming charity in Britain, Pasture for Life, is financing Farming on Crutches in full, but Samai said they need support from Sierra Leone's government to expand.

Meanwhile, the government is investing over \$600 million in agriculture but some believe this will largely benefit large-scale agriculture over small-scale farmers, such as Farming on Crutches' trainees, who form 70% of the population.

Two such smallholders are cousins and Farming on Crutches trainees, Amara and Moustapha Jalloh, aged 19 and 21, in central Sierra Leone.

Both recently harvested rice and cassava. Moustapha, who was born without a leg, said his harvest surplus allowed him to pay for computer science training. He dreams of being an agricultural engineer.

"Any successful story, there must be painful experiences," he said.

# The 'mysterious' treasure trove still hidden in Africa's forests

By Nick Dall

IT'S 8am on a Tuesday and Rudi Swart, 33, is getting ready for yet another day in the office. After tossing his work bag in his car, he picks up his colleague - experienced rock climber, Matthew Kingma - from his home in the South African town of George.

From there it's a 20-minute drive to the Groenkop Forest parking area, and a 25-minute walk to the 17-metre (55-foot) assegai tree (*Curtisia dentata*) Swart - who himself measures 1.94 metres (6.36 feet) - will be climbing today.

After making himself comfortable on a branch with a good view of a clump of the assegai's small, off-white flowers, Swart gets to work. Over the next four hours he makes a note of every creature that visits the flowers, and he tries to catch at least one sample of each different species. He also takes hourly temperature and wind speed (he brings a portable anemometer up the tree with him!) recordings. Kingma, meanwhile, sits on the forest floor and waits.

The next day, weather permitting, they will do it all again. Because when you're part of a tiny band of people who are trying to understand the secret world above our heads, there is little time to waste. Despite being priceless biodiversity hotspots and carbon sinks, Africa's Indigenous forests remain one of the most poorly understood biomes in the world.

All told, Swart did 36 climbs (24 diurnal and 12 nocturnal) up 24 different individual trees of six common species in Groenkop. Across 144 observation hours, over a four-month period between September 2021 and January 2022, he recorded 105 different insects and invertebrates. Of these, two new hoverflies have been formally described by John Midgley, a hoverfly expert based at the KwaZulu-Natal Museum. It's hard to say how many more undescribed species Swart may have found: identifying new species and working out how they fit into the ecosystem is both expensive and time-consuming. That's why, globally, only 10-20 percent of insects have been described.

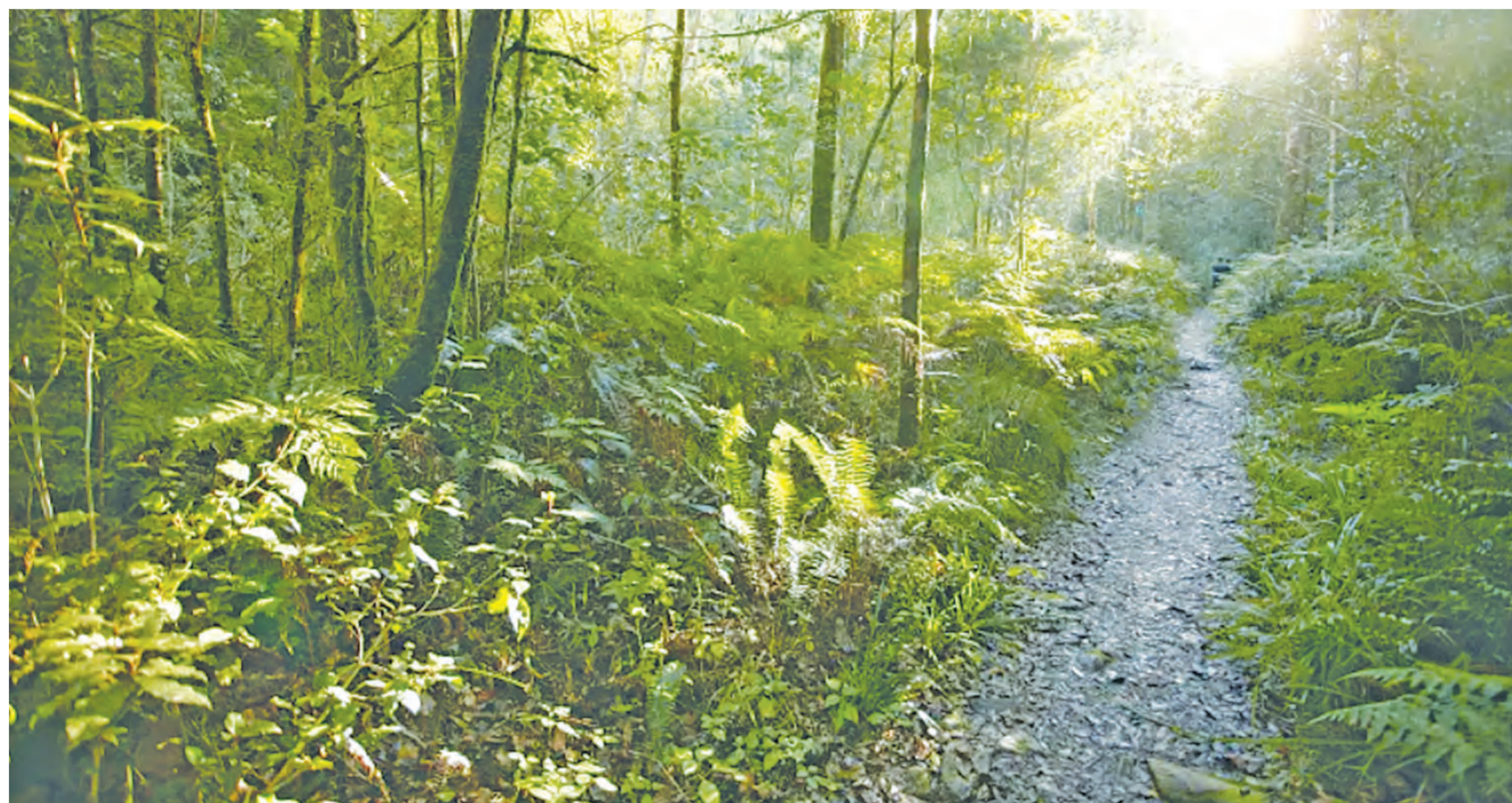
"When you walk through a forest, it's dark and cool and you don't actually see that much life," says Swart. "But up in the canopy it's a completely different story. It's bright and sunny and completely alive."

Charles Haddad, 45, a spider expert and prolific author of scientific papers from the University of the Free State, agrees: "Knowing what's happening near the ground is one thing," he says. "But large trees flower at the top. If you want to have a clue what's pollinating these trees you have to look at what's going on

**They retain connectivity between the forests and keep ecosystems healthy.**



Rudi Swart climbs a tree in the Groenkop Forest, South Africa



**Africa's indigenous forests cover only 9.1 percent of the continent, yet they are home to an estimated 80 percent of its terrestrial biodiversity**

up there."

Haddad has used canopy fogging - a method pioneered by entomologist and visionary biodiversity researcher Terry Erwin in the 1970s that uses targeted poisons to kill the critters living in a single tree - to identify six novel species of jumping spider (across three genera) at Hogsback, some 450km (280 miles) east of Groenkop. He has also identified five new species of ant-like sac spiders and seven new species of dark sac spiders while fogging in Ndumo Game Reserve, near the South Africa-Mozambique border.

**We know more about the surface of the moon'**

Groenkop is one of many pockets of Indigenous forest scattered across the African continent, from Cape Town in the south all the way up to Benin in West Africa.

Erwin famously described forest canopies as "the last biotic frontier". And nowhere is the

phrase more apt than in Africa. Cape Town is one of the largest and most developed cities on the continent. But the Indigenous forests on Table Mountain, the massif at the heart of the city, "probably contain loads of species that we know nothing about", says Swart.

While Indigenous forests cover only 9.1 percent of the continent, they are home to an estimated 80 percent of its terrestrial biodiversity. Afromontane (African mountain) forests in particular are globally unique. They stretch across most of the continent, but pockets are often small and isolated, separated by hundreds of kilometres. The similarities in their tree species have been noted since the time of Darwin: African Yellowwood, Ironwood and Cape Beech are all found from South Africa to Ethiopia. But the more scientists learn about Afromontane forests, the more overlap they see between insect species.

"We know more about the

surface of the moon than we do about what goes on up in the trees," says Swart somewhat rhetorically. One of the main reasons is access. Africa is the only continent without a forest canopy crane (in 2017 there were 22 canopy cranes worldwide), which is a permanent structure that allows easy access to trees on both horizontal and vertical axes. While canopy cranes aren't perfect - typically rooted to one location - they are by far the easiest way to research forest canopies and have revolutionised forest science everywhere except Africa. One Australian crane has yielded more than 120 scientific papers across a wide range of disciplines. One such study highlighted how plant nectar and honey dew (produced by bugs) sustain ant communities.

**A team effort**

With so many trees and so few people willing or able to find out what's buzzing in their canopies, African scientists are forced to

pool resources. Swart's primary interest, for example, is forest ecology. Specifically, which insects are responsible for pollinating Africa's great tree species.

To answer these questions, he needs to rely on the expertise of subject matter experts like Midgley, Haddad and many others. It works both ways. Swart helps them in their quest to understand more about their critters of choice.

Whenever Swart catches a hover fly, he sends it off to Midgley. Spiders go to Haddad. Wasps typically go to Simon van Noort at the Iziko Museum in Cape Town. And moths are identified with the help of Hermann Staude, the author of the first field guide to moths in South Africa.

Haddad and Midgley, meanwhile, share any "bycatch" from their collecting missions. And this giant game of pass-the-sample extends across Africa and beyond. For example, Massi Virgilio, a fruit fly expert working

in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, takes his samples back to his employers at the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Belgium. And then there are Ashley Kirk-Spriggs and Hitoshi Takano (both based at the African Natural History Research Trust museum in the UK), who share samples from their traps in the Republic of the Congo.

Museums around the world also contain at least 100 million samples collected by colonial-era scientists over the centuries.

"Most museums are willing to share," says Midgley, who is 41 and boasts an unruly auburn beard. "It saves us having to travel so much, and the motivation for them is that they can get their stuff identified."

**Filling in the blanks**

Midgley has catalogued 25 different species of hoverfly in his own garden, including at least one undescribed species. "You and your readers will definitely have seen hoverflies," he says. "But you may have confused them for a bee or a wasp." While the individual species are fascinating, he's more concerned with understanding "why we are finding them where we find them". This is partially geographic (how far north, how far south), he says, "but then you have to look finer ... Forest canopy is one factor."

The two genera of hoverfly he has worked on most recently always occur in forests. One of these genera is found from George (where Swart is based) to Cape Verde, an island nation off the west coast of Africa. The second genus has a slightly smaller range, extending from South Africa to Togo. "These are animals with massive ranges, but we have hardly any specimens for them," says Midgley.

The reason for this is simple. The creatures live in the canopy, out of sight of all but the most intrepid researchers. While it's still very early days, the growth of canopy research is helping to answer some fascinating and important questions, says Midgley before rattling off a pretty meaningful to-do list:

**The bigger picture**

As fascinating as the world of forest canopies is, why does it matter?

"The simple answer is 'because destroying the planet would be bad for us,'" says Midgley. "People know that the trees matter, but the trees matter because they support all these species."

And it works both ways, says Haddad. "These giant trees, which are so important for carbon sequestration, depend on tiny insects for their survival." The insects don't just pollinate the trees, adds Swart. "They retain connectivity between the forests and keep ecosystems healthy."

Cataloguing the secret world above our heads is the first step to conserving this biodiversity, says Midgley: "We need to know what we've got. Then we can try to work out how it all fits together."

"There are still a lot of blank spots on the map," agrees Haddad. "While there are pockets where we have a lot of material [most of it still waiting to be identified], countries like Angola and Mozambique are very poorly studied. And the canopy is the last spot you look at in a new country..."

## CAPITAL RADIO

# RATIBA YA VIPINDI JUMATATU - JUMAPILI

| MONDAY<br>TIME PROGRAMME  | TUESDAY<br>TIME PROGRAMME   | WEDNESDAY<br>TIME PROGRAMME   | THURSDAY<br>TIME PROGRAMME   | FRIDAY<br>TIME PROGRAMME  | SATURDAY<br>TIME PROGRAMME  | SUNDAY<br>TIME PROGRAMME  |
|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| 05:00-09:00HRS MORNING JAM<br>09:00-13:00HRS LETE RAHA<br>13:00-14:00HRS DW-RADIO<br>14:00-16:00HRS CLUB 101<br>16:00-18:00HRS DALA DALA<br>18:00-18:10HRS HABARI<br>18:10-20:00HRS BOZOUK TIME<br>20:00-21:00HRS HALI HALISI<br>21:00-22:00HRS SPORTS<br><br>22:00-05:00HRS MUZIKI<br>(MCHAGANGANYIKO) | 05:00-09:00HRS MORNING JAM<br>09:00-13:00HRS LETE RAHA<br>13:00-14:00HRS DW-RADIO<br>14:00-16:00HRS CLUB 101<br>16:00-18:00HRS DALA DALA<br>18:00-18:10HRS HABARI<br>18:10-21:00HRS BOZOUK TIME<br>21:00-22:00HRS SPORTS<br>22:00-05:00HRS MUZIKI<br>(MCHAGANGANYIKO) | 05:00-09:00HRS MORNING JAM<br>09:00-13:00HRS LETE RAHA<br>13:00-14:00HRS DW-RADIO<br>14:00-16:00HRS CLUB 101<br>16:00-18:00HRS DALA DALA<br>18:00-18:10HRS HABARI<br>18:10-21:00HRS BOZOUK TIME<br>21:00-22:00HRS SPORTS<br><br>22:00-05:00HRS MUZIKI<br>(MCHAGANGANYIKO) | 05:00-09:00HRS MORNING JAM<br>09:00-13:00HRS LETE RAHA<br>13:00-14:00HRS DW-RADIO<br>14:00-16:00HRS CLUB 101<br>16:00-18:00HRS DALA DALA<br>18:00-18:10HRS HABARI<br>18:10-20:00HRS BOZOUK TIME<br>20:00-21:00HRS SPORTS<br><br>21:00-23:00HRS<br>MALUMBANO YA HOJA<br><br>22:00-05:00HRS MUZIKI<br>(MCHAGANGANYIKO) | 05:00-09:00HRS MORNING JAM<br>09:00-13:00HRS LETE RAHA<br>13:00-14:00HRS DW-RADIO<br>14:00-16:00HRS CLUB 101<br>16:00-18:00HRS DALA DALA<br>18:00-18:10HRS HABARI<br>18:10-20:00HRS BOZOUK TIME<br>20:00-21:00HRS SPORTS<br>21:00-23:00HRS KIPIMA JOTO<br><br>22:00-05:00HRS MUZIKI<br>(MCHAGANGANYIKO) | 07:30-10:00HRS DK 90 DUNIANI<br>10:00-11:00HRS KADOGOO<br>11:00-13:00HRS BONGO HITS<br>13:00-14:00HRS DW RADIO<br>14:00-16:00HRS ZAIDI YA UMUJAVYO<br>16:00-18:00HRS ALIYEVUMA<br>18:00-21:00HRS BUZUKI TIME<br>21:00-22:00HRS SPOTI<br><br>22:00-05:00HRS MUZIKI<br>(MCHAGANGANYIKO) | 07:00-09:00HRS<br>HABARI NA MATUKIO YA WIKI<br><br>09:00-11:00HRS THE SUNDAY<br>11:00-13:00HRS TOP 20<br>13:00-14:00HRS DW RADIO<br>14:00-16:00HRS CAPITAL<br>MICHEZONI<br>16:00-18:00HRS UKURASA WA MBELE<br>18:00-21:00HRS JIACHIE<br>21:00-22:00HRS SPOTI<br>22:00-01:00HRS LADHA LAINI<br><br>01:00-05:00HRS MUZIKI<br>(MCHAGANGANYIKO) |

Tembelea mitandao ya kijamii ya CAPITAL RADIO



CAPITAL RADIO

## BUSINESS

## China ready for world's largest hydropower dam in Tibet but..

## Billionaire Musk's 'social experiment on humanity': How X evolved this year

NEW YORK

BILLIONAIRE Elon Musk has hailed Twitter as a bastion for freedom of expression ever since he acquired the social media site two years ago. But over the course of 2024, X, as it is now called, has evolved from what felt like a communal town square into a polarised hub where views and posts seem even more controversial.

Certain profiles that have shared misleading takes on politics and the news, some of which have been accused of triggering hate, have recently shot to prominence.

All of this matters because X might not have as many users as some other major social media sites, but it does seem to have a significant impact on political discussions. Not only is it a place where certain high-profile politicians, governments and police forces share statements and views - but now its owner Mr Musk has directly aligned himself with Donald Trump, a relationship that could redefine how the bosses of other social media giants deal with the next US President.

So, what's behind this new wave of change? Has there been a shift in the demographic of people using X over the last year - or could it be the result of deliberate decisions made by those in charge?

Two months ago, Inevitable West didn't exist on X. Now the profile, which calls itself a "Defender of Western values and culture", has amassed 131,600 followers (a number that is rapidly growing). It is racking up around 30 million views each day collectively among all of its posts, according to its creator. Mr Musk has even responded to Inevitable West's posts on X.

Their recent posts, which often feature news alert-style captions, include a faked video showing Trump telling the British Prime Minister he is going to "invade your country and make Britain Great Again".

There have also been several posts in support of far-right activist Tommy Robinson, as well as some debunked

claims about the farmer's protests in the UK and a knife attack in Southport, in which three children were killed during a Taylor Swift-themed dance workshop.

Inevitable West denies accusations of pushing disinformation and inciting abuse or violence. "The purpose of my X account is to be the voice for the silent majority of the Western world," its creator told me. They refused to share their identity with me when we corresponded, but claim to be "Gen Z" and "not Russian".

"Uncensored information and opinions will inevitably lead [to] the US and entire West and Europe moving further right, [which is] proven by Donald Trump getting elected and surges in Europe's far right," they argued. "Globally, it would mean corrupt politicians and leaders would get found out."

They appear to see the rise of their account as the "death" of what they would call the "MSM" or Mainstream Media. That's perhaps no surprise given that, following the US Election, Mr Musk himself told X users: "You are the Media Now".

When Mr Musk first acquired Twitter, he emphasised the need to house all political opinions and push back against censorship by social media companies and governments.

Changes - including mass layoffs and alterations to moderation policies on issues like political misinformation - started immediately.

There have also been various alterations to the nature of feeds including the creation of two separate sections: "Following", which features accounts you follow, and "For You", which is algorithmically curated, as on TikTok.

Over the course of 2024, however, there have been another wave of alterations that appear to have transformed it further. The block function has been changed, meaning that if you block an account you won't be protected from that profile viewing what you post. Likes, meanwhile, have been made private.



LHASA

CHINA has approved the construction of what will be the world's largest hydropower dam, stoking concerns about displacement of communities in Tibet and environmental impacts downstream in India and Bangladesh.

The dam, which will be located in the lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo river, could generate three times more energy than the Three Gorges Dam, currently the world's largest hydropower plant.

Chinese state media has described the development as "a safe project that prioritises ecological protection", saying it will boost local prosperity and contribute to Beijing's climate neutrality goals.

Human rights groups and experts, however, have raised concerns about the development's knock-on effects.

Among them are fears that the construction of the dam - first announced in late-2020 - could displace local communities, as well as significantly alter the natural landscape and damage local ecosystems, which are among the richest and most diverse on the Tibetan Plateau.

China has built several dams in Tibetan areas - a contentious subject in a region tightly controlled by Beijing ever since it was annexed in the 1950s.

Activists have previously told the BBC that the dams are the latest example of Beijing's exploitation of Tibetans and their land. Mainly-Buddhist Tibet has seen waves of crackdowns over the years, in which thousands are believed to have been killed.

Earlier this year, the Chinese government rounded up hundreds of Tibetans who had been protesting against another hydropower dam. It ended in arrests and beatings, with some people seriously injured, the BBC learned through sources and verified footage.

They had been opposing plans to build the Gangtuo dam and hydropower plant, which would

displace several villages and submerge ancient monasteries with sacred relics. Beijing, however, said it had relocated and compensated locals, and moved the ancient murals to safety.

In the case of the Yarlung Tsangpo dam, Chinese authorities have stressed that the project would not have major environmental impact - but they have not indicated how many people it would displace. The Three Gorges hydropower dam required the resettlement of 1.4 million people.

Reports indicate that the colossal development would require at least four 20km-long tunnels to be drilled through the Namcha Barwa mountain, diverting the flow of the Yarlung Tsangpo, Tibet's longest river.

Experts and officials have also flagged concerns that the dam would empower China to control or divert the flow of the trans-border river, which flows south into India's Arunachal Pradesh and Assam states and onwards into Bangladesh.

A 2013 report published by the Lowy Institute, an Australian-based think tank, noted that "control over these rivers [in the Tibetan Plateau] effectively gives China a chokehold on India's economy".

Shortly after China announced its plans for the Yarlung Tsangpo dam project in 2020, a senior Indian government official told Reuters that India's government was exploring the development of a large hydropower dam and reservoir "to mitigate the adverse impact of the Chinese dam projects".

China's foreign ministry has previously responded to India's concerns around the proposed dam, saying in 2020 that China has a "legitimate right" to dam the river and has considered downstream impacts.

China has constructed multiple hydropower stations along the course of the Yarlung Tsangpo over the past decade in a bid to harness the river's power as a source of renewable energy. Flow-

ing through the deepest canyon on Earth, one section of the river falls 2,000 metres within a short span of just 50 km, offering huge potential for generating hydropower.

The river's dramatic topography, however, also poses major engineering challenges - and this latest dam is by far China's largest and most ambitious to date.

The site of the development is located along an earthquake-prone tectonic plate boundary. Chinese researchers have also previously flagged concerns that such extensive excavation and construction in the steep and narrow gorge would increase the frequency of landslides.

"Earthquake-induced landslides and mud-rock flows are often uncontrollable and will also pose a huge threat to the project," a senior engineer from Sichuan provincial geological bureau said in 2022.

The project could cost as much as a trillion yuan (\$127bn; £109.3bn) according to estimates by the Chongyi Water Resources bureau.

Hundreds of Tibetans protesting against a Chinese dam were rounded up in a harsh crackdown earlier this year, with some beaten and seriously injured, the BBC has learnt from sources and verified footage.

Such protests are extremely rare in Tibet, which China has tightly controlled since it annexed the region in the 1950s. That they still happened highlights China's controversial push to build dams in what has long been a sensitive area.

Claims of the arrests and beatings began trickling out shortly after the events in February. In the following days authorities further tightened restrictions, making it difficult for anyone to verify the story, especially journalists who cannot freely travel to Tibet.

But the BBC has spent months tracking down Tibetan sources whose family and friends were detained and beaten. BBC Verify has also examined satellite imagery

and verified leaked videos which show mass protests and monks begging the authorities for mercy.

The sources live outside of China and are not associated with activist groups. But they did not wish to be named for safety reasons.

In response to our queries, the Chinese embassy in the UK did not confirm nor deny the protests or the ensuing crackdown.

But it said: "China is a country governed by the rule of law, and strictly safeguards citizens' rights to lawfully express their concerns and provide opinions or suggestions."

The protests, followed by the crackdown, took place in a territory home to Tibetans in Sichuan province. For years, Chinese authorities have been planning to build the massive Gangtuo dam and hydropower plant, also known as Kamtok in Tibetan, in the valley straddling the Dege (Derge) and Ji-angda (Jomda) counties.

Once built, the dam's reservoir would submerge an area that is culturally and religiously significant to Tibetans, and home to several villages and ancient monasteries containing sacred relics.

One of them, the 700-year-old Wangdui (Wontoe) Monastery, has particular historical value as its walls feature rare Buddhist murals.

The Gangtuo dam would also displace thousands of Tibetans. The BBC has seen what appears to be a public tender document for the relocation of 4,287 residents to make way for the dam.

The BBC contacted an official listed on the tender document as well as Huadian, the state-owned enterprise reportedly building the dam. Neither have responded.

Plans to build the dam were first approved in 2012, according to a United Nations special rapporteur's letter to the Chinese government. The letter, which is from July 2024, raised concerns about the dam's "irreversible impact" on thousands of people and the environment.



## Retailers lure buyers with combo deals as festive items turn pricey

LAGOS

RETAILERS are attracting holiday shoppers with irresistible combo deals and exclusive offers.

From household essentials to luxury items, combo packages have become a strategic focus for top brands, promising convenience and value for money during the busy yuletide period.

Retail giants such as Shoprite, SPAR, among others, are unveiling thoughtfully curated bundles that cater to diverse customer needs.

SPAR Nigeria in a viral post said, "We asked,

you answered, and we listened. This season, we have created the best gifting options for you to choose from. From Hampers ranging from N20,000 - N350,000, Luxury Perfumes that portray your class, and SPAR Gift Cards you have many ways to spread joy.

"And yes, we are also gifting you amazing discounts of up to 50 percent OFF across various products to show our love and appreciation. Because with SPAR Market, Joy comes already wrapped," the post read.

On the flip side, Bokumart offered 21 per-

cent cheaper than open market discounts for 20 products running from December 15 to 21st. These products included: Maryland Cookies Original 138gm, Four Cousins Sweet Red Alcoholic Wine 750ml, and Escape Citrus Zing Body Mist 250ml, among others.

These deals combined complementary products at discounted prices, ensuring customers get more for less. For instance, grocery retailers offer combo packs of holiday staples like turkey, wine, and desserts, while electronics stores pair gadgets like laptops and

smartphones with accessories.

"Holiday shopping can be overwhelming, and combo deals simplify the process while helping families save money," said Sandra Adebayo, marketing manager for a leading retail chain in Lagos. "We want our customers to experience the joy of giving and celebrating without breaking the bank."

James Praise, founder of Marketing in Action, said combo deals offer a way to move overstocked or low-performing items by pairing them with high-demand products.

"Retailers must care-

fully price combo deals to strike a balance between enhancing perceived value for customers and maintaining profitability," he added.

E-commerce platforms are also jumping on the trend, leveraging data-driven insights to design attractive bundles tailored to consumer preferences. For example, Temu, the Chinese e-commerce platform offers products at heavily discounted rates, often starting at less than \$1, thanks to the platform's solid supplier connections and the substantial investment from PDD Holdings.



# Nature can provide a tonic for loneliness

LONDON

HERE is an ever-growing list of the benefits of natural prescriptions - now researchers say nature could offer a cure for loneliness too.

Kye Aziz didn't consider himself a big nature lover. As an asylum-seeker originally from Indonesia, now based in Melbourne, he'd spent stints of time in the outback and high country. But it wasn't until a socially-prescribed picnic and gardening excursion that he began to see nature in a new way.

"You feel like you're transported somewhere else," says Aziz. "Living in Australia and in Western culture can be very lonely and individualistic - but when we're sitting outside and having a laugh and feeling that togetherness, it just feels like home."

There's a science to that feeling. In the 1980s, in a public health bid to help stressed urban workers heal through nature, the Japanese government invested in a campaign for "shinrin-yoku", or forest bathing.

At first, "it was a feeling, not a science" says Qing Li, a medical doctor and clinical professor at Nippon University in Tokyo. But in recent decades, Li and other researchers have linked forest bathing to lower blood pressure, a stabilised nervous system, fewer stress hormones, boosted immune function, and reduced anxiety, depression, anger and fatigue.

According to the late naturalist, Edward Wilson, these health benefits are a product of "biophilia" - an innate love of nature that underpins our near-universal tendency to interact with plants, animals, and other humans.

By making us feel more calm and present, spending time in nature has the potential to help us overcome the self-destructive thinking patterns that can inadvertently increase loneliness - a subjective experience, not an objec-



Residential green spaces will likely reduce loneliness by offering opportunities for social re-connection.

tive state. One study found time in nature reduces neural activity in the subgenual prefrontal cortex, an area of the brain linked to negative thinking patterns, or rumination, and associated with loneliness.

Now, in a first-of-its-kind global nature-based social prescribing experiment - spanning from Ecuador to Australia - early findings suggest time spent with others in nature could dramatically change conversations on health, healthcare, and loneliness.

"When people are outside, they talk about being relaxed, being away from it all, how it just makes them feel good," says Jill Litt, an environmental studies and public health researcher at the University of Colorado Boulder, US. "Nature happens to be very good at making people ready for change, vulnerable - and open to new experiences."

In 2019, just before the Covid-19 pandemic would make loneliness a globally-felt public health problem, Litt had a hunch about a solution. While observing the health bene-

fits of community gardening, Litt noticed how "getting your hands dirty and being with others seemed to be really important".

Litt then wondered about other nature-based group activities, like bird-watching and trail-walking, and after reading a paper co-authored by Laura Coll-Planas, a medical doctor and public health researcher at the University of Vic - Central University of Catalonia in Barcelona, she became curious about their potential to tackle loneliness. "What would happen if we mixed these three ingredients: aesthetic engagement with nature, participation in an outdoor activity, and social connection with a group?"

Enlisting Coll-Planas in Barcelona and other researchers in Prague, Marseille, Helsinki, Melbourne and Cuenca (in Ecuador), Litt's team put together a research proposal for a study they called Recetas - a five-year, six-country-spanning investigation into nature-based social prescribing as a means to alleviate loneliness, boost health, and reduce pressure on healthcare.

Now in its fourth year, Recetas is currently running trials, and has already seen support from local health systems, Litt says. "If Recetas is successful, this can really change the model of care to be more person-centred, to rely less on pharmaceutical interventions, and to utilise our communities as part of the way health is managed."

Co-led by Coll-Planas and Litt, who also works at the Barcelona Institute for Global Health, Recetas rests on two growing buckets of evidence. Studies find all kinds of social prescriptions, from cooking classes to art workshops, can reduce feelings of loneliness, while researchers have long documented the many health benefits of spending time in nature.

In one recent study from the University of Exeter, UK, for instance, researchers found nature prescriptions not only significantly improved the participants' happiness, anxiety, and life satisfaction, but also reduced healthcare costs. Analysis from researchers in Australia shows nature prescriptions

also contribute to a reduction in blood pressure.

But Recetas demonstrates one of the largest efforts to study the effects of nature-based social prescriptions on loneliness, specifically. "In our accelerated world, having two hours to be face-to-face [with other people] is very revolutionary and powerful for our health," Coll-Planas says. "But it's the first time we're doing this kind of research in an outdoor setting, and we're already seeing the way nature brings a different type of social connection."

Some of these gains seem to be by design. One study found people living with more green space near their home reported fewer incidences of loneliness. Conversely, people living in "lonelygenic" environments - marked by factors like car dependency and loss of tree canopy - may contribute to weakened social connection.

Another perspective suggests nature uniquely restores our attention. In this way, natural settings may prime us to have more positive social interactions in the present, in-

Especially since settlement services in Australia can be "really challenging for LGBTQIA+ asylum seekers and refugees", Opacin says his goal is simply to plan "fun things in nature" and help people feel a sense of belonging "not just to each other, but in their new home".

Over the eight week period, those fun things have included bat-watching, beach explorations, and something called "sniff-fari" - a nature walk "where we go out and smell the different plants", Opacin explains.

To arrive at these activities, Opacin and the other five site facilitators focus on "co-creation" - designing the group activities based on participants' interests, as well as what's locally available. Sometimes, that means "nature is more passive" in the activity, he says, like when they simply share a meal together outdoors, for instance.

"It wasn't part of the initial intervention, but sharing a meal proved to be not just attractive for our members to fill their stomachs before we start exploring nature, but also as a way to open up conversations, talk about our different cultures, and understand each other better," Opacin says.

Though the goal of Recetas is to help reduce loneliness, Opacin says talking about it can be challenging. "We try not to be too pushy since people get very emotional if you talk about loneliness all the time, so instead we would talk about connection, finding friends, and what it means to feel belonging," he says.

That's been helpful for Aziz. More than any individual friendships, he says he became attached to the group as a whole, and the comfort and familiarity he felt there. "When the group was ending, I realised how much I was going to miss that routine of seeing the same people each week, just spending some time in nature, and feeling that sense of belonging," he says. "It kind of killed my loneliness."

LOS ANGELES

SAMSUNG is reportedly planning to showcase its second-generation Galaxy Ring and new Ray-Ban Meta Glasses-like smart glasses at the anticipated Galaxy Unpacked event on January 22, 2025. While the next-generation flagship Galaxy S25 series smartphones are expected to take centre stage at the event, the company may preview several new devices that will be launched later in 2025. According to a report by 9To5Google, these new devices may include the Samsung Galaxy Ring 2, new smart glasses and Samsung's Project Moohan XR headset.

Samsung is reportedly planning to showcase its second-generation Galaxy Ring and new Ray-Ban Meta Glasses-like smart glasses at the anticipated Galaxy Unpacked event on January 22, 2025. While the next-generation flagship Galaxy S25 series smartphones are expected to take centre stage at the event, the company may preview several new devices that will be launched later in 2025. According to a report by 9To5Google, these new devices may include the Samsung Galaxy Ring 2, new smart glasses and Samsung's Project Moohan XR headset.

As for the changes, the report stated that the Galaxy Ring 2 will offer better health sensors and improved battery life. No major design change is



## Samsung to preview its gadgets, smart glasses

expected from the new model.

While the company has already showcased its Project Moohan extended reality headset, Samsung may unveil a new smart glass device. Based on the Android XR platform, the smart glass will likely use Google's Gemini AI assis-

tant to offer functionalities such as real-time conversation translation, message summarisation, direction assistance and more.

Previously it was reported that Samsung is developing a Ray-Ban Meta glasses-like smart glass device with a built-in 12MP camera for recording and

more. It will likely be powered by a Qualcomm ARI chip, the same processor that powers Meta's smart glasses.

Earlier this month, Samsung announced that it has developed a prototype XR headset, named Project Moohan, in partnership with Google and Qual-

comm. The device may be officially revealed at the upcoming Galaxy Unpacked event.

Built on Google's Android XR platform, the headset is anticipated to feature advanced displays, pass-through functionality, and multi-modal input options. It is designed to function as a "spatial canvas," allowing users to engage in activities such as navigating Google Maps, watching YouTube, and interacting with Gemini for a variety of tasks.

## Illegal ruby miners easily 'taking advantage' of Mozambique unrest

MAPUTO

GEMFIELDS, a leader in the mining and marketing of coloured gemstones, says illegal ruby miners in Mozambique have taken advantage of the unrest in that country since October after disputed election results.

Gemfields on Friday said there had been several incidents implicating illegal miners at its Montepuez Ruby Mining Limitada (MRM) in Mozambique, including of farming inputs provided by MRM that were due to be distributed to more than 800 local farmers to promote sustainable livelihoods.

"On December 24, more than 200 people staged an attempt to invade the MRM Village and during their approach set fire to exter-

nal structures built by MRM containing, inter alia, a community cash point.

"Security forces comprising both the Mozambican police and military protected the MRM Village using a staged escalation of force," the company said.

"Tragically, during the course of the morning, two individuals staging the attempt on MRM Village were shot, subsequently taken to the Montepuez district hospital and declared dead.

"Given the company's priority remains the safety and security of its personnel, a number of people were temporarily relocated to off-site locations given the increased risk profile.

"MRM maintained a sizeable presence on site of more than 500 people across employees,

contractors and security components. The temporarily relocated personnel began a phased return on Thursday. While our operations were halted from Tuesday, MRM intends to return to normal operations before the end of the year."

Mozambique's top court on Monday confirmed the victory of ruling party Frelimo in the October election, which has sparked huge protests by opposition groups who say the vote was rigged.

The Constitutional Council has the final say over the electoral process and its ruling is likely to spark further protests in Mozambique, a Southern African country of close to 35-million people that Frelimo has governed since 1975.

Western observers



# SCO's strong appeal, rosy future cited

SHANGHAI

SENIOR Chinese diplomat Zhang Ming, who is about to complete his tenure as secretary-general of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, summed up his feelings during the period in three words: gratitude, delight and hope.

"Serving as the SCO's secretary-general is an honor," he said in an exclusive interview with China Daily. "It is also more of a great duty."

Zhang, a former Chinese vice-foreign minister, became SCO secretary-general on Jan 1, 2022, for a three-year term. He will soon hand the baton to former Kazakh defense minister Nurlan Yermekbayev.

China assumed the SCO's rotating presidency in July, and it will host a slew of SCO meetings, including a summit next year.

Earlier this month, Zhang and Yermekbayev held meetings in Beijing with senior Chinese officials such as Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Shen Yueyue, vice-chairwoman of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, to discuss matters such as China's SCO presidency and the organization's future growth.

Starting from the initial six member states 23 years ago to today's 10 member states, two observer states and 14 dialogue partners, the SCO's growth and expansion show its increasing influence, appeal and attractiveness, Zhang said.

"There are more applications in my office for joining the big SCO family," he said with a smile.

Zhang said he believes that as the organization keeps moving in its set direction, "its influence and appeal will continue to grow".

"After all, it is the basic norms and principles advocated and upheld by the SCO, and the Shanghai Spirit it promotes, that have brought about such an appeal and attractiveness," he said.

"We have always stood for fairness, respect and equality, and the member states enjoy a high level of comfort with each other in this big family."

In his view, the cooperation advanced within the SCO framework is of mutual benefit and offers great impetus to the development of each member, which also adds to



Zhang Ming, secretary-general of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

the grouping's appeal.

Over the past three years, the SCO has held three summits, three meetings of prime ministers, more than 80 ministerial meetings, more than 250 expert meetings, and nearly 400 events in various fields.

During this period, the SCO added two new members and eight dialogue partners, and it established partnerships with international and regional organizations such as the League of Arab States and the United Nations Environment Programme.

Speaking of his hopes for the organization, Zhang said: "History has proved that the SCO's founding was a far-sighted decision, and history will again prove that the Shanghai Spirit continues to enjoy great vitality. The future of the SCO is full of hope and it also has a long way to go."

He voiced his hope that the organization will become more pragmatic, provide more opportunities for the development of its member states, and benefit their peoples more, so that their public can have a greater sense of gain and well-being.

"I hope that our organization will keep pace with the times, steadfastly advance its modernization

and reforms, and improve efficiency and actions. I believe the SCO is an organization full of hope and

with unlimited possibilities."

Many SCO member states are also participants in Belt and Road cooperation.

Zhang noted that there are landlocked countries within the SCO, and infrastructure projects such as roads and railroads are crucial to their economic and social development.

"When we join hands and work together to develop infrastructure, the inconveniences that come with being landlocked are solved. For the more than a decade since the BRI was proposed, SCO member states have actively participated in it and have benefited substantially, and I think the momentum will stay strong in the future."

Over the past 23 years, SCO member states have always upheld the Shanghai Spirit, which features "mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for diverse civilizations and pursuit of common development".

Speaking of the relevance of the Shanghai Spirit to the world today, Zhang said: "All the wars, conflicts and turmoil in this world are caused by such injustices as hegemony, unfairness, disrespect, injustice, interference in internal affairs, and bullying of the weak and small nations by

those that are strong and big. In today's world, such practices persist."

He noted that the SCO advocates fairness and justice, non-alignment, no confrontation, no conflict, no targeting of any third party, and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

"A slew of instabilities and uncertainties have emerged in today's international situation. Under the guidance of the Shanghai Spirit and with a positive mindset, we will carry forward cooperation in the set direction with all our might and manifest the rich connotation of the Shanghai Spirit through cooperation, and will play an important role in building a fairer and more reasonable international political and economic order."

As the SCO is an international organization, its achievements are often not so much about building a specific bridge or paving a road, but making some institutional, overarching arrangements, Zhang noted.

"The adopted documents should never be put on the shelf, they should not be left on the desk for display. We should translate every paragraph in them into bilateral cooperation between our member states, multilateral cooperation, or joint cooperation among the 10 member states."

"In this way, we will make cooperation among us in various fields smoother and thus increase our productivity in various areas," he added.



**MONDAY - WEDNESDAY FROM 10:30 PM** **ITV**

## US, France, Spain top 2024 buyers of Nigeria's crude

LAGOS

IN 2024, Nigeria maintained its status as one of Africa's leading crude oil exporters, supplying its high-quality crude to a variety of countries across the globe.

Despite fluctuations in global oil prices and shifting energy policies worldwide, Nigeria's crude oil remained in high demand.

Here are the 10 biggest buyers of Nigerian crude oil this year, according to recent trade figures by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

The United States has overtaken the Netherlands as the biggest buyer of Nigerian crude oil in the first nine months of 2024, marking a change in the dynamics of the West African nation's energy exports.

The US purchased Nigerian crude worth N3.64 trillion between January and September 2024, highlighting its position as a key trading partner.

Findings showed the US has reduced its reliance on imported oil due to increased domestic production. Despite that, it remains one of the top buyers of Nigerian crude, particularly for its Gulf Coast refineries designed to process light crude.

France's refineries remained a consistent market for Nigerian crude in 2024. The country prioritised Nigerian oil due to its compatibility with existing refining infrastructure and relatively lower carbon footprint than heavier crude grades.

France imported N3.34 trillion worth of Nigerian crude oil, reflecting strong energy ties between the two nations.

Spain's refining sector also de-

pended heavily on Nigerian oil. As part of the European Union's energy diversification strategy, Spain increased its imports from Nigeria to reduce reliance on Middle East supplies.

With imports valued at N3.02 trillion, Spain remains a vital European market for Nigeria's oil exports.

As a major hub for oil refining and redistribution in Europe, the Netherlands imported substantial volumes of Nigerian crude in 2024. Much of this oil was refined locally or re-exported to other European nations.

Last year, the Netherlands was the biggest buyer of Nigeria's crude oil. In 2024, the Dutch market accounted for N2.77 trillion, still maintaining its role as a significant buyer in the European Union.

Italian refiners also increased their intake of Nigerian crude, leveraging its quality to produce higher-value refined products like gasoline and diesel for European markets.

Italy imported N2.64 trillion worth of Nigerian crude, cementing its place among the top five buyers.

Canada ranked sixth, purchasing N2.56 trillion worth of crude oil, demonstrating robust North American demand.

South Korea became a significant buyer, importing large volumes to meet its industrial and energy demands. Nigerian crude oil's light characteristics made it an attractive option for the country's advanced refineries.

Indonesia imported N2.02 trillion worth of Nigerian crude in the first nine months of 2024.

ITV

**THURSDAY 26 DEC**

5:00 Soap rpt: Uzalo  
5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi  
6:00 HABARI  
6:40 Kumekucha  
7:30 HABARI  
8:00 Al Jazeera  
9:00 Jungu kuu  
9:30 Soap rpt: Laws of love  
10:00 Watoto wetu  
10:30 Shamba lulu  
11:00 Ripoti maalum  
12:00 Al Jazeera  
12:30 Jarida la wanawake rpt  
13:00 Kipindi maalum rpt: BOT  
13:30 Art and Lifestyle  
14:00 Shamsam za pwani rpt  
15:00 Meza huru  
16:30 Watoto wetu  
17:00 The Base  
18:00 Hapa na Pale  
18:15 Mapishi  
18:30 Jagina  
19:00 Usafiri wako  
19:30 Soap: Laws of love  
20:00 Habari  
21:05 Malumbano ya hoja  
22:50 Kipindi maalum: Mch-  
ezo Supa Jackpot  
23:00 Music: The Base  
00:00 Al Jazeera

**FRIDAY 27 DEC**

5:00 Soap rpt: Uzalo  
5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi  
6:00 HABARI  
6:40 Kumekucha  
7:30 HABARI  
8:00 Al Jazeera  
9:00 Ripoti maalum  
9:30 Soap rpt: Laws of love  
10:00 Watoto wetu  
10:30 Usafiri wako  
11:00 Kipindi maalum: Watumishi housing

11:20 Jagina  
12:00 Al Jazeera  
12:30 Kipindi maalum rpt: Tanesco  
13:00 Kipindi Maalum rpt: Maisha ni nyumba  
13:30 Kipindi Maalum rpt: Sema na mahakama  
14:30 DW: Afrimaxx rpt  
15:00 Meza huru  
16:30 Watoto Wetu  
17:00 The Base (DJ Show)  
17:30 Kiislam  
18:00 Hapa na Pale  
18:15 ITV Top 10  
19:00 Shamba lulu  
19:30 Soap: Laws of love  
20:00 Habari  
21:05 Kipima Joto  
22:50 Kipindi maalum: Mch-  
ezo Supa Jackpot  
23:00 The Base  
00:00 Al Jazeera

**SATURDAY 28 DEC**

5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi  
6:00 HABARI  
6:40 Kumekucha  
7:00 Habari  
8:00 Al Jazeera  
9:00 Watoto wetu  
10:05 Shika Bamba 5  
10:35 Hawavumi lakini wamo rpt  
11:30 Chetu ni chetu rpt  
12:15 Art and lifestyle  
12:50 ITV Top 10 rpt  
13:50 Soap rpt: Laws of love  
15:45 Igizo: Bongo DSM  
16:10 Igizo: Haikufuma  
17:00 Shamsam za Pwani  
18:00 Hapa na Pale  
18:10 Mjue zaidi rpt  
19:00 Jungu kuu  
19:30 Shika Bamba  
20:00 Habari  
21:05 Kipindi maalum: Tatu Mzuka  
21:15 Igizo: Haikufuma

21:45 Kipindi maalum: Mch-  
ezo Supa Min Jackpot  
21:55 Art and Lifestyle  
22:15 ITV Top 10  
23:00 Hawavumi lakini wamo  
23:40 Soap: Uzalo rpt  
00:30 Al Jazeera

**SUNDAY 29 DEC**

5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi  
6:00 HABARI  
6:40 Kumekucha  
7:00 Habari  
8:00 Al Jazeera  
09:00 Watoto Wetu  
10:00 Soap rpt: Laws of love  
11:45 Hawavumi lakini wamo rpt  
12:45 Mjue zaidi  
13:30 Usafiri wako  
14:00 Tamasha la Michezo  
15:30 Mwangaza  
16:30 ITV Top 10 rpt  
17:20 Kipindi cha kikristo  
18:00 Hapa na Pale  
18:15 Mapishi  
18:30 Matukio ya wiki  
19:30 Igizo: Haikufuma  
20:00 Habari  
21:05 Igizo: Bongo DSM  
21:20 Kipindi maalum: Mch-  
ezo Supa Jackpot  
21:40 Mjue Zaidi  
22:15 Soap: Uzalo rpt  
00:30 Al Jazeera

**CAPITAL TV**

**THURS 26 DEC**

06:00 Al Jazeera  
09:00 Kumekucha Michezo rpt  
10:00 Meza Huru Rpt  
11:30 Spots gazette  
12:00 Innovation  
12:30 Culinary delight rpt  
13:00 Telenovela rpt: In Love

With Ramon rpt  
14:00 Our Earth rpt  
14:30 DW news Africa rpt  
15:00 Beyond the Narrative rpt  
15:45 Décor Rpt  
16:00 Tomorrow Today  
16:30 Business edition rpt  
17:00 In good shape  
17:30 Meza huru  
19:00 Out & About Rpt  
19:30 Eco@Africa  
20:00 Our Earth Rpt  
20:45 Telenovela: In Love With Ramon ep#  
21:30 Capital Prime News  
22:00 Capchat rpt  
23:00 Al Jazeera

**FRID 27 DEC**

06:00 Al Jazeera  
09:00 Kumekucha Michezo rpt  
10:00 Meza Huru Rpt  
11:30 Capchat  
12:30 Décor Rpt  
13:00 Telenovela In Love With Ramon rpt  
14:00 Culinary rpt  
14:30 Ripoti Maalum  
15:00 Dk 45 rpt  
16:00 Dw News Africa rpt  
16:30 The Monday Agenda rpt  
17:30 Meza huru  
19:00 Rev  
19:00 Beyond the Narrative RPT  
20:00 Aibu Yako  
20:15 Local Pgm: Business Edition  
20:45 Telenovela: In Love With Ramon ep#  
21:30 Capital Prime News  
22:00 Malumbano ya Hoja Rpt  
00:00 Al Jazeera

**SATURDAY 28 DEC**

08:00 Al Jazeera  
09:00 Rev rpt  
09:30 Jagina rpt  
10:00 Culinary delight rpt  
10:30 Innovation rpt

11:00 Out n'about rpt  
11:30 Sports Gazette rpt  
12:00 Shamba Lulu rpt  
12:30 Our Earth rpt  
13:00 Business edition rpt  
13:30 Al Jazeera  
14:30 Telenovela: In Love With Ramon rpt  
17:15 Beyond the Narrative rpt  
18:15 Capchat rpt  
19:15 Bundesligga Kick Off rpt  
19:30 The Decor  
20:00 Special Pgm : Culinary Tourism  
20:30 Tomorrow Today  
21:00 Out n' About  
21:30 Capchat Rpt  
23:00 Al Jazeera  
01:00 Al Jazeera

**SUN 29 DEC**

08:00 Al Jazeera  
09:00 In good shape  
10:00 Capchat rpt  
11:00 Sports Gazette rpt  
11:30 Dw  
12:00 Out & About Extra rpt  
12:30 Bundesligga Kick Off rpt  
13:00 In good shape rpt  
13:30 Dw  
15:15 Aibu yako  
15:30 Rev rpt  
16:00 Dakika 45 rpt  
16:45 Beyond the Narrative rpt  
17:00 The Decor rpt  
17:30 Meza huru  
19:00 Beyond the Narrative  
19:30 Cookery pgm: Culinary Delights  
20:00 Jagina  
20:30 Out & About Extra  
21:00 Dw News Africa  
21:30 Capchat  
22:15 Telenovela rpt: In Love With Ramon rpt  
00:00 Al Jazeera

## WORLD

## Gaza medics say Israeli strike kills five journalists

CAIRO/GAZA

GAZA authorities said an Israeli airstrike killed five Palestinian journalists in a vehicle outside a hospital on Thursday but the Israeli army said the victims were Islamic Jihad militants posing as media workers.

Medics said the five were among at least 31 people killed in Israeli air assaults across the Palestinian enclave before dawn as Hamas and Israel traded blame over delays in reaching a ceasefire deal after more than 14 months of fighting.

The Palestinian Journalists Union said one strike killed five journalists from the Al-Quds Today channel who were in a broadcast vehicle in front of Al-Awda Hospital in the Al-Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza.

The union said more than 190 Palestinian journalists have been killed by Israeli fire since the conflict began in October 2023.

The Gaza-based channel called the strike a massacre and said in a statement on Telegram the five “were killed as they carried out their media and humanitarian duty”. It has regularly featured Islamic Jihad leaders and provided day-to-day coverage of the conflict in Gaza.

The Israeli military said it “conducted a precise strike on a vehicle with an Islamic Jihad terrorist cell inside in the area of Nuseirat”.

Later, it issued a statement listing the names of the five TV crewmen and saying: “Intelligence from multiple sources confirmed that these individuals were Islamic

Jihad operatives posing as journalists.”

Israel has regularly denied targeting journalists and says it takes steps to avoid hitting civilians.

The Iranian-backed Islamic Jihad group, an ally of Hamas, fought several rounds against Israel in the past two decades, and fighters of the group have joined the fighting against Israel since October 2023. It said it has hostages in its custody too.

The group condemned Israel's killing of the five men in a statement but it did not claim any of them as a member.

Later on Thursday, health officials said five medical staff, including a pediatrician, were killed by Israeli fire at Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahiya in the northern edge of Gaza Strip, where Israeli forces have operated since October.

There was no Israeli comment on the medics' death.

The officials there said they had resisted army orders to evacuate the hospital since the new ground offensive began nearly three months ago.

The Israeli military, which on Wednesday said the hospital was in the heart of the complex fighting, renewed the evacuation orders three days ago, Gaza medics said.

Israel's campaign against Hamas in Gaza has killed more than 45,300 Palestinians, according to health officials in the Hamas-run enclave. Most of the population of 2.3 million has been displaced and much of Gaza is in ruins.

The war was triggered by Hamas' attack on southern Israel on Oct 7, 2023, in which 1,200 people were killed and 251 taken hos-



Palestinians mourn the journalists killed in an Israeli airstrike in Deir al-Balah, central Gaza Strip, on Thursday. XINHUA

tage to Gaza, according to Israeli tallies.

## Funerals

Video from the scene of Thursday's attack showed the twisted wreckage of a white van with what appeared to be the remnants of the word “PRESS” in red on the back doors.

Later on Thursday, dozens of relatives and fellow journalists took part in the funerals of the five journalists, whose bodies were wrapped in white shrouds. Blue flak jackets bearing the word “PRESS” were placed on top of the shrouded bodies.

“The Israeli army justifies or excuses this targeting by claiming it is aimed at individuals involved in Palestinian organizations and cells. However, on the ground, these individuals were on journalistic assignments, residing in press vehicles and covering events,” said Abed Meqdad, a correspondent for Al-Araby TV channel during the funerals.

Women wept besides the bodies as men performed special prayers before burials.

“May God take revenge on them, may God take revenge on them. He's the one that makes the news and broadcasts the crimes to the world, this is what they do to them,” said the mother of Fadi Hassouna, one of the dead journalists.

In its end-of-year report, the Re-

porters Without Borders organization said Gaza was the world's most dangerous region for journalists due to killings by the Israeli army.

Medics in the enclave said 13 other people were killed and 25 wounded in an Israeli airstrike on a house in Gaza City's Zeitoun neighborhood. The death toll could rise as many people were trapped under the rubble, they added.

In Gaza city, an Israeli strike on a house in the suburb of Sabra killed eight more people, medics said, bringing Thursday's death toll to 31.

On Wednesday, Hamas and Israel traded blame over their failure to conclude a ceasefire agreement despite progress reported by both sides in past days.

Hamas said Israel had laid down further conditions, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused the group of going back on understandings already reached.

“The occupation has set new conditions related to withdrawal, ceasefire, prisoners, and the return of the displaced, which has delayed reaching the agreement that was available,” Hamas said.

Netanyahu responded in a statement: “The Hamas terrorist organization continues to lie, is reneging on understandings that have already been reached, and is continuing to create difficulties in the negotiations.”

## Agencies

## China takes countermeasures against US military companies, senior executives

BEIJING

CHINESE Foreign Ministry issued a decision on taking countermeasures against seven U.S. military companies and relevant senior executives yesterday.

The seven companies are Insitu, Inc., Hudson Technologies Co., Saronic Technologies, Inc., Raytheon Canada, Raytheon Australia, Aerokomm Inc. and Oceanering International, Inc.

The Chinese move came after the United States recently announced another substantial military assistance package and arms sale to China's Taiwan region and its National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2025 that includes multiple negative sections on China, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a regular news briefing.

These actions seriously violate the one-China principle and the three China-U.S. joint communiqués, interfere in China's internal affairs, and undermine China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, she said.

“China will continue to take all necessary measures to firmly defend its sovereignty, security, and development interests,” she said.

“Taiwan independence” is a dead end, and the U.S. insistence on using military force to support the “Taiwan independence” will only backfire, Mao said.

She also noted that the negative China-related content of the NDAA is full of Cold War mentality and ideological bias, which provides excuses for the U.S. to increase military spending and maintain its hegemony.

China urges the U.S. side to abide by the one-China principle and the three China-U.S. joint communiqués, especially the August 17 Communiqué of 1982, Mao said.

She added that the U.S. side should immediately stop arming Taiwan in any way, view China's development and China-U.S. relations in an objective and rational way, refrain from implementing the negative China-related content of the NDAA, and cease words and deeds that harm China's interests.

## Ahead of Trump's return to White House, universities urge international students to return early

WASHINGTON

As US President-elect Donald Trump gears up to return to the White House, his upcoming inauguration in January 2025 has sparked concern, particularly among colleges and universities, regarding potential changes to US immigration policies.

Universities across the country have issued advisories to international students, urging them to plan their travel carefully amid expectations of stricter regulations under the new administration, CNN reported.

Donald Trump won a second term as President of the United States after securing 312 electoral votes in the 2024 presidential election, defeating Democratic rival Kamala Harris, who garnered 226 votes. He will officially be sworn in for his second term as US President on January 20.

As per the findings on international students by the US Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs on November 18, 1,126,690 international students from more than 210 places of origin studied at US higher education institutions during the 2023-2024 academic year; a 7 per cent increase from the previous academic year.

Ahead of Trump's inauguration, Cornell University's Office of Global Learning on its website said that the immigration landscape is likely to change under the new presidential administration and advised international students to return prior to the start of the next semester, which begins on January 21 next year or to “communicate with an advisor about your travel plans and be prepared for delays.”

“A travel ban is likely to go into effect soon after inauguration. The ban is likely to include citizens of the countries targeted in the first Trump administration: Kyrgyzstan, Nigeria, Myanmar, Sudan, Tanzania, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Syria, Venezuela, Yemen, and Somalia. New countries could be added to this list, particularly China and India. International students and scholars from outside of these “areas of concern” are not likely to be affected by a travel ban or targeted visa suspension. People who are not citizens of these countries but are in transit through them to the U.S. are unlikely to be affected,” Cornell University's Office of Global Learning said.

It added, “It is a good idea for international students, faculty, and staff from the above countries to be back in the US in advance of the semester, which begins January 21, 2025. If this is not possible (e.g., for scheduled fieldwork), communicate with an advisor about your travel plans and be prepared for delays.”

USC Annenberg Media, a student-led media site, reported that the University of Southern California Office of International Service warned international students that “the safest way to avoid any challenges” related to travel is to be “physically present in the US before the spring semester starts January 13.”

ANI

## His life teaches us how to rise above struggles and reach greater heights : PM Modi

NEW DELHI

IN a heartfelt tribute to former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, PM Narendra Modi yesterday expressed deep sorrow over his passing, describing it as a great loss for the nation.

Addressing the nation over the demise of former Prime Minister, PM Modi recalled Dr Singh's extraordinary journey—from overcoming the challenges of the partition era to shaping India's economic reforms—and highlighted his legacy as a man of integrity, humility, and intellect.

“The passing of Manmohan Singh Ji has caused deep sorrow in all our hearts. His departure is a great loss for the nation as well. Coming to India during the period of partition and achieving success in every field of life here is no ordinary feat. His life teaches us how to rise above struggles and reach greater heights, and this lesson will continue to guide future generations,” he said.

“As a kind human being, a learned economist, and a leader dedicated to reforms, he will always be remembered,” PM Modi added.

The Prime Minister also recalled Manmohan Singh's contribution to the country.



“As an economist, he served the Indian government in many capacities at various levels. At a crucial time, he played the role of the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India. As Finance Minister in the government of former Prime Minister and Bharat Ratna PV Narasimha Rao Ji, he steered the country through a financial crisis and paved the way for a new economic path. As Prime Minister, his contribution to the nation's progress and development will always be remembered. His commitment to the people and the nation's development will always be held in high regard,” he said.

PM Modi also asserted that Manmohan

Singh's life was a reflection of his integrity and simplicity.

“His humility, gentleness, and intellectualism became the hallmark of his parliamentary life. I remember that earlier this year when his term in the Rajya Sabha came to an end, I said that his dedication as a parliamentarian was an inspiration to all. Despite his age, he would attend important sessions in a wheelchair and fulfil his parliamentary duties,” the Prime Minister said.

He also mentioned that even after gaining education from the world's prestigious institutions and holding numerous senior positions in the government, Dr Singh never forgot his humble roots. “Rising above party politics, he always maintained contact with people from all parties and remained accessible to everyone,” he said.

PM Modi also recalled his meetings with Manmohan Singh when he was the Chief Minister of Gujarat.

“When I was the Chief Minister, I had open discussions with Dr Manmohan Singh Ji on national and international issues. Even after coming to Delhi, I would meet him and have discussions with him

from time to time. Those meetings and conversations will always be cherished,” he said.

“In this difficult moment, I express my heartfelt condolences to his family. On behalf of all the people of the country, I offer my tribute to Manmohan Singh Ji,” PM Modi added.

Manmohan Singh passed away at AIIMS, Delhi, on Thursday evening at the age of 92 due to age-related medical conditions. He had a sudden loss of consciousness at home after which he was rushed to the AIIMS Delhi.

Singh, renowned for introducing the 1991 economic liberalisation reforms as the Finance Minister of India, will be cremated near Rajghat, at the location where the last rites of Prime Ministers are performed.

Manmohan Singh was born on September 26, 1932. Apart from being an economist, Manmohan Singh served as Reserve Bank of India governor from 1982-1985. He was the 13th PM of India with his tenure from 2004-2014 and was the longest-serving PM after Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi.

ANI

## ‘Porcelain capital’ Jingdezhen: A window into China’s openness and inclusiveness

JINGDEZHEN, a city known as the world-famous “porcelain capital” in east China's Jiangxi Province, boasts a distinctive charm and artistic ambience bestowed by its rich traditional ceramic culture.

With over 2,000 years of history in ceramic craftsmanship, the small city has become a window into the openness and inclusiveness of Chinese civilization.

The trading center for the China Jingdezhen International Ceramics Expo is home to nearly 1,000 international ceramic brands, building a global network of ceramics trade. The Taoxichuan Spring & Autumn Art Fair has brought together global artists and artisans for cultural exchanges. The city hosts more than 60,000 “Jingpiao,” or migrants

who came to pursue their dreams, with foreigners always seen in workshops, shops, and schools.

Using ceramics as a bridge, Jingdezhen is welcoming visitors from around the world to foster diverse artistic expressions. It has become a dream city for ceramic artists and a refreshing glimpse into Chinese culture.

At the same time, Jingdezhen is rapidly “going global.” In 2023, Jingdezhen's official flagship store opened in Dubai, providing a new platform for cultural exchanges and foreign trade for local ceramic companies. Statistics show that since 2013, the average annual growth of Jingdezhen's ceramic export volume has exceeded 20 percent.

For centuries, Jingdezhen's ceramic products have traversed riv-

ers and oceans, making their way from China to the world. The city's global significance is so profound that it was one of the only three Chinese cities noted on the maps of British museums during the 16th century.

## Going global - Telling ceramic stories to the world

As China's only national ceramic culture inheritance and innovation pilot zone, Jingdezhen is continuously sharing its ceramic cultural stories with the world.

It has set up international experience centers for ceramic culture in Italy and many other countries, and developed an interactive map together with over 100 museums and archaeological institutions, which allows users to explore the global ceramic landscape with a simple

touch.

Beyond Jingdezhen, the Chinese ceramic culture as a whole is revealing its charm through exchanges with different civilizations.

For example, the “Blanc de Chine -- Dehua Porcelain” international exhibition is expected to host cultural exchange activities in more than 20 countries and regions in five years. The crack ice pattern typically found on Longquan celadon ceramics created an important design for the medals of the Beijing Winter Olympics, captivating athletes from around the world.

Ceramics provides a fascinating perspective into the global charm of Chinese culture. In recent years, from traditional festivals to artistic performances and intangible cultural heritage, fine traditional

Chinese culture has continuously transcended borders, capturing the affection of people worldwide and strengthening people-to-people bonds through cultural exchanges.

A civilization can flourish only through exchanges and mutual learning with other civilizations.

Throughout its long history, Jingdezhen has consistently embraced new ideas, experimented with new techniques, and explored new aesthetic expressions.

For instance, the Persian Samarra-blue dazzlingly adorned Jingdezhen's porcelain ware, creating the legendary narrative of blue-and-white ceramics. Many vases have absorbed the design characteristics from other parts of the world, as represented by Meiping vases, moon-shaped vases and double-

handled flat vases.

The “Eight Friends of Zhushan,” a group of Jingdezhen artisans widely noted for their innovations in porcelain painting, took propelling famille rose porcelain to a new height by integrating Chinese and Western painting techniques.

The openness and inclusiveness have become the crucial secret for Jingdezhen to sustain its kiln fires for a millennium.

At the Taoxichuan International Studio, an American ceramic artist, who has lived in Jingdezhen for many years, was operating his 3D printer. He has ingeniously integrated painting techniques and cultural elements he had learned in countries like South Korea and Japan into his ceramic designs.

People's Daily



# Yemen's Houthis claim targeting Ben Gurion Airport with 'hypersonic ballistic missile'

SANA'A

YEMEN'S Houthi group announced on Friday that it launched a "hypersonic ballistic missile" targeting Israel's Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, claiming it had hit its target.

Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Sarea said in a televised statement on Houthi-run al-Masirah TV that the strike caused casualties and disrupted air traffic at the airport.

"The missile succeeded in reaching its target despite the enemy's secrecy. The operation resulted in casualties and the suspension of air traffic at the airport," Sarea alleged.

However, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said it had intercepted the missile. The IDF acknowledged that air traffic was halted for 30 minutes, while Israel's Magen David Adom emergency service said 18 people were slightly injured on their way to shelters.

The Houthis also claimed responsibility for additional attacks, including a drone strike on what they described as a "vital" site in Tel Aviv and a vessel named Santa Ursula near Yemen's Socotra Island in the Arabian Sea. According to Sarea, the vessel was targeted for alleged connections to Israeli ports.

"The Israeli aggression on civilian facilities in Sanaa and Hodeidah will increase our determination to support the Palestinian people," Sarea said, vowing to expand attacks on Israeli targets until the "aggression on Gaza stops and the siege is lifted." Israel launched airstrikes on Thursday targeting Houthi positions in Yemen,



An image grab from a handout video provided by Yemen's Houthis' official Al-Masirah TV station on Thursday shows a convoy bearing UN insignia driving in front of a damaged entrance at Sanaa airport following Israeli strikes. AFP

including Sanaa International Airport and facilities in the Red Sea port city of Hodeidah. Houthi-run al-Masirah TV reported that the strikes caused significant damage, killing at least six people and injuring dozens, including a United Nations staff member.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of the World Health Organization (WHO), was at Sanaa International Airport, preparing to board a UN flight, when Israeli airstrikes struck the area. He confirmed that he and his team escaped the strikes without harm.

Ghebreyesus had been in Sanaa for talks aimed at securing the release of UN personnel who had been detained by the Houthi group earlier this year. He called on the Houthi leadership to release the de-

tained employees without delay.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also criticized the intensifying violence, calling for adherence to international law.

Thursday's airstrike marks the fourth Israeli strike on Houthi-controlled targets this year. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reaffirmed his resolve to dismantle the Houthis' military capabilities, labeling them a "terror arm of the Iranian axis of evil."

The Houthis, who control much of northern Yemen, have ramped up attacks against Israel and Israeli-linked shipping since November 2023, framing their actions as solidarity with Palestinians amid the Israel-Hamas conflict. **Agencies**

## Xiplomacy: Xi's letters add dynamism to China's global exchanges

BEIJING

"THE reply from President Xi was the greatest surprise of the year to me," said Humphrey Moshi, director of the Center for Chinese Studies at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania.

Moshi is one of the 63 scholars from 50 African countries who received a reply from Chinese President Xi Jinping in late August ahead of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Beijing Summit. Prior to that, they wrote a joint letter to Xi, in which they extended their warm congratulations on the successful conclusion of the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.

Letters have in recent years become a unique way for the Chinese leader to communicate with friends from all over the world and to promote exchanges between the Chinese and people of other countries.

In 2024, Xi has sent more than 30 replies and congratulatory letters to long-time friends across the Pacific, young admirers of Chinese culture, as well as events hosted by think tanks and media groups. Those messages have become a key venue to express China's readiness for cooperation and common development.



"TOMORROW WILL BE EVEN BETTER"

Among those who received Xi's letters this year are those in many parts of the world who have participated in and benefitted from Belt and Road cooperation.

On Jan. 17, Xi replied to a letter from representatives of Kenyan students and alumni at Beijing Jiaotong University, encouraging them to continue contributing to the friendship between China and Kenya and between China and Africa.

"Looking ahead, the magnificent picture of the Belt and Road Initiative and the grand blueprint of the China-Kenya comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership need more promising young people to realize," Xi wrote.

After reading the words, Vicky Wangeci Wangari and Jamlick Mwangi Kariuki, two of the writers of the letter to Xi, have become more hopeful about a better future.

Currently pursuing her PhD in China, Wangeci returns to Kenya every holiday to intern with Chinese construction companies in Kenya. She hopes to design smarter and more efficient railways and bridges for her country in the future.

Kariuki, who came to China twice to study railway management, worked on the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway, a flagship project of China-Kenya Belt and Road cooperation. He witnessed firsthand how this modern railway brought development and prosperity to his hometown.

"With the acceleration of China-Africa practical cooperation, I believe more projects will be implemented in Kenya, and my professional skills will certainly contribute to the common development of Kenya and China," he said.

Nenad Cvetanovic from Serbia is also among those who received Xi's encouragements. Cvetanovic is a veteran employee of the Smederevo Steel Plant in Serbia. He can still recall the moment when the Chinese leader told workers at the steelworks in a 2016 visit that the plant "will surely be revitalized."

The Smederevo Steel Plant, founded in 1913, experienced difficulties and was acquired by China's HeSteel Group in April 2016. Thanks to the joint efforts by the Chinese and Serbian management teams and the plant's workers, the steel plant has undergone a remarkable transformation since then.

This spring, upon hearing that Xi would visit Serbia again, 30 Serbian employees wrote a letter to him. "We want President Xi to see for himself that we have realized the vision he shared with us eight years ago," said Cvetanovic.

In his reply, Xi encouraged the steel plant's employees to "make new and greater contributions to the socio-economic development of Serbia and the consolidation of the China-Serbia friendship."

Back in 2016, Zlatan Bankovic, another veteran employee of the steel factory, used steel produced at the plant to make a commemorative plaque with the plant's silhouette engraved on it. The plaque was given to Xi as a gift during his visit.

This year, Bankovic crafted another plaque, this time featuring silhouettes of some newly built modern facilities. "The steel plant is changing rapidly, workers' lives are becoming happier, and everyone believes that tomorrow will be even better," he said. **Xinhua**

## Syria's security challenges persist amid calls for unity

DAMASCUS

IN the wake of former president Bashar al-Assad's sudden ouster on Dec 8, Syrians are grappling with various challenges in a rapidly evolving political landscape.

While the new governing authorities led by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) have pledged reforms and a path to stability, violent incidents persist, with citizens fretting about the future.

In one of the latest episodes, Syria's interim administration imposed curfews in several cities on Wednesday following protests triggered by online footage purportedly showing an attack on an Alawite shrine in Aleppo.

The interim administration also announced a security campaign targeting what they called "remnants of the former regime" and anyone inciting disorder, "regardless of sect or background". They warned that anyone taking up arms against security units would face a "decisive response".

Meanwhile, three judges were shot dead on Tuesday by unknown assailants near al-Rabi'ah in the western rural area of Hama, according to the Syrian Observatory



Syrian security forces, affiliated with the transitional government, stand guard in a street in the capital Damascus on Dec 24, 2024. (PHOTO / AFP)

for Human Rights.

The war monitor said the incident marks the first of its kind targeting judges since the downfall of al-Assad, highlighting a persistent security vacuum.

Since Dec 8, the Observatory has documented at least 66 crimes across the country, where 106 people were killed, including several women and children.

Despite these unsettling developments, the capital saw a strong display of unity this week.

Citizens staged demonstrations

on Monday and Tuesday in the Damascus neighborhoods of Jarmana, Kashkoul, Kabas, Douail'a, al-Tabbaleh, Bab Sharqi, Bab Touma and Qasaa, calling for national cohesion, according to the Observatory.

They urged the new leadership to collaborate with local committees to quell potential sectarian tensions. Protesters carried banners urging tolerance and denouncing any acts meant to incite discord.

Since mid-December, the new authorities have vowed to restore

order to ensure the safety of all citizens, regardless of their background or sect.

Ahmed al-Sharaa, head of Syria's de facto governing group and HTS commander, reached an agreement on Tuesday with other military faction leaders to dissolve all armed factions and unify them under the defense ministry.

Closely monitoring the volatile situation, residents remain vigilant against isolated attacks with a sense of relief that the days of war and hardship are now behind them.

Small businesses are reopening in Damascus, showing a glimmer of hope as Syrians strive to reclaim normal life.



**In one of the latest episodes, Syria's interim administration imposed curfews in several cities on Wednesday following**

"WHENEVER you stroll through the Reservoir Park or climb the Guia Hill Fitness Trail, you'll always see people running, exchanging cheerful morning greetings, or offering words of encouragement. The atmosphere of health, optimism, and harmony is infectious, leaving a lasting impression of the city," said a man surnamed Lin from the Chinese mainland, who works in Macao.

In its policy address for fiscal year 2024, the Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR) government highlighted plans to develop the city into a sports hub.

Ho Iat Seng, chief executive of the Macao SAR, said that the SAR aims to host at least two international sporting events each month, creating Macao-branded sports events that will attract visitors from all over.

This initiative further enriches Macao's role as a world center of tourism and leisure, infusing its offerings with a more active and vibrant character.

The 71st Macao Grand Prix recently concluded, drawing over 100,000 spectators. As a flagship event known for its unique city circuit, the race has been held continuously for more than 70 years since its inception in 1954, serving as a vivid representation of Macao's "sports hub" ambitions.

It's not just about the racing event - tennis, volleyball, basketball, golf, and snooker tournaments take center stage year-round, delighting audiences with nonstop excitement. Recent sporting events like table tennis and women's volleyball matches have seen tickets sell

## Macao to build itself into sports hub



The Galaxy Entertainment Macao International Marathon 2024 is held in Macao, Dec. 1. (Photo from the official account of the Beijing Office of the Macao SAR Government on WeChat)

out almost instantly.

Huang, a table tennis enthusiast from Chengdu, southwest China's Sichuan province, snagged her tickets early and traveled to Macao specifically for the games. "Macao is a perfect mix of warmth and modernity. Watching matches here is so comfortable and enjoyable. It's absolutely fantastic!" she shared.

Around 8 a.m., Zhou Xinghua, a member of Macao's Guia Hill Morn-

ing Walk Good Friends Association, would start her day with warm-up and stretches before hitting the track. Zhou isn't just running alone - she also encourages her fellow runners to join her.

Macao's vibrant community culture is strongly reflected in its sports associations, which serve as a hallmark of local engagement. According to the latest statistics, out of approximately 12,000 associations in Macao, nearly 2,000 are sports-related, spanning 45 categories

including handball, billiards, boxing, cycling, and bodybuilding. These organizations play a significant role in fostering grassroots participation in sports activities.

The Healthy Macao Blueprint, a plan to turn Macao into a healthy city, was launched on July 16 this year. At the launch ceremony, representatives from various Macao SAR government departments and associations joined stretch exercises, following videos and

guided by on-site instructors.

This innovative and practical approach underscored a core message: building Macao into a sports hub starts with people. When everyone is involved, the city naturally thrives with health and vitality.

Professional athletes need professional facilities, and public participation in sports often hinges on having accessible and sufficient venues. According to the Macao SAR Govern-

ment's Sports Bureau, the SAR boasts 40 public sports and fitness facilities. These include specialized venues such as swimming pools, shooting centers, tennis courts, and basketball courts, as well as multipurpose facilities like sports halls, arenas, and fitness centers.

Strolling through Macao, one can easily find free fitness areas by the sea, and in community gardens and parks, as well as large venues near residential areas. Even the paid facilities are highly affordable, which encourages residents to embrace fitness during their leisure time.

In recent years, the Macao SAR Government has made significant efforts to improve services. For instance, the "Macao One Account" mobile app provides convenient access to information about the opening hours of sports venues, ticket purchases, reservations, and event updates. The app also offers insights into sports medicine, opportunities to enroll in community fitness classes, and other resources.

"The Macao sport development fund provides annual financial support for routine expenses of the Federation of Macao Sport General Association and its affiliated sports associations," said an official of the Sports and Olympic Committee of Macao.

"This includes funding for organizing competitions, hiring coaches, and covering operational costs to ensure sports associations can function smoothly and engage the public effectively," the official said.

**People's Daily**



Washington Wizards guard Malcolm Brogdon (15) shoots the ball as Charlotte Hornets forward Miles Bridges (0) defends in the second quarter at Capital One Arena in Washington, District of Columbia, USA, on Dec 26, 2024. Agencies

## Grizzlies score franchise-best 155 points, rout Raptors

By Field Level Media

JAREN Jackson Jr. and rookie Zach Edey each posted a 21-plus double-double and the Memphis Grizzlies set a franchise record for points in a game with a 155-126 victory over the visiting Toronto Raptors on Thursday.

Memphis, the NBA's top-scoring team, won for the seventh time in nine games while sending Toronto to its ninth loss in a row.

Edey grabbed 16 rebounds while Jackson pulled down 11 boards.

Eight Grizzlies scored in double figures, including each of the starters. Desmond Bane had 19 points, Jaylen Wells had 17 and Ja Morant added 15 points and nine assists. Reserves Scotty Pippen Jr. and Luke Kennard also had 15 points, and Brandon Clarke contributed 11.

Toronto, which fell to 1-14 on the road, was led by RJ Barrett, who finished with 27 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds. Scottie

Barnes added 26 points and eight assists for the Raptors, who were outrebounded 63-40.

Ahead by eight at the half, the Grizzlies quickly built a double-digit lead that grew to 22 late in the quarter. Memphis led 121-100 at the end of the third.

Toronto coach Darko Rajakovic, a former Memphis assistant, was ejected with 10:29 to go in the fourth quarter. He had to be restrained by several Raptors assistants from going after the officials.

Following Rajakovic's departure, the Grizzlies eventually extended their lead to 32.

The Grizzlies rushed out to a 19-point lead midway through the first quarter but couldn't sustain the momentum. Toronto eventually rallied to tie the game twice late in the second quarter before trailing 78-70 at the break.

While Memphis scored a season-high-tying 43 first-quarter points, it seemed to be affected by the loss of Santi Aldama. The key re-

serve injured his left ankle on a non-contact play with 3:43 remaining in the first quarter, hobbled under his own power to the locker room and did not return.

With Aldama out, the Raptors outscored the Grizzlies 50-43 over the remainder of the half.

The Raptors stayed close behind with 53.8 percent shooting in the first half, including 60.9 percent in the opening quarter. Memphis shot 53.7 percent before the break.

Overall on the night, the Grizzlies outshot the Raptors 53.2 percent to 45.4 percent.

Meanwhile, in Washington, Jordan Poole hit a go-ahead 3-pointer with 8.7 seconds left and the Washington Wizards rallied late to defeat the visiting Charlotte Hornets 113-110 on Thursday night after squandering a 21-point first-half lead.

Poole's triple made it 112-110 before Charlotte's Brandon Miller misfired from long range with six seconds to go. Washington's Justin

Champagnie rebounded and hit one of two free throws as the Wizards ended the game on a 13-4 run.

Poole led Washington with 25 points and Bilal Coulibaly added 20. Jonas Valanciunas had 14 points and 12 rebounds for the Wizards, who have five wins this season, two of them against Charlotte.

The Hornets' LaMelo Ball led all scorers with 31 points but was shut out in the fourth quarter. Miles Bridges had 22 points and 14 rebounds and Miller scored 18 for Charlotte, which has lost six straight and 14 of 15.

Vasilije Micic hit two 3-pointers and Tidjane Salaun also connected as the Hornets started the fourth quarter with a 9-0 run to tie the game at 96.

Bridges' alley-oop layup put Charlotte up 101-100, its first lead since the first quarter, with 7:38 remaining. Mark Williams' dunk soon increased the lead to 106-100 with 4:33 left.

Washington then scored seven straight, with Carlton Carrington's layup making

it 107-106, but Bridges' layup put the Hornets back ahead by one with 1:21 left. Charlotte's Josh Green missed two free throws with 38 seconds left.

After a miss and scramble for a loose ball at the other end, Alexandre Sarr's tip-in gave the Wizards a 109-108 lead with 15 seconds remaining.

Ball then drove and lofted an alley-oop pass to Williams for the dunk to make it 110-109 before Poole came through for the hosts.

Charlotte trailed by 14 at halftime, but Ball's floater cut the deficit to 84-79 with 4:10 left in the third quarter.

The Wizards led by five early in the second quarter before Corey Kispert hit a 3-pointer to make it 39-31. Kispert's layup started a 7-0 run capped by a Malcolm Brogdon free throw and Washington led 49-35.

Coulibaly's floater made it 63-47 with 3:38 left in the half and Poole's free throw pushed the lead to 68-47 before Charlotte cut it to 68-54 at the break.

REUTERS

## Late Boland burst puts India under pressure in MCG test

By Ian Ransom

INDIA suffered a disastrous run-out and Scott Boland took two wickets to leave the tourists in trouble at 164 for five on day two of the fourth test yesterday, after another Steve Smith century helped Australia post an imposing 474.

Smith, having scored a drought-breaking 101 in the drawn third test in Brisbane, reprised his role as India's tormentor-in-chief by scoring a record 11th century against the nation on the way to 140 at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

In reply, India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal (82) and Virat Kohli (36) combined in a sturdy 102-run partnership after tea to give the tourists hope of reeling in Australia's total.

That was until Jaiswal suffered a brain-fade late in the session, hitting the ball straight to Australia captain Pat Cummins and calling for a single that was never there.

Kohli sent him back, Cummins threw to wicketkeeper Alex Carey, who whipped off the bails leaving Jaiswal to trudge off in agony.

If the run-out opened the door for Australia, recalled paceman Boland (pictured) ripped it off its hinges, having Kohli caught behind half an hour later.

Boland followed that up by having Akash Deep caught for a duck when the nightwatchman edged onto his pads, with Nathan Lyon diving forward to take a sharp, low catch.

That left Ravindra Jadeja (four not out) and Rishabh Pant (six not out) to mount a huge rescue mission, with India still trailing by 310 runs.

### DOUBTS

Smith had earlier shared in a potentially decisive 112-run partnership with Cummins (49), with his 34th test ton ending any lingering questions over his place in the Australia side.

India captain Rohit Sharma, however, did little to dispel the doubts about his future.

Restored to his traditional opening slot, he threw away his wicket for three early in India's reply

with a clumsy pull off Cummins that was caught by Boland.

With scores of three, six and 10 batting at number six in the second and third tests in Adelaide and Brisbane, the 37-year-old has not made more than 18 runs in his last eight innings.

Opener Jaiswal and Rahul saw India to the brink of tea until Cummins struck again to bowl India's number three with an unplayable delivery that ripped back off the seam.

Australia have Smith to thank for their considerable advantage, the number four showing he is all but back to his best.

He brought up his second century for the series with a crisp, off-drive for four off all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy.

After Jadeja denied Cummins a fourth test half-century, Smith teamed up with tailender Mitchell Starc (15) for a 44-run partnership and pushed Australia past 450 before his 197-ball knock came to an unfortunate close.

Charging down the wicket at seamer Deep, Smith edged the ball onto his pads and watched helplessly as the rebound trickled into leg stump and knocked a single bail off.

Even then India leached another 19 runs until Jasprit Bumrah trapped Lyon lbw for 13 for the final wicket, the paceman finishing with 4-99 to again lead his team's bowling.

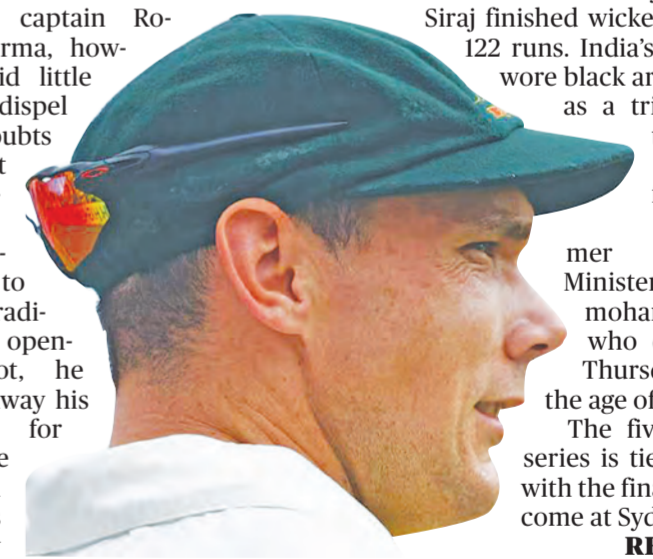
India quick Mohammed Siraj's miserable test continued as runs piled up from his bowling and home fans jeered when he was inserted into the attack or fielded the ball.

Siraj, cast as India's villain since giving Travis Head a send-off in the Adelaide test, sent two bouncers soaring over Rishabh Pant's gloves for five byes each.

Hooked for six and smacked for four in successive balls by Smith, Siraj finished wicketless for 122 runs. India's players wore black armbands as a tribute to the nation's former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who died on Thursday at the age of 92.

The five-match series is tied at 1-1, with the final test to come at Sydney.

REUTERS



## Gauff says she skipped Auckland for better level of competition at United Cup

PERTH

WORLD number three Coco Gauff said yesterday she decided to start her season at the United Cup instead of her happy hunting ground in Auckland as the event offers a higher level of competition and the chance to play as part of a team again.

The 20-year-old (pictured), who won the last two Australian Open tune-up tournaments in Auckland, is part of the U.S. team at the Dec. 27-Jan. 5 United Cup in Perth and Sydney.

"I love Auckland. I won

twice there. It was a great tournament," the 2023 U.S. Open champion told reporters.

"For me I wanted to play a higher level of competition and also a team competition. I had a lot of fun with the Paris Olympics. The season's already so much by ourselves that it's nice to mix it up.

"I think for all of us the main focus is Australian Open and doing well there."

The U.S. start their campaign in the \$10 million mixed team event in Perth against Canada on Sunday, before facing Croatia on Dec. 31.

The Australian Open will begin on Jan. 12, where Gauff will look to improve on her semi-final showing in the 2024 edition.

Meanwhile, two-time Grand Slam finalist Stefanos Tsitsipas said yesterday he needs to break out of a rut and start afresh in 2025 after winning just one title in the previous campaign and dropping out of the world's top 10.

The Greek world number 11, who claimed his only win at the Monte Carlo Masters, has also ended his collaboration with his father Apostolos as his coach.

"I'm looking at kind of reinventing myself," said Tsitsipas, who begins his season at the Dec. 27-Jan. 5 United Cup mixed team event.

"I felt like I've been stuck in a pattern over the last few months. I haven't been able to kind of unlock the pattern.

"I'm looking for a fresh, new 2025. That doesn't mean to suddenly just start winning everything.

"It's just to see a trajectory of constant improvement and improving in all fields in my career, but also in my outside life ... I want to have stability in my life," he told reporters.

Tsitsipas is starting the year outside the top 10 for the first time since 2019 and he hoped that would take some of the pressure off him.

"I don't think there's that much pressure when you're outside of the top 10. Well, probably there is some pressure in terms of like now it's my opportunity to add on points and get some good weeks going," he said.

The United Cup will serve as part of Tsitsipas' preparations for the Australian Open, where the 26-year-old reached the final in 2023.

REUTERS

## Fulham boss Silva praises his goal-scoring subs in comeback win over Chelsea

By William Schomberg

FULHAM coach Marco Silva hailed his substitutes for once again coming off the bench to score in his side's first win at Stamford Bridge in 45 years on Thursday.

By contrast, Chelsea boss Enzo Maresca faced questions about why he did not shake up his team more decisively as the West London derby slipped out of their control, and why England winger Noni Madueke was not even in the squad.

After Cole Palmer put Chelsea ahead in the 16th minute, Harry Wilson equalised for Fulham in the 82nd minute, a quarter of an hour after coming on, and fellow sub Rodrigo Muniz grabbed all three points for the visitors in the 95th minute.

"Of course, again, the impact of players coming from the bench is really important for us," Silva told reporters, saying the two strikes took Fulham's goal tally from substitutes this season to an unmatched nine.

"It means that everybody is on the same page and understands that the team is always above everything," Silva said.

Fulham's fans celebrated raucously at the final whistle after seeing their side not only score at the ground of their local rivals for the first time since 2011 but also claim all three points at Chelsea for the first time since 1979.

"I think we did it well and the aim was clear to break so many years without three points here," Silva said.

The late turnaround win had echoes of Fulham's last-gasp 2-1 victory in November in their other West London derby so far this season against Brentford when Wilson scored twice in stoppage time, again as a sub, to turn that game on its head.

Chelsea coach Maresca was pressed by reporters about the contrast between Silva's successful substitutions and his decision to make only one change, swapping Nicolas Jackson for Christopher Nkunku in the 73rd minute.

The Italian, who has guided Chelsea to second in the standings in his first season in charge, defended his decision, saying he was happy with how the rest of his starting team were playing.

Asked about the absence of Madueke from the squad, he replied: "technical decision" without providing further details.

Maresca criticised the winger earlier this month saying he did not like the way he trained.

REUTERS

## Leading the league feels different this time, says Liverpool's Salah

LONDON

LIVERPOOL forward Mohamed Salah said he senses something different about the way the club are performing as Premier League leaders this season after they secured a 3-1 comeback win over Leicester City to move seven points clear.

Leicester took a shock sixth-minute lead through Jordan Ayew on Thursday but goals from Cody Gakpo, Curtis Jones and Salah turned the tide at Anfield.

Liverpool are now firm title favourites but have faltered before from similar positions, most notably in the 2018-19 season when they had a sizeable lead but eventually finished behind Manchester City.

"It feels different but the important thing is we need to stay humble," Salah, who leads the league with 16 goals, told Amazon Prime.

"We had a few injuries when we were ahead (previously) and we lose it in the end. Hopefully we carry on like that with no injuries and we go on and win it."

"This one is very special. Hopefully we win the Premier League for this club - it's something I dream of."

Liverpool next travel to face West Ham United on Sunday before hosting Manchester United on Jan. 5.

REUTERS



# Guardiola insists team played well after run of poor results continues



Manchester City's Erling Haaland scores a goal that was later disallowed during their Premier League match against Everton at Etihad Stadium, in Manchester, Britain on December 26, 2024. REUTERS

By Lori Ewing

MANCHESTER City boss Pep Guardiola looked aghast at numerous points of his struggling team's 1-1 Boxing Day draw with Everton on Thursday, burying his face in his hands several times while watching their miserable run of poor results continue.

Bernardo Silva scored a rare early goal and City appeared poised for a victory finally, but Iliman Ndiaye levelled and then Erling Haaland missed a penalty leaving Guardiola's men provisionally sixth in the table.

City, who have just one

victory to show for their last 13 matches across all competitions, could drop as low as eighth by day's end.

But Guardiola bristled when asked about his body language.

"No, it's not true. My body language was positive, yes, because the team played really good. I'm not agreeing," Guardiola said.

Confidence has been in short supply for City, and it was much of the same on Thursday as the energy in the squad and among the fans at Etihad Stadium seemed to wane after Haaland's missed penalty in the second half.

"We have to bounce back mentally," Guardiola said.

"Life is not easy. Sport is not easy. When that (penalty miss) happened, it's okay, we still had a lot of minutes to play."

"A team like Arsenal and Chelsea could not score," he added, in reference to Everton's two previous games, both 0-0 draws.

"We created, we did it, and incredible how (City players) run and fight and do everything. Some games have not been good, but today, the case was it was well played, this is my feeling."

"But football is about winning, football is about you score goals and you don't concede. The last month, month and a half, we are not able to do it."

Guardiola's team has been hit hard by injuries this season, and Kyle Walker missed Thursday's match due to illness while Jack Grealish suffered a minor injury in training earlier in the week.

Everton boss Sean Dyche was expecting a stiff challenge from City, both because of their opponents' glittering record as four-times defending league champions and their hunger to end their run of poor performances.

"I was worried about coming here today because it will change, at some point they will hurt someone," Dyche said. "But I felt we handled it well -- the underlying feel-

ing that they (City) pull a result out of the bag at some point."

Everton squandered a four-on-two break late in stoppage time that would have sent shell-shocked City to their seventh loss in their last nine league games.

Meanwhile, in Wolverhampton, Manchester United's woeful form continued on Thursday with manager Ruben Amorim still opting to leave forward Marcus Rashford out of his plans.

Rashford did not feature in United's 2-0 defeat by Wolverhampton Wanderers, the fourth game in succession the 27-year-old did not make the squad.

He was initially left out after stating that he wanted a new challenge, and Amorim suggested after the Wolves loss that the England international is still not part of his plans.

"It's always the same reason it's going to be. We have to be the same professionals, the same guys, winning or losing. Losing, I have to be stronger. I will continue with my idea until the end," Amorim said.

Asked if Rashford had shown the reaction he requires to re-instate him in his plans, Amorim added: "If he's not here, you can make your mind up."

United have now lost four of their last five Premier League games and they were hindered at Molineux as captain Bruno Fernandes was sent off two minutes after half-time for a second booking when the score was 0-0.

In truth, even with Fernandes on the pitch, United hardly looked potent and they rarely troubled the Wolves defence.

The way they fell behind was almost comical as Matheus Cunha's 58th minute corner left United goalkeeper Andre Onana embarrassed as it curled over his head and into the net.

Amorim stopped short of criticising Fernandes or Onana, saying his keeper had been impeded.

"I think (Onana) cannot go to the ball," he said. "He's trying to reach the ball and some guys are not even looking at the ball but I don't want to focus on that."

"I think the good thing is we were near the goal, even with 10 men. That is a good thing, but we lost."

REUTERS

## Gasperini's fairytale of Atalanta under threat from Napoli and Inter

By Trevor Stynes

ATALANTA'S winning run and top spot are at risk when the Serie A leaders take on fourth-placed Lazio this weekend, with Napoli and Inter Milan ready to pounce should Gian Piero Gasperini's side finally slip up.

Atalanta appear unstoppable, with a club record 11 successive league victories sending them soaring up the table to what seemed an unlikely position earlier this season.

They slumped to three defeats in their opening five games, including a 4-0 thumping at Inter, but a remarkable upturn in form has their fans dreaming of a first-ever league title.

Gasperini (pictured) led Atalanta to their first European trophy last season, ending Bayer Leverkusen's 51 match unbeaten run to win the Europa League, the Bergamo club's second major trophy in their 117-year history.

That was Gasperini's first-ever trophy win, a just reward for his loyalty and work put in at Atalanta since joining in 2016.

Gasperini helped turn a club which had bounced

between the top two tiers into a side consistently competing in European football, but his reign could easily have ended prematurely.

In his first season, Atalanta lost four of their opening five games, but the club kept faith and finished fourth, their highest ever finish in the top flight at that stage.

Atalanta's success has been built, not on high-spending, but rather an exceptional youth academy and scouting programme, along with Gasperini's aggressive, attacking playing style and an ability to get the best out of players.

The club sells big - in the last three seasons Teun Koopmeiners joined Juventus, Rasmus Hojlund signed for Manchester United and Cristian Romero went to Tottenham Hotspur - while new signings arrive for much less, often having failed elsewhere.

Gianluca Scamacca lasted one season at West Ham United, before scoring 12 league goals and six in the Europa League last season with Atalanta.

After the striker's anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injury in pre-season the



club bought Mateo Retegui from Genoa, where he scored seven league goals last season. He already has 12 this campaign, topping the Serie A scoring charts. Charles De Ketelaere

failed to find the net in his debut season at AC Milan. Atalanta took him on loan last season and he scored 10 league goals before joining on a permanent move.

Ademola Lookman rarely impressed at the likes of Everton and RB Leipzig, but was recently named African Footballer of the Year, and scored a hat-trick in the Europa

League final.

### CHASING PACK

Lazio beat Napoli twice this month, knocking them out of the Coppa Italia, and off the top spot, before suffering a 6-0 hammering at home to Inter, but a win today would move them back to within three points of Atalanta.

Napoli and defending champions Inter both take on teams in the relegation zone.

Inter, three points off Atalanta and with a game in hand, are at Cagliari today while Napoli, two points behind the leaders, host Venezia tomorrow.

Juventus are the only unbeaten side in Serie A, but 10 draws leaves them sixth in the standings and nine points off top spot. They host fifth placed Fiorentina tomorrow.

AC Milan are well off the pace in eighth place, and they welcome AS Roma tomorrow.

REUTERS

## Gwiji by David Chikoko



Leading the league feels different this time, says Liverpool's Salah

PAGE 19

# Simba SC now aim to extend lead in Premier League clash against Singida Black Stars

By Correspondent Seth Mapoli



**S**IMBA Sports Club, the Premier League leaders, are set to take on fourth-placed Singida Black Stars today at the Liti Stadium in Singida.

The much-anticipated match, scheduled to kick off at 4:00 PM EAT, promises to be a thrilling encounter as both teams aim to strengthen their positions in the league standings.

Simba head coach Fadlu Davids (pictured) has acknowledged the challenge posed by their opponents but remains confident in his team's preparations.

Speaking ahead of the match, Davids emphasized the readiness of his squad following a short but focused training period after their match against JKT Tanzania.

"Tomorrow's

Premier League match against Singida Black Stars will be a difficult one, but we are well-prepared to ensure we perform well," Davids said. "The team is in good condition, and we've utilized the two days of training effectively to fine-tune our approach."

Davids highlighted the quality of the Singida Black Stars squad but stressed Simba's determination to fight until the final whistle to secure victory. Simba midfielder Awesu Awesu also shared his thoughts on the importance of the game, expressing the players' commitment to securing maximum points.

"Everyone understands the significance of this match, and we are ready to fight for the team. Our focus is on ensuring we return with three points," said Awesu. Singida Black Stars, currently in fourth place, have also expressed their readiness for the clash. The club has made ticket information available, with regular tickets priced at Tsh 10,000, VIP tickets at Tsh 15,000, and VVIP tickets at Tsh 30,000.

The team, known for their solid performances this season, will aim to capitalize on home advantage to challenge the league leaders. Simba lead the league standings with 37 points after 14 matches, having secured 12 wins, one draw, and one loss. The team has scored 30 goals and conceded only five, demonstrating their dominance on both ends of the pitch.

Singida Black Stars, on the other hand, sit in fourth place with 33 points from 15 matches. They have registered 10 wins, three draws, and two losses, showcasing their consistency this season. Young Africans are in second place with 36 points, while Azam FC occupy third position with 33 points, highlighting the fierce competition at the top of the table.

A win for Simba would consolidate their lead in the title race and put pressure on their closest rivals, Young Africans. For Singida Black Stars, a victory would narrow the gap between them and the league leaders, further solidifying their position in the top four.

## Tanzanian boxers shine at Samia's knockout event

By Guardian Correspondent

PRESIDENT Samia Suluhu Hassan's efforts to advance sports in the country continue to shine brightly after Tanzania boxers performed exceptionally well in the Mama's Knockout event, held on Thursday in Dar es Salaam.

The boxers successfully retained all the championship belts in the country.

The event featured boxers from the Philippines, Burundi, South Africa, Nigeria, and hosts Tanzania, with Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa representing President Samia, who was scheduled to be the guest of honour at the event.

During the event, President Samia added excitement by offering a bonus of 10m/- to Tanzanian boxers who won their championship belts by Knockout (KO), and 5m/- for those who won by points.

She went further to offer an additional 1m/- for the Boxing Day award to Tanzanian boxers who defeated foreign opponents in non-championship international bouts.

In an uplifting moment for the boxing sector, President Samia called in during the event to encourage and inspire Tanzanian boxers to perform well for their benefit and the nation as a whole, which sparked great joy among local boxing fans.

Along with wishing the attendees a happy end-of-year holiday season, President Samia expressed enthusiasm about the event.

"My advice is to play the game well, and follow the rules," President Samia said while addressing the fans and urging boxers to represent the country with respect in international boxing arenas.

"I've heard there are boxers from outside the country, our Tanzanian boxers, carry the flag of the nation and fight for your country," she emphasized.

After the President's phone call, the Prime Minister explained how popular boxing is in the country, ranking it as the third most loved sport, following football and basketball.

Other leaders present included the Minister of Information, Culture, Arts and Sports, Paramagamba Kabudi, and his Permanent Secretary, Gerson Msigwa, the Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Jerry Silaa, and other officials.

The joy of Tanzanians increased even more after five boxers claimed championship belts.

The first Tanzanian boxer to win a championship title was Yohana Mchanja, who secured the World Boxing Organisation Global Championship title by defeating Miel Farjado from the Philippines.

Salmin Kassim triumphed over Adrian Lerassan from the Philippines by a unanimous 3-0 decision, winning the World Boxing Federation (WBF) Super Bantamweight Continental Championship.

Ibrahim Mafia won the World Boxing Champion (WBC) Africa title by defeating Lusizo Manzana from South Africa.

The judges scored the fight 97-92, 95-94, and 96-93 in favour of Mafia, who sustained an injury to his left eye in the first round.

Said Chino successfully defended the International Boxing Association (IBA) Continental Championship by beating Michael Klassen from South Africa on points.

Kalolo Amir also defeated Shile Jelwana from South Africa by points to claim the Pugilistic Syndicate of Tanzania (PST) Championship.

Each of these boxers was awarded a bonus of 5m/- by President Samia.

In non-championship bouts, Maisha Samson was defeated by Technical Knockout (TKO) in the 2:18 mark of the round against fellow Tanzanian, Juma Thabiti.

Thabiti's right hook knocked Samson down, leading to a count-out before the TKO decision was made.

Omari Omari also suffered a similar fate against Shauri Athumani in the fifth round.

Omari, after being attacked, dropped to one knee signaling an injury to his left arm, prompting the referee to end the match.

Luqman Kimoko defeated Bismark Saah from Ghana by points. Two judges scored it 79-73 for Kimoko, while one judge gave a draw with a score of 76-76. Ramadhan Ramadhan from Tanzania won by unanimous decision over Manish from India, with two judges scoring 59-55 in his favour, and a third scoring 60-54.

Leila Macho defeated Agnes Mtimaukanena from Burundi by a 3-0 decision. Two judges scored 59-55 for Macho, while one gave her a 58-56 score.

## Yanga's winning streak under Ramovic sparks title hopes

By Correspondent Seth Mapoli

YOUNG Africans Sports Club fans are riding a wave of optimism as their team continues to showcase an electrifying brand of football under new head coach Sead Ramovic.

Four consecutive victories in the Premier League have rekindled hopes of reclaiming the championship title, with the team now firmly positioned as a contender.

Since his appointment, Ramovic (pictured) has transformed Young Africans' playing style into a relentless attacking force. The results speak for themselves: a 2-0 victory over Namungo, a hard-fought 3-2 win against Mashujaa, and commanding 4-0 triumphs against both Tanzania Prisons and Dodoma Jiji.

This impressive run has injected fresh energy into the fanbase and the squad alike.

Central to Young Africans' resurgence is the

contribution of the technical bench, particularly the team's new physical trainer, Adnan Behlulovic.

Hailing from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Behlulovic joined the club on December 7, stepping into a crucial role following the absence of his predecessor, Taibi Lagrouni, who has been out of action since Young Africans' trip to Algeria for their CAF Champions League match against MC Alger.

Ramovic did not mince words in praising Behlulovic's impact.

"This has now been possible thanks to the good work being done in the players' training by the physical training coach Adnan Behlulovic and his other assistants," he said.

The improved physical fitness has enabled the players to execute Ramovic's high-tempo, attacking philosophy, giving opponents little respite during matches.

The tactician has emphasized his preference for attacking football, which he believes is grad-

ually taking shape within the team.

"I see my team moving towards the level I need, although it has not reached where I want it to be yet," Ramovic said.

His goal is to instil a winning mentality in the squad, urging them to strive for bigger margins of victory.

"I still want to see my players hungry for a bigger victory because they have the quality to achieve that," he added. "What has increased the most at the moment is the attacks that start from above, which are giving our opponents trouble."

This offensive approach has not only delivered results but has also enthralled Young Africans fans, who have been treated to exciting, fast-paced football.

With this strategy, Ramovic aims to turn Young Africans into an unstoppable force in the domestic league.

Despite their domestic success, Young Africans face a steep climb

in the CAF Champions League group stage. Under Ramovic's guidance, the team has struggled to find its footing on the continental stage, with two losses to Al Hilal (2-0) and MC Alger (2-0), along with a 1-1 draw against TP Mazembe.

These setbacks underline the challenges Young Africans must overcome to secure a spot in the quarter-finals. However, Ramovic remains undeterred, using the lessons from these matches to refine his squad's performance and build resilience in the face of stronger opposition.

As Young Africans continue their Premier League campaign, the focus remains on maintaining their winning momentum while addressing the shortcomings revealed in their Champions League outings.

Ramovic's leadership, coupled with Behlulovic's fitness expertise, has set the stage for a potentially transformative season for the club.



For Young Africans fans, the dream of reclaiming the league title feels increasingly within reach. But for now, the team must balance domestic ambitions with the challenges of competing at the continental level - a task that will require both tactical acumen and unwavering determination.

## Flexibles by David Chikoko

