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Food shortages feared in Lake, central, north zones

“Despite the recorded surplus of food in the country, I urge people at household level to store food until the next harvesting season since there is likely be poor harvests as a result of poor rain in several zones in the country,” the minister appealed.

By Polycarp Machira, Dodoma

THERE is a looming shortage of food in the country due to anticipated poor harvests following delayed and insufficient rainfall in the Lake zone, central zone and the northern parts of the country, the government has cautioned.

The Minister for Agriculture, Japhet Hasunga told the National Assembly yesterday that despite having surplus food in the country, the ongoing farming season might not bring good harvests, calling on farmers to store enough in available supplies.



Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute (Tawiri) officials attach a GPS belt to an elephant in Mwiba Wildlife Ranch in Meatu District, Simiyu Region, yesterday as part of a drive to end poaching in the country's game sanctuaries. Story on page 4. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Police shoot four 'gangsters', nab 19

By Guardian Reporter, Morogoro

Police in Morogoro region have gunned down four suspected gangsters in an exchange of fire after they received a tip-off on a crime allegedly committed by the group.

The law enforcement officers are also holding another 19 people suspected to have taken part in the crime on Thursday night.

Regional Police Commander Wilbroad Mutafungwa told reporters here yesterday that the group is suspected to have committed armed robbery and was in illegal possession of firearms during the deadly encounter.

The exchange of fire took place at around 9pm at Kisanga village in Mikumi area in the region.

“Upon seeing the police officers approaching, they started firing bullets at our officers who responded in self defence to avoid being injured or killed

RPC Mutafungwa said the 19 suspects are being interrogated while the bodies of those who were killed are being preserved at the Morogoro regional referral hospital.

According to Mutafungwa, after

getting information from law abiding citizens that there was a group of people terrorizing people in the area, officers at Ruhembe police station started following up to find out who they were.

“Upon seeing the police officers approaching, they started firing bullets at our officers who responded in self defence to avoid being injured or killed,” the RPC said.

During the incident, the police managed to seize one gun (shotgun double barrow) number 107735, he said.

He called upon village leaders to list and identify all those who enter their villagers to avoid such incidents.

Mutafungwa urged the villagers

to inform the police whenever they see suspicious movements, saying the police depend on them for information.

In August last year, police in Morogoro arrested 39 people for various crimes including one incident where a retired member of the Tanzania People's Defence Forces (TPDF) and his police force counterpart allegedly leased a gun to bandits.

The gun was used in various crime incidents in Morogoro, RPC Mutafungwa had declared.

The earlier incidents occurred in Gairo District and Morogoro municipality, with the suspects arraigned and due to face justice.

Ministry to spread dengue testing kits



By Guardian Reporter, Dodoma

THE government yesterday announced that kits for testing dengue fever will be distributed in health facilities all over the country within one week as cases of the disease doubled in Dar es Salaam.

The Deputy Minister for Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children, Dr Faustine Ndagulile (pictured) told the National Assembly here that so far the diagnostic kits have been distrib-

uted in public facilities in Dar es Salaam, Coast, Tanga and Dodoma regions.

“So far 1,901 patients have been diagnosed with dengue fever in Dar es Salaam, Tanga, Coast, Kilimanjaro and Singida regions,” he said.

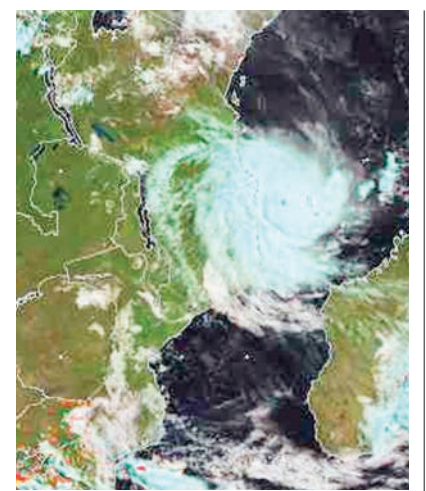
When the current outbreak was first announced last month, 252 cases had been confirmed in Dar es Salaam and 55 other patients were admitted at health facilities in Tanga region.

On Thursday, the Chief Medical

Officer, Prof Muhammad Kambi said in Dar es Salaam that cases of patients being diagnosed with dengue fever in Dar es Salaam region had increased by 50.8 per cent in one week.

The number jumped to 1,809 this week compared to 1,200 recorded in the previous week, Prof Kambi said in a press conference.

The increase, he said, is an average of 75 patients daily with Ilala District which occupies the entire central



Impact of Cyclone Kenneth continues to affect lives in northern Mozambique

Ibo Island, Cabo Delgado

Three weeks after Cyclone Kenneth made landfall in northern Mozambique, over 300,000 people continue to need humanitarian assistance in the coastal provinces of Cabo Delgado and Nampula. The government reports that an estimated 45,000 houses have been either damaged or destroyed.

“This was our house,” said Regina, gesturing towards a pile of rubble and a few walls partially standing. She sits on their one remaining chair, with the youngest of her five children

“Really, I am not well. I have no hope to have a house tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. We did not have many belongings, but the things that I had of value – our home and beds – were destroyed in the cyclone

in her lap, outside their temporary shelter made of metal roof panels.

Regina and her children are one of over 300 vulnerable families who have thus far received support from shelter teams, organised by IOM (International Organisation for Migration) and Instituto Oikos, an Italian NGO which has an office on Ibo Island.

Teams are installing tarpaulins on damaged homes and temporary shelters. The tarpaulins are provided by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID).

“Really, I am not well. I have no hope to have a house tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. We did not have many belongings, but the things that I had of value - our home and beds - were destroyed in the cyclone,” she explained.

Regina keeps her few cooking utensils at a neighbour's house, to ensure that they are not stolen. Her tempo

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TURN TO PAGE 2

New rules for operating forex shops in the pipeline - govt

By Correspondent Marc Nkwame, Arusha

THE government is finalising new rules to govern foreign currency exchange businesses in the country, it has been revealed.

Prime Minister, Kassim Majaliwa announced the development here yesterday and appealed to the owners and operators of forex businesses that have been closed by authorities to be patient.

The Premier said the preparation of the new rules will be completed "soon" and businesses licensed ready to commerce once again.

The Premier made the statement during the occasion to officially open the 24th CRDB Bank's annual general meeting and shareholders' training sessions at the Arusha International Conference Center (AICC) here on Friday.

"We have hatched new mechanism of issuing new operating licences to private foreign exchange shops," said Majaliwa adding that once the process is finalised the business will resume countrywide.

At the moment, foreign currency exchange is being conducted at local commercial banks across the country.

In another development, the chairperson of the CRDB group's board of directors, Ally Laay has expressed concern that majority of Tanzanians are not aware of benefits of investing in purchasing shares.

"Most citizens are either not aware or afraid of purchasing stakes from local companies; instead they pour all their resources in perishable investments such as livestock that are always susceptible to diseases, weather elements and other loss inducing

natural calamities," said Laay.

He pointed out that the Dar-es-salaam Stock Exchange (DSE) market records daily sales of 400 million/- while its immediate neighbour across the border, the Nairobi Bourse, lists over 10 billion/- of daily shares picked from the float.

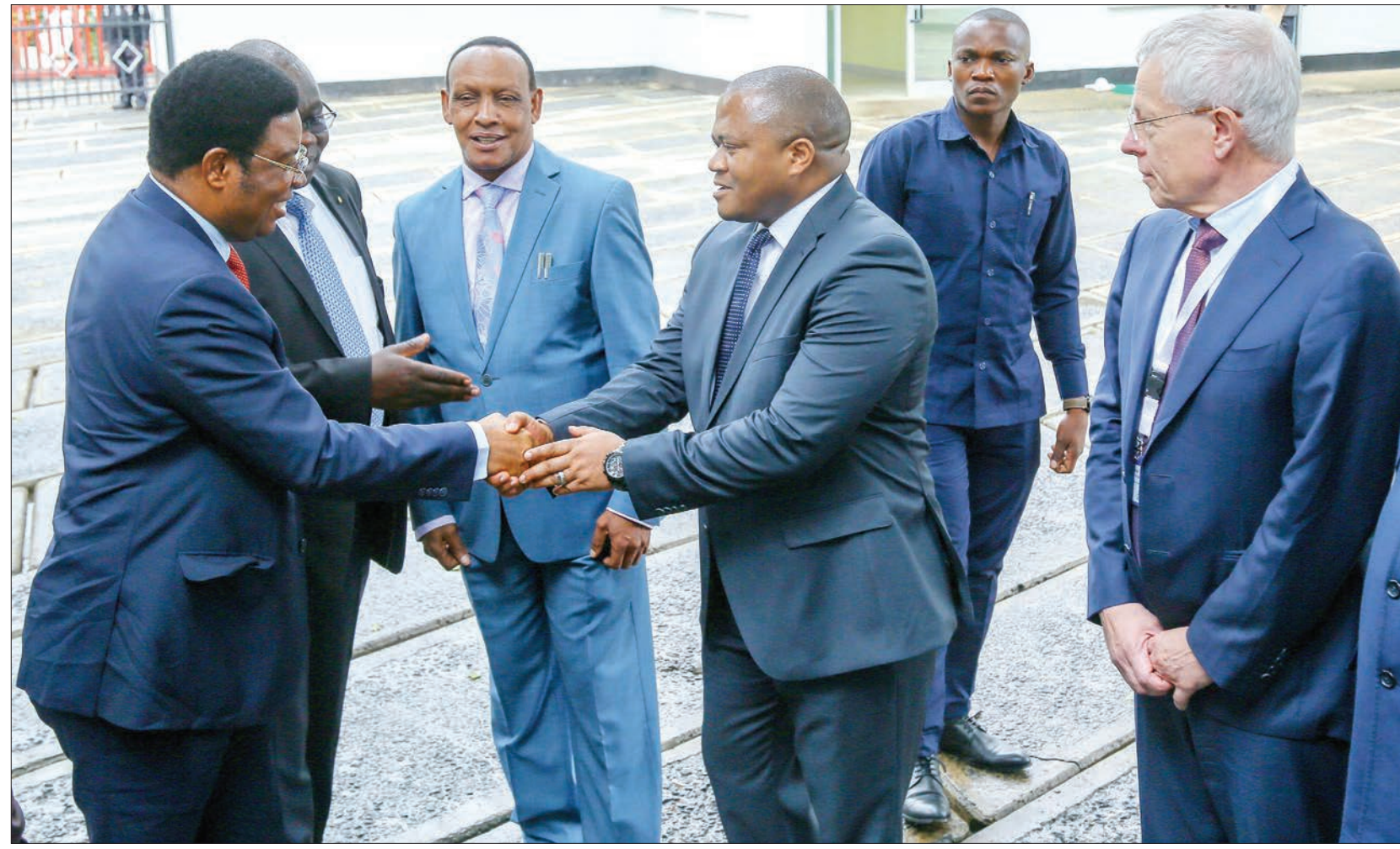
For his part, the CRDB Bank executive director, Abdulmajid Nsekela said the financial institution has grown to 263 branches across the country with over 8000 agents, and plans were underway to have 300 branches and 10,000 agents before the end of this year.

The bank has issued interests worth 16 billion/- to its members as of late last year.

Late last year the state machinery launched special operations in Forex Shops in Arusha, the country's main tourism hotspot, leading to the closure of such entities pending

further investigations after a number of such establishments were found to be 'operating illegally.'

The same operation took effect in Dar es Salaam this year resulting to the same freezing of privately run, foreign exchange businesses in the commercial capital.



CRDB Bank Plc managing director Abdulmajid Nsekela (3rd-R) welcomes Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa, who was due to open a seminar for the bank's shareholders at the Arusha International Conference Centre shortly later yesterday. Photo: Guardian Correspondent.

Ministry to spread dengue testing kits

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business district and key government ministries leading with 235 patients per day.

Considering the rate of the increase in cases, the Chief Medical Officer said the country has a long way to go in ensuring not only education on how to fight against dengue reaches people, but also the precautions being taken against it.

In March last year, Dr Mpoki Ulisubisa, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children, confirmed the outbreak of dengue fever, saying 11 people had been diagnosed with the disease in the commercial capital, Dar es Salaam.

The worst dengue outbreak in Tanzania was in 2014 when more than 400 patients in Dar es Salaam were diagnosed with the disease, which killed at least three, including a doctor who reportedly caught it while attending to patients.

Dengue fever is said to affect about 390 million people in the world every year, and is particularly prevalent on the East African coast.

Dengue fever which is transmitted by female mosquito *Aedes aegypti* which bites during day time causes severe headache along with muscle and joint pain. There is no formal treatment but rebuilding body resistances and enhanced immunity.

To avoid catching the disease, health experts recommend wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants, treating clothes with repellents, and destroying breeding grounds for mosquitoes that transmit the dengue virus, by environmental cleanliness.

Patients are encouraged to report to hospital when they experience symptoms.

Food shortages feared in Lake, central, north zones

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March 2019 the agency had bought 56,236.035 tonnes.

NFRA implemented an agreement to sell 36,000 tonnes of maize to the World Food Programme (WFP) at the price of Sh 21 billion.

On a different note, Hasunga told MPs that plans are underway to offer insurance on crops in the 2019/20 season, starting with at least two crops.

"The ministry to start with has held talks with different stakeholders for initial preparations to start crop insurance, starting with at least two crops," said the minister.

For the system to start working efficiently there is need to have rightful data on weather conditions and proper adherence to modern agriculture, he pointed out.

In that connection, close collaboration between the meteorological authority and extension officers is paramount in order to succeed in the whole process, he elaborated.

Presenting the views of the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture, Livestock and Water, deputy chairperson Dr Christine Ishengoma (Special Seats, CCM) said the committee paid gratitude to the government for the decision to purchase cashewnuts, saying the decision increased the price from 1,650.00/- to Sh 3,300.00 per kilogram.

The committee also pointed out the small budget allocation to NFRA which the minister requested as 67bn/- for the purchase of 110,000 tonnes but only Sh 15 billion was disbursed, that is enough to purchase 28,000 tonnes, being 22 percent of the total.

She said the government should also help in finding reliable markets for cash crops. "The committee realized serious challenges on availability of markets for crops like tea, tobacco, cotton, coffee, sisal, sunflower, cassava and maize," she stated.

After delays, when the rains finally came especially this month, it poured heavily and caused a humanitarian crisis in some parts of the country.

Five people have been so far confirmed dead and over 2,000 others displaced due to the heavy rains in Kyela district, Mbeya region.

Kyela District Executive Officer Salome Magambo said on Thursday that the deaths and displacements occurred mainly in Matema and Bujonde wards due to the downpour which started on April 29.

Impact of Cyclone Kenneth continues to affect life in northern Mozambique

FROM PAGE 1

rary accommodation does not have a door.

"No one can help the others, as we all lost our homes," said her neighbour, Rute, adding: "In the cyclone the wind was very strong. Everyone tried to save themselves. We fled with our children in our arms. It was not a wind in which children could be left to walk alone."

Four shelter teams continue to move through the island, assisting in total more than 40 families per day; 1,000 families are slated to receive assistance.

"In speaking with affected communities, it is clear that Cyclone Kenneth has drained their limited resources.

The cyclone damaged homes, washed away belongings and ruined their food supply," said IOM Mozambique Chief of Mission Katharina Schnoring.

She elaborated: "Many families are unsure of how they will afford to rebuild, and need support to manage through this critical period. From discussions with the Government of Mozambique's Disaster Management Agency (INGC) and humanitarian partners, shelter assistance is a main priority."

IOM has been busy conducting a distribution in cooperation with UNICEF, including tarps, water purification drops and soap for nearly 300 families in the heavily affected Maco-

mia district area of Mucojo. Materials are being delivered by helicopter because roads to the area are washed out and littered with fallen trees.

IOM is responding to urgent shelter needs following Cyclone Kenneth through the incoming management of Non-Food Item (NFI) kits, and delivering to humanitarian partners, who are carrying out distributions.

Thus far, IOM has delivered over 7,000 plastic sheets to partners for distribution in Cabo Delgado (Macomia, Ibo Islands, and Quissanga) and Nam-pula (Erati and Memba) in order to respond to urgent shelter needs.

Information on affected and dis-

placed populations is challenging to obtain in the areas affected by the cyclone, particularly as many communities are cut off from access, and communications and electricity have not yet been restored.

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), which is implemented in coordination with the INGC, is carrying out site assessments in seven temporary accommodation sites in Cabo Delgado province. A total of 2,383 individuals were reported across the seven assessed sites.

At all of the sites, damaged or destroyed houses were the primary factor preventing return to areas of origin,

the remaining reasons being accessibility, inadequate living conditions and repeated affected by extreme events - floods, strong winds and landslides.

The primary need reported in all sites was food and the most reported secondary need was shelter, including construction materials, shelter or non-food items.

IOM has a long-term presence in northern Mozambique, in support of government and local communities. Cabo Delgado is a key province for IOM, being part of a corridor where many migrants from the Horn of Africa transit en route to South Africa.

AGENCIES



Zanzibar President Dr Ali Mohamed Shein attends iftar he hosted for Pemba South Region residents at Chake-Chake State Lodge on Thursday. Others are Zanzibar Chief Sheikh Saleh Omar Kabi (C) and Chake-Chake district commissioner Rashid Hadid Rashid (L). Photo: Zanzibar State House.

Lack of desks biggest challenge in quality education provision - govt

By Polycarp Machira, Dodoma

THE government has acknowledged shortage of desks in both primary and secondary schools as a major challenge facing education sector even as it spends 90bn/- to repair public schools.

Deputy Minister of State in the President's Office, Regional

Administration and Local Government, Mwita Waitara said in the National Assembly yesterday the increasing number of pupils enrolled in public schools every year under free basic education exacerbates the problem.

Responding to a supplementary question by the Special Seats MP, Susan Lyimo

(CHADEMA) who had said the government should have efforts to provide the learning materials every year, the deputy minister said the problem is always realized at the beginning of the year.

He directed all district executive directors (DED) in the country to take records of new enrolments in primary and sec-

ondary schools when the serious shortage is realized.

The deputy minister added that in effort to end the problem, the government has set aside 90bn/- for rehabilitation of schools and improving infrastructure.

"It is true shortage of desks is one of the challenges facing the education sector in the coun-

try, but I urge the DEDs to have always conduct census on the need whenever there are new enrolments" said Waitara.

In the main question, the Solwa MP, Ally Salum (CCM) had wanted to know how much money is budgeted for the completion of classrooms in the country.

He noted that there are 158

uncompleted primary school classrooms, awaiting roofing. "What is the exact amount of money set aside to complete the construction of classrooms?" he asked.

The deputy minister said in the 2018/19, the government disbursed Sh 29.9 for the completion of 2,392 secondary school classrooms, adding that

Shinyanga district council was given 87.5 million/- for completing classrooms in seven secondary schools. On the other hand, the deputy minister said the government will continue completing construction of 352 dispensaries at the cost of 184.6 billion/- where the focus is on those built using resources from members of the public.



Serengeti district commissioner Nurdin Babu (2nd-L) symbolically receives 200 bags of cement worth 4.8m/- from TPB Bank CEO Sabasaba Mashingi in the district on Thursday as the bank's contribution to the construction of a hospital in the area. Looking on (L) is Serengeti District Council executive director Juma Hamsini. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Govt urges MSD to distribute drugs to health facilities on time

By Polycarp Machira, Dodoma

DEPUTY Minister of State in the President's Office, Regional Administration and Local Government, Josephat Kandege has called on the Medical Stores Department (MSD) to swiftly distribute drugs to health facilities that had placed orders.

He said the department now orders drugs from the manufacturers without using middle-men, thus should ensure orders from the health facilities are supplied on time.

"The government had reached the final stage in ensuring that all essential drugs are available in all the hospitals and health centres in the country at all the times," he said.

The deputy minister was responding to a supplementary question by the Handeni MP, Omar Kigoda (CCM) who had wanted to know when the government would ensure availability of all essential drugs in the hospitals.

Earlier in the basic question, the MP had wanted to know whether the government would provide more treatment to Handeni district hospital. "The hospital serve four

constituencies but is faced with serious shortage of equipment, when would the challenges be solved?" he asked.

Responding Kandege noted that in the 2016/17 and 2017/18 the government increased the number of treatment equipment to the hospitals.

He named some of the equipment bought then as ultrasound machine, urine chemistry analyser, gene expert machine and cryotherapy machine.

He added that in the government has continued with the process whereby in the 2019/20 the government increased the amount allocated for the purchase equipment to 96 million/-, being an increase of 20 million/- compared to the 2018/19.

The deputy minister noted that in efforts to reduce congestion at Handeni Town council hospital, the government in the 2019/20 had set aside 500 million/- for the construction of Handeni district council hospital. Also in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 the government spent 800 million/- for expansion and renovation of Kabuku and Mkata health centres.

Whale shark saves man in ocean waters

By Guardian Correspondent, Tanga

IN unusual circumstances, a resident of Unguja, Zanzibar named Hamis Zuberi has claimed that he was saved by whale shark at midnight last Sunday after a dhow capsized due a storm in the Indian Ocean.

Speaking to this newspaper

yesterday at Pangani district hospital, Zuberi said his wife and one child have since been confirmed dead in the accident and their bodies had been found while another child is missing.

He said the dhow which was travelling from Kipumbwi in Pangani district to Unguja faced huge storm at midnight when

him, his wife and two children were on the way to the Isles.

"I tried to rescue my family by using a sack of charcoal where I put them on top of the sack, but my efforts proved futile when the sack was sank around 4 am, and I witnessed my family sinking," he explained. "As I lost hope, I suddenly saw the whale shark that

moved close to me, I stood to its back and the fish took me some meters far near the coast area where I shouted to seek assistance from fishers," he said.

He further added that after he was saved, fishers took him to Pangani district hospital unconscious because I had swallowed a lot of ocean water.

Zuberi said after a relief from the hospital, I recognised that his wife and one child was found died in the water, but one child is still missing to date.

"I am so sorrowful to have lost my family," he said. For his part, Regional Police commandeer Tanga Edward Bukombe said five people lost lives and 11 oth-

ers were injured in the tragedy.

He said the dhow carried 20 people while others are yet to be found. "I want to let the citizens to stop using any unregistered marine transport because they have not approved to carry passengers because they don't have rescue facilities," said Bukombe. The whale shark is a huge

fish—as big as a whale. It's the biggest fish in the world and the biggest shark. Whale sharks are the most benign of all sharks because of their feeding strategy and adaptations. They don't need weapons because they filter microscopic and extremely small prey. And they don't chew their food.

Moi ordered to pay widow 1bn/- for grabbed land

NAIROBI

RETIRED President of Kenya Daniel arap Moi has been ordered to pay 1.06 billion Kenyan shillings (over USD10 million) by the High Court in compensation to a widow for illegally seizing her land in the 1980s.

Moi transferred to himself 53 acres of land belonging to widow Susan Cheburet Chelugui, the judge ruled.

The land was illegally grabbed 36 years ago but only transferred to Moi's name in 2007.

Ms Chelugui's husband Noah Chelugui was a local chief during Mr Moi's rule.

The former president, who remains Kenya's longest-serving leader, was accused by Ms Chelugui and her son David Chelugui of transferring their family land into his name two years after Ms Chelugui's husband passed away.

Moi is then said to have sold the land to Rai Plywood Limited, a timber firm. Rai Plywood Limited told the judge that it had bought the land from Moi in 2007 after thorough legal checks.

However, Moi was unable to provide the court any proof of how he came to pos-

sess the land, our correspondent says.

Judge Anthony Ombwayo of the Eldoret High Court said in a ruling handed last week but became public yesterday that Moi had behaved in a way that was "unconstitutional, irregular, unprocedural" and "tainted".

Moi became Kenya's second president in 1978 and served until 2002.

He ruled the country with an iron fist and was accused of human rights abuses.

Under international pressure, he allowed multi-party elections in 1992, which were marred by widespread violence and allegations of rigging.

Rai Plywood has occupied the land since 2007 – two years after Chelugui died – and has been using it to grow wheat.

The firm told Judge Ombwayo that it bought the land from Moi in 2007 after doing a thorough search that showed there was no claim to the prime property by anyone other than the former President.

Chelugui's 85-year-old wife Susan and son David sued Moi, Rai Plywood, the District Land Registrar, Uasin Gishu District, the Registrar of Titles and the National Land Commission in 2014.



Indian delegation leader T. Rajeswari makes a presentation at a joint Working Group meeting held at the Water Development and Management Institute in Dar es Salaam on Tuesday. Photo courtesy of Indian High Commission



Inspector General of Police Simon Sirro has an audience with British High Commissioner Sarah Cooke in his office in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo courtesy of Police Hqs

80 elephants fitted with surveillance belts - Tawiri

By Guardian Reporter

SOME 80 elephants have been fitted with Global Positioning System (GPS) surveillance belts that relay the protected animals' day-to-day activities to game wardens in various ecosystems in new initiative to deter poachers.

The Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute (Tawiri) is carrying out the project valued at US\$300,000 (about 800m/-) countrywide in collaboration with Friedkin Conservation Fund Limited (FCFL).

Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism, Dr Hamisi Kigwangalla, recently witnessed 18 of the elephants being dressed the GPS belts at Maswa Game Reserve in Simiyu region.

Dr Kigwangalla said the gov-

ernment would continue cooperating with different stakeholders committed to end poaching once and for all in national parks and other areas reserved for conservation.

The GPS belts will go a long way in pursuing poachers, as the gadgets will be tracing herds of jumbos wherever they go and enable game wardens to rescue them in case they confront criminals or encroach on farms.

"I congratulate FCFL for their big contribution to conservation and tourism," said Dr Kigwangalla, explaining that despite protecting jumbos, the institution had created employment opportunities to Tanzanians.

Dr Kigwangalla warned that

following conservation activities being strengthened and anti-poaching drive bearing fruits in the country, conflicts pitting wildlife and human were expected to rise, as jumbos would encroach on farms.

Communities often successfully asked for land to settle and cultivate crops in game controlled areas, but thereafter wildlife animals missed unique nutritious pasture and water they used to obtain in those areas, only to clash with farmers, he said.

Simiyu Regional Commissioner, Anthony Mtaka informed the minister that Mwiba Wildlife Ranch, the investor in Makao Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and Maswa GCA, had

been contributing to surrounding community development projects, including in education, health, conservation and other productive activities.

Good rapport existing between the investor and members of the community was encouraging the regional administrative secretary to cooperate with other development partners, he said.

Tawiri wildlife researcher, Dr Emmanuel Masenga, said, the GPS belts would beef up security of the jumbos and ward off uncalled for wildlife-human conflicts in the country.

The GPS belts have also been applied to 19 jumbos at Selous-Mikumi ecosystem, eight at Ngorongoro Conservation Area,

30 at Ikolongo Grumet and five at Burunge WMA.

In January this year, the government said there was significant success in the war against poaching with the number of elephants killed last year dropping to 23 from 194 in the preceding year.

Permanent Secretary in the ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism Prof Adolph Mkenka said in Dodoma that the decrease was due to enhanced anti-poaching activities involving multisectoral organs.

In the entire period, some 211 elephant tusks and 413 pieces of the same were seized by authorities together with 355 arms and 20,000 rounds of ammunition, Mkenka said.

Parents urged to look for early signs of eye cancer

By Henry Mwangonde

PARENTS in the country have been urged to look for early signs of eye cancer in their children and take them for treatment as it emerged that the disease now affects more than 100 minors annually.

Experts are concerned with the increase of retinoblastoma—an eye cancer that begins in the back of the eye (retina) and most commonly in children which is now affecting about 100 to 120 under-five children annually.

According to Dr Anna Sanyiwa an eye surgeon at the Muhimbili University of Health Allied Sciences (MUHAS) most of the children are brought at the hospital when the disease had reached an advanced stage.

She was speaking during an eye cancer screening exercise for under-five children organised by the Muhimbili National Hospital (MNH).

Dr Sanyiwa said in the children cancer ward, retinoblastoma is the second most common disease of all the cancer cases at MNH.

"It is a disease that has been there for a long time, we have 15 patients in the children ward currently, this is not a small group and we receive 60 to 80 patients per year here at MNH," she said.

She said for every 15,000 live births, there is one child with retinoblastoma; therefore Tanzania has 100 to 130 new patients per year.

Dr Sanyiwa said it unfortunate that most of the patients are brought at the hospital when the disease had reached last stages which cannot be cured.

"The disease can be cured if there is early diagnosis and we are calling upon parents to rush their children to the hospital if they have any doubt with the looks of the eyes of their children," she added.

Retinoblastoma has few, if any, symptoms at first. It may be noticed if a pupil appears white when light is shone into the eye, sometimes with flash photography. Eyes may appear to be looking in different directions. Treatments include chemotherapy, radiation and laser therapy.

An ophthalmologist from MNH Judith Mwendu said the hospital will commemorate eye cancer day for young children and the screening was in preparation to the day.

She said though it was easy to recognize the disease to young ones because it requires expertise to identify it.

During the exercise hundred children were screened.

According to a study by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) in September last year, Tanzania has 42,060 cancer patients while 28,610 patients die every year.

Experts say cancer can be overcome if Tanzanians can develop the tendency of checking their health status regularly.

Cancer incidence rates are higher in high-income countries than in low- and middle-income countries but deaths are higher in low and middle income countries, due to limited capacity to implement prevention, early detection and treatment programs.



For every 15,000 live births, there is one child with retinoblastoma; therefore Tanzania has 100 to 130 new patients per year



National Assembly Speaker Job Ndugai (L) inspects construction of a classroom at the Anglican Church of Tanzania's Queen Esther Girls Secondary School in Mpwapwa District, Dodoma Region, yesterday. Right is the church's retired archbishop, Dr Jacob Chimeledya. Photo courtesy of National Assembly

Plans afoot to start national programme for non-communicable diseases - government

By Polycarp Machira, Dodoma

THE government plans to start the national programme for the non-communicable diseases, saying they are increasing becoming serious health threats in the country, the House heard yesterday.

Deputy Minister for Health, Community Development, Gender, the Elderly and Children, Faustine Ndugulile told the lawmakers that just like in Aids, malaria and TB, the envisioned will increase public awareness on the diseases.

"It is the government's commitment to ensure services and treatment for the non-communicable diseases are accessible at all levels from national hospitals to village dispensaries," he said. Ndugulile said the diseases are a great burden to the government since they are expensive to fighting them, adding that the programme would help reduce the risks after the public has become more aware of risks involved.

According to deputy minister, it cost between 700,000/- and 1,000,000/- to carryout kidney stones from the body while diabetes patients spend about 50,000/- to 100,000/- drugs per week.

Meanwhile, he also told the House that plans are afoot to start cancer treatment at the Mbeya regional hospital in efforts to reduce congestion at

the Dar es Salaam based Ocean Road Cancer Institute.

He said that the government saw the need to bring services closer to people who were forced to travel all the way to Dar es Salaam for treatment.

He said this is part of the government plans to improve provision of treatment for chronic disease which had also seen the establishment of the Jakaya Kikwete Heart Institute.

He explained that the plan goes in hand with the improvement of services for blood pressure patients at Bugando hospital, KCMC and the Benjamin Mkapa Hospital in Dodoma.

Ndugulile made the explanations in response to a question by the Special Seats MP, Mwantumu Dau (CCM) who said that diabetes, cancer and blood pressure patients face a lot of problems.

She had wanted to know the government is doing to help them live with the challenges facing them.

The deputy minister further explained that the three diseases are among those that pose serious challenges in the country just like in other countries.

He said through the 2009-2015 Strategic Plan for the diseases, the government stated measures taken against the diseases, including free diagnosis and treatment at public health facilities.



IPP Media tunatoa shukurani za dhati kwa Vyombo vyote vya Habari vilivyoshirikiana nasi katika kuchapisha na kurusha mubashara **MSIBA MZITO wa MPENDWA WETU MWENYEKITI MTENDAJI WA IPP - DKT. REGINALD MENGI.**

Aidha tunawashukuru kwa mchango wenu wa hali na mali mliotoa katika kipindi chote cha **MSIBA.**

Tunasema asante sana kwa:-

TV WASHIRIKA:

1. CLOUDS TV
2. AZAM TV
3. TBC
4. STAR TV
5. CHANNEL 10
6. TV ONE
7. TV E
8. TOP TV UKONGA
9. RISE AND SHINE TV
10. WASAFI TV
11. DIRA TV
12. UPENDO TV

RADIO WASHIRIKA:

1. CLOUDS FM
2. MAGIC FM
3. E FM

4. TIMES RADIO
5. RADIO FREE AFRICA
6. RADIO 5
7. PASSION FM
8. PAMBAZUKO FM IFAKARA
9. TOP RADIO MOROGORO
10. HIGHLANDS FM
11. PLANET FM
12. KILI FM MOSHI
13. SUNRISE RADIO ARUSHA
14. UHAI FM
15. UPENDO RADIO
16. WASAFI RADIO

MITANDAO:

1. CLOUDS DIGITAL
2. GLOBAL ONLINE TV

3. MILARD AYO
4. MICHUZI BLOG
5. POA TV
6. AZAM DIGITAL
7. WASAFI DIGITAL

MAGAZETI:

1. MWANANCHI/THE CITIZEN
2. DAILY NEWS/HABARI LEO
3. MTANZANIA
4. TANZANIA DAIMA
5. GLOBAL PUBLISHERS
6. UHURU/MZALENDO
7. JAMHURI
8. MAJIRA
9. TAZAMA

Na kwa wengine wote walioshiriki nasi kwa njia moja au nyingine tunasema AHSANTE SANA NA MUNGU AWABARIKI.

Uber(ising) solar energy: It can be done, students show

By Alicestine October in Cape Town

A TEAM of students from Kenya's Strathmore University on Thursday walked off as winners with South African Rand 20000 in prize money for an innovative concept to provide equitable energy access to remote villages based on, among others, "Uber(ising) solar energy".

The students constituted one of four university teams participating in the African Utility Week and POWERGEN Africa conference and exhibition's first ever Initiate! Impact Challenge.

The 19th edition of the event gathered thousands of power,

water and gas industry experts here this week and ended on Thursday.

Student teams from Stellenbosch University, the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand also took part in the three-day challenge sponsored by the Enel Foundation, the Innovation Hub, Lesedi Nuclear Services and the Russian Nuclear Agency Rosatom.

The Initiate! Challenge was meant to create a platform for students and start-ups to drive innovation and share ideas for the energy sector.

The Strathmore University team included engineering students Ignatius Maranga,

Raymond Kiyegga, Frederick Amariati and Alex Osunga. One member of the team will also have the exclusive opportunity to join the 5th annual student fact-finding mission to Russia to visit several state-of-the-art nuclear facilities and dedicated Russian nuclear universities.

Maranga said the team was happy and humbled especially because they competed against some of the top universities on the continent.

He said the teams' winning idea is rooted in real-life challenges that Kenyans in rural areas face, adding: "The solutions offered so far to expand energy access are not solving these problems as many are

not financially viable."

The team's idea is to put a solar-panelled container in rural villages that will also house a clinic and a knowledge hub like a school for vocational training to teach people about the use and benefits of solar energy. It will also include a shop where villagers can buy daily essentials like milk.

"The school will help with capacity building as villagers will see and learn benefits of electricity and as the business grows, they will want to have electricity in their homes and when that point comes, we will have solar-powered tricycles," Maranga explained.

He elaborated: "These tricy-

cles will carry and deliver batteries like Uber does passengers to villagers in more remote areas. The system is modular so we will add another container to charge batteries. These batteries are ferried on trikes, so villagers in more remote areas can request a number of charged batteries on their phone."

Maranga explained that it is common cause that Africa is big, and many people live in remote rural villages, noting: "So, it is not always possible to extend the power grid to these areas as it is very expensive."

"So, what do we do instead? Most people own a cell phone, and everyone needs electricity, so you take it to them. They

cannot exactly carry a battery for two kilometers, so why then not Uber a battery?"

Maranga said their company Kijiji (Kiswahili for village) will now look at commercialising their idea, optimise it and do market tests, adding: "If accepted, we want to roll it out depending on funding."

The team's idea appealed to the judges because it was a simple idea that is easy to replicate beyond Kenya to the rest of the continent. Rosatom Central and Southern Africa CEO Dmitry Shornikov noted: "We are very pleased with the solutions presented by the students. The maturity and depth of their research gives us great hope

and proves that young Africans really are devoted to solving Africa's energy challenges."

In an earlier interview, Lesedi Nuclear Services business development executive Shane Pereira said the company partnered with Initiate! because it is dedicated to the youth that will be the leaders of tomorrow.

"The growth and development as well as training, coaching and mentoring of the youth is critical to the success of our future economy," noted Pereira. The ideas of the other three teams focused more on mitigating the risk of climate change and came up with ideas ranging from vertical farms to energy boxes.



A used tyre 'deployed' at the Sokoine Drive/Azikiwe Street intersection in downtown Dar es Salaam serves to alert motorists on the need to steer clear of the pothole it partly covers, as found yesterday. Photo: John Babi

'Only agriculture will see Tanzania become middle income economy'

By Guardian Correspondent, Morogoro

THE Vice Chancellor for Saint Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) Ambassador Costa Mahalu has said if the country is to achieve the middle income status by 2025, there is a need for media to collaborate with higher learning institutions in the country to promote agriculture sector.

He said the initiative will help farmers to shift from subsistence farming to commercial based.

Prof Mahalu made the remarks during the two-day second international conference to discuss the contribution of media in agriculture and environment held in Morogoro as part of the initiative to honour the work done by Nkwambi Ng'wanakilala the founder of the programme on Business Environmental Strengthening for Tanzania Advocacy (BEST).

Fundamental objective of the programme is to inculcate knowledge and skills among Tanzanian journalists to enable them to write investigative articles on business, financial and

economical affairs.

He said that the contribution of media in promoting agriculture is still minimal despite the fact that the sector employs more people in the country than other sectors which get more coverage in the media.

"Therefore, media should make sure they play a big role in promoting the sector to bring changes and to enable the country to achieve the middle income strategy," he said.

The ambassador added that, researchers are also supposed to cooperate with media to enable their research to be known to citizen and influence changes with potential results.

Head of business and administration for SAUT Dr Anne Gongwe said under the Best Dialogue project funded by the Danish government and European Union (EU), they have trained 100 journalists to conduct research on business environment about agriculture in order to facilitate the sector and boost country economy.

Dr Gongwe who is also coordinator for the project, said Tanzania ranks 139 for promoting business environment com-

pared to other country, calling for more efforts by media to promote agriculture sector.

For his part, deputy chairman for Tanzania Editors Forum (TEF) Deodatus Balile said in order for the country to prosper and become the middle income country, there is a need for farmers who are 67 per cent to shift from subsistence farming to commercial based farming.

He added that in order for farmers in the country together with investors to run commercial farming effectively, it is important for the available laws to be amended to give mandate to minister responsible to stop foreign market and to prepare procedure by involving the private sectors.

Opening the conference, deputy regional administrative secretary for Morogoro Herman Tesha said it is high time for media to play an extensive role by promoting agriculture sector especially in the currently period where the country is heading to become the middle income country through industrialization strategy.

Govt challenges commercial banks to list on Dar es Salaam Stock Exchange (DSE) for capitalisation

By Francis Kajubi

DEPUTY Minister for Finance and Planning Dr Ashatu Kijaji has challenged commercial banks and other big businesses in the country to list on the Dar es Salaam Stock Exchange (DSE) for capitalisation and growth.

She called on companies not to hesitate to attract other investors through the bourse which has existed since the past 21 years.

Speaking at the listing of 36.6million shares at DSE by Dar es Salaam Commercial Bank Plc held in Dar es Salaam yesterday, Dr Kijaji said banks lag behind in maximising their capital by investing at the bourse that could have denied them suffer from liquidity crunch.

"Since 1998 when DSE started its operations only eight commercial banks out of 54 commercial and community banks registered have listed. I commend DCB for being the first bank to list at DSE and has been doing so," said Dr Kijaji.

She urged bankers to be keen of their operations as she wishes the sector not to go back to non-performing loans that had led to closure of several banks in the country.

"The second Tanzania National Financial Inclusion Framework 2018-2022 call for a strong financial sector that facilitates production activities. Financial products and services should meet and satisfy demands for individuals and hence create employment for youth. We can only

achieve this mission by bringing closer financial services to the public especially to the rural areas," added Dr Kijaji.

Capital Markets Securities Authority (CMSA) Chief Executive Officer, Nicodemus Mkama, said that his office approved applications by the banks to sell its 33,913,948 right issues at 265/- per share whereby the bank's shareholders were granted a special priority to purchase one right issue in every two shares they owned before.

"DCB Bank Plc has been able to sell 36.61 million shares compared to a target of 33.91million shares that were expected to be sold an equivalent to 108 per cent. From its shares, 23.68million shares were purchased by the bank's shareholders while the rest 12.95million shares purchased by new shareholders of DCB Bank," said Mkama.

He asserted that from the shares sales, capital for DCB Bank Plc is expected increase to 26.7billion/- from 16.9billion/- an increase of 57 per cent.

"With DCB success in capital markets my office have approved a log book for new DCB Bank shareholders to which their shares are going to be listed today and sold at the Dar es Salaam Stock Exchange," he added.

Mkama explained that listing of companies at DSE boosts efficiency of such companies that in return helps investors having more securities that helps in reducing risk diversification.

DCB Bank Plc Chairman board of directors, Prof Lucian Msambichaka said that in 2018 the bank paid the taxman

745.2million in corporate tax and Value Added Tax. The bank also paid a withholding tax of 747.2million/-.

On his part, the Bank's managing director, Godfrey Ndalaha said that DCB Bank Plc started selling its shares to its shareholders and the public from earlier November 2018. The trading of shares aimed at maximizing capital by strengthening right issues to its shareholders and the rest of shares were sold to the general public.

The selling of shares for maximization of capital was done under the supervision of Capital Markets and Securities Authority (CMSA) that ended on 31 January this year. The bank was the first one to list at DSE in 2008. From 2006 to 2015 the bank remitted 11.8 in dividend to its shareholders.

The bank has 175,000 customers targeting at registering 300,000 customers by 2022 and it made a gross profit of 1.6billion/- in 2018 beating the 6.9billion/- recorded in 2017. The success was however due to reduction in operational expenditures and digital banking services.

"I call upon all municipalities across the country to invest in DCB Bank, to open savings accounts.

The key shareholders and founders of the bank, Dar es Salaam municipal councils and the city council invested 6.5billion/- and have so far received 4.4billion in dividend while the value of their investment have topped 9.5billion/-," said Ndalaha.



University of Dodoma acting Vice Chancellor (Planning, Finance and Administration) Prof Justin Ntalikwa (R) presents certificates in Dodoma earlier this week to the winners of the 12th Chinese Bridge Proficiency Competition involving foreign secondary school students. Photo: Correspondent Peter Mkwavila



Egg vendors hunt for customers at Mbezi Juu in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala

WB approves USD150 million for REGROW project

By Correspondent Friday Simbaya, Iringa

RESIDENTS of the southern highlands regions have been urged to take business opportunities due to the implementation of the Resilient Natural Resource Management for Tourism and Growth (REGROW) project.

The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism Prof Adolf Mkenda made the statement during the second session of the steering committee of REGROW focused on introducing the project to the southern highlands leaders, which was held in Iringa recently.

The government through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism has received funding from the International Development Association (IDA), housed by the World Bank (WB) in the form of a loan to finance the Project.

"The World Bank has signed the loan agreement of about USD 150 million for implementation of project of transforming the tourism

sector in southern circuit known as Resilient Natural Resource Management for Tourism and Growth (REGROW)," said Prof Mkenda.

He said that the REGROW project seeks to strengthen the management of protected areas and promote nature-based tourism in Southern Tanzania - known as the "Southern Tourism Circuit (STC)" and contribute to the diversification of livelihoods in selected communities.

Prof. Mkenda elaborated that the REGROW is a six years project that will address some of the key challenges of the "Southern Tourism Circuit" to realize its potential.

These include limited infrastructure inside the Protected Areas, coupled with environmental degradation; insufficient linkages between tourism and rural development; water resources trade-offs upstream of the Ruaha National Park, leading to water scarcity inside the Park, compounded by other climate variability and climate change impacts.

However, Prof. Adolf Mkenda summarized

that they want the REGROW project to spread like a wild fire in other areas.

"We don't want our tourism to be in the northern circuit alone but also in the southern circuit, western and lake zones and also in other areas where there are tourist destinations in order to spread tourism opportunities in the country," he pointed out.

REGRO project coordinator Nsomeni Lusungu Mteleke said the REGROW will also tackle the challenges through investments in key infrastructure, promotion of linkages between sites, positioning of Iringa as gateway town, attraction of private sector investments, branding and marketing, and creation of effective local supply chain linkages.

The "Southern Circuit" includes several national parks (Katavi, Kitulo, Mahale, Udzungwa Mountains, Mikumi and Ruaha), game reserves (with Selous being the largest), two rift valley lakes (Nyasa and Tanganyika), areas of cultural interest, and access to the primary gateway

town of Iringa.

He said REGROW will promote investments inside four Protected Areas, considered to be catalytic for the consolidation of the circuit: Ruaha, Mikumu and Udzungwa Mountains National Parks, and Selous Game Reserve.

Mteleke further stated that the tourism sector in the country has seen growth and potential for tourism where by the number increased from 500,000 in 2000 to over one million visitors in 2013 but the most visited destination is northern tourism circuit (NTC) which receives ten times than the STC.

The challenges of STC including limited infrastructure, environmental degradation, rampant wildlife poaching, competing economic activity, management capacity, population growth and climate change.

On his part, Iringa Regional Commissioner (RC) Alli Hapi has thanked the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT) for bringing the REGROW project in the southern highlands

regions. He said that for the long time tourism sector have been concentrating in the northern circuit where destination are well arranged than the southern circuit which is facing the number of challenges.

RC Hapi has advised the people of Iringa and other regions in southern highlands to take business opportunities by investing in hospitality industry like hotels.

He noted that there is challenge of hotels for tourists whereby a lot of hotels concentrated in the town centre with limited services like parking.

"A lot of hotels in Iringa for instance, are built along the business roads with a lot of noise coming vehicles and motorcycles (bodaboda) which discourage most of tourists not sleep in the hotels," he pointed.

He said that economy of tourism does not only visiting the national parks but it is a full package which including cultural, forest, and hotel tourism in the southern tourism circuit.



Mariam Fisso (in hat), an agricultural expert at former Prime Minister Mizengo Pinda's farm at Zuzu in Dodoma Region, makes a briefing on grape farming to women from Butiama and Musoma Urban districts who visited the farm yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Ibrahim Joseph

Mental health in the age of 'woke' and 'savage' social media

By Socrates Mbamalu

SINCE when is the label "savage" a positive one? There is a disconcerting absence of civility, even basic humanity, in our social media interaction, and it is doing untold damage.

Social media has succeeded in making people think their actions, filtered through a screen, has no effect on the other person. For some, it is just social media. They hide behind the screen, which gives them a certain degree of anonymity. Screen to screen, they find the "courage" to say words they would never say to someone face to face.

When the news that a young Nigerian poet, Chukwuemeka Akachi, had committed suicide hit social media, the reaction, though mixed, also showed that many people do not understand how serious mental health issues are. After an earlier post, in which Akachi had talked about committing suicide, someone commented that he should die; at least then she would get to eat rice. This was followed by a laughing emoji.

When words arrive on a screen, it does not mean that the person at the receiving end does not feel the full impact of the hurt or love, or whatever emotion is directed at them. At a time when dis-

cussion around mental health is becoming more open, there is unfortunately still an insensitivity that comes with it. An example of this occurred in July 2018, when well-known Nigerian blogger Linda Ikeji shared the Facebook post of a Nigerian poet who talked about his struggles with mental health. Ikeji titled her post "Gay Nigerian poet" and shared the location and the face of the poet involved on her blog. The poet had made no reference to his sexuality in his Facebook post.

In a country where one could easily be targeted not just by the police but by random people because of your sexual identity, Ikeji had placed the poet in danger, not just physically but mentally too. Her insensitivity towards the mental state of a fellow human being and using the story of one person's struggle with mental illness to get traffic to her blog was highly unfortunate, to say the least.

Even more unfortunate was her demeaning apology after being told to take down the post.

This popular Nigerian blogger is not the only one who feels protected by a screen and goes on to publish malicious content about people. The daily interaction of people online shows an absence of civility that should otherwise exist in decent society. How easy it is to pick a target and troll the person! No laws are in place to tackle people like Linda Ikeji and other trolls. For a generation that deems itself "exposed" and "woke", the tag "savage" has come to be regarded as a good label, even when this denotes giving a rude, demeaning and potentially destructive response to people online.

Social media users should ask themselves this simple question: If the person you gave a savage response to, for whatever reason, was standing in front of you, would you still give such a response? We are humans; we exist beyond the screen. RIP, Chukwuemeka Akachi.

Geita gets microscopes for TB in mining areas

By Guardian Correspondent

THE Geita Gold Mining Ltd (GGML) has donated two microscopes worth 13,222,600/- to the Geita Region to enhance tuberculosis screening which is common in parts of mining areas.

That donation is a result of a study conducted by the National TB technical working group which indicated that Tubercu-

losis cases have been increasing in the Geita area because of unregulated mining activities, both formal and informal, where workers are exposed to the environment that increases the risk of TB and silicosis.

Speaking during the handover ceremony at the Geita Regional Commissioner's Office, GGML managing director Richard Jordinson said: "We understand that TB can be reduced

by increasing access to better diagnostic tools that will enable the early detection and therefore early treatment. However, other initiatives to promote safe working environments in the small-scale mining area must also be a point of focus. This is why GGML, in collaboration with the Geita RC office and the Occupational, Safety and Health Authority (OSHA), held a workshop in 2018 to bridge

the knowledge gap among key health and safety stakeholders in Geita."

Richard added that, as a corporate citizen, GGML believes investment in community health is integral in the development process. He said that the donation of the microscopes will increase good detection and prevention of TB cases, simplifying its treatment and care.

"We understand that Geita

region is surrounded by small-scale miners who work in dusty environments, something which increases the risk of contracting Tuberculosis. For the reason, we have decided to give these two microscopes to support Government initiatives in the fight against "Tuberculosis," the MD said. For his part, Geita Regional Administrative Secretary (RAS) Dennis Bandisa, on behalf of the Geita Regional Commissioner,

acknowledged GGML's support in the fight against Tuberculosis in Geita, mentioning that the Company has been running a number of different health programmes in collaboration with the Government to work to resolve health challenges in the area.

"GGML has been one of our good partners in executing a number of health projects especially spending 800 Million

Tanzania Shillings to renovate the Geita Referral Hospital, the construction of dispensaries in Nyamalembu, Nyakahongola, Kasota and Kakubiro, where every dispensary cost 260 Million Tanzania Shillings to build.

Earlier this year, GGML also donated medical equipment to healthcare facilities worth 142/- in a move to support the Katoro and Bukoli dispensaries in Geita," said Bandisa.

Hospitality industry: Late bloomer success story

THE hospitality industry is a broad category of fields within the service industry that includes lodging, food and drink service, event planning, theme parks, transportation, cruise line, traveling and additional fields within the tourism industry.

The hospitality industry is an industry that depends on the availability of leisure time and disposable income.

A hospitality unit such as a restaurant, hotel, or an amusement park consists of multiple groups such as facility maintenance and direct operations (servers, housekeepers, porters, kitchen workers, bartenders, management, marketing, and human resources etc.).

Before structuring as an industry, the historical roots of hospitality was in the western world in the form of social assistance mainly for Christian pilgrims directed to Rome.

For such a reason, the eldest public hospital in Europe was the Ospedale di Santo Spirito in Sassia founded in Rome in the VIII century A.D. on the model of the oriental world.

In the same vein, the government has established new regulations aimed at overseeing operations of service providers in the tourism and hospitality sector in the country.

According to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, the regulations have been established under the Tourism Act No 29 of 2008. The regulations, according to the ministry, are aimed at ensuring that quality services that meet international standards are provided in the sector and in turn boost competitiveness. The established regulations will see provision and maintaining of employees with knowledge and appropriate skills that will enable them compete in both national and international markets.

Other benefits include provision of job safety and security to employees and to ensure efficiency and integrity in the delivery of hospitality and tourism services. The guidelines will also put in place a system that will recognise tourism and hospitality professions in the country enabling the establishment of a professional institution to produce experts that fit the needs of the sector.

Against this background the need for professional ethics is a vital tool that will ensure provision of appropriate and international standard services. Efficiency is the only thing that matters in the sector and for that reason it needs employees who will adhere to professional ethics.

For if professional ethics were well observed by employees plus patriotism, there would be no need for special trainings to workers. On the other hand, we feel there should also be plans to conduct an assessment to establish shortfalls in the tourism and hospitality sector.

It is therefore of paramount importance that the need for all stakeholders in the sector, including the private sector, to cooperate and establish a better partnership to drive the sector.

The private sector stands a better chance to take over and manage the sector as the government creates enabling environment.

There is a lot of misconception as far as people in China regard the African Continent, and the current entourage of more than 340 Sino tourists visiting Tanzania may help change that.

When they were setting out from China, many people in the team had little opinion of Africa. They thought they will only see wild animals and be attacked by insects, and were thus surprised to find an environment quite close to Europe, if not better.

They remarked: Tanzania has very good hotels and lodges. In fact some of the tourist facilities in the country match those in the United States or Europe, if not better.

TCB ought to intervene for coffee farmers on credit opportunity to boost productivity

COFFEE production in Tanzania is a significant aspect of its economy as it is Tanzania's largest export crop. Tanzanian coffee production averages between 30-40,000 metric tons annually of which approximately 70 per cent is Arabica and 30 per cent is Robusta.

The country has nine main growing regions of Arabica are while the main growing region of Robusta is the Bukoba area of the Kagera Region. Harvest time is traditionally October to February.

Ninety per cent of the nation's coffee farms are smallholder, with the remainder being plantations. The industry estimates are approximately 270,000 personnel involved in the coffee industry. Coffee was introduced into the Tanzanian region from modern day Ethiopia in the 16th century. Coffee was not really brewed in the region but was used as a stimulant.

Brazil is the largest coffee producing country in the world, and history comes from the last 150 years. Vietnam is the second largest producer of coffee after Brazil with total production of about 1,300,000 tons per year.

Ivory Coast is West Africa's largest producer, and the third largest in sub-Saharan Africa. Ethiopia, which is the origin of Arabica coffee, is renowned for its unique Yirgacheffe, Sidamo and Harar Arabica varieties, while Kenya's fine Arabica beans grown at high altitude near Mount Kenya are in equally high demand.

It was recently reported that the country's coffee production is projected to dwindle by 23 percent in the 2019-20 season. Africa's fourth-biggest coffee producer, according to the report overall production in coffee

would drop by 23 per cent in the next period due to delayed rainfall in northern regions, according to the Tanzania Coffee Board.

The crop for the season that starts in July may decline to 50,000 tons, the Tanzania Coffee Board said in an emailed response to questions. It said last month that the country had experienced dryness in many growing areas, and that farmers would start collecting crops in May in the Kagera and Mara regions, Bloomberg reported.

After missing earlier targets to boost production, the country has said it's considering distributing seedlings to farmers in an effort to double supply in five years. Arabica coffee accounts for more than half of Tanzania's output, and it mainly ships coffee to Japan, Italy, the US and Belgium.

A lower cycle will follow a bumper harvest this season. Auctions for the 2019-20 crop will start in Moshi at the end of July, the board said. As far as the importing of coffee is concerned, Japan is the leading importer of Tanzania's coffee.

The decline in productivity is caused by a number of factors including low applications of fertilisers and poor investment, according to Tanzania Coffee Board's acting director general, Primus Kimario. The Tanzania Coffee Industry Development strategy 2011-21 aims at increasing production to 100,000 tonnes annually.

Tanzania Coffee Board is a government organ established by the Tanzania Coffee Industry Act No. 23 of 2001. Its main function is to regulate the coffee industry in Tanzania and advise the government on all matters related to the growing, processing and marketing of coffee within and outside the country.

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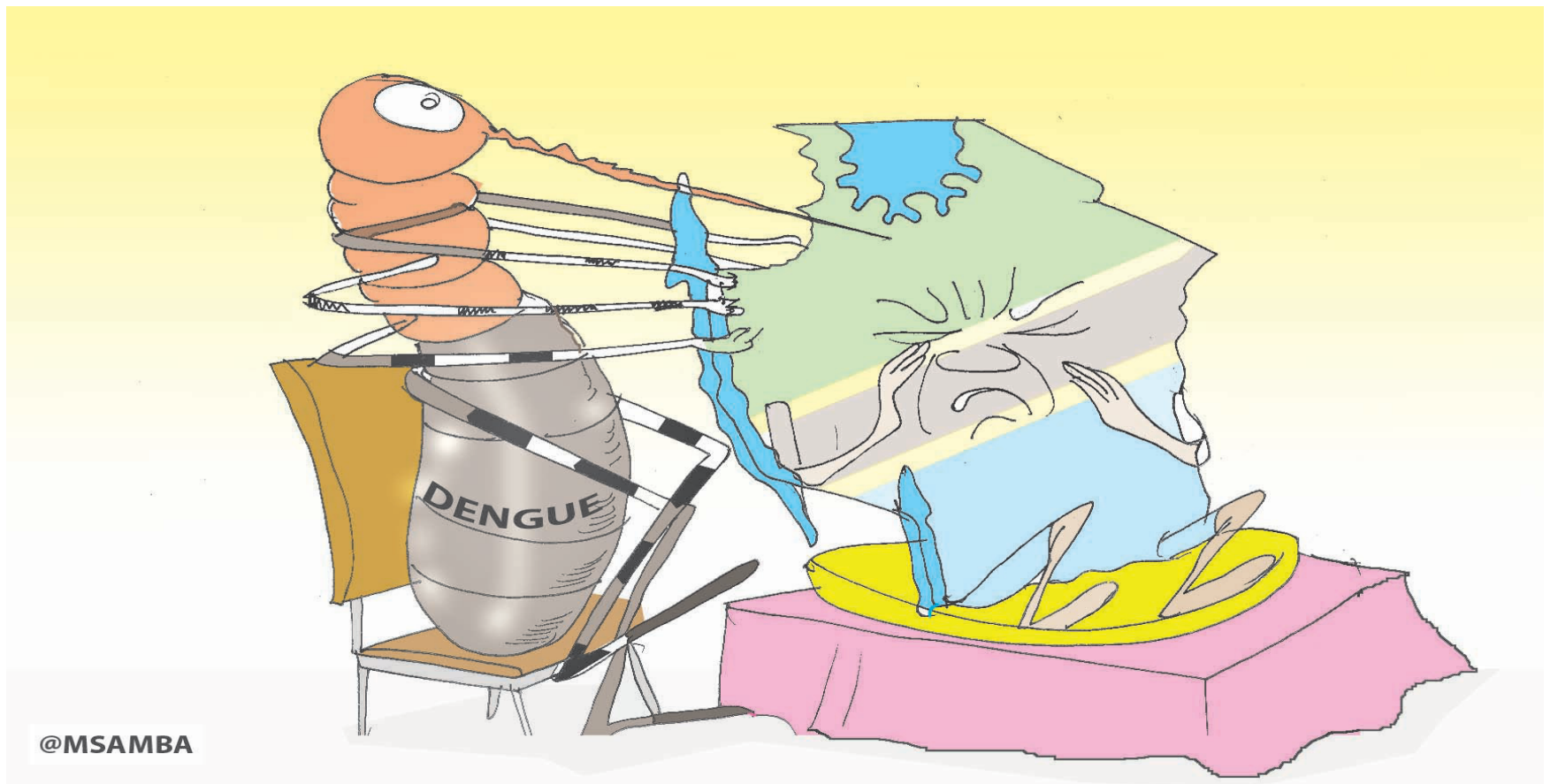
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Protecting civilians in combat zones: Need to tackle explosive weapons in populated areas

By Izumi Nakamitsu

HUMAN suffering caused by war is not a new phenomenon. And while our highest priority remains the prevention of war, evolving patterns of armed violence are posing new and more difficult challenges that require action.

The number of people killed in armed conflict has risen tenfold since 2005. Conflict is migrating into villages, towns and cities, but governments and non-state actors are continuing to use weapons designed for open battlefields.

Many weapons originally intended for battlefield use, those that disperse multiple munitions over a wide area, fire without a direct line of sight to the target or produce large blasts and fragmentation, pose serious humanitarian concerns when used in populated areas.

In 2018 alone, these "wide-area" weapons killed civilian women, men and children by the tens of thousands, both directly and by destroying critical infrastructure needed to move supplies like food and medicine.

In recent conflicts, civilians have constituted more than 90 per cent of those killed or injured by explosive weapons used in populated areas. Eight civilians now die in conflict for every soldier killed, a reversal of the ratio that prevailed in the early part of the twentieth century.

In places like Afghanistan and Yemen, combatants continue to use weapons like im-

vised explosive devices and air-launched munitions, both of which harm people far beyond the user's line of sight.

This devastating reality demands new measures to protect civilians. The need to protect people from war's effects - called the "humanitarian imperative" - has driven decades of international efforts to regulate warfare.

In the 70 years since the adoption of the Geneva Conventions, which established the cornerstones of international humanitarian law, global-level prohibitions have entered into force for anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions as well as chemical and biological weapons.

Despite this progress, civilians continue to bear the brunt of conflict globally. A number of responsible governments and armed forces have taken many steps to protect civilians from warfare, such as adjusting military doctrines, policies and rules of engagement, and some have enhanced training practices in these areas.

NATO and the African Union, for instance, have each enacted tactical directives and other policies aimed at placing limits on the use of certain heavy weapons.

The United Nations has compiled information on these practices that can serve as a basis for common standards to safeguard civilians. There needs to be a shared understanding that combatants should not use certain heavy weapons in densely populated areas as they



are highly likely to cause indiscriminate harm. Affirming this understanding in a political declaration would be an important first step. Other measures should be pursued in parallel.

Improving how we collect data on civilian casualties can further inform policy and practice. Authoritative information on the impact of these weapons will help governments meet their humanitarian commitments and weigh risks associated with arms exports.

In his agenda for disarmament issued in 2018, "Securing Our Common Future", the UN Secretary General calls for new efforts to protect civilians from the urbanisation of armed conflict, in particular from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

He stands ready to facilitate the development of a political declaration as well as appropriate limitations, common stand-

ards and operational policies, building on proven and existing practice.

Governments can also support these efforts by sharing more details on their practices, including through military-to-military dialogue.

Momentum for effective multilateral action is growing. In October 2018, a total of 50 countries at the UN General Assembly jointly voiced their grave concern about the humanitarian harm caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

This was a clear call to accelerate our efforts in the spirit of "disarmament that saves lives", as the Secretary General described these initiatives in his agenda for disarmament.

We need to seize this moment and act together to protect civilians from unacceptable harm caused by the urbanisation of warfare. The humanitarian imperative must drive us forward with urgency.

Izumi Nakamitsu is United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

Lessons on a 'just transition' from fossil fuels to renewable energy

By Happy Khambele

MOVING to what is termed a just transition is not an overnight event. It requires careful planning, implementation, oversight and high-level political guarantees. Thankfully, in South Africa, we can draw on some lessons about what has worked and failed in other countries which have been in a similar position.

The truth about climate change is that it will make our collective environmental conditions in Sub-Saharan Africa much harsher than what has been experienced before.

The impacts of climate-related weather events on Africans indicates the severity of the situation we are facing.

The impacts of Tropical Cyclone Idai in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi are an alarming reminder of how climate change will manifest on

the African continent and how African nations are equipped to deal with said events.

The current temperature warming potential for Sub-Saharan Africa is almost double that of the global average, meaning two degrees warming globally is actually 3.5 to four degrees in our region.

This applies equally to South Africa and, if recent droughts have taught us anything, it is that we are under-equipped and under-resourced to deal with regular extreme weather events.

It is common knowledge that extreme weather events are increasingly becoming the norm. In 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) made it clear that, globally, there were 12 years left in which to act to shift away from fossil fuels.

Otherwise, preparations should be made to face runaway climate change. It is essential that the Earth's

average temperature does not exceed (at the very least) 1.5°C of warming. The Earth's atmosphere has already warmed by 1°C, which means that we have neither the time nor space to avoid a climate crisis, which will know no borders and have incalculable costs.

It is in the face of severe health impacts of coal and potentially catastrophic climate change that the urgency of delivering a "just transition" in South Africa has exponentially increased.

South Africa is almost entirely reliant on coal for electricity production and is one of the world's biggest coal exporters.

However, as the world is increasingly carbon constrained, the viability of coal as a real growth industry is rapidly fading away.

Countries are taking action to reduce their reliance on fossil fuels and

in turn make their contribution to addressing climate change. Coal exports are already showing strain as other countries reduce their coal imports and, for South Africa's balance of trade, this does not bode well.

This is a clear signal that South Africa should reduce its reliance on coal. The question that must be dealt with now is: what does an urgent just transition look like in South Africa?

In South Africa, the idea of there being a programme to effect a just transition has proven to be a challenge. The issue is not only about the protection of existing jobs but also the realisation of the potential job opportunities in a new industry.

In South Africa, different regions are known for specific economic activities and Mpumalanga is clearly of critical importance to any just transition approach because of its immense existing coal-reliance.

Reforming the electoral process a desideratum

By Special Correspondent

If there is an object lesson from the conduct of the last general elections ripples of which still resonate across the land, it is that the nation's electoral laws need to be revised, amended and revitalised with a view to strengthening the norms and practice of democracy in the land.

From the point of voter registration, defining party membership and the rules of engagement among politicians, through the act of voting, transmission of results and final proclamation of winners, it is imperative for us to take a second look at extant electoral laws.

It is instructive that INEC and other stakeholders like the National Assembly were conscious of these shortcomings and proposed a new electoral law, the 2018 Electoral Laws Reform Bill.

The President in his wisdom refused to append his signature to the Bill and thus effectively killed the reforms. The National Assembly could not muster enough voting strength to override the president's veto. That has been the bane of the current elections.

Sadly, INEC performance in the 2019 elections fell below expectations of citizens and stakeholders including foreign observers who were on the ground and wrote damning reports about the elections.

The groundswell of opinion is that we regressed from the level of relative transparency, which the nation experienced in the 2015 elections. The savagery and open partisanship of some men of the Nigeria Army in Rivers State is a case in point.

Indeed the inherent weaknesses of our state institutions - the judiciary, the DSS, the Police, INEC - stared us in the face in the days before, during and after the elections.

Why is the electoral process still bedevilled by fraudulent practices by politicians and state officials, official intimidation, blatant corruption and physical violence? Is there something in the psyche or DNA of the typical Nigerian politician that makes desper-



Professor Mahmood Yakubu, Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, speaks during the announcement of the postponement of the 2019.

tion a constant decimal in the political equation?

Why are 'gentlemen' and decent people still wary of electioneering in Nigeria? Is there a fundamental reason that precludes us from deploying now-available digital facilities and expertise to result collation and data processing? Why should men of the armed forces be deployed to polling centres as if we were at war? Was INEC able to convince the citizens that it was fair, competent and above board in the last elections? These and more or are troubling questions that we must ponder on.

In the prelude to the elections, politicians were frivolously and selfishly defecting from one party to another. They behaved like scavengers, which eat off the flesh of their prey, and moved on to other shenanigans. Tragically, the political parties could not and still cannot discipline their members.

The expression 'party discipline' appears alien to the mind-set of the Nigerian politician. The two main parties were used as special-purpose vehicles twisted and manipulated to serve their inordinate ambitions.

Principles or commitment to ideological persuasions, if they existed,

were thrown overboard in a most shameless manner. Doubtless, we can assert that the main problem of Nigerian politics is the politician himself.

Specifically, the electoral umpire should not go to bed after concluding the 2019 elections. They must start preparing for 2023.

The rules, which govern change of political parties (defection), ought to be more stringent and enforced and so the Electoral Reform Bill should be started early enough before the fever of the next general elections seizes the political class. It was good that the Chairman of INEC, Professor Mahmood Yakubu noted the urgency of the Bill the other day while presenting certificates to the National Assembly members-elect.

Besides, the introduction of the card reader into the voting process was an attempt to reduce fraud in the system. But in some states of the federation the card readers were curiously ignored. Some INEC officials allegedly colluded with some unscrupulous politicians to render this innovation ineffective.

Going forward, INEC should be able to perfect this system and reduce the level of rigging. We do not need a prescient being to tell us that the state elec-

tions of March 16 and 23 strangely witnessed voter apathy. Either voters lost faith in the process or they were too scared to participate in local elections.

A cursory look at the number of registered voters and those who actually voted is highly indicative of this disconnect. The much-vaunted people power in a democracy was inexorably assaulted and thwarted by the political class and their thugs.

More important, the technological developments of the 21st century at our disposal should be deployed at this time to delivering credible elections.

The travesty of inconclusive elections, which truly is not totally alien to elections has been taken to new heights. The perception is that the state apparatus is used to favour some politicians while the process remains suspended. The results of some of these acts of affront are being and soon to be tested in the law courts.

Nobody has been charged and prosecuted for vote selling or buying even though it is common knowledge that the two main parties were as guilty as Cain of the biblical notoriety.

Meanwhile, the political parties should be reorganised along lines of principles and programmes. In the 2019 elections, there were some 90 odd political parties on the ballot. The First and Second Republics produced parties that were inherently peculiar in their avowed goals.

The Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), Action Group (AG), National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), Nigeria's Peoples' Congress (NPC), Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), Peoples' Redemption Party (PRP) created unique identities for themselves.

For example, politicians who identified with NEPU would never cross to any of the parties that were considered 'anti-people' in their policies and manifestoes. Neither the PDP nor APC can be said to have unique features. They are truly birds of a feather sworn to capturing power just for the sake of it. This is a national malaise.



Nigeria ranked 6th on world's most miserable country index

By Special Correspondent

A RECENT report on ranking of nations using the Misery Index on the state of living standards appears quite worrisome, particularly to the ordinary Nigerian.

According to the latest Misery Index Report released by one Steve Hanke, an economist from the John Hopkins University, Baltimore, United States of America, Nigeria was ranked as the sixth most miserable country to live in.

In that ranking, two other African countries, Egypt and South Africa were also listed among the top ten most miserable countries in the world, with Venezuela in South America ranked as the most miserable country in the world.

The report further indicated that countries such as Argentina, Iran, Brazil and Turkey make up the top five countries on this misery index classification.

Though this country classification is an effort by an economist or a non-government organisation, the outcome of this research is worth consideration by all well meaning individuals in the countries surveyed, particularly those whose rankings are considered unpalatable. The outcome of the study should be seen as a food for thought for policy makers and that is why this newspaper cannot ignore it.

Conceptually, the Misery Index which was first conceived and designed in the United States of America to give President Lyndon Johnson a snapshot indicator of the state of the economic wellbeing of the ordinary American during his tenure as President of the United States of America, has come to be relied on by many as a useful guide on the performance of economic policy across the world, particularly as it affects the poor.

The latest computation of the index considers the state of three critical economic indicators such as inflation, unemployment and bank lending rate with adjustments made for the percentage change in the growth rate of the country's per capita income.

Putting all these together to get the misery index gives an indication of the quality of life in the concerned society as well as the level of impoverishment or otherwise of the generality of the populace. Issues of inflation, one of the criteria used in arriving at the misery index, are very critical in the design of monetary policy across the world.

In fact, the main reason why central banks exist, among others, is the maintenance of price stability in the country. Hence the core role of the monetary policy committees of central banks across the world is the maintenance of price stability.

Uncontrolled inflation makes the average worker poorer, particularly for those on fixed wages. If not well managed, inflation often creates a spiral that

works against enhanced productivity in the economy with a massive erosion of monetary value in the system. Hence a key measure of the successful performance of central banks across the world is the extent to which they keep inflation at a tolerable level.

For Nigeria, the level of inflation has deteriorated from the single digit that prevailed in 2015, when this administration came into power, rising to as high as over 18 per cent in January 2017, at the height of the economic recession recently experienced in the country.

However, because of a persistent stagnation of the Monetary Policy Rate, (MPR) for about 14 consecutive sessions of the Central Bank Monetary Policy Committee, (CBMPC), the rate of inflation has taken a downward trend and currently stands in the region of 11 per cent. It was only in March 2019 that the MPR was slightly reduced by 50 basis points. The trajectory of inflation in Nigeria over the period could have had an effect on the computation of the misery index for Nigeria.

Besides, poverty in the past few years in the country has been exacerbated by the high rate of unemployment in the country, another factor considered in the computation of the misery index.

Unemployment is at present the most worrisome factor for Nigeria that reportedly weighed heavily against the country in the determination of the state of misery of its people.

Currently, only one in every five graduates of tertiary institutions in Nigeria gets employed. And the situation appears to be getting worse, according to recent reports from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) as well as the Minister of Employment and Labour, Chris Ngige.

The current unpalatable growth of unemployment in the country is indeed a time bomb that is already exploding with unpleasant consequences for the state of insecurity and the growth of organised economic activity in the country. We see this already in reports on banditry, kidnapping and insurgency. The consequences are staring us in the face already.

The other factor, the rate of bank lending in Nigeria is considered high by various stakeholders in the economy. This ultimately takes credit availability out of the reach of the small-scale entrepreneur.

Most of the growth in the economies of South East Asia came about with the growth of small and medium scale enterprises. The current bank-lending rate in the country is not considered low enough for the thriving of small-scale enterprises.

However, this is a consequence of trade off in economic policy since the Central Bank keeps the monetary policy rate high to fight inflation and maintain exchange rate stability but which on the other hand, makes credit costly for small businesses.

Why governments derive huge financial benefits from biometric payroll cleaning

By J. Tiah Nagbe

MANY individuals and institutions in a country benefit significantly from biometric identification. But, for me, the biggest beneficiary of national biometric identification is the government. Government benefits come from many sources, including ease of national security operations, support to healthcare systems, and ease of tax administration. Yet, of all these vital benefits, one that stands out probably as the most significant financial benefit is cost-savings from payroll operations. Why is this the case and how this works is the focus of our discussion today.

Looking back at last week, I hope you followed the article on biometric ID verification, which was written to mark the special event that was hosted last Thursday to introduce our verification platform. That article discussed why ID verification is necessary today and how it works. We also had quite a successful program on the verification and are looking to rolling out the platform within six weeks, following further consultations with our potential clients.

Payng Plenty People is Tough to Manage

Governments employ a lot of people to carry out essential public services, like public education, public health, local government administration, policing, and borders management.

The more the population of a country, the more the number of employees of the government, I want to believe. These public servants who are in the millions for highly populated countries like China and several thousands for not-too-populated countries like Liberia, are also spread all over the country. These two factors, too many employees and too many areas of assignment, create problems in tracking the employees.

In the case of Liberia, my estimate is that some 65,000 people work directly for the Government of Liberia and probably another 10,000 work for

other institutions of the Government, like the state-owned enterprises. These employees work in perhaps more than two thousand localities when you consider Town Chiefs and other local officials. It is therefore no small matter to find out if an employee is still working at a particular job, if the name on the payroll is real, or if the employee is still alive.

The annual cost for paying these employees is estimated at over US\$300 million and is the most expensive item on the national budget.

Therefore, if you can clean the payroll by even a modest 5% and keep it clean for five years you will save at least US\$15 million per year or US\$75 million over five years.

Having too many employees who work in too many places create challenges that lead to ghost names on the payroll. From what I have observed, ghost names come from inefficiencies and outright fraud.

A common case of such inefficiency is failure to remove names of deceased people from the payroll in a timely fashion, thus allowing the deceased people's pays to continue for several months or even years. As you may know, most Government of Liberia salary payments are done through monthly direct deposit into employees' accounts.

Therefore, if a school teacher in a remote town in, say, Grand Cape Mount County passes away, the payroll data entry officer in Monrovia will have no way of knowing of that incident.

Also, the documents and processes that are needed to inform the payroll people in Monrovia take a long time to complete.

While all this is going on, the monthly direct deposits could continue for several months or even a few years. Of course, family members and other people who know about this situation could find ways to withdraw the money from the deceased teacher's account. Yes, the withdrawal is a fraud; but the opportunity for this fraud is provided



J. Nagbe Tiah, Executive Director, NIR

by slow pace of removing the name from the payroll, and maybe replacing it with that of another qualified person who is available to do the job.

There are also many fraudulent activities that lead to ghost names on payrolls. But fraud is often made possible by both the desire of a criminal-minded person and the opportunity provided that person as well.

The unfortunate fact is that our current payroll system provides opportunities for people to place ghost names on payrolls.

As an example, consider a situation where a fake name (let's call it Mr. Fake Wilson) is placed on the payroll and a bank account is created into which monthly salaries are deposited for Mr. Wilson.

Consider another situation in which a healthcare worker's name is repeated on the payroll either to the knowledge of the healthcare worker or without his/her knowledge.

There could be thousands of these

names on the payroll. In these two cases, it is the weakness of the system that allows for these fraudulent activities. Therefore, we can reduce these incidents by improving the payroll system in ways to make it modern and strong against fraud.

How Biometric Identification Cleans Payrolls

Biometric identification systems have simple ingredients that can prevent ghost names from entering or remaining on payrolls.

The three key elements of biometric identification are: each person must be 1) alive, 2) uniquely identified, and 3) traceable.

Deceased people cannot find their way on biometrically cleaned payrolls, neither can fake or duplicate names. It is just as simple as that. When you remove all these ghost names, you save governments so much money and you make payrolls fair - paying only those who work.

Be it fight or talk, China is ready

BEIJING

AT the 11th round of Sino-U.S. high-level economic and trade consultations, the U.S. again resorted to the tactic of "maximum pressure" in an attempt to attribute the blame for a no-deal to China. China responded with rationality, composure and calmness. Be it fight or talk, China is ready.

There was commentary saying that China went to a "minefield" deliberately set up by the U.S. The Chinese delegation was full of sincerity and staunch principles when heading to the U.S. for the talks. Honesty and principle are consistently reflected in China's attitude.

China shoulders responsibility

In 1997, when the Asian financial crisis broke out, China withstood tremendous pressure to prevent the depreciation of the renminbi.

It not only stabilized the Chinese economy but also helped many countries and regions out of the crisis. In 2008, in the face of the more overwhelming global financial crisis, China maintained its stable macroeconomic policies and actively carried out international cooperation, making essential contributions to the stability and recovery of the world economy.

In recent years, economic globalization has faced some headwinds. Unilateralism and protectionism have risen. China has been advocating for greater openness, inclusiveness, universal benefits, balance and win-win development. In the process, China has always shouldered responsibility.

China and the U.S. are the two largest economies in the world, and both hold strong sway on the world economy. The Sino-U.S. economic and trade frictions provoked by the U.S. have brought significant uncertainties to the development of and become a serious drag to the world economy.

"America First" cannot be pursued at the expense of other countries' interests, or worse, at the cost of interests of both other nations and America itself. The U.S. may fall into the holes it digs for others and struggle to get out.

China is honest

The purpose of consultation and negotiation is to resolve contradictions and differences. This requires the two sides to be sincere and respond to each other's primary concerns. China has adequately handled the disputes in the way of seeking common ground while



Chinese-made jackets are displayed for sale at a Manhattan department store in New York City, recently.

reserving differences.

China has responded to U.S. concerns with utmost sincerity and made strenuous efforts to stabilize bilateral economic and trade relations.

China has always welcomed and affirmed the U.S. willingness to cooperate, and sincerely communicated with it and rationally sought to solve the problem.

For some U.S. accusations and demands, it has also calmly explained and responded with great patience, willing to make response and adjustments in good faith as long as principles were not compromised.

China has tried to prove its sincerity through action. To maintain healthy and stable Sino-U.S. relations and promote China's economic and social development, it has expanded imports and reduced tariffs on some products.

This move demonstrated the country's sincerity. At a critical moment when the people were speculating about the possible breakdown of Sino-U.S. trade talks, the Chinese delegation went to the U.S. as promised.

The Chinese team did not go there because they were "afraid" of anything but because they were full of sincerity.

What did the U.S. do? For more than a year, the U.S. has engaged in trade protectionism, discriminated against

Chinese products, hindered the normal investment activities of Chinese enterprises in the U.S. under the pretext of "national security review," adopted many non-tariff barriers, abused trade relief measures, etc.

In particular, its insistence on raising the tariffs to bully China into accepting an agreement by coercion has led to considerable obstacles to the negotiation process.

China has its own principles. It has responded to U.S. concerns and considered U.S. interests with the greatest sincerity, but the U.S. did not show a similar attitude or honesty in return. Instead, it has just made more accusations and put more pressure on China.

The opportunity for mutually beneficial cooperation needs to be grasped by both countries. China and the U.S. can only reach a mutually beneficial and win-win agreement based on mutual respect and equality and taking care of each other's reasonable concerns. China is full of sincerity. How sincere is the U.S.?

China is not aggressive

At the heart of Sino-U.S. eco-

nomics and trade relations are mutual benefit and win-win cooperation. Since China became a member of the World Trade Organization, Sino-U.S. bilateral trade volume has increased exponentially. In 2018, the bilateral trade in goods exceeded 630 billion U.S. dollars, and bilateral investment totaled 240 billion U.S. dollars.

The development of Sino-U.S. economic and trade relations has contributed to the economic growth of the U.S., lowered the inflation level in the country, created a large number of domestic job opportunities, and brought real benefits to American consumers.

By 2017, the U.S. had set up 68,000 foreign-invested enterprises in China, with actual investment exceeding 83 billion U.S. dollars. The fast-growing Chinese economy has created substantial business opportunities for these American enterprises.

However, the U.S. government turned a blind eye to the benefits gained and provoked Sino-U.S. trade frictions under the pretext of a "U.S. trade deficit." A trade war is a self-mutilating way of punishing other countries and has never

been won in history. In the 1930s, countries put up high tariff barriers. Was there a winner? For China and the U.S., whose industries are highly integrated, the cost of a trade war is set to be borne by both countries.

The additional tariffs imposed by the U.S. on Chinese goods are mostly a tax on U.S. consumers and businesses, which will directly affect U.S. consumption, investment, import and export, and the American people will have to "foot the bill."

In this regard, many American people know it very well. A report released by the Peterson Institute for International Economics pointed out that 95 percent of the Chinese goods subject to the tariff increase are spare parts and electronic components which are assembled into the final products "made in the U.S."

Raising the tariffs on these products will harm American enterprises themselves. More than 150 trade associations in the U.S. have set up a lobbying campaign named "Tariffs Hurt the Heartland."

The campaign stated that the 25 percent tariffs on Chinese goods would significantly harm U.S. farmers, enterprises and consumers, increase financial market volatility and cost one million domestic jobs.

How is it possible for the U.S. to gain more from the trade war than from cooperation? Given the intertwined nature of the two economies, the Americans who believe only China will be hurt and eventually lose out should hone their math skills to figure out who loses and who gains.

China won't buckle under pressure

Does "maximum pressure" really work for a major power like China? At least so far facts tell us: No!

China sincerely hopes that the two countries can solve the problem and reach an agreement through consultation. However, this does not mean that China is afraid of the U.S. or will "capitulate" and "be subdued" under maximum pressure and set principles aside to accept the U.S. unreasonable demands. China has always been reluctant to fight, but

is not afraid to fight, and will fight when necessary.

The strength, resilience and room for maneuvers of China's economy must be well understood by the "China school" in the U.S. It is hoped that people with little knowledge of China will take a fresh look at the actual size of China today and refrain from looking down on the Chinese economy because of their limited understanding of China.

Consultation should be equal and should be based on mutual respect. While asking China to take care of its concerns, the U.S. turns a blind eye to China's core concerns, such as abolishing all additional tariffs to normalize bilateral trade, bringing the number of trade purchases in line with reality, and making the text of the agreement more balanced. The U.S. is arrogant and does not want to make any substantial considerations of China's concerns. It only unilaterally threatens China. If this is the case, how can a fair and dignified agreement be reached?

Over the past year or so, through "fighting" and "talking," the U.S. should have seen China's stamina in upholding its principles and bottom line. The Chinese people have a clear understanding of the purpose of economic and trade frictions provoked by the country. As a result, Chinese people have become more confident and united.

For future negotiations, no matter what kind of outcome is in store, China has made thorough preparation and developed response tactics. The sky will not fall as there is always a way out. If China and the U.S. reach an agreement, which is a scenario China welcomes and looks forward to, the two countries can continue to deepen their economic and trade relations. If the two countries fail to reach an agreement, China will not panic and will never give in on issues of principle and dignity.

The Sino-U.S. economic and trade issues are long-term, complex and cumbersome. It may become a norm for the two to resolve economic and trade frictions by talking while fighting. Everyone should get used to it. When facing a complicated situation, haste makes waste. China is ready for a protracted war.

'High unemployment in South Africa a ticking time bomb'

CAPE TOWN

THE stubbornly high unemployment in South Africa is like "a ticking time bomb" that would spell calamity for the country, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has warned.

Workers expect to see the government place massively reducing unemployment at the heart of all government programmes, from national to provinces to municipalities to state-owned enterprises (SOEs), said COSATU, the country's largest union federation with more than 3 million members.

Earlier on Tuesday, Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) released its Quarterly Labor Force Survey for the first quarter of 2019, which shows that the country's unemployment has risen by 0.5 percentage points to 27.6 percent compared to the fourth quarter of 2018.

The increase in the unemployment rate is a result of decline of 237,000 in the number of people in employment and an increase of 62,000 in the number of people who were unemployed between the fourth quarter of 2018 and the first quarter of 2019, according to the survey.

This came on the heels of the Spectator Index in January which revealed that South Africa is the country with the highest youth unemployment rate in the world, with about 52.8 percent of young people unemployed.

Spectator Index is a weekly British magazine on politics, culture and current affairs. "This is calamitous for the country because it means millions of young people will be dependent on the state for their well being and that



of their families," COSATU national spokesperson Sizwe Pamla said.

The political leaders and the government entrusted with managing the economy should hang their heads in shame because the inequities of their favored economic system has condemned thousands of South Africans to lives of brute survival and hopelessness, said Pamla.

South Africa needs an economic development model that will dismantle the current colonial and apartheid eco-

Members of the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa stand in line for free T-shirts before the start of a protest. (File Photo)

nomics and social policy paradigm that is unsustainable, Pamla said.

"We need an economic trajectory that will ensure that there is a proper redistribution of income and that more people are allowed to participate in the economy," he said.

The last two decades have shown that all of this cannot be left at the hands of the market and the notion that foreign direct investment (FDI) is everything,

Pamla said. COSATU has been critical of the regressive and contractionary policies pursued by the government.

The federation says these policies only focus on cutting social expenditure and weaken the capacity of the state. The deceleration of fiscal spending since 2014 and now the outright reduction of spending plunged the economy into the doldrums in an environment of depressed

private sector investment and household spending, according to COSATU.

The government cannot keep applying the same macroeconomic framework that led the country to this current position and still go on with the rhetoric about the centrality of job creation and the transformation of the economy, Pamla said.

"We hope that this unemployment report will jolt the gov-

ernment and business into action," he said. Also on Tuesday, the South African government vowed to tackle rising unemployment through a series of interventions.

The high rate of unemployment is a serious concern to the government, but there are a number of interventions that are being implemented to revive and stimulate economic growth, government spokesperson Phumla Williams said.

Decisive steps are being taken including rebuilding investor confidence, ending corruption, restoring good governance and strengthening critical public institutions, she said. Unemployment requires all sectors of society to work together to address this challenge, said Williams.

"All South Africans must join hands and make an extraordinary effort to overcome the economic challenges we face," she said. South Africa hosted the Jobs Summit in October which brought together government, business, labor and community organizations to seek solutions to the country's unemployment challenge.

Through this Jobs Summit, the government, labor, business and the community sector have agreed on concrete interventions to boost employment. It's estimated that these interventions will create an additional 275,000 direct jobs a year.

Xinhua

The Pope in 1493: Foundation of Western civilisation and race

By Dele Cole

THE Pope in 1493, by the Treaty of Tordesillas and as subsequently amended by further treaties, laid the foundation for Western world dominance. The Pope divided the world into two halves, gave the Western half to Spain and the Eastern half to Portugal. Spain, through the treaties, got all of Central and South America, except Brazil. The Spanish and the Portuguese settled their people there to the decimation of native populations, a decimation which has continued till today. Nothing much has changed.

No one queried or questioned the Pope's right to give the world to two countries; nor were the opinions of those people and places given away to Spain and Portugal canvassed. The Pope could not. He did not know these people and the places he so cavalierly gave away.

In the Americas, Spain and Portugal, armed by the technological marvel of sea faring ships and guns roamed wherever they pleased. The 1493 Papal Bull and all the subsequent amendments emboldened Spain and Portugal to the heights hitherto unknown and unreachable. They believed that they were authorized by no one less than God to do as they pleased in what later became the New World. Their citizens settled in Brazil, Argentina and South of the United States. In the case of Brazil, the map they used in dividing the world wrongly placed Brazil as part of the Eastern world awarded to Portugal. Other areas of the Papal award to Portugal included Africa, India, Thailand, Malaysia, right up to Indonesia and its 1,700 Islands. Portuguese and Spanish nationals went out to inhabit as much of the world as they could, exporting their language and customs to these

far off places. Today, all of Central and South America except Brazil speaks Spanish. Brazil speaks Portuguese as they do in Cape Verde, Mozambique, and parts of Asia.

The Pope by his action led to the foundation of Western civilization, industrial revolution, the cult of White superiority and world wealth and power causing the imbalances which continue to this day. The rest of the world outside Europe, with the exception of the United States has been trying to catch up ever since. What Europe needed, they took like slaves for sugar and tobacco plantations. They deculturized everyone else, leading to the replacement of a mishmash of Western culture and religion throughout the world. Moreover the continued need of wealth in Europe and the US was one of the reasons for the Slave Trade.

Racism became the norm; propagated by convicts sent from Europe to the United States (US), Australia, Canada and the West Indies. The Whites in these new territories took on superior airs in relation to the indigenous population.

Spain and Portugal carted away tons of silver, gold, cloves and different kinds of spices. They established European rule which led to the slave trade, probably the most pernicious action of humanity. The Spanish and Portuguese destroyed the centuries-old civilization of the Aztecs, Incas and Mayas and over 100 other civilizations in Latin America. Those civilizations were among the oldest, most advanced social and political civilization with a mountain of knowledge about engineering, architecture, astronomy, physics, medicine, agriculture (planting, irrigation etc.) and other aspects of human endeavour.

These civilizations gave the world a plethora of food such as



maize, beans, plantains, cassava, pineapples, potatoes, tomatoes, tobacco, strawberries, blueberries, various pepper, sunflower seeds, rubber, avocado, cocoa, vanilla etc. They also taught the visitors geology, sculpture, melting and mining for gold, silver and other precious stones, sculpture, writing etc.

It was not long before the infallibility of the Pope in doctrine, in dividing the world between Spain and Portugal was challenged by other European countries principally Belgium, Britain, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and some others, who all rejected the Pope's decree. Britain even set out on its own adventures to Canada, Africa, Asia, New Zealand and Australia. Setting up penal colonies on the Eastern coast of the United States and in Australia. Britain was to claim all of West Africa, South Africa, India, Ma-

laysia, China and other countries in which it established its presence.

Other European countries did likewise and made territorial claims which have stood the test of time. The Germans were also in South West Africa and East Africa whilst the Belgians gunned for Central Africa and West Africa, North Africa, the Middle East and so on. But Germany found much fatter prizes among its neighbours in Europe and started several wars in Europe. They attacked Belgium, Scandinavia, France, Poland, Hungary and other Eastern European nations, thus becoming the *bête noire* of Europe, after France's own expansionist phase during the reigns of Louis XIV and Napoleon. These European wars saw a pause through the 1885 treaty of Berlin which acknowledged several German claims in Africa, Europe and the Middle

East, among other countries of the world.

In a sense the European Whites in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Australia only practised what had happened to them, subject as they were to numerous wars, quasi colonization, the mixing of tribes in Europe as each wave of conquerors were replaced by new ones. But these various people found accommodation and even assimilation and acceptance as they settled in different countries in Europe. But the Europeans on arrival in Americas, Asia and Africa, gave no such luck to the indigenes. Slaughter was common. The rest button was the superiority of the West - my way or no way, the high way they said to the indigenes.

The new arrivals from Europe even fought civil wars all over. In the United States of America the South and North fought a civil

war on slave trade. Their mindset as they moved to Africa and Asia was much the same: punishing and pillaging the population of the local inhabitants, some of whom even joined in exploiting their own kith and kin. The slave trade saw the transfer of millions of Africans to the Americas and the Caribbean in the most inhumane conditions; it propagated the hateful doctrine of racial discrimination to the detriment of the black and brown. History has not paid nearly enough attention for these exigencies. There is the debate about reparation, which still does not get enough airing but maybe someday it will.

The fine words of the American Declaration of Independence were for the Whites - no one else: not for the indigenous owners of the land or the slaves who worked the land (Slaves 3/5th of American citizens).

The question today is whether that sense of White superiority has stopped or been diminished. I leave you to answer that question. Do business relations between Europe and Africa have any taint of superiority? Has China changed these dynamics? Can Africa do that? Will the doctrine of diversification, climate change etc. make any difference as the West abandons globalization for an introspective ideology pushed by the ALT RIGHT?

It is ironic that Europeans, who felt no compunction to immigrate, to the Americas, Australia, and Africa should today, be opposed to immigration and have made the subject the centre piece of politics in the West, forgetting that they too were once immigrants.

President Trump's immigration policy has many complex hues but most of it is fired by racism.

Humanoid robot Sophia addresses Africa technology summit in Rwanda

KIGALI

HUMANOID robot Sophia on Wednesday addressed the 5th edition of Transform Africa Summit, one of the largest ICT forums on the continent, in the Rwandan capital Kigali.

"If we work together humans and robots can build a prosperous and harmonious world. We don't have to look very far to see how artificial intelligence is already shaping societies and economies for the better," said Sophia at the official opening of the summit.

African startups are already working to address shortages of doctors in rural areas while others are working to increase food security using drones and satellite to predict weather patterns and monitor crops, said the robot.

Africa is also a great source of technological innovations that are playing a key role in improving the lives of people, especially through mobile banking, remote medicine and remote devices that detect explosives, it said.

According to the summit program, Sophia is scheduled to headline discussions

about artificial intelligence and the fourth industrial revolution.

Sophia, who is now a citizen of Saudi Arabia, was developed by a Hong Kong-based company Hanson Robotics.

The summit that runs through Friday has brought together about 4,000 participants including policymakers, regulators, young innovators and officials from Africa and beyond, who are expected to discuss taking advantage of information and communication technology to boost the continent's economy.

The forum dubbed "Boosting Africa's Digital Economy" has also attracted presidents of Kenya, Rwanda and Mali, as well as the secretary general of the International Telecommunication Union.

Rwandan President Paul Kagame said at the opening that economic transformation and prosperity require mastery of technology, adding that it is the time to build the necessary infrastructure and skills in Africa.

Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta emphasized the role of education for people to take advantage of opportunities presented by technology.



Humanoid robot Sophia addresses the 5th edition of Transform Africa Summit in Kigali, capital city of Rwanda. The summit ran through yesterday and it had brought together about 4,000 participants including policymakers, regulators, young innovators and officials from Africa and beyond, who were expected to discuss how to take advantage of information and communication technology to boost the continent's economy. (Xinhua/Cyril Ndegeya)

Lose like winners: Lesson from SA polls

HARARE

LOSE like a winner! That is the lesson from South Africa's recently held elections. What contesting parties won, they won with grace; what they lost, they did so with dignity. The African National Congress (ANC) won reelection with a reduced majority; the Democratic Alliance (DA) was voted official opposition, but lost five seats; while the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) gained 19 additional seats.

Although for the ANC, the result was the worst-ever since independence, President Cyril Ramaphosa - with dignity - quoted South Africa's first democratic president, the late Nelson Mandela, who spoke with grace during his inauguration 25 years ago: "Let freedom reign."

The EFF, yesterday extended its "deep and sincere gratitude to the people of South Africa who came out in their numbers" to vote on May 8.

Other winners include the Freedom Front Plus, which took 10 seats in parliament, up from four in the previous election.

Climate change: Sometimes always never

By Nad Sivaraman

GLOBAL experts, thinkers, practitioners, journalists, politicians and innovators are currently in Geneva to discuss the state of disaster risk across the globe. Many countries, especially those like Mauritius and Mozambique which are exposed to cyclones and floods, have still a long way to go to meet the Sendai

Framework (2015-2030). Over and above translating Climate Change challenges into concrete budgetary terms, this international agreement/commitment sets four specific priorities for action:

1. Understanding disaster risk;
2. Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk;
3. Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience;

4. Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to «Build Back Better» in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

The United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) Global Platform meeting starts today and I express/La Sentinelle is privileged to be at the table of discussions of those highly relevant issues and challenges facing our country

and sub-region. Daily analysis and interviews will be shared so that our readers and policymakers are in the loop of this global conversation happening in a new age of big data, artificial intelligence, blockchain technologies and borderless connectivity. It is important that we, as a people, focus on such trends and technologies, especially when our politicians seem to be more engaged in petty poli-

tics and strategies to save their own personal interests.

Climate change is arguably the most pressing environmental issue facing humanity today. In fact, the current global economic slowdown, combined with climate change can potentially hamper and, in some countries, even reverse the political and economic gains that have been achieved in recent years.

By Ann Garisson

HIGH profile journalists have been jabbering about whether or not Julian Assange is really one of them. If “journalist” is understood to mean “propagandist for the ruling class,” then he most certainly is not.

However, if we go by the more common, less restrictive definitions, anyone who compiles and transmits information to a willing audience is a journalist. Some are good, most are awful, even evil, but Julian Assange is historic. Saying he is not a journalist is like saying Charles Darwin wasn't a biologist, Albert Einstein wasn't a physicist, LeBron James can't play basketball, and by the way, Galileo Galilei was wrong. The earth is flat after all and we are the centre of the universe.

Assange is a genius who could have joined the club of technology billionaires, but instead he looked at global injustice with the mind of a systems analyst, then founded Wikileaks and the transparency movement. They put corporations and government, including the Pentagon, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and all the other intelligence agencies on notice that they could no longer count on operating in secret. State and corporate scandals had been uncovered before, but there had never been anything like Wikileaks. It guaranteed sources anonymity if they used its Dropbox secure technology, and it has never busted a source. It has published well over 10 million documents and never had to retract even one. Its decentralised technical infrastructure protects it from attack, and that strikes terror in the twisted psyches of Mike Pompeo [current USA Secretary of State and former CIA Director] and his inner circle of spies, murderers, and thieves without borders. If a global movement can free Julian Assange, with the full force of the national security state coming at him, it will be a game changer, perhaps even as historic as Wikileaks itself.

On the other hand, prosecuting and convicting Assange for the crime of possessing and publishing classified material would establish a precedent for convicting any journalist, media outlet, or citizen who publishes, republishes, cites, quotes, or even tweets classified material. There is a growing list of classified Wikileaks that I could go to prison for quoting even though they are not the ones that have shocked the world like the “Collateral Murder” video of US soldiers shooting Iraqi civilians from an Apache Helicopter as though they were playing video games.

One is “ETHNICITY IN RWANDA - - WHO GOVERNS THE COUNTRY?” This is a cable generated in Rwanda on 5 July 2008. It doesn't identify the sender, only the location it was sent from—Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. It could have been written and sent by one of many US officials: the US ambassador, a member of his staff, and/or any number of CIA, Defence Intelligence Agency, or other spooks in the region. The recipient is the US State Department, but no one in particular.

Whoever wrote this described Rwanda as an apartheid state exclusively ruled by an ethnic Tutsi elite headed by Rwandan President Paul Kagame. Most of all an English-speaking Tutsi elite who grew up in Uganda and joined Kagame in invading Rwanda from Uganda on 1 October 1990. The ninety days known as the Rwandan Genocide were not an isolated bloodbath, but the end of four-year war that began on that date. During that war Kagame's army massacred Hutu civilians on a scale equivalent to or greater than the Tutsi massacres depicted in the movie *Hotel Rwanda*.

Ethnic reconciliation is one of the most boldfaced lies about Rwanda. For years we have been told that President Kagame was Rwanda's saviour, that he swept down out of nowhere to stop the genocide and ended the country's long history of bitter Hutu and Tutsi competition. This US diplomatic cable from Kigali turns the reconciliation myth on its head, and the US State Department, including its higher-ups, know that. They have promoted the lie and lauded the criminal president for the last 25 years anyway. US elites put him in power, and he is their man in Africa. He helps secure access to the trillions of dollars worth of strategic and critical mineral wealth in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, at staggering human cost. At the same time, 38 percent of Rwandan children, a majority of them Hutus, are stunted by malnutrition.



Assange is not a journalist ‘if journalists are propagandists for the ruling class’

Rwanda's brutal ethnic apartheid could lead to another bloodbath, and if it does, there will be blood all over US officials' and elites' hands. They know that is what it is, and they have backed it up and exploited it for the last 25 years.

The Global Intelligence Files

In February 2012, Wikileaks began publishing the Global Intelligence Files, five million emails leaked from Stratfor, an intelligence-for-hire outfit based in Texas, USA.

In the introduction to this release, Wikileaks writes that “they reveal the inner workings of a company that fronts as an intelligence publisher, but provides confidential intelligence services to large corporations, such as Dow Chemical Company, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon and government agencies, including the US Department of Homeland Security, the US Marines, and the Defence Intelligence Agency. The emails show Stratfor's web of informers, pay-off structure, payment-laundering techniques, and psychological methods. For example: ‘...Control means financial, sexual or psychological control.’ - Chief Executive Officer (CEO) George Friedman to Stratfor analyst Reva Bhalla on 6 December 2011.”

There are emails about how Stratfor corrupted the press from Reuters for the Kiev Post.

There is one email in which the Stratfor founder and CEO says he would like to assassinate Julian Assange.

There is another, also written by a Stratfor executive, that says there is a secret indictment of Assange in a federal court in Virginia. We all know that now but that was back in February 2012.

There is a lot more about what Stratfor would like to do to Assange, but, moving on, there is one about how to exploit an Israeli spy providing information on the medical condition of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez back in 2011.

There is another about a Stratfor subdivision called StratCap, whose goal is to use Stratfor's information and analysis to trade in a range of global financial instruments, including government bonds, currencies, etc. It says that in 2011, a Goldman Sachs executive invested over US\$4 million in this scam and joined Stratfor's board of directors.

There is also one about Stratfor staff's revolving door with government offices. Stratfor's Vice-President for Intelligence, Fred Burton, was formerly a special agent with the US State Department's Diplomatic Security Service and was their Deputy Chief of the counterterrorism division.

There is one I take particular interest in headlined “Re: DISCUSSION - RWANDA/SOUTH AFRICA - Rwandans are cold ass mofos.” This describes the exploits of President Kagame's assassination squads in Europe and Africa. Since I have been following their trail for the past ten years, I know more details than there are in

the document, so I wrote that one up under the headline “US Intel: Rwandans Are Cold Ass Mofos.”

Cold as these Rwandan mofos are, they couldn't be colder than those trying to get their hands on Assange. They want to wreak vengeance on his body and mind, maybe even damage his outsized brain, and make a spine-chilling, blood-curdling example of him. So, we have got to throw all we have got at stopping them.

Julian Paul Assange is an Australian journalist, computer programmer and the founder and director of Wikileaks. Wikileaks, which he founded in 2006, is an international publishing organisation known for revealing war crimes, human rights abuses, and corruption. Wikileaks came to international attention in 2010 when it published a series of leaks provided by Chelsea Manning. These leaks included the Collateral Murder video (April 2010), the Afghanistan war logs (July 2010), the Iraq war logs (October 2010), and CableGate (November 2010). After the 2010 leaks, the United States government launched a criminal investigation into Wikileaks and asked allied nations for assistance.

In November 2010, Sweden issued an international arrest warrant for Assange, after questioning him months earlier about allegations of sexual assault. Assange denied the allegations, and said that they were just a pretext for him to be extradited from Sweden to the United States because of his role in publishing secret American documents. Assange surrendered to UK police on 7 December 2010 but was released on bail within 10 days. Having been unsuccessful in his challenge to the extradition proceedings, he breached his £340,000 bail in June 2012 to seek asylum from Ecuador. In August 2012, Assange was granted asylum by Ecuador due to fears of political persecution and possible extradition to the United States. He remained in the Embassy of Ecuador in London for almost seven years. Swedish prosecutors later suspended their investigation and applied to revoke the European arrest warrant in May 2017.

During the 2016 U.S. Democratic Party presidential primaries, Wikileaks hosted emails sent or received by candidate Hillary Clinton from her private email server when she was Secretary of State. The U.S. Intelligence Community, as well as a Special Counsel investigation, concluded that the Russian government carried out a hacking campaign as part of broader efforts of interference in the 2016 United States elections. In 2018, twelve Russian intelligence officers, mostly affiliated with the GRU, were indicted on criminal charges by Special Counsel Robert Mueller; the indictment charges the Russians with carrying out the computer hacking and working with Wikileaks and other organisations to spread the stolen documents. Assange consistently denied any connection to or co-operation with Russia in relation to the leaks, and accused the Clinton campaign of stoking “a neo-McCarthy

hysteria”.

On 11 April 2019, Assange's asylum was withdrawn following a series of disputes with the Ecuadorian authorities. The police were invited into the embassy, and he was arrested.[24] Later that day he was found guilty of breaching the Bail Act and on 1 May 2019 he was sentenced to 50 weeks in prison in the United Kingdom. As a result of the revocation of his asylum, and at the request of his alleged rape victim's lawyer, Swedish prosecutors reopened their investigation in May 2019. Assange is incarcerated in HM Prison Belmarsh.

Early life, family, education

Julian Paul Hawkins was born on 3 July 1971 in Townsville, Queensland, to Christine Ann Hawkins (b. 1951), a visual artist, and John Shipton, an anti-war activist and builder. The couple separated before their son was born.

When Julian Hawkins was a year old, his mother married Brett Assange, an actor, with whom she ran a small theatre company and whom Assange regards as his father (choosing Assange as his surname). His mother had a house in Nelly Bay on Magnetic Island, where they lived from time to time until it was destroyed by fire.

Christine and Brett Assange divorced about 1979. Christine Assange then became involved with Leif Meynell, also known as Leif Hamilton, a member of Australian cult The Family, with whom she had a son before the couple broke up in 1982. Assange had a nomadic childhood and lived in over 30 Australian towns and cities by the time he reached his mid-teens, when he settled with his mother and half-brother in Melbourne.

Assange attended many schools, including Goolmangar Primary School in New South Wales (1979-1983) and Townsville State High School in Queensland as well as being schooled at home. He studied programming, mathematics and physics at Central Queensland University (1994) and the University of Melbourne (2003-2006), but did not complete a degree.

While in his teens, Assange married a woman named Teresa. In 1989 they had a son, Daniel Assange, now a software designer. The couple separated and initially disputed custody of their child. Assange was Daniel's primary caregiver for much of his childhood. Assange has other children; in an open letter to then-French president François Hollande, he stated that his youngest child lives in France with his mother. He also said that his family had faced death threats and harassment because of his work, forcing them to change identities and reduce contact with him.

Hacking

In 1987, aged 16, Assange began hacking under the name Mendax (Latin for “liar”). He and two others—known as “Trax” and “Prime Suspect”—formed a hacking group they called “the International Subversives”. He is thought to have been involved in the WANK (Worms Against Nuclear Killers) hack at NASA in 1989, but he does not acknowledge this.

In September 1991, Assange was

discovered hacking into the Melbourne master terminal of Nortel, a Canadian multinational telecommunications corporation. The Australian Federal Police tapped Assange's phone line (he was using a modem), raided his home at the end of October and eventually charged him in 1994 with 31 counts of hacking and related crimes. In December 1996, he pleaded guilty to 24 charges (the others were dropped) and was ordered to pay reparations of A\$2,100 and released on a good behaviour bond. The perceived absence of malicious or mercenary intent and his disrupted childhood were cited to justify his lenient penalty.

Programming

In 1993, Assange gave technical advice to the Victoria Police Child Exploitation Unit and assisted with prosecutions. In the same year, he was involved in starting one of the first public Internet service providers in Australia, Suburbia Public Access Network. He began programming in 1994, authoring or co-authoring the TCP port scanner Strobe (1995), patches to the open-source database PostgreSQL (1996), the Usenet caching software NNTPCache (1996), the Rubberhose deniable encryption system (1997) (which reflected his growing interest in cryptography), and Surfray, a command-line interface for web-based search engines (2000). During this period, he also moderated the AUCRYPTO forum, ran Best of Security, a website “giving advice on computer security” that had 5,000 subscribers in 1996, and contributed research to Suelette Dreyfus's *Underground* (1997), a book about Australian hackers, including the International Subversives. In 1998, he co-founded the company Earthmen Technology.

Assange stated that he registered the domain leaks.org in 1999, but “didn't do anything with it”. He did, however, publicise a patent granted to the National Security Agency in August 1999, for voice-data harvesting technology: “This patent should worry people. Everyone's overseas phone calls are or may soon be tapped, transcribed and archived in the bowels of an unaccountable foreign spy agency.” Systematic abuse of technology by governments against fundamental freedoms of world citizens remained an abiding concern—more than a decade later, in the introduction to *Cypherpunks* (2012), Assange summarised: “the Internet, our greatest tool for emancipation, has been transformed into the most dangerous facilitator of totalitarianism we have ever seen”.

Wikileaks

After his period of study at the University of Melbourne, Assange and others established Wikileaks in 2006. Assange is a member of the organisation's advisory board and describes himself as the editor-in-chief. From 2007 to 2010, Assange travelled continuously on Wikileaks business, visiting Africa, Asia, Europe and North America.

Wikileaks published secret information, news leaks, and classified media from anonymous sources, including revelations about drone strikes in Yemen, corruption across the Arab world, the extrajudicial executions by Kenyan police, the 2008 Tibetan unrest in China, the “Petrogate” oil scandal in Peru, the leaked emails from the Turkish government published at the height of Erdoğan's post-coup purges in Turkey in December 2016, or collection of more than two million emails from Syrian political figures, government ministries and companies. Assange said of the Syria Files that “it helps us not merely to criticise one group or another, but to understand their interests, actions and thoughts. It is only through understanding this conflict that we can hope to resolve it.”

By 2015, Wikileaks had published more than 10 million documents and associated analyses, and was described by Assange as “a giant library of the world's most persecuted documents”. The published material between 2006 and 2009 attracted various degrees of publicity, but it was only after it began publishing documents supplied by Chelsea Manning, that Wikileaks became a household name.[89] The Manning material included the Collateral Murder video (April 2010) which showed United States soldiers fatally shooting 18 people from a helicopter in Iraq, including journalists Namir Noor-Eldeen and Saeed Chmagh. This material also included the Afghanistan war logs (July 2010), the Iraq war logs (October 2010), a quarter of a million diplomatic cables (November 2010), and the Guantánamo files (April 2011).

BUSINESS

INVESTMENT

Tharisa seeks to tap Zimbabwe's battery minerals potential

LONDON

PLATINUM group metals miner Tharisa is expanding into Zimbabwe with a drilling programme that could deliver results early next year and develop the company's exposure to battery minerals, its chief executive said on Wednesday.

Tharisa is established in the Bushveld region of South Africa, where it is also investing in increasing platinum and chrome output, as it bets on continued consumption, despite expectations of reduced auto-sector demand.

A major use for platinum and palladium is in reducing emissions from gasoline and diesel vehicles. The platinum industry also has its sights on the need for platinum in hydrogen fuel cells, especially for industrial trucks in remote places.

"The world's parking lots are still dominated by internal combustion engines and will be for some time," CEO Phoebos Pouroulis said in an interview.

Tharisa is nevertheless looking to di-

versify its chrome and platinum group metals portfolio with minerals likely to be in deficit in future.

Expansion into the Great Dyke area of Zimbabwe, which is considered to have comparable resources to South Africa's Bushveld region, can help.

"Tharisa already has some copper and nickel," Pouroulis said. "In Zimbabwe the component is materially larger in terms of copper and nickel and even a small amount of cobalt."

Tharisa has exposure to Zimbabwe through its stake in the Pouroulis family's Cyprus-based Karo Resources.

Pouroulis said the company had approval for drilling and could probably deliver initial results early next year.

"On the ground, things are efficient and effective and we are pleasantly surprised," he said, when asked about political instability in Zimbabwe.

In South Africa, redesign of the open pit and investment in equipment have eaten into first-half earnings, but the company said full-year output is on track, as is an expansion plan.

Precision Air resuming flights to Kahama, Tabora

By Guardian Correspondent

THE long wait for the Precision Air's return to Kahama and Tabora is over, as the airline has announced the immediate resumption of its flights there. It will be flying the two destinations every Sunday, Wednesday and Friday from its hub - Dar es Salaam.

Speaking about the "comeback", marketing and corporate affairs manager Hillary Mremi said in a press statement yesterday: "Precision Air recognizes the importance of Kahama and Tabora in economic activities in the northwestern region in Tanzania. Therefore, this strategic decision aims at supporting economic growth especially in the trade, agriculture and mining sector in this region."

"The movement of goods and

people in the region will now be simplified and there will be an easy connection to the dry port at Isaka, which also serves the neighbouring landlocked Rwanda, Burundi and Democratic Republic of Congo," he added.

Mremi appealed to businesses both big and small "to take advantage of the flights to accomplish their businesses and trade deals".

Established in 1993, Precision Air is a public listed airline that provides scheduled flights to over ten destinations within and outside Tanzania from Dar es Salaam, among them Arusha, Kilimanjaro, Serengeti, Mtwara, Kahama, Bukoba, Mwanza, Zanzibar, Tabora, Serengeti, Nairobi, Entebbe and most recently Tanzania's capital - Dodoma.



Infinix general manager Houson Tu gives a short history about firm during the launch of Infinix S4. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Revealing details in new Global Index on Economic Openness

LONDON

THE Legatum Institute, a London-based think-tank with a global vision to see all people lifted out of poverty, has just published the inaugural Global Index of Economic Openness (GIEO).

The inaugural Index ranks 157 countries' openness to commerce, with analysis of what enables or hinders each country's ability to trade domestically and internationally.

Economic openness reaches highest level globally, spreading global trade, innovation and prosperity. But the authors say many Western countries' instinct to protect and turn inwards, combined with a wider stagnation in the quality of governance globally is acting as a brake on economic openness and poses a risk to solving social challenges.

Key findings in the Index include that economic openness is at its highest ever level globally, with some of even the lowest-ranked countries improving and lifting millions of people out of poverty, and that countries with greater levels of economic openness are more productive.

Others are that economic openness, and therefore economic growth, can be improved by policy choices, and that governance is key but its quality is stagnating, acting as a brake on economic openness.

Hong Kong is cited as the world's most open economy, followed by Singapore (second) and the Netherlands (third), with the UK seventh and the US ninth.

The most open economy in South America is Chile (31st) and in Africa it is South Africa (58th). Meanwhile, countries showing most improvement in Economic Openness include India, China and Rwanda.

According to the index, India has reduced the burden of business regulation and made starting a business easier as part of wider liberalising reforms under Prime Minister Narendra Modi that has improved Enterprise Conditions by 20 places since 2009.

China ranks 51st, improving by 13 places since 2009, strengthening Enterprise Conditions and the Environment for Business Creation using the wide availability of skilled labour.

The Chinese government is also prioritising the development of city clusters, notably in the Pearl River Delta, Yangtze River Delta, and the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei economic zone.

Rwanda ranks 78th and is the sub-Saharan African country that has improved the most since 2008, with its Investment Environment now ranked 51st after removing restrictions on foreign investment and making key improvements in Enterprise Conditions by reducing burdens such as lengthy tax filing and making it easier to start a business.

The United Arab Emirates is given as the best-known example of business-friendly reform in the MENA region, rising 21 places in its Enterprise Conditions pillar to 26th and third for its low Burden of Regulation.

The authors say their ambition is that the Index becomes "a valuable tool to make the case for economic growth and development".

"We are also launching our analysis of the openness of two leading economies: the United States and the United Kingdom," they say, adding: "Rising concerns in communities across many developed nations about low wages, the security of homes, and pressures on health and education systems are increasing demands on politicians for protection from change, most visible in the rise of populist and nationalist movements in the UK, US and France."

They say all the evidence shows that solving these social problems "requires us to not lose sight of what we know drives economic growth... We must resist the temptation to turn inwards because Economic Openness is a critical path to real prosperity - economic and social wellbeing".

Baroness Philippa Stroud, CEO at The Legatum Institute, said at yesterday's launch of the Index: "Our research shows that open, competitive and connected economies not only increase prosperity for people living in those nations, they also prevent crony capitalism and corruption."

"At a time when many nations around the world are at a crossroads, we need to restate the case for entrepreneurialism and free markets with a pro-business agenda that is open to trade, skills and investment," she noted.

"Economic Openness has delivered decades of economic and social

wellbeing, turning inwards, putting up barriers and closing our economies to the world poses risks to future prosperity," said the baroness.

She further noted: "I believe that the onus is on all of us to create and encourage a new wave of Economic Openness. We are now living through a new global digital revolution, and this presents huge opportunities to deliver economic and social prosperity for a new generation."

Dr Stephen Brien, Director of Policy at The Legatum Institute, chipped in: "The benefits of economic competition are widely understood and the language of openness is easy to use, so with this Index we are seeking to define and measure openness in a way that can help political leaders and policy makers to effect change by enhancing Economic Openness."

"Open economies improve domestic and international welfare, and there are many levers for leaders to deploy that can enhance competitiveness and openness, but it requires domestic political will," he said.

This report marks the inaugural publication of the Legatum Institute's Global Index of Economic Openness. It measures the extent to which the economic systems of 157 countries around the world enable trade, competition and productivity - by measuring four pillars that describe the policy choices for countries: Market Access and Infrastructure, Investment Environment, Enterprise Conditions and Governance.

'Booth babes' cause controversy at business show

LONDON

Whether it's effective, inappropriate or both, some firms still use women in skimpy dresses to market their wares.

Visitors to this week's Business Show 2019 have expressed surprise and dismay that an exhibitor used "booth babes" to attract attention to their stand.

The event was held at ExCeL London and was billed as the "the biggest business event in Europe".

But some attendees shared photos online of four women wearing branded, figure-hugging dresses and handing out fliers.

'Sincerely apologise'

Known as booth babes, women wearing skimpy dresses used to be standard fare at events like this, intended to attract male attendees to stalls and marketing materials.

But in recent years there has been more criticism of this as a promotional tactic.

In a statement to the BBC, organisers of the event said:

"The Prysm Media Group, would like to sincerely apologise to those who feel upset about certain garments worn by associates of exhibitors during the 2019 Business Show.

"We would like to thank those who pointed this issue out as this is a great opportunity for us to better our business practices."

The company in question, VLSA Ltd, paid the women £100 plus £20 expenses for each of the two days, requiring them to wear branded dresses, distribute fliers and pose for photographs at the exhibition.

A spokesperson for the firm said there had been no negative reaction at the event.

However, visitors took to Twitter to question the use of booth babes at a serious and inclusive business exhibition, sharing photographs that inspired further criticism from people who were not there.

One attendee tweeted: "Seriously @TheBusinessShow I'd have a



Some sports still use women in skimpy dresses to promote their events

word with your exhibitors. Promo girls and a photographer from VLSA is a bit outdated."

"A rare colourised picture actually taken in 1895," joked Ben Lovell on Twitter.

'Polite attitudes'

Many exhibitions have banned the

use of scantily-clad women being hired to pose by stands as a marketing ploy.

Last year, the cyber-security conference Infosecurity Europe apologised after one of its exhibitors used women in red dresses as a promotional tool, saying "booth babes are indeed a step backwards for the industry" and that exhibitors were

expressly banned from using this tactic.

Pavel Sisov, a director at VLSA, said there had been no negative feedback at the event and that he was surprised to hear people had questioned it online.

"We have been extremely busy with all the interest the models brought in with their smiles and polite attitude," he told the BBC, adding that a company

on a nearby stall was so impressed by their success that it said it planned to hire models for its next show.

He also said the term booth babes was disrespectful to the women he hired for the event. VLSA had originally advertised for "show girls" to hand out fliers and pose for photographs.

'Needs outlawing'

While some people may dismiss the presence of women wearing tiny branded dresses as perhaps old fashioned but not harmful, others disagree.

Julie Thompson Dredge, owner of lifestyle PR firm Frame, said: "This needs to be outlawed - it's not flying in Ibiza in 1999."

One female tech commentator, who spoke anonymously for fear of a backlash, says this kind of tactic has a real impact on other women attending conferences.

"It is harder to get respect as a legitimate delegate working at conferences when people are hiring in 'brand representatives"

who don't know anything about what you're selling or showcasing," she says.

"It means anyone looking to have a meaningful conversation just beelines for a male team member."

'Outdated'

There's also debate over whether it actually works for the businesses involved as well.

Lee Ali, managing director of global exhibition company Expo Stars Interactive, says this kind of promotion can backfire for companies.

"If businesses want to get the most out of exhibitions, they have to move away from outdated tactics like asking promotional staff to wear revealing outfits.

"It's not only sexist and inappropriate, it's embarrassing and makes people really uncomfortable.

"Thankfully, most businesses that invest in exhibitions have moved away from this kind of nonsense but you do still see the odd case."

Turmoil at Thyssenkrupp marks battle for Germany's economic identity

FRANKFURT

When Thyssenkrupp CEO Guido Kerkhoff announced plans to list its prized elevators unit last week, he set off a battle for the conglomerate's future that could test Germany's brand of "social market" capitalism.

Kerkhoff had little choice but to think the unthinkable when the company's share price sank to a 15-year low on May 8. The plan to take elevators public not only broke with long tradition but marked the abandonment of a turnaround plan he himself had unveiled less than eight months before.

Now Thyssenkrupp's future is in play, with activist investors on the one side baying for a restructuring of the group to drive up value, and its top shareholder - the charitable Krupp foundation - and workers on the other side with a mandate to protect the unity of the company and jobs.

It's also a clash of cultures and of differing visions of capitalism: Anglo-Saxon profit maximization pitted against Germany's long-term focused social market economy model.

Kerkhoff's strategy will not only decide the fate of his career, but also the shape of Thyssenkrupp - a poster child of Germany's so-called Rhineland capitalism, which buttressed the country's economic success by emphasizing social policies to protect workers rights as much as the rules of free enterprise.

Thyssenkrupp's conglomerate structure has fallen out of favor in the market, reflected in the deterioration of its share price. Many investors say Kerkhoff and the non-profit foundation must move to reshape the group's portfolio, including through spin-offs and divestments.

Ingo Speich, head of sustainability and corporate governance

at top-20 shareholder Deka Investment, said this kind of active portfolio management was the likeliest and best solution for the group.

"Parts will be separated out and the resulting proceeds used to make acquisitions."

Bankers and investors are now eyeing the prospect of finding new owners for the group's sprawling businesses, ranging from steel and elevators to car parts and submarines.

Components Technology, which makes automotive parts, and Industrial Solutions, which makes chemical and cement plants, may be merged with sector peers in the medium to long-term, according to three financial sources familiar with the matter.

Elevators may end up in the hands of Kone or Schindler, should they intercept Thyssenkrupp's IPO plans, while plant engineering could be combined with Linde's engineering unit, one of the sources said.

Other investment bank pitches to potential buyers will focus on finding a partner for some of Thyssenkrupp's automotive businesses, where Bosch, ZF Friedrichshafen, Nexteer or Mando are seen as potential players, according to the sources.

The company's Rothe Erde machine parts unit may attract interest from Sweden's SKF, Schaeffler and Japan's NSK, they said.

"This is the breakup of Thyssenkrupp," said a senior banker who declined to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter.

All the companies either declined to comment on potential deals or were not immediately available to comment.

Kerkhoff has acknowledged that new ownership structures for its businesses is needed to turn the company around. But Thyssenkrupp declined to comment on any future asset sales.

Such a process will however be lengthy and difficult, according to three separate financial and



FILE PHOTO: A logo of Thyssenkrupp AG is pictured at the company's headquarters in Essen, Germany, November 21, 2018. REUTERS/Thilo Schmuelgen/File Photo

labor sources, for two reasons: apart from elevators, all other units of Thyssenkrupp are less profitable than their peer average, are going through a restructuring or are in need of one.

This is reducing their value and makes it less probable that an M&A frenzy will ensue.

"I don't see quick, easy wins unless assets are sold under value," said another senior banker. "A fire sale is not the way forward."

Secondly, powerful labor representatives at Thyssenkrupp, who control half of the seats on group's 20-member supervisory board, are willing to oppose M&A that will result in further job cuts

among its 161,000-strong workforce.

The 10 workers' representatives can team up with the Alfred Krupp von Bohlen and Halbach Foundation, which holds a 21 percent stake, to veto major changes.

The foundation's mandate is to preserve the unity of the company while at the same time relying on healthy dividends to fund its non-profit activities for promoting the "common good".

It therefore needs to tread carefully, preserving the company's future without obstructing needed reforms.

The elevator IPO, part of a plan that also includes 6,000 job re-

ductions, has found support because it brings in cash that is badly needed to fix Thyssenkrupp's balance sheet and strengthen the businesses as a whole.

"It will be a difficult path for the company and its employees. But we won't abandon workers," said Markus Grolms, vice chairman of Thyssenkrupp's supervisory board and secretary at IG Metall, Germany's biggest labor union.

The conflict at Thyssenkrupp also illustrates the growing influence of activist shareholders on European household names, with demands to tackle under-performance and simplify structures.

Swedish investor Cevian, a shareholder since 2013 that has long pressed for change, holds an 18 percent stake, while more recent investor Elliott holds under 3 percent. Both have criticized Thyssenkrupp's under-performance.

Activists argue specialized businesses are often more highly valued than conglomerates because in times of growth, high-potential assets do not have to share the balance sheet with cash-consuming, lower-return businesses.

Conglomerates tend to be valued at a trading multiple of some of their lowest performing busi-

ness resulting in the so-called conglomerate discount and higher refinancing costs.

In recent years, groups that have reshaped their portfolios through spin-offs and sales have outperformed peers in terms of share price development, Goldman Sachs said in a study last year, a trend which helped asset disposals in Europe reach their highest level since 2007.

"It's not necessarily that boards and companies were doing things wrong before," said Rich Thomas, managing director and head of European shareholder advisory at investment bank Lazarus.



Photo taken on May 10, 2019 shows a conference entitled "Italy-China Partnership in the New Silk Road" held in Rome, Italy. The conference was held Friday here, at which Italian government officials and experts voiced their support for the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), discussing the possibility of Italy becoming the BRI's terminal in southern Europe. (Xinhua/Cheng Tingting)

Pakistan determined to ensure security of CPEC: Pakistani military spokesperson

ISLAMABAD

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a living example of the deep-rooted friendship between the two countries and Pakistan is fully determined to ensure the security of the project, Pakistani military spokesperson said on Thursday.

Major General Asif Ghafoor, director general of Pakistani army's media wing, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), made the remarks

while talking to Chinese media here.

Talking about the security measures taken by the army to protect the CPEC, the ISPR chief said that the Pakistani military has raised a whole division-sized force to ensure the security of the CPEC, and they are planning to deploy another division for this purpose.

Ghafoor said that his country faced a very challenging war against terrorism during the last two decades, and now

the security situation is under control.

Talking about the CPEC's role in the country, the officer said that economic prosperity brought by the CPEC will fail the motives of terrorists as with the success of CPEC, more employment and business opportunities will be unveiled and with more economic opportunities coming in, people's lifestyle will improve and inimical elements will fail gradually.

"The security condition of Balochistan got better since the launch of the CPEC in Balochistan, now there is better infrastructure, many Chinese projects are underway there, and with every coming day, security, development and investment situation will get better in the province. Today's Gwadar is not what it used to be two years ago and in the future it will be on par with ports of developed countries," he said.

Briefing about the investment opportunities in Pakistan, Ghafoor said that Pakistan is doing its best to create an environment where investors can come and do their business as the security situation has been greatly improved.

Though there are a few sporadic terrorist incidents, but investors should not be discouraged from these rare attacks and keep their trust intact in peace, Ghafoor noted.

Italy could become Belt and Road terminal in southern Europe: officials

ROME

A conference entitled "Italy-China Partnership in the New Silk Road" was held Friday here, at which Italian government officials and experts voiced their support for the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), discussing the possibility of Italy becoming the BRI's terminal in southern Europe.

Joining the BRI could be an opportunity to join a new global path of concrete multilateralism, said Manlio Di Stefano, Italian Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, at the conference.

"Italy is a natural terminal for the new Silk Road" despite strong pressure endured during negotiations to sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with China to join the BRI, he said.

Italy has the edge as the first G7 power to sign an MoU, although the edge will not last forever, said Di Stefano.

"The (Italian) government looks very kindly on the agreements inked with China. We have to stay the course," added the undersecretary.

Among the experts attending the conference, Vladimiro Giacche, president of Italian think tank Centro Europa Ricerche (CER), said the BRI is the only project that aims to relaunch growth with real investment after the 2008 financial crisis.

According to an analysis conducted by the CER, the BRI could unleash the potential of international trade through reinforcing connectivity, said Giacche.

General Manager of COSCO Shipping Lines Italy Marco Donati believes that the BRI's goal is not to colonize, because "the Chinese culture does not have the concept of colonization."

According to Donati, BRI logistic improvements will benefit both

countries and such a logistic edge will be fundamental for Italy to become competitive on the global stage, considering its export-centered economy.

"For COSCO, Italy is the second most important country in Europe, second only to Germany, and we are getting closer," said Donati.

Closing the conference, Senator Vito Petrocelli, head of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate, stressed the possible role that the BRI will play in helping Italy reduce its North-South development gap, enhancing people-to-people exchanges and promoting cooperation in third countries.

The presence of Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte at the second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing in April is evidence enough of Italy's acknowledgement of the BRI, Petrocelli told Xinhua.

Petrocelli said Italy is ready to become BRI's terminal in southern Europe, not just in the distribution of goods because "New Silk Road" also means people-to-people cooperation.

The event, organized by the Italian parliamentary group Unione Interparlamentare di Amicizia Italia-Cina, was also attended by Chinese Ambassador to Italy Li Ruiyu, who highlighted the need for both Italy and China to nurture the Belt and Road, expand infrastructure connectivity and create new channels for people-to-people exchanges.

Over the past six years, total trade between China and other countries participating in the BRI has exceeded 6 trillion dollars, and China's investment in these countries has surpassed 80 billion dollars, with nearly 300,000 jobs created so far, according to official data.

WORLD

Biden shows early strength, but pitfalls loom in 2020 US presidential race

WASHINGTON

FORMER U.S. Vice President Joe Biden has shown surprising strength in the first three weeks of his campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination, prompting a persistent question: Can anyone stop him?

Biden holds a significant lead in opinion polls over the 23 other Democratic contenders. Republican President Donald Trump is treating him like his top threat in 2020.

Ahead of his formal campaign kickoff on Saturday at an outdoor rally in Philadelphia, Biden, 76, has seemingly put to rest doubts about his age and his ability to raise money as well as questions over whether he is out of step with the Democratic Party.

"The rest of the race now revolves around Joe Biden," said Joe Trippi, a longtime Democratic operative who is not aligned with the campaign.

But traps may lie ahead. The first major opportunity for Biden's competitors to dent his lead comes next month in the first of a dozen Democratic presidential debates.

Biden could find himself as the leading target of attacks, particularly from progressives. He also has a history of gaffes, something that could be problematic in the national spotlight.

"I've long said Joe Biden's best days will be the beginning of this cam-

paign," said Charles Chamberlain, executive director of the progressive advocacy group Democracy for America.

According to Real Clear Politics, Biden is backed by about 40% of the Democratic electorate on average in opinion polls, giving him more than a 20 percentage-point lead over his nearest challenger, U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont.

Experienced presidential strategists told Reuters that while they expect some other Democrats to eventually become top contenders, Biden's strength is likely sustainable.

They cited two main factors: The massive Democratic field makes it difficult for any one candidate to stand out, and voters tend to be risk-averse when seeking a candidate to topple a sitting president.

FAR AFIELD

In recent elections, early front-runners such as Democrat Al Gore, himself a former vice president, in 2000 and Republican Mitt Romney in 2012 largely kept a lock on the nomination, despite some bumps along the way.

In 2008, Democratic favorite Hillary Clinton was overtaken by Barack Obama to secure the nomination, but Obama took advantage of a relatively small field to steadily amass support as the top alternative to Clinton. When Clinton ran again in 2016, Sanders tried to do the same thing with a simi-



Former US Vice President Joe Biden

larly small field and almost succeeded.

That becomes exponentially harder with the 2020 scrum, with its 20-plus candidates all vying for attention and money. Trippi said more than a dozen Democrats trying to challenge Biden have consulted Trippi on strategy.

"I've told every single one of them that Joe Biden is going to be more formidable than they thought, and it was going to be tough for anyone to emerge from this field," he said.

Biden also is aided by the perception among some voters that he may be a safer choice to take on Trump than a less-known politician.

In the 2004 primary, Democrat John Kerry, a longtime party fixture with a strong national-security background, used that argument to wrest the nomination from Howard Dean, like Sanders an upstart progressive from Vermont.

Robert Shrum, Kerry's top strategist at the time, said Democrats began to panic at the thought of running Dean against Republican President George W. Bush.

Which candidate could beat Bush became "the defining question," Shrum said.

AVOIDING LANDMINES

Shrum cautioned, however, the 2020 race could still shift. Biden would be the oldest president ever elected, and he will need to "seem vig-

orous and energetic" at the debates, Shrum said.

"This is a dynamic process," Shrum said. "It is not frozen in amber. A lot depends on his conduct."

Biden, who spent 40 years in the U.S. Senate and two terms as Obama's vice president, must also defend his record to progressive voters who view him as too moderate.

In the past week alone, Biden has been challenged over his stance on combating climate change and his support for the 1990s crime bill, which is viewed by critics as leading to mass incarceration of African-Americans.

"When we get to that whites-of-their-eyes stage of the campaign and candidates realize the only way to improve their market share is to take Biden head-on, that's when the real test begins," said Kevin Madden, a former top aide to Romney.

Those tensions within the party could lead to some tough stretches for Biden, despite his current position. In 2012, Romney was the early front-runner, only to yield to challengers such as Rick Perry and Rick Santorum at different times before finally re-asserting himself as the favorite.

Madden said Romney's campaign made hats with the slogan "The Long Slog" for a reason.

"No one is going to give you the nomination," he said, "and every other candidate has a plan to take it away from you."

Agencies

Xi's vision on civilizations inspires hope for humanity's future

BEIJING

CHINESE President Xi Jinping's speech at the opening of the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations on Wednesday has been echoed by many as his vision inspires hope for a brighter future for Asia and humanity.

At the grand gathering, Xi (pictured) said that "the intensifying global challenges humanity are facing now require concerted efforts from countries across the world," highlighting the role of culture and civilization to cope with common challenges.

"History tells that pursuing the superiority of one's own people and culture causes great tragedies to mankind," Luigi Gambardella, president of ChinaEU, a business-led international digital association in Brussels, said. "The principles of mutual respect and equal treatment should be adhered to by all to address our common challenges."

EQUAL DIALOGUE SUSTAINS MUTUAL LEARNING

Inside and outside its venue, the conference was widely hailed as a new platform for civilizations in Asia and beyond to engage in dialogue and exchanges on an equal footing and to facilitate mutual learning.

In his keynote speech, the Chi-

nese president raised a four-point proposal to consolidate the "cultural foundation" of a community with a shared future for Asia and humanity: treating each other with respect and as equals; appreciating the beauty of all civilizations; adhering to openness, inclusiveness, mutual learning; and keeping pace with the times.

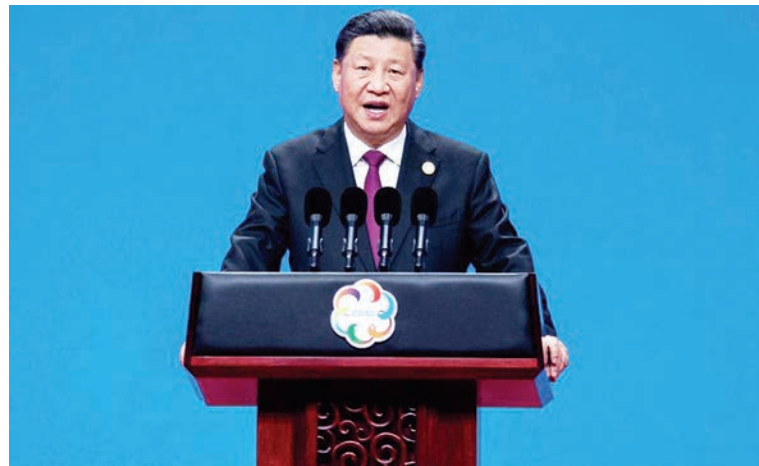
Peter Frankopan, a professor at Oxford University, said that "it's important that we live in a world where we work out how to listen to each other's opinions. We work out to collaborate closer together."

"What we've been hearing in this conference again and again is about the need for mutual respect," he added.

Likewise, "it is a very good initiative to have a dialogue between civilizations, at the time when a lot of changes are happening (pertaining to) religious and economic diversity," Satyendra Kumar Upadhyay, an Indian scholar with the Somaiya Institute of Management Studies and Research, said.

It is foolish to believe that one's race and civilization are superior to that of others, and it is disastrous to willfully reshape or even replace other civilizations, Xi said.

"Increasing reciprocal openness and working on people-to-people exchanges and mutual learning" can help strengthen cul-



tural ties between civilizations, said Fabio Massimo Parenti, a professor of international studies at the International Institute Lorenzo de' Medici in Florence, Italy.

Such an approach "can work only if we all reject superiority attitudes," he added.

CIVILIZATIONS DON'T HAVE TO CLASH

The conference came at a time when certain countries have resorted to the "clash of civilizations" argument amid rising protectionism and unilateralism.

Xi said that various civilizations are not destined to clash as long as people are able to appreciate the beauty of all civilizations, which became a hot topic after his speech.

Bundit Limschoon, secretary

general of Asia Cooperation Dialogue, said more tolerance is needed. This would help us to open our minds and learn from each other, he said.

China says no to the so-called "clash of civilizations" and sees the beauty of each civilization. As Xi has said, a large number of outstanding cultural works from other countries are brought to China, and a lot of Chinese cultural works are being introduced to other countries.

"Clashes of civilization will only happen if people expect it to happen. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy," Ole Doring, a German expert with the Berlin Institute of Global Health, said. "I don't think it's even called a theory, it's just a wrong prediction."

CHINA WALKS ITS TALK

Calling China a doer not a talker, many said that China has been collaborating with other countries to turn its proposals of dialogue among civilizations and people's longing for a better life into reality, with the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and a community with a shared future for Asia and humanity frequently mentioned.

Culture "serves as an important instrument to promote people-to-people connectivity between countries, contributing strongly to better understanding and fostering closer relationships among peoples across the world," Bosengkhom Vongdara, Lao minister of information, culture and tourism, said.

"This is highlighted in various aspects of the policies of the BRI," he said. Echoing a similar view, MS Siddiqui, a Bangladeshi economist, said the BRI connectivity will "enhance global connection and the world will get more communication facilities to exchange knowledge and share the culture to enrich the Asian and the global community."

China, an open civilization with a very long history, serves as a "catalyst for stability and qualitative development" in the 21st century, David Gosset, a French expert on international affairs and China, said. **Xinhua**

Russia has no plans to withdraw from Council of Europe, says Lavrov

MOSCOW

RUSSIA is not planning to withdraw from the Council of Europe, it remains committed to financial obligations, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told a ministerial session of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers.

"We are not seeking to quit the Council of Europe," he said, dismissing attempts to spread rumors about that. "We are not reneging on any of our commitments, including financial ones," the Russian diplomat told the 129th ministerial session yesterday. The text of his speech has been uploaded to the website of the Russian Foreign Ministry.

The foreign minister also gave high marks to the Council of Europe's contribution to the development of the Russian national law, reforms of the judicial system, penitentiary system and the settlement of many other humanitarian matters.

"We are interested in continuing our activity in the Council of Europe on the basis of rules of international law, goals and principles of the UN Charter that must be interpreted and applied consistently," the minister added.

Russia and the Council of Europe

In April 2014, Russia's delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) was stripped of its key rights, including the right to vote, over the situation in Ukraine and Crimea's reunification with Russia.

The issue of restoring the rights of the Russian delegation was raised at PACE twice throughout 2015 but sanctions remained in place.

In response, Russia suspended its participation in PACE's activities. The country did not apply for confirmation of its rights in 2016-2018. Moscow suggested PACE's regulations be amended to ensure that no one could strip lawmakers of their rights except their voters.

Secretary General of the Council of Europe Thorbjorn Jagland said on October 10 that Russia's membership in the organization's Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly might be suspended starting from June 2019 due to non-payment of monetary contributions.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in response that Moscow would quit the Council of Europe if opposing member states called for expelling Russia.

In January 2019, the two houses of the Russian parliament issued statements, pointing out there were no reasons for Russia to return to PACE in 2019. In addition, the State Duma upheld the move to suspend the payment of the country's contribution.

On April 10, PACE members adopted a resolution on the role and mission of the Assembly, which, in part, mentions the need to maintain Russia's Council of Europe membership and calls on Moscow to form a delegation to PACE and pay membership dues.

The resolution says that PACE's sanctions against the Russian delegation following Crimea's reunification with Russia and the country's subsequent decision to terminate participation in the Assembly's activities caused discord within the organization. **Agencies**

Lake Chad Basin no longer safe haven for Boko Haram

ABUJA

THE Lake Chad Basin is no longer a safe haven for terror group Boko Haram, as joint military efforts by countries in the region have yielded good results so far, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari said on Thursday.

"We have led vigorous military campaigns against the terrorists by re-organizing the multinational joint task force which had dislodged them," Buhari, represented by Nigeria's minister of interior Abdulrahman Dambazzau, said at the closing of the 16th Annual General Meeting of West African Police Chiefs Committee and Meeting of the Forum of Ministers in charge of Security in Abuja.

He said in the past four years, Nigeria, working with regional and international allies, had taken drastic measures and spared no effort in the

fight against Boko Haram.

The Nigerian president urged the regional security chiefs to share their experiences, re-assess and harmonize crime control and operations in their various countries to see the end of the terror group.

He said the insecurity posed by corruption, terrorism, communal clashes, and kidnap for ransom, organized crimes, among others, were some vices threatening the region's peace, progress, integration, and development.

Buhari attributed the vulnerability of the region to criminal activities and other threats to peace and security to the vast borders and proximity to the Sahel.

Countries in attendance at the Abuja meeting included Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

Turkey deepens ties with Iraq amid regional instabilities

ANKARA

TURKEY and Iraq have deepened their relations and fostered trade, economic and political cooperation during Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi's visit to Ankara amid regional instabilities, said experts.

The visiting prime minister met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday, discussing issues such as Turkey's concerns on the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) activities in northern Iraq and the new

border crossing to be established between the two countries.

They also discussed the possibility of increasing the trade volume from 10 billion U.S. dollars to more than 20 billion dollars. Erdogan said a mutually beneficial military cooperation and trust agreement is also part of their discussion, state-run Anadolu Agency reported. The defense ministers and intelligence chiefs of the two countries will meet soon to further discuss details of the agreement, he added.

Following the visit of the Iraqi prime

minister, a Turkish delegation chaired by Trade Minister Ruhsar Pekcan is slated to attend the Turkey-Iraq Business Forum in Iraq's capital Baghdad.

"Turkey needs a stable Iraq amid increasing challenges in the Middle East and the continuing war in Syria. Iraq for its part needs Turkey's thriving business experience and capacity for its reconstruction after the defeat of the Islamic State (IS)," said Oytun Orhan, a Turkish analyst.

Turkey claimed the biggest share of Iraq's reconstruction bill by pledging 5

billion dollars at the international donor conference held last year.

Orhan, a researcher at the Ankara-based Center for Middle Eastern Studies, pointed out that after several years of ups and downs in bilateral relations, Iraq and Turkey have managed to restore ties on the basis of mutual interests.

The Iraqi prime minister's visit also came as the United States has announced the lift of sanctions exemption for a number of countries importing oil from Iran, including Turkey.

"Energy cooperation with Iraq is crucial especially after Washington's announcement of ending waivers. Ankara is looking for alternative suppliers for its increasing oil needs and Iraq is the most feasible choice given its proximity to Turkey," said Orhan.

To further improve trade deals, the two countries have agreed to open a new border crossing. The existing Habur border crossing, dubbed as "Turkey's opening to the Middle East" and through which 1.6 million vehicles pass annually, has not been able to meet de-

mands. In a sign of further enhancing ties, the Iraqi government has permitted Turkey to re-open general consulates in Mosul in northern Iraq and Basra in the south as well as to launch a consulate in Najaf. The opening of a consulate in Kirkuk, home to the Turkish-speaking Turkmen minority, is also on the agenda.

"Turkey regards Iraq as one of the key regional partners whose stability and security are essential for peace in the Middle East," said Serkan Demirtas, a political commentator and journalist.

Modi faces backlash for backing terror accused candidate Pragma Thakur

BHOHAL

FOR nearly a decade, Pragma Thakur was known mostly as the saffron-clad Hindu ascetic shuttling in and out of Indian courts, flanked by police, facing charges under an anti-terrorism law for plotting a bomb attack on Muslims.

Last month, the 49-year-old was fielded as a candidate by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the current general election, in which he is seeking a second term.

Overnight, Thakur, who has been out on bail since 2017, emerged as a symbol of a Hindu nationalist movement that is showing increasing intolerance towards Muslims in the Hindu-dominated nation.

The five years of Modi's rule have seen an increasing number of attacks on Muslims by right-wing groups. But the brazenness of Thakur's candidacy has still stunned many.

It's the first time a leading political party in India has fielded a candidate accused of terrorism in an election.

"They are addressing a very extreme form of the Hindutva fold," said Nilanjana Mukhopadhyay, a New Delhi-based biographer of Modi, referring to the BJP's Hindu-first ideology.

Thakur says she had nothing to do with the 2008 explosion near several mosques in the Muslim-majority town of Malegaon in western India. Six Muslims were killed and more than a hundred people injured. According to court filings, the motorcycle on which the explosives were strapped was Thakur's, and she was among those who planned the attack to avenge "jihadi activities."

Indian law allows candidates

charged with crimes to contest elections, but not convicts. The trial against Thakur started in December but a final verdict is not expected anytime soon.

Modi and BJP leaders have come out strongly in defence of her candidature.

BJP President Amit Shah told a television channel last month that Thakur was given a ticket to contest "so that the whole world can know that these accusations against her were fabricated".

DEFENDS GANDHI'S KILLER

The BJP argues there is no such thing as a Hindu terrorist, and portrays charges against her as an affront to all Hindus.

"You are saying that a saffron-clad person is a terrorist? What is this?" said Prabhakar Jha, the BJP's national vice president in central India's Bhopal city, where Thakur is contesting. He was referring to the robes worn by Hindu ascetics.

Voting in Bhopal was on May 12, and results are due on May 23.

Thakur stirred fresh controversy on Thursday when she called the right-wing Hindu, Nathuram Godse, who killed India's independence hero Mohandas "Mahatma" Gandhi in 1948, a patriot. "Those who call him a terrorist should look within. This election will deliver a fitting reply to such people," she said.

The BJP quickly distanced itself from the comments and Thakur later apologised.

"Whatever has been said about Gandhi or Godse (Nathuram Godse), it's terrible," Modi said in a television interview on Friday.

"In a civilised society, this kind



Pragya Singh Thakur, leader of ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), shows her ink-marked finger after casting her vote, outside a polling station in Bhopal, India recently. REUTERS

of language and thinking does not work... I cannot forgive her."

Thakur declined to be interviewed for this story. According to her family and supporters, she is a pious nationalist and champion of women's rights who was a former youth politics leader known for fiery speeches.

Born in a village in central India, she grew up to become a leader of a youth group linked to the BJP, and usually clad in a shirt and jeans, hair cropped short, came to be referred to as "didi", or elder sister, her sister Upma said.

Former members of the youth

group said Thakur was known then as a "dabang", or daredevil, not afraid to pick a fight. One said she would carry a "katta" - a locally-made pistol - although others said there was no proof.

Days after gaining the candidacy, Thakur boasted about her role in demolishing a 16th century mosque in the northern Ayodhya city in 1992 - an event that sparked some of India's deadliest communal riots.

"I was there, I had broken the structure, and I will go back to build the temple," Thakur said in a campaign speech, echoing BJP's promise to build

a temple at the mosque site.

TORTURE CLAIMS

Thakur, whose family says she is a cancer survivor, has often wept while describing the torture she claims she endured in custody.

But the Supreme Court said in 2011 it found no merit in her allegations. The National Human Rights Commission said in 2015 her claims "were not substantiated by facts".

Her media relations head, Hitesh Bajpai, said there was proof she was tortured, but declined to elaborate.

Kremlin says response to new US sanctions will be based on reciprocity

SOCHI

RUSSIA will take countermeasures in response to US sanctions against the Chechen special unit Terek of Russia's National Guard (Rosgvardiya) proceeding from the principle of "reciprocity" and its own national interests, presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said.

"One way or another, the principle of 'reciprocity' is to be observed. It will require certain countermeasures to such destructive steps," he said, when asked if Moscow would retaliate against Washington's decision.

The Kremlin spokesman pointed out "the principle of reciprocity will be observed first thing." "The national interests will be observed in the first place. Everything will be done in conformity with national interests," Peskov added.

The US Department of the Treasury on Thursday complemented the so-called Magnitsky Act sanction list with the Chechen special rapid reaction unit Terek and five Russians, including the unit's commander Abuzar Vismuradov and four other persons - Genady Karlov, Sergei Kossiyev, Ruslan Geremeyev and Yelena Trikulya.

The Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act was adopted by the US Congress and signed by President Barack Obama in December 2012. It envisages unilateral sanctions against Russian officials who from the United States' point of view are responsible for human rights violations in their own country. **Agencies**

Washington's trade bullyism: lies and fallacies

BEIJING

WASHINGTON is waging a bullying campaign in an attempt to coerce Beijing into swallowing trade concessions it cannot accept.

While wielding a big stick of punitive tariffs, the Trump administration is also trying to mislead the international community into believing that China is to blame for the ongoing trade tensions.

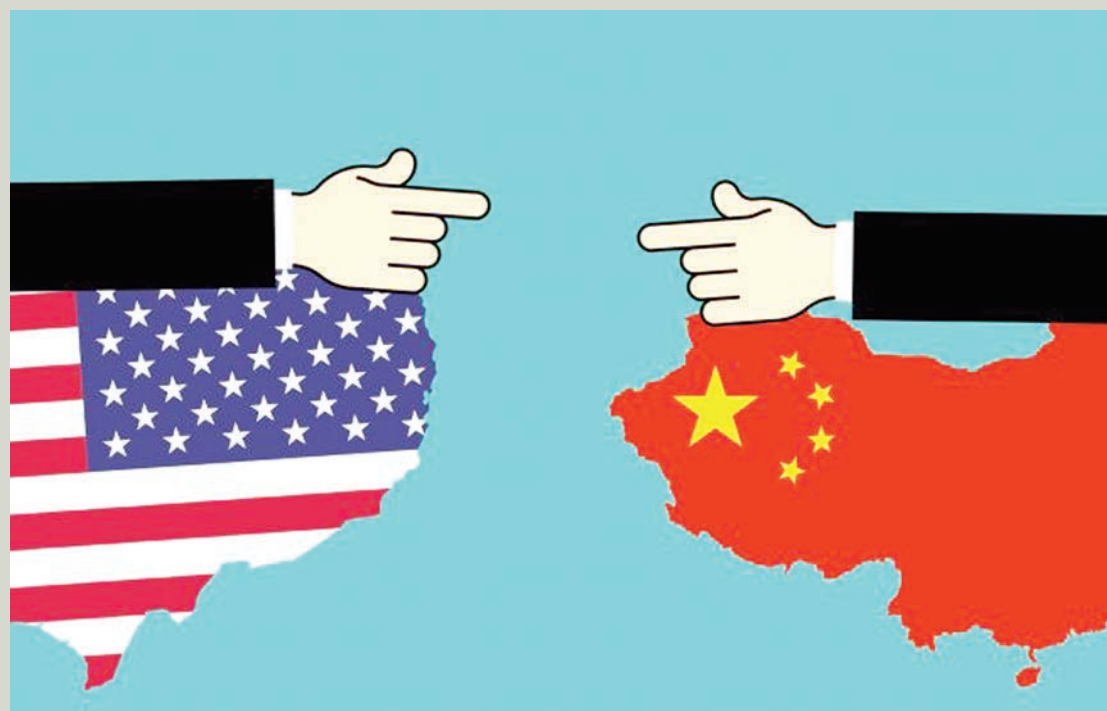
The first lie is that China has been deliberately pursuing a huge trade surplus with the United States.

Mainstream economists worldwide have already refuted such a claim. According to Stephen Roach, a senior fellow at Yale University, the fact that the United States ran trade deficits with over 102 countries in 2018 reflects a profound shortfall in domestic savings.

When Americans are consuming far more than their country can deliver, the United States needs to import surplus savings from overseas and run huge current-account deficits to attract the foreign funds. Therefore, trade deficits are the result and not some kind of a foreign conspiracy.

The truth is that tariffs on imported products would not help the United States water down any trade deficit. Statistics show that in 2018, the year when Washington kicked off its tariff bullying, U.S. merchandise and service trade deficits still increased by 12.5 percent, reaching 621 billion U.S. dollars, a ten-year record high.

Another unwarranted accusation made by Washington is that trading with China is slashing jobs in the United States. According to a report released by the U.S.-China Business Council,



China-U.S. trade has supported almost 2.6 million jobs in the United States across a range of industries.

Raising tariffs is highly likely to cause job losses in the United States because supply chains would be disrupted and corporate costs would rise.

As for Washington accusing China of forced technology transfers and theft, don't believe it. Such accusations are conjured up by desperate U.S. politicians looking to score points. They have ignored the fact that technology transfers between Chinese firms and their foreign partners happen on a consensual basis.

Over the past few decades, China has achieved some notable progress in cutting-edge technology because it has stepped up measures to encourage innovation and protect intellectual property rights.

So far, China has joined almost all major international conventions on intellectual property.

Its firms always pay for patents they use. In 2017, royalties paid by China to the United States reached 7.13 billion U.S. dollars, accounting for a quarter of the total intellectual property charges China paid to other countries, according to data.

China has worked hard to improve its business environment for foreign investment. In January this year, the U.S. electric carmaker Tesla Inc. broke ground in Shanghai to build a factory, becoming the first foreign automobile company to do so in China. That is a vote of confidence in the country.

Last but not least, Washington's belief that tariffs will be paid by China is another lie. In fact, these tariffs are a tax on Americans.

Already, U.S. consumers are feeling the heat. According to a recent study by the University of Chicago and a Federal Reserve Board Governor, the price of washing machines has gone up by an average of 12 percent after

additional tariffs were imposed. That's almost 100 bucks per washer.

The tariff war on China has already stoked a wave of opposition from U.S. industry. Several U.S. industrial groups including the American Soybean Association, the National Retail Federation, and the Information Technology Industry Council denounced the move, saying it will jeopardize American jobs and increase costs for consumers.

The fact that economic relations between China and the United States are highly intertwined means Washington cannot pull itself out of the situation unscathed.

Moreover, its tariff strategy is already sending shock waves around the world. Global stock markets have been on a roller coaster ride in recent weeks. Investors are facing huge uncertainties, and a future global economic recovery is very much in doubt. **Xinhua**

Trump tells aides he does not want US war with Iran

WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump has told his top advisers he does not want to get the United States involved in a war with Iran, three U.S. officials said on Thursday.

"He doesn't want to go to war. It's not who he is," one official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Trump (pictured) has communicated to his national security team and other aides that wants to keep tensions with Tehran from boiling over into an armed conflict, the officials said.

But he has also made clear that he will protect U.S. interests in the region, one official said. U.S. intelligence showed heightened activity by Iran or its proxies that U.S. officials took as a threat against American targets in the region.

Iran's Zarif calls for "practical steps" to save nuclear deal

Trump won the 2016 election in part by promising to stay out of conflicts abroad after what he viewed as costly wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Earlier this year he ordered U.S. troops out of Syria but was persuaded to leave some in.

Trump told reporters on Thursday that he hoped the United States was not heading to war with Iran as he met with Switzerland President Ueli Maurer, whose nation has served as a liaison conduit between the two countries since they do not have diplomatic relations.

"Hope not," Trump said when asked by reporters if Washington was going to war with Tehran.



Tensions have escalated in recent days with increasing concerns about a potential U.S.-Iran conflict. Earlier this week the United States pulled some diplomatic staff from its embassy in Baghdad following weekend attacks on four oil tankers in the Gulf.

"The president has been clear, the United States does not seek military conflict with Iran, and he is open to talks with Iranian leadership. However, Iran's default option for 40 years has been violence, and we will protect U.S. personnel and interests in the region," said Garrett Marquis, spokesman for the White House National Security Council.

A White House statement said the two leaders discussed "a range of international issues, including the crises in the Middle East and in Venezuela."

Trump has said publicly he wants to pursue a diplomatic route with Iran a year after withdrawing the United States from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. He has said privately that he was worried that some of his

advisers, such as White House national security adviser John Bolton, were pushing for war, two officials said.

The Pentagon has prepared options for potentially sending U.S. troops to the region if needed ranging from a relatively small number of troops up to 120,000, although officials stressed these are the types of options that are always considered for hot zones.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders told Fox News Channel's "Fox & Friends" that there is no friction between Trump and his advisers and he welcomes different viewpoints.

"He's the one the American people elected. He's going to take in the information and the guidance from all of his national security team and he then will make a decision on what he thinks is the best and safest thing for the American people," she said.

U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Thursday welcomed what she called Trump's lack of "appetite" for military conflict with Tehran. **(Agencies)**

Yemeni govt forces recapture key southern district following large-scale military operation

ADEN, YEMEN

YEMENI government forces yesterday announced recapturing a key southern district from the Houthis rebels following a large-scale military operation backed by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition.

According to a press statement released by the government forces, different military units of the local security and army forces launched a large-

scale pre-dawn attack against the Houthis in Qataba district located to the northwestern part of al-Dhalea province.

The military attack sparked ferocious street battles that continued for several hours between the government forces and the Houthis in and around Qataba district, the statement said.

It said that the government forces succeeded in seizing full control over Qataba and

the surrounding areas following the large-scale anti-Houthi military campaign that left scores of rebels killed or injured.

A military source based in the area told Xinhua that "the government forces stormed Qataba from various directions and managed to expel the Houthis out of the strategic southern district."

Videos released by local activists on social media ap-

parently showed the moments of the the ferocious street fighting that forced Houthis to withdraw from Qataba district.

In one video, a group of government soldiers patrolling the main street of Qataba while chanting victory slogans while holding their automatic assault rifles.

The activists also shared graphic images of the fighting aftermath showing several bodies of Houthi fighters lying

in streets of Qataba. Both warring sides continued to mobilize large numbers of fighters to the frontlines in al-Dhalea amid non-stop armed confrontations taking place since weeks ago in the government-controlled province.

On Tuesday, the UN Special Envoy to Yemen Martin Griffiths tweeted that he is deeply concerned about the ongoing escalation of conflict

in Dhale, and urged all parties to exercise utmost restraint.

The UN envoy said that any military escalation risks a setback in the progress towards peace in Yemen.

Last month, scores of Houthi fighters launched a series of intense armed attacks on the positions of government forces and succeeded in seizing the district of Al Husha in the west of al-Dhalea.

The areas in the north and

west of the government-controlled al-Dhalea have been witnessing continuous fighting between government forces and Houthi fighters for four years.

Yemen has been plagued by a civil war since late 2014 after Houthi rebels revolted and forced the internationally-recognized government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi into exile. **Xinhua**



FILE PHOTO: Fans wait for guests to arrive at the world premiere of the television fantasy drama "Game of Thrones" series 5, at The Tower of London, in London, Britain March 18, 2015. REUTERS

Dismayed or grieving, 'Game of Thrones' fans prepare for the final episode

LOS ANGELES

PASSIONS are running high as "Game of Thrones" nears its final episode this weekend, with hundreds of thousands of unhappy fans signing an online petition and a counselling service offering to help those grieving the end of the TV fantasy saga.

Some 600,000 fans worldwide had signed a Change.org petition by Thursday criticizing Season 8 of the HBO series and calling for a remake.

"This series deserves a final season that makes sense," said Dylan D. from Texas, who launched the "Remake Game of Thrones Season 8" petition ahead of Sunday's series finale.

The story of warring families in the fictional kingdom of Westeros has drawn to a close with ever more bloody battles and favourite characters being killed off.

"Season 8 was very disjointed and rushed. Characters were hastily written off and plots became twisted. It was not a good close to a great series!!!" wrote Marilyn Marnell, one of those signing the petition.

HBO did not return a request for comment on the petition.

The show was created by David Benioff and D.B. Weiss, who have taken the story beyond George R.R. Martin's source material book series, "A Song of Ice and Fire."

Despite the criticism, the eighth and final season of the Emmy-winning series has broken

records for HBO, which says it has so far averaged 43 million viewers per episode in the United States alone - a 10 million increase over Season 7 in 2017.

Among television critics, reviews have gone from 92 percent positive for the Season 8 opener on April 14 to 47 percent favourable for the penultimate episode, "The Bells," which aired on May 12, according to review aggregator RottenTomatoes.com.

"The Bells" saw character Daenerys Targaryen descending into madness and destroying the Westerosi capital of Kings Landing with her dragon. Some fans thought that was too sharp a departure for Daenerys, who had previously said she wanted to create a better world.

"This is definitely not how it was supposed to go. Daenerys Targaryen has gone rogue," wrote CNN.com's AJ Willingham.

Meanwhile, British website Bark.com is launching a "Game of Thrones" counselling service offering expert advice on how fans can deal with the loss of the show, which first aired in 2011.

"Game of Thrones" is one of the most popular TV programs of our time, so I'm not surprised that people are devastated it's going to end," Kai Feller, co-founder of Bark.com, said in a statement.

"I think there will be a fair amount of superfans out there who will need to chat with a professional when the show ends."

REUTERS

Rapper Pras now plugs his album while proclaiming innocence in election fraud case



Prakazrel 'Pras' Michel

WASHINGTON

FORMER Fugees rapper Prakazrel "Pras" Michel appeared in court on Thursday and told reporters he is innocent of criminal charges that he conspired to funnel foreign funds into Barack Obama's 2012 presidential re-election, while also plugging his upcoming album.

Michel said he has no plans to take a plea deal if offered one and that "every issue and everything that has been said around here" will be addressed on his new nine-track extended-play album.

"I'm totally innocent and my lawyer's

going to handle the whole trial and we're in full compliance," he said after appearing in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

"More importantly, I want everybody to understand that I'm just working on my 'Elon Musk' EP. It's coming out next month. I'm totally focused on that."

Last week, the Justice Department unsealed charges against Michel and Low Taek Jho, a wealthy Malaysian businessman with a tabloid partying reputation known as "Jho Low," alleging they conspired to steer foreign campaign contributions into Obama's 2012 campaign. It is a crime for foreign nationals to make political contributions in U.S. federal, state or local elections.

Federal prosecutors say foreign funds totaling more than \$21 million were funneled by Low into the election, with some of the funds masked as legitimate campaign contributions through straw donors and others listed under Michel's name.

Michel, who has pleaded not guilty to the charges, wore a navy blue blazer, jeans and sneakers for his first appearance before U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly, who will preside over the case.

His attorney, Barry Pollack, told the judge he plans to file motions to dismiss the indictment, and intends to argue that prosecutors brought the charges well after the five-year statute of limitations had expired.

Michel remains free on bond and is permitted to travel to his homes in California and Florida.

Although he has sought permission to skip some of the less substantive hearings, Kollar-Kotelly warned Michel on Thursday that he should remain an active participant in his own defense.

Low remains at large and is also wanted by the United States in a separate case in connection with a multi-billion-dollar scandal at Malaysian state fund (Malaysia Development Berhad (IMDB).

A spokeswoman for Low previously told Reuters he is not guilty in the election fraud case.

REUTERS

Warriors rally from 15 down at halftime, hold off Blazers

OAKLAND, CALIF.

THESE Golden State Warriors have long been able to score in fabulous, jaw-dropping flurries. Down by eight to the Portland Trail Blazers at home with 4½ minutes to go, they needed every last burst, perfect pass, driving layup and dunk.

"Our experience really paid off for us tonight having a bunch of guys who just won't quit," said Draymond Green, who was right smack in the middle of it all.

Stephen Curry scored 37 points, and the Warriors rallied from a 15-point halftime deficit before holding off Portland on the final possession for a 114-111 win Thursday night and a 2-0 lead in the Western Conference finals.

Golden State coach Steve Kerr insisted his team stole this game with a sensational final few minutes and another, familiar third-quarter outburst.

Counterpart Terry Stotts of the Trail Blazers considered it a "lost opportunity" on the road.

CJ McCollum missed a driving jumper with 32 seconds left and Green scored on the other end for the Warriors, giving Portland one final chance with 12.3 seconds to go. Andre Iguodala then blocked a 3-point attempt by Damian Lillard on the left wing.

"They stole it, but they earned it down the stretch," McCollum said.

Seth Curry, Steph's little brother, scored 16 points and put Portland ahead on a 3-pointer with 1:03 left before Kevon Looney's dunk on the other end put Golden State back on top at 112-111. Seth tried to "distract" his brother at the free throw line late, or so the story went from Steph, who called Seth a "pest" on defense.

"This was like the coolest experience I think I've ever had playing against him. You talk about the stage, he was amazing tonight," Steph Curry said. "For my parents, I know we've talked about it the whole series, these last two games it's probably nerve-wracking as heck for them. It worked out perfectly tonight. He played well and we won."

Stephen Curry shot 11 for 22 and made all 11 of his free throws - three with 2:01 left - to



Golden State Warriors' Andre Iguodala, center, strips the ball from Portland Trail Blazers' Damian Lillard during the final seconds of Game 2 of the NBA basketball playoffs Western Conference finals Thursday, May 16, 2019, in Oakland, Calif. (AP Photo)

post his third straight 30-point performance while Splash Brother Klay Thompson needed a half to heat up, scoring 13 of his 24 points in the Warriors' 39-point third period. It was reminiscent of those old third-quarter runs that have defined this group.

McCollum scored 22 points for Portland and Lillard overcame a slow start to add 23 points and 10 assists as the Blazers looked far more in sync than in a 116-94 defeat two days earlier.

Game 3 in the best-of-seven series is Saturday night at Portland.

"We did play a much better game at both ends of the floor tonight. We've got to take that into Game 3," Stotts said. "It is a lost opportunity, no question. We had a chance to get one here on the road."

Green made a pretty bounce pass through the paint to a cutting Iguodala for a dunk with 3:06 left to make it 108-105, then Green assisted on a layup by Looney the next possession.

"Draymond's been special all playoffs," Thompson said. "... When he goes, we go. He was tremendous tonight."

Green had 16 points, 10 rebounds, seven assists and five blocked shots playing with foul

trouble. His seven straight playoff games with at least 10 rebounds are a career high.

"We've been here before," Green said. "When you're on a run like we're currently in, you've seen everything. Down eight points with what, four minutes to go, or whatever it was, just got to keep going, because we know we can erase eight points."

The Warriors missed Kevin Durant for a third straight game because of a strained right calf and he isn't likely to return at all this round.

Curry scored Golden State's first eight points of the third to get his team back within 69-58 then Thompson hit two straight 3s.

The Blazers had built a 65-50 halftime lead, capitalizing on 10 Warriors turnovers for 18 points.

Then two of the top backcourts in the Western Conference went at it in an entertaining final two quarters. The game was tied at 89 to start the fourth.

The Warriors already got past James Harden and Chris Paul in the last round - now it's McCollum and Lillard standing in the way of a fifth straight trip to the NBA Finals.

Portland showed it made adjustments from Game 1 and brought it on both ends from the

opening tip after the Blazers had regularly left Curry wide open on the perimeter off the pick-and-roll and he scored 36 points while matching his postseason high with nine 3-pointers.

"We've got to bring that same energy at home," McCollum said, "understand that this is the first time in 19 years we've been in the conference final."

Lillard isn't ready to ponder this might have been his final game at Oracle Arena, just a short walk from where he grew up in Oakland. The Warriors are moving to new Chase Center in San Francisco next season.

The Blazers want to return to the Bay Area for a Game 5 next week.

"I doubt this will be the last time. We plan on being back here," Lillard said.

Durant will miss at least Games 3 and 4, scheduled to be re-examined by doctors in another week. That means he wouldn't be expected to return until the NBA Finals if Golden State advances.

Durant was re-evaluated Thursday and is not yet ready for on-court work - a necessary step before the two-time reigning NBA Finals MVP can return to game action. AP



Sevilla FC: An introduction

FOUNDED at the turn of the century in Andalusian capital, Sevilla FC are one of only nine clubs to have ever won the LaLiga title, doing so in 1945/46. Boasting an impressive list of honours, the club has also won five Copa del Rey titles (1935, 1939, 1948, 2007 and 2010), one Spanish Super Cup (2007), five UEFA Europa League titles (2006, 2007, 2014, 2015, 2016) and one European Super Cup (2006).

Success in recent decades has been unparalleled, with nine of the 13 senior club trophies secured over its history having come since the turn of the century. Such success has grown from

the excellent scouting skills of Sevilla's former goalkeeper turned sporting director Ramon 'Monchi' Rodriguez, who unearthed talents such as Croatia's 2018 World Cup finalist Ivan Rakitic, Brazil star Dani Alves and former Mali striker and current LaLiga ambassador Frederic Kanoute.

A first UEFA Cup trophy was lifted in 2006 under Juande Ramos, quickly followed by a second a year later before an unprecedented three successive Europa League titles between 2014 [when city rivals Real Betis were beaten on penalties in the quarter-finals] and 2016. To date Sevilla are the only club in Andalusia with a con-

tinental title to their name.

Thanks to these achievements, Sevilla sit fifth in LaLiga's all-time rankings and are currently ranked seventh of all European clubs by UEFA, ahead of traditional European heavyweights such as Arsenal and AC Milan.

Both these clubs are among the past opponents whose badges decorate the famously beautiful mosaic over the main entrance of the 'rojiblanco' club's atmospheric Ramon Sanchez-Pizjuan stadium, where both Real Madrid and Barcelona have been beaten in recent seasons.

An excellent youth system has also fed the team through the

years, with homegrown winger Jesus Navas last season beating an appearance record previously held by former defender Pablo Blanco, now the club's Head of Youth Development.

The sudden death in 2007 of local icon Antonio Puerta aged just 22 was a huge blow still felt at the club.

Last season brought changes both on and off the pitch, a seventh-place finish in LaLiga and a run to the Copa del Rey final. The current squad, which includes the likes of free-scoring French striker Wissam Ben Yedder, World Cup-winner Jesus Navas and Argentine midfielder maestro Ever

Banega, is a perennial European challenger and one of LaLiga's most entertaining sides.

Just last season the club reached the quarter-finals of the UEFA Champions League, knocking out Manchester United at Old Trafford in the process, 60 years ago after having done so for the first time back in 1958.

Sevilla FC's home, the Ramon Sanchez-Pizjuan, is one of the temples of world football. With more than sixty years of history, it is the lucky stadium for Spanish national team, who have never lost on its soil.

The Sanchez-Pizjuan also hosted the historic 1982 World Cup semi-final between Germany and France and the European Cup final between Steaua Bucharest and FC Barcelona in 1986. The Sanchez-Pizjuan is also in the running to host the final of the UEFA Europa League in 2021.

Qatar brings first new World Cup stadium to life as FIFA mulls expansion

DOHA

QATAR inaugurated the first of seven new World Cup 2022 stadiums on Thursday, just weeks before a crucial FIFA summit will decide whether to expand the tournament and potentially push it beyond the tiny Gulf state's borders to accommodate a larger format.

Fans packed into the Al Janoub stadium, a 40,000 seat venue made to resemble the sail of a dhow, or traditional wooden sailboat, to cheer on Qatari teams playing in the final of the Emir Cup, a local tournament for the country's club sides.

The inauguration comes as soccer's world governing body FIFA floats a plan to expand the next World Cup to 48 teams from 32, which could require a last-minute co-host despite a protracted dispute between Qatar and some of its neighbours, bans on alcohol and a lack of facilities restricting likely candidates.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt have imposed a political and trade boycott on Qatar since mid-2017, accusing it of supporting terrorism, which Doha denies.

That rift has strained efforts by FIFA President Gianni Infantino to push for a suitable World Cup co-host even as qualifying matches

begin early next month.

FIFA will host its annual congress in Paris on June 5, where it is expected to make a final call on the expansion, though any decision must be signed off by Qatar, the first Arab country to win hosting rights for the tournament in 2010.

The finals will start in November 2022, having been moved from the usual June-July slot to avoid the searing summer heat.

Al Janoub, a fully air-conditioned stadium which kept the temperature 10 degrees lower than the 29 Celsius outside, was called Al Wakrah after the city just south of Doha.

However, Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani tweeted before the match that it was being renamed.

It is one of seven venues built from scratch for the 2022 World Cup, with an eighth stadium renovated and opened in 2017.

Qatar has pushed ahead with an ambitious scale-up of its infrastructure ahead of 2022 that includes \$6.8 billion on stadiums and sporting facilities, part of efforts to use the tournament to diversify its energy economy and project itself on to the world stage through sport.

REUTERS

Lineker backs Liverpool to win Champions League

LONDON

LIVERPOOL are overwhelming favourites to win the Champions League title when they face Tottenham Hotspur in the final in Madrid on June 1, former England striker and television pundit Gary Lineker has said.

Lineker, who spent three seasons at Spurs between 1989 and 1992, pointed to the 26-point gap in the Premier League table between runners-up Liverpool and his fourth-placed former team as evidence of a massive gulf between the sides.

"Overall, team against team, (Liverpool) have got the better players," Lineker told The Times. "They finished 20-odd points ahead of Tottenham this season so it's hard to make a case where Tottenham are favourites."

"But, as we know in football, the best teams don't always win, which is one of the things that makes it so special."

The 58-year-old also praised Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp for successfully creating a team in his own image, while pointing out that Spurs need to invest to keep pace with the ambitions of boss Mauricio Pochettino.

"Klopp is a massively enthusiastic, passionate man," Lineker said. "This Liverpool side very much reflects his personality - very dynamic, great energy. He's clearly very intelligent, and he's a brilliant football man who shows his passion."

"(Pochettino) is... clearly one of the best managers in world football, but (Spurs) do need investment, he's said that to me himself. He needs to be backed and I suspect if he's not backed they'll find it quite difficult to keep hold of him."

Tottenham have not signed anyone in the last two transfer windows with the club being forced to keep a tight lid on spending following their move to a new stadium.

Pochettino, on his part, has hinted he could leave if Spurs are unable to challenge for the biggest titles due to a lack of investment, which would be a massive blow for the club he has guided to four consecutive top-four Premier League finishes.

"It really is a seminal moment for Tottenham," Lineker added. "They've got to decide what they are."

REUTERS

England will not walk off pitch for racist abuse, says Southgate

LONDON

ENGLAND manager Gareth Southgate has said his players will not walk off the pitch in protest if they are racially abused by supporters following discussions with his squad and staff.

England's 5-1 rout of Montenegro in Podgorica in March was soured by racist abuse from fans and the hosts were ordered to play their next European competition match behind closed doors as part of sanctions handed out by UEFA.

Southgate said he discussed the matter with England internationals Raheem Sterling, Danny Rose and Callum Hudson-Odoi and the players agreed that walking off would shift the focus to them rather than the issue of racism.

"They are clear they don't want the story at the end to be about them as individuals," Southgate told reporters on Thursday as he announced his squad for next month's UEFA Nations League semi-final against Netherlands.

"They want football to be the story."

"In terms of walking off the pitch, that isn't something they're all on board with. None of the current team has expressed that as a preference... But they have had an opportunity to speak (publicly) and have an impact that way."

Sterling, who had also been allegedly racially abused when playing for Manchester City at Chelsea, had last month signed a manifesto that called for consistent punishment for racist and discriminatory behaviour, including automatic nine-point deductions.

Southgate added that walking off the pitch would be nothing more than a "symbolic statement" which would not necessarily lead to reform.

"The bit that isn't clear to me if we did that - apart from the question of whether we would be penalised - is what would happen then?" Southgate added. "It would be a statement, but what would that lead to? REUTERS

Champions League final - football match or showbiz extravaganza?

NYON, SWITZERLAND

FOOTBALL fans are renowned for their creativity and passion, adapting the most unlikely songs into stadium anthems and brightening up the drabest of grounds with their banners and flags.

Yet, at major matches such as the Champions League final, the World Cup and the European championship, their passion is often drowned out by loud music and screeching announcers as organisers take the pre-game atmosphere into their own hands.

UEFA now invites a big-name band to perform in its increasingly glitzy pre-match Champions League final ceremony - with mixed reactions.

A performance by Black Eyed Peas two years ago prompted a wave of criticism on social media as well as concerns about what the extravaganza might do to the pitch.

It is a far cry from the old days when the noise would gradually build up in the hour before the game as fans filed into the stadium, culminating in the roar which greeted the kickoff.

So what is the thinking behind it?

UEFA's marketing director Guy-Laurent Epstein said that, in the case of Champions League final, the idea was to appeal to a broader range of people than would normally watch a match.

"The lines between entertainment and football are getting very blurred, especially when you talk about a final that has an attraction not only to fans of clubs but to football fans in general and even to a broader range of people," he told Reuters in an interview.

"The Champions League final is not comparable to any league game; there is a diverse audience because it is on a neutral ground, you have a neutral audience, the fans from both clubs in equal numbers, so the atmosphere is different."

Epstein said that Dua Lipa's performance at the final in Kiev last year



Singer Dua Lipa performs before the Champions League Final match involving Real Madrid and Liverpool at NSC Olympic Stadium in Kiev, Ukraine in this May 26, 2018 file photo. REUTERS

was UEFA's most-viewed, single piece of social media content ever.

WORLDWIDE AUDIENCE This year, Grammy-award winning band Imagine Dragons will perform ahead of the Liverpool-Tottenham match at Madrid's Wanda Metropolitano stadium, in a show which UEFA promises "will feature a level of production never seen before at a UEFA Champions League final".

"It's not just for the participating teams and fans in the stadium, it is a worldwide audience," said Epstein. "Maybe we will convert them to enjoying our core business."

Epstein said that sports and entertainment were getting closer and closer and "competing for the same air time".

"This will diversify the audience, bringing more women to watch the

game," he added. "Trying to gather a great audience that is outside the club fan base...that is really the objective."

Pepsi, who will be presenting the ceremony for the fourth time, said they were aware that they were treading a fine line.

"It's a question of how you engage the fans. It's really important that we don't turn the opening ceremony into the (main) event of the final - but rather, that we are enhancing the fan experience," said Mark Kirkham, Pepsi's head of marketing for Western Europe.

Kirkham pointed out that last year, Dua Lipa's performance ahead of the Liverpool-Real Madrid final proved popular with the English team's supporters.

"If you go back and look at last

year's performance, you have supporters singing along - it was very much a cultural moment," he said.

He was confident that the pre-match Champions League show would eventually enjoy a status similar to the Super Bowl halftime performance.

"When they first brought the halftime show to the Super bowl, it was a very different experience to what it is today," he said.

"People have now grown up with that and now see that as part of the celebration of the sport and I think that is what we are trying to do."

"We are four years in. I think it is starting to bring new audiences in, which also expands the audience and the passion for football."

REUTERS

European final a step in 'spectacular progress' for Barca women's team

BARCELONA

BARCELONA are making their first appearance in the women's Champions League final against holders Olympique Lyonnais today but landing a maiden European title is just one part of the club's grand ambitions in the booming women's game.

The Spanish side are preparing to launch a female franchise in the United States and are looking into building a residence for female players in the mould of their famous La Masia academy.

"Reaching the final is not something exceptional but something we have been working very hard to do," Barca's vice-president Jordi Mestre told Reuters in an interview.

"We have made spectacular progress in the last few years and we're going to keep going down this path as we believe we can go very far in women's football."

Today's sold-out match at the 22,000-capacity Groupama Arena is the first time the women's Champions League final is being held in a separate city to the men's showpiece, which Mestre called "a wise move".

"This week the women are the protagonists, all the media and the fans are focused on this final alone," he added.

Women's football is proving particularly popular in Spain where the top division is sponsored by energy company Iberdrola and two games are broadcast per week on national television.

Barca's women's team, meanwhile, have their own shirt sponsorship deal with Stanley Black And Decker which Mestre said has made the team self-sustainable.

"These are unequivocal signs that women's football generates huge interest in Spain. Spain are European and world champions at youth level, no-one can doubt the size of women's football, but of course it can grow even more," he added.



Barcelona players pose for a photo as they celebrate after the Women's Champions League - Semi Final Second Leg match against Bayern Munich at Mini Estadi in Barcelona, Spain in this April 28, 2019 file photo. REUTERS

Mestre is certain, though, that the Spanish women's game would be even more popular if Real Madrid started a female team to face Barca in a 'Clasico' between Spain's greatest rivals.

"It would be very positive for Spanish football if Madrid had a women's team, we have seen the impact a Clasico has in Spain and around the world," he said.

"It's not for me to say what another club should do but I'm sure a Real Madrid-Barcelona clash in women's football would be a huge deal, there is always a special interest in any game between the two clubs."

Barca hope to attract more fans to games next season when their

women's side move into the shiny new Estadi Johan Cruyff, named after the club's legendary Dutch player and coach which will also house the men's reserve side and Under-19 team.

But their ambitions go beyond Spain, with the club still hopeful of opening a franchise in the National Women's Soccer League.

"This is a strategic matter, something we began in 2015 when we opened our club's office in New York. We have had conversations with clubs, but right now the project is on standby," Mestre said.

"If we are going to do it we need to guarantee it is sustainable on a sporting and economic level for a

long time."

In the meantime, Barca's focus is on strengthening their women's teams at all age groups, and they have discussed building a residence akin to the 'La Masia' academy which housed the likes of Andres Iniesta before they broke into the team.

"If we detect there are enough young girls to play in our teams we could dedicate a space to having an academy and residence, there is room to do so," Mestre added.

"To do if we would need to have a lot of players coming from outside, but in a few years we could do it perfectly."

REUTERS

Gwiji by David Chikoko



John Stephen Akhwari Marathon set for Arusha next month

SPORT

Champions League final - football match or showbiz extravaganza?

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT, PAGE 19

Sevilla FC boasts glittering record

By Guardian Reporter & Agencies

SEVILLA FC that will take on Simba of Tanzania in an international friendly match at the National Stadium in Dar es Salaam next week, won the first-ever organized football match in Spain.

For many years it was believed that the club was formed in 1905 but the discovery of a copy of the Dundee Courier in the British Library in 2012 traced the club back to 1890.

The newspaper revealed that the club's first president was in fact Edward Farquharson Johnston, then the British vice-consul in the city and owner of a shipping company, which sold Andalusian oranges in the UK.

In that same year, the club challenged neighbours Huelva Recreation Club (today known as Recreativo Huelva) to a match at a horseracing track near the city limits on the 8th March.

Amid driving rain more typical of northern Europe, Sevilla won 2-0 with goals from Ritson and Yugles in front of a crowd of 150 spectators... and Spanish football was born.

Their Sanchez-Pizjuan stadium is named after their iconic league-winning president

Since 1958 Sevilla have played at their now much revered Ramon Sanchez-Pizjuan stadium, a ground named for their long-time president.

Born in 1900, Sanchez-Pizjuan was a locally-born lawyer who ran the club for 17 years over two terms between 1932 and 1956, during which time Sevilla established themselves as a force to be reckoned with in the top-flight and picked up three Copa del Rey trophies (1935, 1939, 1948).

Later the vice-president of the Spanish Football Federation, Sanchez-Pizjuan passed away in 1956 just as his former club were completing a new ground, right next to their old home in the city's Nervion district, which was then dedicated to his memory.

The inaugural match at their new home - a thrilling 3-3 draw with fellow Andalusian side Real Jaen - set the tone for what would become a stadium famed for thrilling encounters over the years.

A Gambian striker who played for the club in the 1970s is still Sevilla fans' number one cult hero Alhaji Momodo Nije, widely known as Biri Biri, became the first African to play for the club in 1973, going on to score 32 goals in 99 La Liga games before leaving in 1978.

Regarded as the greatest player in Gambian history, Biri Biri is well known around La Liga for his five-year stint in Sevilla.

The club's 'Biris Norte' fans take their name from the much-loved figure, who in recent years has become a regular visitor to games at the Sanchez-Pizjuan.

Sevilla were the first Spanish club to field a full foreign-born XI

Sevilla's global reach was also shown during the 2016/17 La Liga campaign when they became the first club in Spanish football history to field a full starting XI born outside the country.

The team picked for the away trip to Eibar in September 2016 contained players from six countries on three different continents.

The side consisted of Salvatore Sirigu (Italy), Gabriel Mercado (Argentina), Adil Rami (France), Daniel Carrico (Portugal), Timothee Kolodziejczak (France), Hiroshi Kiyotake (Japan), Matias Kranevitter (Argentina), Paulo Henrique 'Ganso' (Brazil), Raphael Correa (Argentina), Samuel Vietto (Argentina) and Wissam Ben Yedder (France).

They have a history of World Cup winners. Summer 2018 saw Sevilla celebrate a World Cup victory, with rojiblanco midfielder, Steven Nzonzi, playing a key role as France beat Croatia 4-2 in the World Cup final in Moscow.

But Nzonzi is not the only World Cup winner in Sevilla's history. Current teammate Jesus Navas lifted the Jules Rimet trophy with Spain in 2010.



Sevilla FC

By Correspondent Marc Nkwame, Arusha

ARUSHA is planning a special athletics event to honour the ace national athlete, John Stephen Akhwari, who had done Tanzania proud in the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico more than 50 years ago.



John Stephen Akhwari

The race, known as the John Stephen Akhwari Marathon, will be staged in the region on June 9. Few people know John Stephen Akhwari, the former national marathon runner, who represented Tanzania in the 1968 Olympics and managed to

complete the race despite badly injuring his leg.

Akhwari coined the golden quote: "My country did not send me 5000 miles to start the race, they sent me to finish it!"

The ace legendary runner repeated the same immortal line during a press conference held in Arusha yesterday.

Born in 1938, Mzee John Stephen Akhwari was 30 years old when he dislocated his knee during the 1968 Summer Olympics, but still continued to limp his way to the finishing line.

Aged 81 years, Mzee Akhwari is still strong. "I was the first Tanzanian athlete to open the curtains into international marathon events," he said.

"This race being organized in my honour should encourage young people to take bold steps into similar sporting expeditions regardless of either their backgrounds or capabilities."

John Stephen Akhwari Marathon's Director, Sylvester Orao, said the maiden event

starts with 21 kilometers race next month.

However, during the second installment of race, to be held in 2020, the race will expand into full marathon.

Winners of the main 21 kilometers' race, in both men and women categories will earn 800,000/- apiece while the first runners-up are going to pocket 600,000/- apiece and the third winners to get 400,000/- apiece.

The fourth winners will earn 250,000/-, while those finishing in the fifth position are to get 200,000/-.

The sixth winners will receive 170,000/-, the seventh will pocket 150,000/-, the eighth-placed winners will receive 130,000/- whilst the ninth will get 100,000/- and the 10th will take 70,000/-.

Arusha Regional Athletics Association Chairman, Jackson Jorwa, disclosed that preparations are ready and maintained that the race will be successful despite taking place for the first time

Dar, Dodoma students win 2019 Chinese singing contest

By Correspondent Renatha Msungu, Dodoma

DODOMA students Maurine Mwansongwe and Amina Kibao have won this year's Chinese singing contest that was held at the Dodoma Secondary School venue mid this week.

The duo beat 12 other contestants from a section of schools from across the country that took part in the event.

Amina Kibao is from Rosmin School located in Tanga, whereas Maurine is studying at Shaaban Robert of Dar es Salaam put impressive showing to emerge victorious in the event, which is held annually and brings together schools that teach Chinese language.

University of Dodoma (UDOM) organized the event, which also sees participating students battle it out in debate, speeches, as well as displaying various talents.

Alexander Makuliko, UDOM Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academics, Research and Nutrition noted during the competition Kiswahili has a good chance to win popularity all over the world if Tanzanians will diligently learn more languages.

"Kiswahili is now in use in South Africa and, in the continent, such countries like Kenya, Uganda are using Kiswahili," he noted.

"For that matter, we must use Kiswahili to spread our culture to other parts and prove we can effectively use the language at the international level."

He noted Kiswahili might be used in singing contests in other countries if Tanzanians will keep on participating in contests.

Speaking on the importance of Chinese language in economic growth, Makuliko disclosed China is among respected nations in the world that are rich and have invested in various projects in Tanzania.

Makuliko added Tanzanians should



Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy student performs a Chinese song during a past Chinese singing contest in Dar es Salaam.

learn the language with a view to gaining from the opportunities coming from the projects.

Confucius Institute's head at the UDOM Rafiki Sebonda noted there are several technical terms expressed in Chinese language in contracts and, for that matter, the presence of Tanzanians that are well versed in the

language will make it easy in understanding the contracts.

"If you do not know the language, you can not sign the contracts you do not know what they are all about," he added.

"This is for that matter an opportune moment for learning the language. We will also see to it Kiswahili is promoted and become

an official language in other countries."

Confucius Institute's Director, Yang Lun, noted winners of the sixth edition of the competition would feature in the 12th competition in China later this year.

The participants will get an opportunity to familiarize with fellow contestants from other countries.

Mauritius unveil final squad for 2019 COSAFA Cup

PORT LOUIS

MAURITIUS have named their final squad for the 2019 COSAFA Cup to be staged in Durban from May 25-June 8 as they seek to end a long run of first round exits.

The islanders have not been past the first stage of the competition in their last 10 attempts, since they reached the quarterfinals in 2004.

As ever they go into the tournament with plenty of hope of changing that and coach Akbar Patel has named a strong 23-man squad to achieve that aim.

Included is veteran goalkeeper Kevin Jean-Louis and experienced forward Giano Fabrice Li Tien Kee, with the youngest member of the squad 20-year-old midfielder Adrien Francois.

Mauritius will open their Group A campaign against fellow islanders, Comoros, in what is also the first game of the tournament at the King Zwelithini Stadium on May 25.

Mauritius caused arguably the biggest upset in COSAFA Cup history in 2004 when they beat South Africa, who had a full-strength team headed to the African Nations Cup finals in Tunisia, in the first round in Curepipe.

But Mauritius are still seeking to get past the quarterfinal stage of the southern African championship.

In 2001, Mauritius did make that stage after

beating Namibia and but then lost 1-0 to Angola in Luanda.

In 2004 their hopes were dashed in the last eight when they went down 3-1 to Zambia. Four years later they suffered the indignity of a 7-0 thrashing at the hands of fellow islanders, Seychelles, the biggest defeat in the history of the competition.

Last year they did fare so well, despite winning their opener 1-0 against Malawi. That was followed by a defeat by the same score line to Angola, and a 6-0 loss to Botswana.

Mauritius squad:

Goalkeepers: Christopher Caserne, Kevin Jean-Louis

Defenders: Kerlon Agathe, Jean Fabrice Augustin, Clarel Mathieu Jackson, Mamainiana Francis Rasolofonirina, Emmanuel Jason Selmour Jean, Emmanuel Rudy Vincent Jean, Marco Dorza Louis, Didier L'enfle Jean

Midfielders: Mervyn Jocelyn Jean, Bernard Jubeau Jean, Joseph Stephan Kevin Perticots, Luther Murphy Rose, Jonathan Speville, Walter Duprey St Martin, Fabrice Brasse, Adrien Francois

Forwards: Adrien Botlar, Stephan Nabab Jean, Ashley Nazira Steven, Jacques Desire Patate Jean, Giano Fabrice Li Tien Kee.

Flexibles by David Chikoko

WHEN TEMPTED TO FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE, REMEMBER THAT THE FIRE DEPT. USUALLY USES WATER

Hic, I use BEER Hic

