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Accountability in governance not yet there, says Z'bar VP1

In the meeting, various points were discussed regarding the conduct of multiparty politics as the country heads towards the 2024 local government polls and the 2025 general election

By Guardian Reporter

ZANZIBAR First Vice President Othman Masoud Othman has appealed for the enhancement of accountability systems at all levels to promote good governance. Opening a meeting of the council of political parties discussing what to add to bills for political parties and electoral reforms tabled back in November, he said there are leadership gaps in

political activity, the legislature, the judiciary and within the general public. Accountability can be achieved if there are reforms for a democratic electoral processes as currently envisaged, he said. It is the general election that brings in leaders at all levels, thus getting candidates has to be well-managed as it is leaders who shape the country's image, he said, urging participants at the meet-

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Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority conservation commissioner Mabula Nyanda (R) and Magellan General Trading LLC director Ahmed Warsama pictured in Dar es Salaam yesterday signing special wildlife investment concession agreements in respect of the Mkungunero Game Reserve. The reserve, a natural corridor for wildlife migrating from Tarangire National Park into neighbouring reserves, straddles three administrative districts: Kondo, Kiteto and Simanjiro. Photo: Correspondent Happy Shayo

Stunting: Njombe schools to farm vegetables, start poultry projects

One in six children aged two to three years is likely to be severely stunted, with stunting higher in the Mainland (35 percent) than in Zanzibar (24 percent)

By Guardian Correspondent, Njombe

NJOMBE regional authorities have tasked primary and secondary schools to start engaging in vegetable cultivation, as part of measures to combat stunting and malnutrition among children. Anthony Mtaka, the regional commissioner, issued this directive here yesterday at the launch of a five-year broad based nutrition project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), disbursing over 800m/- annually. He challenged schools to establish poultry farms for pupils to access balanced diets that especially include eggs, affirming that regional authorities will be asserting that the regional secretariat will seek information from schools on how they are imple-

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New wildlife concessions to add 40bn/- in revenues

By Henry Mwangonde

THE Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority (TAWA) yesterday signed seven strategic investment contracts billed at \$278m (696bn/-) with five prospective investors for special wildlife investment concession areas

(SWICA), a new business model for sustainable utilisation of wildlife resources and raising revenues. SWICA is a model that allows investors to provide trophy hunting and photographic tourism services within one concession area, targeting high end customers who prefer ex-

clusive and luxurious service. Mabula Misungwi, the TAWA conservation commissioner, at a briefing that the government is expecting to generate upwards of \$314m during the 20 years of investments, which boils down to \$16m per year (40bn/-), a far cry from

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Former President Jakaya Kikwete fetes adolescent male members of his Kwere tribe at an initiation ceremony held at his native Msoga village in Chalinze constituency, Coast Region, on Sunday. Some were from the residences of close relatives of and were recently circumcised the traditional

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Amrouche open to including John in upcoming Taifa Stars selection

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New wildlife concessions to add 40bn/- in revenues

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the trophy hunting business model, which was generating just above a tenth of those estimates annually.

The SWICA business model is a viable option toward attaining optimal and sustainable utilisation of wildlife resources, he said, noting that the procurement process for investors was conducted in line with the relevant provisions set out in SWICA regulations of 2021.

The regulations provide for solicited and unsolicited applications plus assessment procedures where solicited application procedures provide that the special concession areas are designated, advertised to solicit applications in a competitive manner, he stated.

He listed awarded investors as Bushman Safari Trackers Ltd that will operate Maswa Game Reserve to the north, Mkwawa Hunting Safaris Ltd billed for the Selous Game Reserve lot 1, Grumeti Reserves Ltd set for Grumeti Game Reserve and Ikorongo Game Reserve).

Mwiba Holdings Ltd set up Maswa Game Reserve at Mbono and Kimali lots, while Magellan General Trading has been handed the Mkungunero

Game Reserve area.

TAWA is ready to ensure smooth implementation of all SWICA projects in the respective areas in collaboration with the concession winning firms, based on the monitoring and evaluation manual used as a tool to inform TAWA on the progress of SWICA projects, he emphasised.

Angellah Kairuki, the Natural Resources and Tourism minister, said that among other benefits in conservation and research, the investment drive is going to benefit local communities in the vicinity of those areas as an estimated \$50m (125bn/-) will be used to finance community development projects during the 20 years of investment.

Tanzania used to hear of trophy hunting and photographic tourism for a long time but now SWICA is being added as a business model and revenue strategy, she said, intimating that this is a great innovation in the quest to diversify tourism products and services.

Domestic and international stakeholders need to invest in the sector as there is a good number of attractive investment areas for would-be investors, she added.

Accountability in governance not yet there, says Z'bar VP1

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ing to make good use of the platform.

They need to ensure that electoral laws coming from the bills are beneficial to the country, while veteran CCM cadre and former cabinet minister Stephen Wasira praised President Samia Suluhu Hassan for embracing the country's traditions.

She had introduced political dialogue and sought reconciliation, which is suitable for the promotion of peace, he said, underlining that it was wrong to oppose what President Samia has demonstrated in spearheading democratic reforms, improving the conduct and operations of multiparty politics.

Right after being sworn in, the president demonstrated what she wished the country to be like, he said, noting that media outlets, hitherto operating in fear, were now operating freely. The general public can now discuss and talk politics anywhere, he remarked.

Major steps have been taken in improving the economy and slowly the economy is becoming inclusive, while earlier a small section of society was holding the economy.

He said that for countries like Tanzania, reconciliation was a vital issue

meriting priority, expressing concern that some politicians are prioritising their parties in the dialogues instead of the country.

In the meeting, various points were discussed regarding the conduct of multiparty politics as the country heads towards the 2024 local government polls and the 2025 general election.

Hamza Hassan Juma, the Policy, Coordination and House of Representatives state minister in the Zanzibar Second Vice-President's Office, said that efforts by the government to involve other stakeholders seek to enact good laws.

Judge Francis Mutungi, the registrar of political parties, said that the meeting takes up President Samia's instructions regarding recommendations from meetings of the council of political parties in changing various law provisions on elections and democracy.

The meeting participants need to prioritise patriotism for productive debate focusing on building national institutions, not for benefiting specific parties, where stakeholders ought to give their own contributions in the broadest way possible, he added.

Earthquakes in Japan leave at least 62 dead, scores trapped

TOKYO

A SERIES of powerful earthquakes that hit western Japan left at least 62 people dead as rescue workers fought Wednesday to save those feared trapped under the rubble of collapsed buildings.

Aftershocks continued to shake Ishikawa prefecture and nearby areas two days after a magnitude 7.6 temblor slammed the area. The first 72 hours are considered crucial to save lives after disasters.

Water, power and cell phone service were still down in some areas. Residents expressed sorrow about their uncertain futures.

"It's not just that it's a mess. The wall has collapsed, and you can see through to the next room. I don't think we can live here anymore," Miki Kobayashi, an Ishikawa resident, said as she swept around her house.

The house was also damaged in a 2007 quake, she said.

Of the deaths, 29 were counted in Wajima city, while 22 people died in Suzu, according to Ishikawa Prefectural authorities. Dozens of people have been seriously injured, including in nearby prefectures.

Although casualty numbers continued to climb gradually, the prompt public warnings, relayed on broadcasts and phones, and the quick response from the general public and officials appeared to have limited some of the damage.

Toshitaka Katada, a University of Tokyo professor specializing in disasters, said people were prepared because the area had been hit by quakes

in recent years. They had evacuation plans and emergency supplies in stock.

"There are probably no people on Earth who are as disaster-ready as the Japanese," he said.

Japan is frequently hit by earthquakes because of its location along the "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanoes and fault lines in the Pacific Basin.

Katada warned the situation remains precarious and unpredictable. The March 2011 quake and tsunami in northeastern Japan had been preceded by other quakes.

"This is far from over," Katada said. Predictions by scientists have repeatedly been proven wrong, such as with the 2016 quake in southwestern Kumamoto, an area previously seen as relatively quake-free.

"Having too much confidence in the power of science is very dangerous. We are dealing with nature," Katada said.

Japanese media's aerial footage showed widespread damage in the hardest-hit spots, with landslides burying roads, boats tossed in the waters and a fire that had turned an entire section of Wajima city to ashes.

Japan's military has dispatched 1,000 soldiers to the disaster zones to join rescue efforts. It was uncertain how many more victims might still be in the rubble.

Nuclear regulators said several nuclear plants in the region were operating normally. A major quake and tsunami in 2011 caused three reactors to melt and release large amounts of radiation at a nuclear plant in northeastern Japan.



Participants of an event organised by the Zanzibar Information, Youth, Culture and Sports ministry follow a presentation by former Zanzibar Chief Secretary Dr Abdulhamid Yahya Mzee yesterday. It was held yesterday as part of the run-up to the 60th anniversary of the January 12 Zanzibar Revolution. Photo: Correspondent Martin Kabemba

Stunting: Njombe schools to farm vegetables, raise chicks

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menting that directive.

If land is available this should allow them to establish poultry farms, he said, noting that schools that are ready will be required to pay for 1,000 chicks to start producing eggs.

Such efforts will enable schools to uplift what pupils eat, thus help to curb stunting, he remarked, stating that school managements would decide on the distribution of eggs for pupils.

Dr Joyceline Kaganda, the nutrition project supervisor, said that the project will be providing chicks and nutritious seeds to the schools, as well

as teaching women and girls how to prepare nutritious foods.

They will also be educated on proper maize preservation methods as poorly stored maize can ignite aflatoxins, poisonous bacterial growth that contributes to stunting, she said.

Victoria Mwanziva, the Ludewa district commissioner, said the district authorities have been putting up strategies to end malnutrition and stunting, including educational campaigns directed at women and children.

"We have running campaigns to promote school feeding whereas parents are educated on the impor-

tance of feeding their children with balanced diets. We also encourage residents to establish home vegetable gardens," she said, while Claudia Kitta, the Wanging'ombe district commissioner, said that residents are being taught how to prepare nutritious porridge and auxiliary foods.

One in six children aged two to three years is likely to be severely stunted, with stunting higher in the Mainland (35 percent) than in Zanzibar (24 percent).

Reports have it that the rate of stunting among children under the age of five has decreased from 34 per cent in 2015/16 to 30 per cent in 2022, while

child pregnancies dropped from 27 per cent in 2015/16 to 22 per cent in 2022, but there is a lot to be done by parents and guardians in keeping children and youth safe, experts affirm.

Launching the 2022 Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey and Malaria Indicator Survey (2022 TDHS-MIS), President Samia Suluhu Hassan said that 300 children out of 1,000 children in the community have stunting.

This is not a good sign for progress, whereas regions with high levels of stunting were listed as Njombe at 50 per cent, Rukwa (50 percent) and Geita (39 percent).



Siti Abbas Ali, a director in the Zanzibar Community Development, Gender and Children ministry, addresses women leaders from Sebulani in Unguja Urban District yesterday. She urged them to help in educating and sensitising the public on the importance of fighting anti-social practices and tendencies. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Egypt stands firm with Somalia in face-off against Ethiopia

CAIRO

EGYPTIAN President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi has pledged his support for Somalia, following a deep disagreement between Ethiopia and Somaliland over maritime access.

Ethiopia signed an agreement on Monday to use one of Somaliland's seaports, prompting criticism and annoyance from Somalia.

Somalia, which considers Somali-

land part of its territory, condemned the agreement as an act of "aggression" and a violation of its sovereignty.

Mogadishu promises to oppose it by all legal means.

Somaliland is part of Somalia under the Somali constitution, and this agreement, signed without any legal basis, defies the rules of the UN, AU, and IGAD," said the Prime Minister.

Mogadishu immediately recalled its ambassador to Addis Ababa for consul-

tation and called on international institutions to force Ethiopia to abandon its Red Sea access project.

In a telephone call with Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, Egyptian President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi assured that "Egypt will maintain a firm position alongside Somalia and support its security and stability".

Sisi's spokesman, Ahmed Famy, added that the two leaders had also discussed "regional developments"

and bilateral relations.

President Mohamud also spoke by telephone with the Emir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad, about bilateral and regional relations of mutual interest, the Somali presidency said.

The European Union criticized the agreement, demanding respect for Somalia's "unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity". "This is essential for the peace and stability of the Horn of Africa region," the EU said in a statement.



Parliamentary Administration, Constitution and Law Standing Committee pictured yesterday on the first day of its routine sessions being held in Dodoma city ahead of the upcoming meeting of the National Assembly. Photo courtesy of National Assembly

DPM: Public should add value to all bills set for debate in the National Assembly

By Guardian Reporter, Geita

DEPUTY Prime Minister and Minister for Energy Doto Biteko has called upon Tanzanians to massively participate in the on-going exercise to collect views for improvement of the recently tabled bills aimed to support President Samia Suluhu Hassan's reconciliation efforts.

The bills, which were tabled for first reading in the National Assembly in November last year are the National Electoral Commission Bill 2023, the Political Parties Affairs Laws (Amendment), Bill 2023, the Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Government Elections Bill, 2023.

He made the call when addressing residents in Mbogwe District, Geita Region during celebrations to welcome the year 2024 which was organized by Mbogwe District Commissioner, Nicodemus Maganga. The event was attended by different leaders led by Geita Regional Commissioner, Martine Shigella.

"The National Assembly has called upon people to submit their views on the bills from January 6th to 10th, 2024. May I urge Tanzanians to actively participate in the exercise," said the DPM.

He said President Samia is working tirelessly to unite Tanzanians despite their religious, tribal and political ideology differences. He said the President has been listening and working on views presented by various groups as well as allowing political parties to conduct rallies to explain their policies to the people.

On civic polls scheduled for later this year, Biteko called upon citizens to vote for leaders of their choice, insisting polls should not be a reason to divide.

He said Tanzanians should remain united and discuss issues of national interest such as improvement of water services, electricity and infrastructure development.

Biteko noted that electricity services in Mbogwe District continued to be improved whereas new power transmission lines have been built. He said the power transmission line from Nyakanazi will also transmit electricity to Kahama District, Shinyanga Region.

Mbogwe will also have a power cooling sub-station, he added.

Geita Regional Commissioner, Martine Shigella expressed satisfaction with implementation of development projects in Mbogwe District. The project includes school construction, water, electricity, health and infrastructures.

Shigella said that 90 percent of villages in Mbogwe District have been connected to power, insisting the remaining 50 villages will be connected in near future.

Mbogwe legislator, Nicodemus Maganga commended the DPM for visiting the area during New Year, insisting the District is determined to ensure all development projects including those in the mining sector are implemented accordingly.

Maganga lauded President Samia for allocating funds for development projects in Mbogwe District, insisting the district will have a new look by 2027.

"The National Assembly has called upon people to submit their views on the bills from January 6th to 10th, 2024. May I urge Tanzanians to actively participate in the exercise"

Official: El-Niño rains will likely affect cotton production this farming season

By Correspondent Wilhelm Mulinda, Mwanza

THE on-going El-Niño rains are said to have affected cotton production this year, a senior official has said.

Prosper Kulaya, Tanzania Cotton Board (TCB) planning officer said yesterday that the target was to cultivate over 1.8 million acres, but

that projection may not be reached as most of the cotton growing areas received more rains, a situation that may negatively affect production.

Kulaya noted that cotton mostly grows on plain land and when there is a lot of rain such areas are full of water and therefore crop's seeds fail to germinate well, consequently negatively affecting production.

With a lot of water in the areas,

farmers tend to cultivate paddy that is friendly to the situation instead of cotton, Kulaya pointed out.

"In November and December last year there was a lot of rain therefore farmers in areas suitable for cultivating the crop they should go on as farm inputs will continue to be supplied as usual to those who will cultivate," he noted.

He affirmed that there are enough

seeds and farm inputs such as seeds, insecticides as well as sprayers to boost development of the crop in the country.

Currently cotton is grown in 17 regions in 56 districts across the country. The regions are Mwanza, Shinyanga, Mara, Simiyu, Geita, Kagera, Kigoma, Singida, Tabora, Dodoma, Manyara, Katavi, Morogoro, Iringa, Tanga, Kilimanjaro and Coast region.

Cotton is one of the country's strategic crops, contributing substantially to export revenues and employment in the two crop's growing zones, namely western and eastern zones.

Come up with better strategies to boost agriculture sector, govt told

By Guardian Reporter, Zanzibar

ZANZIBAR'S veteran politician, Baraka Muhamed Shamte has challenged the government to come up with strategies to improve the agriculture sector, thus reducing food dependency from other places.

Shamte made the remarks yesterday when speaking to journalists on the 60th anniversary of Zanzibar Revolution which is celebrated on January 12th every year.

He added that as Zanzibar celebrates the 60th anniversary of the revolution day, the government should conduct an evaluation of the agriculture sector since it has been performing poorer in recent years. He said the low productivity has led into the Isles depending on food from outside Zanzibar.

Shamte said that previously, the government invested much in agriculture, a situation which has now changed despite the presence of a good number of experts.

He however challenged the government decision to demolish and rebuild the Amani stadium, saying it was to be left the way it is because it is a symbol of the late Abeid Amani Karume who championed the Zanzibar revolution.

He said the late Karume will be remembered for his tireless efforts to improve the welfare of Zanzibar residents as well as construction of storey buildings in both Unguja and Pemba

which were freely given to citizens.

Shamte said that to ensure good governance, the government should take stern measures against corrupt government officials and dishonest public servants. He said the officials are those mentioned in the Controller and Auditor Generals' (CAG) annual reports.

He said there are people who have been implicated in different scandals including corruption but they have never been ar-

raigned.

Shamte also reminded leaders of the ruling CCM on the importance of honouring the country's founding fathers.

"Speaking the truth is a key to Zanzibar's development; leaders should be reminded on what to do to improve the welfare of people. We need to protect our country and continue harnessing the good things done by our leaders during the revolution," he added.





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RE: EXTENSION OF TENDER SUBMISSION DEADLINE

This is in reference to the **"Tender for Procurement of Professional Services for Financial Year 2023-2024"** with Procurement Reference Number ICAP/TZ/03/2023-2024 published in The Guardian on Friday 22 December on Page 5. For only the applications for Category D (Lot 4) and Category E (Lot 5, 6, and 7), the submission deadline has been **extended to 11:59pm on 11 January 2024**. Please note all other lots follow the original deadline. For any questions, please contact TanzaniaProcurement@cumc.columbia.edu

**The Tender Committee,
 MSPH Tanzania LLC - ICAP,
 7th Floor, Alfa Plaza,
 Plot No. G6, Chaburuma street
 P.O Box 80214, Dar es salaam, Tanzania**

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR REFERENCE NO. MST-TZ-20231220

Daqing Oilfield Construction Group Co., Ltd. (hereinafter as DOCG), as a CONTRACTOR for Storage & Terminal of EACOP Project, invites experienced and reputable contractors that have demonstrable capability, willingness, ability and availability to perform related works to express their interest in providing various services in the description to the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project.

The EACOP Project development involves the engineering, construction, operation and maintenance of a crude oil export pipeline crossing Uganda and Tanzania and an onshore Marine Terminal in Chongoleani, near Tanga Port in Tanzania.

There are Two (2) planned packages as follows:

Package-1: Provision of Precast Concrete product (Ref: MST-TZ-202231020-001)

The scope of the materials shall include Supplying Precast Concrete products, including:

No	Item	Specification	Unit	Quantity
1	Manhole	Width:1.2-1.5m, Length:1.2-1.5m, Height:1.4-4.975m	Set	90
2	Lighting pole	Width:1.1.5m, Length: 1.5m, Height: 1.875m	Set	450

Technical requirement:

- Concrete grade shall be C37;
- Calculated embedded lifting point for transportation shall be provided;
- Raw Material test report from approved lab, such as concrete, rebars and etc., shall be provided

Package-2: Provision of Rental Services for Large Scale Crawler Crane (Ref: MST-TZ-202231020-002)

The scope of the Service shall include Rental Services of 150-ton Crawler Crane. The detailed technical requirement is show in Appendix1-Description of basic demand.

Should you be interested in participating any or all of the packages, please provide below minimum requirements clearly specifying the package(s) of interest, including the reference number(s).

Minimum Requirements for Package 1 and Package 2.
 Companies expressing their interest are invited to document their request with:

- Company Profile;
- Proof of registration with the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA).
- Certificate of incorporation (BRELA), TIN Certificate, Valid Business license and permits.
- Tax Clearance Certificate for the latest year available.
- Copy of ISO 9001: 2015,ISO 14001:2015, OHSAS 18001 (ISO45001:2015) or equivalent certificate.
- Proven track record experience list for similar services supplied in the last Three (3) years
- Evidence of organization HSE Management Systems & policy, procedure, and process in compliance with applicable Industry standards for similar works.
- Proof of registration/application to Local Supplier Service Provider (LSSP) database at the time of submission of the response to this expression of interest is strongly recommended.
- Compliance with Petroleum (Local Content) Regulations, 2017, and Local Company definition for Tanzania.

Interested companies with the capacity to provide the services listed above should express their interest in English language by sending the above documents to pq@doeg.cn (not exceeding 20 MBs) on or before 17:00 hours East African Time (EAT), on **18th /Jan/2024**. Subject of the email should be **MST-TZ-20231220-(Package No.)/-EOI- (COMPANY NAME)**.

The format of the required documents and relevant technical requirements which are mentioned in Minimum Requirements should be downloaded from EACOP's website (<https://eacop.com/opportunities-by-main-construction-contractors/daqing-oil-field-construction-group-co-ltd/>).

Companies satisfactorily meeting the above minimum requirements will receive, subject to the signature of a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA), a detailed pre-qualification questionnaire for further evaluation by Company.

DOCG reserves the right not to consider companies that submit an incomplete dossier.

Note: Only pre qualified companies will receive invitation to submit bids in furtherance of the call for tender process.

Fall armyworms hit Ludewa District, with food crisis worsening

By Guardian Correspondent, Ludewa

CROP-eating fall armyworms have attacked nearly 385 hectares of maize in Ludewa District, Njombe Region

In separate interviews yesterday, farmers said that they are afraid of a famine due to fall armyworms entering their fields and attacking the crops and thus asking the government to take immediate measures to control them so that they cannot cause more effects.

Castory Luoga, maize farmer in the district said that the insects are a problem because they destroy the crops despite the high cost they have spent cultivating.

"As farmers we've spent money in preparing farms, buying improved seeds, plating, but haphazardly you find the farm bare as all the maize have been eaten by the insects," said Luoga.

Another farmer in the area, Ayub Haule said that the armyworms have attacked rapidly and if they are not controlled, there will be severe hunger.

"Now they have attacked a large part of the area and most of the farms remain bare, so we are asking the government based on these effects that will happen in 2024 to pay more attention because this is a very serious disaster," Haule lamented.

Nyamapinda sub-village chairman, Francis Mwinuka said the insects have attacked maize fields and farmers have already applied fertiliser.

"I'm asking the government to provide helicopter to spray the pesticides and address the problem," he suggested.

Ludewa District Agricultural Officer,

Godfrey Mlewa said on December 23, 2023 there was a challenge of being invaded by fall armyworms in Ludewa ward.

"Fall armyworms started invading the areas of Nyamapinda and Mdonga at a very high speed. It's regarded as a pest and can damage and destroy a wide variety of crops, which causes large economic damage," said Mlewa.

He noted that in the Nyamapinda area; more than 380 acres of cultivated fields have been invaded by the insects, stressing that the government has already started to take action where the Ministry of Agriculture, the Tanzania Plant Health and Pesticides Authority (TPHPA) has been able to provide 1,000 liters of pesticides to fight the insects so far 185 liters have been used.



Fall armyworms started invading the areas of Nyamapinda and Mdonga at a very high speed. It's regarded as a pest and can damage and destroy a wide variety of crops, which causes large economic damage



A delegation led by Ilemela district commissioner Hassan Masala (in blue) pictured on Tuesday visiting a site at the centre of a dispute over land ownership and use between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania and residents of North Buzuruga Street. He ordered the Ilemela District Council to resolve the wrangle. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

By Guardian Correspondent, Dodoma

SOME residents of Dodoma have lamented over the rise in prices of sugar, calling for government intervention on the value of the commodity as one kilogramme of the sweetener has risen up to 4,000/-.

The residents have also called for a quick solution to the situation which they said is causing other commodities to rise as it is an important ingredient.

One of the residents, Saida Kessy, told this paper that they are surprised to see that sugar prices have risen from the usual price of 3,000/- to 4,000/- within a short period of time,

Dodoma city residents decry high sugar prices

which threatens to raise prices of other commodities.

"We ask the government to intervene because sugar is a very important ingredient that is used a lot in our families, so this price increase is a big blow to low-income citizens," she said.

Mariam Ally, a food trader in the city,

said she used to buy one kilogramme of sugar for 3,000/- but today he was sold for 3,500/- which is a loss for his business.

"I am a food vendor, and sugar is an important ingredient which I must use daily, now the increase in the price of this product is threatening

my business, which I rely on to run my family," she said.

Likewise, he said he is asking the government through the relevant authorities to address the matter in order to rescue small scale businesses who rely on sugar for processing of their products for sale.

State drills four deep wells in Ludewa DC

By Guardian Correspondent, Ludewa

THE government has started drilling deep wells in four wards in Ludewa District, Njombe Region.

The idea is meant to address water woes facing thousands of people who have no access to the precious liquid in the district.

Eng. Jeremiah Maduhu, manager of the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (RUWASA) in Ludewa District made the remarks yesterday when speaking before the district security committee that visited and inspected implementation of the water projects in the district.

Maduhu said the idea of deciding to dig deep wells came immediately after realizing that there are some areas that have had challenges with access to water on the ground.

"Therefore, in this area, we've lacked sources of flow, that's why we came up with the idea of digging these deep wells, basically we did research in these four wells in each ward and the research report directed us that we should dig wells with a length of a certain meter," said Maduhu.

Ludewa District Commissioner, Victoria Mwanziwa said to solve the challenge of access to clean and safe water, President Samia Suluhu Hassan bought 26 emergency vehicles for drilling wells across the country.

"In other words, there are long-term and short-term projects, and one vehicle from Njombe region is here, and it's working in Manda ward to ensure that we get good water service," said Mwanziwa.

Manda ward councillor, Elfrida Kizota, said that drilling deep wells

will help the citizens overcome the challenge of following water in the lake.

"We say that in this exercise, President Samia has saved us a lot. She has saved us from searching for water for a long distance," said Kizota.

One of the Manda ward residents, Maura Komba said previously they were fetching water from the lake which is not safe for their health. "But, we thank the government for coming up with this idea of drilling deep wells."



Therefore, in this area, we've lacked sources of flow, that's why we came up with the idea of digging these deep wells, basically we did research in these four wells in each ward and the research report directed us that we should dig wells with a length of a certain meter



Hashim Omari (L), secretary of the CSO Community Heroes of Development and Social Welfare Tanzania, pictured in Shinyanga municipality on Tuesday exchanging greetings with Little English Medium School director Lucy Mfwele. He was at the school to brief the management on campaigns conducted by his agency. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

NGO plants over 1,000 trees in public bodies to restore environs

By Correspondent James Lanka, Moshi

KILIMANJARO-based non-government organisation (NGO) and other environmentalists planted over 1,000 trees in primary and secondary schools in Moshi municipality last year.

Daniel Mvungi, founder of Mongola

Environment and Conservation Group (MECG) unveiled this on Monday when launching the African Peace Garden in Majengo ward, Moshi municipality.

He said the idea is meant to restore degraded lands to combat desertification, promote sustainable biodiversity conservation and improve the livelihoods of local communities.

He said that the project also aims at creating awareness on the importance of environmental conservation for sustainable development

According to him, trees were planted in public institutions in Moshi Municipality between June and December last year.

"As you have seen today, we have

already participated in our tree planting project in some primary and secondary schools, for the sustainability of this project that will also help to protect Mt. Kilimanjaro's buffer zone," he said.

Mvungi said that apart from planting more trees in the future, they will also inaugurate a special traditional hut

at Majengo ward to promote Cultural tourism.

The environmentalist also said tree planting is for carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation, oil protection and restoration, water quality enhancement, and cycle regulation, climate regulation, air quality improvement, disaster risk

reduction, economic benefits and social and cultural benefits.

"By planting trees and restoring forests, we can effectively sequester carbon, reducing greenhouse gas emissions. As trees mature, they continue to store carbon, making reforestation an impactful strategy in combating climate impacts."

UVCCM calls on MPs to find ways of addressing unemployment hiccups

By Guardian Reporter, Zanzibar

CCM Youth Wing (UVCCM) secretary general Faki Rafiel Lulandala has asked Members of Parliament and those of the House of Representatives originating from the wing to use their leadership skills to find solutions to unemployment challenges.

He was speaking after receiving five motorbikes, 10 sewing machines and 12 bicycles donated by Special Seats Representative from UVCCM-South Unguja Region, Salhia Mwijuma and Member of Parliament for Uzini Constituency, Khamis Hamza Chilo.

He said UVCCM's priority is to find solutions to unemployment challenges facing youth in the community by creating a friendly environment for them to use the available opportunities to employ themselves.

Lulandala applauded the two leaders for donating the various items, noting the sewing machines will be given to youth in South Unguja Region to enable them generate income. He said the motorbikes will also help youth to start income generating activities.

"The items I have received including bicycles and motorcycles are meant for the young people in South Unguja Region. This is a sign of how you care

about the interests of the youth," said the SG.

He called on the officials entrusted with the equipment to take care of them and make sure they are used for the set targets. He said some motorbikes will be given to UVCCM officials to facilitate transportation services as they work for the people.

He added that the 60 years of the Zanzibar revolution should be used to evaluate development progress reached in the Isles.

He said residents should celebrate the anniversary by knowing that it is their responsibility to protect their country and the party.

Uzini Constituency Member of Parliament, Khamis Hamza said his office has also provided loans to young people to enable them to establish small businesses.

Meanwhile, Salhia Mwijuma, Special Seats Representative said the donated bicycles and motorcycles will facilitate transportation services for UVCCM officials especially when coordinating registration of voters in the permanent voter's registration book.

She also handed over 100 iron sheets and 20 cement bags to support construction of a residential house for the UVCCM Secretary in South Unguja Region.



Dodoma city's strategic CDA Road near Nyerere Square all but rendered impassable yesterday afternoon, with commuter buses scattered all over in a hunt for passengers. Photo: Correspondent Ibrahim Joseph

By Carlos Banda

ENVIRONMENTAL expert and conservationist Frank Abel, has underscored the need to address challenges of solid wastes disposal which have been detrimental to the environment, citing that most of the environmental conservation initiatives are limited to reforestation.

Speaking during an interview, Abel said although trees have been perceived to be the most affected during environmental degradation, initiators of environmental conservation have been missing out on other vital factors that are dangerous to the environment.

"Why do so many people talk about planting trees when it comes to environmental conservation? It is because trees have been the most affected for many years. Many people especially in developing countries lack the focus on other forms of wastes like solid wastes and electronic wastes. Those who advocate planting trees are correct but it is not the only solution

Expert: Environ protection is more than planting trees

when it comes to protecting the environment," said Abel.

He added: "When dealing with environmental conservation, there are a lot of issues. This is why it is paramount to have more awareness building programmes, publications and studies for people to read and understand the scope of environmental protection. For instance, in Dar es Salaam and other regions, solid waste management is a big problem, hence, there is a need to clearly educate the public on what it takes to conserve the environment."

He suggested that measures to ensure environmental conservation should be carried out using domestic resources, utilizing various platforms such as school lessons, lectures, professional

meetings, training sessions, seminars, workshops, religious and political gatherings.

According to Abel, it is important to make people proactive in controlling environmental degradation, mitigating its impacts and building resilience to extreme weather events.

Abel advised the government to look at possibilities to ensure clean cooking energy sources are made available at affordable prices for low-income earners in rural vicinities to access them.

He said allowing rural dwellers to access and use clean energy for cooking, support's the government's efforts in fighting against climate change. "The government's commitment to enable Tanzanians

to transform dirty to clean energy sources is a commendable step toward addressing climate change. The transformation must be approached with a holistic perspective that considers the livelihoods of those depending on charcoal while making clean cooking energy accessible to low-income families," he said.

In her end of the year remarks, President Sami Suluhu Hassan highlighted the government's commitment and focus to mitigate climate change effects by stopping the use of charcoal and wood and advancing the absolute use of clean cooking energy solutions where she cited that the goal is to ensure 80 percent of Tanzanian households use clean cooking energy in 2024.

World Bank forecasts a 2.5pct increase in remittances in SSA

By Special Correspondent

FOLLOWING a year of increased remittance flow in sub-Saharan Africa, the World Bank anticipates further growth this year. Nevertheless, challenges and issues requiring attention accompany this projection.

In its latest Migration and Development Brief titled Remittances Brave Global Headwinds with a Special Focus on Climate Migration, the World Bank projects a 2.5 percent growth in remittance flows to Nigeria, Ghana, and other sub-Saharan African countries this year. Remittance flows to the region are anticipated to have risen by approximately 1.9 percent in 2023, reaching \$54 billion. Notably, remitting \$200 to sub-Saharan Africa incurred an average cost of 7.9 percent in the second quarter.

Nigeria, as the largest remittance recipient in the region, is expected to receive over \$20 billion in official remittances by the end of 2023, marking a slight increase compared to the previous year. Remittances to Nigeria, constituting 38 percent of the region's total, grew by about 2 percent, while Ghana experienced estimated gains of 5.6 percent. The growth trend extended to other nations, including Mozambique (48.5 percent), Rwanda (16.8 percent), Ethiopia (16 percent), and Kenya (3.8 percent).

Despite the 3.8 percent growth in remittances to low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) in 2023, a moderation from previous years, the World Bank expresses concern about the potential decline in real income for migrants due to global inflation and low growth prospects. Remittance flows to LMICs, estimated at \$669 billion, have been resilient, supported by stable labour markets in advanced economies and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

However, the World Bank forecasts a further softening in the growth of remittances to LMICs to 3.1 percent, driven by slowing economic growth and weaker job markets in high-income countries. Additional risks include volatile oil prices, currency exchange rate fluctuations, and the possibility of a deeper-than-expected economic downturn in high-income nations.

Iffath Sharif, Global Director of the Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice at the World Bank, emphasizes in a statement the importance of inclusive labor markets and social protection policies for migrants, whose remittances act as a vital lifeline for developing countries.

"During crises, migrants have weathered risks and shown resilience to support families back home. But high inflation and subdued global growth is affecting how much money they can send," notes Sharif.

The Remittances Prices Worldwide

Database reveals persistently high remittance costs, averaging 6.2 percent to send \$200 in the second quarter. Banks remain the costliest channel for remittances (12.1 percent), followed by post offices (7 percent), money transfer operators (5.3 percent), and mobile operators (4.1 percent).

Dilip Ratha, lead economist and lead author of the report, advocates leveraging remittances for private capital mobilization to support development finance, particularly through diaspora bonds. Ratha explains that "remittance flows to developing countries have surpassed the sum of foreign direct investment and official development assistance in recent years, and the gap is increasing".

Nigerian investor Moses Adeolubodun views this development as a positive signal for investment opportunities within the region.

"I believe that this upward trajectory is a testament to the resilience and potential of these economies. The growth further signifies a positive economic outlook, and as an investor, I see promising opportunities for strategic investments," said Adeolubodun.

Although acknowledging the challenges highlighted by the World Bank, Adeolubodun remains confident in the long-term potential of sub-Saharan Africa, emphasizing the importance of diversified investment portfolios to navigate economic uncertainties.

"Fostering an environment conducive to remittance growth is essential for sustainable economic development. This is an opportunity for governments and businesses in sub-Saharan Africa to explore innovative solutions that attract foreign investments and support economic growth," says Adeolubodun.



I believe that this upward trajectory is a testament to the resilience and potential of these economies. The growth further signifies a positive economic outlook, and as an investor, I see promising opportunities for strategic investments



EYESORE: A view of Dar es Salaam's all-important Temeke Stereo mixed-goods market, for decades a confirmed crowd-puller, as captured yesterday shortly after a light rain in parts of the city. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala

African farmers must stop relying on maize, climate researchers warn

By Mark Holloway

MAIZE is a staple crop across the region where it is grown and consumed in vast quantities.

Led by Dr Stewart Jennings from the University of Leeds, the study argues that diversification towards fruits, vegetables and crops such as cassava, millet and sorghum will improve nutrition security in the region, with people getting sufficient micronutrients essential for good health.

The study also says the quantity of food produced must increase - and unless yields are boosted to an unprecedented level, more land will have to be brought into agricultural production.

Sub-Saharan Africa is home to around 1.2 billion people, and according to figures from the World Bank, the population will grow by an additional 740 million people by 2050.

Farmers will have to boost the amount of food grown at a time

when climate change will result in increasingly extreme conditions, affecting what crops can be grown.

The researchers say the population is at risk of "food and nutrition insecurity" unless effective ways of adapting to climate change are identified. Integral to any decisions is a requirement that crops need to be nutritious and provide sufficient energy for the population.

Prof Jennie Macdiarmid, from the Rowett Institute at the University of

Aberdeen and one of the authors of the paper, said: "The study has highlighted the need to place nutrition at the heart of agricultural policy to avoid the long-term unintended consequence of failing to produce food that can deliver the nutritional needs of the population.

"If policy solutions focus only on increasing production of calories and adapting to be climate smart, it is likely there will be negative consequences for health through nutritionally poor diets."

Refugees turn trash into treasure at the Dukwi Camp in Botswana

GABORONE

AT Dukwi Refugee Camp, located about 550 km northeast of Gaborone, the capital of Botswana, some women have transformed discarded materials into exquisite items.

Evert Mabela, a 44-year-old from North Kivu, a province in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), rises before dawn with her colleagues to begin their daily routine of scavenging discarded materials. The materials, including old newspapers, plastics and cardboard boxes retrieved from the garbage dumps at Dukwi Refugee Camp, were transformed into various items and sold to generate incomes.

Among the estimated 430 Congolese refugees residing at the camp, Mabela has endured immense hardships, losing her home, relatives and livelihood due to the war in her native country. However, she remains resolute in her determination to make a positive impact on her community and environment.

"I refuse to lose hope and am determined to create a positive impact on my community and the environment," she said. Mabela is confident that with Botswana's commitment to refugee protection, she will succeed.

"We craft a variety of decorative items from old newspapers, discarded plastics and cardboard boxes," Mabela explained, emphasizing that their initiative not only generates income but also contributes to keeping the environs of Dukwi Refugee Camp clean.

Their crafted artifacts, ranging from photo frames and flower pots to table decorations and pen holders, often bear a price tag between 5 and 20 U.S. dollars. Mabela acknowledges that their products may lack perfection

as they are still mastering the craft but emphasizes their commitment to environmental cleanliness and income generation.

Since its inception in April 2023, the project has attracted around 30 female refugees from diverse nationalities at Dukwi Refugee Camp, all devoted to turning trash into treasure.

"Our project has gradually gained attention in the area, surprising many who couldn't believe that discarded materials could be transformed into something beautiful," said Namco Bool, a 30-year-old refugee from Somalia.

Bool said the women not only sell their creations in Francistown, Botswana's second-largest city situated 80 km west of the refugee camp, but also participate in various exhibition shows and markets.

According to Bool and Mabela, the sales yield about 1,000 dollars per month for the refugee camp.

The revenue generated by these women helps fill the financial gap resulting from dwindling monetary support from the international community, said Machana Ronald Shamukuni, Botswana's minister of justice.

Noting the significance of this project, Shamukuni said, "Firstly, it breathes new life into discarded materials, particularly old newspapers and plastic items. Secondly, it provides a means of income for suffering refugees who may have limited employment options and rely solely on food rations."

Established in 1978, Dukwi Refugee Camp is now home to at least 725 refugees, according to the latest figures from Botswana's Ministry of Justice. Shamukuni affirmed Botswana's commitment to ensuring refugee protection and sanctuary, vowing to employ all available resources for this cause.

Land governance critical to the AfCTA realization, say experts

By Special Correspondent, Addis Ababa

LAND governance regulating access, use and ownership of land is critical to the successful implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCTA) and is needed to promote inclusive and sustainable development, experts at an African land policy conference heard.

Leontine Kanziemo, the Africa Development Bank's advisor on Natural Resources Management, told the opening session of the recent conference on Land Policy in Africa in Addis Ababa.

She said that improved land governance was essential to protect vulnerable groups, including women, as agricultural trade expands in a pan-African market.

"Expansion of intra-African trade and the resulting demand for goods such as agricultural goods will affect land systems including land value and sustainability, increasing large-scale land acquisitions by public and private actors, and insecurity of land tenure for women, youth, pastoralists, and other vulnerable groups," she told the conference.

Therefore, the issue of good land governance is critical for the successful implementation of AfCTA and to support the promotion of gender equality, the development of resilient infrastructure and communities, and ensuring even development within countries, she said.

"A successful continent-wide market for goods and services, business and investment, represents a major opportunity for African countries to boost growth, reduce poverty, and broaden economic inclusion," Kanziemo said, speaking on behalf of Dr Vanessa Ushie, Acting Director of the Bank's Africa Natural Resources Management and Investment Center.

Under the theme "Promoting Sustainable Land Governance in Africa for Accelerating Implementation of the AfCTA", the conference brought together technical experts from across the continent to explore the land governance issue in relation to its impact on AfCTA.

The implementation of AfCTA has already started to smooth intra-continental trade through the harmonization of customs management, transport facilitation, trade and project finance, and institutional development, delegates heard.

However, inadequate governance of land and land-based natural resources has suppressed growth and negatively impacted industrialization and job creation and increased inequalities, Kanziemo said.

She called on governments to continue to invest in supporting women farmers in line with the 2016 Africa Union campaign to allocate 30 percent documented allocation of land to African women by 2025 for Africa's economic transformation.

She told the meeting that the African Development Bank will continue to ensure that all its regional member countries prioritize land policies in their national development and policy frameworks and continue building the capacity of national land institutions and supporting inclusive land tenure rights in order to deliver country poverty reduction programs.

Dr Robert Lisinge, Acting Director of the Private Sector Development and Finance Division at the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) said African citizens need to maximize benefits from their land and its resources by taking advantage of enhanced trade under AfCTA to boost sustainable development and environmental stewardship.

"AfCTA holds the potential to lift 30 million people out of extreme poverty and boost Africa's income by USD 450 billion while connecting 1.3 billion people," Lisinge said.

Sound land governance systems are essential to ensuring youth, women, communities, and the private sector can benefit from the free trade area, he said.

"Good land governance promotes secure access to land and creates an enabling environment for investments that are key to unlocking the productive capacities of Africa. Good land governance will support agro-industrial parks, infrastructure and renewable energy, all needed ingredients for industrialization and trade," Lisinge told the conference.

Josefa Sacko, AU Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment also highlighted the link between land policies and regional economic integration.

"AfCTA presents a transformative opportunity for intra-African trade, industrialization, and economic growth, and coherent land governance is fundamental to realizing its full potential," Sacko said.



Amani Kwanza Institute president Dr George Wilson (in blue shirt) shows an outstanding leadership certificate the institute, which conducts education courses on security and patriotism in collaboration with various defence and security agencies, awarded to him in Dar es Salaam on Tuesday. He is with AKI vice president Alex Mnyang'ombe (R) and secretary general Netho Ndilito. Photo: Correspondent Imani Nathaniel

KAMPALA

Ugandan helicopter gunship crashes into house in Ntoroko

A MILITARY helicopter gunship met a devastating end as it crashed into a residential house western Ntoroko district of Uganda.

The event, which occurred near the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo on Tuesday, claimed the lives of the entire helicopter crew and an individual who happened to be in the house at the time of the crash, according to Brigadier General Felix Kulayigye, the spokesperson for the Ugandan army.

The abrupt and fatal collision has left the community in shock, prompting urgent investigations into the circumstances surrounding this tragic accident.

The implications of this unforeseen disaster are likely to resonate beyond

the immediate vicinity, raising questions about the safety protocols and operational factors that may have contributed to the untimely demise of the military aircraft.

The Ugandan army has been conducting airstrikes against the

Islamic State-linked Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) militants, who have carried out several attacks in Ntoroko.

President Yoweri Museveni has called for the activation of paramilitary local defence units to support the army in fighting the militants.



In marking the advent of Year 2024, Shinyanga Water Supply and Sanitation Authority employees (in T-shirts) gift needy residents of Shinyanga municipality foodstuffs, washing soap and various other items. Photo: Correspondent Marco Maduhu

Rwanda's mountain gorillas: A conservation success story

By Afolake Oyinloye

RWANDA'S mountain gorilla population is making a remarkable recovery after decades of facing threats from humans. Once endangered due to poaching, armed conflicts, and diseases, the primates are now flourishing thanks to dedicated conservation efforts.

In the heart of the Virunga Mountain range, rangers guide a group through the rainforest, seeking one of the world's most endangered species:

the mountain gorilla. Despite the challenging weather, the group presses on, guided by Patience Dusabimana, an experienced gorilla guide.

Dusabimana shares valuable insights on interacting with these majestic creatures. He warns, "If you hear any silverback doing the 'ah'... you have to pay attention. If he coughs, he doesn't want you to approach; he wants you to move back."

Deep into the forest, the group spots the gorillas, and Dusabimana, who has been working with this family for two

decades, expresses his astonishment at their close relation to humans. Despite being genetically similar, these gorillas faced threats from poachers and conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In 2008, the IUCN estimated only 680 individual mountain gorillas left in the wild. However, recent efforts have seen a positive turn. "For the census we did in 2018, there were 1,063 mountain gorillas. The population is growing, it's coming up," notes Dusabimana.

Conservation initiatives, including

anti-poaching patrols and the removal of snares, have contributed to the thriving gorilla population. The last gorilla poaching incident in Rwanda occurred in 2002, marking a significant milestone in conservation success.

As the gorilla family enjoys a peaceful meal, Dusabimana explains their need for breaks and socializing. He emphasizes the importance of these conservation efforts in ensuring the survival of these creatures, who inhabit areas surrounded by heavily cultivated land, presenting ongoing risks.

While challenges persist, there's hope that these majestic mountain gorillas will continue to thrive in the forests for generations to come, showcasing the success story of Rwanda's commitment to conservation.

THURSDAY 4 JANUARY, 2024

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Climate-smart drive boosts mining sector

ORGANISATIONS are being formed to conduct climate adaptation at a micro level, with artisanal mining a vital latching point.

The move involves the cutting of trees for various purposes and using chemicals to wash the ore to obtain gold - in turn, seeing the miners poisoning their own bodies, polluting rivers, etc.

Whether indeed the issue in artisanal mining is to be climate-smart or simply smart is a different matter, as climate smart will require a few tools or techniques - for instance, the use of auxiliary materials instead of firewood as applies in tobacco 'curing'.

Smart mining is a technological and credit issue, an uplift of the scale and mode of using labour or techniques most efficiently and effectively.

Artisanal miners definitely need to be better equipped with understanding on how to conduct climate-smart mining.

This is the kind that minimises the environmental and climate footprint and helps to ensure that miners manage natural resources in a sustainable manner.

Partners in the project range from climate-specific organisations to gender activist networks, and this spells some difficulties in actually devising workable strategies and setting out ways of achieving it. It is a debate involving variable parameters, with the project likely to bring about experiences to clarify on the issues.

The movers of the particular project talked of research conducted by the Women Action Towards Economic Development (WATED) in Geita District.

They indicated that deforestation is a major challenge facing small-scale mining, which implies that the need to rely on the method is quite a challenge.

Yet, if other energy sources are too expensive or there is no infrastructure for a smooth enough shift, no change will take place - and hence the need for NGOs to form an operational alliance and work to change things.

Harvesting the hyacinth weed for manufacturing is bright prospect

WATCHERS of how youth innovation is being deployed in countering climatic and employment pressures will take heart from reports that some novel formulas are being tried in Kisumu, a city on the Kenyan side of the Lake Victoria shoreline.

A recent write-up quoted in the regional media says that the world's largest tropical and second-largest freshwater lake offered fish aplenty for consumption and, in recent decades, a fish fillet processing industry has developed as a new export item - chiefly to Europe.

The narrative was noticeably set in the past tense, suggesting that most of the 'wealth' is gone.

The lake is still a major source of income for local fishers even if climate change may have eaten up much of the amateur fishing of old that even schoolboys could do with some amusement.

This explanation has to do with the start and spreading out of an intrusive weed, the water hyacinth plant, which casts a suffocating green cloak across much of the edges of the lake.

While the weed clothes the basically blue lake into a field of green on a breadth of its surface, the beauty of that immense green carpet is deceptive.

One thing about the plant's survival rate is that it has no consumers gobbling it up the way swarms of insects often come into green grasses or crops.

Sturdy plant species being noticed in conservation areas, or on the edges or drainage canals of well-built city roads, are resilient to negative conditions and are avoided by plant-eating species as

It is also an indication that activist groups are branching into more practical issues than merely gender equality or domestic violence, and are thus working to change realities in artisanal mining where women lie in peculiar situation and form a specific agenda, meanwhile as the wider environmental or climatic issues figure in as well.

It is not clear if the lessons offered by a range of civil society organisations (CSOs) and even colleges on appropriate ways of mining that protect the environment can actually alter the situation as they aren't envisaging a technical uplift since most don't have modern mining equipment.

Other than the focus on environment, the project designers examined the barriers small miners commonly encounter in seeking loans, without an explicit objective of changing the capital mode or land ownership context that opens bank doors. Instead the focus was to set out "potential strategies for a just and sustainable transformation".

What is pursued here has to do less with mining technology than with mining conditions, especially for women, with studies having shown that women in small-scale mining are among the most vulnerable groups to climate change.

This is more so in relation to rising extreme weather events like floods and droughts, which call for specific adaptation measures bringing about issues of links between artisanal mining and agriculture.

It is to suggest that the women are artisanal miners on the one hand and producers of food in their households on the other.

Small-scale mining is commonly seen in terms of justice or equity, in gender terms, compelling comparison with male artisanal miners.

It often considers the higher resilience of men to climatic or environmental threats for the simple reason that men may have a typically "lighter" time handling household chores.

they have little or no trace of sugar.

They absorb compounds which edible plants can't use, and the product is fibre-like, which youths in Kisumu are reportedly beginning to harvest as an industrial raw material for the making of baskets, bags and printing paper.

It is reported that thanks to the absence of natural predators for the weed, supportive temperature levels and thermal variations inside the water, the weed has thrived - and is spreading - by gorging on open space.

The result is the cutting-off of fishing routes and the creation of an environment facilitating the survival and spread for mosquitoes.

For years governments in the region have been at a loss as to how to tackle the pervasive floating weed, worried about the threat it posed to the sustainability of economic activities and welfare generally, but a window is being opened.

Physical methods deployed to remove the weeds, including employing harvesters, faced challenges, especially when herbicides were part of that arsenal.

An inventive biological method fronted by energy technology firm Biogas International seems more reliable, especially in that it can absorb almost as much water weed as could be produced - on the shores of Lake Victoria or Lake Jipe along the Kenyan border on the southward reaches of Mount Kilimanjaro.

With the invention of a machine that converts waste like the water hyacinth into biogas, as a cleaner alternative for cooking fuel, the sky is the limit. This is closely aligned with the women's network for clean fuel - and is worth supporting.

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Hints for journalists assessing a past year and planning for the one ahead

By Elna Schütz

BEFORE I transitioned to freelancing, I used to love end-of-the-year strategy sessions. Sure, most people in a typical workplace may be bored by the icebreaker. I, however, found clarity in assessing the past year and encouragement in planning for the future.

When I began my freelancing career, I held solo planning meetings and found that they set the tone for my whole year. Since not everyone makes spreadsheets and worksheets for fun, I began inviting my freelancer friends to my annual sessions, which is now known as the "Annual General Meeting of Freelancers (AGM)" and is proudly in its third year.

Here are some lessons I learned from these AGMs that journalists can benefit from, regardless of their position:

One: Put on your management hat. One of the crucial lessons you tend to learn as a freelancer is that, unlike in a typical corporate role, you are in charge of everything. That means that you get to do all the wonderful work on the ground, but also that you carry the responsibility of strategising and managing.

One of the tricks is not just recognizing that you are both the worker and the manager but finding appropriate times to take on each role to function effectively.

For instance, deciding in the middle of a busy, tiring workday whether you should pivot your entire work skillset or diversify your income mix is not particularly fruitful.

Year-end strategies are a chance for the worker in you to sit back and put on the management hat. That means dreaming big and tapping into what you want to do next.

However, it also means being honest and strategic about your weaknesses and things that hold you back. So, take this seriously.

Personally, I like to do my AGM on a quiet afternoon at a coffee shop, away from any deadlines, to make myself focus on it fully.

Two: Face the feedback facts. The kind of strategy you use to review your year doesn't matter, as long as you do it honestly and vulnerably. Very often we try to build what we should do next based on deep but slightly vague feelings, like "another job would make everything better" or "I don't make enough money as a freelancer".

Though it can be painful, it is necessary to take time and genuinely work through what happened in the last year. You could advisedly make a



monthly breakdown or a list of stories or clients.

Try to consider what kind of work you did, both in medium and in content. If you have a variable income, it can be helpful to use your finances as a tracker to give some idea of how the year flowed.

I also recommend looking at your work environment as a key area to review. Did you like how much you worked, where you worked and in what rhythm? How are your networks and support structures? Are changes possible?

All of this can come together to give you a much better understanding of what actually happened during the year.

Three: It is okay to be intimidated by your dreams. I remember looking around the table after my first group AGM. Once everyone was done strategising alone, there was a sense of heaviness and anxiety. Eventually, someone admitted: "Now that I know what my goals are, I feel like I have something to lose." Everyone agreed, even though their dreams were quite different.

I happen to think that the fear of failing can mean that you have touched on the exact nerve of where you should be heading. One of the strategies I have found to work well in this regard is a three-step exercise inspired by freelance reporter Rebecca L Weber.

First, focus on just your desires, needs and wants. Sit with them before jumping ahead. Do you need to make

more money so that you can afford to support your family? Do you deeply crave more creative or artistic work? Or, is your big desire to leave a toxic workspace?

Once you've let yourself sit with these feelings for a moment, turn your desires into goals. Try to identify these goals as something you could recognize if they happen.

For instance, if you are a freelancer wanting to do more of a specific type of work, the metric may look like onboarding a new client in that medium or having two projects of a certain type in a quarter.

Now that you've quantified it, make it practical. Think of actionable items, like contacting someone who could guide you on your next step, putting a new system into place or enrolling in a training that could get you started towards that goal. Be as particular and detailed with your list as is helpful to you.

Four: Leave next year's you with something. The secret to new-year planning is that it's just half the story. Whenever I do this kind of facilitation for clients, I emphasize that having a great discussion is not enough. It's the subsequent one or two-page summary of plans and action steps that make a difference.

I personally like writing these down as a set of resolutions or standards - rather than as prescriptive instructions. For instance, I once had the goal of cutting down on the kind of work that took a large amount of time but that

brought me neither much pleasure nor significant income.

The best practice I decided on was to not accept any writing under a certain rate, trusting that better work would come along.

This came into play on a random, stress-filled day when I was low on self-esteem, and I had to stick to my guns and turn down work. Without that simple idea in my head, I would likely have been bogged down in a tedious and unfulfilling project. I didn't regret my decision.

Whatever it looks like for you, leave yourself with something like this to start the year on. This also does wonders in terms of putting the previous year to rest, if you are taking a holiday break.

Five: Say hurray! Lastly, no matter what kind of year you have had or what may come in the following one, I very seriously urge you to celebrate. Say 'cheers' to something that you are proud of, whether it is a story you loved, a risk you took, or that you held strong under pressure.

End your personal feedback by reminding yourself that you, as a worker and a strategist, are doing a very decent job and will hopefully have a great year ahead.

* A dispatch by the International Journalists' Network (IJNet), a project of the Washington-based International Centre for Journalists. Elna Schütz is a South African freelance journalist working in podcasting, writing, radio and more.

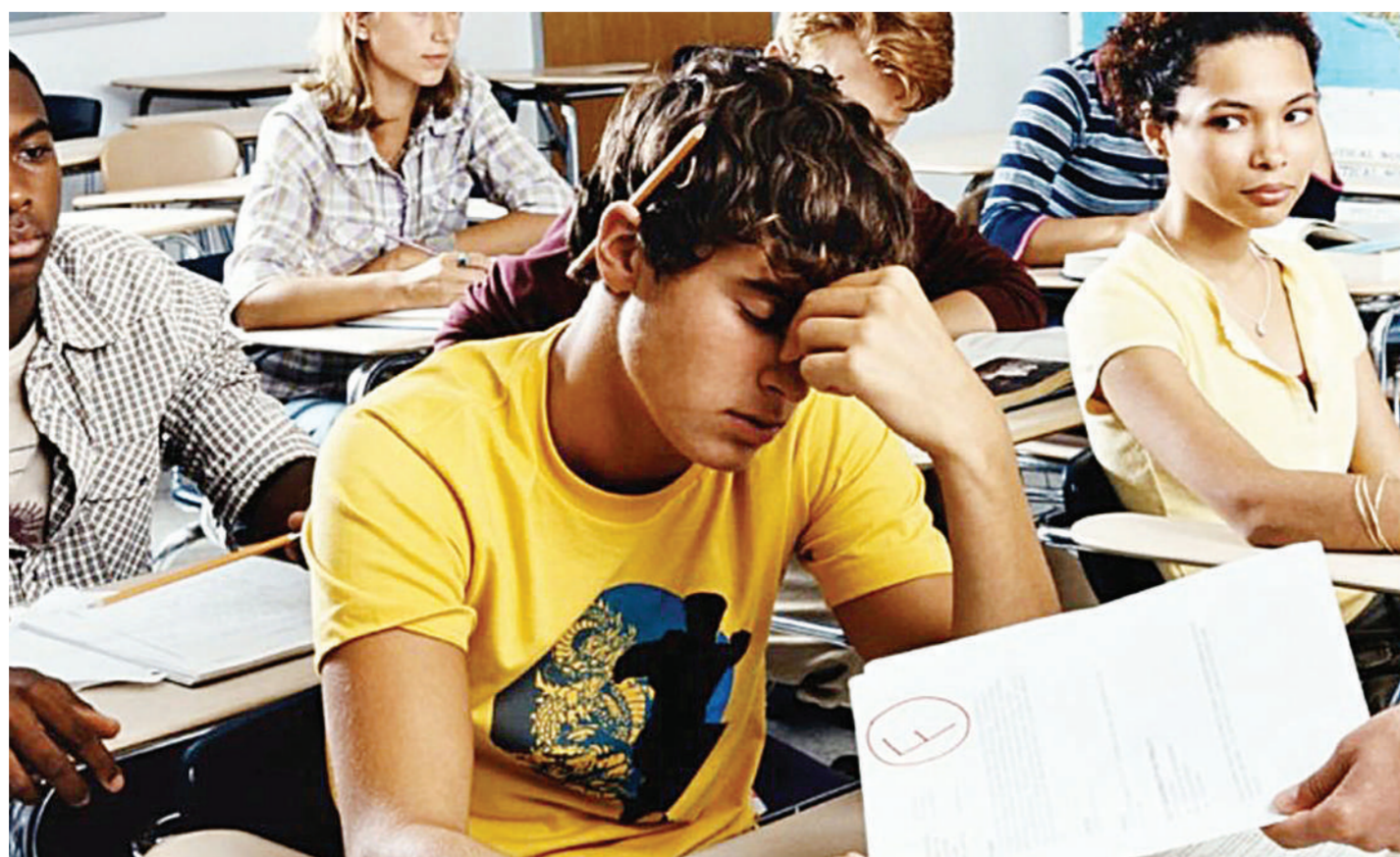
The case for good grades and not positions held in class after exams

After learners have written their examinations, what people wait for is results. This is like harvesting season which can have motivating or discouraging effect. For decades, it has been a custom for parents to consider positions held in class as a way of judging the progress of their children.

It is not wrong to consider position held in class as it is the easiest way to determine the best learner but in a class not one learner is expected to excel. There is a possibility of the whole class passing the examination but if we want to know the first one we can find them.

Parents are normally divided into two groups: those looking for positions and those looking for grades. Teachers find themselves in hard times to convince those who consider positions that their children have performed well. The recourse here is using grades. A learner can post a good position but poor grade. This cannot mean success in education. Also, a learner can have a discouraging position but good grades and this cannot mean failure.

It is parents' understanding and objectives that can help teachers in explaining the results. There are parents who really look for progress and not just positions. They point out some areas where they wish to see progress. Even if the positions are good, they are not satisfied unless they are much convinced that their children have mastered certain skills. These are the parents who know that success in life does



CLASSROOM MATTERS
By Thomas Lyimo
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not depend on certificates but skills.

For the transition from valuing positions to embrac-

ing grades to be successful, teachers need to prepare well before meeting parents when the agenda is examination re-

sults. The change in perspective begins with the ability of teachers to show the real progress in education by using

evidence. Normally, an ideology is erased by using another ideology.

Teachers should consider

meetings for provision of result as crucial ones which may or may not change the perspectives of parents towards position. The task of changing the perspectives that someone has held for many years is probably the hardest one. Statistics help in convincing parents that their children are doing well. Teachers should allow statistics to speak for themselves. Too much explanation without data may be boring. An emphasis on considering grades and not position is important in the following ways:

Firstly, the use of grades enables self-competition. There are some thinkers who believe and hold that before an individual competes with others, they need first to compete with themselves. They should set targets to improve their previous performance.

Teachers and parents need to recognize any kind of improvement in academics so as to encourage learners to keep on studying. Learning is a tussle which needs motivation for someone to keep on working hard. What is important is progress and not position because failure of others may cause someone to possess a good position even if their marks are below the standards. Therefore, a kind of evaluation which can show real progress is that of using grades and not positions.

Secondly, learners are of different abilities and hence administering justice can easily be done using grades rather than positions. It is not compulsory for someone to be the first in class for them to be successful. Teachers are not paid to teach a single learner but many. This means that many learners are expected to excel in.

The issue of position is only for identification but not for qualification. If someone uses positions

in justifying excellence in studies, they may discourage other learners. Evaluation using grades show the reality than position. It is very important for teachers and parents to put much focus on grades as it leads to academic improvement. Positions are hidden unless you can see the grades but grades are realistic and hence possible to evaluate.

Thirdly, the use of grades helps to show success and failure in education. It is not easy to determine success or failure in education by using positions without grades. In education system there are standards which have been set by using grades. Therefore, if learners are used to grades rather than positions, they may be in a good position to prepare for final examinations which may take them from one level to another.

Fourthly, grades are used to show or determine divisions or GPAs in education system. What learners are exposed to in the beginning should be similar to what they will meet in the final evaluation. A learner won't pass the final examination because of the position which they used to hold in the past but due to final grades which they score. For any positive and focused parent, the emphasis should be on grades and not position. The learner may drop in terms of position but rise in terms of grades.

For any examination there must be the first and the last but all can post a pass. We better consider grader than positions. Positions may discourage parents and some learners. We need to produce individuals who are capable of doing what is needed. Positions are used for categorization but grades show us the real performance. Teachers should embrace grades and parents should value the same.

By Correspondent Daniel Semberya

Reproductive health education billed to end unsafe abortions

GOOD sexual and reproductive health is one of the health challenges facing developing countries including Tanzania. Experts define it as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being in all matters relating to the reproductive system. This implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life, the capability to reproduce, and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so.

But to maintain one's sexual and reproductive health, people need access to accurate information and the safe, effective, affordable and acceptable contraception method of their choice. People of reproductive age must be informed and empowered to protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections and when they decide to have children, women must have access to services that can help them have safe pregnancy, safe delivery and healthy baby.

Binti Makini Foundation and Binti Salha Foundation have joined hands to raise awareness and movement building through safe reproductive health (SRH) to 500 higher learning institution students against stigma around access to Comprehensive Sexual Education (CSE) and contraception services.

Speaking during a safe reproductive health session to students of the National Institute of Transport (NIT) in Dar es Salaam recently, Binti Makini Foundation Founder and Executive Director Janeth John said that through the project entitled 'You can' the organization uses 'University Caravan' to educate on friendly campus environment for students and access to SRH information.

She said that through their project, they have been able to increase knowledge and stigma reduction around CSE and contraception among participants.

"Movement building among university students provided friendly SRH services to youth without stigma," she said.

John noted that so far, they have succeeded to reach around 500 students from five higher learning institutions, namely Water Institute, Social Welfare Institute, NIT, Dar es Salaam University College of Education (DUCE) and the Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS).

"In each institution we managed to reach around 100 students, meaning for the five high learning institutions, we



have reached 500 students," she said.

John further noted that through the project which is being funded by WGNRR -Africa, they are looking forward to reducing the impacts of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections as well as reducing unexpected pregnancies at colleges.

"So, we encourage the youth to access the right information about safe reproductive practices from health centres present in their colleges without stigma" she said.

"Many youth stopped going to seek the right information about SRH over bad language and stigmatisation from some health providers."

The project further targeted to reach decision-makers, students' organizations and offices of dean of students so as to urge them to put more emphasis on this issue.

However, she said that one of the major challenges is that many parents do not tell their adolescent children the truth about reproductive health, especially

when they go to higher learning institutions.

However, without a miss, parents and guardians always insist that such students should study hard while knowing the environment in college gives them the freedom to do whatever they want and at the end they find themselves messing up.

John noted that some of college students get unwanted pregnancies over lack of proper knowledge of reproductive health. And as a result, some of these girls have reportedly died after resorting to backstreet unsafe abortion.

Dotto Yotham who works with Binti Makini Foundation said that stigma is a complex process that often leads to social and economic exclusion of young people in accessing information and services.

"Higher learning institutions are settings where young people live freely during their transition into adulthood," she said.

"They are settings where young people are supposed to get necessary information regarding their sexuality and reproduction."

But due to stigma constructed by social norms, traditional and religious beliefs, young people are being denied comprehensive sexuality education, contraceptives and services in school and higher learning institutions, she said.

Stigmatizing attitudes of teachers and healthcare providers lead young people to seek information and services from unreliable sources which expose them to so many issues affecting their health such as STIs and STDs, unwanted pregnancy hence unsafe abortion.

Countering stigma by deconstructing negative narrative, myths and misinformation around safe reproductive health right of young people is critical to creating an enabling environment where young people fulfill their sexual and reproductive rights while on campus.

Dorice Achadi, NIT Students Organization vice president commended Binti Makini Foundation and Binti Salha Foundation for education students on safe reproductive health.

She said that awareness students received will be of great help to students, especially girls who used to resort to unsafe abortion to stop because they are endangering their lives.

Mary Joachim, a student at NIT also concurred with fellow students by commending Binti Makini and co-foundation, saying that their awareness on safe reproductive health has been an eye opener.

Was going to space a good idea?

By Alice Gorman

IN 1963, six years after the first satellite was launched, editors from the Encyclopaedia Britannica posed a question to five eminent thinkers of the day: "Has man's conquest of space increased or diminished his stature?" The respondents were philosopher Hannah Arendt, writer Aldous Huxley, theologian Paul Tillich, nuclear scientist Harrison Brown and historian Herbert J. Muller.

Sixty years later, as the rush to space accelerates, what can we learn from these 20th-century luminaries writing at the dawn of the space age?

The state of space 60 years on
Much has happened since. Spacecraft have landed on planets, moons, comets and asteroids across the Solar System. The two Voyager deep space probes, launched in 1977, are in interstellar space.

A handful of people are living in two Earth-orbiting space stations. Humans are getting ready to return to the Moon after more than 50 years, this time to establish a permanent base and mine the deep ice lakes at the south pole.

There were only 57 satellites in Earth orbit in 1963. Now there are around 10,000, with tens of thousands more planned. Satellite services are part of everyday life; weather prediction, farming, transport, banking, disaster management, and much more, all rely on satellite data. Despite these tremendous changes, Arendt, Huxley and Tillich, in particular, have some illuminating insights.

A brave new world

Huxley is famous for his 1932 dystopian science fiction novel *Brave New World*, and his experimental use of psychedelics.

In his essay, he questioned who this "man" who had conquered space was, noting it was not humans as a species but Western urban-industrial society that had sent emissaries into space. This has not changed. The 1967 Outer Space Treaty says space is the province of all humanity, but in reality, it's dominated by a few wealthy nations and individuals.

Huxley said the notion of "stature" assumed humans had a special and different status to other living beings. Given the immensity of space, talking of conquest was, in his opinion, "a trifle silly".

Tillich was a theologian who fled Nazi Germany before the second world war. In his essay, he wrote about how seeing Earth from outside allowed us to "demythologise" our planet.

In contrast to the much-discussed "overview effect" which inspires astronauts with a feeling of almost mystical awe, Tillich argued that the view from space made Earth a "large material body to be looked at and considered as totally calculable".

When spacecraft began imaging the lunar surface in the 1960s, the process of calculation started for the Moon. Now, its minerals are being evaluated as commodities for human use.

Have humans changed, or is it how we view earth?

Like Tillich, Arendt left Germany un-



Astronaut Bruce McCandless II, mission specialist, participates in a spacewalk a few meters away from the cabin of the space shuttle Challenger on Feb. 7, 1984. Image: NASA

der the shadow of Nazism in 1933. She's best remembered for her studies of totalitarian states and for coining the term "the banality of evil". Her essay explored the relationship between science and the human senses. It's a dense and complex piece; almost every time I read it, I come away with something different.

In the early 20th century, Einstein's theory of special relativity and quantum mechanics showed us a reality far beyond the ability of our senses to comprehend. Arendt said it was absurd to think such a cosmos could be "conquered". Instead, "we have come to our present capacity to 'conquer space' through our new ability to handle nature from a point in the universe outside the earth".

The new geocentrism

The short human lifespan and the

impossibility of moving faster than the speed of light mean humans are unlikely to travel beyond the Solar System. There is a limit to our current expansion into space.

When that limit is reached, said Arendt, "the new world view that may conceivably grow out of it is likely to be once more geocentric and anthropomorphic, although not in the old sense of the earth being the center of the universe and of man being the highest being there is". Humans would turn back to Earth to make meaning of their existence, and cease to dream of the stars.

This new geocentrism may be exacerbated by an environmental problem already emerging from the rapid growth of satellite megaconstellations. The light they reflect is obscuring the view of the night sky, cutting our senses off from the

larger cosmos.

The far future

But what if it were technologically possible for humans to expand into the galaxy?

Arendt said assessing humanity from a position outside Earth would reduce the scale of human culture to the point at which humans would become like laboratory rats, studied as statistical patterns. From far enough away, all human culture would appear as nothing more than a "large scale biological process". Arendt did not see this as an increase in stature:

"The conquest of space and the science that made it possible have come perilously close to this point [of seeing human culture as a biological process]. If they ever should reach it in earnest, the stature of man would not simply be lowered by all

standards we know of, but have been destroyed."

Sixty years on, nations are competing to exploit lunar and asteroid mineral resources. Private corporations and space billionaires are increasingly being touted as the way forward. After the Moon, Mars is the next world in line for "conquest". The contemporary movement known as longtermism promotes living on other planets as insurance against existential risk, in a far future where humans (or some form of them) spread to fill the galaxies. But the question remains.

Is space travel enhancing what we value about humanity? Arendt and her fellow essayists were not convinced. For me, the answer will depend on what values we choose to prioritise in this new era of interplanetary expansion.

DM

CAPITAL RADIO

RATIBA YA VIPINDI JUMATATU - JUMAPILI

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

Tembelea mitandao ya kijamii ya CAPITAL RADIO



CAPITAL RADIO

Know Félix Tshisekedi, DR Congo's re-elected president

By Basilio Rukanga

At the beginning of his first term in office in 2019, Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi vowed to make his country "the Germany of Africa".

He promised to grow the economy and create jobs for the people, in a country with massive resources but whose population was living in poverty.

In his first four years in power, he did not achieve his ambitious goal of transforming such a vast country, but now he has a second chance after he was declared the winner of a chaotic election. He is due to be sworn in for a second term on 20 January.

Mr Tshisekedi first came into power in unusual circumstances.

He was declared the surprise winner of a disputed presidential election, which some, including the influential Catholic Church, had challenged.

His main rival Martin Fayulu alleged that outgoing President Joseph Kabila had engineered a secret deal for Mr Tshisekedi to succeed him - charges that were strongly denied.

Mr Fayulu and other opposition candidates have also said the 2023 election was marred by fraud and demanded a re-run. The electoral commission has dismissed such claims as sour grapes.

Until a few years before the 2018 election, Mr Tshisekedi was largely untested in high-level DR Congo politics.

He was more known for who he was related to - he is the son of the veteran late opposition



leader Étienne Tshisekedi.

He however did not simply cash in on his father's name and was immersed in politics from a very young age, and worked his way up through the party ranks.

He also had to suffer the consequences of his father's political activism.

When Tshisekedi senior founded the Union for Democracy and Social Progress

party (known by its French initials UDPS) in 1982, the family was forced into internal exile in their home town in the central Kasai province.

They stayed there until 1985, when Étienne Tshisekedi's long-time rival, autocratic leader Mobutu Sese Seko, allowed the mother and children to leave.

Félix Tshisekedi then moved to the Belgian capital, Brussels. After completing his studies there he took up politics, working his way through his father's party to become national secretary for external affairs for the UDPS.

His father's former chief of staff, Albert Moleka, told the BBC in 2019 that Mr Tshisekedi "made powerful friends and allies among the diaspora there, but he was

sometimes overlooked - and so it wasn't easy for him".

Mr Tshisekedi's inauguration in 2019 inspired some hope, as it was the first peaceful transition of power in the country since independence in 1960.

At his swearing-in ceremony, he told the crowds that he wanted to "build a strong Congo, turned toward development in peace and security - a Congo for all in which everyone

worked out as planned and Mr Tshisekedi has ordered them to leave, saying they had been ineffective. He has said he wants to replace them with troops from a different trade bloc of which DR Congo is also a member - the Southern African Development Community (Sadc).

But there is little sign of them coming any time soon. Mr Tshisekedi has also demanded the end of the UN peacekeeping mission in DR Congo. After more than two decades, it will take some time for the thousands of troops to leave, but it has raised fears of a security vacuum as the army is in no position to take on the numerous rebel groups which operate across eastern DR Congo on its own.

DR Congo's membership of the EAC is complicated by the fact that Mr Tshisekedi, as well as UN experts, say fellow member Rwanda is backing one of the most active rebel groups in eastern DR Congo, the M23.

Rwanda's government has strongly denied this but it has led to a souring of relations between Mr Tshisekedi and his Rwandan counterpart, Paul Kagame, that has defined the end of his first term.

It was not always that way. At the beginning of his term, Mr Tshisekedi initially tried to mend relations with neighbouring countries including Rwanda.

In a surprise gesture, he invited President Kagame to the funeral of his father in May 2019. In the latter years of his presidency, however, the relationship has become so frosty that Mr Tshisekedi recently compared Mr Kagame to Germany's World War II dictator.

While addressing a campaign rally in Bukavu, close to the Rwandan border, Mr Tshisekedi last week said of Mr Kagame: "I promise he will end up like Adolf Hitler."

Hitler, responsible for the deaths of millions, including six million Jewish people in the Holocaust, ended taking his own life in a bunker in the German capital, Berlin, in 1945.

The Rwanda's government described the Congolese president's comments as "a loud and clear threat".

In his final rally before the election, he even vowed to declare war on Rwanda if he was re-elected. While he was hoping to whip up nationalist sentiment, most Congolese will be hoping he does not follow through on this pledge.

They would prefer him to stick to his previous goal of creating jobs and transforming the economy, even if turning the country into the "Germany of Africa" remains a distant dream.

grown nearly three-fold from \$6bn (£4.7bn) at the beginning of his tenure to \$16bn this year.

"We have come a remarkable way since 2020, overcoming the challenges posed by the pandemic to achieve rates of economic growth that inspire confidence in the future," he said.

In spite of the growth, many Congolese have been complaining about the depreciation of the Congolese franc which is having a serious impact on their daily lives.

Despite its vast mineral wealth and huge population, life has not improved for most people, with conflict, corruption and poor governance persisting.

In his re-election campaign, he made some of the same promises he made five years ago, such as creating more jobs, making the economy more resilient and promising to tackle the insecurity that has wracked the east of the country for three decades, leading to the deaths of millions of people.

Much of the country's natural resources lie in the east where violence still rages despite Mr Tshisekedi's attempts to deal with the situation by imposing a state of siege, ceasefire deals and bringing in regional troops.

These included a force from the East African Community, which DR Congo joined last year, hoping to improve trade and political ties with its eastern neighbours.

However things have not

worked out as planned and Mr Tshisekedi has ordered them to leave, saying they had been ineffective. He has said he wants to replace them with troops from a different trade bloc of which DR Congo is also a member - the Southern African Development Community (Sadc).

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They would prefer him to stick to his previous goal of creating jobs and transforming the economy, even if turning the country into the "Germany of Africa" remains a distant dream.

However things have not

THE GUARDIAN CROSSWORDS AND WORD FIT - 50 -

14. a tall cedar with drooping branches, native to the Himalayas
15. the capacity to tolerate delay
18. a Maori wife
20. to a higher degree than is desirable
21. Togo's Capital
24. Priest in Kiswahili
25. gross
26. serum

DOWN:

1. state of mind
2. short for wine red
3. someone treating a disease by conventional means
4. division into distinct zones
5. citrus fruit
6. See in Kiswahili
7. Parliament in Kiswahili
11. a native of the US state of Idaho
12. Ireland
16. a snake-like fish
17. a person who arrives
19. the region of the atmosphere
22. half of two
23. the seventh letter of the Greek alphabet

ACROSS:

1. Rocky city in Tanzania
5. hit a ball in a high arc
8. petroleum
9. list of available dishes
10. controlled by or connected to a computer
13. an adult human male

In this Puzzle you have no clues, only a list of words that all fit into the grid. The Guardian have given you a head start.

ILLEGAL **ALIKE** **VILELY**
ULAZIMA **SEE: REG** **EKE: OYEZ**
SET: ESOL **RIVER** **DELAY**
IYYAR **RAISI** **OASIS: LAT**
IGLOO **ILLEGIBLE** **ROME**

Yesterday's solution

R O M E G B B A T A K M
O P E N A R O M A O M A N O
A L D S R E A R M Y I E L D U
D U A L A S T E R D L A Y E R
M L A N G O I H G E A N
G V I E N N A A N G E L S
A G R E E A E R O R U N I T E
Z O E C A N A D A A S N E C
A D D E T R O T M A T T E R S

RADIO One **RATIBA YA VIPINDI**
JUMATATU - JUMAPILI

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
TIME PROGRAMME	TIME PROGRAMME	TIME PROGRAMME	TIME PROGRAMME	TIME PROGRAMME	TIME PROGRAMME	TIME PROGRAMME
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Tembelea mitandao ya kijamii ya Radio One **Radio One**

Thursday 4 January 2024

CBK lowers interbank forex trading limit to USD100,000

NAIROBI

The Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) has lowered the minimum amount that banks can trade in the formal interbank forex market to \$100,000 (Sh15.7 million) from \$250,000 (Sh39.3 million) following the launch of an electronic trading platform that is expected to improve supply and price discovery in the forex market.

A CBK circular on the new platform, which is known as Electronic Matching Systems (EMS), has also abolished the spread of 20 cents between bids and asks, effectively freeing market participants to negotiate rates depending on supply and demand.

The minimum trade limit on the interbank market had been put at \$500,000 (Sh78.7 million) in a 2015 CBK circular to banks, which also introduced the 20 cent spread.

The trading limit was subsequently halved in an August 2023 circular, which also set the stage for the introduction of the electronic platform.

"Minimum tradable amount in EMS will be \$100,000 with additional lot sizes of \$50,000. System Participants may transact amounts outside the minimum tradable amount via Request for Quote [a direct trading line]," said the CBK rules.

"Firm, tradeable prices will now be available via the EMS. Market participants should buy and sell foreign exchange with their clients and among themselves at freely negotiated rates and should adjust their quotes as necessary for prudent management of their forex risk within prudential limits."

The introduction of the electronic platform was one of the key reforms the

CBK identified last year in response to the near collapse of the interbank forex market, whose problems caused a dollar supply hitch that resulted in the emergence of a parallel foreign exchange market rate.

Banks had taken issue with tough policing by the regulator over trades that fell outside allowable spread limits and the official exchange rate.

All the licensed commercial banks in Kenya have been admitted as system participants in the EMS, which is also open to non-banking players on application to the CBK.

Participants will be utilising the EMS to place their purchase or sell orders, but the quotes will remain anonymous until the trades are matched for settlement.

In order to guarantee liquidity and fair prices in the market, the CBK has earmarked the 10 leading commercial banks in terms of foreign exchange trading to act as market makers for the platform.

"The market makers will be expected to continuously provide two-way quotes in the EMS, good for the minimum tradable amount. All other banks can provide two-way quotes in the EMS, good for the minimum tradable amount, at their discretion," said the CBK.

The earmarked lenders include Absa Bank Kenya, Citibank Kenya, DTB, Equity Group and I&M Bank. Others are KCB, NCBA, Stanbic Bank Kenya, Standard Chartered Bank Kenya and Co-operative Bank of Kenya.

The official exchange rate of the shilling against the dollar on Monday crossed the 150-unit mark following a



The Central Bank of Kenya in Nairobi.

period of sustained and consistent depreciation that has narrowed the gap between the official and retail selling rates of the US currency.

Since the beginning of the year, the shilling has depreciated by 17.7 percent against the dollar, which is more than double the 8.3 percent it shed against the unit in the whole of 2022.

The Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) indicative rate published Monday morning showed the dollar's buy price at Sh149.84 and a selling rate of Sh150.04 units, hence an average of 149.94.

The spot or average trading rate had climbed to Sh150.03 in the afternoon.

The indicative rate is the closing price of the previous day's trading session, which is taken as the opening

price of the following day. A check in banking halls of 12 commercial lenders—including all nine tier one banks—showed that they were selling the dollar at between Sh154.95 and Sh157, and buying at a range of Sh141 and Sh149.95.

Forex bureaus, meanwhile, quoted dollar selling prices of between Sh156.50 and Sh157 while buying at between Sh152 and Sh153.

Banks have been selling dollars above the Sh150 level from late August. A forex dealer the local outlet on Monday that the lenders are seeing resistance on the sell side at around Sh156, signalling the currency might be finding its true rate after months of consistent depreciation.

The reopening of the interbank dollar market in April and the removal of a Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) rule that capped daily deviation from the indicative rate at 20 cents has helped the exchange rate find its own level through demand and supply.

"The interbank market is better than where we were in March, even though there are still a few structural issues to sort out. Overall, we have seen the spread between retail and official selling price of the dollar come down to between Sh4 and Sh6, from double digits in the first quarter," said a dealer.

During the period, the interbank market was not functioning, banks quoted the rate at which they were buying the dollar in line with that of the CBK rate to avoid regulatory reprimand, but on the sell side they were charging each other—and customers—a margin of up to Sh13 above the official rate.

Treasury Cabinet secretary Njuguna Ndung'u, when appearing before the National Assembly on September 27, said that the shilling's recent slide was not a free fall, but rather a "process of adjustment" from what he termed as historical policy mistakes in the management of the shilling.

Prof Ndung'u said Kenya had largely held its currency constant in the previous five to seven years even as the country's price structure changed, leaving it misaligned with the real economy.

The comments by the CS indicated that the consistent pace of

depreciation against the dollar is a result of CBK allowing the shilling to ease to its correct level without intervention unless there is volatility.

"We are actually paying the price of misalignment which happened in the previous five to seven years," said the CS when he appeared before Parliament to answer questions from MPs.

"As soon as we allowed the nominal exchange rate to move—because there was a requirement that it can't fluctuate more than 20 cents either way—then we restarted the interbank market, there was [a] steep depreciation which was also being pushed by scarcity of dollars."

In comparison to other regional currencies, the shilling loss against the dollar this year stands out.

The Uganda shilling, for instance, has depreciated by 0.96 percent to the greenback since January, while the Tanzania unit has shed 6.8 percent while the Rwandan Franc has appreciated by 14 percent to the US currency since the turn of the year.

This year, the Uganda shilling has gained 20.2 percent to exchange at 25.04 units versus the Kenyan unit while the Tanzania shilling gained by 13.4 percent to 16.67 units as the Rwandan Franc rose 6.1 percent to 8.15 units.

The weaker shilling against the dollar has meant costlier purchases for importers and merchant traders while the external debt load has grown on a local currency perspective.

Hong Kong's top 50 insurers experience about 7.7 pct YoY premium contraction

HONG KONG

The premiums of Hong Kong's top 50 insurers contracted by 7.7 percent year-on-year (YoY) in 2022, on the back of lower demand for linked products, decreased population size, and market uncertainty, the Hong Kong Business Insurance Rankings revealed. In total, the top 50 companies saw their premiums reach HK\$51.7b, smaller than the HK\$55.4.2b in 2021.

"In 2022, the linked products business decreased by over 50 percent, in terms of premiums industry-wide. This reflects this lower demand because the financial markets didn't do well.

And so people don't want to buy insurance-linked products Assistant Professor Ben Charoenwong, from the Department of Finance at NUS Business, told Hong Kong Business.

The drop in overall premiums is linked to complexities in financial markets. Both stocks and bonds faced significant losses simultaneously, leading potential policyholders to adopt a cautious stance.

"Of course, the funny thing for me—someone who studies the financial markets—is typically after you have a bad year, it tends to be better afterwards. And so you might want to start products when the price falls rather than avoid

them," Charoenwong said.

He said he anticipates a potential rebound in demand as market sentiment stabilises. Nevertheless, persistent demographic factors, including business closures and population shifts out of Hong Kong, may present a lasting obstacle to a complete recovery.

To tally, 26 life or "long-term" insurers were included in this year's rankings whilst 24 general insurers were counted. The life segment, which accounts for 91.3 percent of the rankings' grand total, fell 8.9 percent YoY. On the other hand, Hong Kong's top general insurers, 8.7 percent of the total, expanded by 7.1 percent.

Out of the top 15 insurers in Hong Kong, only five saw their premiums grow YoY. Namely, HSBC Life (third place, 33.3 percent), Hang Seng Insurance (eighth, 36.8 percent), FTLife (11th, 27.6 percent), AXA General (14th, 4.0 percent), and Chubb Life (15th, 1.8 percent).

In terms of premiums accumulated, at first place is AIA International, which saw its 2022 premiums dip 14.8 percent. Trailing behind is Prudential Life at 2nd place, which also contracted by 12.0 percent.

Insurers that followed were Manulife (4th, -22.8 percent), China Life (5th, -24.5 percent), AXA China (Bermuda at 6th place, -5.6 percent), BOC Life (7th,

-10.6 percent), FWD Life (Bermuda at 9th, -23.8 percent), TPLHK (10th, -7.8 percent), Sun Life (12th, 23.6 percent), and YF LIFE (13th, 2.5 percent).

Examining the long-term trends, Charoenwong highlighted the impact of the ageing population in Asia on the insurance industry. As the workforce shrinks and older individuals seek coverage, a potential decline in premiums is expected over time.

Hong Kong, being a mature financial market, may already have a significant portion of its population covered. This demographic shift places a burden on insurers, necessitating strategic expansion beyond borders to mitigate the impact of an ageing population.

"Hong Kong is already a decently developed financial market. Many people may already have insurance, right? So then the only effect they might see is this kind of mega trend of decreasing premiums over time, just because there are just fewer people.

We kind of saw this in Japan. And that's part of why Japanese insurers worked hard to expand across borders, to try to go to Vietnam, the Philippines and so on. Because their population is ageing," Charoenwong stated.

To stay competitive, traditional insurers must improve their digital infra-



Ben Charoenwong, Assistant Professor at the Department of Finance at NUS Business

structure, invest in user-friendly apps and websites, and streamline their claims processes. Whilst the transition may present challenges for incumbents, Charoenwong views these changes as beneficial for consumers, ensuring a more efficient and seamless insurance experience.

Similarly, Hong Kong Insurance Leader Billy Wong and partner Richard Hart of PwC Hong Kong said in a report that insurers in Hong Kong have been actively undergoing digital transformation, catching up with changing customer expectations. The rise of

virtual insurers and the pandemic have accelerated the adoption of digital tools, such as chatbots and e-signatures.

Digitalisation across the value chain is a top priority for Hong Kong insurers to enhance customer experience, streamline operations, and remain competitive. Insurers are expanding ecosystem partnerships to offer more value to customers beyond traditional transactions. The focus on the Greater Bay Area (GBA) provides opportunities for cross-border collaborations and partnerships.

Zanzibar minister commends PBZ for getting 78bn/- profit last year

By Guardian Reporter, Zanzibar

Zanzibar minister for Social Development, Elders, Gender and Children Riziki Pembe Juma, has commended the People's Bank of Zanzibar (PBZ) for recording a 78bn/- profit last year.

She made the statement yesterday when speaking at the opening of the bank's new branch at Nungwi in North Unguja, being part of celebrations to mark the 60th anniversary of Zanzibar revolution. She said the increment will make it contribute more to the government through dividends.

The minister noted that the banks' profit dropped in 2022 to 22, but it has been able to provide loans amounting to 1trn/- to its customers.

She linked the recorded successes with the directives and guidelines from President Dr Hussein Ali Mwinyi through the Ministry of Finance and Planning.

Zanzibar's Finance and Planning Ministry Permanent Secretary, Juma Malik Akil said they have been working on directives and guidelines from Union government leaders. He said their directives are meant to bring about development to the people.

PBZ Acting Executive Director, Said Mohammed Said informed the minister that the bank has continued to grow, adding that in 2020 it had 29 branches, the number which increased to 49 in 2023. He said that 35 branches are in Zanzibar and 11 in Tanzania mainland.

"Our bank is a financial institution owned by the people. PBZ was established two years after the Zanzibar revolution; it is now 58 years old," he said.

Rashid Hadid Rashid (North Unguja) Regional Commissioner called upon Nungwi residents to use the bank for financial activities including payment of government taxes, foreign money exchange as well as opening savings accounts.

Rashid urged workers to provide education to customers, especially entrepreneurs on how to properly use the acquired loans.

Transcorp, Chams, CWG shares record over 700 pct price gain

LAGOS

Transport Hotels Plc, Chams Holding Company Plc and Computer Warehouse Group, CWG PLC, topped the winners' chart on Nigeria Exchange Limited (NGX) in capital appreciation in 2023, with price gain that ranged from 721.8 percent to 1022.9 percent.

Transcorp Hotels Plc posted the highest capital appreciation as the share price jumped from to close at N70.18 on the last trading day of 2023, from N6.25 in 2022, an increase of 1022.9 percent. The company is a subsidiary of Transnational Corporation of

Nigeria (Transcorp).

Transcorp's market capitalisation rose to N718.8 billion at the last trading day of 2023. With a share price appreciation of 1022.9 percent, Transcorp Hotels is the best performing stock in the Nigerian Exchange in 2023.

The company's share price started 2023 at N6.25 and closed 2023 at N70.18. The company's market cap also hit N718.8 billion at the close of trading in 2023.

Chams Holdings Plc has sustained its stellar performance in 2023 as the frontline financial technology company's share price rose by 795.5 percent from N0.24 at the beginning of

2023 to close at N1.97. Chams HoldCo's fundamentals are waxing stronger with a gross profit of N1.84 billion in nine months in 2023, a year-on-year growth of 181.3 percent from the corresponding period in 2022. In a recent media interview, the Company's Group Managing Director, Mayowa Olaniyan, attributed the performance to the gains from the on-going transformation in the entire group which comprises ChamsSwitch, ChamsAccess, Card-Centre, and ChamsMobile, its subsidiaries.

The third best price gainer in the review period was CWG PLC, formerly Computer Warehouse Group. From N0.92 at the start

of 2023, the share price hit N3.96 per unit at the end of the trading day, an increase of 721.8 percent.

The company is one of the pioneers in the IT ecosystem. The company's nine-month revenue was N18.26 billion in 2023, an increase of 79.7 percent in the preceding year.

Apart from being a leading provider of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) across West, Central and Eastern Africa, the company is also a leading cloud service provider that enables Africa's SMEs to exploit cloud services for commerce and management.

UK use of gas and coal for electricity at lowest since 1957, figures show

LONDON

The amount of electricity generated by the UK's gas and coal power plants fell by 20 percent last year, with consumption of fossil fuels at its lowest level since 1957.

Not since Harold Macmillan was the UK prime minister and the Beatles' John Lennon and Paul McCartney met for the first time has the UK used less coal and gas.

The UK's gas power plants last year generated 31 percent of the UK's electricity, or 98 terawatt hours (TWh), according to a report by the industry journal Carbon Brief, while the UK's last remaining coal plant produced enough electricity to meet just 1% of the UK's power demand or 4TWh.

Fossil fuels were squeezed out of the electricity system by a surge in renewable energy generation combined with higher electricity imports from France and Norway and a long-term trend of falling demand.

Higher power imports last year were driven by an increase in nuclear power from France and hydropower from Norway in 2023. This marked a reversal from 2022 when a string of nuclear



outages in France helped make the UK a net exporter of electricity for the first time.

Carbon Brief found that gas and coal power plants made up just over a third

of the UK's electricity supplies in 2023, while renewable energy provided the single largest source of power to the grid at a record 42 percent.

It was the third year this decade that

renewable energy sources, including wind, solar, hydro and biomass power, outperformed fossil fuels, according to the analysis. Renewables and Britain's nuclear reactors, which generated 13

percent of electricity supplies last year, helped low-carbon electricity make up 55 percent of the UK's electricity in 2023.

Dan McGrail, the chief executive of RenewableUK, said the data shows "the central role that wind, solar and other clean power sources are consistently playing in Britain's transition".

"We're working closely with the government to accelerate the pace at which we build new projects and new supply chains in the face of intense global competition, as everyone is trying to replicate our success," McGrail said.

Electricity from fossil fuels was two-thirds lower in 2023 compared with its peak in 2008, according to Carbon Brief. It found that coal has dropped by 97 percent and gas by 43 percent in the last 15 years.

Coal power is expected to fall further in 2024 after the planned shutdown of Britain's last remaining coal plant in September. The Ratcliff on Soar coal plant, owned by the German utility Uniper, is scheduled to shut before next winter after generating power for 24 years.

Renewable energy has increased

sixfold since 2008 as the UK has constructed more wind and solar farms, and the large Drax coal plant has converted some of its generating units to burn biomass pellets.

Electricity demand has tumbled by 22% since its peak in 2005, according to the data, as part of a long-term trend driven by more energy efficient homes and appliances as well as a decline in the UK's manufacturing sector.

Demand for electricity is expected to double as the UK aims to cut emissions to net zero by 2050 because the plan relies heavily on replacing fossil fuel transport and heating with electric alternatives.

In recent weeks, offshore wind developers have given the green light to another four large windfarms in UK waters, including the world's largest offshore windfarm at Hornsea 3, which will be built off the North Yorkshire coast by Denmark's Ørsted.

The German utility RWE has also agreed to buy the Norfolk Boreas, Norfolk Vanguard East and Norfolk Vanguard West from Sweden's Vattenfall in a €1bn deal that is expected to revive plans for the projects, which were derailed last year by rising supply chain costs.

ASML

ASML halts hi-tech chip-making exports to China reportedly after US request

AMSTERDAM

Dutch firm says decision was down to licence change, after initial report connected it to US pressure.

A Dutch manufacturer has cancelled shipments of hi-tech microchip machinery to China after pressure from the US government, it has been reported.

ASML, a key firm in the global semiconductor manufacturing supply chain, was due to export three chip-making machines to China but had its export licences revoked by the Dutch government before they were shipped.

The company is one of the only manufacturers of extreme ultraviolet lithography systems (EUVs), which use lasers to help create

the circuits for chips.

The advanced technology is used by leading chip producers such as Samsung and Intel, which are then used in products ranging from smartphones to sophisticated military equipment.

Bloomberg reported that ASML decided to cancel the shipment of some of its most advanced machines after a request was made by the Biden administration.

However, a later statement from the company said that a licence for the shipment of two types of lithography machines had been "partially revoked" by the Dutch government, and would affect a "small number of customers" in China.

It added: "In recent discussions with the US government, ASML

has obtained further clarification of the scope and impact of the US export control regulations."

The pressure from the US comes as the country seeks to limit China's ability to expand its semiconductor knowledge and production, urging allies to restrict technology associated with the manufacturing of semiconductors. The Biden administration brought in new restrictions last October to try to block non-US firms exporting semiconductor chips and lithography machines that contain US-made parts and technology.

In July last year, the Dutch government agreed to put restrictions on sales of ASML's deep ultraviolet (DUV) lithography machines, the second most ad-

vanced it produces, after pressure from the US. The restrictions came in officially on Monday.

Responding to the most recent blocking of the ASML orders, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin urged the Netherlands "to be impartial, respect market principles and the law, take practical actions to protect the common interests of both countries and their companies and maintain the stability of international supply chains".

He added that the action by the US "to encourage the move was 'hegemonic and bullying behaviour'".

ASML said it did not expect the revocation of the licence to have a "material impact" on its financial outlook for 2023.

Divorces delayed by cost of living crisis, new research finds

REYKJAVÍK

Financial pressures have led to postponement of 19 percent of divorces, involving 270,000 couples, Legal & General claims.

The start of the new year is often boom time for divorce lawyers, but 2024 may be different as new research shows the cost of living crisis has delayed more than 270,000 couples from splitting.

Financial pressures delayed 19% of divorces, researchers at Legal & General found. The impact has been particularly pronounced since 2020, with income concerns, cost of living pressures and the price of divorce all cited as reasons to postpone the split.

Neil Russell, the head of family law at Seddons, said he frequently spoke to couples with this issue. "People always think financial pressures break couples up but they also keep them together."

What with inflation and interest rate rises, it has put a lot of pressure on families because they can't afford to sell and buy, because they can't afford the new mortgage rates and they can't afford to maintain two households, so a lot of people stay together."

Russell said when the economy suffered, finances became an increasing issue for those wanting to separate. He said this applied across income brackets and caught out many middle-class couples trying to separate.

"It's a big factor. When the economy is doing well it's easier to get divorced because you can buy homes, sell homes more quickly, and the economy is more fluid. When it's tough it's harder," he said.

Nearly half (48 percent) of divorcees saw their incomes shrink by about 31 percent, leaving them with an average of £9,700 less each year, the research found.

The first working day after the new year is often nicknamed "divorce day" because so many people make inquiries after Christmas. The Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association (PLSA) has released online guidance on how private workplace pension scheme

providers could help spouses splitting up, to coincide with the day.

Though 272,000 divorces were reportedly postponed due to money concerns, just one in five couples discussed their pensions when dividing their assets, while 58 percent considered the value of their family home.

Paula Llewellyn, the managing director of Legal & General Retail, said: "When people divorce, money is always an important factor, especially during the challenges of the cost of living crisis. However, as our research shows, a separation can have long-term implications for people's finances."

Two in five divorcees believed the process ends up financially unfair and that one of the parties came out on top. Fewer than a third signed clean break orders, which can protect from a future claim from their former spouse.

Llewellyn said: "Many couples have not even sorted the necessary paperwork to ensure they have a clean break from their financial obligation to one another."

"By consulting a financial adviser, people increase the likelihood of a divorce being fair and equal. While the number of people seeking out this support has increased in recent years, we need to encourage more couples to take this step."

The impact of divorce on retirement funds can be significant, with an average of £63 less put into pension pots each month due to the financial strain. About 29 percent of divorcees actively waived their rights to the value of their pensions, the research found.

Joe Dabrowski, the deputy director of policy at the PLSA, said: "Understandably, working out how to split pension assets is not the first priority for most separating couples."

"But it is really important to make sure both parties are provided for in retirement, especially when one party has been the primary earner and built up a pension, while the other - usually because they have taken on more family caring responsibilities - has not."

Senegal launches all-electric-bus rapid transit network

DAKAR

Senegal has become the latest African country to deploy electric buses. The West African country debuted its first all-electric bus rapid transit network (BRT) on Wednesday.

Senegalese Prime Minister Amadou

Ba stated at the inauguration ceremony that "this project is a very modern infrastructure, as well as a major innovation."

China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) built the Dakar BRT project, which spans 18.3 kilometres and includes 23 bus stations and three hub

transfer stations.

China Railway Rolling Stock Corporation is supplying the all-electric buses for this project.

According to a government release, after the launch, travel time from Dakar's outskirts to the city centre would be cut in half, and urban

mobility will be increased, according to Huang Fei, project manager of CRBC.

According to Huang, the project created 1,500 employment during construction and is expected to create more than 1,000 jobs once it is operational.

Senegal has joined Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda in the ongoing African e-mobility competition with the project.

Rwanda recently signed an agreement with BasiGo and AC Mobility to launch electric buses in Kigali.

The introduction of electric buses comes as Africa's e-mobility race heats up.

Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda are also making significant strides in e-mobility, with companies manufacturing and importing electric vehicles in the region.

Q4 signals a turning point for mobile phone makers

SHANGHAI

The just-ended fourth quarter marks a turning point for the domestic mobile market, as a bullish mobile market is expected and is forecast to maintain a positive growth this year.

Mobile phone shipments in the domestic market reached 31.21 million units in November, up 34.3 percent year-on-year, according to a report released by China Information and Communication Academy on Dec 27. During the Jan-Nov period, the overall shipment of mobile phones in the domestic market accumulated 261 million units, an increase of 7.1 percent on a yearly basis, of which 5G mobile phone shipments were 215 million units, a rise of 12.9 percent, accounting for 82.5 percent of mobile phone shipments in the same period, the Paper.cn reported on Wednesday.

According to statistics put together by IDC, a market researcher, the actual retail volume of domestic smartphones achieved a 0.4 percent growth year-on-year in the third quarter of 2023, and shipments are expected to show an inflection point in the fourth quarter.

The estimation on the emerging turning point was based on several key factors: The market base in the fourth quarter of 2022 was relatively low, and a flagship model released in August by Huawei is attractive enough for consumer to buy new phones, said Guo Tianxiang, a senior



Consumers select products at an Apple store on Nanjing Road Walkway in Shanghai.

analyst at IDC China, during an interview.

Phone makers such as Huawei and Apple have all introduced their flagship models during the second half of last year, effectively activating the consumer market.

Huawei's return at the end of August has pulled the appeal of consumers back to the market, re-stimulating consumers' attention for mobile phones, invigorating the demand for replacement, and other brands are offering many upgrades to attract consumers to

buy new phones.

According to a recent report released by IDC, the AI large model is more widely used on mobile devices.

Major domestic manufacturers have successively laid out large AI models for mobile phones. The use of large AI models on mobile phones is expected to break the situation of insufficient innovation in the mobile phone market, and the demand for higher performance hardware can prompt some users to upgrade.

Up until this day, phone manufac-

tures from China such as Huawei, Vivo, and Oppo have all introduced their large language model.

Although most consumers rarely use relevant services on a daily bases, satellite communications will still play an important role in some rare cases and become an important choice for high-end products to create differentiation. Paired with artificial intelligent generated content, satellite communication will enhance the competitiveness of high-end products, according to IDC.

Analysing Rwanda's key crop yields in 2023

KIGALI

THE Seasonal Agricultural Survey 2023 annual report by the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) highlighted the performance of major crops that Rwanda prioritises under the Crop Intensification Programme (CIP). The crops play a major role in Rwandans' nutrition.

The report covers three primary agricultural seasons in Rwanda. The main agricultural seasons include Season A, which spanned from September 2022 to February 2023, Season B which started from March to June 2023, and Season C which started from July to September 2023.

The survey results are useful to monitor the current agricultural and food supply conditions and facilitate evidence-based decision-making for the development of the agricultural sector, according to NISR.

Below is the performance of five major crops under CIP, including their cultivation area, production, and yield in the year under review:

Maize

The cultivated area for maize was estimated at 226,982 hectares in 2023 season A, an increase of 3.3 per cent when compared to the same season of 2022.



Packages of rice produce collected during the harvest time in Bugesera District.

In season B, the cultivated area for the crop was estimated at 93,927 hectares, a rise of 15 per cent when compared to the season B of 2022.

According to the survey estimates, overall, more than 508,000 tonnes of maize were produced in the 2023 farming year, according to estimates from the survey.

The average yield of maize in 2023 was 1.7 tonnes per hectare in season A of 2023, while it was 1.3 tonnes per hectare in season B. This is almost 11 per cent higher than over 458,500 tonnes of maize produced in 2022, as per the

2022 survey by NISR.

Irish potatoes

For Irish potatoes, the cultivated area was estimated at 55,613 hectares in season A of 2023, a decrease of 1.5 per cent when compared to the same season of 2022. In season B, the cultivated area of Irish potatoes was estimated at 48,210 hectares, a decrease of 9.1 per cent when compared to the same season of 2022.

In season C, the cultivated area under Irish potatoes was 10,540 hectares, an increase of 0.8 per cent when compared to the same season of 2022.

The annual production of Irish potato was estimated at slightly over 865,000 tonnes in 2023, representing a reduction of about 43,000 tonnes compared to slightly over 908,000 tonnes realised in 2022.

The average yield of Irish potato was 8.2 tonnes per hectare in season A of 2023, 6.7 tonnes per hectare in season B, and 7.9 tonnes per hectare in season C of the same year.

Cassava

The cultivated area for cassava was estimated at 239,221 hectares in season A of 2023, an increase of 28.5 per cent when compared to the same season of 2022. In season B, the cultivated area for cassava was estimated at 159,089 hectares, an increase of 4 per cent when compared to season B of 2022.

The harvested area was estimated at 45,182 hectares in season A of 2023 and 49,655 hectares in season B of 2023.

In total, cassava production amounted to more than 1.34 million tonnes in 2023, which implies about 30,000 tonnes less production compared to more than 1.37 million tonnes achieved in 2022.

The average yield of cassava was 13.5 tonnes per hectare in season A of 2023 and 14.8 tonnes per hectare in season B of 2023.

FBI charges Nigerian fintech founder with securities fraud

LAGOS

Odogwu Banue Mmbuosi has been charged by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) with securities fraud, creating false filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), and conspiracy. Mmbuosi is still on the loose.

The FBI claims that the founder of Tingo, a Nigerian-founded Nasdaq-listed agri-fintech business, declared hundreds of millions of dollars in false revenues and assets for three companies he controls.

According to the SEC, it won a temporary asset freeze, restraining order, and other emergency relief against the three connected U.S.-based corporations of which he is the CEO-Tingo Group Inc, Agri-Fintech Holdings Inc, and Tingo International Holdings Inc.

This is in line with an alleged multi-year conspiracy to exaggerate the financial performance measures of these companies and significant operating subsidiaries in order to deceive investors worldwide, according to the complaint.

Damian Williams, US Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and James Smith, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's New York Field Office, announced the indictment's unsealing yesterday.

"From at least in or around 2019 through at least in or around 2023, Odogwu Banye Mmbuosi orchestrated a scheme to enrich himself by falsely

representing that Nigerian companies he founded, Tingo Mobile and Tingo Foods, were operational, profitable businesses generating hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue, respectively," the FBI said in a statement.

"Mmbuosi then sold Tingo Mobile and Tingo Foods to companies listed in the United States, including Tingo Group (listed on Nasdaq as TIO) and Agri-Fintech Holdings (traded in the Over-the-Counter Markets under the symbol TMNA," it continued.

As a result of Mmbuosi's actions, Tingo Group and Agri-Fintech issued financial statements that falsely depicted Tingo Mobile and Tingo Foods as cash-rich, revenue-generating businesses when, in fact, they were not.

According to the FBI, Mmbuosi then robbed Tingo Group and Agri-Fintech by "misappropriating cash from those companies and engaged in well-timed sales of their shares at inflated prices, generating millions of dollars of profits from his scheme."

"Mmbuosi allegedly orchestrated a massive scheme to inflate Tingo Group's financial statements and make it appear as though the cellular and agriculture companies he founded were profitable and cash rich when, in fact, they were not," stated US Attorney Williams. Mmbuosi's alleged deceptive scheme comes to a stop with this Indictment."



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BANKING & FINANCE

Thailand considers permanent visa waiver for Chinese visitors



Chinese visitors tour in Bangkok, Thailand.

BANGKOK

Thailand will permanently waive visa requirements for Chinese tourists starting on March 1, Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin announced on Tuesday after a Cabinet meeting in Bangkok.

Thailand had previously granted a temporary visa waiver for visitors from China and Kazakhstan, which is set to expire on Feb 29.

After negotiations with related Chinese authorities, the Thai government has now opted to adopt a permanent visa-free policy for Chinese tourists starting on March 1, Srettha said at a news conference following the Cabinet meeting.

"This will not only boost Thailand's tourism industry but also signify further improvement in the friendly relations between the two countries," he added.

In Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin con-

firmed that authorities on the two sides are in close communication regarding the matter and China looks forward to the arrangement's early implementation.

"The further strengthening of people-to-people exchanges and the mutual visa exemption policy (once implemented) will conform to the fundamental interests of both peoples," Wang told reporters at a regular news briefing on Tuesday.

Tourism plays a crucial role in Thailand's economy, with 28 million foreign tourist arrivals recorded last year, including about 4.4 million visitors from Malaysia, and 3.4 million from China.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Chinese nationals comprised the biggest group of foreign tourists to Thailand, with 10 million visits each year.

Thailand now plans a 3.5-trillion-baht (\$102 billion) boost for its

economy via the tourism sector in 2024, aiming to establish the nation as an all-season tourist destination.

During the Tourism Authority of Thailand's recent promotion activity targeting the Chinese market, Sudawan Wangsuphakijkosol, Thai minister of tourism and sports, said that China has been a key source market for Thailand and has had a significant impact on the Thai economy.

"The Thai government is committed to providing high-quality tourism experiences for Chinese tourists. Our strategies include the development of new attractions in tandem with the promotion of Thai soft powers and meaningful travel experiences," she said.

"Equally important is the safety measures to ensure that Chinese tourists can enjoy peace of mind throughout their travels in Thailand," she added.

WORLD

Trump appeals disqualification from Maine primary ballot

WASHINGTON

DONALD Trump on Tuesday appealed a decision from Maine's top election official disqualifying him from the state's Republican presidential primary ballot next year over his role in the Jan 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol, a court filing showed.

Trump, the frontrunner for the Republican nomination for November's US presidential election, asked a state

Superior Court to reverse a decision from Secretary of State Shenna Bellows barring Trump from the March 5 primary ballot.

Bellows, a Democrat, concluded that Trump incited an insurrection in an attempt to hold onto power following his defeat in the 2020 election and was disqualified from holding office again under the US Constitution.

Trump's lawyers argued in a court filing that the decision was "the prod-



Secretary of State Shenna Bellows speaks at an event, Jan 4, 2023, in Augusta, Maine. AP

uct of a process infected by bias and pervasive lack of due process". His legal team disputed that Trump took part in an insurrection and argued that Bellows did not have the authority to exclude him from the ballot.

The ruling came after a group of former Maine lawmakers petitioned Bellows to keep Trump off the ballot, arguing that he could not serve as president under a provision of the US Constitution that bars people from holding office if they engaged in "insurrection" after swearing an oath to the United States.

"I have confidence in my decision and in the rule of law", Bellows said in a statement after the appeal was filed.

Advocacy groups and some anti-Trump voters have brought several challenges to Trump's candidacy under the provision, known as Section 3 of the 14th Amendment. The lawsuits have argued that Trump incited his supporters to violence by spreading false claims that the 2020 election was stolen and then urged them to descend upon the Capitol to stop Congress from certifying Democrat Joe Biden's victory.

The US Supreme Court is likely to consider the issue soon, af-

ter Colorado's top court barred Trump from the primary ballot in that state. A ruling from the Supreme Court could provide a nationwide resolution to questions surrounding Trump's eligibility.

Several similar lawsuits filed against Trump in other states have been rejected by courts. Trump's campaign has called the ballot challenges a "hostile assault on American democracy". Opinion polls show Trump with a commanding lead in the Republican nominating contest. State-by-state contests to select a nominee begin on Jan 15 in Iowa.

Longest doctors' strike to pile stress on England's health service

LONDON

JUNIOR doctors in England will begin a six-day walkout on Wednesday, the longest strike in the state-run National Health Service's 75-year history which is set to hit patient care during its seasonal winter peak in demand.

Like in other key sectors over the past year, junior doctors represented by the British Medical Association have staged a series of walkouts in demand of better pay in the face of soaring inflation.

Cumulatively, the NHS, which has provided healthcare free at the point of use since it was founded in 1948, cancelled 1.2 million appointments in 2023 due to strikes.

The BMA abandoned talks with the government after being offered a pay rise of 8-10 percent, and held strikes on Dec 20-23. The union is seeking a 35 percent improvement which it says is needed to cover the impact of inflation over several years.

The government, which has agreed new pay deals with other healthcare workers, including nurses and senior doctors in recent months, has resisted hikes it



Displaced Palestinians sit in a makeshift tent camp in Rafah, Gaza Strip, Thursday. AP

says would worsen inflation.

The strikes threaten to increase the pressure on the health service where over 7.7 million patients are on waiting lists for procedures and appointments.

"This January could be one of the most difficult starts to the year the NHS has ever faced," NHS National Medical Director Stephen Powis said in a statement.

"The action will not only have an enormous impact on planned care, but comes on top of a host of seasonal pressures such as covid, flu, and staff absences due to sickness."

Agencies

Israeli forces find tunnel shaft in Gaza school with photos of weapons for children

TEL AVIV

ISRAELI soldiers in Gaza discovered a tunnel shaft located inside a school, the Israel Defense Forces said yesterday.

The tunnel was discovered by the 5th Brigade's combat team in the southern Gaza area of Khirbet Ahza. The forces also found

photos of weapons geared for children. A photo released by the IDF showed various mortars, grenades and bullets inside the school.

During the military operation in Khirbet Ahza, forces also raided Hamas observation posts and positions where terror squads fired anti-tank rockets.

Meanwhile, in Khan Yunis, ground forces directed an airstrike on a terror squad that was trying to attach a bomb to a tank. Soldiers also seized weapons and a safe containing hundreds of thousands of shekels inside the home of a member of Hamas's Nukhba unit.

Also in Khan Yunis, an Israeli

fighter jet struck a munitions production complex belonging to Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

In the northern Gaza area of Tupah, soldiers eliminated a terror squad operating aerial drones to observe the Israeli forces.

At least 1,200 people were killed in Hamas's attacks on Is-

raeli communities near the Gaza border on Oct. 7.

The number of men, women, children, soldiers and foreigners held captive in Gaza by Hamas is now believed to be 129. Other people remain unaccounted for as Israeli authorities continue to identify bodies and search for human remains. ANI

Ahead of General Elections, Pakistan's first Hindu candidate vows to strengthen ties with India

ISLAMABAD

DR Saveera Parkash, a Hindu woman in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Buner district who is running in the upcoming general elections on a ticket from the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP), has vowed to improve ties with India if she wins, as reported by Geo News.

Saveera Parkash, a 25-year-old physician who completed her medical studies in Abbottabad, has also emphasized support for women's rights in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as a key priority.

After securing a ticket from the PPP to contest the elections in the Buner district (PK-25), Dr. Saveera Parkash, a member of the Hindu community, expressed optimism about her candidature.

Her father, Om Parkash, a recently retired doctor and long-time PPP member, influenced her decision to run for office with the party. Her family had supported the party for 37 years.

She was granted a ticket by the PPP to contest in the next elections, at a time when she was also preparing for the Central Superior Services (CSS) in Pakistan, Geo News reported.

The 25-year-old physician said in an interview with Geo News that she had been dubbed the "daughter of Buner" and that the "Muslim brothers" had promised her both their full support and their votes.

Her top legislative priority after winning the election would be to advance education and deal with problems like environmental degradation and health. Along with the lack of healthcare education and awareness, she is also concerned about the dearth of healthcare services in her district.

She also believes that women have fewer rights and progression possibilities, and resolving these issues is one of her major concerns.

"I was proud to be a part of the Pashtun culture, but when I got the party ticket for the general elections and people, including my Muslim brothers, came to know about it, I received several congratulatory and encouraging messages," she said, as reported by Geo News.

The politician described Bilawal's visit to Goa (at the time of the G20 Foreign Ministers' meeting) as a significant step towards promoting Indo-Pak ties.

The politician will compete in one of the most important elections in the nation's recent political history, which are slated to take place on February 8.

The prospective candidate said she is a patriotic Hindu and that her confidence has grown even more after being named the "daughter of Buner." She said that she will contribute positively to the relations between Islamabad and New Delhi if elected to the provincial parliament, and the Hindu community, both in Pakistan and across the border, will feel free to reach her, according to Geo News.

PPP KP's women wing head, Senator Rubina Khalid said that the party is a symbol of federation and doesn't discriminate between women and minorities.

"This is the reason why Dr Saveera Parkash got the ticket from Buner and we created a new history in KP, while in Sindh, too, we brought forward people belonging to minorities, not only in the election battle but also in the assembly," the Senator said.

General elections are scheduled to be held in Pakistan on February 8, 2024, to elect the members of the 16th National Assembly. ANI

Brazil's Lula enacts fiscal law with zero-deficit target

BRASILIA

BRAZILIAN President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva promulgated the 2024 Budgetary Guidelines Law on Sunday, which calls for a zero primary deficit target in public spending.



The law was published in Tuesday's edition of the Government Gazette, outlining the framework for the year's budget, including revenue forecasts and limits on public spending. Brazil's public spending has recorded successive primary deficits since 2014. The law also establishes guidelines for legislative amendments and imposes a cap on the 2024 Electoral Fund.

The president vetoed a legislative timetable set by Congress to implement amendments that seek to increase the congressional body's say over public spending. He also vetoed superfluous expenses that were included as budget items.

Populist parties' rapid rise shakes up EU political landscape

BRUSSELS

THE European Union has witnessed a rapid rise of populist parties in 2023, a change that was caused largely by economic and migration issues and a change that will affect the EU's political landscape and China-EU relations, experts say.

So far, about one-third of seats in the European Parliament are occupied by parties that are viewed as populist or radical, and the trend is likely to continue in the next European elections in June.

According to research led by political scientist Matthijs Rooduijn at the University of Amsterdam, 32 percent of Europeans now vote for populist, far-right or far-left parties, compared with 20 percent in the early 2000s and 12 percent in the early 1990s.

For the first time in France, more French people say far-right leader Marine Le Pen's National Rally party, now headed by her right-hand man Jordan Bardella, is capable of participating in government than not, according to an annual survey by Le Monde and Franceinfo last month.

Just 54 percent of respondents said they disagreed with the party's ideas, the lowest since the poll first began in 1984.

A EuroTrack poll conducted by OpinionWay in November showed the National Rally would win 28 percent of the vote if the 2024 European elections were held a few days later, ahead of the 19 percent for President Emmanuel Macron's Renaissance party.

National Rally is now the largest opposition party in the National Assembly, the lower house of the French parliament.

The party got 89 seats in the 577-member parliament in the 2022 election, up from a previous total of only eight.

On Dec 20, Le Pen claimed an "ideological victory" after Macron's government reached a compromise over an immigration bill, a bill that divided Macron's centrist coalition but echoed Le Pen's tougher immigration policies, such as excluding foreigners from state benefits and council housing.

In Germany, the Alternative for Germany, or AfD, regarded as a far-right party in Europe, won its first mayoral election in December in Pirna, Saxony, a victory that party co-chair Alice Weidel described as "historic".

The victory has also been seen across Germany as a sign for key state and local elections in this coming year.

In June, AfD leapfrogged to surpass

Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats, or SPD, to become the second-largest party in Germany, behind former chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union.

A Forsa poll on Dec 19 showed that AfD received a record high of 23 percent of support, behind the 31 percent for CDU but way ahead of the 14 percent for SPD, 13 percent for the Greens and 5 percent for the Free Democrats.

After major election victories in the states of Hesse and Bavaria in October, Weidel said AfD is "no longer an eastern phenomenon, but has become a major all-German party".

"So, we have arrived," she said, referring to the party's high popularity in former East Germany's states.

In Italy, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni worried many after she took power in

October 2022 because of her Brothers of Italy party's reputation as a post-fascist party. But so far, her coalition has been widely viewed as right-wing on domestic policies, such as family, civil rights and immigration, but moderate on international relations and some EU affairs.

"Since becoming Italy's prime minister, Giorgia Meloni has been something of a surprise for Brussels-based skeptics," Anthony Constantini, who studied populism at the University of Vienna, wrote in an opinion piece for the Politico website.

"As leader of the post-fascist Brothers of Italy, many had expected her to be a firebrand a la Hungary's Viktor Orban. But she has instead sought a different goal: to become the first populist-right leader to forge a genuine Pan-European

alliance.

"And if she's successful, it could change the game in Brussels forever."

Besides the EU's three biggest economies, populist leaders have also claimed election victories and gained popularity in the past year in Austria, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Sweden and several other EU states.

Yan Shaohua, an associate professor in the Institute of International Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai, said the rise of the far right, including in core EU countries such as France, Germany and Italy, is largely associated with the persisting migration crisis that has worsened over the past years because of heightened geopolitical tensions in the EU's neighborhood, particularly in Ukraine and the Middle East.

Agencies

Restrictions on import of Russian diamonds to G7, EU countries take effect on January 1

MOSCOW

RESTRICTIONS on the importation of Russian diamonds into G7 countries and restrictions on deliveries of diamonds to the European Union under the EU's 12th package of sanctions have taken effect as of today, January 1, 2024, but experts surveyed by TASS doubt that the ban will be very effective.

In December, the G7 nations announced the introduction of restrictions on imports of diamonds mined or processed in Russia effective January 1, 2024.

Starting on March 1, restrictions on Russian diamonds processed in other countries are to kick in as well. In a joint statement following an online meeting of G7 heads of state and government, the leaders agreed that a reliable mechanism for inspecting and certifying unprocessed diamonds will be created inside the G7 by September 1, 2024.

Later, the European Union approved its 12th package of sanctions against Moscow in reaction to the special military operation in Ukraine. In particular, the new restrictions contain a ban on imports of diamonds that were mined, processed or produced in Russia.

The ban covers non-commercial natural and man-made diamonds and diamond jewelry. The EU Council ruled that the ban on imports will take effect on January 1, 2024, with specific provisions rolled out gradually from March 1 through September 1.

Survey of analysts' views

"As of now, such a mechanism (inspection and certification of diamonds) does not exist, neither will it appear by March 1, and it is unclear whether it will be ready by September 1.

This only suggests certain possibilities of [so-called] 'grey' supplies," Finam analyst Alexey Kalachev said. If the mechanism is based on "technical methods of defining the origin of stones," it will be possible to introduce it quickly, although this is an expensive and not very efficient technology, he added.

Meanwhile, if the mechanism for tracking diamonds is based on blockchain technologies, it would be virtually impossible to evade it, "as it will deal not even within the stone physically, but with its confirmed history, which is impossible to falsify, while stones having no digital 'passport' confirmed by blockchain will be banned automatically," Kalachev noted.

However, it will take years to introduce such a system, while much may change in the world in the interim, the analyst said.

Alfa-Bank securities market research chief Boris Krasnozhyonov said earlier that the sector of rough and polished diamonds "was not resting on its laurels," while sanctions are increasingly "cosmetic" in nature.

Those companies facing sanctions pressure will redirect commodity flows to other locations as it would be difficult to cut Russia off completely from the global trade in rough diamonds since it boasts a share of around 35% in production and 40% of global reserves, the analyst added.

"The export of diamonds is a relatively small share of Russian exports, with the main risks from these [sanctions] measures pertaining to Russian [diamond giant] Alrosa.

However, there are doubts that this ban will not be evaded one way or the other given that Russia is one of the main suppliers of diamonds to the global market," Finam's Olga Belenkaya said.

Hostilities intensify between Russia, Ukraine at turn of year

MOSCOW / KYIV

AT the turn of the year, hostilities have mounted between Russia and Ukraine with the latest barrage of missile and drone attacks beginning on Friday.

The Russian forces attacked Ukraine on Friday morning with 158 drones and missiles, including at least 90 air-launched cruise missiles and five Kinzhal ballistic missiles, said Valery Zaluzhny, chief commander of the armed forces of Ukraine.

At least 12 people were killed and more than 70 others wounded in the "largest missile and drone attack" on the country since the start of the conflict, said the National Police of Ukraine.

On Saturday, Ukraine's shelling of the Russian border city of Belgorod killed more than two dozen people. The assault on Belgorod marked one of the most lethal ones on Russian territory since the beginning of the conflict. Russian officials said the death toll reached 26, including five children, after a barrage of rockets on Tuesday.

Russian air defense systems near Belgorod shot down four missiles on Tuesday, according to the Russian Defense Ministry. Over the past 24 hours, Ukraine has carried out at least 50 attacks, including shelling and explosives from drones, said regional Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Monday that Moscow would intensify strikes on military targets in Ukraine, after an unprecedented Ukrainian attack over the weekend on the Russian city of Belgorod.

On Tuesday, Russia launched almost 100 missiles of various types at Ukraine, killing at least five people and injuring 130 others, said Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, adding that Russia has fired nearly 300 missiles and more than 200 Shahed combat drones against Ukraine since Dec 29, 2023.

"No other state has ever repelled such attacks, combined ones: both drones and missiles, including air-launched ballistic missiles. Ten Kinzhal missiles have been shot down today alone", Zelensky said in a video address.

In his new year's speech, Zelensky vowed to boost drone production to "a million" extra in 2024, saying "the enemy will feel the wrath of domestic production".

Meanwhile, US President Joe Biden urged Congress to take "urgent action" to greenlight plans to provide more weapons for Ukraine.

In a statement Friday, Biden said, "unless Congress takes urgent action in the new year, we will not be able to continue sending the weapons and vital air defense systems Ukraine needs to protect its people. Congress must step up and act without any further delay".



Cars burn after a Russian attack in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Tuesday. AP

French President hopeful in New Year address despite a troubled 2023

PARIS

THE next year should be one of "determination", "regeneration", and "hope" for France, the country's President Emmanuel Macron (pictured) told the nation in his Dec. 31 address.

The past year has not been easy for France, with high inflation, deep social divisions over the forced passing of pension reforms, the controversial shooting of a teenager by police, and the constant threat of terrorism.

UNPOPULAR PENSION REFORM

In January 2023, over a million people in France protested against the proposed pension reform bill to increase the legal retirement age from 62 to 64.

The nationwide social movement dramatically disrupted daily life, with Parisian streets infested with garbage due to strikes by refuse workers, and public transport services frequently canceled.

In March 2023, the government used Article 49.3 of the Constitution to force the bill through the French Parliament, leading to an eruption of violence, protests and strikes across the country.

According to France's Pensions Advisory Council (COR), expenditure on the pension system reached 360.7 billion euros (395.26 billion U.S. dollars) in 2022, equivalent to 13.7 percent of the French gross domestic product (GDP). The COR emphasized in its annual report in June that after Italy, France has the highest pension/GDP ratio among the countries monitored.

However, while the French government insisted that the reforms to the pension system were necessary, the COR was not as optimistic about their promised effects.

It projected in its annual report that the pension deficit would be between 0.2 percent and 0.3 percent of France's GDP from 2024 to 2030, while the government had said the reform would bring a balance to pension funds by 2030.

However, the COR has said



that the pension reform will limit the increase in the number of retirees to around 1.5 percent fewer in 2030, and 0.8 percent less in 2040, which will cut pension expenditure.

In his New Year speech, Macron admitted that the reform was unpopular, but insisted that it was necessary for the country.

ECONOMIC PROGRESS

He also reflected on the progress that France made during 2023, saying that the measures taken have allowed France to finance its social model.

The French economy was also resistant in 2023. Its central bank, the Banque de France, estimated that the GDP would grow by 0.8 percent in 2023, although the pension reform protests hit France's economy hard in the second semester.

With heavy investment in green energy and carbon-free industries, France is expected to have GDP growth of 0.9 percent in 2024, with a confirmed decline in inflation.

This mainly results from the tightening of monetary policy since July 2022, unprecedented in its amplitude since the creation of the eurozone.

France's year-on-year consumer price index (CPI) was 3.5 percent in November, the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) said in its latest report. French Minister of the

Economy Bruno Le Maire has said that the government bringing inflation under control after two years of soaring rates represents a "real success".

During 2023, the French government also pushed for many measures to cut the cost of living. From April to June 2023, retail groups were asked to cut prices for a wide range of products.

Meanwhile, the energy tariff shield put in place in 2021, already extended to December 2022 for gas, was also prolonged for the whole year of 2023.

In addition, the government asked the fuel industry to sell at cost price, and granted 100 euros in aid to the poorest workers who have to drive to work.

In April, inflation stood at 5.9 percent, but was brought down to 4.5 percent in June. According to the European Commission, France's inflation is expected to stand at 5.8 percent in 2023 on average, before easing to 3.0 percent in 2024.

VIOLENT PROTESTS AGAINST POLICE RACISM

However, while the French economy recovered significantly in 2023, the killing of a North African teenager by police in June sparked a week-long social crisis in the country.

Nahel Mazouk, 17, was shot dead after an altercation with police in a Paris suburb on June 27, leading to violent protests and riots across the country. The demon-

strations also extended to other European countries, where people also protested against police racism and brutality.

According to official figures, almost 4,000 people were taken into police custody during the riots, including 1,124 minors.

The intensity of the protests over Mazouk's death surpassed even that of the 2005 riots caused by the death of two teenagers of African descent, who were accidentally electrocuted during a police chase. The riots have also impacted French tourism.

According to President of the Paris Tourist Office Jean-Francois Rial, thousands of holidays to the French capital, one of the world's most popular summer destinations, were canceled due to the riots. Geoffroy Roux de Bezieux, president of the Movement of the Enterprises of France, estimated that the cost of the riots would be at least 1 billion euros. Mazouk's death also reflected deep rifts in French society, and among French police.

"This is a moment for the country to seriously address the deep issues of racism and discrimination in law enforcement," said Ravina Shamdasani, spokesperson for the United Nations' (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights.

However, the French government said the UN's statement was "completely unfounded." It was not the first time that the French police have been accused of racism. According to the French television channel TV5 MONDE, in December 2022 the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) expressed its "deep concern" over the frequent and disproportionate use by French police of identity checks, arrests and fines on people of foreign origin.

Meanwhile, Macron has said that in 2024 he plans to continue what he started during his second term: civic and economic rearmament for France. "It's up to us to do it together. It's up to us to choose rather than to endure, it is up to us to forge the path rather than to follow," he added. (1 euro = 1.10 U.S. dollar)

Xinhua

Hamas freezes talks with Israel after deputy leader killed in Beirut

GAZA/BEIRUT

HAMAS announced a freeze on ceasefire negotiations with Israel after the faction's deputy chief, Saleh al-Arouri, was killed on Tuesday evening in an Israeli attack in Lebanon, a Palestinian source told Xinhua.

"We have informed the brothers in Qatar and Egypt of the freezing of negotiations," the source said on condition of anonymity. Qatar and Egypt have been mediating a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.

The source added that Hamas, at war with Israel, rejected any talks about reaching a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip amid escalated Israeli aggression and "assassination schemes" against Palestinian leaders.

Earlier, a Hamas source told Xinhua that several aides of al-Arouri, deputy head of the Hamas politburo, were also killed in the Israeli attack targeting a Hamas office in the southern suburb of the Lebanese capital of Beirut.

In a statement, Hamas confirmed that seven of its members were slain in the Israeli attack, slamming it as a "barbaric and heinous" terrorist act, a violation of Lebanon's sovereignty, and an expansion of Israeli aggression against Palestine and its people.

Lebanese armed group Hezbollah said the attack was a serious assault on the Lebanese people, security, and sovereignty. "This crime will never pass without response and punishment," it said in a statement, warning that the attack signaled "a dangerous development" in the current Israel-Hamas conflict.

There was no immediate comment from Israel on the incident, but Israeli media, citing senior officials, said that the country was on high alert against "a significant retaliation" by Hamas or its Iranian-backed ally, Hezbollah, including the launching of precision weapons at Israeli cities.

"The IDF (Israel Defense Forces) is in a very high state of readiness in all arenas, both in defense and offense. We are highly prepared for any scenario," IDF Spokesperson Daniel Hagari said during a briefing to



A picture taken from a position in southern Israel on the border with the Gaza Strip on Tuesday, shows destroyed buildings in northern Gaza following Israeli bombardment amid ongoing battles between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas. AFP

reporters.

Iran on Tuesday condemned Israel's "despicable" move of assassinating al-Arouri, as well as two commanders of the Al-Qassam Brigades, the Hamas armed wing, in the drone strike in Beirut.

Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati also strongly condemned the Israeli attack that rocked the southern suburbs of Beirut on Tuesday, according to Lebanon's National News Agency (NNA).

"The explosion is a new Israeli crime aimed at inevitably dragging Lebanon into a new phase of confrontation, following the daily ongoing assaults in the south, resulting in a significant number of martyrs and wounded individuals," Mikati said in a statement.

In recent weeks, Israeli officials threatened to assassinate Hamas leaders in Palestinian territories and beyond, particularly al-Arouri, who was accused by Israel of directly being responsible for the "Al-Aqsa Storm" attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, which sparked the current Israel-Hamas conflict.

Al-Arouri, 57, is considered one of the prominent Hamas leaders, and a founder of the al-Qassam Brigades and its cells in the West Bank.

He was imprisoned in Israel for more than

18 years and was deported by Israeli authorities from Palestinian territories upon his last release in 2010. In the same year, he was elected as a Hamas politburo member. Al-Arouri became the No. 2 in the top Hamas leadership body in 2017.



The explosion is a new Israeli crime aimed at inevitably dragging Lebanon into a new phase of confrontation, following the daily ongoing assaults in the south, resulting in a significant number of martyrs and wounded individuals

Can Amrouche's AFCON revolution rewrite Tanzania's football narrative?

By Correspondent Seth Mapoli

WITH just days to go before the African Cup of Nations (AFCON) kicks off in Ivory Coast January 13-February 11, all 24 participating teams have finalized their squads.

Among them, Tanzania's senior national team, Taifa Stars, has generated excitement with its bold selection of young, foreign-based players.

Head coach Adel Amrouche has unveiled a 31-man squad, which will be trimmed down to the final 27 before the tournament begins.

Notably, this squad features a record number of players plying their trade outside of Tanzania, showcasing a strategic shift in the team's composition.

One of the most intriguing selections is goalkeeper Kwesi Kawawa, who made his Taifa Stars debut against Morocco last year.

His experience and talent promise to bolster the team's defense. Newcomer Miano Danilo, a fullback from Spain's Villena CF, also brings fresh energy and technical prowess to the backline.

Other promising newcomers include Twaliq Abdullah, Taryn Allarakhia, Khleffin Hamdoun, Mohamed Omar, and Cyprian Kachwele.

Their inclusion injects youthful vigor and international exposure into the squad.

The emphasis on foreign-based players marks a deliberate move by Amrouche.



Footballers making Tanzania's senior national football team are pictured participating in drills in Egypt recently to shape up for qualifiers for the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations slated for January 13-February 11, 2024, in Ivory Coast. PHOTO: COURTESY OF TANZANIA FOOTBALL FEDERATION

He recognizes the need for higher standards and believes playing abroad can elevate Tanzanian players' skills and income.

This approach not only strengthens the current squad but also lays the groundwork for future success.

Amrouche's squad selection extends beyond established names. He has also called up promising players from Tanzania's leagues.

While their current level may not be on par with their international counterparts, being exposed to the senior national team training camp and potentially playing in AFCON can significantly raise their profile and attract attention from higher-tier clubs.

Amrouche's bold vision and unconventional choices are already shaking up Tanzanian football.

He is challenging traditional thinking and inspiring both fans and players to embrace a new era of ambition

and growth.

His assertiveness could be the catalyst for a paradigm shift in Tanzanian football, paving the way for sustained success on the continental stage.

Taifa Stars key striker Simon Msuva expressed his commitment to achieving positive results in the upcoming AFCON finals.

"On a personal note, this marks my second AFCON finals. We now have a new generation of young players in the team who are eager for success. I am confident that we are destined to outperform our previous editions.

"I urge Tanzanians to continue supporting us. We know they are always behind us, and their unwavering spirit is crucial for the team throughout the competition," he emphasized.

The Taifa Stars face a tough challenge in Group F of the 2024 AFCON, which includes Morocco, Zambia, and DR Congo.

However, the team's recent performances have been encouraging, and they will be hoping to use the camp in Egypt to fine-tune their preparations and build momentum for the tournament.

Taifa Stars will also play an international build-up friendly match against Egypt on January 7 before competing in the Africa Cup of Nations finals scheduled to take place in Abidjan, Ivory Coast this month.

Taifa Stars' AFCON squad announcement has generated a buzz of excitement and anticipation.

With a blend of experienced heads and promising newcomers, the team possesses the potential to surprise and impress on the biggest stage.

Amrouche's forward-thinking approach and unwavering belief in Tanzanian talent could mark the beginning of a golden age for Tanzanian football.



Yanga's vice president, Arafat Haji.

Yanga's official now refutes reports about new signings

By Correspondent Nassir Nchimbi

YANGA's vice president Arafat Haji has refuted rumours circulating that the outfit is out to sign various players who have already featured in this season's CAF Champions League.

Haji stressed the Jangwani Street side is focusing on signing players that are eligible to play in all competitions.

The NBC Premier League defending champion is linked with the signing of Ghana's Medeama SC striker Jonathan Sowah and Ivory Coast's ASEC Mimosas' 20-year-old attacker Sankara Karamoko.

Yanga was linked with CAF Champions League's leading goal scorer Karamoko - who has four goals - and Sowah who is having a stellar season in the Ghana Premier League and this season's CAF Champions League. "We want the players that we sign up to settle in quickly and directly help the team in the CAF Champions League," Haji pointed out.

The vice president noted: "Even if we decide to sign those players from ASEC Mimosas and Medeama SC, they won't help us in continental games as they will not play, so there is no benefit."

Haji said: "Our goals for the squad are to find players who will directly enter the squad and play in the continental showdown, so, anyone who will be registered will be the one who has not played at all in the CAF Champions League."

"Fans are now familiar with two signings we made, we have started

by signing up Shekhan Khamis and the second is Augustine Okrah, we expect to add more signings," Haji revealed.

He said that they are currently working on the report presented by the outfit's head coach Miguel Gamondi, who requested the side to bring in a few players during the mini-registration period that has a shortage of good, free players.

"The mini transfer window rarely (a platform for an outfit) to achieve what it desires, so after the registration of these two players, the remaining entries are not many, as we try our best to sign the best players," he said.

Yanga is linked to signing striker Leonel Ateba from Dynamo FC de Douala Club of Cameroon, the forward is currently training with the country's national team as he is expected to play in the 2023 AFCON in Ivory Coast.

Dynamo FC de Douala Club is currently leading Cameroon Premier League's Group A with 24 points from 13 matches played and has not participated in any of Africa inter-club showdowns this season.

The 24-year-old, who has drawn significant attention due to his impressive performance, is seeing interest from significant parties such as Yanga in Tanzania, Abha Club in Saudi Arabia, and Al Shamal in Qatar.

Recently, South African club AmaZulu FC has also entered the race, making a bid to secure the services of the Indomitable Lions player.

Mwinjuma Muumin releases new track

By Correspondent Sabato Kasika

VETERAN Tanzanian dance music artist, Mwinjuma Muumin, has released a new song titled 'Bila Wewe' as he prepares to produce the first album for 2024 with his troupe, Special Band.

Muumin, who has now relocated to Mwanza with the troupe, revealed yesterday the song was recorded in the Lake Zone city last week.

"It's a song that has been composed in Rhumba style, explaining the true love that people have encountered in relationships," Muumin noted.

He explained that one of the stories described in the song is that of a Maasai security officer having taken his (Muumin) wife, adding the song is full of true stories.

"I and my musicians, including instrumentalists like Rashid Sumuni (Solo guitar), Hosea Mgochachi (Bass guitar), and many others have decided to move to Mwanza to continue doing music," he said.

The reputed dance music star said at the moment the music genre has a lot of fans in almost all parts of the country.

According to the talented vocalist, dance music's current scenario is quite different from the past when most of the genre's troupes were based in Dar es Salaam.

"We have decided to expand the scope of music activities and set up our base in Mwanza and we have already seen the benefits of such a move, given there are plenty of dance music fans here," he said.

Muumin further said he has planned to dominate the dance music market in the Lake Zone by performing shows in all of the zone's regions.

According to the singer, his troupe will start with performing in Mwanza and later tour other regions, namely Mara, Simiyu, Shinyanga, Geita, and Kagera.

"If it turns out I'm going to Dar es Salaam, such a trip will simply be for either visiting family and friends or doing shows," the outspoken singer stated.

He stressed: "Our band will, thereafter, make its way back to our base in Mwanza where we have already begun gaining popularity," he said.



Zanzibar House of Representatives Speaker, Zubeir Ali Maulid (2nd R), is pictured receiving a jersey from NMB Bank's Head of Branch Network and Retail Sales, Donatus Richard (3rd L), when the institution handed over sports gear to the House to be used at the NMB-Zanzibar House of Representatives Bonanza slated for January 11 in Zanzibar. The bonanza will take place during the Revolution Day celebration. Others are (R) the House of Representatives Sports Club Chairman Miraji Kwaza, and (L) NMB Bank's Zanzibar Cluster Manager Naima Said Shaame. PHOTO: CORRESPONDENT

All set for 2024 NMB-Zanzibar House of Representatives Bonanza

By Guardian Reporter, Zanzibar

THE National Microfinance Bank (NMB) has handed over sports gear that will be used during this year's NMB-Zanzibar House of Representatives Bonanza scheduled for January 11, 2024 at Mao Tse Tung Stadium in Zanzibar.

The donated gears worth 10m/- include track-suits, football and netball jerseys, basketball jerseys, balls, trophies, and medals.

Speaking during the handover ceremony held in Zanzibar yesterday, NMB's Head of Branch Network and

Retail Sales Donatus Richard said the bonanza that is held on the sidelines of the 60th anniversary of the Zanzibar Revolution seeks to encourage a healthy lifestyle amongst participants.

"We believe sports play a pivotal role in creating a healthy lifestyle for citizens that is why we have been organizing such bonanzas both in Zanzibar and Mainland Tanzania for over seven years now."

"Unlike the past NMB-Zanzibar House of Representatives bonanzas, we have this year invited legislators from Mainland Tanzania to take

part in it," Richard said.

Richard had during the event reiterated the bank's commitment to continue partnering with various stakeholders in Zanzibar to push for sports development.

The official noted: "Development of sports to their full potential can unlock many employment opportunities, especially for the youths."

"We will continue working with various sports stakeholders to ensure the sector realizes its full potential," Richard added.

The Zanzibar House of Representatives Speaker,

Zubeir Ali Maulid, commended the bank for its continued support towards various development initiatives in Zanzibar - reiterating the House's commitment to continue working closely with the bank. "NMB through its 'Close to You' philosophy has been working closely with the Zanzibar House of Representatives. We are glad for the sports gear donated by the bank today and we believe our team will triumph during the bonanza," he added.

The Zanzibar House of Representatives Sports Chairman Miraji Kwaza also

commended the bank for sponsoring the bonanza - expressing optimism that this year's bonanza will be bigger and better.

"We are grateful for the sports gear donated by the bank today. This year's bonanza has been packaged with a lot of fun and I believe it will be bigger and better," he stressed.

The Zanzibar House of Representatives Secretary Raya Issa Mselemu pointed out that apart from sports, the bank has been working closely with the house on various development issues.

'A horrible place to play'

LONDON

IT's a horrible place to play. For all of the motivation that may run through a visiting team when presented with Anfield's place on the fixture list, the hostile corner of L4 looks as difficult to conquer as it has at any time in recent years.

Since March of 2021, Liverpool have lost once at home in the Premier League. That's a single defeat - to Leeds United - in 52 matches, or one loss in 1,031 days.

Monday's battering of Newcastle saw Liverpool move past 100 shots in their last four home league games and yet some pockets of the fanbase point to a side not yet firing on all cylinders. The numbers tell a different story.

As the rain hammered down and the home crowd grew in ferocity with every perceived injustice handed out by referee Anthony Taylor, the unity between Kop and player appeared to mix into something gnarly.

Newcastle's own numbers perhaps sum up how tough the environment was. Eddie Howe's side completed 75.4% of their passes - their lowest mark of the season and well under their average of 84.37%. The Magpies had 12 touches in the opposition box - also their lowest of the season by a distance.

Bruno Guimaraes, Lewis Miley and Sean Longstaff in midfield were all well below their individual pass-completion rate for the season as the rough and tumble of a night on the Anfield turf proved too much.

What a fully firing Liverpool will look like is anyone's guess and it may well be more is needed given Manchester City typically get their own party started at around this point in the calendar.

Jurgen Klopp's side could be tighter at the back, they could be neater through midfield and could without doubt be more clinical. But perhaps this version of Klopp's project is less about a slickness and efficiency and is more about the intensity and energy he has delivered in the past. Liverpool seem to simply keep on powering forward and while on times it proves erratic and misguided, eventually the sheer weight of chances gets the job done.

"You were never safe there," ex-Manchester United player Gary Neville once said of Anfield.

Right now a fire on the pitch and a growing belief in the stands make his words more tangible than ever. A changing cast of players are doing their bit in making sure Anfield remains a horrible place to play.

BBC

Spanish star Hermoso testifies about Rubiales's 2023 World Cup kiss

MADRID

SPANISH World Cup-winning star Jenni Hermoso told a judge on Tuesday that the kiss forced on her by disgraced former Spanish football chief Luis Rubiales was "at no point consensual" and that she had come under pressure to defend his actions.

Arriving at the Audiencia Nacional in Madrid just before 10:00 am (0900 GMT), the 33-year-old went to testify before Judge Francisco de Jorge, who is investigating Rubiales on allegations of sexual assault and coercion.

"Now everything is in the hands of the justice system and that's all I can say," she told reporters on leaving court several hours later.

A judicial source told AFP that she had "ratified the statement made at the public prosecutor's office that the kiss was completely unexpected and at no point was it consensual".

During the incident on August 20, the then head of Spain's RFEF football federation held her head in both hands and forcibly kissed her on the lips after Spain won the World Cup in Australia.

He has said the act was "a consensual peck" but Hermoso has insisted it was not.

She filed a lawsuit against him in September and told the judge she had come under pressure to defend Rubiales, both on the flight back from Australia and on a subsequent team holiday to Ibiza in the Balearic Islands.

"After the event, the situation experienced by the victim, both on the flight back to Spain and during her stay in Ibiza was one of constant harassment by the parties under investigation, which disrupted her normal life, causing her anxiety and distress," the source said, quoting Hermoso's testimony.

- Fine or up to 4 years prison -

Under Spanish law, a non-consensual kiss can be considered sexual assault - a criminal category that groups all types of sexual violence. Penalties for such a kiss range from a fine to four years in prison.

The 46-year-old Rubiales, who is subject to a restraining order banning him from being within 200 metres (yards) of Hermoso, is also accused of "coercion" for allegedly pressuring her to justify his actions, which were broadcast live round the world.

The kiss provoked widespread outrage and prompted his suspension by world football governing body FIFA.

Rubiales appeared in court on September 15. In October, the judge quizzed three others over allegations they also pressured Hermoso - former women's coach Jorge Vilda, men's team director Albert Luque and RFEF marketing boss Ruben Rivera.

Numerous other witnesses have testified in court over the pressure faced by Hermoso, among them two-time Ballon d'Or winner Alexia Putellas and two other Spanish teammates.

AFP

Five talking points from the first half of the Premier League season

LONDON

LIVERPOOL lead the way in a tantalisingly poised Premier League title race heading into 2024 with just six points separating the top five.

Champions Manchester City are ominously poised to strike in the new year despite a dip in form from last season's treble winners, while Arsenal, Aston Villa and Tottenham are also in the mix.

But it has been a disastrous start for some of the other pre-season big spenders. Manchester United, Newcastle and Chelsea are mired in mid-table having lost a combined 26 games.

At the bottom, the promoted trio of Sheffield United, Burnley and Luton occupy the bottom three, but Everton's 10-point deduction has put their 70-year stay in the top flight at risk.

AFP Sports looks at five talking points from the opening half of the season.

*New-look Liverpool back in the hunt

Last season marked the end of an era for the Reds as a tired-looking squad sank to fifth just 12 months after coming close to an unprecedented quadruple.

There have been some teething problems after a midfield overhaul in the summer and Darwin Nunez's erratic form in front of goal is still to justify the £85 million (\$108 million) splash on the Uruguayan in 2022.

But Liverpool are back to the position they have often found themselves under Jurgen Klopp as City's biggest threat.

A demolition of Newcastle on Monday, that should have been more comfortable than a 4-2 scoreline suggests, took Klopp's men three points clear at the top and five ahead of City and Arsenal.

The experienced core of goalkeeper Alisson Becker, captain Virgil van Dijk and top scorer Mohamed Salah have all re-found their best form.

But Liverpool must cope without Salah for up to a month



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah celebrates after scoring during their English Premier League match against Newcastle United held at Anfield Stadium in Liverpool on Monday. Agencies

now as he departs to lead Egypt at the Africa Cup of Nations.

*City still the team to beat

Prior to jetting off to win the Club World Cup last month, City had won just one of their previous six league games to give the contenders to their throne hope.

However, Pep Guardiola's men enjoyed the best festive season as they added a fifth trophy of 2023 to their haul in Saudi Arabia and then watched all of their title rivals drop points.

City have a game in hand to cut their five-point deficit to Liverpool and look set to come on strong like they did last season to reel in Arsenal at the top of the table.

Kevin De Bruyne is nearing a return from a hamstring injury that has kept him out since the opening game of the season and Erling Haaland should also be fit by the time City return to Premier League action in mid-January at Newcastle.

The fixture list is also kind for City to build momentum.

Pep Guardiola's men will not face another side currently in the top six until they travel to Liverpool on March 9.

*Fortress Villa Park

Villa's stunning rise under Unai Emery has been built on a phenomenal home record.

Only bottom-of-the-table Sheffield United have escaped with a point from 10 games at Villa Park this season, which has included notable scalps over City and Arsenal.

Many doubt Villa's ability to last the course in the title race, but they are at the very least well in the running to qualify for the Champions League for the first time.

*Miserable Man Utd

After a positive first season under Erik ten Hag, United were hoping to kick on and challenge for a first league title in over a decade.

Instead, they lost 14 times in all competitions before the turn of the year -- the most the Red Devils have suffered since the

1930/31 season.

Ten Hag's men sit eighth, 14 points off the top and nine adrift of even the top four.

A lengthy injury list has played its part, but United's persistent lack of value for money in the transfer market has been a bigger issue.

Rasmus Hojlund has scored just one league goal since his £72 million arrival from Atalanta, £55 million midfielder Mason Mount has rarely featured and a series of mistakes from goalkeeper Andre Onana, who cost £47 million, saw United dumped out of the Champions League group stages.

A new era has just begun at Old Trafford with British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe taking a 25 percent stake in the club and control of sporting operations.

But a huge amount of work lies ahead of Ratcliffe's INEOS group to lead United back to the promised land at the top of the Premier League.

*Chelsea's billion pound flop

Yet, United are arguably not even the biggest flops of the season as Chelsea sit three points further back and 10th in the table despite a world record spend in the transfer market.

The Blues have splashed out over £1 billion on new players in just three transfer windows under the ownership of American Todd Boehly's consortium.

In that time Chelsea have spiralled down the table under four different managers.

Mauricio Pochettino hinted after a 2-0 defeat at Everton last month that he could be forced into the transfer market again in January to add some much-needed goal threat.

And there is widespread discontent among the Chelsea fanbase that academy graduate Conor Gallagher could be sold to rivals Tottenham to help balance the books in January and comply with financial fair play rules.

AFP

Sir Jim Ratcliffe makes first United visit as new £1.03bn investor with Ten Hag meeting booked in

By James Ducker

SIR Jim Ratcliffe is expected to meet Erik ten Hag and the Manchester United players this week as part of his first visit to the club since his £1.03 billion investment was announced 10 days ago.

The Ineos founder held the first of what are expected to be a number of informal meetings at Old Trafford on Tuesday after flying into Manchester.

Ratcliffe is expected to spend a few days at the club this week when he is also due to meet with Ten Hag and the United players at their Carrington headquarters.

Ineos have been given full control of football operations by the Glazer family as part of the deal that will see them take a 29 per cent stake in the club subject to Premier League approval.

Under the terms of the agreement, United's current hierarchy must run any big football decisions, such as signings, loans and changes to personnel including the manager, by Ineos while the deal awaits

the green light.

That is not expected to come until next month but Ineos want to take as many soundings as possible in the interim as part of a scoping exercise.

Ten Hag's squad were on a day off on Tuesday but are due back in on Wednesday when Ratcliffe plans more talks with staff.

Sir Dave Brailsford, Ineos' director of sport, had met with Ten Hag and United staff at Carrington on Sunday as part of a guided tour by interim chief executive Patrick Stewart and football director John Murtough.

Brailsford - who watched United's 3-2 win over Aston Villa and 2-1 loss at Nottingham Forest from the stands - is conducting an audit of the club's football operation ahead of anticipated changes.

Ineos are expected to appoint a new director of football in a bid to dramatically improve United's poor recruitment record.

Ten Hag has a joint veto on transfers with the recruitment team as part of his deal as manager and

is understood to be keen to ensure that remains the case, despite a litany of poor signings during his 19 months in charge.

Twelve months after signing Netherlands striker Wout Weghorst on loan from Burnley, Ten Hag is again on the lookout for a centre-forward this month. Unless United can raise considerable funds through sales, Ten Hag is likely to be restricted to another loan deal.

THE TELEGRAPH



Sir Jim Ratcliffe makes first United visit as new £1.03bn investor. Agencies

Gwiji by David Chikoko



SPORT

Five talking points from the first half of the Premier League season

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5 TO NIGHT @ 9:00

EATV THURSDAY

11:00 DADAZ
12:00 KIPENGA XTRA
13:00 MOVIE
13:55 Dondoo za Michezo
14:00 MOVIE
14:30 Ujenzi (r)
15:00 Funguka
15:30 Ubungo Kids
16:00 Zote Kuntu
16:55 Dondoo za Michezo
17:00 SSELEKT
17:55 Kurasa
18:00 Kati Za Wana
18:30 #HASHTAG
19:00 EATV SAA 1
20:00 DADAZ (r)
21:00 TOP 10
21:30 Zote Kuntu
23:00 Kurasa
23:05 EATV SAA 1

TOP 10
It is a list of the hottest Bongo Flava music videos that are loved by the viewers

eastafrica RADIO

05:00 Supa Breakfast
09:00 MAMAMIA
12:00 Kipenga Xtra
13:00 Planet Bongo
16:00 EA Drive
19:00 Kipenga
21:00 The Cruise

88.1FM
DAR ES SALAAM



Council of East and Central Africa Football Associations (CECAFA) president, Wallace Karia.

All set for crucial CECAFA General Assembly in Kenya

By Correspondent Nassir Nchimbi & Agencies

THE Council of East and Central Africa Football Associations (CECAFA) will hold its non-elective General Assembly in Mombasa, Kenya, on February 16, 2024.

Auka Gecheo, the CECAFA Executive Director, communicated this information to all 12 Member Associations earlier this week, marking a vital step in the regional football calendar.

"Among other things, the Assembly will receive, discuss, and ratify the CECAFA competitions and the calendar for 2024/2025," Gecheo stated.

The agenda for the Assembly includes the reception, discussion, and ratification of CECAFA competitions and the calendar for the 2024/2025 period.

Additionally, members will review the CECAFA financial report for the year 2023, among other emerging matters.

Noteworthy events scheduled for 2024 include the AFCON U-17 and AFCON U-20 Zonal qualifiers, Zonal CAF Women's Champions League qualifiers, CECAFA Senior Women Championship, and the Pan African Schools Football Championship Zonal qualifiers, among others.

The previous CECAFA General Assembly took place in Zanzibar on January 6, 2023.

In 2023, CECAFA staged several regional competitions. They include the CECAFA U-18 Championship Pan African Schools Football Championship Zonal qualifiers held in Kenya, and the CECAFA U-15 Championship held in Uganda.

The CECAFA U-18 Women's Championship, played in Tanzania after the tournament's hosting rights were taken away from Kenya, was also a competition that took place in the year.

The last CECAFA General Assembly, held in Zanzibar on January 6, 2023, saw significant outcomes including the re-election of Tanzania's Wallace Karia as the body's president.

The executive committee saw the inclusion of notable figures such as Ethiopia's Isayas Jira Boshu as vice president, Augustino Parek Maduot (South Sudan), Burundi's Alexandre Muyenge, and Doris Petra of the Football Kenya Federation (FKF) as the Women's Representative.

Olivier Mugabo Nizeyimana, President of the Rwanda Football Federation (FERWAF), also serves as an Executive Committee member for the body.

The 12 CECAFA member associations consist of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan, and Zanzibar.

Amrouche open to including John in upcoming Taifa Stars selection



Belgium-based Tanzanian striker, Kelvin John, currently playing for Jupiler Pro League club KRC Genk. AGENCIES

By Correspondent Nassir Nchimbi

TANZANIA'S national senior team head coach Adel Amrouche has opened doors for Belgium-based forward Kelvin John upon future selection for the side if the footballer develops a good attitude and earns more playing time at his club.

The promising Tanzanian goal-getter, now turning out for KRC Genk, missed out on Taifa Stars' selection for the entire 2023 calendar year.

John's woes came about after missing Tanzania's 31-man squad heading to 2023

AFCON slated for January 13 to February 11 this year in Ivory Coast.

John, nicknamed 'Mbappe' by many Tanzania football fans, has been playing for KRC Genk development squad, Jong Genk, since 2022/23.

The 20-year-old attacker has scored two goals and executed four assists for the development squad in 16

games in the ongoing 2023/24 Pro Challenger League.

John, also Tanzania's national U-23 team's captain, lastly earned a senior national team call-up on March 23, 2022, in an international friendly match against Central African Republic, coming in the 84th minute in a 3-0 win for Taifa Stars.

Amrouche has challenged

John to develop and break in the KRC Genk senior team so the attacker can make his way back into Taifa Stars after recent squad development and various players vying for a call-up.

"I unveiled players for the benefit of Tanzania, not individual players, Tanzania comes first," the Belgian-Algerian coach disclosed.

The tactician pointed out: "I am aware of John's prowess but I want to protect his development and (let him) develop if he is willing to do so."

"It is very unfair to compare him with Mbappe - an extraordinary player who is France's national team captain and already taking the world of football by storm," he explained.

"With John playing on the development squad at KRC Genk, I want to protect him, his efforts should convince me to call him while, in the meantime, I select players earning first-team minutes at the club level," Amrouche added.

Tanzania has been pooled in Group F of the AFCON finals alongside Morocco, Congo DR, and Zambia and will kick off its campaign against Morocco to be held at the Laurent Pokou Stadium on January 17.

Taifa Stars' next fixture comes on January 21 at the same venue before coming up against DR Congo on January 24 in the Tanzania squad's last match of the campaign.

Tanzania's envoys, who have currently pitched a camp in Egypt before flying to Ivory Coast for the AFCON finals slated to kick off on January 13, will play against Egypt in an international friendly clash on January 7 and later come up against Senegal.

Yanga secures progression to 2024 Mapinduzi Cup quarterfinals

By Correspondent Seth Mapoli

YOUNG Africans SC is looking forward to a clash with KVZ today at 2:15 pm at the New Amaan Complex Stadium in Zanzibar.

This is not just another group stage match, it is a battle for pride, a chance for Young Africans SC, alias Yanga, to finish their campaign in the group stage of the Mapinduzi Cup showdown with a flourish, and set the stage for a potential trophy run.

Yanga's assistant coach Mussa Ndaw is looking beyond the scoreboard, promising opportunities for players yearning for their moment.

Joyce Lomalisa, Augustine Okrah, Shehan Khamis, and a contingent from the outfit's U-20 team will get a chance to prove their mettle against KVZ today, Ndaw stated.

Yanga's forward Crispin Ngushi revealed: "It's about more than wins, this is about showing what we're capable of, earning the trust of the coaching staff, and entertaining our fans."

"We want to continue this positive journey, and their unwavering support fuels our fire," the forward noted.

Yanga's opponents, KVZ, are well aware of the task at hand. The Isles squad's head coach Ali Muhammad, a seasoned observer of Tanzanian football, acknowledges the challenge.

Muhammad pointed out: "Yanga is a class apart. They're



Yanga's winger, Mahlatsi Makudubela (R), dribbles past Jamus FC's player during the 2024 Mapinduzi Cup tournament's tie which took place at New Amaan Complex in Zanzibar on Tuesday and ended in a 2-1 victory for Yanga. PHOTO: COURTESY OF YANGA

the team I've studied most, and I know we're in for a tough battle."

Resilience though is part of Yanga's DNA. The club has already navigated a challenging group stage, securing the quarterfinal berth with a hard-fought 2-1 victory over South Sudan's Jamus FC on Tuesday.

The Jangwani Street side's journey began with a dominant 5-0 thrashing of Zanzibar's Jamhuri SC on December 31 last year.

The true test for Yanga, nevertheless, came in the Tuesday match against Jamus FC.

Yanga's winger Farid Mussa

found the South Sudan club's net to secure the first goal for his squad after his well-executed free kick from the left flank went straight into the net.

Left fullback Nickson Kibabage's last-gasp winner for Yanga, which came in the seventh minute of the added-on time, was the one that sent

Yanga's fans into raptures.

The hardworking left-back latched onto a well-executed through ball by forward Clement Mzize and easily beat Jamus FC's keeper with a left-foot effort.

"We underestimated them at first," admitted Kibabage, reflecting on the tie against Jamus FC.

The defender revealed: "But we adapted, followed the coach's instructions, and snatched victory from the jaws of defeat. We need to keep this fighting spirit alive and make our fans proud."

Yanga's vice president Arafat Haji is clear about the club's ambitions, revealing: "This historic Mapinduzi Cup is a trophy we crave. The players understand the weight of this competition, and it's a platform for our young talents to shine."

Defender Gift Fred, named Man of the Match in the duel against Jamus FC, embodies the youthful exuberance that defines Yanga.

Today, they take the pitch not just as players, but as ambassadors of a club with a proud history and a hunger for success.

Can Yanga win against KVZ and send a thunderous message of intent to the club's Mapinduzi Cup rivals?

The answer is expected to unfold at the New Amaan Complex, where every tackle, every goal, and every chant will reverberate with the passion of Tanzanian football.

Flexibles by David Chikoko

DEAR, IS THERE LIFE AFTER DE...



...DECEMBER?

