



**National Pg 3**  
Dar to host global health and safety meeting

**National Pg 4**  
LATRA, police launch surprise check on highway

**National Pg 5**  
Project worth 4bn/- ends water woes in Kyela

## Primary schools directed to form child protection committees, now

By Guardian Correspondent, Tabora

THE government wants primary schools all over the country to establish child protection committees to combat gender-based violence and erosion of moral values among pupils.

Dr Dorothy Gwajima, the Community Development, Gender, Women and Special Groups minister, issued this appeal over the weekend when speaking to residents of Ulyankulu in Kaliua District, Tabora Region, explaining it as part of the government's broader strategy to create a safer and more conducive learning environment for children.

The lack of such committees in schools has contributed extensive breakdown of morals among the learners, leading to instances of violence and preventing them from assured pursuit of their future aspirations, she stated.

The government has provided guidelines for setting up such committees, stressing that this initiative be carried out as schools reopen, so that children can learn in environments that foster good morals and values, the minister noted.



**We must focus on the holistic development of our children, ensuring they grow up in environments that promote integrity, respect and responsibility**

"The committees will help protect children from abuse and keep them away from harmful practices such as same sex enticements, child abuse and other forms of exploitation," she affirmed.

She also underscored the importance of community involvement in this initiative, urging that parents, guardians and residents of specific areas take an active role in the scheme, involving guiding and mentoring children.

"It is essential for parents and guardians to sit down with their children, teach pupils good morals, and help them understand how to avoid falling prey to gender-based violence and other forms of exploitation," she emphasised.

The impact of government efforts to improve educational infrastructure and create better learning environments for pupils will be compromised unless robust child protection measures are put in place, the minister asserted.

Improvements being made to school facilities will have no lasting value if the children are not protected and empowered to reach their full potential, she said, stressing that a safe learning envi-

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# 'NIDA has to work 24 hours to timely distribute 0.8m cards'



Chadema national chairman Freeman Mbowe addresses the party's youth wing general meeting held in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

*"These individuals have undergone rehabilitation and are now ready to reintegrate into society as productive citizens"*

By Correspondent Joseph Mwendapole

THE National Identification Authority (NIDA) needs to operate 24 hours a day to ensure the timely distribution of 800,000 identification cards expected all over the country and not yet delivered to their rightful owners.

Innocent Bashungwa, the Home Affairs minister, issued this directive yesterday when speaking to members of the Tanzania Editors' Forum (TEF) in Dar es Salaam yesterday, highlighting that NIDA has already distributed 400,000 identification cards in the two months he has been in office.

The cards were previously held at the authority's offices, he said, insisting that NIDA IDs are crucial for citizens to access essential services, and it is imperative that these cards are distributed promptly.

"We have made significant progress in ensuring that these IDs reach the beneficiaries on time," he said, expressing satisfaction over the leadership replacement there, after the president appointed a new director at NIDA.

Efforts are underway to address existing challenges, he said, remarking that

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## Religious teams offer views on Vision 2050

By Guardian Reporter

THE Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT) has emphasized the need for enshrining the need for simplifying business regulations in the coming National Development Vision 2050.

Azzgard Stephen, the CCT director of development and advocacy, made this appeal in Dar es Salaam yesterday at an interfaith committee meeting, highlighting ongoing complaints from entrepreneurs about the complex process of obtaining permits, as well as taxes.

These cumbersome processes often lead to tax evasion, which in turn harms the national economy, he said, stressing the need to simplify business regulations by reducing the number of permits required.

This will help to streamline business operations. TURN TO PAGE 2

## Interviews, tests for 14,468 teaching posts begin today

By Polycarp Machira, Dodoma

THE government is set to begin conducting interviews to fill 14,468 teaching positions in primary and secondary schools across the country this month.

George Simbachawene, the Public Service Management and Good Governance state minister in the President's Office, said here yesterday that the recruitment process will take six weeks, January 14 to February 24.

The recruitment is a key component of a wider plan to create 155,008 employment opportunities in the public service, in line with promises outlined in the ruling party's 2020 election manifesto.

The Public Service Recruitment Secretariat (PSRS) will ensure that the exercise is conducted with fairness, equity and impartiality, he stated.

Shortlisted candidates need to prepare thoroughly as the recruitment process is competitive, he said, hinting at plans to hire vocational training trainees to meet evolving demands of public education initiatives.

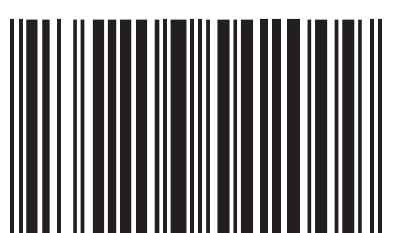
"I encourage successful candidates to remain committed to professional development to fulfil their roles effectively in public service," he further appealed.

Recruitment tests and interviews will be conducted in regions where the candidates resided, to reduce travel expenses,

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Mariam Hamza, a Standard One teacher at Mdote Primary School in Muheza District, Tanga Region, speaks with pupils on their first school day yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Steven William



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## Confessional teams give insights on 'Vision 2050'

FROM PAGE 1

curations and accelerate national development, he stated, urging the government to address this issue by establishing a more efficient system.

Any good system would enable businesses and the general public to pay taxes fairly and easily, without unnecessary coercion, he said, noting that the council has also examined the role of science and technology.

"Considering the rapid global changes and ongoing technological revolutions, we propose that diplomacy be a key driver of development, allowing Tanzania to better engage in international trade and secure a stronger position both regionally and globally," the director intoned.

The government also needs to focus on creating a favourable environment for the private sector to thrive, instead of solely concentrating on public enterprises, he asserted.

"In addition, good governance practices and the reduction of corruption need to be prioritized. However, the Vision 2050 does not sufficiently address corruption as a major barrier to development. Therefore, the vision must explicitly state that corruption is an enemy of development, and we must actively combat it," he further appealed.

Sheikh Mohamed Khamis, the Muslim Council of Tanzania (BAKWATA) deputy secretary general, suggested that the government should consider joining international organizations that could assist in promoting economic growth and development.

Anti-corruption education needs

to be incorporated into school curricula to raise awareness among children and encourage them to reject corruption, he said.

He further proposed improving healthcare services by building health centres at the local and village levels, reducing treatment costs and strengthening peace-building initiatives.

"Improving research activity is crucial to uncovering new opportunities," he said, pointing at the need to draw up a structured timetable for learners in public and private schools to participate in extracurricular activities.

This needs to go in tandem with enhancing the use of ICT in service delivery, he stated, while Dr Camilius Kasala, a publicity official for the Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC), advised that the national vision should ensure Tanzanian families have access to healthcare, food security, and opportunities for social participation.

He stressed on the need to provide families with the tools and resources necessary for financial security and economic stability.

Strengthening adult education programmes would help families engage with communities, fostering self-confidence and enabling them to participate in inclusive activities that promote economic uplift, he said.

"It is also vital to provide young people with the skills, tools and opportunities they need to engage with and contribute to various sectors, including the creation of jobs that will provide them with stable incomes," the TEC specialist intoned.

## Interviews, tests for 14,468 teaching posts begin today

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accommodation and other challenges.

Successful candidates will then be assigned to specific workstations and should be ready to serve in any village, district or region, regardless

of where they applied from or currently reside, he emphasised.

Candidates to carry with them their original academic and birth certificates, as well as their recruitment numbers sent through the employment portal.

## TLS urges govt to accept univesal treaty on enforced disappearances

By Guardian Reporter

THE Tanganyika Law Society (TLS) has urged the government to ratify the international treaty on enforced disappearances to establish a special national commission to address the issue of abductions and disappearances in the country.

Boniface Mwabukusi, TLS President, made the call in Dar es Salaam yesterday during a press briefing on various national matters ahead of the upcoming General Election in which president, members of parliament and councillors will be elected.

He said establishment of such a commission will help provide protection and justice for the victims of abductions and their families.

"The issue of abductions remains a dark spot in the history of East Africa. Currently, even when a person goes missing due to personal reasons, the nation suffers a stain as the country has already been tainted," he said.

He further called on Tanzania to rejoin the East African Court of Human Rights to give its citizens the opportunity to receive justice in a timely manner both within the country's borders and at the international level.

Regarding the upcoming General Election, Mwabukusi reminded that the Constitution and laws are tools to safeguard democracy in the country, and thus must be adhered to.

"Free and fair elections are a hallmark of a nation that values democracy and unity of its people. I call on all political leaders to ensure they adhere to the rule of law, avoid dividing the people and foster an environment of unity and national solidarity," he said.

He also urged the Police Force to protect citizens rather than be

coming involved in the registration process for political parties. This will enable the force to maintain its commitment to the principles of justice and freedom.

Furthermore, he condemned the behaviour of politicians and leaders who use derogatory, sectarian, gendered, or ethnocentric language to belittle candidates, stating that such conduct divides the nation, and urged them to develop substantive arguments instead.

On the internal election process within the opposition party Chadema, Mwabukusi described the ongoing process as a maturity of democracy that has led to internal competitions.

He argued that given the size of the party, it should already have known its leaders for the upcoming General Election, rather than having individuals emerge suddenly.

Mwabukusi suggested that the election reflects a need for 600,000 political parties in the country, rather than the current 19, considering the nation's population of 60 million.

He also explained his support for Tundu Lissu as Chadema's presidential candidate, pointing out that Lissu is a TLS member and has played an active role in encouraging party members to run for various leadership positions.



**...I call on all political leaders to ensure they adhere to the rule of law, avoid dividing the people and foster an environment of unity and national solidarity**



President Samia Suluhu Hassan exchanges greetings with the outgoing Ambassador of Japan to Tanzania, Yasushi Misawa, shortly after his arrival at the State House Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: State House

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distributing 400,000 IDs out of the 1.2m identity pieces that were previously uncollected was the first major step.

Addressing the issue of 31,000 IDs that were erased due to technical errors, he assured the public that those affected would be issued new IDs free of charge.

"We have resolved the issue that led to the erasure of these IDs, and the citizens who were affected will receive replacements without any cost to them," he stated.

## 'NIDA has to work 24 hours to timely distribute 0.8m cards'

He stressed clear and timely communication from the ministry to prevent confusion and panic among sections of the public, hinting at organizing a meeting with media practitioners to discuss strategies for effective information dissemination.

As part of the portfolio's broader efforts, the minister sketched imple-

mentation of key strategies across various departments, including Prison Services, the Fire and Rescue Force, Immigration, and the Police Force.

Following the launch of these strategies on January 9, departmental executives met to map out their effective execution, he said, noting

that one key point of the new strategies is a campaign to encourage the community to accept former prisoners who have been pardoned.

"These individuals have undergone rehabilitation and are now ready to reintegrate into society as productive citizens," the minister intoned.



Chadema national Vice Chairman (Mainland) Tundu Lissu speaks at the party's youth wing general meeting held in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

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ronment is key to unlocking their future success.

Pointing at the growing concern on moral decay among the youth, she said that schools should pursue learning while instilling values that "help shape well-rounded individuals who can contribute positively to society."

"We must focus on the holistic development of our children, ensuring they grow up in environ-

## Primary schools directed to form child protection committees, now

ments that promote integrity, respect and responsibility," she said.

Rehema Migira, the Ulyankulu MP, reported that the constituency had received 361m/- to build a new primary school at Langoni, to ease overcrowding at the Ibambo

mother school.

The school has been struggling with high numbers of pupils, while the new school is expected to provide a more conducive learning environment.

The constituency had similarly

been allocated 136m/- to build a girls' dormitory at Mkindo Secondary School, to address the challenges faced by female students making unsafe commuting trips to school and back, she added.





Zanzibar Second Vice President, Hemed Suleiman Abdulla (3rd R), inaugurates NMB Wete Branch at the weekend. To the right is North Pemba Regional Commissioner Salama Mbarouk Khatib, Deputy Minister for Finance Hamad Hassan Chande (2nd R) Head of Sales and Branch Network at NMB Bank Donatus Richard (L) Minister of State in the President's Office (Finance and Planning) Dr. Saada Mkuya (2nd L) and NMB Bank Chief Finance Officer, Juma Kimori (3rd L). Photo: Guardian Correspondent

## NMB Bank opens new branch in Pemba North

By Guardian Correspondent, Pemba

ZANZIBAR Second Vice President Hemed Suleiman Abdulla has inaugurated the new NMB Wete branch in Pemba North Region, marking a major milestone in the region's financial inclusion and economic development.

The event held at the weekend, attended by key government leaders and NMB officials, underscored the growing partnership between the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar and NMB Bank, highlighting the bank's vital role in supporting the isles' development initiatives.

In his remarks Abdulla said: "The overwhelming response from 1,800 new customers opening accounts on the first day is a clear

indication of the community's demand for accessible banking."

"This is a vital step toward the prosperity of Pemba North and Zanzibar as a whole. We are committed to working with NMB to ensure that the people of Zanzibar continue to benefit from such invaluable services."

The branch will offer a comprehensive range of banking services, including loans, deposits, withdrawals, insurance, and currency exchange, all of which will contribute to the economic empowerment of the residents.

Additionally, the Second Vice President praised NMB's commitment to expanding digital banking services, noting that these innovations are crucial in meeting the evolving needs of modern banking.

Ibrahim Malogoi, Director of Bank of Tanzania (BoT) Zanzibar Zone, highlighted NMB's contributions to Zanzibar's financial sector.

Malogoi applauded the bank's efforts to expand financial inclusion across the region, calling it a key player in the government's broader economic development strategy.

As part of its commitment to social responsibility, NMB has also made significant donations to local healthcare and educational institutions.

The bank presented medical supplies worth 65m/- to Mzambarauni and Kendwa hospitals, including equipment to improve patient care.

In addition, NMB donated 12m/- worth of hospital and maternity beds to Mzambarauni hospital, alongside a contribution to roofing projects at two local secondary schools.

The donations, valued at over 110m/-, are part of the bank's ongoing corporate social responsibility initiatives aimed at uplifting the local community.

Juma Kimori, NMB's chief financial officer, expressed gratitude to the Zanzibar government for creating an enabling environment for

financial institutions.

He emphasized that the Wete branch would significantly reduce the burden on residents who previously had to travel long distances for basic banking services.

"NMB's slogan, 'Close to You,' is now a reality for the people of North Pemba. This branch will provide them with essential services that will help drive local economic growth and improve quality of life," Kimori said.

NMB's expansion in Zanzibar aligns with the bank's broader mission to increase access to banking services across Tanzania, particularly in underserved areas.

Wete Branch is NMB's ninth in Zanzibar and one of 241 branches nationwide. It is part of a network that includes 720 ATMs, 22 of which are located in Zanzibar, making NMB a leading financial institution in the region.

Dr Saada Mkuya Salum, Zanzibar Minister of State in the President's Office for Finance and Planning, also praised NMB for its alignment with the government's financial inclusion policies, which have contributed to the expansion of banking services across the Isles.

She highlighted strategic initiatives, including loans totalling 470m/-, which have been instrumental in financing key development projects.

She said with the opening of the Wete branch, NMB does not just provide financial services—but creates a foundation for sustained growth, prosperity, and inclusion for the people of North Pemba and beyond.

The launch of the NMB Wete branch comes at a significant moment, coinciding with the 61st anniversary of Zanzibar's Revolution. It underscores the commitment of the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar to support initiatives that improve the welfare of its citizens.

The collaboration between the government and financial institutions like NMB is seen as a catalyst for long-term economic growth and stability.

By Getrude Mbago

## Dar to host global occupational health, safety forum next month

OVER 500 professionals from across East Africa and beyond are set to converge in Dar es Salaam next month for the global health and safety conference, a key event aimed at promoting safer workplaces across Africa.

Organised by the Tanzania Occupational Health and Safety Association (TOHASA), the conference is set to take place on February 21, promising to be an impactful gathering for workplace safety advocates.

According to Manyanda Maziku, head of planning at TOHASA, the conference is not just an event; it's a movement.

In a statement availed to the media yesterday, Maziku said the conference, which has become a cornerstone for health and safety in Africa, will see participation from delegations representing countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan, among others.

The event's theme this year, 'Advancing Health and Safety in Tanzania: A Collaborative Approach to Safer Workplaces in Africa', highlights the importance of collaboration in addressing the challenges of workplace safety as industries continue to

grow across the continent.

"The unity we see from countries across Africa in prioritising worker safety shows just how important this cause is. Together, we're making strides towards safer, more sustainable workplaces."

The conference aims to provide a platform for sharing ideas, learning from each other's experiences, and inspiring action towards safer work environments. "This is about more than just safety in isolation," Maziku said.

He added: "We are talking about sustainable development and protecting the people who make that development possible."

A key highlight of the conference will be the involvement of international organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH), who will bring global expertise and best practices to the table.

"As TOHASA continues to host this

annual conference, it is building a lasting community of professionals committed to improving workplace safety. We're not just doing this for ourselves," Maziku said.

He added: "We're doing it for the next generation of workers, ensuring that they have safe and healthy environments to thrive in."

Caroline Baraza, president of TOHASA, expressed her excitement at the growing prominence of the conference, noting the invaluable contributions these organisations will offer.

"When you bring together global organisations with decades of experience, we're able to align ourselves with international standards and best practices," said Baraza adding: "It's about learning, adapting, and ensuring that African workplaces meet the highest safety standards."



Government agencies will also play an integral role in the year's conference, contributing to important discussions around policy, regulation, and the implementation of effective safety measures.

According to Baraza, collaboration between the public and private sectors is crucial in driving the practical changes needed for safer workplaces. "It's not just about talking - it's about creating tangible, lasting impacts."

The conference will feature a robust agenda, with workshops, keynote speeches, and case studies designed to equip attendees with actionable tools and strategies to implement in their respective workplaces.

Baraza expressed her enthusiasm for the opportunity to showcase solutions that can be immediately put into practice. "This is not just about learning - it's about taking real steps towards safer workplaces," she explained.

She said the 2025 TOHASA global health and safety conference is set to be a pivotal moment for workplace safety in Africa, with the potential to drive meaningful change across the continent and leave a lasting legacy for generations to come.

### REQUEST FOR TENDER

North Mara Gold Mine, a fully owned subsidiary of Twiga Minerals Corporation, which is ultimately owned by Barrick Gold Corporation and the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania requests the submission of Tenders from reputable, experienced, certified, and qualified parties to provide the following goods:

**Manufacture and Supply of High Production Truck Bodies for CAT 777E Tender Ref: NM033/2024**

**Pre-qualification Criteria**

No	Reference no	Description of work	Qualification Criteria												
1	NM030/2024	<p><b>Manufacture and Supply of Two (2) High Production Truck Bodies for CAT 777E:</b></p> <p><b>Technical Specifications:</b></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; font-size: x-small;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">Truck</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;">Model:</td> <td>CAT 777E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;">GVW:</td> <td>155.2 MT</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;">Chassis:</td> <td>49.1 MT</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;">Payload &amp; Tray:</td> <td>114.3 MT</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;">Overload:</td> <td>5.0 MT (5%)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Truck		Model:	CAT 777E	GVW:	155.2 MT	Chassis:	49.1 MT	Payload & Tray:	114.3 MT	Overload:	5.0 MT (5%)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Company should provide a project profile over the last three years for similar project</li> <li>ii. Company Profile and capability statement. These should include photo of the production workshop, confirmation of floor size and location.</li> <li>iii. Confirm minimum lead time to supply North Mara site with spares and critical parts.</li> <li>iv. List of Personnel and organogram.</li> <li>v. Local Content Regulations Compliance</li> <li>vi. Provide the safety, health, and environmental ISO compliance certificates.</li> <li>vii. Provide 19 X high production truck bodies to fit Caterpillar 777E Trucks.</li> <li>viii. No liners required for truck bodies</li> <li>ix. Designed for specific gravity of 1.76MT/m<sup>3</sup> but able to handle all material (varying SG) at North Mara site.</li> <li>x. Must increase payload/freeboard.</li> <li>xi. Delivered full assembled in one piece ready for work.</li> <li>xii. Reduction in trucks bodies weight.</li> <li>xiii. Increased volume while staying OEM specifications.</li> <li>xiv. Provide Maintenance free bodies.</li> <li>xv. Should be able to minimize carry back in the bodies.</li> </ol>
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**Submission of Proposals**

If your company meets the qualification criteria and would like to be considered to receive the RFP package (B00, Technical Specs, etc.), send your request along with all requested documents to [nm.proposal@barrick.com](mailto:nm.proposal@barrick.com)

Applicants must quote the tender description(s) and the respective package reference no.(s) in the subject line of the email.

Queries should also be directed to [nm.proposal@barrick.com](mailto:nm.proposal@barrick.com)

**NB:** The Company reserves the right to invite any other supplier(s) who did not submit a proposal through this advertisement.

Qualification of any company submitting a "proposal" shall be at the sole discretion of NMGM.

If you do not hear from us in 21 days after the deadline date, please consider your submission unsuccessful.

**Key Dates**

- Last Date to Submit Proposals **20 January 2025**

North Mara Gold Mine Limited



**Embassy of Sweden**  
Dar es Salaam

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY PROPERTY MANAGER

The Embassy is responsible for representing and promoting Swedish interests in Tanzania and has approximately 40 employees. The overall tasks of the Embassy include supporting business and trade, development cooperation as well as consular and visa services.

We would like to invite applications from suitably qualified candidates for the position of Property Manager. The job holder will report to the Head of Chancery.

**Main responsibilities:**

- Oversee the daily operations of the embassy's properties, ensuring all facilities are functioning optimally.
- Coordinate with the Embassy and Swedish National Property Board for maintenance, repairs, and renovations.
- Manage property budgets, expense tracking, and financial reporting.
- Ensure compliance with local laws and regulations pertaining to property management and embassy operations.
- Serve as the primary point of contact for tenants, addressing concerns and facilitating a positive living and working environment.
- Implement and maintain security protocols to safeguard the properties and their occupants.
- Conduct regular inspections and audits to uphold property standards and embassy expectations.
- Liaise with service providers to maintain supply of services.
- Other tasks decided by the Head of Chancery.

**Qualifications, Skills and Experience:**

- A minimum of 5 years' experience in property management, preferably within a diplomatic context.
- Must have advanced mechanical skills and knowledge of plumbing, electricity and other building systems.
- Degree in engineering or equivalent merits.
- Strong organizational and leadership skills, with the ability to manage multiple tasks simultaneously.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills, with excellent proficiency in both English and Kiswahili.
- Must be able to drive and possess a license class C.
- The candidate must be able to demonstrate great time management, organization and prioritization abilities.
- A commitment to providing exceptional service and upholding the embassy's reputation.

The Embassy of Sweden in Dar es Salaam offers a competitive salary package, comprehensive benefits, and the opportunity to work in a dynamic and culturally diverse environment.

If you are interested in this exciting career opportunity, send your current CV (max. 5 pages) and one page cover letter merged into one file to **Prospect Africa**. Write "**Property Manager**" in the e-mail subject line. Do not send copies of certificates, letters of recommendation etc. Applications should not be sent directly to the Embassy.

**Closing date for receipt of applications: 21st January 2025**  
Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted for interview. If you do not hear from us within 4 weeks of the closing date, please, assume your application was unsuccessful.

Send your application to [recruitment@prospect-africa.net](mailto:recruitment@prospect-africa.net)





## Thirty-four procurement, supply experts punished for negligence

By Guardian Correspondent, Morogoro

THIRTY-FOUR procurement and supply professionals have been disciplined for negligence that led to financial losses to the government.

This was said by Executive Director of the Procurement and Supplies Professionals and Technicians Board (PSPTB), Godfred Mbanyi, during a meeting of PSPTB Workers' Council in Morogoro at the weekend. The meeting was held to review and discuss the management's budget estimates for the 2025/2026 fiscal year.

Mbanyi stated that the board has been taking strict action against professionals who fail to perform their duties effectively. As of December 2024, 34 professionals across various regions of the country had faced disciplinary measures.

He emphasised that the board is committed to ensuring adherence to procurement laws, procedures, and ethics, leading to increased awareness about the importance of integrity in procurement processes.

"In the past, the board faced numerous challenges but now even cases highlighted by senior leaders during their visits to various areas have significantly declined," he said.

He added that the board implements annual disciplinary measures against professionals who violate regulations, which has led to more ethical behaviour and a reduction in negligence.

Mbanyi clarified that most issues arise not from deliberate theft, but from wilful negligence in adhering to laws, resulting in financial losses borne by Tanzanians.

"When a project is implemented, whether it's a bridge, school, or health centre, it belongs to Tan-

zanians. When a professional is negligent, the board addresses it. We don't just look at cases of bribery; we focus on whether someone failed to fulfill their responsibilities," he explained.

Mbanyi also highlighted improvements in the board's registration system, which now integrates registration numbers with the public procurement system, NEST, to streamline procurement processes.

He further mentioned the integration of the board's professional examination system for certification with the National Examinations Council of Tanzania (NECTA) system. This measure aims to prevent unqualified individuals, including those with forged Form Four certificates, from entering the profession.

Shilla Mwandu, Chairperson of PSPTB Workers' Council, expressed gratitude to the government for its support, especially for initiatives like workers' councils in public institutions.

"The councils have become a driving force for providing ideas and strategies to enhance management performance in public institutions, including our board," said Mwandu.



**In the past, the board faced numerous challenges but now even cases highlighted by senior leaders during their visits to various areas have significantly declined**

## RUWASA to drill 5 new wells in Manyara Region

By Guardian Correspondent, Babati

AUTHORITIES in Manyara Region plan to drill five new water wells in each constituency within the region to ensure residents have access to clean and safe water close to their homes.

James Kionaumela, Regional Manager for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (RUWASA), announced the initiative yesterday while discussing strategies to improve water access for residents.

He also urged residents to protect water sources to ensure they continue to serve current and future generations.

The society must refrain from engaging in economic activities near water sources such as farming, tree-cutting, and livestock grazing to preserve biodiversity of the resources and ensure success of water projects.

"In Manyara Region, 35 wells are planned to be drilled. So far, 29 wells have been completed and efforts to drill the remaining ones are

ongoing," he explained.

Kionaumela urged residents benefiting from RUWASA's water services to pay their water bills on time to support the agency's operations and sustainability.

"Using water without paying your bills is not the right thing to do. Pay your bills for the agency to sustain its operations and development activities," he said.

"The fees collected are also used to compensate technicians who repair infrastructure when necessary. Paying your bills ensures smooth service delivery."

Idd Ntandu, resident of Magara Ward in Babati District, praised RUWASA for providing good services to the community.

"Even during the Uhuru Torch races, RUWASA's projects are highly praised because they are well-executed and the value for money is evident in every project they undertake," he said.

RUWASA serves Babati, Kiteto, Simanjoro, Mbulu and Hanang districts in Manyara Region.

## 'Ethiopia mega hydro dam project is 97.6pc complete'

ADDIS ABABA

THE Ethiopian government has announced that the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) has reached 97.6 percent completion.

Marking the dam's near-completion, the government has launched a fundraising campaign, urging financial institutions and the public to step up their support to the project, according to a statement issued at the weekend by the Ethiopian Ministry of Water and Energy.

Aregawi Berhe, director general of the GERD project public participation coordination office, emphasized during a resource mobilization event that the GERD, Africa's largest hydroelectric dam, has achieved significant progress. He called for intensified fundraising efforts and greater citizen involvement to ensure the project's timely and smooth completion.

Ethiopia's State Minister of Water and Energy Sultan Wali praised the "unwavering support"

of Ethiopians at home and abroad throughout the dam's construction. He stressed the importance of sustaining this support as the project nears its final stages.

Financed entirely through domestic resources, the GERD is seen as a symbol of Ethiopia's renaissance. Since its construction began in 2011, Ethiopians have supported the project through various means, including bond sales, athletic events, and lottery draws.

Located in the north western Benishangul-Gumuz region on the Blue Nile River, the GERD was initially designed to generate 6,500 megawatts of electricity, later revised to 5,150 megawatts.

However, the project has been a point of contention among Nile Basin countries. While Ethiopia views the dam as essential to its development goals and middle-income aspirations, Egypt and Sudan have voiced concerns about its potential impact on their water shares.



Home Affairs Minister Innocent Bashungwa (2nd R), hands over the ministry's communication strategy to Tanzania Editors' Forum Chairperson Deodatus Balile during a meeting between the minister and members of the forum in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Joseph Mwendapole

## LATRA, police launch random inspections to control accidents

By Guardian Correspondent, Tanga

THE Land Transport Regulatory Authority (LATRA) in Tanga Region, in partnership with the police, has launched a surprise operation along Segera-Manga-Mombo highway. The operation aims to address driver fatigue among passenger bus and truck drivers, a significant factor contributing to numerous acci-

dents in the area.

According to Shedrack Malale, LATRA officer-in-charge, the region has seen frequent accidents, with police identifying fatigue and reckless overtaking as the primary causes.

In addition to monitoring and managing driver fatigue, the operation will also focus on assessing driving habits, particularly those

operating Toyota Coaster commercial vehicles, commonly known as 'Special Hire.'

"We will use devices that track the distance drivers cover. We will also address speeding issues," Malale said. "The goal of LATRA is to reduce accidents which have been a frequent occurrence, leading to fatalities, disabilities and property damage."

Following the launch of the operation, LATRA officer-in-charge urged drivers to adhere to road safety regulations, particularly by avoiding speeding to prevent accidents that could be avoided.

Tanga Region is part of the northern corridor which also includes Kilimanjaro, Arusha, and Manyara regions, and one of the routes known for frequent road accidents.



A panel of lawyers representing former Ambassador Dr. Willibrod Slaa, led by President of the Tanzania Law Society (TLS), Boniface Mwambukusi (R), Hekima Mwasipo and Peter Madeleka (C) at Kisutu Resident Magistrate's Court in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Imani Nathaniel

By Guardian Correspondent, Lindi

DEPUTY Minister for Water, Kundo Mathew yesterday launched well-drilling and roads infrastructure project worth 325m/- for five villages in Ruangwa District, Lindi Region.

The project is part of a nationwide government initiative to drill 900 wells across all electoral constituencies in Tanzania.

Upon completion, the project is expected to benefit 917 households across Mmawa, Mtawilile, Njawale, Mpara, and Namkatila villages.

Speaking after inspecting the site and laying the foundation stone for water well at Mmawa Village at the weekend, Mathew directed Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (RUWASA) to ensure that

## Five villages in Lindi get road, water project valued at 325m/-

the project is completed on scheduled time.

He stressed the importance of having all projects that are still under implementation to begin providing water services by the end of January as per the government's commitment to supply reliable water services.

He further reiterated that the government continues to allocate substantial financial resources for water projects to ensure that citizens, especially those in rural areas have access to water services.

He called on engineers to implement improvements in certain areas, particularly regarding calibration of water meters and water pressure in the distribution system to ensure efficient service delivery.

RUWASA Manager for Ruangwa District Lawrence Mapunda said the project is carried out using force account system, adding that the construction of water infrastructure has reached an 85 percent.

The project will also increase the overall access to water in rural areas there by 2.62 percent, raising water

access coverage from 74.8 percent to 77.42 percent.

Once the project is fully completed, the infrastructure will be managed and operated by local communities through water user committees, ensuring that the sustainability and maintenance of the water services are in the hands of the beneficiaries themselves.

The initiative is part of the broader effort by the government to improve water accessibility, reduce water scarcity, and enhance quality of life in rural areas.



# 'Tanzania well prepared to host pending Africa energy summit'

By Guardian Reporter

DEPUTY Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Energy responsible for electricity and renewable energy Dr Khatibu Kazungu has said Tanzania is well prepared to host the upcoming energy summit which will bring together 53 African heads of state.

The summit is scheduled to take place on January 27 and 28 in Dar es Salaam.

Dr Kazungu made the remarks at the weekend in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates during the 15th Assembly of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) Council where he presented a paper during a high-profile ministerial discussion.

The session aimed at exploring how member countries can leverage their influence to encourage development partners to allocate funding for renewable energy projects that are environmentally sustainable.

"Tanzania is honoured to host this crucial energy summit, and as

a country, we are fully committed to ensuring that 300 million people in sub-Saharan Africa have access to electricity by 2030. I call on IRENA member countries to adopt this agenda and take meaningful action," Dr Kazungu said.

He further explained that the 'Mission 300 Summit' will focus on energy sector reforms and explore ways to secure funding for projects aimed at connecting consumers, promoting private sector involvement in joint projects, and encouraging the use of clean cooking energy solutions.

Dr Kazungu also highlighted that the theme of the summit will centre on accelerating energy access in Africa, with the goal of bringing electricity to the 685 million Africans who, out of a total population of one billion, still lack access to power.

Additionally, Dr Kazungu said that the government has revised its investment laws to create opportunities for the private sector to partner with the government in the implementation of renewable

energy projects, recognising their critical role.

He expressed gratitude to development partners, including the World Bank (WB), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the German Development Bank (KfW) and the French Development Agency (AFD) for their support in financing various renewable energy initiatives in Tanzania.

The initiatives include the Kakono and Malagarasi projects which are currently under implementation.

Kevin Kariuki, Vice President for Power, Energy, Climate Change and Green Growth at AfDB emphasised the need for political will and clear policy frameworks to ensure successful implementation of energy projects that benefit African populations.

He urged African nations to seize the opportunity to implement environmentally friendly energy solutions to combat climate change, reduce carbon emissions, calling on the international community to provide concrete support for the agenda.



Tanzania Aid Access (TAA) Executive Director, Suphian Nkuwi, plants a tree at Unyianga Primary School in Singida Municipality recently. The organization, sponsored by Tanzania Forest Services (TFS) planted a total of 800 trees at primary and secondary schools in support of the government's efforts to restore natural vegetation in Singida. Photo: Correspondent Thobias Mwanakatwe

# Transformation of MSCL seeks to shift from service to business

By Correspondent Wilhelm Mulinda, Mwanza

THE transformation of Marine Services Company Limited (MSCL) into Tanzania Shipping Company (TASHICO) aims to shift its corporate culture from a service-oriented approach to a business-driven one.

The change will foster a shift in attitudes among employees and stakeholders, focusing on operational efficiency and service quality in a competitive business environment, according to Eric

Hamissi, Managing Director of TASHICO who spoke in Mwanza recently.

"The new name, TASHICO, will help attract new customers, expand our business scope and significantly increase the company's revenue," he said.

He emphasized that the company's growing contribution to the transportation sector will support national economic growth and improve lives of Tanzanians.

The rebrand will drive innovation and the search for new ways to enhance services, with continued investments

in technology to deliver better customer experiences.

Hamissi also praised the government for its substantial investment in the company, noting that the development projects are essential for the company's business capacity. Without the investment, the rebranding would be meaningless, he explained, likening it to changing a bottle without changing its content.

He concluded by thanking customers and the public for their support, acknowledging that their contributions are vital for the company's success.

# Chinese FM's Africa visit enhances all-weather friendship, says official

BEIJING

CHINESE Foreign Minister Wang Yi's Africa visit was a complete success, strengthening the China-Africa all-weather friendship and demonstrating firm resolve of China and Africa to jointly respond to the rapid changes in today's world, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said yesterday.

Wang's recent trip took him to four African countries, namely Namibia, the Republic of Congo, Chad and Nigeria. The visit continued the 35-year-long tradition of a Chinese foreign minister visiting Africa on the first overseas trip at the start of a year.

At a regular press conference, spokesperson Guo Jiakun provided more details on the visit.

"The visit was a complete success," Guo said, adding that a series of new consensus and results were achieved on implementing the six proposals and 10 partnership actions proposed by the Chinese president at the 2024 Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC).

Guo said that the global situation is ever-changing, but the original commitment of China and Africa to treat each other as equals and support each other is as firm as the rock.

African leaders who met with Foreign Minister Wang reaffirmed commitment to the one-China principle. They expressed sympathies over the earthquake in China's Xizang, he said.

The visit has achieved tangible outcomes, promoted cooperation between China and Africa across various fields, and fostered broad consensus in areas such as inter-civilization exchanges, green development and agricultural cooperation.

The visit also contributed to China-Africa all-round coordination and stronger joint efforts to redress the historical injustices to Africa, promote solidarity and prosperity of the Global South and build a just and equitable global governance system.

"China and Africa are on the forefront in building a community with a shared future for mankind and will become a shining example of this endeavour," Guo said.



## PUBLIC NOTICE

Viettel Tanzania PLC (Halotel) is a telecommunication company we continue to ease communication to all our customers by offering cheaper rate for SMS, Voice and Internet services.

We would like to announce to all our customers and public on Basic Tariffs (Tariff customer pay when not registered to bundle/package) for public awareness.

### LOCAL BASIC TARIFFS

Category	Price
Onnet (Halotel-Halotel)	10 Tsh/Dk
Offnet (All networks)	20 Tsh/Dk
SMS	5 Tsh/SMS
Data (MB)	9.35 Tsh/MB

### INTERNATIONAL TARIFFS

#### VOICE INTERNATIONAL TARIFFS

Call Category (Zones/Groups)	Price(Tsh/Min)
<b>Zone 1:</b> USA, UK, India, China, Canada, Australia, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia	450
<b>Zone 2:</b> REST of EUROPE, Kenya	750
<b>Zone 3:</b> Rwanda, South Africa, Zambia, UAE, Oman, Haiti, Peru	840
<b>Zone 4:</b> Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Uganda, Congo DRC, Mozambique	1,000
<b>Zone 5:</b> Burundi	1,350
<b>Zone 6:</b> Rest of the world	2,700
<b>Zone 7:</b> Satellite Networks	13,800

#### INTERNATIONAL SMS TARIFFS

Category	Price (Tsh/SMS)
International SMS	95

### VOICE TARIFFS

Bundle Nature	Validity	Price (Tsh)	All Networks (Min)	Halotel-Halotel (Min)	SMS	Data (MB)
<b>VOICE BUNDLES</b>						
Voice	Daily	350	25			
Voice	Daily	500		110		
Voice	Daily	500	60		60	
Voice	Daily	1,000	180		60	
Voice	2 Days	1,000	160		25	
Voice	Weekly	1,500	180		150	
Voice	Weekly	2,500	350	50	150	
Voice	Weekly	3,000	500		150	
Voice	Monthly	4,000	400	50	50	
Voice	Monthly	5,000	550	650	100	
Voice	Monthly	10,000	1,600	1,600	150	
Voice	Non-expiry	500	20			

#### SMS BUNDLES

SMS	Daily	100			200	
SMS	Weekly	500			2000	
SMS	Monthly	1,000			10,000	

#### INTERNET BUNDLES

Internet	Daily	350				170
Internet	Daily	500				246
Internet	Daily	1,000				492
Internet	Daily	2,000				985
Internet	10 days	2,100				1,024
Internet	Week	1,000				492
Internet	Week	2,000				985
Internet	Week	3,000				1,475
Internet	Week	5,000				2,460
Internet	Week	10,000				4,925
Internet	Monthly	10,000				4,920
Internet	Monthly	20,000				9,850
Internet	Monthly	30,000				14,780
Internet	2 Months	50,000				24,600
Internet	Non-expiry	500				200

#### COMBO BUNDLES

Combo	Day	500	15	10	5	200
Combo	Day	1,000	60		60	246
Combo	Weekly	2,000	55		20	850
Combo	Weekly	2,500	20		20	1,150
Combo	Weekly	3,000	100		30	1,250
Combo	10 Days	3,100	150	20	300	1,024
Combo	Monthly	10,000	280		50	4,000
Combo	Monthly	20,000	400		100	8,500
Combo	Monthly	50,000	600		200	22,000

### VAS TARIFFS

- Halotel customers access all Integrated USSD short codes free of charge (Zero rated).
- Halotel customers access Integrated VAS SMS Short Codes with charging price ranging from Zero (Free of Charge) to 100Tsh depending on business arrangements with service provider. .



## Project worth 4bn/- ends water woes for residents of 15 wards

By Guardian Correspondent, Kyela

RESIDENTS of 15 wards in Kyela District, Mbeya Region, have stopped walking long distances in search of clean and safe water after the government completed project worth 4.1bn/-.

The residents reported that before the project, they relied on water from rivers and wells, which was often unsafe and caused frequent stomach-related illnesses.

The project, under the Kyela Water and Sanitation Authority, is expected to benefit all wards in Kyela town and some surrounding villages.

Speaking during the launch of the project in Itope Ward yesterday, the residents expressed their gratitude to the government for completing the project. They said besides protecting them from diseases, the project would also reduce the time spent searching for water.

One resident, Sela Mwakaje, explained that the area faced significant water challenges, especially during dry season when even wells dry up, forcing them to fetch water from rivers.

She further explained that the situation made life difficult, and at times, they had to suspend productive activities and spend hours in search of water for domestic and economic use.

"During the rainy season, we collect rainwater for drinking, but during dry season, the situation becomes extremely difficult because our wells dry up completely," she

said.

She added that the problem primarily affected women and children, who bore the burden of fetching water, noting that fetching water from rivers was sometimes life-threatening.

Fred Sanga mentioned that water from wells was unsafe for consumption because wells were often located near pit latrines, leading to frequent stomach illnesses and occasional cholera outbreaks.

"We request the government to continue completing the project in other areas so that more residents can benefit. For years, we have been using water from wells, and some people even dig latrines and wells in the same compound," he said.

Presenting a report on the project, Director of Kyela Water and Sanitation Authority, Raphael Francis, stated that once the project is 100 percent complete, it will serve over 127,000 residents.

He added that the area's daily water demand is over nine million liters but the current production capacity is five million liters, meeting only 60 percent of the need.

Inaugurating the project, Kyela District Commissioner Josephine Manase urged Kyela Water and Sanitation Authority to manage the project efficiently to ensure it serves residents for long time.

She also called on residents to protect the project infrastructure and ensure timely bill payments to maintain the service.



Dodoma Regional Chiefs' Council Secretary Ndahani Chinang'ang'ana speaks with chiefs, political party officials and various religious leaders on the importance of peace ahead of this year's General Election at a debate organized by the World Thinkers Institute held in Dodoma yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Peter Mkwavila

## Pemba sees business boom due to revolution festivities

By Rahma Suleiman, Pemba

THE 61st-Zanzibar Revolution anniversary celebrations in Pemba Island have created significant business and economic opportunities for residents due to the influx of visitors attending the festivities.

A survey conducted by this paper showed that the high number of attendees led to a shortage of services such as accommodation,

with all guest houses fully booked. Some residents reported that guest house owners raised accommodation charges, with room rates increasing from an average of between 50,000/- and 70,000/-.

"Since January, visitors have been coming to Pemba but the past few days leading up to the anniversary have overwhelmed the island, benefitting businesses, especially food vendors," said Hamad Ali, a

resident of Chakechake.

Ali Bakari, a vendor selling octopus soup at Machomane area, noted that the celebrations had revitalised his business.

"Before this, my business was not doing well. These celebrations have truly been a blessing for traders like me," he said, adding that increased financial circulation boosts local businesses.

On January 11 and 12, transportation between Unguja

and Pemba went up, with five boats departing Malindi port in Zanzibar's stone town for Pemba, carrying visitors to Gombani grounds for the celebrations.

However, unscrupulous ticket brokers exploited the high demand, selling boat tickets at inflated prices. Tickets that usually cost 20,000/- were sold for 30,000/-, with some lacking proper passenger details, according to the survey.

## DC kneels down to ask residents to leave forest reserve in Singida

By Guardian Correspondent, Singida

SINGIDA District Commissioner Godwin Gondwe has taken extraordinary step of kneeling down before residents of Msikii and Munkhola villages, pleading with them to vacate Munkhola Forest Reserve.

The step came after reports that villagers have encroached on the protected forest area, engaging in farming and construction of houses.

Munkhola Forest Reserve, a protected area crucial for environmental conservation, has been subjected to illegal activities, including logging, land clearing for agriculture and building houses. The encroachment has led to severe land degradation, with soil erosion and flooding posing significant risks to the surrounding villages.

During a visit at the weekend, Gondwe was accompanied by members of the District Security and Safety Committee to assess the situation first-hand.

They witnessed the devastating impact of human activities in the area which left over 150 homes affected by soil erosion.

During his visit, he was visibly moved by the situation and resorted to kneeling down as a sign of urgency and appeal to the villagers to vacate the reserve.

Addressing the residents, Gondwe gave them a three-month ultimatum to leave the forest reserve.

"I beg you; please understand the

seriousness of this situation. I want the village chairman to confirm that this message has been understood," he said, emphasizing the dire consequences of continuing to encroach on the land.

He explained that the damage to the forest reserve has led to soil erosion, which in turn has caused water to flood Munkhola Village.

The flooding has resulted in latrines collapsing and homes being flooded, creating a public health threats and posing serious risks to safety of the villagers.

"The forest is not just a place for timber and farming; it is essential for the balance of our environment and your own wellbeing. The consequences of destroying it will affect your children and future generations. You are responsible for protecting this land for them," Gondwe said.

The DC also highlighted that many of the residents who purchased land in the reserve had been misled.

"Those who bought land here were defrauded. The authority to allocate land lies with the Village General Assembly, not the Village Council. If you bought land from the council, you were deceived," he said, urging the villagers to seek redress for the fraudulent land deals.

In response, several residents acknowledged the severity of the situation, expressing their concern about the floods and the damage to their homes.



Beneficiaries of Building a Better Tomorrow: Youth Initiative for Agribusiness (BBT-YIA) phase two stand outside the Ministry of Agriculture ready to head to Ndogoye farm in Chamwino District, Dodoma Region yesterday. They are expected to cultivate high-quality C105 maize seeds. Photo: Correspondent Renatha Msungu

By Correspondent Ashton Balaigwa,

Morogoro

MOROGORO Regional Commissioner Adam Malima has directed Morogoro Urban Water and Sanitation Authority (MORUWASA) and the Rural Water and Sanitation Agency (RUWASA) to expedite ongoing water projects to resolve shortages affecting the region.

Speaking during 42nd Regional Consultative Committee meeting here at the weekend, Malima set January 30 deadline for the authorities to present solutions addressing both urban and rural water challenges.

Malima also condemned the

## RC urges authorities to expedite water projects

rising cases of gender-based violence (GBV) in the region and called for urgent action. He urged the community to denounce GBV acts, including physical abuse, rape, threats, and related crimes.

Regional Administrative Secretary Dr Mussa Ali Mussa called on district and local leaders to collaborate in formulating effective plans to eradicate GBV.

Mvomero District Commissioner Judith Nguli blamed the persistence of GBV on weak laws and urged legislative reforms to

enforce stricter penalties.

ASP Dr Mwanaidi Lwena, Head of Gender and Children Desk in the region, stressed that GBV severely impacts mental and physical health, often resulting in fatalities. She advocated for streamlined medical care, counselling, and case follow-up for victims.

Morogoro Region has allocated 4.8bn/- for 2024/2025 development projects, with 3.4bn/- from domestic sources and 1.4bn/- from external funding.

NAIROBI

PROMINENT activist Maria Sarungi Tsehai, a staunch critic of the government, was released on Sunday, hours after being abducted by armed men in Nairobi, Kenya.

Known for her outspoken advocacy for land rights and freedom of expression, she shared an emotional video on X (formerly Twitter), telling her 1.3 million followers, "I have been saved." Amnesty International Kenya confirmed her abduction on Sunday afternoon, stating she was forcibly taken into a vehicle in the Kenyan capital.

The Law Society of Kenya president, Faith Odhiambo, announced they had intervened to

## Maria Sarungi freed hours after abduction in Nairobi

secure her release, warning against using Kenya for such operations: "We will not allow this." Kenyan and Tanzanian officials remain silent on the incident.

The activist has long accused the government of reversing democratic progress, citing crackdown on opposition activists and fears of a return to repression ahead of this year's General Election.

Change Tanzania, a movement she founded, alleged that Tanzanian agents were behind her abduction, branding it an attempt to silence her criticism.

This is not Kenya's first entanglement in cross-border abductions. Ugandan opposition leader Kizza Besigye was kidnapped in Nairobi last year and extradited under murky circumstances, while domestically, over 80 people have reportedly disappeared following anti-tax protests.

Calls are growing for accountability as rights groups, and officials, like Kenya's Public Service Cabinet Secretary Justin Muturi, criticize the government's failure to tackle the alarming trend of enforced disappearances.





Chairman of CCM in Simanjiro District, Manyara Region, Kiria Laizer (C), is welcomed by residents of Naepo Village led by their Chairman Elias Laizer (R) during a thanksgiving celebration for a peaceful local government election at the weekend. Photo: Correspondent Gift Thadey

# Over 14,000 mpox cases reported in Africa - WHO

KINSHASA

ABOUT 14,700 confirmed mpox cases, including 66 deaths, were reported in 20 African countries from January 2024 to January 5, 2025, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has said.

The confirmed cases represent only a subset of suspected cases, the WHO said at the weekend. It previously said that a significant number of suspected mpox cases remain untested and "thus never get confirmed" in countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) due to limited diagnostic capacity.

The on-going outbreak is being driven by multiple clades of the virus, including the Clade 1b variant, which is predominantly spreading in the DRC and neighbouring countries, the WHO said in its latest report.

Imported travel-related cases caused by the Clade 1b variant and secondary transmission from these cases have also been detected outside Africa. The WHO reported that the imported cases were primarily among adults who travelled during their incubation periods or with early symptoms, with diagnoses made upon their arrival in other countries.

The new variant, first detected in South Kivu, an eastern province of the DRC, is estimated to have emerged around mid-September 2023, according to a previous WHO

report.

The travel-related mpox cases highlight the challenges posed by varying surveillance capabilities and reporting practices across countries. Limited resources and restricted access to diagnostic testing can result in underreporting or delays in detection, the WHO warned. It urged member states to sustain and strengthen mpox surveillance to improve case detection and reporting.

In mid-August 2024, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention declared the mpox outbreak in Africa a public health emergency of continental security. Shortly afterward, the WHO also declared mpox a public health emergency of international concern, activating its highest level of global alert for the disease for the second time in two years.

Mpox, formerly known as monkeypox, was first identified in laboratory monkeys in 1958. It is a rare viral disease that typically spreads through body fluids, respiratory droplets and contaminated materials. The infection usually causes fever, rash and swollen lymph nodes.

*The on-going outbreak is being driven by multiple clades of the virus, including the Clade 1b variant, which is predominantly spreading in the DRC and neighbouring countries*

# Egypt increases African diplomatic bid as Red Sea crisis hits economy

CAIRO

EGYPT is stepping up diplomatic engagement with African nations as it seeks to bolster security in the strategically vital Horn of Africa and Red Sea region, where ongoing conflicts have sharply cut into its crucial Suez Canal revenues.

The diplomatic effort comes as Egypt grapples with a 60 percent drop in canal revenue over the past 11 months -- a staggering \$7 billion loss, according to President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi -- driven by shipping disruptions from attacks by Yemen's Houthi group on vessels in the Red Sea.

On Saturday, Cairo played host to the first meeting of a new trilateral

committee with Somalia and Eritrea, following up on an October summit between the three nations' leaders in Asmara, the capital of Eritrea. Later that day, Egypt's Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty spoke with his counterpart in Djibouti about protecting their shared interests in Red Sea maritime security.

"The increasing threats to regional security are a motivation behind the increased Egyptian interest in all African issues," said Amani el-Taweel, an expert in African affairs at Cairo's Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies. She noted that developments in East Africa affect both Egypt's water security and

its economic interests in Red Sea shipping lanes.

The diplomatic push extends beyond the Horn of Africa. In recent weeks, Egyptian officials have engaged with leaders from Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, the Republic of the Congo, Kenya, and Chad, where Abdelatty visited in December to discuss counterterrorism cooperation and trade ties.

The flurry of diplomatic activity underscores Egypt's renewed focus on building African alliances at a time when regional instability threatens both its security interests and its economy. The Suez Canal, which connects the Red Sea to the Mediterranean, has historically

been a vital source of foreign currency for Egypt's struggling economy.

During Saturday's phone call, Abdelatty and Djibouti's foreign minister, Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, emphasized the need for Red Sea states to coordinate their response to regional threats, according to Egypt's Foreign Ministry. They also discussed support for Somalia's stability -- a key concern in a region where political upheaval and militant activity have long challenged maritime security.

"Egypt is mainly affected by the developments in East Africa," El-Taweel said. "The intensified Egyptian approach with African states is logical and necessary."

# Hijacked Chinese fishing vessel set free off Somalia, embassy confirms

MOGADISHU

A CHINESE-OWNED fishing vessel hijacked off the Somali coast in November has been set free with its 18-member crew, the Chinese Embassy in Somalia said on Monday.

The embassy said in a statement posted on X that the crew was rescued Monday following "the unremitting efforts of the Chinese government."

"The Chinese side strongly condemns this vicious action which threatened the safety of the crew and international navigation security, and will continue to firmly safeguard the lawful rights of Chinese citizens and enterprises overseas," the statement said.

The ship and its crew were hijacked in late November and taken to Xaafuun district in the semi-autonomous state of Puntland,

a territory in Somalia's northeast. The pirates who took the ship later demanded a ransom of \$10 million. It was not immediately clear if the money was paid.

The embassy statement said, "the Chinese side maintained close consultation and coordination" with federal authorities in Somalia and the regional government of Puntland in efforts to rescue the ship and its crew.

The hijacking underscored the persistent challenges of maritime security in Somalia's waters. Somalia has for years been blighted by piracy, which peaked in 2011, when the United Nations says more than 160 attacks were recorded off the Somali coast.


However, incidents have declined drastically since then, largely due to the presence of American and allied navies in international waters.



**The Chinese side strongly condemns this vicious action which threatened the safety of the crew and international navigation security, and will continue to firmly safeguard the lawful rights of Chinese citizens and enterprises overseas**



Dr. Halfan Haule (R), Rorya District Commissioner, inspects construction of Owak Secondary School in Kowak Village, Mara Region, recently. Photo: Guardian Correspondent



**VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT**

**Job Title:** HSE METHODS AUDITS COORDINATOR-TZ

**Reports to:** HSE METHODS AND AUDIT LEAD

**Job Type:** Full Time

**Location:** Dares-Salaam (TZ)

**WHO WE ARE**

The East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project is a Midstream development located across Uganda and Tanzania that includes a nearshore Marine Storage and Export Terminal (MST). Once completed, the EACOP Company will operate the East African Crude Oil Pipeline, a 1,443 km long, electrically heated crude oil export pipeline that transports oil from Kabaale - Hoima in Uganda, to the Chongoleani Peninsula near Tanga Port in Tanzania for crude export to the international markets.

**JOB DIMENSIONS/ GENERAL JOB DESCRIPTION**

**CAPEX Project:** The East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project is a major regional infrastructure project (Capex: 4.1 G\$, OPEX: >2.5G\$ over 25 years) between Uganda and Tanzania coast, opening a new value corridor between the two countries. The role does not have a direct budget function.

**Corporate HSE Department:** The role will be based within the Corporate HSE Department and will provide functional support to the Methods and Audits team. The role interfaces with the Project teams to integrate the contractor plans into the Corporate systems and strategies.

**ACTIVITIES**

- HSE Management System: Develop and implement the key processes and working tools/documents required for an effective EACOP HSE Management system (HSE-MS).
- Coordinate the EACOP Corporate HSE Audit program.
- Coordinate and implement the EACOP HSE training requirements.
- Conduct Contractor evaluation and audit.

**CONTEXT AND ENVIRONMENT**

- Behind the numerous technical, environmental, and social challenges faced by the project, objective is for EACOP to be developed in a fast-track mode with start-up anticipated 39 months after FID.
- With operations in two countries, two separate regulatory regimes will need to be addressed in the HSE-MS.
- Numerous stakeholders and heavy focus by NGOs create a complex context. Project will need to be developed in accordance with IFC standards and the Equator 4 Principles to secure the necessary financing.
- Several risks related to the location including malaria, limited infrastructure, significant transport & road risk, etc.
- Job Location: The position is based at Dar es Salaam Office (Tanzania) and with travel to Uganda offices and worksites.

**ACCOUNTABILITIES**

- Prepare the required documentation as outlined in the HSE management system, in line with the EACOP Integrated Management System (EIMS).
- Support the HSE Methods & Audit Lead to establish the processes required for the implementation of the HSE procedures in the EACOP Organization.
- Coordinate the EACOP Corporate HSE Audit program.
- Lead Auditor for internal and 3rd party Contractor HSE Audits.
- Conduct the HSE evaluation of contractors and support Contract Owners to develop and implement effective contractor oversight.
- Support and coordinate HSE Training requirements and delivery model for the Corporate functions.
- Perform any other duties or tasks that may be required by the position.

**QUALIFICATIONS / EXPERIENCE REQUIRED**

**Academic Qualifications:**

- Bachelor's degree and/or equivalent formal qualification in a recognized HSE discipline (NEBOSH Certificate or higher qualification).
- National Occupational Safety and Health OSHA certified (NOSHC Module I & II).
- Lead Auditor with qualification recognized by a certification body (i.e., IRCA, CQI). Registered expert for conducting environmental audits, with National Environmental Management Council (NEMC) for Tanzania is an asset.

- Minimum 10 years of experience in Oil & Gas Industry or related experience in large scale projects & industrial operations.

**Technical competencies:**  
HSE Management system development expertise. Subject Matter Expert for Occupational Health and Safety; Certified Lead Auditor; Risk Analysis, Contractor HSE Management.


**Behavioral competencies:** Ability to work in a multi-cultural business setting and excellent interpersonal and communication skills essential. Fluent in English: Speaking and Writing.

**HOW TO APPLY**

The applicant must submit his/her Curriculum Vitae CV and a Cover Letter explaining why he/she is the suitable candidate for the position. Applicants are also required to provide details of three (3) referees of whom should be the most recent employer. **Please submit your application only through ANY of the contact information provided below. Application deadline is on 13th Feb 2025.**

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## Electoral commissions need to live up to President Mwinyi's promises

ASSURANCES have been given at the highest level that the responsible commissions have started to work to ensure fairness and transparency in the General Election later this year.

They came from Zanzibar President Dr. Hussein Ali Mwinyi at the climax of events to mark 61 years of Zanzibar Revolution at Gombani Stadium in Pemba. The specific appeal the Zanzibar leader issued was that the public should engage in the upcoming election with intent to uphold peace, which is definitely what most people expect. The ball is in commissions' courts to show they can do that.

In that case it is the responsible commissions that need to work in such a manner as to instil confidence in the public that the process is indeed geared towards harmony, which presumes that the election organisers are transparent in what they do. This will not be easy to attain as the mood among political parties has been poisoned for a while, as demands on the state become too heavy for it to bear. Efforts to reduce these burdens by reconciliation or reform aren't easy to carry out as they lack consensus in responsible political agencies.

An unavoidable sphere of expectations is to depend on existing inter-community organisations to counteract the divisive work of those who vie for power, with interfaith committees of religious groups notably helpful. Reiterating the need for the public to maintain peace and unity during the run to the polls appears rather familiar, but to some people even the peace is too familiar. It is a sentiment that has often shocked visitors for instance at higher

learning institutions, hearing voluble students supporting opposition groups carelessly shout that the outcry about maintaining peace is hullabaloo, etc.

An election year is a situation where the goalposts might change so that one of the main contestants is in a better position to achieve victory. Elections are punctuated by shifts of important figures to other parties to boost their own chances as well as the chances of those parties, which doesn't guarantee them victory but at least assure a decent presence in the legislature. If the polls are transparent, they will at least be able to achieve the limited goals of increased number of winning candidates in various areas, rather scarce for some years.

To put it more to the point, decisions need to be made to make the polls transparent, as we have failed that test for a while, making transparent elections unfamiliar territory. Yet, it is better to have enhanced opposition presence at various levels of representation than targeting 98.1 percent wins in this or that poll. Those who reject the primacy of peace have wider legroom that way, whereas a better contested election ensures agitators are marginalized.

Hopefully, those charged with organising the polls will stick to the president's assurances that the government will ensure that the country conducts a peaceful and fair election, before, during and after the process. Critics have plenty to say on how far the current electoral commissions are independent, but it is well known that polls can be conducted fairly if there is political will to do so, not just owing to the composition. What the Zanzibar leader said is just that.

## Work of interfaith committees will be easy when everybody cherishes peace

IT is evident that Tanzania has a working outreach of non-governmental organisations assisting in building consensus of societal action in a number of areas that may compare with anywhere where peace is a priority. There was testimony to that effect when a Norwegian State Secretary was on a visit here lately, praising the country's Interfaith Peace Committee (IPC) for exceptional work in promoting peace, unity and tolerance among members of diverse communities. Activists and the wider public acknowledge the plaudits but see the dangers.

The moment was appreciably a visit the minister made in Lindi Region to inspect several projects implemented by Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) in collaboration with the National Muslim Council of Tanzania (BAKWATA). Evidently this link up arose from colleagues of the Muslim council on interfaith committees at regional and national levels, as such projects foster the solidarity needed to work harmoniously. There were several features or indicators on the spot to give an impression that collaboration was working appreciably well.

The visiting minister affirmed that the interfaith initiative helps plenty in fostering collaboration, mutual respect and understanding despite intuitive differences, tied to religious upbringing or loyalties. He quite noticeably asserted that efforts of interfaith groups are critical for peace and harmony not just for Tanzania but for the entire world. He singled out that kind of positive relationships for praise, underlining that the world is a better place when communities respect and value each other despite their differences. Indeed for much of what we know locally, these aren't seen as differences but faith variations.

That there is now appreciable levels of working together is indeed salutary even at the local level, as less than 10 years ago there was a violent upsurge targeting local leaders of the ruling party. Some excuses were being brought up for that flare up, one such reason being environmental controls on stopping deforestation of woodlands in the Rufiji Delta zone. There were suggestions that portions of those spreading chaos were intruders from nearby countries, looking for soft spots to cause chaos. It was Mozambique that suffered, next.

Not far from Lindi there were disturbances in Mtwara several years earlier, this time strictly over job opportunities from natural gas exploitation offshore in particular. Authorities had difficult moments to rein in the networks of agitation, while background efforts of interfaith peace committees are vital when the situation at least starts to calm down. The purpose is to restore usually acceptable roles for everyone, which are ignored or belittled when youth are put on a war footing for some reason, starting to see violence as heroic. Bringing them back to common sense that it is peace, personal enterprise and family wellbeing that matters.

There was another dimension to societal violence that the minister witnessed closely, when he visited a school club dedicated to combating gender-based violence (GBV). Reports said that at the school, the State Secretary expressed gratitude for the initiative and commended the young pupils for their active role in addressing GBV. There is an expression that when young persons are taught the right things, they are unlikely to abandon those ways until old age, and that is precisely what we need to end most forms of gender-based violence.

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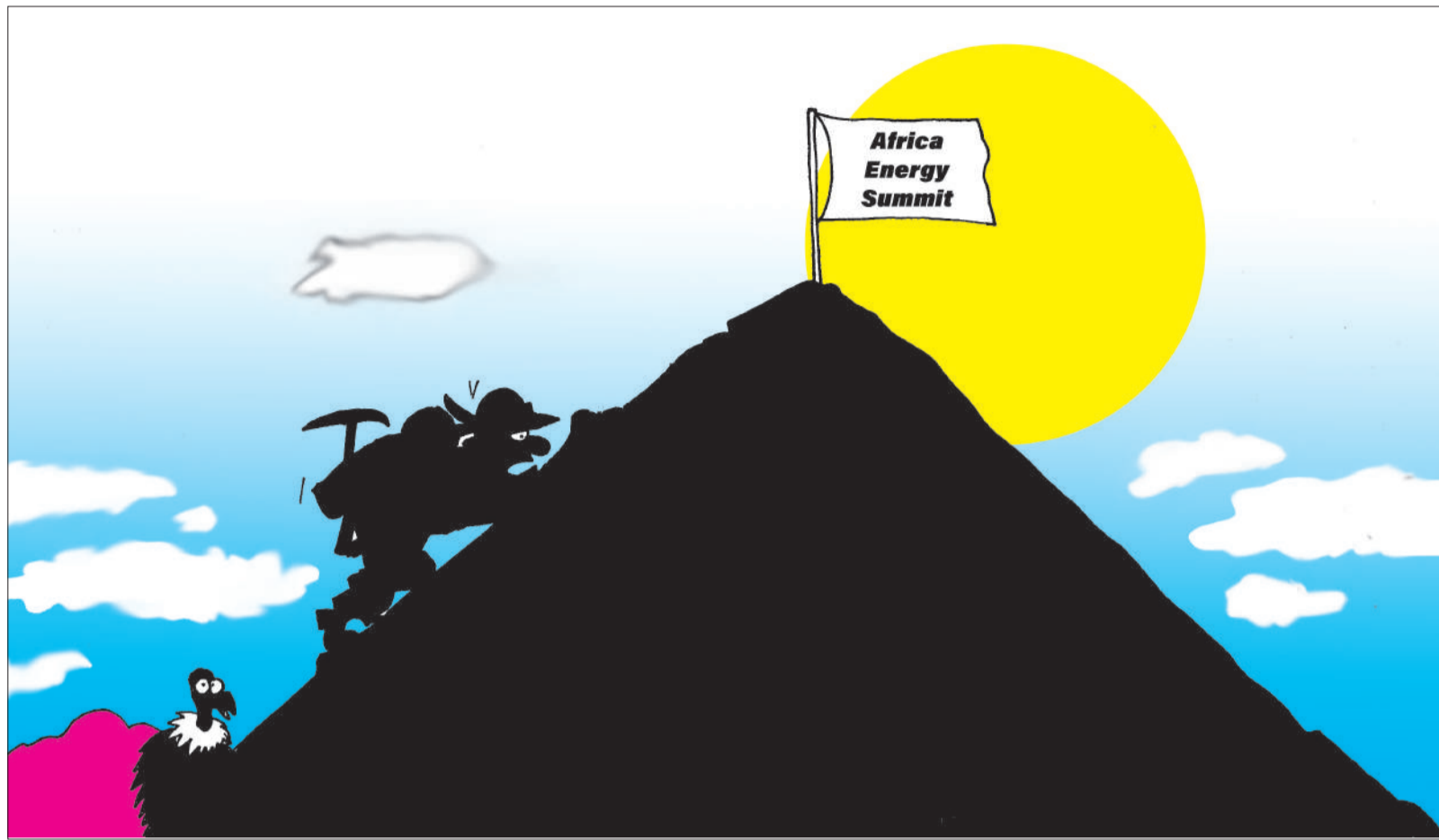
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By Kettie Chipeta

## Soft Skills or stagnation: The silent deficiencies holding Tanzania back

IN a world where automation and artificial intelligence are revolutionizing industries, technical expertise alone is no longer enough. The future belongs to those who can communicate, adapt, and lead with empathy, qualities that Tanzania is dangerously neglecting. While our national agenda has focused on expanding technical education in sectors like ICT and engineering, we have largely ignored the "human skills" essential for success in today's dynamic workforce. Reports continue to warn that without a focus on soft skills such as communication, adaptability, and empathy, Tanzania faces the threat of economic stagnation.

The World Economic Forum's 2024 "Future of Jobs" report predicts that by 2030, nearly half of all jobs globally will require strong soft skills. Yet, Tanzania's education and workplace systems remain overly fixated on technical qualifications. This unspoken crisis could stunt our growth if left unaddressed. It's not enough to cultivate a workforce proficient in coding or engineering without the human touch, even the most technically sound projects fail to make their intended impact.

We've all experienced that awkward silence during meetings. You can feel the tension in the air, a discomfort that lingers no matter how much time passes. People shift uneasily in their seats, avoiding eye contact, each one hoping someone else will break the silence. That feeling, the one you get when you sense something has gone terribly wrong, remains long after a critical meeting with a client.

After weeks of hard work, carefully preparing technical reports and projections, we gathered to present our findings. Yet, something was amiss. Despite our best efforts, the client wasn't impressed. In fact, they seemed visibly frustrated.

"Why has no one returned my calls?" the client asked, cutting through the presentation.

As our manager scrambled to explain technical delays and communication breakdowns, it became painfully clear: the issue wasn't with the data or technical setbacks. We had failed to engage with the client on a human level. We were consumed with facts and figures but overlooked the one thing that truly matters in business relationships.

This personal experience highlights a truth that resonates across Tanzania. Recent government initiatives such as the National ICT Policy 2022 and the Higher Education for Economic Transformation (HEET) project funded by the World Bank, have made significant strides in developing a digitally skilled workforce and strengthening infrastructure and STEM programs at universities. However, there is an opportunity to complement these

efforts by also nurturing foundational soft skills, ensuring a well-rounded and adaptable workforce.

Tanzania's future economic growth hinges on how well it nurtures soft skills in its workforce. While automation and artificial intelligence are advancing in technical domains, human qualities remain irreplaceable. Unfortunately, Tanzania is trailing behind in this regard.

In our schools, there is little emphasis on critical thinking, effective communication, or teamwork. The focus remains on rote learning, memorizing facts to pass exams rather than developing the skills needed for the modern workforce. This outdated approach fails to prepare learners for the demands of an increasingly dynamic global economy.

Similarly, in the workplace, technical training is prioritized, while soft skills such as leadership, conflict resolution, and emotional intelligence are rarely addressed. This oversight weakens our workforce and hampers Tanzania's economic potential.

A recent study by the World Economic Forum (2024) revealed that over 60 percent of Tanzanian businesses reported a lack of skilled workers with strong communication skills. Additionally, an International Labour Organization (ILO) report found that only 37 percent of the workforce in Tanzania possesses the necessary problem-solving skills, which are critical for adapting to a rapidly changing global economy. If we continue ignoring these critical human skills, we will remain competitive only in the most outdated sectors.

Take the case of Michael, a friend who recently left his position at a prominent Dar es Salaam-based company. When I asked why he resigned, he responded, "It wasn't the work; it was the way we were treated."

At first, I assumed the issue was long hours or low pay, but Michael explained that the real problem lay in the toxic atmosphere. His manager's micromanagement and failure to provide feedback or constructive criticism created a stifling environment. Communication became one-sided, and employees felt disempowered and voiceless.

This is not an isolated experience. In fact, it's a widespread issue in many Tanzanian workplaces. A 2023 survey by Tanzania's Chamber of Commerce found that over 40% of employees reported feeling disengaged from their jobs due to poor management practices and a lack of effective communication.

Too often, leadership is seen as top-down, where managers issue

orders without considering the well-being or development of their teams. True leadership shouldn't be limited to issuing commands; it should prioritize building trust, actively listening to employees, and empowering them to succeed through emotional intelligence.

But the importance of soft skills extends far beyond leadership roles. Imagine walking into a hospital with a loved one in pain. You're stressed, anxious, and desperate for help. The nurse at the desk barely glances up and coldly says, "Take a number and wait." Now, imagine a different scenario where the nurse looks up, offers a warm smile, and says, "I can see you're concerned. Let me check how soon we can get you in." The difference lies not only in the interaction itself but also in the lasting impact it has on the patient's experience.

This same principle applies to customer service in businesses. Consider a small café in Dar es Salaam where the owner prioritized training her staff in active listening and empathy. Despite operating in a competitive market, the café built a strong customer base by ensuring every patron felt valued, not just as a customer, but as an individual. This focus on personal service led to a noticeable increase in repeat visits, proving that soft skills directly impact customer loyalty.

In today's rapidly changing business landscape, adaptability is just as critical as empathy and communication. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed glaring gaps in adaptability among Tanzanian businesses.

While companies around the world embraced new technologies and strategies to stay afloat, many Tanzanian businesses struggled to adapt. A World Bank (2023) report noted that only 25% of Tanzanian businesses adopted digital technologies during the pandemic, compared to 65% of businesses in neighboring Kenya. This disparity reflects a broader trend where Tanzanian firms lag behind in embracing innovation. The businesses that thrived were led by individuals who demonstrated creativity, flexibility, and calmness in the face of uncertainty.

Adaptability isn't a skill acquired in a single workshop; it's a mindset cultivated through experience, curiosity, and a willingness to embrace change. And yet, adaptability remains in short supply across many of our industries.

Effective communication is another vital soft skill that Tanzanian businesses often overlook. Communication is frequently seen as simply delivering a message clearly, but true communication

involves listening attentively, asking insightful questions, and ensuring alignment among all parties. Poor communication breeds confusion and conflict. I recall a project where vague instructions from our manager led to significant confusion. Each team member assumed they understood the task, only to discover at the deadline that we had been working toward different goals. A brief five-minute conversation could have saved time, resources, and frustration.

The solution begins with a fundamental shift in mindset. We must prioritize soft skills not just in education, but across our workplaces and industries. Soft skills should no longer be viewed as optional or secondary. They are essential for both individual success and national prosperity.

Here's how Tanzania can move forward: First, we must incorporate soft skills into the national education curriculum. We must teach students critical thinking, teamwork, empathy, and communication alongside technical subjects. This can be done by introducing project-based learning, debate clubs, and mentorship programs in schools.

Second, businesses must invest in continuous soft skills training. Companies should offer workshops on emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and adaptability. Training programs should focus on developing leadership skills at all levels and not just among top managers.

Third, the government should incentivize soft skills development. Tax breaks and grants could encourage businesses to invest in employee development programs that prioritize communication, empathy, and adaptability.

Finally, leaders must exemplify the behaviour they expect to see, as true leadership transcends giving orders and instead centres on fostering trust. Tanzanian leaders, whether in government, business, or civil society, must lead by example to create a culture where trust and collaboration thrive.

The choice is clear: Tanzania must prioritize soft skills or risk being left behind in a world that values human connection and adaptability more than ever. Our future prosperity depends not only on our technical abilities but also on how well we communicate, empathize, and lead.

This is not merely a business concern but a national priority. The time to act is now before the human touch becomes our greatest deficit.

**Kettie Chipeta is a management consultant specializing in RBM, adaptive management, governance, and digital business. She can be reached at kettieloma@gmail.com**



# Tanzania to lead the charge for Africa's energy future at historic summit in Dar

By Adonis Byemelwa

**T**HE African Development Bank Group, World Bank Group, African Union and the government are coming together to confront one of Africa's most pressing challenges—energy access.

On January 27th and 28th, 2025, Dar es Salaam will host the Africa Heads of State and Government Energy Summit, a historic gathering that aims to accelerate progress towards universal electrification on the continent.

The summit reflects a shared urgency among global and African leaders to tackle the energy crisis that has left nearly 600 million people in Africa without electricity. This staggering figure accounts for 83 percent of the global energy deficit, highlighting the scale of the challenge and the critical need for coordinated action.

A joint statement from the event's organizers underscored the gravity of the situation. "Energy poverty is not just an infrastructure problem; it is a barrier to economic growth, access to education, improved healthcare and opportunities for millions of people across Africa."

This summit represents a pivotal moment for transformative action," it said. The event will convene African Heads of State and Government alongside leaders from the private sector, civil society, development organizations, and academia to forge solutions that will unlock the continent's energy potential and catalyze sustainable development.

A cornerstone of the summit is Mission 300, an ambitious initiative launched in April 2024 by the African Development Bank and the World Bank in collaboration with development part-



**On December 22, 2022 President Samia Suluhu Hassan pressed a button to open a diversion channel on Rufiji River to start filling water into a 2,115MW Julius Nyerere Hydrodropower Project.**

ners. The initiative aims to provide electricity to 300 million people in Africa by 2030, representing a bold step toward closing the energy gap.

Mission 300 rests on two foundational pillars: large-scale investments in energy infrastructure and comprehensive policy reforms to strengthen the electricity supply chain. The mission is more than a technological solution—it is a transformative vision for Africa's future.

The joint statement described it as "a commitment to light up Africa, one community at a time, and create a ripple effect that will elevate the continent's socio-economic landscape."

Tanzania's role as the summit host underscores its growing leadership in energy development. Over the years, the country has become a model for expanding energy access,

showcasing how targeted investments and innovative policies can yield significant progress.

Dar es Salaam offers an ideal backdrop for the summit, serving as both a symbol of achievement and a springboard for further action. Organizers hope Tanzania's example will inspire other nations to follow suit, leveraging its successes to accelerate electrification efforts across the continent.

November 2024's African Energy Week in Cape Town, South Africa, further highlighted the urgency of Africa's energy challenges and the opportunities within reach.

Prof Benedict Oramah, President of Afreximbank, delivered a powerful address, focusing on Africa's untapped potential. He described the continent's energy crisis as "the paradox of plenty," pointing to Africa's vast energy resources—10 percent of the world's oil reserves, 7 percent of natural gas, and nearly 40 percent of global solar potential.

Despite this abundance, Africa continues to struggle with energy poverty, which costs the continent an estimated 2-4 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) annually. Oramah called for a decisive shift toward energy sovereignty, urging African nations to transform the continent into a hub for refining and energy production.

Oramah's message was clear: "Africa must move beyond reliance on external financing and focus on building self-sufficiency. He cited examples from countries like India, Brazil, and South Korea, which have achieved energy independence through strategic investments in refining and production capacities".

"Africa has the resources to transform itself," he said, "but this requires bold leadership, innovative institutions, and a commitment to energy sovereignty." At the grassroots level, transformative changes are already taking place. In Tanzania's Morogoro region, small-scale farmers are embracing solar-powered irrigation to combat water scarcity and improve productivity.

Farmers in Mindu and Magadu wards, who previously relied on inconsistent water supplies from the Kasanga River, have turned to solar technology to sustain their crops year-round.

Jonathan Mshana, a vegetable farmer in the area, explained how the technology has changed his operations. "Solar-powered irrigation systems have provided us with a consistent water supply, reduced production costs, and improved

the efficiency of our farming," he said. "This is not just a source of power—it's a lifeline for modern agriculture." The adoption of solar energy has brought multiple benefits, from job creation in rural areas to improved soil fertility through sustainable farming practices. By integrating vegetables with cereals, farmers are enriching their land while boosting yields. Crops such as beans, cabbage, and peas are helping to restore soil nutrients, reduce erosion, and provide better nutrition for families. The ripple effects of renewable energy in agriculture are undeniable, creating opportunities that go beyond the farm and into communities.

Energy access is more than a technical challenge; it is a human right that underpins economic growth, education, healthcare, and overall quality of life. The Africa Heads of State and Government Energy Summit aims to galvanize the political will and financial resources needed to make universal electrification a reality.

Organizers have emphasized the need for innovative partnerships and long-term investments to achieve this goal. "Africa has the potential to lead the world in sustainable energy solutions," the joint statement read, "and this summit will provide a platform to harness that potential fully."

Angola's Minister of Mineral Resources, Petroleum, and Gas, Diamantino Pedro Azevedo, echoed these sentiments during African Energy Week. He highlighted Angola's efforts to attract foreign investment in its oil and gas sector through regulatory reforms and strategic planning.

Similarly, Minister for Home Affairs, Innocent Bashungwa highlighted the festival as part of President Samia Suluhu Hassan's broader national initiative to address Kagera's economic challenges. Kagera Regional Commissioner, Fatma Mwaswa emphasized the importance of local investment, urging residents—both at home and abroad—to invest sustainably in their homeland.

Her message aligns with Prof Rugarabamu's vision of fostering a deep connection to one's heritage among younger generations, especially those raised in urban settings. He advocates for improved basic infrastructure, such as electricity and water, to mirror urban amenities and strengthen ties to rural communities.

The Julieth Flowers Botanical Garden is more than a tribute; it is a beacon of hope and unity. Through local initiatives like JFBG, profound environmental and economic challenges can be met with sustainable solutions.

Prof. Rugarabamu's vision serves as an inspiring reminder that nature can unite us in building a better future. Kagera must strive to become a model for sustainable growth, nurturing a strong sense of community and belonging among its residents. The garden not only beautifies the Kagera Region but also provides vital environmental benefits that support a healthier, more sustainable future for its community and ecosystems.

## Kagera's botanical garden to help tackle climate change, support green tourism

By Correspondent Mutayoba Arbogast

AS world leaders and scientific institutions convened to address the biodiversity crisis at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 16) and climate change at the 29th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Colombia last year, a quiet yet impactful initiative was taking root in Bukwali, Kasheshene ward, Misenyi District, Kagera Region.

The Julieth Flowers Botanical Garden (JFBG) may have been far removed from these global discussions, but its efforts to combat biodiversity loss and climate change echo the goals pursued at these international conferences.

Nestled about 45 kilometres from Bukoba town along the tranquil shores of Lake Victoria, Bukwali village has long been celebrated for its natural beauty. The garden offers significant environmental benefits that contribute to the resilience and sustainability of the local ecosystem. It serves as a sanctuary for native and exotic plant species, preserving biodiversity and creating a habitat for various pollinators, birds, and small animals.

This conservation effort helps maintain ecological balance and promotes the survival of species threatened by habitat loss and climate change. The garden contributes to improved air quality by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen, mitigating the impacts of climate change. The lush vegetation in JFBG also helps to regulate temperatures locally, creating a cooler and more pleasant microclimate for surrounding areas.

The garden's vegetation prevents soil erosion, particularly in an area affected by Lake Victoria's rising water levels. JFBG serves as a platform for environmental education, raising awareness about sustainable practices and the importance of protecting ecosystems. Visitors, including researchers and local communities, gain valuable insights into addressing environmental challenges.

It enhances the region's resilience to climate impacts such as heavy rains and unpredictable weather patterns. JFBG integrates environmental sustainability with economic development by inspiring eco-friendly practices and supporting green tourism. Its presence reinforces the need for balanced growth that prioritizes the health of the planet.

However, the area has recently faced significant environmental challenges. Since early 2020, heavy rains have caused Lake Victoria's water levels to rise dramatically, displacing over 200,000 people across Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania.

According to Ali-Said Matano, Executive Secretary of the Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC), the lake's water volume has exceeded the historic high of 13.41 meters, a record set in 1964. In response to these challenges, JFBG was established to preserve and protect local ecosystems. Visitors to the garden are greeted by a serene sanctuary filled with cool, fresh air and the fragrant bloom of vibrant flowers. Simon Kalaba, Chairperson of Bukwali village, acknowledges the garden's transformative impact since its founding in 2021. He told The Guardian that beyond environmental improvements like better



**The Julieth Flowers Botanical Garden helps to regulate temperatures locally, creating a cooler and more pleasant microclimate for surrounding areas. Photo: Correspondent Mutayoba Arbogast.**

weather and fresher air, the garden has spurred new economic activities that have uplifted the community. JFBG is a multi-million-shilling project initiated by Prof. Paschalis Gerald Rugarabamu in memory of his late wife, Julieth, who cherished floriculture.

"In honouring her love for flowers, my children and I established this investment to create a space for researchers and the public to collaborate on climate change solutions while fostering community growth," said Prof Rugarabamu. After retiring in June 2024 from his decade-long tenure as Vice Chancellor of the The Catholic University of Health and Allied Sciences - Bugando (CUHAS-BU-

GANDO), Prof Rugarabamu chose to return to his rural roots rather than settle in urban areas. Previously, he served as Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at Hubert Kairuki Memorial University in Dar es Salaam Region. Kagera Region is emerging as a promising investment destination, with its economic potential showcased during the second regional investment festival in Bukoba town in December.

Part of the 'Ijuka Omuka' (Remember Your Roots) week, the festival was designed to tackle barriers to growth in Kagera Region. Gracing the event, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Energy, Doto Biteko encouraged investors to leverage the region's strategic location and untapped economic opportunities.

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**“In honouring her love for flowers, my children and I established this investment to create a space for researchers and the public to collaborate on climate change solutions while fostering community growth.”**



By Special Correspondent

CHINA has added more home appliances to the list of products that can be used in its consumer trade-in scheme and will offer subsidies for additional digital goods this year, in an effort to revive demand in the sluggish household sector.

Microwave ovens, water purifiers, dishwashers and rice cookers will be included in the trade-in scheme for home appliances this year, according to a document issued by the top state planner and the finance ministry on Wednesday. Cellphones, tablet computers, smart watches and bracelets under 6,000 yuan (\$818) could get 15 percent subsidies.

The statement did not specify the total cost of the incentives, however, a finance ministry official said at a press conference on Wednesday that the government had so far allocated 81 billion yuan for consumer goods trade-ins to support consumption in 2025.

The new measures are part of a broader plan to spur growth in the world's second-largest economy in 2025, where a severe property crisis has eroded consumer wealth and hurt household spending.

China's struggling consumer sector has been a particular pain point for the economy with analysts and policy advisers calling for urgent measures to get households spending again.

"We expect the total subsidies to double in



A sales agent talks to prospective customers at a home appliances store in Handan city in north China's Hebei province.

## China counts on microwaves, rice cookers to revive economic growth

size to 300 billion yuan in 2025. This marks somewhat a policy pivot towards more consumption," said Xu Tianchen, senior economist at the Economist Intelligence Unit.

However, more limited subsidies for phones and tablets, at less than 500 yuan per item, suggest

Beijing does not intend to subsidize the rich for large-ticket spending, he added.

China last year apportioned about 150 billion yuan from the 1 trillion yuan special treasury bonds issuance to subsidize replacements of old appliances, cars, bicycles and other goods.

Officials said that campaign "had achieved positive effects"

The campaign resulted in 920 billion yuan in auto sales and 240 billion yuan of home appliances sales in 2024, Li Gang, an official from the commerce ministry, said at the same press conference.

However, investors

found little cheer in Wednesday's announcements, with China's consumer electronics stock index down 3.2 percent by midday break.

A state planner official last week said China would sharply increase funding from ultra-long treasury bonds in 2025 to spur equipment upgrades

and consumer goods trade-in scheme. Last year, China earmarked a total of 300 billion yuan for these initiatives.

Zhao Chenxin, vice head of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the state planner, said on Wednesday funding figures for the schemes

would be released during the annual parliamentary meeting in March.

### Consumption boost

Top Chinese leaders have vowed to "vigorously" boost consumption and expand domestic demand "in all directions" this year.

Reuters reported last

week that millions of government workers across China were given wage increases, as part of efforts to boost consumption.

"We expect that more supportive policy as well as a more supportive base effect will help retail sales growth rebound in 2025 compared to 2024," said Lynn Song, chief economist of Greater China at ING.

"Household consumption recovery will depend on asset price stabilization as well as improved confidence on employment prospects."

According to the policy document, China would also increase funds from the ultra-long special treasury bond issuance to support equipment upgrades in key areas.

Equipment used in the information technology and agriculture sectors will now be included in the campaign, with coverage focusing on high-end, smart, and green equipment.

On the basis of a 1.5 percentage point subsidy on interest rates for equipment upgrade loans obtained from banks, the NDRC said it would also arrange funds from treasury bonds to further lower financing costs of firms. The central bank has arranged a 400 billion yuan low-cost relending facility to support equipment upgrades.

Song also said the document suggests that high-tech industrial sectors as well as transportation equipment manufacturing are likely to benefit, helping these sectors build on last year's solid momentum.

## The art of being human: Creativity's role in the 'intelligent age'

By Joseph Fowler

IN an era increasingly defined by Artificial Intelligence (AI), the very essence of human creativity faces unprecedented challenges. As machines become more proficient at generating art, music, literature and solutions, we must reflect on the unique role of human intuition and experience in the creative process and explore the delicate balance between the advancements of AI and the irreplaceable nature of human creativity.

While AI, digital tools and algorithmic processes enable new forms of artistic expression, they also highlight the unique value of human intuition, emotion and imagination. In this evolving landscape, the role of the artist is not just to create, but to curate, challenge and give meaning to the data-driven world around them.

As automation and digital innovations reshape industries, there is also a necessity to safeguard and nurture handcrafts and human creativity. Preserving traditional craftsmanship and artistic expression ensures that we maintain a connection to our cultural heritage. Balancing technological advancements with the rich tapestry of human creativity will lead to a more diverse and resilient future.

### Art at the annual meeting

The exhibitions on display at the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting 2025 place a spotlight on social justice, gender equity, environmental

activism and the boundless potential of human-machine collaboration and creativity. They pose questions such as: How do we preserve the intrinsic value of the human touch in a world that prizes efficiency? How can we use AI as a tool for expansion, not replacement, of human creativity? And, importantly, how do we ensure that the arts remain a reflection of humanity's most intimate thoughts, struggles and joys, even as technology reshapes the landscape?

Technology is racing ahead, but the fight for gender equity is stuck in slow motion. The stark disparity in investment between tech research and development and initiatives for gender equity reveals a systemic undervaluation of diverse perspectives. While billions flow into advancing technology, efforts to ensure equal opportunities for women and marginalized groups lag far behind, perpetuating a cycle of inequality that stifles innovation and limits the potential of our society.

The World Economic Forum's 2024 Gender Gap Report warns it could take an astonishing 134 years to close the global gender gap at the current rate – a timeline that starkly contrasts with technological innovation.

Work in Progress, co-created by artists Jann Haworth and Liberty Blake, is a vibrant tribute to women's impact on global cultural development. Commissioned by the Forum, this piece features eight panels showcasing 150 women – both historical and contemporary –

who have advanced gender equity. The portraits were created in workshops led by Haworth and Blake where participants painted stenciled images of women who inspired them.

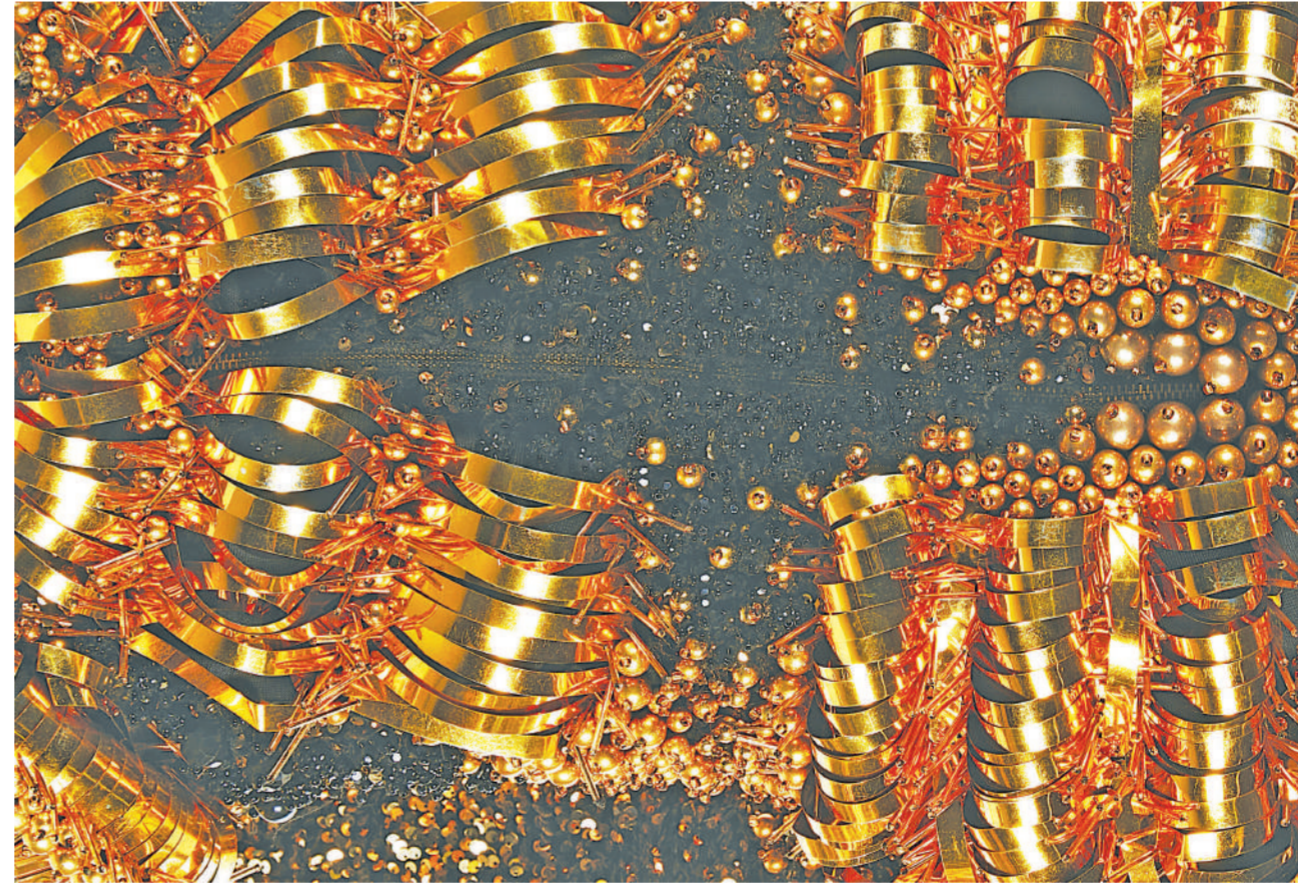
By promoting gender parity, we unlock creativity and prosperity, paving the way for a more inclusive, innovative future where all are equally empowered.

As we move further into a digital age, handcrafted art serves as a reminder of the value of human intuition, craftsmanship and the stories that only a human artist can tell, making it essential in preserving the authenticity of artistic expression.

A Life Interrupted is an exhibition by 2024 Frieze Los Angeles Impact Prize recipient Gary Tyler. It delves deeply into the themes of social justice, addressing the systemic inequities that permeate society.

Tyler's work is at once simple and complex. He uses a variety of decoupage styles and techniques and various fabrics to fashion his portraits on quilts. This time-honoured craft of quilting combines intricate design, personal storytelling and tactile artistry, reflecting both tradition and innovation.

Through his use of mixed media, symbolic visuals and thought-provoking narratives, this exhibition serves as a catalyst for reflection and dialogue, asking fundamental questions: How do we address the legacies of injustice? What does true equality look like? And, most importantly, how



The Golden Voyager designed by Kevin Gérmanier - Olympic Museum Collection, Lausanne

can art be a vehicle for change in the pursuit of social justice?

Human beings have an inherent need to connect with nature, which nurtures our physical and emotional well-being.

However, as technology increasingly distracts us and pulls us away from the natural world, the urgency to protect our environment becomes ever more pressing. We must reclaim our connection to nature before it slips further from our grasp.

Through a series of captivating images and personal narratives, from a journey spanning over 120 countries and every continent, visionary photographer, marine biologist and avid conser-

vationist Cristina Mittermeier navigates the intricate relationship between humans and nature in her immersive exhibition HOPE.

Blending breathtaking photography with urgent storytelling, HOPE is a powerful counter-narrative to hyper-consumerism and environmental exploitation, showcasing global unity in environmental stewardship. It reminds us that we all are part of the same humanity and that, despite everything that separates us and divides us, we have, deep within us, the desire for interaction, peace and harmony.

In sharp contrast, the human-machine collaboration has become a trans-

formative force across creative, scientific and industrial fields. Machines, particularly through AI and advanced algorithms, enhance human capabilities by processing vast amounts of data, identifying patterns and generating ideas that can inspire new forms of creativity. Extending beyond mere tools; machines are now co-creators, assisting in art, music, design and problem-solving.

Sougwen Chung's art installation "Spectral" explores the intersection of human creativity and AI, merging traditional drawing techniques with AI-generated elements.

In "Spectral", Chung collaborates with machine learning algorithms to

create fluid, ethereal compositions that blur the boundaries between organic and artificial forms. By intertwining the spontaneous, intuitive nature of human artmaking with the precision of AI, "Spectral" questions the evolving role of the artist in a technologically advanced world, highlighting the potential for harmony between human and machine intelligence.

At its core, the fusion of technology and human creativity magnifies the power of art to bridge divides, provoke introspection and drive societal change. In an age where information is abundant but often detached from human experience, the arts remain uniquely posi-

tioned to breathe life into abstract concepts, making complex issues like social justice, gender equity and environmental sustainability resonate on a deeply personal level.

As artists harness the tools of the intelligent age, they not only reflect the challenges of the world but also imagine transformative solutions, empowering audiences to participate in shaping a more just, equitable and sustainable future.

As technology accelerates the flow of information and expands artistic possibilities, the arts become a crucial platform for raising awareness and inspiring action on the pressing issues of our time.

Through the lens of AI, immersive installations, digital media and virtual experiences, artists can highlight the complexities of social justice, portraying the struggles and triumphs of marginalized communities, amplifying voices historically silenced and creating empathy and solidarity across borders.

The intelligent age offers vast potential for artistic expansion, but it also requires a vigilant defence of the qualities that make human creation profound. Unlike algorithms, which calculate outcomes based on data, human creativity emerges from a place of vulnerability, identity and lived experience. It draws from the ineffable, the dreams, contradictions and uncertainties that shape us. It is through this complexity that we find connection, empathy and deeper understanding.



By Special Correspondent

**I**N October 2023, the spillage of the Akosombo dam triggered catastrophic flooding across parts of the Eastern, Volta, and Greater Accra regions, displacing thousands and causing widespread devastation. For many, the flood was more than just a physical disaster; it was a deep emotional shock. Families woke to find their homes submerged, belongings destroyed, and lives overturned. The loss of homes, livelihoods, and the uncertainty of the future fuelled overwhelming anxiety and despair among the affected communities.

The psychological impact was far-reaching. Children struggled with the trauma of losing their safe spaces, while parents grappled with helplessness and an uncertain future. Health workers, many of whom were also victims of the flood, faced immense pressure to care for others while dealing with their own distress. For those with pre-existing mental health conditions, the disaster exacerbated their struggles and others developed symptoms of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress.

Public health emergencies, such as the Akosombo flood, often reveal a critical yet overlooked consequence: the strain on mental health. If left unaddressed, these challenges can impede recovery and leave long-lasting scars on affected populations. Recognising this, the World Health Organ-



# Experts urge focus on mental health for dam flood victims

isation (WHO), with funding from UK in Ghana, Dr Leveana Gyimah, WHO's technical officer for mental health, stressed the importance of prioritizing mental health during emergencies.

“Floods and other natural disasters don't just destroy property—they leave emotional scars. The psychological impact can be lasting, affecting entire communities. By integrating mental health and psychosocial support into the flood response, we've alleviated suffering and strengthened health workers' ability to address these needs.”

One of the beneficiaries of this program was Richard Sedem Ahakutor, a

mental health nurse from Sogakope, who faced mental health challenges during the disaster. “The flood was overwhelming. I lost everything, and yet I was expected to help others cope. It became too much. Thanks to the support I received, I was able to regain my strength and continue supporting my community,” he shared.

Dr Senanu Kwesi Dzokoto, Volta Regional Director of Ghana Health Services, highlighted the broader impact of the initiative:

“Emergencies expose gaps in our mental health support systems. WHO's collaboration with the Mental Health Authority has enabled us to effectively meet the needs of flood victims, ensuring both residents and health workers receive the support they deserve. This initiative is a vital step in building a more resilient health system.”

To provide comprehensive care, clinical psychologists and psychiatrists were deployed to offer counselling and specialised psychiatric services. Dr Richard Dei-Asamoah, a clinical psychologist and psychiatrist at Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital, emphasised the importance of mental health services in disaster situations:

“Mental health is often overlooked during emergencies, yet it is crucial for recovery. People need help to process their grief, anxiety, and trauma. This initiative has shown how integrating mental health support into disaster response can transform lives and communities.”

This collaboration has brought relief and hope to those affected by the Akosombo floods, proving that addressing mental health is just as essential as providing food, shelter, and medical care in emergencies.

With funding from UK in Ghana, the initiative has strengthened mental health systems in the region, leaving a lasting impact on both survivors and health workers.

WASHINGTON

SOMALIA announced that obstacles to Ethiopia's participation in the new African Union mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) have been overcome, and the final stage of the composition and size of Ethiopian forces is expected to be sorted out shortly.

Somalia previously threatened to expel Ethiopian troops from the African Union peacekeeping mission unless Ethiopia renounced its controversial memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Somaliland, the breakaway region of Somalia.

Under the terms of the MOU, Somaliland would lease about 20 kilometres (12 miles) of its Gulf of Aden coastline to landlocked Ethiopia's naval forces and in exchange – according to Somaliland officials – Ethiopia would begin a process considering the official recognition of Somaliland's independence.

However, Ali Omar Balcad, Somalia's state foreign minister told VOA that the obstacles posed by the MOU, which had hindered Ethiopia's participation in AUSSOM, have now been overcome.

The minister said the current challenge lies in reallocating the number of troops assigned to AUSSOM, which were previously distributed to other countries.

“A Somali delegation will visit Ethiopia on Jan. 15, to proceed and finalize the technical details for their involvement and the number,” Balcad told VOA.

Restoration of diplomatic ties

The development comes after a two-day visit by Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to Addis Ababa, during which he held discus-



Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (R) welcomes Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in Addis Ababa.

# Somalia, Ethiopia to restore diplomatic relations after AU mission arrangement

**“After in-depth discussions, Somali President Hassan Mohamud and Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed have agreed to reestablish diplomatic relations.”**

sions with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. The leaders agreed to mend diplomatic ties strained by Ethiopia's MOU with Somaliland.

“After in-depth discussions, Somali President Hassan Mohamud and Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed have agreed to reestablish diplomatic relations,” Balcad said in an interview with VOA.

“Somalia's ambassador to the African Union in Addis Ababa will also serve as Somalia's new ambassador to Ethiopia. In return, Ethio-

pia will send a new ambassador to Somalia and assign consular representatives to Hargeisa and Garowe,” Balcad added.

The diplomatic relationship between the two nations was damaged last year when Somalia declared the MOU between Ethiopia and Somaliland to be “null and void” and a violation of its sovereignty.

The fallout led to the expulsion of Ethiopia's ambassador to Somalia and the order to close Ethiopian consulates in Hargeisa and Garowe, although both con-

sulates continue to operate.

In a joint communique issued Saturday, the two leaders pledged to “restore and enhance” bilateral relations through full diplomatic representation. Both leaders emphasized that regional stability hinges on strong cooperation built on mutual trust and respect.

Turkey played a pivotal role in mediating between the two sides. Last month, President Recep Tayyip Erdo an facilitated a meeting in Ankara between President Mohamud and Prime Minister Ahmed,

where both parties reaffirmed their commitment to mutual sovereignty and territorial integrity in what is being called the Ankara Declaration.

The Somali minister said the trade, port access and sea routes are set to be key topics at a meeting scheduled for next month in Ankara, building on the discussions from last month's agreement.

Egypt and Red Sea tensions

Meanwhile, Egypt declared Saturday that it will

not accept any military or naval presence in the Red Sea from non-bordering countries. The remarks, made by Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty during a news conference with his Somali and Eritrean counterparts, underscore Egypt's growing concerns over Ethiopia's regional influence.

“We will not allow landlocked countries to set up [a] military presence along the Red Sea. Such moves would affect the security arrangement in the deep waters,” Abdelatty said.

Somalia's foreign minister Balcad told VOA he is aware of Egypt's remarks, emphasizing that Somalia is not directly involved in the Red Sea issue, as it does not share a border with the waterway.

The Bab-el-Mandeb strait connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden which runs along Somalia's coastline.

“We maintain independent relations with Cairo and Addis Ababa, and we don't believe one harms the other,” Balcad said.

**JAMHURI YA MUUNGANO WA TANZANIA**  
**WIZARA YA UJENZI, UCHUKUZI NA MAWASILIANO**

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 Tovuti: www.mwtc.go.tz Tarehe 13/1/2025

**TANGAZO**

- Ndugu wananchi mmatangaziwa kuwa siku ya **Jumanne** tarehe 14-1-2025 kampuni ya HAINAN INTERNATIONAL LTD itasafirisha Mzigo wake wenye vipimo vikubwa kutoka DAR ES SALAAM Masaki kuelekea DAR ES SALAAM Mloganzila, gari hilo lenye namba za usajili:

T 176 DFN / T 171 DFN.

- Gari hilo lina vipimo vifuatavyo:

Urefu	-	mita	18.00
Upana	-	mita	2.8
Kimo	-	mita	5

- Njia itakayotumika: DAR ES SALAAM Masaki hadi DAR ES SALAAM Mloganzila kupitia Morogoro ROAD.

Gari itasafiri muda wa mchana tu (kuanzia saa 12:30 Asubuhi mpaka saa 12:00 jioni)

Tunaomba radhi kwa usumbufu utakojitokeza.



By Charles Pensulo

ON a sunny Saturday afternoon, Manase Madia, 50, shows his Mozambican identity card. Once a sign of pride, he does not know what to believe in any more. Over the past few weeks he has seen houses being burned down, and shops and businesses looted, including his own. He now fears for his family, which has scattered.

At a community ground where officials are processing new arrivals before being transferred to a shelter, Madia is one of about 13,000 people who have crossed into Malawi in the past two months, seeking refuge from post-election violence in Mozambique. The arrival of the refugees, albeit in smaller numbers, is reminiscent for people here of the civil war when almost a million Mozambicans sought refuge in the neighbouring southern African nation in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Protests and violent uprisings have continued in Mozambique since the 9 October election, which saw Daniel Chapo, the candidate for the ruling Frelimo party, declared the winner over Venâncio Mondlane, of the opposition Optimist Party for the Development of Mozambique.

In December, Mozambique's constitutional council upheld the earlier decision, sparking fresh violence. While political members were targeted initially, the protests have metamorphosed into criminality and looting with businesspeople and those who are well off, like Madia, being targeted by marauding gangs.

Madia, who hid in the bush after being tipped off that he was a target, managed to leave the country on a motorbike with his wife and one of his 12 children. He says the violence has disturbed thousands of families in his community and he believes people are being targeted for their money or possessions, no matter what their ideological or political leaning.

"At first it was party mem-

# Malawi sees influx of refugees from post-election violence in Mozambique



Malawians have welcomed refugees from Mozambique with meals, despite the country's president declaring a state of disaster after a severe drought. Photograph: Charles Pensulo

bers who were getting their houses broken into," he says. "Then some people informed me that I was being targeted and people were planning to come during the evening. They came in hundreds in our community carrying pangas [machetes] and were signalling by whistling while shouting the name of the opposition leader. I fuelled my motorcycle and whisked my family away to my relatives," says Madia, whose shop was destroyed, and goats and sheep stolen.

e says some of his relatives and adult children are still hiding in the bush without any way to travel to safety.

He knows of many in his hometown of Morrumbala in a similar predicament, he adds.

"My brother called me to say the situation has worsened and we should not think about returning anytime soon," he says. "The people doing violence are our neighbours and they know us very well."

The Guardian spoke to a dozen people who said how they had made the 30-mile (50km) journey to Malawi with just the clothes on their back and with no food or possessions.

Malawians have been welcoming the refugees, with whom many share a lan-

guage, despite the country battling one of the worst food shortages in its history after a severe drought. The president has declared a state of disaster and called for international support.

Malawi, a landlocked country, depends on Mozambique's ports for fuel. The violence and roadblocks further exacerbated fuel shortages, with people having to camp out and sleep in queues at petrol stations.

The district council - with support from Malawi's Department of Disaster Management Affairs and charities such as the UN refugee agency, UNCHR - is erecting

tents to host the thousands of refugees who are now at three centres, including one at a primary school.

At one of the centres, Judith Fukizi, who works for Restoring Family Links, an International Red Cross initiative, is busy making calls, helping to locate members of the same family who have become separated or fled to different areas.

"The ones that approached us said they fled to different locations. Others were attacked at night and they don't know where their relatives fled. It's mostly children being separated from their parents.

"The decision of who joins

who lies with the people. Some just want to know the welfare and whereabouts of their loved ones," Fukizi says.

Hilda Katema Kausiwa, operations manager in the refugee department at Malawi's Ministry of Homeland Security, says they are carrying out a joint assessment with UN agencies and the International Red Cross after receiving reports of refugees arriving due to political conflicts.

"We are looking into issues of hygiene and sanitation where these people are camping. We have also seen some health concerns because other people are com-

ing with health issues.

"We have monitored a number of children who are malnourished, so we are working with stakeholders and the district health team to enhance health-screening and ensure all the persons of concern have access to health facilities," she says, while commending the chiefs and local people who had generously received the refugees.

About 46 hectares (113 acres) of land have been granted to build a settlement and facilities for the refugees. UNHCR, the Red Cross and other organisations have sent tents.

Kausiwa said: "So far, the response has been good. But we are still advocating for additional resources to ensure that we meet the needs of this population. There are issues of food that are critical. As the population continues to grow, we need continued support.

"We know that the times are hard, but we just want to ensure those that we register or screen are genuine asylum seekers that are fleeing persecution and that they should get the relevant support.

"We're also appealing for continued monitoring of the points of entry to enhance security," she says, adding they are also planning for public health emergencies, such as mpox.

Mike Dansa, chair of Nsanje civil society organisations, says they are engaged in humanitarian aid, disaster response, food security and health initiatives.

"The influx of asylum seekers is putting significant pressure on local resources and services," he says. "We are advocating for comprehensive support that addresses not only the basic needs of displaced individuals but also the wellbeing of the host communities who have shown incredible solidarity during these challenging times.

"This situation highlights the critical need for strengthened humanitarian systems, increased resource allocation and sustainable interventions to address the immediate and long-term impacts of displacement," he adds.

## Starting New Year as world strives after global public health, wellness standards

By Telesphor Magobe

ALTHOUGH health and wellness outcomes like life expectancy continue improving, "cross-border development assistance for health is falling," according to World Economic Forum (WEF)'s Global Cooperation Barometer 2025 (Second Edition) published January 2025.

The report says in 2023, metrics related to health outcomes (child mortality, maternal mortality and life expectancy) improved, but at a slower rate than before the pandemic. "Disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), one of the key measures of health, stagnated after significant improvement in 2022," it adds.

However, the report calls for building cooperative mechanisms to protect against global health threats to bolster public health systems. "Over the next 25 years, the global population aged 60 and over is projected to double. This means that many economies will need to share best practices for developing health systems that are sustainable and can support this burgeon-

ing ageing population while they collaborate on addressing near-term global health risks."

Life expectancy in various countries has been improving from year to year. In Tanzania, life expectancy in 2024 was 66.8 years, a 0.13-year increase from 66.67 years in 2023. The average life expectancy in sub-Saharan Africa in 2023 was 61 years from 56 years in 2010, while global life expectancy at birth in 2024 was 73.3 years and is projected to reach 77.4 years in 2054, according to a UN report, which attributes this improvement to improved health services, better nutrition, personal hygiene and active lifestyles.

Despite life expectancy improvement in various parts of the world, neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) pose a challenge to public health and wellness. World Health Organization (WHO)'s global report on NTDs 2024 says in efforts to eliminate NTDs in 2023 only five countries were acknowledged by WHO for eliminating one NTD, and one country for eliminating two NTDs.

It says as of December

2023, 50 countries had eliminated at least one NTD, marking the halfway point towards the 2030 target of 100 countries. Sustainable development goal (SDG) Target 3.3 states: "By 2030, end the epidemics of Aids, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases."

Although there is slow progress in realising this target, the WHO report says what has so far been achieved "is commendable and highlights opportunities for further progress against the 13 NTDs targeted for eradication, and elimination as a public health problem."

The WHO list of NTDs includes Buruli ulcer (skin disease), Chagas disease (American trypanosomiasis), dengue and chikungunya (viral disease), dracunculiasis (Guinea worm disease), echinococcosis (parasitic disease), food-borne trematodiasis (caused by consuming contaminated food), human African trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness), leishmaniasis (character-



ised by irregular fever, weight loss, enlargement of the spleen and liver, and anaemia) and leprosy. Others are lymphatic filariasis (elephantiasis); mycetoma (inflammatory disease), chromoblastomycosis (chronic fungal infection) and other deep mycoses (fungal infections), noma (a condition which causes body tissues to die due to infection or lack of blood supply), onchocerciasis (river blindness), rabies, scabies and other ectoparasitoses (which include parasitic arthropods). The list also includes schistosomia-

sis (bilharzia); snakebite envenoming, soil-transmitted helminthiasis (worm infection), taeniasis (tapeworm infection) and cysticercosis (pork tapeworm), trachoma and yaws (chronic tropical skin infection caused by bacterial infections called endemic treponematoses). Snakebite envenoming in particular is a global public issue which causes the deaths of 81,410-137,880 people worldwide and over 400,000 people are left permanently disabled by snakebite envenoming each year, according to WHO report of 2023. How-

ever, the goal of WHO is to reduce snakebite mortality and disability by 50 per cent by 2030.

The WHO report says NTDs cause immense human suffering, affect some of the world's most vulnerable people, who often live in remote communities, thereby creating NTD-related generational cycles of poverty that cost low- and middle-income countries billions of dollars every year.

Speaking of the African Region, the report says as of December 2023, 19 previously endemic countries have been officially

validated or certified for elimination of at least one NTD. In total, 29 processes acknowledging the elimination of an NTD have been successfully completed and 14 for dracunculiasis, seven for human African trypanosomiasis, six for trachoma and two for lymphatic filariasis.

Moreover, it says of the 47 countries in the region, 46 have attained the threshold for elimination of leprosy as a public health problem at national level.

The report says countries are clearly motivated to be acknowledged for

progress made against NTDs and important efforts continue being made towards implementing key public health interventions. Thus, adequate funding of public health is needed for buying medicine and modern medical equipment. The more we prevent NTDs the more we improve life expectancy and public health, and the more we enjoy life. Each country should aim at achieving SDG 3 of ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellness for all at all ages. All this depends on political will to implement.





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## Research institute seeks to distribute 0.5 million coconut seedlings in Tz

By Correspondent Valentine Oforo

FARMERS in Lindi and Mtwara regions are expected to receive 500,000 coconut seedlings produced by Mikocheni agricultural research centre, as part of boosting the production of the crop as directed by President Samia Suluhu Hassan.

The ongoing exercise entails distribution of the East African Tall (EAT) coconut varieties, whereby each region will receive 250,000 seedlings.

Dr Fred Tairo, the TARI Mikocheni Center's Manager unveiled that the East African Tall (EAT) varieties, which are more productive include Vuo, LBS, Madonga and Buza.

He said the exercise is for enabling the coconut farmers in the two regions to replace the old plants in their plantations.

"Principally, a coconut's economic lifespan lasts for at least 70 years, and it appears that most plants in the regions are outdated, thus need replacement," he observed.

He added, the center, which is charged with the responsibility to research and develop the crop, is currently running a series of efforts to improve coconut production to at least ten percent by 2030.

He said that the center has so far researched and developed at least four best coconut varieties which are resistant to disturbing coconut diseases, mostly coconut lethal disease. In further efforts to improve production of the crop, he said the center plans to extend its research beyond coastal regions.

"As part of our envisaged research program, we're expecting to go to Kigoma, Mwanza, Mbeya and Morogoro regions, the other areas with potential for growing the crop," he informed.

The manager expressed that the center was also working to mentor the farmers how to produce woods from the old coconut plants instead of burning them as they formerly used to do.

"The coconut trees are producing very expensive woods which can

later be processed into high-class furnishes which attract lucrative prices in the relevant market," he said.

As part to empower the farmers to attain value addition chain for the crop, he said the experts at the state-owned agricultural research center are disseminating the farmers with cheap technologies to process virgin coconut oil (VCO).

"The target is to ensure that by 2030, all coconut produced by farmers in the country are processed into different prestigious products instead of being marketed while raw," Dr Tairo said.

Currently, he said one raw coconut fruit is sold at 1,500/-, but when processed into virgin coconut oil, one liter fetches at least 50,000/-.

"And one liter of coconut virgin oil is produced by 20 raw coconut fruits, which means through processing the farmers stands economic change to generate a profit of around 30,000/-," he said.

In more efforts to help farmers attaining value addition for the crop, he said the project also works to empower the sub-sector's farmers to process strings and pots for growing seedlings.

Together with that, he added, during 2023/24 financial year, the government has set aside a total of 1480m/- to help boosting performance of the economic sub-sector, the amount which is being used to facility a series of strategies, including disseminating the farmers with friendly coconut processing technologies.

He said coconut was flourishing well in several regions across the country, but currently most production based in Tanga, Coastal region, Dar es Salaam, Lindi, Mtwara and Ruvuma.

"The other regions with coconut growing potential where production remain at very low ebb include Morogoro, Mbeya (Kyela), Kigoma and Mwanza," he said.

Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute -Mikocheni (TARI-Mikocheni) is one of the 17 research centres under TARI.



The strategy for reviving and developing the coconut crop is a priority for the Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute (TARI).

## IATA projects aviation industry profitability to increase in 2025

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Airline industry revenues will exceed \$1t for the first time in 2025

DUBLIN

THE International Air Transport Association (Iata) forecasts a slight improvement in global airline industry profitability for 2025, with net profits expected to reach \$36.6bn, up from \$31.5bn in 2024. Operating profits are projected at \$67.5bn, with a 6.7 percent operating margin.

Total industry revenues are anticipated to exceed \$1t for the first time, marking a 4.4 percent increase. Passenger numbers are expected to rise 6.7 percent to 5.2 billion, while cargo volumes will grow by 5.8 percent to 72.5 million tonnes. Despite challenges, profitability is strengthening, with a return on invested capital of 6.8 percent.

"We're expecting airlines to deliver a global profit of \$36.6bn in 2025. This will be hard-earned as airlines take advantage of lower oil prices while keeping load factors above 83 percent, tightly controlling costs, investing in decarbonisation, and managing the return to more normal growth levels following the extraordinary pandemic recovery," says Willie Walsh, Iata's director general.

"All these efforts will help to mitigate several drags on profitability which are outside of airlines' control, namely persistent supply chain challenges, infrastructure deficiencies, onerous regulation, and a rising tax burden."

He said in 2025, industry revenues will exceed \$1t for the first time. It's also important to put that into perspective.

"A trillion dollars is a lot—almost 1 percent of the global economy. That makes airlines a strategically important industry. But remember that airlines carry \$940bn in costs, not to mention interest and taxes," he said.

"They retain a net profit margin of just 3.6 percent. Put another way, the buffer between profit and loss, even in the good year that we are expecting in 2025, is just \$7 per passenger. With margins that thin, airlines must continue to watch every cost and insist on similar efficiency across the supply chain—especially from our monopoly infrastructure suppliers who all too often let us down on performance and efficiency."

IATA has also highlighted the broad benefits of growing connectivity. The most recent estimates show that airline employment is expected to grow to 3.3 million in 2025.

Airlines are the core of a global aviation value chain that employs 86.5 million people and generates \$4.1t in economic impact, accounting for 3.9 percent of global GDP (2023 figures). Connectivity is an economic catalyst for growth in nearly all industries.

Looking at 2025, for the first time, IATA boss says traveller numbers will exceed five billion and the number of flights

will reach 40 million.

This growth means that aviation connectivity will be creating and supporting jobs across the global economy.

"The most obvious are the hospitality and retail sectors which will gear up to meet the needs of a growing number of customers. But almost every business benefits from the connectivity that air transport provides, making it easier to meet customers, receive supplies, or transport products. On top of this, growth in aviation also contributes to achieving almost all the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," says Walsh.

Overall financial performance is expected to improve in 2025 on the back of lower jet fuel prices and efficiency gains.

Further increases are being held back by forced capacity discipline resulting from unresolved supply chain issues.

This is limiting growth opportunities and driving up several cost areas, including aircraft leasing and maintenance.

Net profitability will also be squeezed as airlines are expected to exhaust their tax losses carry forwards from the pandemic era, leading to an increase in tax rates in 2025.

Passenger revenues are expected to reach \$705bn (70 percent of total revenue) with an additional \$145bn (14.4 percent of total revenues) from ancillary services in 2025.

Travel continues to become more affordable as the passen-

ger yield is expected to fall by 3.4 percent (ticket and ancillaries). Unit revenues are expected to fall by a more moderate 2.5 percent.

Seen a different way, the average airfare in 2025, including ancillaries, is expected to be \$380, which is 1.8 percent lower than in 2024.

In real terms (adjusted for inflation) that represents a 44 percent drop compared to 2014, indicating that significant value is being passed to consumers in the industry's continued effort to improve efficiency.

Passenger demand (RPKs) is expected to grow by 8.0 percent in 2025, which is ahead of a 7.1 percent expected expansion of capacity (ATK). Aircraft departures are forecast to reach 40 million, an increase of 4.6 percent from 2024, and the average passenger load factor is anticipated at 83.4 percent, up 0.4 percentage points from 2024.

Africa's carriers face high operational costs and a low propensity for air travel expenditure in many of their home markets.

A significant issue is a shortage of US dollars in some economies which, along with infrastructure and connectivity challenges hinder the airline industry's expansion and performance.

Despite these obstacles, there is sustained demand for air travel, which is expected to improve the region's profitability marginally in 2025.

## Cocoa, coffee prices rebound on renewed supply concerns

By John Baffes

The World Bank's beverage price index increased by 18 percent in December last year, following an increase of coffee and cocoa prices amid renewed global commodities supply concerns.

The index, which declined by 6 percent in the third quarter of 2024 (q/q), remains approximately 91 percent higher than its level a year ago.

Following a 58 percent increase in 2024, the index is projected to decline by 9 percent in 2025 and an ad-

ditional 3 percent in 2026 as coffee and cocoa production recover.

Cocoa shortages pushed the commodity price of cocoa to a whopping \$12,500 per ton on the London market last spring, up 400 percent from the typical price over the past decade.

Climate change is transforming agriculture worldwide, with shifting weather patterns wreaking havoc on production systems.

Unpredictable temperature extremes and variable rainfall caused billions of dollars in crop losses last



year in the US alone, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation.

These trends are being observed around the globe, affecting everything from

corn to coffee to cattle, and cocoa is no exception. Cocoa only grows within a narrow region around the equator, making it especially vulnerable to changes in climate

conditions.

Heavy flooding and crop disease in West Africa last year intensified a growing bean deficit in the region, which produces over 60

percent of the world's cocoa.

Increasingly unfavorable growing conditions place additional stress on production systems struggling from underinvestment. Low profit margins for farmers often prevent them from implementing management practices that can advance crop resilience and productivity.

The International Cocoa Organization (ICO) projects that global cocoa supply will drop by 13 percent to 4.38 billion tons in 2024, with cocoa stocks potentially hitting their lowest levels in 45

years. This has serious implications for the almost \$120 billion chocolate industry, which is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 4 percent per year through 2030, according to Grand View Research.

Surging commodity cocoa prices have already trickled down to consumers in the form of product price increases, reductions in product size known as "shrinkflation," and ingredient substitutions. Some companies are expanding their non-chocolate offerings, while others are making chocolate without any cocoa at all.



# Five fiscal trends to watch in 2025

CENTRAL banks are no longer the only game in town. Fiscal policy is becoming an increasingly important driver of economic and financial market outcomes amid growing sovereign debt across the advanced and emerging world.

Here are five fiscal themes to look out for throughout 2025.

Are the bond vigilantes returning?

Tax cuts are coming in the US. Yet, at this stage, the scale that will be passed by US president-elect Donald Trump's administration is unknown. It's likely to increase the federal budget deficit and push the federal public debt on an even higher trajectory - well into the triple digits as a share of gross domestic product over the coming years.

Investors are wary. Partly due to the US fiscal trajectory, the 10-year US Treasury bond yield has steadily risen to close to 4.70 percent. This is not a 'Liz Truss'

moment of fiscal panic but there is a renewed risk that bond vigilantes will return in full force this year.

In the UK itself, the 10-year gilt yield has surpassed the level reached during former Prime Minister Liz Truss's tenure in October 2022 to above 4.80 percent. This presents a headache for Chancellor Rachel Reeves who is trying to balance fiscal consolidation with a struggling economy. She may be forced to amend her half-baked fiscal plans to stick to the government's fiscal rules or risk a further market backlash.

France faces a similar dilemma. The new, fractured government has struggled to pass a 2025 budget with the latest plans only outlining moderate fiscal consolidation. In a recent speech, Banque de France Governor, François Villeroy de Galhau, outlined the need for 'reducing budgetary and tax uncertainty, which is weighing on businesses and households'. However, it's unclear whether there

## FISCAL TRENDS

By Nikhil Sanghani



will be sustained political appetite for fiscal tightening, which could lead to further investor concerns.

Will Germany release the debt brake?

One country with fiscal room is Germany. The debt brake ('Schuldenbremse'), which limits Germany's structural deficits to 0.35 percent of GDP, has been a key fiscal anchor for the country. Its public debt-to-GDP ratio has dropped towards 60 percent, while other major European countries have seen it rise to over 100%. But amid stagnant growth and a broken economic model, there are growing calls for the government to loosen the purse strings.

There may be a tentative shift towards higher public spending this year. The conservative Christian Democratic Union's Friedrich Merz is almost certain to win February's election and has hinted that the debt brake may be loosened. But Merz is unlikely to open the floodgates for significant fiscal stimulus. In the meantime, Germany's economy will remain in the doldrums - a topic OMFIF will explore with their finance ministry and central bank in February 2025.

Will China unleash a fiscal bazooka?

Another struggling economy with fiscal space is China. Its economic weakness prompted fresh pol-

icy stimulus in late 2024 - initially by monetary authorities and then via fiscal policy through a Rmb10tn (\$1.4tn) package to allow local governments to restructure their debts. These efforts prompted a sharp turnaround in the Chinese equity market.

The authorities are gearing up for more fiscal stimulus in 2025 amid looming US tariffs and continuing structural headwinds. Vice Finance Minister Liao Min stated 'the direction of fiscal policy in 2025 is clear, very proactive' and that 'we will provide strong support for economic and social development'. This may increasingly target households through subsidies for consumer goods. But China's government remains cautious in unleashing a 'bazooka' such as direct handouts to consumers.

Can emerging markets escape debt troubles?

Most major EMs have weathered the various economic storms of the past five years and 2024 saw

some positive news on the fiscal front. Argentina witnessed a sharp turnaround as President Javier Milei delivered a primary surplus in his first year. There was fresh optimism on South Africa as the new coalition government embarked on economic reforms, prompting S&P to improve its sovereign credit rating outlook. Elsewhere in Africa, Ghana and Zambia finalised their sovereign debt restructuring deals last year.

However, many economies are not yet out of the woods. As highlighted in OMFIF's Absa Africa Financial Markets Index 2024, 18 of 29 countries covered are in, or at risk of, debt distress - as deemed by the International Monetary Fund. Rising global bond yields, a strong dollar and heightened geopolitical tensions are a toxic mix for many emerging and frontier economies. Meanwhile, major EMs such as Brazil, Mexico and Hungary face home-grown fiscal challenges.

Will governments embrace new solutions?

The proposed US Department of Government Efficiency may be one of Elon Musk's new pet projects. However, it does shine a light on an important topic: how to improve the effectiveness of government spending. Solving this problem will ultimately allow governments to tackle their rising public debt while meeting the demands for greater public spending on areas such as defence, healthcare and pensions.

In a report jointly published with EY, 'The future of public money' highlighted the need for governments to embrace new frameworks, accounting standards and technology. Most policy-makers remain unaware or resistant to structural changes on these fronts. But as fiscal problems mount, policy-makers may be forced to embrace new innovations and solutions. The risk of inaction is rising.

**Nikhil Sanghani (pictured) is the Managing Director, Economic and Monetary Policy Institute at OMFIF.**

# How technology can help to expand global financial equity

By Stacy Greiner

Imagine what your life would be like without basic financial tools, like an ATM card, credit card or bank account. Or more recent innovations, like online banking or trading apps. You would be living in a world filled with barriers to opportunity and tremendous limitations for you and your family. Yet, according to data from the World Bank, about 1.4 billion adults worldwide are 'unbanked,' meaning they don't have an account at a financial institution or through a non-bank provider.

Digital access to one's finances is a must to succeed economically in today's world. The days of putting money in a piggy bank or under the mattress disappeared when we became adults. Even writing a paper cheque or travelling to a bank to access funds seems quaint today. Our world is becoming cashless. Without a bank account, you are incredibly limited in your ability to pay bills,

## GLOBAL FINANCIAL

By Stacy Greiner



cash cheques and send or receive money. More advanced financial services, like credit cards, loans and investments, are totally off the table.

Simple financial products and services are now as necessary as air and water to live a productive life. The ability to move money safely and quickly is more important than ever, but thankfully, money movement is now easier than ever. The phone in your pocket has replaced the need to travel to an actual bank branch. Physical card? It is no longer needed, your phone gives you the ability to pay at the tap of your finger on the screen.

Research shows that

there were about 6.7 billion smartphones in use worldwide in 2023, which is about 69 percent of the global population. This connectivity is critical because the first step to financial stability is access. That's a good start and the World Bank reports that advancements in financial technology have helped about 1.2 billion previously unbanked adults gain access to financial services in the last decade. The research highlights Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, East Asia and Asia Pacific as regions that have adopted mobile money accounts.

Taking a deeper dive into those regions, we find some inspiring examples of those

boosting global financial equity and potentially providing a roadmap for the rest of the world.

Innovation in Kenya

Kenya's M-PESA is an example of a fintech company that is championing financial inclusion to an underserved population - especially among those in rural areas of the country. M-PESA describes itself as a mobile money service that enables users to send and receive funds, pay bills and even access loans directly through their mobile phones, essentially acting as a digital wallet without requiring a traditional bank account. M-Pesa has been transformational in how people manage and move money in Kenya, leading to life-changing results for the population. A 2016 MIT study found that M-PESA lifted 194,000 households (2% of the total) out of poverty over six years. This was connected to increased consumption levels and the ability to save money and receive government payments. A related story in

Vox Media further outlines the impact the service has had on driving economic growth and stability for many Kenyans who for so long lacked this type of financial access.

Closing the financial gender gap

Tala is a global fintech company helping to close the gender gap in accessibility to financial products in emerging markets, such as Mexico, India and the Philippines. Tala prioritizes credit accessibility by using alternative data to assess creditworthiness, providing microloans to individuals. The inability to access credit is a major deterrent in driving financial independence - especially for women in developing countries. For example, research shows that only 62 percent of Mexican women have access to formal financial services, making them a clear minority of banking customers in that country. However, women make up 50 percent of Tala's lending portfolio in Mexico.

Driving funds to under-

served Americans

Finally, with continued high inflation globally, having access to money to pay bills, especially for underserved communities in the US, has never been more important. A majority of Americans are living pay cheque to pay cheque and more than 1 in 4 (27 percent) of American adults report having no emergency savings, according to a Bankrate survey. Real Time Payments (RTP), a platform created by The Clearing House, has advanced money movement technology that helps drive funds into the hands of those who need it most - when they need it most. The Clearing House's payments technology, for example, helps facilitate the immediate movement of money from an employer to an employee, via an earned wage access platform, so that employees can pay a bill on time. After all, bills wait for no one. For millions of hourly workers, the speed of real-time payments can be the difference between

building financial stability and suffering economic insecurity.

For the agricultural worker in Kenya, the small business owner in Mexico and the retail worker in the US, forward-thinking companies and cutting-edge technology have opened doors to vital financial services that were once out of reach. Yet, with 720 million people - 9% of the world's population - still living in poverty according to the World Bank, the mission remains clear: by making financial tools truly accessible to all, we can help forge greater financial equity worldwide.

As a tech CEO, I'm proud to embrace the challenge to innovate technology that helps uplift people and provides access and opportunities to those who need it most.

**Stacy Greiner (pictured) is an award-winning business leader and strategist, serves as Chief Executive Officer for DailyPay, an American financial services company founded in 2015, which provides payroll services such as earned wage access.**



ABUJA

NIGERIAN Exchange Group (NGX Group) reaffirms its commitment to sustainable development through strategic partnerships and initiatives focused on societal transformation.

These efforts align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

## Nigerian Exchange group sets to promote inclusive growth

and NGX Group's corporate responsibility pillars of Community and Marketplace.

In collaboration with the Women at Risk International

Foundation (WARIF), NGX Group supported the No Tolerance March Against Gender-Based Violence, an annual event aimed at raising aware-

ness about the prevalence of gender-based violence.

The initiative reflects NGX Group's commitment to SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and its

goal of promoting safer, more inclusive communities.

NGX Group also partnered with the Revamp Africa Foundation for the SheTech Digital Inclusion Program, training over 40 young women from underserved communities in digital skills such as web design, social media management, and business strategy.

By equipping participants with these capabilities, the program aimed to address the gender gap in technology and empower women to participate meaningfully in the digital economy.

In addition to its focus on gender and digital inclusion, NGX Group contributed to grassroots development through collaborations with the Rotary Club of Lagos and the Lagos Motor Boat Club.

By supporting events like the Rotary Club of Lagos President's Dinner, NGX Group directed resources toward programs in education, healthcare, and youth empowerment. The Group's involvement in the Lagos Motor Boat Club Children's Christmas Party brought moments of joy to children from the SOS Children's Village.

Healthcare initiatives have also been a priority. NGX Group sponsored Medical Project 5.0, organized by the Abba Charity Foundation, to facilitate access to medical services for underserved communities at the Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH) and Massey Children's Hospital. This initiative, which aligns with SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), helped deliver essential care to hundreds of beneficiaries.



# Factors that will drive oil prices in 2025 unveiled

By Irina Slav

THIS year in oil has been marked by chronic trader pessimism about Chinese demand and an equally chronic downplaying of supply disruption risks. This has made for a rather stable year in prices—and the stability could continue in 2025, on a few conditions.

Brent crude and West Texas Intermediate appear set to end the year at nearly the same levels that they started. WTI started 2024 at a little over \$70 per barrel and is about to end a little below that. Brent crude looks like it will post a little more noticeable loss, starting the year at \$77 per barrel and ending at a bit over \$74 at the time of writing.

The biggest reason for this somewhat unnatural stability in oil prices has been the focus on China. Every single report on oil prices this year has featured Chinese economic data or oil import figures in its lead. This is set to continue in 2025 amid a flurry of reports predicting peak oil demand growth for the world's biggest importer.

China's very own state oil

giants are saying it. CNPC said earlier this month that it expected demand growth to peak in 2025, moving the peak year from 2030, which was its prediction in 2023. The company cited electric vehicle adoption and LNG truck growth as reasons for its predictions, even though the record share of EVs in total car sales this year has failed to reverse China's oil demand growth.

Sinopec was next, publishing a report a week ago saying that oil demand growth in China was about to reach its peak in three years in 2027. The peak will occur at a daily demand level of some 16 million barrels or a total of 800 million metric tons, the Chinese state oil major said. A year ago, Sinopec saw Chinese oil demand peaking at around 800 million metric tons sometime between 2026 and 2030. China's oil demand this year is seen reaching 750 million metric tonnes, according to Sinopec.

So, focus on China and pessimism about its demand has kept a lid on prices this year and is likely to keep that lid in place in 2025 as well—unless all the stimulus that the govern-



ment in Beijing is throwing at the economy doesn't spur greater demand for the key commodity. As one analyst from Brokerage Pepperstone put it to the Wall Street Journal, "The apparent calm in the oil market hides a complex interplay of macroeconomic factors that could trigger sharp movements at any moment."

"Attention is focused on the evolution of macroeconomic data and future OPEC+ decisions, which will determine the market's direction in the coming months," Quasar Elisundia told the WSJ. In macroeconomic data, the focus will remain on China but also on India, which is shaping up as the next leading demand driver globally.

Indeed, S&P Global Commodity Insights recently forecast that India's oil demand growth rate was set to exceed China's this year.

"India will be the leading driver, along with South-east Asia and other parts of South Asia, of the region's future oil demand growth," SPGCI's global head of macro and oil demand research, Kang Wu, said.

But even weaker growth markets such as the European Union, continue to see growth in oil demand, as suggested by import figures. The latest available, for the second quarter of the year, showed a decline in natural gas imports but a pickup in what the EU categorizes as "petroleum oils". The EU is not the oil market traders look to for insight

into demand trends, but this may be an oversight.

On the supply side, the focus, of course, remains on OPEC+, even as forecasters keep repeating how they expect great production growth things from non-OPEC majors such as the United States, Guyana, Canada, and Brazil. These forecasts have started to moderate with regard to the U.S., however, as the industry gives repeated signs that there will be no drilling at will just because there is a pro-oil president in the White House.

The situation with OPEC+ is quite similar. Forecasters have been making traders nervous and bearish for months, reminding them of all that spare capacity that OPEC could bring back online when it decides to roll back its output cuts.

What they've consistently forgotten to mention is that OPEC and its OPEC+ partners made it clear from the start of the cuts that output would only be brought back online when prices rose high enough. This basically means that several price routs this year were entirely the result of unrealistic expectations, with zero relation to actual oil

## UK gig economy company employees forced to pay ransom to receive wages

BY TOM WALL

RETAIL assistants have accused a gig economy firm of "holding them to ransom" by making them pay a fee if they want to receive their wages within a month.

A new payment system brought in by YoungOnes, which supplies "freelance" retail assistants to many well-known high street stores, charges gig workers 4.8 percent of their earnings to be paid in one minute or 2.9 percent to be paid in three days. If they decline, they typically have to wait 30 days. Previously the workers were paid in three days, without a charge.

Tom Gillam, who has worked at least six shifts at the Emma Sleep's store in Manchester, said gig workers on low and irregular wages needed money quickly to buy essentials and pay bills. "People do gig work for short-term cash ... it feels like we're being held to ransom," he said. "It is so immoral it's unreal."

Gillam, 37, claimed some of the workers at the store were last week still waiting to be paid for shifts in late November and early December. "They can't really badger their managers because working as a freelancer you have no voice, you might not get any more shifts if you are seen as outspoken."

Another worker at the Manchester store said he was forced to borrow money from his family to buy gifts and travel home for Christmas. "It is unfair for people working on a low wage with reduced rights to be charged to get their money quickly," he said.

Last month, the Observer revealed the growing use of gig economy workers without basic employment rights in the retail sector, a move the TUC had called "worrying".

The minister for employment rights, Justin Madders, told the Observer he would be asking the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate to investigate the allegations against YoungOnes.

He added he would also be writing to the firm to demand



UK minister for employment rights Justin Madders

working in the gig economy.

The government has promised to consult on a simpler two-tier employment framework, which distinguishes between genuine self-employment and all other types of workers, but nothing has been published yet.

Last week Margaret Beels, who is the government's independent director of labour market enforcement, told the committee that the UK's complex three-tier employment status system - which includes employees with full rights, casual workers with limited rights, and freelancers with no rights - was being abused. "Having three levels of status allows people to engage in sharp practice, shifting workers around between those [levels]," she said.

Beels called on the government to act more quickly: "I really would like to see the government stepping up to doing more - you can probably consult till the cows come home on this issue, and it's about time to do something about it."

James Medd, YoungOnes' chief operating officer, said the new payment system allowed freelancers to choose between standard payment terms at no extra cost or pay for faster options. "We deeply value the freelancers on our platform and understand the challenges they face, particularly when it comes to payment timelines," he added.

Medd said freelancers choose to work through YoungOnes as it offers them independence and a flexible solution tailored to their needs. "They have the freedom to decide when, where, and with whom they work," he said.

Emma Sleep said it took the allegations very seriously. It said "payment issues" were reported by some workers but the team had been paid for several weeks now. "Emma is committed to continuously improving the working experience for freelance employees in our stores while ensuring full compliance with labour laws," said a spokesperson.

## Central banks expect to pick up the pace on CBDCs in 2025

By Katerina Liu

CENTRAL banks are progressing in their research on retail central bank digital currencies, but some have yet to commit to launching one. As more research and experimentation is undertaken, 2025 could see some concrete decisions made on issuance.

OMFIF, in partnership with Giesecke+Devrient, is publishing a report in February exploring the factors contributing to the hesitation about launching a CBDC and what concerns central banks struggle with. In the report's survey of central banks, 81 percent of respondents have issued or expect to issue a CBDC at some point, with 47 percent expecting to issue one within five years (Figure 1).

The European Central Bank is entering the second year of the digital euro's preparation phase. The ECB aims for the digital euro to "bring cash into the digital age", while retaining the key features of the physical currency: a pan-European reach, no cost to users, privacy and offline usability as features and ECB issuance. By October 2025, the ECB will expect to finalise the scheme rulebook, select service providers and have explored technical features for further testing.

The Bank of England is still investigating the technological and policy requirements for the digital pound. It remains undecided on issuing a digital currency but a decision could come as early as this year.

Privacy is a major concern for both central banks, featuring heavily in the responses to the Bank of England's public consultation.

Holding limits, the maximum amount of digital currency that users could hold in an account, is another concern that central banks would need to address. Different ecosystem members may disagree on the limit amount. For instance, commercial banks may prefer lower limits as using the CBDC as a store of value may impact their deposits, while consumer groups might prefer higher limits for usability and convenience.



Deutsche Bundesbank's Trigger Solution, Banca d'Italia's TIPS Hash-Link solution and the Full-DLT Interoperability solution from Banque de France.

There are 35 different exchanges operating across the European Union, which is causing fragmentation. As such, central banks are seeing a clear demand from the market to deliver short-term solutions for this issue. The Eurosystem is aware of the pressure to continue with trials to utilise DLT to address fragmentation and will strive to balance short-term needs with long-term adaptability.

In Asia Pacific, central banks from the Philippines and Indonesia have completed proof-of-concepts for wholesale CBDCs, named Project Agila and Project Garuda respectively. Meanwhile, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) continues to pave the way in this area with projects such as Ensemble, launched in 2024, aiming to research tokenisation use cases.

**Cross-border payments**

More recently, HKMA expanded its work on cross-border payments by announcing in October 2024 it will conduct experiments to connect Project Ensemble with Brazil's DREX pilot. Despite the growing importance of instant payment systems - OMFIF's 2024 Future of payments report found that 47 percent of survey respondents chose interlinking IPS as the most promising avenue for improving cross-border payments over the 13 percent that selected connecting CBDCs - central banks have clearly not ruled out wholesale CBDCs and their role in cross-border payments (Figure 2).

HKMA is also involved with Project mBridge, alongside the central banks of Thailand, the UAE, China and Saudi Arabia, to improve efficiency, speed and transparency in cross-border payments by using a multi-currency CBDC platform.

**Katerina Liu (pictured) is a Research Analyst, Digital Monetary Institute, OMFIF.**

VIEW FROM THE TOP



## WORLD

# Canada has counter-tariffs ready if Trump launches trade war, Trudeau says

By Bloomberg

JUSTIN Trudeau says Canada is ready to respond with counter-tariffs against the US if President-elect Donald Trump follows through on his threat to begin a trade war in North America.

Speaking on MSNBC's Inside With Jen Psaki, the outgoing Canadian prime minister said his government isn't looking for a trade fight with the new administration but will have to retaliate if the US puts tariffs on Canadian products.

Canada buys more US-made goods than any other country, according to US Commerce Department export data – about \$320 billion in the first 11 months of last year. The US trade deficit on goods with Canada was \$55 billion during that period.

"As we did last time, we are ready to respond with tariffs as necessary," Trudeau said. "We are the number one export partner of about 35 different US states and anything that thickens the border between us ends up costing American citizens and American jobs." On a per-capita basis, Canada buys far more from the US than the US buys from Canada.

When the first Trump administration placed tariffs on steel and aluminum in 2018, the Canadian government put levies on a list of US-manufactured items that included household appliances, bourbon whiskey and boats.

This time, Trump has said he's considering broad 25 percent tariffs against items from Mexico and Canada. One draft retaliation plan circulating within the Canadian government would affect almost every category of products imported by Canada from the US, Bloomberg reported on Jan 10.

In the interview with Psaki, Trudeau touted Canada's decision to spend more on border security, including more helicopters and drones, which aims to stymie the flow of fentanyl and illegal migration into the US – a direct response to Trump's concerns.

"Less than 1 percent of the illegal migrants, less than 1 percent of the fentanyl that comes into the United States, comes from Canada. So were not a problem," Trudeau said. "We've actually responded to his request for us to do more with billions of dollars worth of investments to even further strengthen the security of our



Justin Trudeau, Canada's prime minister, during the funeral service of late former US President Jimmy Carter at the Washington National Cathedral on Jan 9, 2025. (PHOTO / BLOOMBERG)

borders."

Trudeau called Trump's taunts about making Canada the 51st US state "distracting" from more pressing issues.

Trudeau, who said Jan 6 he'll resign as prime minister and Liberal Party leader, will remain in the country's highest political office until members of his party choose his successor on March 9.

Meanwhile, a prominent conservative provincial leader engaged with Trump on Saturday. Alberta Premier Danielle Smith said she met the president-elect at his Mar-a-Lago residence in Florida to emphasize the importance of US-Canadian energy relationship.

More than half of US crude imports come from Canada, most of it from Alberta. Asked whether Canada could curb energy supplies to the US, Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly told CTV News: "Everything is on the table." Smith has said she's opposed to energy export restrictions.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford in December floated the idea of cutting off his province's electricity ex-

ports to several border states, but last week he proposed a new energy partnership that would deliver more nuclear power to the US.

Canada's provincial premiers plan to visit Washington in February to warn of the harm tariffs would cause to both countries.

Trudeau, 53, has served as prime minister for nine years. His approval rating dropped below 30 percent last year, according to public opinion tracking by the Angus Reid Institute. Then came Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland's December resignation in which she said the government needed to avoid "costly political gimmicks" and keep its financial capacity ready to deal with the impacts of a possible trade war.

Her exit led to an uprising of Liberal members of parliament calling on Trudeau to quit.

The winner of the party's leadership contest will become Canada's 24th prime minister. A national election is due by October, and may come sooner if opposition parties join forces in a non-confidence vote to topple the government.

## 'German scenario' implausible for Ukraine settlement – Medvedev

MOSCOW



THE "German scenario" of settling the crisis in Ukraine, which implies its division along the lines of the GDR and the FRG, is utterly unrealistic, Russian Deputy Security Council Secretary Dmitry Medvedev said.

"I would like to highlight the so-called German scenario, which has resurfaced on the agenda. It suggests that a fragmented Ukraine would resemble a kind of FRG and GDR, with the role of the FRG, of course, assigned to Bandera's Kiev, while that of the GDR – to the Russian territories that have returned to their homeland.

This scenario has emerged for obvious reasons, despite having no chance of success. The explanation is simple: it facilitates reconciling the leadership of the illegitimate Kiev regime with the most extreme neo-Nazis," the politician wrote on his Telegram channel.

In the historical sense, the "Germanic scenario" of settlement is only feasible in terms of integrating the territories of Malorossiya into Russia, Medvedev noted.

## Mohammed Sinwar becomes new Hamas leader in Gaza Strip

NEW YORK

HEAD of the Ezzedein Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, Mohammed Sinwar, has become a new Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip, the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) said, citing sources.

According to the newspaper, Sinwar (pictured) is the younger brother of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar killed in October 2024. He "is working to build the militant group back up," because its combat ability has been severely crippled since the onset of Israel's military operation in the Palestinian enclave in October 2023, the sources said.

The sources told the media outlet that after the death of Yahya Sinwar, the Hamas Qatar-based office opted not to elect a new leader and decided to switch to a collective leadership.

Militant groups in the Gaza Strip refused to be administered by it and are currently acting independently, led by Mohammed Sinwar. It is claimed that he was close with the head of the movement's military wing, Mohammed Deif, who was killed in the July 2024 Israeli strike.

According to the WSJ, Mohammed Sinwar has been a long-time member of Hamas; he is currently around 50. He was greatly influenced by his older brother. The sources told the newspaper that Mohammed Sinwar was able to evade Israeli secret services for a long time, thus gaining the nickname of "Shadow."

Israel's authorities think that Mohammed Sinwar was involved in organizing the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack on the Jewish state as well as in the 2006 kidnapping of Israeli serviceman Gilad Shalit. In 2011, in a swap for Shalit, 1,027 Hamas supporters returned to the Gaza Strip from Israeli jails, including Mohammed's older brother Yahya Sinwar.

Tensions flared up again in the Middle East on October 7, 2023, when militants from the Gaza-based Palestinian radical group Hamas staged a surprise incursion into Israeli territory from the Gaza Strip, killing residents of border settlements and seizing more than 240 hostages.

Israel launched a military operation in the enclave in response, aiming to eliminate Hamas' military and political structures and release all hostages. On July 31, 2024, Hamas Political Bureau chief Ismail Haniyeh was killed in Israel's surgical strike and on October 16, his successor Yahya Sinwar was killed.



## President Xi meets Grenadian PM in Beijing

BEIJING

CHINESE President Xi Jinping met with Prime Minister of Grenada Dickon Mitchell in Beijing yesterday.

Mitchell extended sincere condolences to the Chinese government and people over the recent earthquake in Dingri county in Southwest China's Xizang autonomous region.

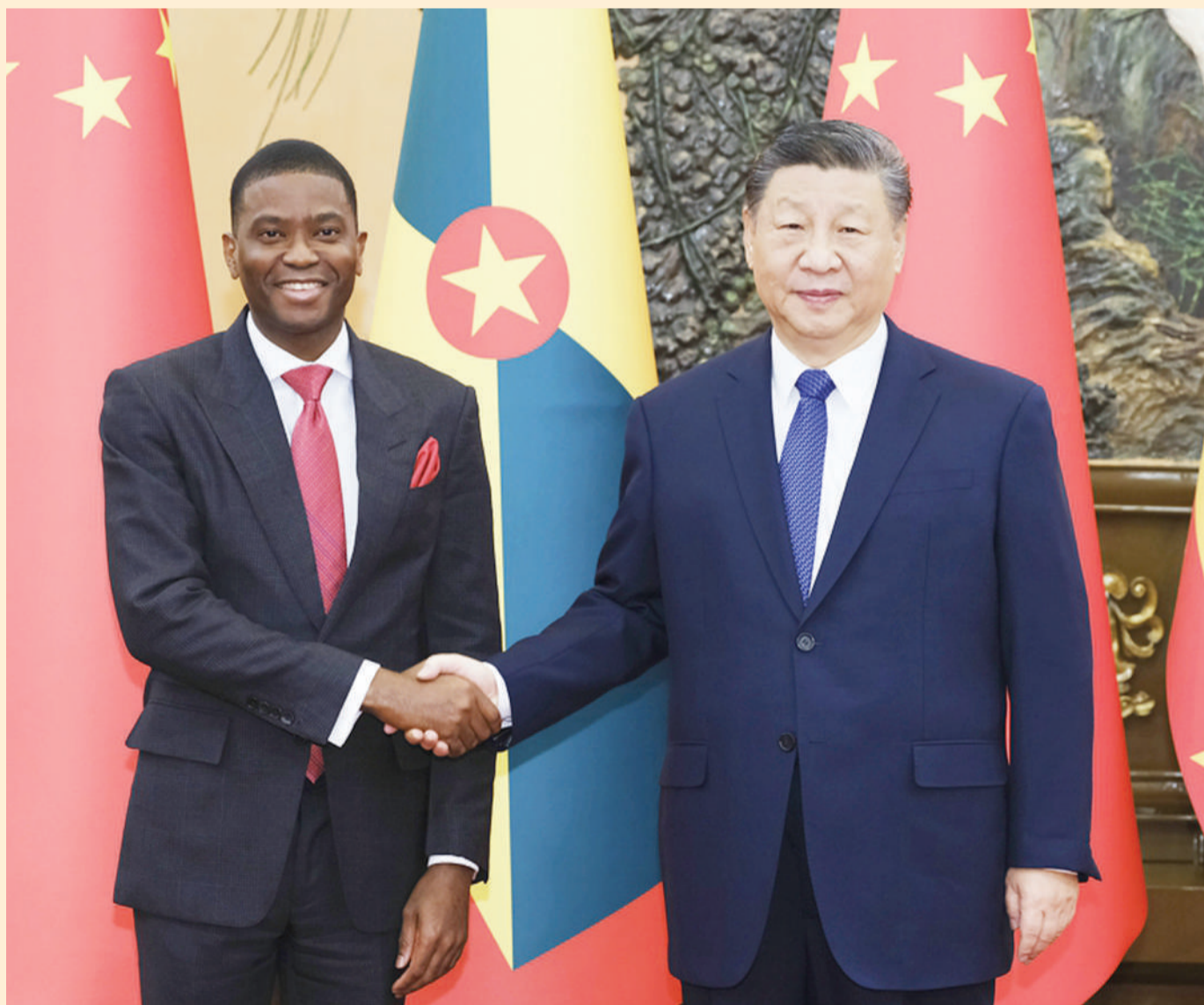
Xi expressed his appreciation for that. Noting that this earthquake occurred in a high-altitude area, Xi said China has completed rescue and temporary resettlement work in the shortest possible time and will carry out reconstruction work as quickly as possible.

"The Chinese government is confident and capable of achieving victory in earthquake relief," Xi said.

Xi noted that in recent years, China-Grenada relations have developed steadily, with the two sides treating each other with mutual respect and equality, consolidating political mutual trust, achieving fruitful results in practical cooperation in various fields, and deepening the friendship between the two peoples.

China is willing to work with Grenada to enhance the synergy of development strategies and push for more outcomes of bilateral cooperation to better benefit the two peoples, Xi added.

Xinhua



Chinese President Xi Jinping (right) meets Prime Minister of Grenada Dickon Mitchell in Beijing, China yesterday. XINHUA

## 'Rural grandpa' in northwest China becomes tourism envoy

AN elderly man, sometimes holding farming tools, walks along the ridges of the fields; at other times, he herds sheep slowly under peach trees in bloom; and occasionally, he stands amidst the vast desert and mountains, embodying the image of a general while narrating the history of the ancient Silk Road in northwest China...

"He really knows how to command the presence and energy," "Thank you for promoting my hometown," "I've watched this video at least 10 times" - as Zhang Yifang scrolls through the comments on his phone, he reads each one carefully.

Zhang, 68, hails from Qingsi village in Datong township, Yongdeng county, Lanzhou, northwest China's Gansu province.

As a child, Zhang was nicknamed "Sanxiwa," which literally translates into triple joy child. These days, he's more commonly known as "Sanxi Grandpa," meaning triple joy grandpa, which is also his ID on short video platforms.

Over the past four years, with support from the local cultural and tourism department, Zhang and his son Zhang Jianzong have filmed and produced over 100 short videos.

From rural fields and farmhouses to the vast deserts, grasslands, and the striking Danxia landform, he has filmed in many places with distinct northwest China characteristics, sharing the cultural stories and unique features of Gansu province. "Sanxi Grandpa" now has nearly 1.3 million followers on the short video

platform.

During the 2024 Spring Festival, Zhang Yifang joined a local troupe of folk art show which features celebration of Chinese Spring Festival in multiple forms such as dragon dance, stilt walking, lion dance and other folk performances.

He released nearly 10 videos, with one of them receiving over 5.87 million likes and more than 1.01 million comments.

The folk art show performance has a long history, with participants sometimes exceeding 300, parading through streets, alleys, and fields.

From childhood to adulthood, Zhang Yifang has participated in the folk art show performances nearly every year. This deep-rooted passion for local performances has made him

a natural in the world of short videos.

In the summer of 2021, Zhang Yifang's children and grandchildren returned to Qingsi village. Under the clear sky and gentle wind, he was always seen lying in a chair, fanning himself with a straw hat, or playing with his grandchildren in the golden wheat fields.

Zhang Jianzong, who works in the film and television industry, captured these moments on camera and edited them into a short video. Once posted, the video quickly garnered over 50,000 likes and nearly 4,000 shares.

Surprised by the positive response, the father and the son decided to make rural life the central theme of their short videos and continue filming. "When I was young, our village only had one black-and-white televi-

sion, and we would all crowd around to watch movies together," Zhang Yifang recalled. The scenes of martial arts heroes always fascinated him. "It would be amazing to be a martial arts hero one day!"

Now, this dream has come to life in his short videos.

From an ordinary farmer to a martial arts hero or a general, as Zhang Yifang's roles change, so do his backgrounds, such as a rural courtyard, the Danxia landform of Yongdeng, a waterwheel park, deserts, and grasslands.

Taking advantage of the popular trends in short video content, Zhang Yifang changes outfits every few seconds, enriching the scenes and roles to promote his hometown.

From the poplar forests in Jiuquan

to the endless grasslands of Gannan Tibetan autonomous prefecture, Zhang Yifang has traveled to over 10 cities and prefectures in Gansu, filming videos wherever he goes. He and his son have also launched two popular video series: "Sanxi Grandpa's martial arts journey" and "Sanxi Grandpa's food selection."

The first series showcases local cultural and tourism resources by portraying different historical figures, while the second focuses on traditional Gansu cuisine - how to make Yongdeng rose cakes, why the roast meat in Jiayuguan tastes so good, and how to dry Dingxi wide noodles, among others. Dozens of Gansu's regional dishes have been featured in the videos.

People's Daily



## Nationwide strike in Belgium hits air and train traffic

BRUSSELS

A nationwide strike in protest against possible pension reforms crippled air and rail traffic in Belgium on Monday and many schools remained shut.

Almost half of all flights at Brussels airport were cancelled as luggage handlers, security and other ground staff went on strike, while national train operator NMBS said it was running only a limited number of trains throughout the country.

Public transport in the capital Brussels

was also heavily impacted.

Schools were shut with tens of thousands of teachers expected to join a national rally in Brussels to protest pension reforms that are being discussed by parties trying to form a new government following the June 2024 election.

Government formation talks have dragged on for months without any real progress, as the five parties at the table continue to disagree on government finances and the contested pension reforms.



A train is pictured at a railway station in Brussels, Belgium, Dec 6, 2023. XINHUA

## Los Angeles races to contain wildfires before severe winds return, death toll rises to 24

LOS ANGELES

FIREFIGHTERS raced to contain the frontiers of two Los Angeles wildfires that burned for the sixth straight day on Sunday, taking advantage of a brief respite in hazardous conditions before high winds were expected to fan the flames anew.

At least 24 people have died in what California Governor Gavin Newsom said could be the most devastating natural disaster in US history, one that has destroyed thousands of homes and forced 100,000 people to evacuate.

Flames have reduced whole neighborhoods to smoldering ruins, leveling the homes of the rich and famous and ordinary folk alike, and leaving an apocalyptic landscape. Officials said at least 12,300 structures have been damaged or destroyed.

"LA county had another night of unimaginable terror and heartbreak," Los Angeles County Supervisor Lindsey Horvath said.

Aerial firefighters, some of them scooping water out of the Pacific Ocean, dropped water and retardant while land crews with hand tools and hoses held the line of the Palisades Fire as it encroached on the upscale Brentwood section and other populated areas of Los Angeles.

That fire on the western side of town has consumed 23,713 acres (96 sq km) or 37 square miles and stood at 13 percent contained, a figure representing the percentage of the fire's perimeter that firefighters have under control.

The Eaton Fire in the foothills east of Los Angeles scorched another 14,117 acres (57 sq km) or 22 square miles - itself nearly the size of Manhattan - and firefighters increased the containment to 27 percent, up from 15 percent a day earlier.

North of the city, the Hurst Fire was 89 percent contained, and three other fires that had ravaged other parts of the county were now 100 percent contained, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) reported, though areas within the containment lines may still be burning.

Severe winds return

Firefighters got a temporary break from the weather this weekend as Santa Ana winds, which reached hurricane force earlier in the week, finally eased. The dry winds originating from the inland deserts had fanned flames and blew embers up to 2 miles (3 km) ahead of the front lines.

But, in an area that has not received any rain of note since April, the National Weather Service forecast Santa Ana winds of up to 50 to 70 miles per hour (80 to 112 kph) would resume on Sunday night (US West Coast time) and last through Wednesday.

Officials warned the entire Los Angeles county population of nearly 10 million that anyone may be ordered to evacuate from the flames and toxic smoke.

By Sunday, more than 100,000 people in Los Angeles county had been ordered to evacuate - down from a previous high of more than 150,000 - while another 87,000 faced evacuation warnings.

"These winds combined with low relative humidities and low fuel moistures will keep the fire threat in all of Los Angeles county very high," Los Angeles County

Fire Chief Anthony Marrone told a press conference, adding that evacuated areas may not be reopened until red flag conditions are lifted on Thursday.

Even so, schools except some in mandatory evacuation zones would reopen on Monday, after closing for all 429,000 students in the Los Angeles Unified School District on Thursday and Friday, Superintendent Alberto Carvalho announced.

Newsom told NBC News the fires were likely to be the worst natural disaster in US history "in terms of just the costs associated with it." The Los Angeles County Medical Examiner reported 24 deaths from the fires.

Private forecaster AccuWeather has estimated the damage and economic loss at \$135 billion to \$150 billion.

To help expedite the monumental rebuilding effort ahead, Newsom signed an executive order on Sunday temporarily suspending environmental regulations for destroyed homes and businesses.

Active duty military personnel are ready to support the firefighting effort, FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell said in a series of Sunday television interviews, adding the agency has urged residents to begin filing for disaster relief.

Firefighters from seven states, Canada and Mexico have already converged on the Los Angeles area to help fire departments from around the state.

High anxiety

Hundreds of people displaced by the fires attended mass at the St. Monica Catholic Church in Santa Monica on Sunday, including parishioners whose churches were destroyed.

Kathleen McRoskey, who attended mass regularly at Pacific Palisades' ruined Corpus Christi church for over 40 years, said she was grateful to St. Monica for opening its doors to those who lost their homes and place of worship.

"It was the first offer of support that would heal us spiritually and physically and emotionally," she said.

In Altadena on the edge of the Eaton Fire, Tristin Perez said he never left his home, defying police orders to evacuate as the fire raced down the hillside.

Instead, Perez insisted on trying to save his property and his neighbors' homes.

"Your front yard is on fire, palm trees lit up - it looked like something out of a movie," Perez told Reuters in an interview in his driveway. "I did everything I could to stop the line and save my house, help save their houses."

His one-story yellow duplex survived. So did two more homes next door. Across the street, entire houses burned to the ground. "A lot of these areas still look like they were hit by a bomb. There are live electrical wires, gas lines and other hazards," said Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna.

Zuzana Korda was evacuated from her home in the Fernwood neighborhood in Topanga, northwest of Los Angeles. Speaking outside a temporary assistance office at the West Hollywood Public Library, she said her landlord told her the family home was still standing, but she was anxious.

"We've left everything behind. We have no insurance," Korda said. "We stand to lose everything."

## Gaza doctor, amputee after airstrike, returns to care for war-inflicted children

GAZA

DR. Khaled al-Saidani moves deliberately between hospital beds at Al-Aqsa Hospital's pediatric ward, his prosthetic leg a testament to the personal toll of a war that has devastated Gaza's medical system. For him, the choice to continue practicing medicine, even after losing his leg to an Israeli airstrike, wasn't really a choice at all.

"It is my mission," said Al-Saidani, 51, his voice steady despite his struggle to navigate the ward. "Even if I became a disabled man, I still have the medical experience that all my community needs."

The airstrike that claimed his leg six months ago also destroyed his home in the al-Bureij refugee camp and killed several family members. Like thousands of others in Gaza, he became both a victim and a caregiver in a war that has upended countless lives. "Without any prior notice, my family and I became displaced," he said, his words weighted with the memory.

"But what made the matter worse was the fact that I became a disabled man who even cannot help himself." The aftermath plunged him into months of depression, a dark period when he questioned whether life was worth living.

"Several times, I wished that I was killed during the attack," he admitted. "I felt that my life lost all of its value since I became a burden on my family and community." But Gaza's mounting medical crisis -- with hospitals under strain and medical staff in short supply -- eventually pulled him back to work.

At first, he relied on a wheelchair. Now he uses a locally made prosthetic leg, though it's far from ideal. "The prosthetic is not in the best condition," he said, "but at least it motivates me to continue my work."

Al-Saidani faces another looming medical challenge: tests have revealed a severe arte-



Doctor Khaled al-Saidani works at Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah city, central Gaza Strip, on Jan. 9, 2025. Xinhua

rial blockage in his remaining leg that could, in the worst case, necessitate another amputation. Yet he refuses to step away from his duties.

"I cannot leave the hospital, especially since I am a pediatrician and the children require special care during the war," he said, embodying the determination of Gaza's medical workers to continue their work despite personal trauma and professional challenges. The war, which began after Hamas's Oct. 7 attack on Israel that killed

about 1,200 people, has claimed more than 46,000 Palestinian lives and injured over 109,000, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health.

The majority of casualties have been women and children. For Al-Saidani, returning to work has become more than just fulfilling a professional obligation -- it has restored his sense of purpose. "My return to the hospital restored my desire to cling to life," he said, "and continue my work no matter the circumstances."

## Bird-watching activities bring both ecological, economic benefits to county

THE period from October to May of the following year is the perfect time for bird watching in Yingjiang county, Dehong Dai and Jingpo autonomous prefecture, southwest China's Yunnan province, as the rainfall decreases and the dry season approaches.

At this time, Xu Xiaolong, a villager from Shiti village in Taiping township of Yingjiang county, would get his homestay ready to accommodate the influx of tourists, which is almost fully booked every day during this peak season.

With a forest coverage rate of over 90 percent, Shiti village is home to over 450 bird species, accounting for more than 1/3 of those found across China.

It boasts a large number of bird species under national-level protection such as the grey peacock-pheasant, collared falconet, and bay-headed bee-eater. Additionally, three species of hornbills, including the malabar pied hornbill, wreathed hornbill, and great hornbill, have stable breeding grounds in Shiti village, making it known as the "hornbill valley of China."

Leveraging the abundant bird resources, Yingjiang county has vigorously developed the bird-watching industry. By coordinating bird-watching activities with ecological conservation efforts, a new path for development has been paved.

In the past, Shiti village was home to over 300 residents. However, as the village was rarely visited by tourists due to its poor transportation, these residents lacked the expertise in tourism services.

In 2015, the government of Yingjiang county initiated a campaign to promote bird-watching activities, and local bird-watching enthusiasts also established a bird-watching association of Yingjiang county, which not only bolstered bird conservation efforts but also facilitated the development and utilization of bird-watching resources in the area.

Additionally, significant improvements were made to local infrastructure, and financial incentives were provided to villagers who transformed their residential properties into homestays.

In a couple of years, the "horn-



A hornbill flies in the Tongbiguan provincial-level nature reserve in Yingjiang county, Dehong Dai and Jingpo autonomous prefecture, southwest China's Yunnan province. (People's Daily Online/Yang Jialin)

bill valley of China" began to gain reputation. Currently, there are over 30 bird-watching spots in Shiti village, with more than 50 bird guides who can proficiently identify over 100 bird species. The village provides a number of services for bird enthusiasts from accommodation to tour guide, and to transportation.

The per capita disposable income in Shiti village surged from less than 2,000 yuan (\$273) in 2015 to 12,800 yuan in 2023, thanks to the booming bird-watching industry. This not only lifted residents out of poverty but also effectively protected the local mountains and forests, fostering harmonious coexistence between bird-watchers and birds.

Today, protecting birds, forests and the ecology has been incorporated into village regulations and become a consensus among villagers. Even children in the village are aware of the importance of protecting birds.

Developing a bird-watching industry presents significant challenges, with the creation of bird-watching sites being one of the toughest.

A successful bird-watching spot requires attracting birds to the area and keeping them there. Building ponds, introducing food sources, and ensuring the right environment can help establish a thriving bird habitat. From a distance, shelters or hides allow visitors to observe and photograph birds without disturbing them.

As Xu explained, "Photographers often travel long distances. If they spend three to five days waiting without capturing anything worthwhile, it's hard to maintain

a steady stream of visitors."

Creating a bird-watching site may seem easy, but Xu has faced his share of obstacles. Choosing the right location, studying migration routes, ensuring adequate water sources, and providing food for the birds are all delicate balances to strike.

If the site is too close to people, the birds may avoid it; if it's too far from where people live, it might deter visitors. Underfeeding won't keep the birds around, but overfeeding increases costs and risks altering the birds' natural behavior.

Since 2017, the bird-watching association of Yingjiang county has conducted 10 training sessions in Taiping township, teaching local residents to identify common species in the area, and providing practical guidance on bird-watching services. Xu found these sessions invaluable, saying, "I've learned so much."

In Shiti Village, bird watching spots are divided into two types. One includes sites where bird watchers can feed the birds, and the other is for watching hornbills where feeding is not allowed.

**Why is artificial feeding necessary?**

"During the dry season when food is scarce, timely and appropriate feeding supplements the food for birds," said Jin Yinde, an official with the Yunnan Tongbiguan provincial-level nature reserve. However, unlike "bird cages," birds in these spots come and go freely without restrictions, and sufficient food and water sources help the survival

of bird species.

Yingjiang county guides villagers to develop in a differentiated manner and has built 55 spots for watching great hornbills, collared falconets, and grey peacock-pheasants.

Birdwatchers are flooding into the village as the number of bird-watching spots expands. The rich bird resources and sound ecological environment are also attracting more and more tourists to the village. This poses challenges to Shiti village - how should it balance protection and development, regulate bird-watching activities and avoid disorderly competition?

"Core zones of protected areas must stay closed," Jin told People's Daily. Located near the Tongbiguan provincial-level nature reserve, Shiti village must coordinate bird-watching activities with ecological protection when building bird-watching spots, strictly adhere to ecological red lines, plan bird-watching spots reasonably, set appropriate distances between the spots, and strictly control the density of bird-watching spot distribution.

Shiti village has established a specialized cooperative invested by households involved. Under unified management, it distributes profits to its investors.

The village has also invited the bird-watching association of Yingjiang county to provide training sessions, guiding villagers to strengthen the management of bird-watching spots, strictly control the daily number of tourists based on environmental carrying capacity, and feed the birds in moderation and at appropriate times, so as to minimize disturbances to the environment.

In Yingjiang today, ecological conservation projects such as artificial nests for birds, hornbill conservation, and transnational cooperation on bird protection are continuously advancing. The activities of bird watching and bird protection have formed a virtuous cycle. More and more wild and rare bird species are choosing to settle down in Yingjiang.

People's Daily



# CHAN 2024 now set to thrill as prize money sees major boost

By Lloyd Elipokea

SINCE popping up on the continental football scene, the African Nations Championship (CHAN) Finals have steadily grown in stature, which has been greatly encouraging to see.

This year, the CHAN football championship is set to take center-stage here in East Africa as the competition will be jointly hosted by Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya.

With regard to the CHAN competition, there were glad tidings to report lately about the prize money that will be up for grabs in the hugely anticipated football spectacle.

Indeed, in what was a heartening move, the Confederation of African Football (CAF) announced recently that it had upped the prize money on offer in the CHAN Finals by an astonishingly large 75 percent.

It seems starkly clear then that the whopping 75 percent increase in prize money will doubtlessly act as a great incentive for the assemblage of competing teams in the tourney.

Ergo, it is expected that this year's CHAN Finals will turn out to be a scintil-



CAF president Patrice Motsepe.

ating and pulsating affair, which could be indelibly etched on all of our minds.

Naturally, it is a truism that as one of the CHAN's co-hosts this year, our home fans will be offering all of their support to the Taifa Stars, who will be on an enormous quest to leave their mark on the perennially action-packed football event.

Still on football, recent media reports have it that

the Ivorian right-winger Amad Diallo has penned a new contract at Manchester United, which will keep him at Old Trafford until 2030.

The 22-year-old marvellous attacker, who joined Manchester United from Atalanta in 2021, has been in top notch form this season as he and his fellow Red Devils continue to take a stab at dramatically changing their season,

which has been worryingly heading south so far.

As he continues to gain a stronger foothold in the English Premier League (EPL), it is hoped that Amad, as he is famously known, will keep on going from strength to strength right up to the pinnacle of the sport.

Let us now switch our focus to the home front where one of Tanzania's pre-eminent female golf-

ers, Madina Iddi, has lamented about a lack of sponsorship, which has been a ginormous challenge facing local women's golf for quite some time now.

Indeed, this familiar complaint made by top lady golfers is a crying shame as they have clinched some of the continent's most invaluable golf competitions over the last several years.

For instance, last year the afore-mentioned Madina fantastically claimed the Zambian Ladies Open and the Ugandan Ladies Open to boot.

It should be noted here that in sharp contrast to football, domestic women's golf has unfortunately received an infinitesimal amount of funds for quite a long spell.

Thus, one would like to call upon would-be sponsors and golf stakeholders to try their damndest to channel more funds into domestic women's golf for the betterment of the sport.

And, as Madina so amply demonstrated last year, such financial investment is likely to pay off in a rewarding way.

## Jaded Tsitsipas out as Sinner sweeps through under doping cloud

MELBOURNE

WORLD number one Jannik Sinner opened his Australian Open title defence in blazing sunshine with a win over Nicolas Jarry on Rod Laver Arena yesterday that brought the scourge of doping in the sport back into focus.

Women's number two Iga Swiatek, who served a short doping ban last year, also progressed on a balmy day at Melbourne Park along with third seed Coco Gauff, who safely negotiated a tricky first-round encounter with 2020 champion Sofia Kenin.

Stefanos Tsitsipas, however, crashed out at the first hurdle at the hands of American young gun Alex Michelsen, much to the disappointment of the local Greek community who had turned out in numbers to support the 2023 finalist.

The sunny weather was welcome after persistent rain had chopped six hours of play out of the outer court schedule on day one but the dark cloud of doping, which has shrouded tennis over the last year, refused to budge.

Jarry served an 11-month ban for doping in 2020 and the big-serving Chilean was quick to contrast his treatment with Sinner's avoidance of a suspension for failing two drug tests last year after losing 7-6(2) 7-6(5) 6-1 to the Italian.

"It's tough for me to play against him ... it's a very difficult and delicate topic. What I can say is that I would have liked the same treatment as the things that I went through," he told reporters.

"I don't think it was the same, so that's all."

Sinner, who could yet face a ban after an April hearing at the Court of Arbitration for Sport, told reporters he was not familiar with the details of Jarry's case.

"We got treated in the same way," he added. "There's the protocol. If the protocol has some issues or problem, then it's not my fault, you know?"

Swiatek was also at the centre of allegations that the doping authorities in tennis were running a two-

tier system favouring more high-profile players after she served a one-month ban late last year.

The 23-year-old five-times Grand Slam champion was not at her very best in a 6-3 6-4 victory over Czech Katerina Siniakova on Monday but was pleased enough to progress.

"I think it was a solid match and I'm happy I'm through to the second round," she said.

Gauff, who like Swiatek could move to the top of the world rankings if results go her way in Melbourne, was more troubled by the impact of the sunshine at one end of the Rod Laver Arena court than by Kenin in her 6-3 6-3 victory.

"I could have served better but I could hardly see at that end," said the American number one, who mixed 12 aces with nine double faults over the match.

Tsitsipas could only blame himself for his jaded performance in his 7-5 6-3 2-6 6-4 loss to Michelsen at the Grand Slam where he once beat both Rafa Nadal and Roger Federer in their prime.

"I had a fresher mind back then," the 26-year-old said.

"I would definitely say that one thing that stood out the most back then is that I had this hunger to try and make a life out of tennis ... It was different than it is now."

The last active player from the 'Big Three' of men's tennis, Novak Djokovic, begins his quest for an 11th title at Melbourne Park and a record 25th Grand Slam crown later on Monday.

World number three Carlos Alcaraz also gets his campaign underway in the evening session, while Australian Nick Kyrgios makes his return to his home Grand Slam after two injury-ravaged seasons.

There was already plenty for local fans to cheer with James Duckworth, Jordan Thompson, James McCabe, Aleksandar Vukic and Tristan Schoolkate progressing on the men's side along with Ajla Tomljanovic and Talia Gibson in the women's draw.

REUTERS

Jovin Tongora (L), a music teacher from the Mbezi Luis Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Dar es Salaam, leads a dynamic music lesson and shares insights on church music philosophy with members of the congregation yesterday. The lesson was part of a special program organized by the church to enhance and strengthen its music ministry. PHOTO: GUARDIAN CORRESPONDENT.



## Yanga's quarterfinal hopes hinge on crucial clash

By Correspondent Seth Mapoli

YOUNG Africans have reignited their hopes of reaching the quarterfinals of the CAF Champions League following a vital 1-0 victory over Al Hilal at the Cheikha Ould Boudiyya Stadium in Nouakchott, Mauritania.

The hard-fought win sets up a decisive encounter against Algeria's MC Alger at Benjamin Mkapa Stadium, where victory will secure Young Africans' progression to the knockout stage.

In a tense fifth-round Group A clash, Young Africans' star midfielder Stephane Aziz Ki netted the lone goal in the eighth minute. Aziz Ki's (pictured) powerful strike, set up by a well-timed pass from Dickson Job, beat Al Hilal goalkeeper Issa Fofana, giving the Tanzanian champions an early advantage.

The goal not only showcased Aziz Ki's clinical finishing but also highlighted Young Africans' intent to avenge their 2-0 defeat to Al Hilal in the group opener on November 26, 2024, in

Dar es Salaam. Young Africans entered the Nouakchott encounter knowing that anything less than a win would jeopardize their chances of advancing. From the outset, they displayed urgency and aggression, dominating possession in the first half with 53% to Al Hilal's 47%.

The Jangwani Street-based side created three clear chances in the opening 45 minutes, with one converted by Aziz Ki.

In contrast, Al Hilal struggled to break through Young Africans' defensive line, thanks to the solid performance of goalkeeper Djigui Diarra, who made several crucial saves.

In the second half, Young Africans maintained their defensive discipline while seeking opportunities to extend their lead. Al Hilal pressed for an equalizer but were repeatedly thwarted by Young Africans' organized backline. Despite the Su-

danese club's efforts, they failed to breach the Tanzanian champions' defense.

The victory marked Young Africans' second consecutive win in Group A, following their 3-1 triumph over DR Congo's TP Mazembe in Dar es Salaam on January 4.

These six points have kept Young Africans' quarterfinal hopes alive, allowing them to build momentum in the tournament.

Significantly, this win was Young Africans' first-ever triumph over Al Hilal in the CAF Champions League, adding a historic milestone to their campaign under the guidance of German coach Sead Ramovic.

Young Africans' win elevated their points tally to seven, placing them third in Group A. Al Hilal, with 10 points, have already secured their place in the quarterfinals, while MC Alger sit second with eight

points.

This scenario leaves Young Africans with a clear task: a win of any kind against MC Alger on January 18 at Benjamin Mkapa Stadium will secure their spot in the quarterfinals.

A draw or loss, however, will see the Algerians advance at Young Africans' expense. Young Africans' journey to this point has been marked by resilience and a determined effort to match their achievement from last season, when they reached the quarterfinals.

The team's performance against Al Hilal reflects their ability to handle pressure and deliver results in must-win situations.

The upcoming clash against MC Alger will be the ultimate test of Young Africans' character and tactical discipline. Playing at home in front of their passionate fans provides a significant advantage, but the Tanzanian champions must remain focused and execute their game plan flawlessly to overcome the Algerians.

Coach Ramovic has praised his team's effort and determination in the



Czech Republic's Katerina Siniakova in action during her Australian Open first round match against Poland's Iga Swiatek at Melbourne Park, in Melbourne, Australia yesterday. REUTERS



## Conte hails McTominay and Lukaku as Napoli extend Serie A lead

ROME

NAPOLI manager Antonio Conte praised the impact of Scott McTominay and Romelu Lukaku, both in their first season at the club, after their 2-0 Serie A win over Hellas Verona on Sunday.

Napoli broke the deadlock early on when Giovanni Di Lorenzo's shot hit the post and rebounded off goalkeeper Lorenzo Montipo, while Frank Anguissa sealed the victory with a powerful long-range shot.

Conte said he is still trying to find the right tactics to suit his squad, even as they secured a fifth successive league win, but that the new signings were integral in helping Napoli lead the standings by four points ahead of Inter Milan.

"There have certainly been changes since the beginning of the summer, especially as I am still trying to find the right tactics for this team," Conte told DAZN.

"The arrival of Scott McTominay and Romelu Lukaku, in particular, made a big difference to the switch to 4-3-3. We tried a couple of different formations before we settled on this one."

The coach added that he was pleased with the team's development, as "there is more confidence, and the whole squad is involved".

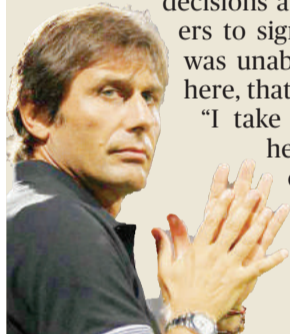
After revealing that forward Khvicha Kvaratskhelia wanted to leave the Serie A club, Conte said he bore no ill will toward the Georgian and that he was more disappointed with himself.

"It's a disappointment for me, not for the player or the club," Conte said. "In six months I failed to change the situation."

"I believe a coach should help a club to make decisions and advise on what players to sign. When I realise that I was unable to make a difference here, that is my disappointment."

"I take nothing from Khvicha, he's a good lad, but everyone has to decide their own destiny, just as the club has to make its decisions."

REUTERS



FC Barcelona president Joan Laporta celebrates with the trophy and players after winning the Spanish Super Cup final against Real Madrid at King Abdullah Sports City, in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on January 12, 2025. REUTERS

## Barcelona thrash Real 5-2 in Spanish Super Cup thriller

JEDDAH

BARCELONA came from an early goal down to beat Real Madrid 5-2 in the Spanish Super Cup final on Sunday, scoring four goals in a dominant first half and surviving having their goalkeeper sent off to clinch a record-extending 15th trophy.

Lamine Yamal, Robert Lewandowski, Raphinha and Alejandro Balde were all on target before halftime, after French

forward Kylian Mbappe put Real in front in the fifth minute. Raphinha grabbed another in the second half while Rodrygo scored for Real.

Barcelona put in a clinical display to lift their first trophy in more than a year, having no silverware to show for last season.

"A goal for big clubs is always to win titles, that's why we work hard. But now we have to show it in the next games," Hansi Flick told a press conference after

winning his first trophy as Barca coach.

"Real made many mistakes, and we knew how to take advantage of them to control the match."

Barca prevented Real from winning their third title of the campaign, after they won the European Super Cup against Atalanta and beat Mexico's Pachuca to the Intercontinental Cup last month.

"In the first half we didn't play football, we hit long balls and that

wasn't the idea," Real coach Carlo Ancelotti said.

"I told the players that they can lose games, but not in the way we played in the first half."

### QUICK TURN-AROUND

Mbappe earned an early advantage for the Spanish champions, finishing a solo run from around the halfway line with a shot inside the far post.

But what looked like a dream start quickly

turned into a nightmare for Ancelotti's men when Yamal levelled for Barca in the 22nd minute. Striker Lewandowski gave them the lead 14 minutes later from a penalty awarded for Eduardo Camavinga's foul on Gavi.

Raphinha increased the advantage with a stunning header from a brilliant long cross by Jules Kounde in the 39th minute, and left back Balde added a fourth for Barca deep into stoppage time after

nine minutes were added to the first half.

Yamal released Raphinha with a precise pass following Real's miserable corner kick, before the Brazil forward left the ball to Balde who scored with a simple finish.

Real started the second half with Rodrygo hitting the bar, sparking hopes of the hectic clash taking another turn.

But Raphinha quelled any sniff of a comeback when he made it 5-1 three minutes after the break, having slalomed past the Real defence.

Barca were left with 10 men when goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny was sent off for fouling Mbappe in the 56th minute and Rodrygo beat substitute keeper Inaki Pena from the resulting free kick.

But Real, who hold a five-point advantage over Barca in LaLiga after 19 games, had no shots on goal after the penalty until Mbappe's effort was denied by Pena in stoppage time.

Barcelona also lost defender Inigo Martinez before the half-hour mark through injury, with Ronald Araujo stepping in.

Barcelona and Real met in the competition's final for third consecutive time, with Ancelotti's side prevailing last year while Barca lifted the trophy in 2023.

Barcelona booked their spot in the final by winning 2-0 against current Spanish Cup holders Athletic Bilbao in the semi-finals before Real beat last year's Copa del Rey finalists Mallorca 3-0.

REUTERS

## Amorim sees shoots of progress in Man United's shootout win at Arsenal

LONDON

MANCHESTER United boss Ruben Amorim said his team are still improving, as Sunday's dramatic FA Cup penalty shootout victory over Arsenal points to a more positive future after a difficult start to life at Old Trafford.

United fans have suffered several false dawns in recent seasons, with development under Amorim's predecessors Erik ten Hag and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer largely a case of one step forward and two steps back.

Amorim may have wondered if he had taken on a poisoned chalice when a three-game unbeaten run to begin his reign was followed by a woeful run of results, with an unlikely victory over Manchester City in the middle.

But having outperformed expectations with a brilliant display against Liverpool last weekend, United followed that up at Arsenal to keep their FA Cup defence alive.

Amorim said he was particularly pleased with United's improvement on their 2-0 league defeat by Arsenal last month, when both the Gunners' goals came from set pieces.

"I think we played, especially in the first half, we played better than in

the first game," Amorim told reporters.

"We were better in set pieces today, more aggressive. We showed a different spirit, even with 10 men, we are improving on that aspect."

Second-choice goalkeeper Altay Bayindir and forward Joshua Zirkzee were ultimately United's heroes on Sunday after recent criticism.

Zirkzee was booed off as a first-half substitute in last month's defeat to Newcastle United, while Bayindir was blamed for United's League Cup exit against Tottenham Hotspur.

But both were key contributors to United's third round win, where they were reduced to 10 men, which Amorim said was a lesson for his squad.

"Your life as a footballer has cycles and moments and sometimes in one week your life can change," he said.

"You can see Altay - against Tottenham everybody was pointing the finger (at) Altay and I understand that and today he was our hero also."

"Joshua a few weeks ago had a small problem with our fans and today every time he's going on the pitch you feel the support from the fans."

"Then he has the last penalty, so life is like that and you have to continue

(being) humble, to work every day, your time will come."

Amorim also said he was not sure if forward Marcus Rashford, who was again left out of the squad, had played his last game for United.

"He's a player for Manchester United, we'll see, he has to work, he has to represent his club and he loves his club, but I have to make choices," he said.

Meanwhile, Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta said he was astounded his side could not finish off 10-man Manchester United in their FA Cup third round clash on Sunday, after they were dumped out on penalties having drawn 1-1 after extra time.

The hosts came from behind to level, Gabriel cancelling out Bruno Fernandes' opener after United's Diogo Dalot was sent off, and could have taken the lead through a controversial penalty.

But captain Martin Odegaard's spot kick was saved by Altay Bayindir, who produced the only save of the shootout from Kai Havertz to send United through to the fourth round.

Arsenal had multiple chances to score a winner at 1-1, with Havertz guilty of missing a relatively simple chance inside the last 10 minutes of normal time, and



Arsenal's Kai Havertz has his penalty saved by Manchester United's Altay Bayindir during the penalty shoot-out in their FA Cup third round match at Emirates Stadium, in London, Britain on January 12, 2025. REUTERS

Arteta could not quite believe his team were on the wrong side of the result.

"Incredible how you don't win the game," he told reporters. "The dominance, the superiority in relation to the opposition and everything that we did to try to win the game and that's it."

"We didn't get what

we deserved clearly, but there is an element that is about putting the ball in the back of the net."

"We did it once and with the amount of situations, chances, penalties that we had we didn't (again). We go home extremely sad but I cannot be prouder of my players."

Arsenal came into Sunday's match un-

beaten in 10 Premier League games and having trimmed Liverpool's lead to six points, albeit having played a game more.

But Sunday's FA Cup exit, following a 2-0 home defeat by Newcastle United in the first leg of their League Cup semi-final, narrows the Gunners' prospects of silverware this season.

They next welcome local rivals Tottenham Hotspur to the Emirates Stadium on Wednesday, but Arteta played down any additional pressure after two straight cup losses and insisted he was focused on the quality of their performances.

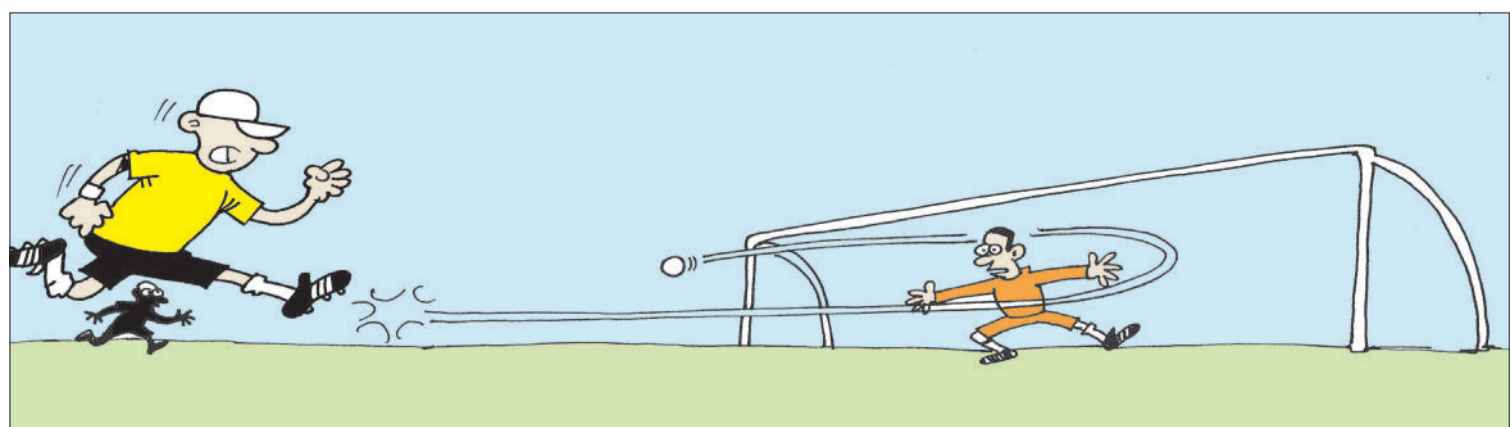
Gabriel Jesus was carried off the field on a stretcher in visible dis-

comfort in the first half on Sunday and Arteta said he feared the Brazil forward could face a prolonged spell on the sidelines.

"Big worry, that's my feeling," Arteta said. "He had to come off on a stretcher with a lot of pain, touching his knee and he's not looking good."

REUTERS

Gwiji by David Chikoko





Conte hails McTominay and Lukaku as Napoli extend Serie A lead

PAGE 19

## Coach Davids now targets Group A top spot after Simba SC's quarter-final qualification



Bravos do Maquis goalkeeper Okiemute Odah pictured on Sunday failing to stop a shot from Simba SC striker Leonel Ateba (not in picture) during their CAF Confederation Cup Group A match at the National Stadium in Talatona, Luanda. Photo: Courtesy of SSC

By Correspondent Seth Mapoli

**S**IMBA SC head coach Fadlu Davids expressed his pride in his team after they secured a place in the CAF Confederation Cup quarter-finals for the sixth time in seven seasons since their 2018-19 debut.

The Msimbazi Street-based side earned a hard-fought 1-1 draw against Angola's Bravos do Maquis at the National Stadium in Talatona, Luanda.

Speaking after the match, Davids commended the collective effort of his players and technical staff, emphasizing their unity as the cornerstone of their success.

"I would like to thank the technical staff and players; they have done a very good job for our team to qualify for the quarter-finals," Davids said. "It was not easy, but we worked together, and that was very good. We had a plan to qualify with one game in hand, and that is what happened."

Reflecting on the match, Davids noted that Simba aimed for a win but settled for a result that still ensured progression.

"We wanted to win the match, but unfortunately, we had a draw, which also helped us qualify. It's a good take. We created chances and could have gone 2-0 or 1-0 up, but some of our

mistakes made us draw," he explained.

Davids also highlighted the strengths of Bravos do Maquis, particularly their counterattacks and set-piece plays, which posed challenges for Simba.

Despite this, the coach remained optimistic about the future, setting a new target for his team.

"We have qualified, and the first goal is reached, but our second goal to accomplish is to win the last match so we can finish on top of the group."

Simba now sit second in Group A with 10 points, trailing group leaders CS Constantine, who have 12 points following a dominant 3-0 victory over CS Sfaxien.

Simba will face Constantine in Dar es Salaam in their final group-stage match to determine who tops the group.

In Luanda, the match began on a challenging note for Simba, who conceded in the 13th minute due to a defensive error. Defender Che Malone Fondoh's misplaced back pass gifted Bravos forward Abednego Keoikantse an easy opportunity to score, putting the hosts ahead.

However, Simba regained composure in the second half and equalized in the 69th minute. Right-back Shomari Kapombe delivered a precise pass to Leonel Ateba, who fired a powerful shot past Bravos goalkeeper Okiemute Odah to level the game.

Simba had entered the match buoyed by a 1-0 victory over Bravos in their first-leg encounter in Dar es Salaam, where midfielder Jean Charles Ahoua converted a penalty in the 27th minute.

Despite the opening set-

back, Simba showed resilience throughout the match. In the first half, both teams created opportunities, with Bravos forward Samuel Bengue missing an open chance in the 32nd minute and Simba's Kibu Denis seeing his 38th-minute header saved by Odah.

Simba's Moussa Camara also made crucial saves, including a powerful shot from Joaquim Paciencia just before halftime.

The visitors' attacking intent continued in the second half, bolstered by tactical substitutions from Davids.

Yusuph Kagoma and Elie Mpanzu made way for Debora Fernandes Mavambo and Ladack Chasambi, adding fresh energy to Simba's offensive efforts.

While the changes helped Simba control the game for significant stretches, Bravos managed sporadic late

attacks that tested the Tanzanian defense.

Ultimately, Simba's disciplined performance secured the vital point needed to confirm their qualification.

This achievement marks Simba's sixth quarter-final appearance in seven seasons, underscoring their consistency on the continental stage.

The club's next challenge will be their final Group A match against CS Constantine on January 19 at the Benjamin Mkapa Stadium in Dar es Salaam.

Victory in that encounter will see Simba top the group, setting the stage for a potentially favorable draw in the knockout stages.

For now, Davids and his team can take pride in reaching their first objective, with their sights firmly set on conquering the rest of the tournament.

## Ngassa among East African legends leading CHAN 2024 draw

By Correspondent Michael Mwebe

TANZANIAN football legend Mrisho Ngassa will play a key role in the official draw for the CAF African Nations Championship (CHAN) 2024 finals.

The draw is scheduled for tomorrow, January 15, at 8 PM, at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre in Nairobi, Kenya.

Ngassa is one of three East African legends selected by the Confederation of African Football (CAF) to assist in determining the tournament's groupings.

He will join Uganda's Hassan Wasswa and Kenya's McDonald Mariga in conducting the draw for the eighth edition of the competition, which will run from February 1 to 28, 2025.

The trio have made significant contributions to the development of African football and are celebrated figures in their respective countries.

Ngassa is regarded as one of the best Tanzanian footballers of all time. With a century of international appearances, Ngassa is the second most capped Tanzanian player of all time and the nation's leading scorer with 25 goals for Taifa Stars.

Debuting in 2005, Ngassa's club career saw him represent three of Tanzania's biggest teams - Simba SC, Young Africans SC, and Azam FC.

He also ventured abroad, playing for Free State Stars in South Africa and Fanja in Oman before concluding his career at Ndanda SC in Tanzania.

Wasswa, a long-serving Ugandan footballer, represented the Cranes 75 times during a career spanning more than a decade.

The defensive midfielder also played professionally in Turkey and Saudi Arabia before retiring in 2021.

Kenya's Mariga brings a glittering resume that includes a UEFA Champions League title with Inter Milan, along with Serie A and Coppa Italia victories.

Mariga, the first Kenyan to play in the UEFA Champions League, also won the FIFA Club World Cup in 2010 and earned 40 caps for the Kenya national team, scoring five goals.

He is the elder brother of Victor Wanyama, another Kenyan football icon.

A total of 19 nations, including co-hosts Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda, as well as defending champions Senegal, will feature in the draw, which will map out the schedule for the month-long tournament.

CAF African Nations Championship 2024 Confirmed Qualified Teams: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda (all co-hosts), Morocco, Guinea, Senegal, Mauritania, Niger, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Congo, Sudan, Zambia, Angola and Madagascar. Two more teams will be confirmed for the finals.



## Ramovic praises Yanga character in victory over Al Hilal

By Correspondent Michael Mwebe

YOUNG Africans head coach Sead Ramovic has praised his team's performance following their 1-0 victory over Sudanese side Al Hilal on Sunday.

Stephen Aziz Ki's seventh-minute goal secured the vital win, keeping Young Africans in contention for a spot in the knockout stages of the CAF Champions League with one group match remaining.

Speaking at the post-match press conference, Ramovic (pictured) expressed his satisfaction with his players, commending their determination and resilience under pressure.

"We knew it would be a very difficult game," said Ramovic. "We've had a busy schedule with many games and a long, challenging trip, making recovery tough."

"Despite this, the team delivered an amazing performance. Congratulations to my players and the staff for showing such incredible character under

high pressure."

He also extended his appreciation to Al Hilal for a fair and competitive match.

"We started the game very well, tactically smart, and closed spaces effectively for the first 20 minutes," Ramovic explained.

"After scoring the early goal, we dominated the game, although the opponent grew stronger as the game progressed. In the second half, they had one or two chances, but overall, we deserved the win."

"We should have

scored a second goal with the opportunities we had, but I'm proud of how we handled the match."

Young Africans must now win their final group match against MC Alger on Saturday at the Benjamin Mkapa Stadium in Dar es Salaam to secure progression to the CAF Champions League knockout rounds.

Looking ahead, Ramovic acknowledged the challenge but remained optimistic.

"Alhamdulillah, we now focus on the de-



cisive match in Tanzania against MC Alger. It will be another tough game, but we're ready. We have a few days to

recover and prepare after the long trip back," he said.

The showdown against MC Alger prom-

ises to be a thrilling finale for Young Africans as they aim to advance in Africa's premier club competition.

## Flexibles by David Chikoko

