



**Guardian BUSINESS** DSE indices close the week on low note

**Gold bulls set sights on previously dismissed record \$3000/oz level**

**TRA imposes equitable tax on payers**

**Australia's Reserve Bank raises its gold price forecasts**

**China is raising its retirement age**

**BoT to ease digital payment growth to boost e-commerce**  
Page 3

**National school feeding conference sparks new initiatives**  
Page 4

**Stakeholders launch effort to save water sources**  
Page 5

**China is raising its retirement age**  
Page 13



CCM Secretary General Dr Emmanuel Nchimbi has an audience at the ruling party's sub-headquarters in Dar es Salaam yesterday with editors and other senior journalists representing various media outlets. It was chiefly in connection with recent cases of abduction, torture and murder in various parts of Tanzania, some blamed on state organs. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma

## Minister flags off bulk fuel tanks project at Kigamboni

By Correspondent Joseph Mwendapole

**A** TOTAL of 15 fuel storage tanks are to be built at the port of Dar es Salaam to boost capacity and ensure adequate supply of petroleum products.

Prof Makame Mbarawa, the Transport minister, said this yesterday when visiting the Tanzania Port Authority (TPA) oil terminal project at Tundwi in Kigamboni District in the city.

Building storage tanks is part of government plans to expand port infrastructure and positioning Tanzania as a regional fuel hub, he said, noting that upon completion the new facilities will be able to hold 378,000 litres of petroleum products at any moment.

The tank farm construction will take two years, significantly improving efficiency at the

*Building storage tanks is part of government plans to expand port infrastructure and positioning Tanzania as a regional fuel hub, he said, noting that upon completion the new facilities will be able to hold 378,000 litres of petroleum products at any moment*

port, reducing vessel turnaround time and diminishing retail fuel prices, he said.

Oil tankers that overstay at the port are subjected to demurrage charges of up to 50m/- per day, costs that are habitually passed on to consumers, he said.

The waiting can at times extend to more than a week, now set to end with the new storage facilities, enabling ships to spend only a few hours at the port, he said.

The government is committed to making the port of Dar es Salaam one of the most competitive globally, he declared, hailing the start of the project's implementation.

The TPA management and board worked hard to arrive here, he stated, while TPA project manager Hamis Mbutu assured the minister that the project will be completed on schedule.

The management is fully aligned with the government's goal to enhance port efficiency, he said, with TPA deputy director Juma Kijavara earlier stating that the project is billed to take up 678.6bn/-.

It was formally inked on February 26, with the contractor, China Railway Major Bridge Engineering Group, already paid 9.9bn/- to begin the work, he explained.

Wen Hongyuan, a China Railway executive, told the minister that five percent of the project has been completed, citing office construction and site clearing.

Construction work will involve six tanks for storing diesel, five for petrol and three for jet fuel, he added.

## New contracts take subsidised gas cylinders to more than 0.4m

By Guardian Reporter, Dodoma

UP to 200,000 more gas cylinders are being added to enable the distribution of 400,000 six-kilogramme gas cylinders for use in rural areas and among peripheral urban users.

Dr Doto Biteko, the deputy premier and Energy minister, said at the signing of the donations and distribution contracts in the capital yesterday that the government is doing everything possible to lower the cost of cooking gas to make it affordable to people across the country.

While also inaugurating head offices for the Rural Energy Agency (REA), he said the government was working with various companies to facilitate implementation of the national strategy for clean cooking energy.

Underlining that people are demanding quality public services, he described the positions and powers held by top government officials as without much value if people always receive substandard services.

The cylinders will be distributed by Manjis, Oryx, Lake Gas and Taifa Gas

TURN TO Page 2

## 'Abductions, killings tarnish CCM image'

By Henry Mwangonde

TOP officials of the ruling party are joining the fray in calls for prompt investigation into the recent spate of abductions, torture and killings in the country, culminating in the daylight abduction and killing of a senior opposition cadre.

Dr Emmanuel Nchimbi, the CCM sec-

retary general, told senior journalists in Dar es Salaam yesterday that the incidents threaten the nation's peace and unity, and those carrying them out are enemies of the party.

He called for patience in reconcilia-

TURN TO Page 2



**UNENDING HIDE & SEEK GAME FOR TRADERS AND LAW ENFORCERS:** The especially creative or innovative could easily concur in calling this 'Umbrella Roadside Open Market' - for, indeed, that is precisely the role this particular 'backyard' of Dar es Salaam's Mbezi Mwisho commuter bus stand currently plays, though without official permission. Small traders have set up business on both sides of the busy road, making navigation extremely rough and tough for vehicular traffic and other road users. Correspondent Sabato Kasika captured this near-permanent scene yesterday.

## JICA all ready to take up start-up ecosystem uplift

By Guardian Reporter

THE Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has penned its signature to minutes of a meeting setting out an information technology start-up ecosystem enhancement project.

An online entry says that a start-up ecosystem is a network of resources like people, investors, public institutions and companies working together to create an environment for newcomers in the information technology industry to thrive.

"A start-up ecosystem can be a physical place or an online space," it says, with the MoU envisaging start-up

ecosystem enhancement in the Eastern Africa region.

A JICA statement said yesterday that the government made a request for initiating the project mid last year and it is set to take three years starting early next year.

The agreement outlines the project's framework and implementation structure, listing key stakeholders as the ICT Commission and ministries of Information and Information Technology, Industry and Trade, Education, Science and Technology, Community Development, Gender, Women and Special Groups, along

TURN TO Page 2







High Court Judge Asina Omari, a member of the Independent National Electoral Commission, opens an election stakeholders' meeting in Singida municipality yesterday. The thrust was on the updating of the national Permanent Voters' Register, which is scheduled to run in Singida Region from September 25 through October 1. Photo: INEC.

## New contracts take subsidised gas cylinders to more than 0.4m

FROM PAGE 1

firms, while REA will provide subsidies of up to 50 percent to assist targeted sections of the people to access the cylinders, he said.

He recalled the gathering of instructions from President Samia Suluhu Hassan for the government to explore all opportunities to make clean cooking energy available everywhere in the coming months and years.

"There are times when people complain that the agenda is unachievable because gas prices are too high," he said, noting that work is proceeding to reduce

prices so that this energy becomes affordable everywhere.

"We have started with over 400,000 cylinders available at reduced prices, and other forms of affordable energy are also available," he said, pointing at the cylinder distribution contracts as a catalyst to ensure that the goal of achieving 80 percent clean cooking energy usage by 2034 is met.

"It would be a great disappointment to sign these contracts today and then fail to deliver results in the future. Tanzanians expect to see quick results," he emphasised, describing clean cooking energy as a life-saving agenda.

He instructed Energy permanent secretary Felchesmi Mramba to convert energy use in buildings of the ministry to solar, setting an example for other government institutions to reduce operational costs. As the front-running institution in the clean energy drive, the ministry has to use clean energy in its offices, he said, demanding to see all ministry buildings equipped with solar facilities.

During the day offices will use solar power and minimise energy usage at night, thus setting an example for other public institutions, he said, while Home Affairs deputy minister Daniel Sillo described clean cooking energy solutions

in the Prisons Department.

Prisons will eliminate reliance on firewood with a 98 percent reduction in its use, he said, even as improved stoves had reduced firewood consumption by 40 percent from 2016 to 2019.

Hassan Saidy, the REA director general, said that the six contracts elevated to 72.8bn/- have a component of construction and distribution of clean energy systems to the Prisons Service and the National Service (JKT).

The head offices building has taken 18 months to complete, taking up 9.8bn/-, a sharp cut from the 13bn/- set earlier thus saving 3.2bn/-, he added.

## 'Abductions, killings tarnish CCM image'

FROM PAGE 1

forts with opposition parties and rejected Chadema's ultimatum to President Samia Suluhu Hassan on the issue, meanwhile as the special police zone command in the city refused permit for a demonstration and rally preannounced by the opposition party for the weekend.

The top secretariat official said that individuals behind the abductions and killings of ordinary people and political cadres are sabotaging CCM.

"As the ruling party, this is a major concern for us. These individuals or groups could be from Chadema, CCM, the police force or elsewhere. Let us all work together to expose them," he appealed.

He recounted that Tanzania has been a model of unity for over 60 years of independence, underlining that the country is facing a difficult period, with peace and public security under threat.

"This is a serious issue and is central to the party's promise to protect people and their properties," he stated, stressing that anyone threatening public safety is an enemy of CCM. "The party cannot associate itself with such malpractices."

Reiterating his appeal for unity, he said that CCM views those involved in these acts as seeking to divide the country. "A good leader does not react un-

der pressure but ensures that we all work together to end these incidents," he further asserted.

He said the secretariat was holding reconciliation meetings with opposition parties, expressing the desire to maintain positive relations between parties for the benefit of the country.

"Anyone involved in the abductions and killings is clearly aiming to tarnish the party's image," he declared, affirming that this is why the secretariat abhors these acts," he added.

His remarks come at a time of rising tensions in the wake of the death of Ally Kibao, an opposition secretariat member, who was found dead last Saturday, after being abducted on Friday evening near Kibo Complex in Tegeta, northwards of Dar es Salaam.

He was travelling to his home in Sahare, Tanga Region aboard a Tashrif bus, then his body, showing severe injuries including facial trauma by a throw of acid, was discovered in the Ununio area in the vicinity the next morning.

President Samia condemned the brutal act and demanded a thorough investigation, as the development raised alarm among the public.

In a joint statement, European Union (EU) diplomatic missions demanded a thorough investigation into the spare of abductions, torture and killing.

## JICA all ready to take up start-up ecosystem uplift

FROM PAGE 1

with the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH).

A JICA expressed satisfaction in the consultation in designing the project for a start-up ecosystem for their fruitful and constructive inputs, while Dr Nkundwe Mwasaga, the ICT Commission director general said that the commission looks forward to a smooth commencement and productive implementation of the project.

Mukai Naoto, a senior official with the Private Sector Development Group at JICA head of offices remarked that JICA is committed to address

challenges in the start-up ecosystem, ensuring that the project's outcomes are beneficial to the breadth of the population.

The project is intended to enhance the start-up ecosystem by supporting the development of a master plan and action plans to foster innovative start-ups and conditions for their being viable, he said.

It involves pilot initiatives to build capacity among start-up ecosystem actors, conduct reviews and analyses of related policies or legislation. This will enable project initiators to provide recommendations for what should be improved, he added.



National Assembly Speaker Dr Tulia Ackson, currently also Inter-Parliamentary Union President, addresses the opening session of the 10th IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians in the Armenian capital, Yerevan, yesterday. Photo courtesy of National Assembly

## SA President seeks to avert coalition crisis by delaying 'controversial' Education Law

JOHANNESBURG

SOUTH African President Cyril Ramaphosa takes steps to prevent a major dispute within his fragile coalition government by postponing implementation of the most contentious element of a new education law.

The delay comes amid tensions over the Basic Education Laws Amendment (Bela) Act, which has sparked controversy within the 10-party coalition formed after the Af-

rican National Congress (ANC) lost its parliamentary majority in the May elections.

Prior to signing the new legislation into law, Ramaphosa announced a three-month consultation period to address concerns related to the law's language policy. This policy has become a flashpoint for conflict within the coalition.

John Steenhuisen, leader of the coalition's second-largest party, the Democratic Alliance (DA),

has reiterated his intention to challenge the law in court. Although he supports further discussions, Steenhuisen emphasized that any negotiations must protect the constitutional right to mother-tongue education, which he believes the Bela law threatens.

President Ramaphosa has urged coalition members to find ways to reconcile differing views. "We need to accommodate different perspectives within our government," he said.

Passed by the previous ANC-dominated parliament, the Bela law proposes significant changes to existing education legislation, including: Government regulation of school admissions and language of instruction, regulation of home schooling, possible jail time for parents who fail to ensure their child's school attendance.

Others include making Grade R, for four and five-year-olds, compulsory, starting a year earlier than currently and enforcing

the abolition of corporal punishment with fines and possible jail time.

The ANC argues that these changes are essential for reforming the education system and addressing ongoing inequalities. Experts have noted the need for improvement in South Africa's education system, which ranked last out of 57 countries in the 2021 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study.

The most contentious aspect of the law involves

increased government oversight over language and admission policies. This is a sensitive issue related to racial integration and access to education.

The ANC contends that language and admission criteria have been used to exclude many learners, particularly from previously white-dominated schools. While Afrikaans is not specifically mentioned in the legislation, the ANC argues that some children are being denied access to schools that use

Afrikaans as the medium of instruction.

The DA has defended the right of school governing bodies to set their own language policies, citing constitutional protections for mother-tongue education. Opposition has been particularly strong from the Afrikaans-speaking community and civil rights groups like AfriForum, which view the bill as a threat to Afrikaans education and quality schooling.

The Freedom Front

Plus, another party in the coalition, has called the Bela law "ill-conceived," suggesting it will lead to unnecessary disputes over educational rights.

Concerns have also been raised about the law's impact on home schooling. The Bela bill seeks to close a loophole allowing unregulated private schools to operate as "home learners," ensuring they are regulated like state schools.

Agencies



## Minister roots for construction of key facilities to support irrigation project

By Guardian Correspondent, Shinyanga

MINISTER for Agriculture Hussein Bashe has instructed construction of a large rice warehouse at the Nyida Irrigation Project in Shinyanga Region to ensure safe storage of the produce.

He also instructed the establishment of a central rice purchasing station and a rice milling plant along with construction of a 7.5 kilometre road linking the project area to the main tarmacked road as well as a water trough for animals.

Speaking after inspecting the construction progress of the project, Bashe directed expansion of the scheme which currently covers over 400 hectares. He stressed the need to promote Nyida scheme to attract investors, ensuring that local residents can benefit from its development.

"This project has been a long-held dream. I visited it in 2020, and today we have returned to assess the progress. I am very grateful to the government for agreeing to allocate the funds," he said.

The minister explained that the project, which falls under the National Irrigation Commission (NIRC), will include

three dams and construction of another scheme at Lyamalagwa, covering 1,500 hectares with a main canal of 12 km and internal canals extending over 50 km.

Despite limited financial resources, Bashe acknowledged the government's commitment to allocating funds for the projects which will serve two districts: Nzega DC and Shinyanga Rural. He said that the dam with a capacity of 7 million cubic metres and a water management system will prevent overflow that could damage road infrastructure.

"This dam will support farmers through two systems: water from the dam will be used during dry season and rainwater will be utilised during rainy season, allowing farmers to cultivate twice a year," he said.

"Farmers should pay irrigation service fees to ensure that, when repairs are needed, the irrigation fund can serve its purpose."

Raymond Mndolwa, NIRC Director General, reported that the commission was working on plans to build new dams, rehabilitate old schemes and identify new areas for agriculture.



Transport minister Prof Makame Mbarawa (C) with members of the Tanzania Ports Authority staff, various government officials and China Railway Major Bridge Engineering Group Limited employees during his tour of the Dar es Salaam Port yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Joseph Mwendapole

## Geoscientists detect rapid uplift at unique Volcano in Tanzania

By Special Correspondent

GEOSCIENTISTS have made a ground-breaking discovery regarding the behaviour of the Ol Doiyo Lengai volcano in Arusha Region, detecting rapid uplift using satellite observations.

The study, published recently in *Geophysical Research Letters*, is the first to track "transient deformation"—a phenomenon where the land around a volcano swells like a balloon before an eruption.

The research, conducted by Virginia Tech's Geodesy and Tectonophysics Laboratory, reveals that as pressure builds inside the volcano's magma reservoir, the surrounding land bulges. When the pressure decreases, the land returns to its previous state. This insight is crucial as it offers a potential early-warning system for eruptions.

According to the study, this transient motion is a precursor to volcanic eruptions.

"We have been able to detect transient motion in volcanic activ-

ity, which can signal the onset of an eruption," said Ntambila Daud, a graduate student working with Associate Professor D. Sarah Stamps.

"This research could significantly improve our understanding of volcanic activity and help Tanzanian authorities prepare for potential eruptions."

Ol Doiyo Lengai, meaning "mountain of God" in the Maasai language, is unique in that it produces carbonatite lava, which appears black or gray when erupted but turns bone white upon cooling.

The volcano's eruptions pose risks to nearby communities and affect tourism and air traffic.

Records of Ol Doiyo Lengai eruptions date back to the 1880s, with periodic activity noted since then. Monitoring efforts were enhanced in 2016 when Virginia Tech installed six high-precision sensors on the volcano's flanks. These sensors collect data from Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS) to measure Earth's geometric shape, while an on-site seismometer tracks localized seismic activity.

Using seven years of GNSS data, Daud developed computer models to identify potential volcanic signals related to changes in the magma reservoir. The team detected rapid uplift from March 2022 to December 2022, followed by steady-state uplift through August 2023.

"If the difference between observed data and expected patterns is three times larger, it indicates transient deformation in surface motion," Daud explained. "This could be an important indicator of

an impending eruption and assist in eruption forecasting."

This technique not only provides an early-alert system for Ol Doiyo Lengai but has also been applied to other volcanoes such as Long Valley Caldera in California and Alaska's Akutan volcano.

"This approach represents a significant advancement in our understanding of the dynamic magma plumbing system of Ol Doiyo Lengai," said Stamps. "It enhances our ability to predict volcanic activity and safeguard communities."



Dr Ashatu Kijaji (C, in black), Minister of State in the Vice President's Office (Union and the Environment), has a first-hand account of waste processing at an organic fertiliser project in Dar es Salaam's Mabwepande suburb yesterday. Photo: VPO

## Zambia's President fires army commander, promotes deputy

LUSAKA

ZAMBIA'S president has fired the country's army commander Lieutenant General Sitali Alibuzwi, replacing him with his deputy.

A statement issued by State House Communication's specialist Clayson Hamasaka on Thursday stated that President Hakainde Hichilema had in exercise of the provisions of Article 91 (1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Zambia, elected not to renew the contract of appointment of Lieutenant General Alibuzwi as Zambia's army commander.

"The President congratulates the outgoing army commander on his distinguished career in the Zambian Army and wishes him blessings pending his redeployment in the diplomatic service," the statement noted.

Hichilema swore in Major General Geoffrey Zyelee on the same day at State House in Lusaka, with Hamasaka adding that the appointment and promotion was in exercise of the provisions of Section 165 (1) of the Defense Act, Chapter 106 of the laws of Zambia and Article 91 (1) of the country's Constitution.

"The President has since appointed Major General Geoffrey Zyelee as Zambia's army commander and has since promoted him to the substantive rank of lieutenant general in the Zambian Army," Hamasaka further indicated.

He said Hichilema had also appointed Brigadier General Luswepo Sinyinza as deputy army commander and promoted him to the substantive rank of major general.

"The appointment and promotion is in exercise of the provisions of Article 91 (1) and Article 92 (2) (e) of the Constitution of the Republic of Zambia," Hamasaka said.

## BoT to ease digital payment growth to boost e-commerce

By Guardian Correspondent, Arusha

THE Bank of Tanzania (BoT) has reaffirmed its commitment to advancing digital payment services by developing user-friendly infrastructure aimed at safeguarding the public and facilitating affordable money transfers.

Speaking here yesterday during a forum focused on inclusive business between the private sector and civil

society organisations (CSOs), Dastan Massawe, senior financial analyst at BoT, highlighted the pivotal role of financial services in driving business and economic growth in Tanzania.

Massawe emphasised BoT's dedication to supporting both domestic and international trade while ensuring financial security to combat challenges such as online fraud.

He noted that existing policies complement innovative systems de-

signed to enhance transaction security among various traders.

"Many businesses are still underserved by formal financial services as a significant number operate outside formal systems, missing out on capital opportunities," he said.

Nasim Losai, head of programmes at the Foundation for Civil Society (FCS) said that the organisation implements a three-year project aimed at empowering women, youth and

people with disabilities by helping them understand their fundamental rights related to business and finance.

"There are numerous opportunities and benefits available but not all groups can access them. This is why FCS has initiated this project to reach all groups," Losai said.

Mary Msuya, executive secretary of the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority's Consumer

Consultative Council (TCRA - CCC), noted that technology has greatly simplified access to inclusive financial services through mobile transactions.

She cited TCRA statistics from June 2024, which show that 76.6 million active mobile phone lines with 55.7 million used for financial transactions and 39.3 million accessing the internet.

Msuya stressed the importance

of protecting personal information with financial service providers during registration, pointing out that some providers have proven untrustworthy.

Perodius Makubi, a representative from the Ministry of Industry and Trade, said that while online business offers many advantages, it also presents challenges, including individuals deviating from intended goals and causing disruptions.



## Govt invests 3.9bn/- for upgrade of Ibanda-Kyerwa National Park

By Guardian Correspondent

IN an effort to boost the western tourism circuit, the government has committed 3.9bn/- for infrastructure development at Ibanda-Kyerwa National Park in Kagera Region.

The investment aims to enhance the park's facilities and improve services for tourists. Speaking recently after inspecting the park's infrastructure, Conservation Commissioner at Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA), Musa Juma Kuji, outlined the planned improvements which include the construction of a state-of-the-art tourist entrance complex and staff housing at Kifurasa area.

He stated that the investment reflects the government's commitment to revitalizing the western tourism circuit by upgrading crucial infrastructure and increasing the park's operational capacity.

"Key upgrades will involve a multi-faceted approach, such as establishing a new park gate with essential facilities, including offices for rangers, accountants, a tourism officer, IT support, and an expanded road network," he said.

Additional improvements will feature modern toilets, fresh water wells, an electric fence, staff

accommodations and solar power systems.

"This significant investment not only aims to improve the park's infrastructure but also reaffirms the government's commitment to conservation and tourism, ensuring a sustainable legacy for future generations," he said.

"We are committed to intensifying our efforts to protect and manage our natural heritage."

The construction, undertaken by MJT Crew Co. Ltd and JV Sumry's Enterprises Ltd, is currently at 55 percent and is expected to be completed by November this year.

Project Manager, Issa Mfaume, thanked the government for the timely financial support, which has facilitated high-quality work and adherence to deadlines.

Assistant Conservation Commissioner Fredrick Mofulu, who oversees the park, noted that the initiative will greatly enhance both operational efficiency and visitor experience.

Addressing park officers and rangers, Kuji praised their dedication, calling them the "pillars" of conservation efforts. He reaffirmed their rights to education, allowances, medical care and career advancement, emphasizing the importance of their role.



Opposition ACT-Wazalendo Secretary General Ado Shaibu addresses a rally at Mbawala in Mtwara Rural District yesterday as part of his ongoing party-strengthening tour. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

## Dangote calls on African business leaders to drive continent's change

By Special Correspondent

PRESIDENT and Chief Executive of the Pan-African conglomerate Dangote Group, Aliko Dangote has urged African business leaders to spearhead the continent's transformation.

His call to action came during the recently concluded African Renaissance Retreat held in Kigali, Rwanda.

Addressing the gathering, Dangote highlighted the continent's potential despite ongoing challenges. Africa's youthful population and rich resource base—including 30 percent of the world's mineral reserves and major reserves of gold, cobalt, uranium,

platinum, and diamonds—present opportunities for significant and inclusive growth.

"Moreover, Africa has 65 percent of the world's arable land and 10 percent of the planet's internal renewable freshwater sources. These assets offer a myriad of opportunities for robust and inclusive growth, leveraging our abundant human potential and natural resources to boost prosperity both within Africa and globally," he said.

He emphasized that Africa is at a pivotal moment with its dynamic population, expanding cities, and increasing adoption of innovative

technologies such as Artificial Intelligence. Dangote also reflected on the hurdles faced by his group, which has expanded operations from Nigeria to 14 other African countries across diverse sectors including cement, fertilizers, sugar, oil refineries, petrochemicals, and agriculture.

"Despite numerous challenges—ranging from visa issues and fluctuating government policies to infrastructure gaps and foreign exchange crises—the Dangote Group has successfully built a pan-African presence. We now employ over 50,000 people and anticipate generating revenues exceeding \$30 billion by the

end of 2025," he noted.

The retreat, which Dangote initiated, was aimed at gathering dedicated African business leaders to address the continent's challenges, devise concrete solutions, and position Africa as a viable investment destination despite its obstacles.

"This private, high-level gathering was long overdue. With leading entrepreneurs, heads of major pan-African companies, influential development institutions, global institution leaders, top investors, civil society activists, and respected political figures, this retreat provided an opportunity for candid dialogue and alignment on our development narrative," said

Dangote. He underscored that the retreat was not merely about dialogue but about actionable outcomes. "We come together not just as leaders of our institutions but as visionaries and catalysts for transforming our societies."

It is our collective responsibility to drive this transformation—no one else will do it for us," he added. The retreat's participants resolved to encourage regular high-level dialogue among African private sector and political leaders. They proposed supporting the ratification of the free movement of people protocol, launching the African Renaissance Companies Gender Compact, and

convening top global business leaders of African descent. Additionally, they aimed to reduce logistics costs across the continent and expand internet access for a broader segment of Africa's population.

The retreat featured prominent figures such as Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations; Prof. Benedict Oramah, President of the African Export-Import Bank; former Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf; Adebayo Ogunlesi of Global Infrastructure Partners; former Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn; and many others from diverse sectors.

## Dar RC embarks on gas cylinders distribution to help clean cooking

By Correspondent Joseph Mwendapole

THOUSANDS of women in Dar es Salaam Region are set to receive free gas cylinders as regional authorities launch a new initiative to distribute over 10,000 cylinders to help promote use of clean cooking energy.

According to Dar es Salaam Regional Commissioner Albert Chalamila, beneficiaries, the majority of whom are food vendors, will start receiving gas cylinders next week. He made the statement during the launch of a workshop on clean cooking energy in Dar es Salaam on Thursday, where 1,000 gas cylinders provided by Lake Gas were distributed to women across all districts in the region.

Chalamila instructed government institutions in the region to donate 300 gas cylinders by the end of this month, as part of an initiative to reduce reliance on charcoal and firewood.

"I see many government institutions represented here today, I direct the Regional Administrative Secretary to send a letter to all institutions, requesting them to donate gas cylinders to the Regional Commissioner's office. These will be dis-

tributed to women to protect their health by reducing dependence on charcoal and firewood," he said.

He emphasized that the successful implementation of clean cooking energy initiatives relies heavily on the support of various government institutions.

"The goal of this strategy is to safeguard women's health by minimizing their use of charcoal and firewood which have significant health risks."

Chalamila acknowledged the efforts of clean energy stakeholders who have contributed resources to support the initiative. He also announced a cooking festival using clean energy, scheduled for September 23, where the first 1,000 attendees will each receive 20,000/-.

"I encourage all food vendors and barbecue operators to attend the festival in large numbers. I will do my best to attract many customers to ensure it's a successful business day for you," he said.

He further instructed the Regional Administrative Secretary to approach university heads and other education institutions to donate between 100 and 200 gas cylinders to the Regional Commissioner's office.



Victor Byemelwa, communications and stakeholder relations manager with Kilombero Sugar Company, briefs journalists in Kilombero District on Thursday on Kilombero Valley Sugarcane Farmers Exhibition scheduled for October 10 through 12. The event is meant to equip farmers with knowledge on innovative and modern sugarcane farming technologies. He is with Kilombero Joint Enterprises Cooperatives Society manager James Mayunga (L) and African Wildlife Foundation manager Clarence Msafiri. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

## National school feeding conference in Dodoma inspires new initiatives

By Special Correspondent

TANZANIA has reaffirmed its commitment to providing free primary school education, removing the financial burden of schooling from parents.

However, parents are still expected to contribute to school meals, with arrangements varying according to each school's resources and the local community's economic conditions.

This was said during a recent National School Feed-

ing Conference, held in Dodoma, bringing together a wide range of stakeholders, including teachers, students, researchers, international organisations, policymakers, civil society groups, and private sector representatives.

The conference aimed to enhance awareness, share best practices, and foster collaboration on the critical issue of school feeding.

Dr Penina Muoki, programme manager at HarvestPlus, participated as a panelist and highlighted the work

of HarvestPlus Tanzania.

Her recommendations focused on integrating biofortified crops into school meals and strengthening private sector engagement to enhance the supply chain for healthy diets in schools.

These recommendations align with HarvestPlus' efforts in Tanzania through the Advancing Availability of Biofortified Foods for Institutional Markets project, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation via AGRA.

"This three-year initiative

aims to improve value chains for biofortified iron and zinc-enriched beans and vitamin A maize, and to promote locally grown school feeding. The project targets 400,000 schoolchildren and seeks to build a sustainable delivery system for these biofortified crops within school feeding programs in Tanzania," she said.

The conference also showcased various initiatives to ensure food availability in schools, including the establishment of school gardens.

Managed primarily by students as part of the Education for Self-Reliance initiative, the gardens contribute a diverse range of foods to school meals and were introduced by the Ministry of Education in 2023.

The event provided an opportunity to strengthen the implementation of school feeding projects through collaboration among multiple stakeholders. Their joint efforts are vital for creating sustainable school meal programs that utilize locally pro-

duced staple foods.

Additionally, the conference highlighted significant efforts in value chain development, such as improving access to early generation seeds, enhancing seed distribution, and establishing market linkages for seeds and grains. These measures aim to boost agricultural productivity and support farmers by ensuring access to high-quality seeds and efficient distribution channels.

The conference also addressed the issue of maize

dehulling, a process that reduces nutrient content. Providing guidelines on this practice will help schools maintain the nutritional integrity of maize used in meals.

Furthermore, the conference emphasised the need for policies that prohibit the sale of unhealthy foods in school canteens. By restricting access to high-energy, unhealthy foods, schools can promote better eating habits and improve student health outcomes.



## Morocco confirms first mpox case in current outbreak wave

RABAT

MOROCCO has confirmed a case of mpox in a man in the city of Marrakech, health ministry said yesterday.

This is the first such discovery since the current outbreak was declared a public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organization (WHO) last month.

That was in response to the rapid spread of a new variant, or clade, of the virus in central Africa. The Moroccan authorities have not said which variant the man has.

The health ministry said he is receiving treatment and is in a stable condition.

Moroccan authorities are tracing and monitoring the health of all the people the man has had contact with. None were showing any symptoms, the statement released on Thursday afternoon said.

Mpox can be spread through close person contact with someone who is infected.

It can also be spread through touching objects which have been contaminated by the virus, such as bedding, clothing and towels.

The infection can clear up on its own and lasts between 14 and 21 days.

But in some cases it is fatal, particularly for vulnerable groups including small children.

Serious cases can see lesions attack the whole of the body, especially the mouth, eyes and genitals.

Treatment involves taking care of the rash, helping manage the pain, and preventing complications, the WHO said.

In 2024, more than 20,000 cases and 500 deaths have been recorded across 14 African countries. The Democratic Republic of Congo is at the centre of the outbreak with more than 5,000 cases this year.

Vaccines, which are thought to be a vital measure in preventing the spread, have arrived in DR Congo, but because of logistical challenges it could be several weeks before they arrive in the most affected areas in the east of the country.

When declaring the outbreak a public health emergency on 14 August, WHO director-general Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said it was "clear that a co-ordinated international response is needed to stop these outbreaks and save lives."



**Serious cases can see lesions attack the whole of the body, especially the mouth, eyes and genitals**



Natural Resources and Tourism minister Dr Pindi Chana (2nd-L) inspects a guard of honour mounted by Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority rangers in the course of her tour of Karatu District, Arusha Region, yesterday. Photo courtesy of NR&T ministry

## Africa faces critical shortage of public health workers, says CDC

By Special Correspondent

AFRICA faces "critical shortage" of public health workers, according to the African Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC).

In response to the gaps revealed by the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a call across the continent for substantial expansion and reinforcement of Africa's pool of researchers and practitioners.

In celebration of its 10th anniversary this year, the Africa Research, Implementation Science, and Edu-

cation (ARISE) Network, which includes the Africa Academy for Public Health (AAPH) and universities in ten African countries—Botswana, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda—has committed to addressing this issue.

Researchers from Harvard Chan School, in collaboration with ARISE, have conducted an assessment of public health doctoral training in Africa, identifying key areas for development as the initial step towards establishing a new doctoral programme.

The assessment, published in May in *Lancet Public Health*, offers six recommendations for improvement. These recommendations can be realised through equitable partnerships between universities, research centres, and national, regional, and global public health institutions.

Building on these findings, ARISE is working to develop new doctoral education opportunities at its partner universities. Each institution will likely oversee its own degree programme, but mechanisms will be put in place to facili-

tate the sharing of expertise across the network. This initiative aims to strengthen connections between universities and national research and public health institutes, enhancing the existing workforce and addressing major health challenges in Africa.

Since its inception, ARISE has been involved in training programmes, with more than 350 African scientists participating. Notably, the network has run a programme called WASHA Takwimu (Kiswahili for "ignite data"), which focuses on data science research.

ARISE has also collaborated on research training programmes in nutrition, infectious diseases, and HIV implementation science.

Wafae Fawzi, who leads ARISE at the School and is the Richard Saltonstall Professor of Population Sciences and professor of nutrition, epidemiology, and global health, emphasised the significance of this new doctoral training programme. "We have a crucial opportunity to address Africa's public health worker shortage through collaborative efforts like this new programme. By expanding educa-

tion and building expertise across our network, we can empower the next generation of African researchers and practitioners to tackle health challenges in innovative ways," he said.

Adolescent health is one of the proposed focus areas for the doctoral training programme. With Africa having the world's youngest and fastest-growing population—its median age is just 19—addressing the health needs of adolescents is an urgent priority.

Over the past decade, ARISE has advanced adolescent health



Serengeti district administrative secretary Angelina Marko (3rd-R) pictured in Mugumu town yesterday presenting one of several sewing machines donated by World Changer Vision Tanzania College to its tailoring programme graduates. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

## Stakeholders launch effort to save water sources in Monduli District

By Guardian Correspondent, Monduli

CONSERVATION stakeholders from both within and outside the country have begun taking deliberate steps to save water sources at risk of drying up in Serela and Losimingori indigenous forests in Monduli District, Arusha Region.

The water sources which are crucial for some of the district's wards, have been severely damaged due to indiscriminate deforestation for firewood and the construction of housing for pastoral communities.

In response to the damage, Maasai Pastoralist Development Organisation (MPDO-Lareto) with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has introduced a beekeeping project for residents of Serela and Repruko wards.

Baraka Laizer, MPDO-Lareto director said yesterday that the project aims to provide an economic alternative to reduce deforestation in the forests.

"Since we launched this beekeeping project in the areas, the community has stopped damaging the Serela and Losimingori indigenous forests," he said.

"Our goal is to protect the environment and address climate change impact in this region with vital water sources. Overall, this project focuses on conserving and preserving these water sources. Currently, we are working to build the capac-

ity of the committees involved in environmental conservation and protection of the sources in the respective villages."

Amani Sekino, MDPO Lareto project coordinator, stated that more than 60 women have already been provided with beekeeping projects and were beginning to benefit economically.

"Many women from pastoral communities rely on cutting trees from the forests for their livelihood. Therefore, to motivate them to abandon the destruction of the Serela and Losimingori forests and protect these water sources, we introduced this economic project," he said. Nalembo Ole Shulu, a beneficiary from Enywata Maa group and a resident of Monduli, shared how the project has started to change their lives. She said that the project has provided a source of income through honey sales. "We now produce various bee products which are different from just harvesting honey as we used to do," she said.

Professionally, bees produce many valuable products that benefit health and economic development such as wax, bee venom, bee milk, pollen, honey and propolis.

Isaac Joseph, Chairman of the Monduli District Council, expressed support for the project, noting that it is a significant aid in restoring damaged environment caused by deforestation for construction and firewood in some villages.

## Zambia joins UN Water Convention amidst severe drought, water scarcity

LUSAKA

IN efforts to address severe drought and ongoing water scarcity, Zambia has become the 55th member of the UN Water Convention, an international treaty dedicated to the protection and management of transboundary watercourses and lakes.

This marks Zambia as the 12th African country to join the Convention, following the recent accessions of Côte d'Ivoire and Zimbabwe.

Zambia's decision to join the Convention comes in response to a National Crisis declared in February 2024, due to a debilitating drought that has significantly impacted the country's food and energy production.

Home to over 21 million people and situ-

ated within the Zambezi and Congo River basins, Zambia faces acute challenges related to water management.

The UN Water Convention, formally known as the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, provides a global framework for the cooperative management of shared water resources.

Sonja Koeppel, Secretary to the Water Convention, emphasised that Zambia's accession is a pivotal step in advancing its transboundary water cooperation efforts. Koeppel added that Zambia will be formally celebrated as a new Party during the 10th session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) in Ljubljana, Slovenia, from 23-25 October 2024. This recognition is expected to fur-

ther encourage global participation in the Convention.

Engineer Collins Nzovu, Zambia's Minister of Water Development and Sanitation, praised the accession as a significant tool for achieving water-related sustainable development goals and supporting global adaptation efforts.

He noted that joining the Convention will enhance bilateral and multilateral cooperation in managing transboundary water resources, which is crucial given the region's ongoing climate change challenges.

Southern Africa, where several countries have recently declared national drought emergencies, is experiencing extreme water stress. Namibia was the first to join the Convention in 2023, followed by Zimbabwe

in 2024, with Botswana and Tanzania currently pursuing membership and Malawi expressing readiness to begin the process.

The regional momentum aims to maximise the benefits of the UN Water Convention and its related tools.

The UN Water Convention, serviced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), offers a unique platform for cooperation and sustainable management of shared water resources, including groundwater. Accession to the Convention enables member states to benefit from community support, experience-sharing, and access to financing.

The latest progress report on the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator 6.5.2, which measures transboundary wa-

ter cooperation, reflects Zambia's commitment to improving shared water resource management. Zambia has increased the percentage of its shared basins covered by operational agreements from 70 percent in 2020 to 77.7 percent in 2023.

Despite the progress, Zambia continues to face challenges, and the Convention's tools and guidance materials are expected to play a crucial role in addressing them. The country's strategic efforts to enhance transboundary water cooperation also include recovering from a cholera outbreak in late 2023.

Zambia is already involved in several basin agreements and is a member of key river basin organisations, including the Zambezi River Authority (ZRA), the Zambezi Wa-





Vodacom Tanzania board chairman Judge (rtd) Thomas Mihayo briefs journalists in Dar es Salaam earlier this week shortly after an annual general meeting of the firm's shareholders. From-L: Vodacom Tanzania managing director Philip Besimire, board member Margaret Ikongo and chief financial officer Hilda Bujiku. Photo: Correspondent

## AU agency welcomes China's support for Africa's agriculture

By Special Correspondent

A SPECIALISED African Union agency focusing on capacity building has welcomed China's pledge to support Africa in further developing its agriculture and addressing the effects of climate change.

At the 2024 Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) held in Beijing earlier, China promised to expand its cooperation with Africa and implement 10 partnership actions over the next three years. China pledged to support Africa's further development in the agricultural sector through various initiatives, including the construction of standardised agricultural demonstration centres.

It would also consider the deployment of Chinese agricultural experts and the creation of a China-Africa agricultural scientific and technological innovation alliance. Executive secretary of the Harare-based African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), Mamadou Biteye, said Africa would benefit immensely from the knowledge, innovation, and expertise of Chinese agricultural experts.

"China is a very important partner to Africa, especially as we come out of the FOCAC Summit and some important announcements have been made.

"This includes capacity building through the deployment of Chinese experts to support agriculture productivity in Africa," Biteye said.

He added that China's continued support for Africa's infrastructure development, particularly climate change-related and resilient infrastructure, is crucial to Africa's efforts to modernise and combat climate change.

## Senegal president dissolves parliament, paves way for snap legislative election

DAKAR

SENEGAL'S President Bassirou Diomaye Faye has dissolved the opposition-led parliament, paving the way for a snap legislative election six months after he was voted in on an anti-establishment platform.

The new election will take place on November 17, Faye said in a televised address on Thursday evening in which he asked voters to give his party a mandate so that he can carry out the systemic transformation.

Analysts say that Faye's political party, PASTEF, has a high chance of securing a majority, given his popularity and his margin of victory in the March

presidential election.

The Benno Bokk Yaakar opposition platform led by former President Macky Sall condemned the move. They said Faye had convened a legislative session under false pretences in order to announce the dissolution and accused him of "perjury."

Faye, 44, won the vote in March to become Africa's youngest elected leader, less than two weeks after he was released from prison. His rise has reflected widespread frustration among Senegal's youth with the country's direction – a common sentiment across Africa, which has the world's youngest population and a number of leaders accused of clinging to power

for decades.

During the presidential campaign, he promised widespread reforms to improve the living standards of ordinary Senegalese, including fighting corruption, reviewing fishing permits for foreign companies, and securing a bigger share from the country's natural resources for the population. He was elected with 54 percent of the votes.

Faye and Ousmane Sonko, the country's prime minister and a popular opposition figure who helped catapult Faye to victory, have blamed the parliament. Their political party, PASTEF, does not hold a majority in the assembly, which Faye says has

blocked him from executing the promised reforms.

In June, the opposition coalition cancelled a budgetary debate in a dispute over whether Sonko was required to issue his government's policy roadmap, with Sonko arguing that he was not required to.

The tensions between the government and the parliament are "unprecedented," Alioune Tine, founder of Afrikajom think tank, told The Associated Press. "It is all the result of the dysfunctions of the electoral process of the 2024 presidential election," Tine said.

Faye's decision to dissolve the national assembly does not come with

out risks, Gilles Yabi, political analyst and founder of WATHI think tank said. The assembly has until the end of December to vote on the budget for next year, but new legislative elections might make it hard to meet this deadline.

The presidential election in April tested Senegal's reputation as a stable democracy in West Africa, a region rocked in recent years by coups and attempted coups.

Both Faye and Sonko were released from prison less than two weeks before the vote following a political amnesty announced by former President Macky Sall. Their arrests had sparked months of protests

and concerns that Sall would seek a third term in office despite term limits. Rights groups said dozens were killed and about 1,000 were jailed.

Over 60 percent of Senegalese are under 25, and 90 percent work in informal jobs. Senegal has been hit by skyrocketing inflation in recent years, making it difficult for them to get by.

The country is also the major source of irregular migration to Europe, with thousands leaving every year on rickety, artisanal fishing boats in search of economic opportunities.

Thursday's announcement came days after one such boat carrying almost 90 people capsized, killing at least 39.

## Report finds scientific freedom 'not yet mainstream' in Africa

By Special Correspondent

A NEW six-country study has found that African continent needs "coherent policy" to free up knowledge production.

The freedom to engage in scientific inquiry, pursue and apply knowledge and communicate it openly remains poorly established in Africa, it has found.

The report, published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), reviewed "scientific freedom" in six African countries: Ghana, Namibia, the Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

Sierra Leone and Ghana score highest among the six in the Academic Freedom Index, which tracks indicators such as freedom to research and teach, freedom of academic exchange and dissemination, and institutional autonomy.

However, there are signs of "creeping erosion" of academic freedom in Ghana, the report states. In Sierra Leone, funding constraints – especially a lack of domestic funding for research – "significantly hinders the expression and impact of scientific

freedom and responsibility in the country."

Only 14 of Africa's 54 countries reference "academic freedom" in their constitutions, the report says. It adds that UNESCO's 2017 Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers, a statement of science ethics to form the basis for science policies that recognise science as a universal public good, has "yet to enter the mainstream discourse in Africa."

Africa's history of colonialism and authoritarian rule has hampered its scientific freedom, with indigenous knowledge systems continuing to be overlooked in favour of Western scientific norms, the report says.

The continent's high dependence on foreign investment for R&D and lack of secure, tenured jobs for scientists also influence its scientific freedom negatively, it says.

Other challenges are mounting attacks on democracy on the continent and long-established traditions of punishing dissent, the report says. For instance, Tanzania passed an act in 2015 that effectively criminalised scholarly data that disagreed with government statistics.



Construction of a Bus Rapid Transit station along Azikiwe Road in downtown Dar es Salaam in progress yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala

## East Africa tops continent's indebtedness list, says report

By Special Correspondent

EAST Africa has emerged as the continent's most indebted region, according to a new report by the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank).

The study highlights a sharp rise in loan defaults across Africa, with the total amount of loans in default reaching a record \$149.4 billion in 2022 – the highest level in three decades.

The significant increase in debt is attributed to the compounded impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and a global

surge in interest rates aimed at curbing inflation.

The report, titled State of Play of Debt Burden in Africa 2024: Dynamics and Mounting Vulnerability, reveals that East Africa, with countries like Kenya and Tanzania among the highest sovereign loan defaulters, has seen its debt-to-GDP ratio rise to 54.5 percent over the past seven years. This is in contrast to Central Africa, which recorded the lowest average ratio of 35.4 percent during the same period.

The study also shows that the amount of impaired loans

has surged from \$112.2 billion in 2021 and \$100.2 billion in 2020 to \$149.4 billion in 2022.

The rising defaults have not only triggered financial crises but also led to a significant decline in investor confidence across the continent. The report indicates that more than half of the 52 countries assessed are either at high risk of or already in debt distress.

Despite these alarming figures, 2023 saw a decrease in loan defaults by 13 percent, dropping to \$129.9 billion. This decline is attributed to many distressed nations beginning

to voluntarily restructure their debts in more transparent and innovative ways.

The report highlights several key contributors to Africa's debt crisis: "other official creditors" (29.4 percent), "foreign currency bonds" (16.8 percent), and the "Paris Club" (22.6 percent) collectively accounted for about 69 percent of the continent's loan defaults in 2022. Specifically, Tanzania defaulted on \$1.3 billion to official creditors and \$4.5 billion to private creditors, while Kenya defaulted on \$305 million to private creditors.

Tanzania and Zimbabwe are prominent among the defaulting nations, particularly with private creditors. Defaults on foreign currency bonds were notably high in Ghana (\$27.1 billion), Zambia (\$3.5 billion), and Mozambique (\$1.4 billion), while significant defaults on Paris Club loans were reported by Sudan (\$22.1 billion), Zimbabwe (\$3.7 billion), and Somalia (\$1.6 billion).

Defaults on loans from China, which made up 3.8 percent of Africa's total loan defaults in 2022, decreased from \$8.8 billion in 2021 to \$5.3 billion. This

reduction is linked to China's cancellation of 23 interest-free loans to 17 African countries.

Despite these efforts, Zambia and Ghana remained major defaulters, particularly with Chinese loans and foreign currency bonds. While only Mozambique, Zambia, and Ghana have defaulted on Eurobond coupon payments in recent years, countries like Angola and Kenya, which have substantial Chinese loan exposure, are leading efforts in bilateral debt restructuring.

The report also underscores that Africa's external debt is

concentrated among a few countries. Ten nations, including Egypt, South Africa, Nigeria, and Morocco, hold about 67% of the continent's total external debt stock.

Over the past decade, the share of external debt has grown significantly, reaching \$1.2 trillion by 2023 and representing nearly 60 percent of the region's total public debt. This shift reflects a move away from traditional Paris Club creditors towards a more diverse mix of commercial and non-Paris Club lenders.

Private debt, which in-



## Africans central banks turn to gold reserves to sidestep economic flux

By Special Correspondent

CENTRAL banks in Africa are turning to gold to protect themselves from economic and geopolitical instability and to diversify their financial portfolios.

In September 2023, the price of gold per ounce was \$1,900. A year later, it is selling for \$2,500. According to the World Gold Council, an international trade association for the gold industry, demand for the metal is expected to increase in the next 10 months despite the soaring prices.

Some experts, such as Carlos Lopes, a professor at the Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance in South Africa, attribute the African central banks' gold rush to the need to protect their local currencies.

"In the last few years, because of inflation and all these movements for stimulation packages and the rest, the returns are extremely low," Lopes said. "On the other hand, gold is going up in terms of price because these big banks are also going after gold as a protection. So, it is a very good investment to go to gold."

It helps that African gold produc-

tion has grown by 60 percent since 2010, according to the World Gold Council, higher than a global increase of 26 percent.

In 2022, Zimbabwe launched a gold-backed currency to curb inflation and volatility in foreign exchange rates.

Ghana and Uganda have been buying gold from artisanal miners to bolster their shrinking foreign currency reserves.



**In the last few years, because of inflation and all these movements for stimulation packages and the rest, the returns are extremely low," Lopes said. "On the other hand, gold is going up in terms of price because these big banks are also going after gold as a protection.**



Zanzibar's Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children minister, Riziki Pembe Juma (R), and Zanzibar House of Representatives' Social Welfare Committee deputy chairperson Nassor Jazira consult at the ministry's offices at the weekend during deliberations on a draft bill on the recommended repeal of Zanzibar's Children's Act No. 6 of 2011. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

## WHO analysis shows urgent rehabilitation needs in Gaza

By Special Correspondent

THE World Health Organisation (WHO) has highlighted vast and urgent need for rehabilitation services in Gaza, revealing that at least a quarter—approximately 22,500—of those injured by 23 July are estimated to have life-changing injuries requiring immediate and long-term rehabilitation.

In its analysis report, titled Estimating Trauma Rehabilitation Needs in Gaza using Injury Data from Emergency Medical Teams, identifies severe limb injuries as the primary

driver of this need, with estimates ranging from 13,455 to 17,550 cases. Many individuals have multiple injuries, and between 3,105 and 4,050 limb amputations have also been reported.

Additionally, surges in spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, and major burns further contribute to the high number of life-changing injuries, affecting thousands of women and children.

Dr Richard Peepkorn, WHO Representative in the occupied Palestinian territory, commented, "The dramatic increase in rehabilitation needs

coincides with the ongoing devastation of the health system. Patients are unable to receive the care they need. Acute rehabilitation services are severely disrupted, and specialised care for complex injuries is unavailable, putting patients' lives at risk. Immediate and long-term support is urgently required to address these enormous rehabilitation needs."

Currently, only 17 of Gaza's 36 hospitals are partially operational, and primary healthcare and community-level services are frequently suspended or inaccessible due to insecurity, attacks, and repeated evacuation or-

ders.

Gaza's sole limb reconstruction and rehabilitation centre, located in Nasser Medical Complex and supported by WHO, ceased functioning in December 2023 due to a lack of supplies and the departure of specialised health workers seeking safety. The centre was further damaged following a raid in February 2024.

The rehabilitation workforce in Gaza has also been severely impacted, with reports indicating that 39 physiotherapists have been killed as of 10 May.

Inpatient rehabilitation and pros-

thetic services are no longer available, and the demand for assistive products far exceeds the available equipment in Gaza. Essential stocks, such as wheelchairs and crutches, have run out, and replenishing supplies is challenging due to restricted aid flow into the region.

The analysis focuses on new injuries sustained since the escalation of hostilities in October 2023. However, many Palestinians in Gaza were already living with chronic conditions and impairments before this escalation, further complicating their situation due to the lack of appropriate

services.

The WHO and its partners will use these estimates to plan for a surge in rehabilitation-related services and to contribute to long-term health planning and policymaking.

In the midst of ongoing hostilities, ensuring access to essential health services, including rehabilitation, is critical to prevent further illness and death. The WHO reiterates its call for a ceasefire to facilitate the rebuilding of the health system and address the escalating needs.



Dar es Salaam regional commissioner Albert Chalamila (C) pictured on Thursday cutting the ribbon to launch the distribution of a total of 1,000 cooking gas cylinders which Lake Gas Ltd has said it is determined to present to residents of all districts across the region. Photo: Correspondent Joseph Mwendapole

## Optimisation of technology needed to curb cost-squeeze

By Special Correspondent

IN an era marked by rising costs and market instability, agricultural experts have urged farmers to prioritise profitability and efficient input rather than just production.

During an Agriculture conversation panel discussion held at Nampo Cape in South Africa midweek, agricultural experts addressed the pressing issue of the cost-price-squeeze effect.

The cost-price-squeeze effect, a well-known challenge in agriculture, occurs when prices of input such as seeds, fertilizers, technology and machinery, increase at a faster rate than output prices. This phenomenon significantly impacts farm profit margins, squeezing them between rapidly rising input costs and more slowly increasing producer prices.

Corné Louw, Applied Economics and Member Services lead at Grain SA, highlighted that farmers frequently experience a cost-price-squeeze when the prices for their products decline while input costs rise. This imbalance can severely affect profitability and financial stability.

"The challenge for farmers is to produce more with less, but escalating input costs and fluctuating market prices are creating substantial financial pressure," Louw said. He noted that factors like inflation, supply chain disruptions, and geopolitical uncertainties further exacerbate this issue.

Senekal, another panelist, pointed out that the volatility of input costs, particu-

larly in the crop protection market, is a major threat to producers' profitability. "Managing this volatility is a challenge. For instance, the cost of active ingredients like glyphosate has sharply increased over recent years, complicating pricing and budgeting for farmers," he explained.

To navigate the challenges, Senekal stressed the importance of optimizing inputs. Louw concurred, emphasizing that fertilizers and agricultural chemicals constitute a significant portion of a farmer's input costs.

"Farmers should focus on optimizing these products to enhance profitability. It's not enough to use numerous inputs for high yields if the income remains low. Profitability should be the primary focus," he advised.

The panel also discussed how new technology could help manage volatility.

Another expert, Van der Westhuizen noted that while the cost-price-squeeze is a global issue, South African farmers, lacking subsidies, must become more efficient. "Economic efficiency requires achieving the maximum output for a given level of input. This can often be achieved through new technology or improved practices," he said.

He highlighted that there is no one-size-fits-all solution and emphasized the importance of collaboration among various agricultural stakeholders. Hudson added that while focusing on economies of scale remains a viable strategy, efficiency has become even more crucial.

## South Africa's health train offers free care to remote communities

By Special Correspondent

FOR the past 30 years, the Phelophepa health train has been a lifeline for South Africans in remote areas, delivering essential medical care to those unable to access crowded or distant clinics.

This unique initiative, which began as a modest three-carriage operation, has expanded to include two 16-carriage

trains, significantly increasing its reach and impact.

Today, the train made a stop in Tembisa, a township east of Johannesburg, where it offered free medical services to local residents. Thabang, one of the patients, shared his experience: "I've been suffering a lot from my eyesight. I heard the train was coming to assist people, so I came here. They can help around 150 people a

day, and some of us even stay overnight because we live far away."

The Phelophepa train's services are a stark contrast to South Africa's overstretched public healthcare system, which serves approximately 84 percent of the population. With only 16% of South Africans having access to private health insurance—often beyond the financial reach of

many in a country with an unemployment rate exceeding 32 percent—the train's free care is a critical resource.

The Phelophepa train, operated by the Transnet Foundation—the social responsibility arm of the state-owned railway company Transnet—began in 1994 as an eye clinic. Over time, it expanded its services to address broader healthcare needs. The train now features

not only health professionals but also managers, translators, and security staff, reflecting its comprehensive approach to care.

Despite the growth in South Africa's healthcare budget and public sector employment since the end of apartheid, challenges remain. In Gauteng province, which includes Pretoria and Johannesburg, the health department's budget has

increased from 6 billion rand (\$336 million) in 2000 to 65 billion rand (\$3.6 billion) today.

However, public health expert Alex van den Heever criticises the ruling African National Congress for the current state of the public sector.

For many South Africans, the arrival of the health train brings much-needed relief. Thethiwe Mahlangu, who visited the clinic for an eye check

and a pap smear, expressed her gratitude: "This train is incredibly helpful. I truly hope it doesn't stop here today. It should return, even if it is next year, as there are so many of us who are really sick."

The Phelophepa health train remains a vital resource, bridging gaps in South Africa's healthcare system and bringing essential services to those in greatest need.



SATURDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2024

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

## Placing 3.9bn/- in banks for lending to wildlife investors achieves much more

THOSE enthusiastic about starting development projects intended to pull more tourists to the north-western, western and southern circuits of our country's travel landscape have something to smile about.

This is in the wake of authoritative reports to the effect that the government has disbursed at least 3.9bn/- for upgrading the Ibanda-Kyerwa National Park in Kagera Region. The project is now roughly halfway done.

There is something of a rule of how economies grow quickly in what is usually known as 'first world' or developed countries, and those with rather stagnant or slow growth economies and heavily relying on natural resources, rain, etc.

These are known as 'third world' or 'developing economies', while previously there was a 'second' world - for those that followed a state-led model to relatively high level of economic growth. The rule that separates these economies is that those whose economies grew rapidly after 1945, and in the Far East starting from the 1960s or early 1970s - closed with China's strategic policy shift in 1978 - use private ownership as the key element in economic organisation.

This means that land is occupied by individuals and can be traded, to just about anyone, and most sectors of economy are run as businesses.

The state has a purely regulatory role in some areas, or takes up some key services like health, but government is active, setting aside vast sums for lending to firms to build, maintain, and what have you. The 3.9bn/- spent on uplifting facilities in the north western circuit park is a telling case of how the two models work. In the 'third world' method

all the money is allocated to national park administration, or say the ministry, to uplift the works.

It means that the government may have just that money for a particular financial year, as other national parks also crying out for an uplift wait for another year - to see if they can be considered.

In the other model, the 3.9bn/- would be placed in banks for lending to, say, eight companies obtaining tenders to uplift a national park. The firms would write projects and get big cash.

The cash would not be a break-up of the government allocation placed, say, in two or three banks but actual bank cash, where the bank would look at project feasibility with a proviso that it is unlikely to lose more than 0.5bn/- when any of the various investors pays back.

The 0.5bn/- loss absorption capacity as due diligence is observed in the lending process meanwhile means that prospects of failure are phenomenally curtailed. But the lending will take place unlike in a situation where it is just the market.

Thus, the cash now used to ensure a respectable facelift for one national park would cushion a few banks into lending to eight companies with similar contracts to uplift the viability in terms of infrastructure or service layouts for this or that national park.

They would all enhance park facilities and improve visitor services, where the role of government agencies is to find the anchor of banks to lend rather than find money for the works as the facilities are businesses potentially able pay back.

Africa has under some 60 years of experience with planning and should easily be in a position to grasp any of this, thus forestalling chaos.

## Digital water source maps helpful even if complicated contracting work will remain

USING latest technology applications is becoming increasingly fashionable as more and more traditional project write-ups and financing proposals get wrapped in ICT applications chiefly to maximise impact in various directions as well as to diminish costs.

When the government links up with the development partners to create digital maps for surface and underground water sources, this is expected to diminish surveying by foot, nights out, etc.

Even if ICT shuts out some trained surveyors who could have done the job, perhaps even to greater satisfaction, these experts are retained either as supervisors or casuals to help out; not quite a clear career.

Ease of mapping out water sources helps in starting such projects and, with the government seeking to work with private investors, a lot of projects can be started at the same time - depending on the financial model deployed.

The problem of perception is especially acute in this aspect as adapting to climate change requires many large projects at the same time. Many projects can start if the lending and guarantee funds method is used but, if it is a matter of development partners raising cash for ministry to contract firms to do the implementation, it will take longer.

That is why it is relevant to ask what theme is really an urgent matter at 'Forum CC' - the code for climate change deliberations - namely, whether it is the technology aspect or the financing model.

On the contrary, those who or-

ganised the event focused on the public relations aspect of bringing together youths from across the country to see if they can use ICT, whereas the issue is how many projects could be taken up.

It is the sufficiency of the projects vis-à-vis the flooding chaos, not ICT skills, first.

The focus on ICT and bringing together the youth seems to have in mind not major projects where groups of youths will be involved but individual youth projects where a key premise is to be able to work with ICT applications.

This approach raises mostly empty promises for youths and the anger could be emptied on the streets when they see, rightly or wrongly, that those in offices need few new skills. They know that such costs dry up funds for new jobs.

In any field or contested issue one may seek to look at, steering clear of President Samia Suluhu Hassan's 4Rs and applying the same old model where construction is done by government agencies, at enormous cost and locking out investments and jobs, will not always work.

Many appear to get the point when the president goes back to the public-private partnership theme but there are no institutional initiatives to that effect until orders are given.

Chances are that the orders could turn rather unpopular, with top decision makers reluctant to go too far in the reform direction and hence letting the future organise itself as has often been the case - that is, by just hoping for the best.

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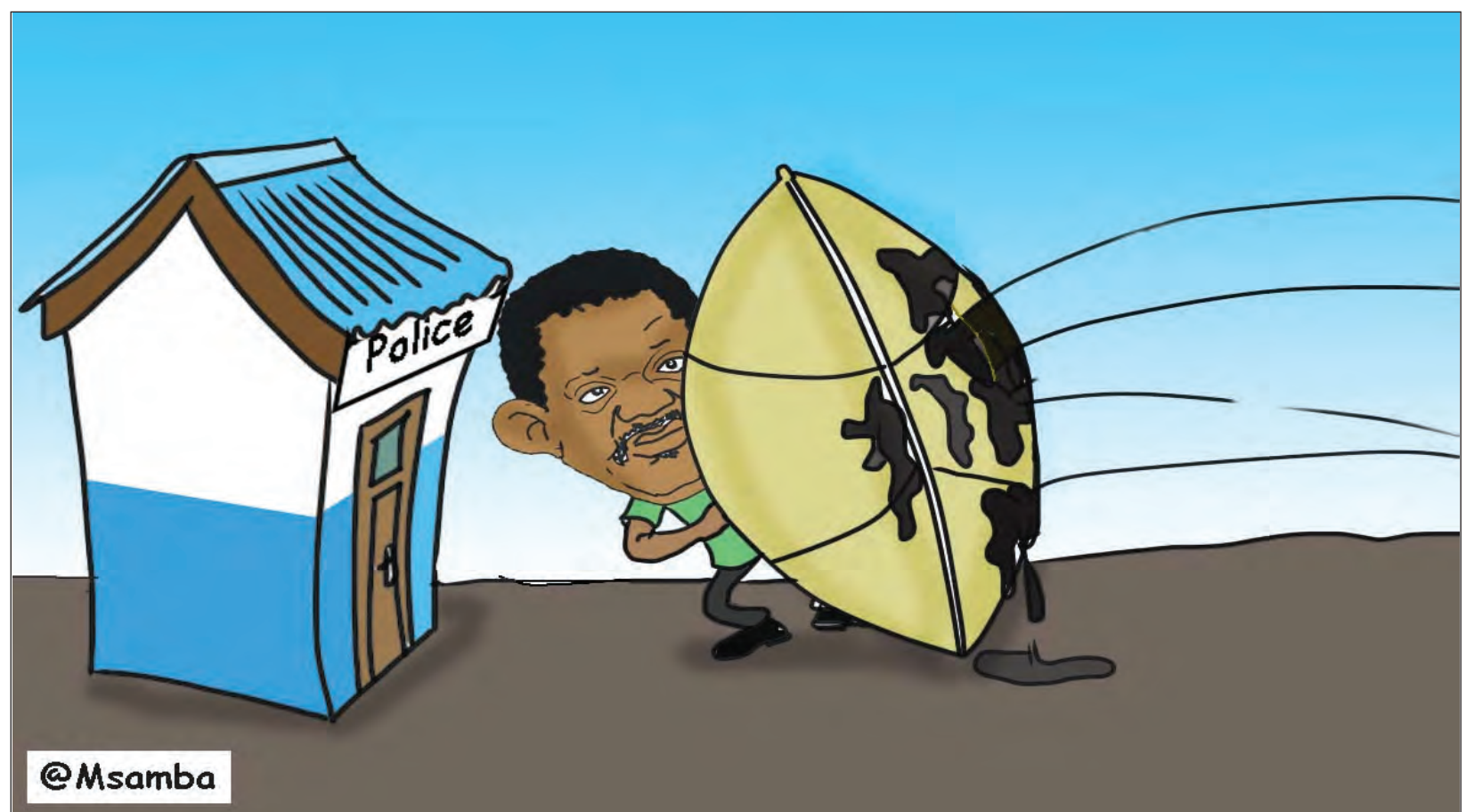
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# New fertiliser and soil health hub takes root in West Africa

By Simeon Ehui and Bernard Vanlauwe

WEST Africa and the Sahel are grappling with a severe soil health crisis that is threatening food security.

Two-thirds of the region's land is degraded, while fertiliser application rates remain far behind global averages.

This has led to low crop yields and reduced agricultural productivity, particularly for smallholder farmers. Unsustainable farming practices and limited access to essential agricultural inputs have worsened the situation, putting regional food systems under severe strain.

The recent (September 2 through 6) Africa Food Systems Forum (AFSF) 2024, held in Kigali, Rwanda, highlighted this urgency again. It brought together key stakeholders to confront the region's soil health challenges head-on.

The discussions at AFSF underscored the need for swift, decisive action in tackling soil degradation, emphasizing the imperative for establishing a transformative initiative that would elevate the region's agricultural future.

In response to this urgent crisis, a coalition of partners had earlier come together and set up the Regional Hub for Fertiliser and Soil Health for West Africa and the Sahel.

The hub, based at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Ibadan, Nigeria, was launched in June 2024, amid high hopes and optimism.

The regional hub is already making significant strides towards improving soil fertility and agricultural productivity and is highly expected to provide the much-needed technical assistance.

This will be primarily by focusing on developing and implementing investment plans meant to improve soil health and fertility through best agronomic practices and soil management strategies.

The hub was established to address the specific needs of individual countries across the region, underscoring the need for integrated soil fertility management to optimise resource use and build resilience against climate change.

Its strategy is firmly rooted in the priorities outlined in the Fertiliser and Soil Health Roadmap 2023 and the Nairobi Declaration from the Africa Fertiliser and Soil Health Summit 2024, two important documents that emphasize the value of this regional initiative.

With significant financial backing from the World Bank and OCP Africa, the hub is proactively revitalising West African agriculture. By prioritising integrated soil fertility management and soil health restoration, it is working towards a more resilient and food-secure region.

IITA, the leading agricultural research partner with a proven track record in advancing crop production in Africa, was selected to host the hub.

Since 1967, IITA has pioneered innovations in soil science in Africa, making it the ideal institution to spearhead this initiative.

By hosting this regional hub, IITA, work-



Delegates at the May 8, 2024 launch of the Regional Hub for Fertiliser and Soil Health for West Africa and the Sahel at the Africa Fertiliser and Soil Health Summit in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi. Photo: Agencies

ing through the Excellence in Agronomy Initiative, is taking a pivotal role in transforming agriculture in West Africa.

IITA's extensive experience and innovative approach is widely seen driving this initiative forward, providing a platform for collaboration and progress sure to empower farmers and improve soil health across the region.

The impact of the hub is magnified by the collaboration of key partners, each contributing its unique strength.

OCP Africa provides tailored, sustainable fertiliser solutions to meet the specific needs of local soils and crops essential for improving soil fertility and agricultural sustainability.

The African Plant Nutrition Institute (APNI) meanwhile advances plant nutrition research and develops training programmes, helping farmers build knowledge and implement best practices in soil health management.

The International Fertiliser Development Centre (IFDC) supports the hub through its expertise in developing and disseminating effective fertiliser technologies and fostering public-private partnerships to ensure that innovative solutions reach farmers.

Accelerating the Impact of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa (AICCRA) serves as a key knowledge partner, offering soil information, knowledge management, agronomy recommendations, capacity development, policy support and advocacy. For its part, Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P) drives scientific and technical advancements through soil mapping, remote sensing and precision agriculture tools.

This is a Moroccan non-profit private research university. Centred on African development, the university is oriented towards applied research and innovation and is engaged in regional economic and human development.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) meanwhile plays a crucial role in aligning the hub's activities with regional policies and promoting best practices across member states.

But what's next for the hub? Moving forward, its focus has shifted to implementation. Following its launch, a technical inauguration workshop was held in June 2024, bringing together representatives from Benin, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo, along with ECOWAS and various key regional and international partners.

The next steps include gathering critical information and refining action plans tailored to each country's specific needs. Bilateral meetings in each country will help define initial focus areas and actions for this year.

AFSF 2024's action-oriented momentum continues to inspire the hub's forward-looking agenda. Stakeholders at the Forum were eager to translate the discussions into tangible interventions, underlining the need for urgent, on-the-ground impact.

By 2033, the hub sees itself increasing yields and income for three million farmers, enhancing soil health across 1.5 million hectares, and helping 1.5 million farmers adapt to climate change.

The Regional Hub for Fertiliser and Soil Health for West Africa and the Sahel represents a significant milestone in promoting sustainable agriculture.

By addressing soil degradation and implementing scalable solutions, it is set to make a lasting impact on West Africa's agricultural landscape.

The focus on improving soil health, building resilience and enhancing food security promises a future where soil health is revitalised, crop yields are increased, and the agricultural sector is robust enough to withstand climate change challenges.

As the regional hub advances its mission, it does not just address today's chal-

lenges but lays the groundwork for a resilient agricultural future in the region.

With continued commitment, dedicated effort and collaboration, it is expected to achieve its vision of fertile, productive and resilient soils in West Africa, paving the way for a brighter agricultural future.

The establishment of the Regional Hub for Fertiliser and Soil Health for West Africa and the Sahel marks a significant milestone in addressing the region's soil degradation crisis.

By leveraging the collective strength of research institutions, governments and private sector partners, the hub is set to transform soil health, boost agricultural productivity, and enhance resilience to climate change.

As it looks ahead, it both addresses today's challenges and promotes cross-learning and regional synergy by fostering knowledge sharing and collaboration through regional hubs.

This reinforces the importance of a continent-wide approach to improving soil health, ensuring that best practices and innovations are shared across borders for greater impact.

AFSF 2024 highlighted the urgency and enthusiasm of stakeholders who are ready to take action. The discussions at AFSF 2024 signalled the shift in addressing the soil health crisis, moving from rhetoric to concrete action. With renewed energy and commitment, the hub is poised to tackle soil health challenges head-on, ensuring a resilient and food-secure future for West Africa.

Through collaboration, innovation and an unwavering commitment to sustainable agriculture, it is turning the tide on soil health in the region - one field at a time.

**• An IITA dispatch. Simeon Ehui is IITA Director General and CGIAR Regional Director for Africa. Bernard Vanlauwe is IITA Deputy Director General for Research for Development and Lead of the CGIAR Excellence in Agronomy Initiative.**



By Jaskiran Warrick and Shreejit Borthakur

# Farms of the future: Just how can AI accelerate regenerative agriculture?

**T**HERE has been a growing focus on regeneration over the last few years. Mitigation is no longer enough.

In 2019, a survey illustrated that 80 percent of US consumers prefer “regenerative” over “sustainable” brands. Regenerative is synonymous with renewal – it goes beyond “doing no harm” to “harm reversal”, a critical theme when discussing the environment. While this is a multisectoral trend, regeneration is critical for agri-food systems. For instance, 34 percent of global agricultural land is degraded and will steadily become infertile to the point that we will not be able to grow food, fibre or feed on it.

**There has been a growing focus on regeneration over the last few years. Mitigation is no longer enough.**

In 2019, a survey illustrated that 80 percent of US consumers prefer “regenerative” over “sustainable” brands. Regenerative is synonymous with renewal – it goes beyond “doing no harm” to “harm reversal”, a critical theme when discussing the environment. While this is a multisectoral trend, regeneration is critical for agri-food systems. For instance, 34 percent of global agricultural land is degraded and will steadily become infertile to the point that we will not be able to grow food, fibre or feed on it.

The agriculture sector is also responsible for 72 percent of all freshwater withdrawals, a critical resource currently under threat. The industry contributes significantly to climate change: 21 percent to 37 percent of global anthropogenic emissions can be attributed to food systems. With such challenges on hand, sector actors need to focus on regenerating agriculture and food systems, especially to feed approximately 10 billion people by 2050.

**Regenerative agriculture: for future food security and resilient food systems**

Regenerative agriculture is centred on building resilient food systems by restoring soil health and enhancing natural resources such as water tables and on-farm biodiversity. Prioritizing soil regeneration ensures long-term sustainability and improves crop yields through healthier, more water-retentive soils. Additionally, regenerative agriculture can reduce agricultural emissions by optimizing input use. At the farm level, it strengthens resilience, making farms better equipped to withstand environmental challenges and, ultimately, leading to more stable incomes.

**Understanding the role of digital and AI in agriculture**

Slightly preceding the global momentum towards regenerative agriculture has been a focus on the digitalization of agriculture. It offers benefits like higher farm incomes, improved environmental outcomes, and better commercial viability when working with smallholder farmers. Research suggests that digital agriculture could boost the agricultural GDP of low- and middle-income countries by more than \$450 billion, or 28 percent per annum. The increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) in agriculture has further amplified these benefits for farmers. For example, leveraging AI and digital tech, the World Economic Forum’s AI for Agriculture Innovation initiative in collaboration with Government of Telangana, India supported



AI has the potential to accelerate regenerative agriculture.

chilli farmers achieve a 21 percent increase in yields, a 9 percent reduction in pesticide use, and an \$800 income boost per acre per cycle.

**Overlaying regenerative agriculture and AI: promising use cases**

Many of the use cases of AI in agriculture have the potential to accelerate regenerative agriculture. We highlight five such promising use cases.

**Geospatial imagery for landscape-level planning**

Scaling regenerative agriculture often requires a landscape approach, focusing on the broader production area rather than individual farms. This allows for holistic management/regeneration of natural resources. AI models using geospatial data can analyze land-cover-land-use change, soil health, and water availability across large land patches, aiding the planning of regenerative landscapes. In Mad-

hya Pradesh, the Forum’s Food Innovation Hub, in partnership with the state government, is working with Skymet Weather to integrate geospatial imagery into landscape planning. Data collected will further be linked with financial instruments to better support farmers in adopting sustainable practices.

**AI enabled digital extension**

Regenerative agriculture relies on tailored practices developed by research universities. Delivering these practices through extension agents is costly, and a low agent-to-farmer ratio leaves several farmers unserved. Technology advancements have improved the economics of disseminating such practices through digital channels. Additionally, large language models (LLMs) combined with Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) models can make advice specific to farms based on localized data. Furthermore, AI-enabled language translations can enable

delivery in local languages in a cost-effective manner, making them more accessible across regions.

**Pest prediction for reduced pesticide use**

The use of pesticides has been quoted as a “global human rights concern,” and regenerative agriculture programmes attempt to reduce pesticide use gradually. AI solutions based on image recognition and hyperspectral imagery can enable both predictive and preemptive pest detection, optimizing pesticide use.

**AI-enabled financial incentives**

A barrier to regenerative agriculture is the lack of financial incentives to make the shift. Financial incentives such as payment for carbon sequestered is complex owing to the high costs of monitoring and making payouts. However, recent pilots using sensors for soil health measurement and AI-enabled smart contracts have made payments faster, er-

ror-free, and cost-effective. Most carbon finance companies use geospatial data-enabled AI models to measure carbon sequestration remotely. Similar innovative models for incentivizing the transition are being used in the 100 Million Farmers Initiative. The initiative provides a mix of financial and non-financial support to transition towards regenerative agriculture. Through AI, it enables rewarding both farmers and early investors. Blueprints for replicating such financial models are available through the initiative.

**Rapid soil tests and programme monitoring**

AI-enabled soil testing provides rapid assessments of soil health, enabling precise decisions on the effectiveness of regenerative practices. Additionally, geospatial AI models can be used to monitor practices like intercropping or cover cropping, which are generally difficult to monitor at scale. Such analysis can also enable farmer segmentation, enabling the delivery of customized support to farmers at different levels of adoption.

**Scaling AI for regenerative agriculture**

There are several challenges today that would need to be addressed to ensure that AI indeed facilitates climate action. Steps towards these include:

**Reducing AI’s carbon footprint:** The growing demand for AI is driving up electricity use, leading to increased emissions from tech companies. Reducing these emissions is crucial, and options that support reduction, such as renewable energy and better data management, should be explored.

**Optimizing data infrastructure and framework:** High-quality data is crucial for effective AI models, but agricultural data is often fragmented. Building digital public infrastructure for data sharing can help reduce costs by enabling organizations to reuse and recycle data. Harmonizing data collection via standards is essential for interoperability and making data use more efficient. Another aspect includes the collection of data on farmer’s practices and corroborate it with other data sets on soil, water etc., to build evidence on practices that work.

**Structuring a village-level service delivery network:** Farmers may find it difficult to adopt AI-enabled technologies directly without any intermediation. Multistakeholder collaboration is needed to train and deploy village-level agents who can assist with the assisted delivery of AI-enabled services to farmers.

As more agricultural data is accumulated and farmers become conversant with technology, the role of AI in regenerative agriculture will increase. At the same time, with more data, the accuracy of existing solutions will improve. Therefore, to make the most of these advancements, planning for AI while designing regenerative agricultural programmes is critical.

**For more information on how AI can help global agricultural development, please get in touch with the Forum’s AI4AI Team.**

# School dropouts: Organisation enables return of vulnerable children to formal education

By Correspondent Zuwena Shame

**J**AMILA Swalehe, (16) dropped out of school in 2018 while in Standard Four at Vikindu Primary School in Mkuranga District, Coast Region. She was out of school for three years, a situation that resulted in her losing hope in achieving her educational and life dreams. She had a dream to become a musician.

Swalehe has never known her father, who disappeared shortly after her birth in 2008. Her mother, a former secondary school student who dropped out due to pregnancy, has not been able to locate him.

At the age of six, Swalehe was enrolled for primary school education at Vikindu Primary School. However, by 2021, she had dropped out while in Standard Four due to a number of reasons including lack of educational resources and neglect after her mother re-married.

She was then sent to live with her aunt in Temeke District, Dar es Salaam Region without her school transfer documents, leaving her as an out-of-school child living on the streets.

Her situation is not unique. Globally, 84 million children will be out of school by 2030 if no urgent extra measures are taken (UNESCO 2022). In Tanzania, 3.6 million children comprised of 1.3 million primary school aged 7-13 years and 2.3 million secondary school aged children 14-17 years are out of school, according to study conducted in March 2018 by the Ministry of Education and UNICEF to verify out of school children in the country.

She remained on the streets for over three years because her caregivers were unaware that the government offers programs like the Complimentary Basic Education (COBET) programme also known as Mpango wa Elimu ya Msingi kwa Walioikosa (MEMKWA), and the 2021 Education Circular, which facilitates the return of out-of-school children to formal education.

The changes in education circular gives teen mothers a second chance to return to school two years after giving birth, also allows students who dropped out of school due to other various reasons, including truancy and due to family challenges to return to classrooms.

The Children Education Society (CHESO), a local non-profitable organization has stepped in to help vulnerable girls who have dropped out of school whereas it



Jamila Swalehe

registers them for primary school education under the COBET programme, monitors out-of-school children, assess their educational needs, and provides comprehensive support, including counselling and conditional cash transfers to enable them to re-enter school.

In 2021, CHESO enrolled her at Maendeleo Primary School in Temeke District where she joined Standard Four pupils. In 2023, she was transferred to Vikundi Primary School, where she completed her primary education after doing Standard Seven national exams on

September 11th and 12th, 2024.

During her primary school graduation ceremony on August 31st, 2024, Swalehe tearfully expressed her gratitude to CHESO for rescuing her from the streets and fighting to ensure she completes primary education.

“It’s like a dream come true; today, I am completing Standard Seven, a milestone I never thought I would reach,” she said, urging the government and stakeholders to continue assisting street children who have missing chances to study.

“My educational journey is just the beginning. I call upon the government and stakeholders to help me continue with secondary school education in 2025. Street children have life dreams they would like to achieve as they become adult but lack they opportunity to pursue them,” she said. Richard Shilamba, CHESO Chief Executive Officer, commended the government for coming up with programmes like COBET/MEMKWA and the 2021 Education Circular, which enable out-of-school children to access primary and secondary school education.

He called for expansion of the programmes, noting that many children and their families are unaware of their existence. He said efforts are needed to ensure they are known to many Tanzanians as well as expanding the programme’s limited geographic coverage.

Shilamba called for intensified sexual and reproductive health education in schools to prevent early pregnancies, giving an example of Swalehe’s mother who dropped out of school while in Form Two.

He emphasized the importance of community involvement in tracing and supporting out-of-school children. “CHESO understands that the government alone cannot address these issues. As stakeholders in the education sector, we must work together to ensure every child has access to inclusive, equitable, and quality education, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4 under which Tanzania has committed to ensure that all girls and boys attend and complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education.

Shilamba reaffirmed CHESO’s commitment to identifying vulnerable girls and address barriers keeping them out of school. He said the organization works to empower communities and ensuring no child is left behind.



# A midwife in Gaza: Bringing life into the world as war rages

By Maram Humaid

**N**OUR Mwanis, a 27-year-old midwife, was still in the al-Awda Health Center delivery room with a woman who arrived early in the morning in labour.

The shift manager said she would need about half an hour to attend to the birth, clean up, and sterilise the room and equipment.

In the reception area, the grandmother, grandfather and uncles of a newborn were passing the baby around in a festive atmosphere.

Grandma beamed as she inspected the baby, swaddled in a pink scarf.

The happiness on their faces brought warmth and joy to hearts around them. This kind of happiness had been absent for a long time.

Asked about the baby girl's name, they laughed gently and said: "She doesn't have a name yet."

A few minutes later, her mother was wheeled out on a gurney by two nurses who were taking her to the recovery area.

The department head said Nour was ready to meet, and she was, nearly.

Standing in the quiet delivery room, she looked up with a calm smile as she placed a tray of tools in the sterilizer, sanitised her hands, then sat on a bed to talk about being a midwife during a war.

Interrupting herself, Nour went out to reception to ask about labouring women and their progress.

The nurse at the desk said: "They'll all need time. Until the second shift or tomorrow morning."

"OK, we've got time to talk then," Nour said as she came back to sit on the bed.

Nour had dreamed of becoming a midwife, of helping women give birth safely and bringing joy to new families with smiles all around.

For three years, she had that. Then her dreams were devastated by the start of Israel's war on Gaza in October.

"I never expected to see days like these in my life," Nour told Al Jazeera of the massive influx of people who came to the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, trying to get away from Israel's bombs by moving south.

"For the first three months of the war, we were handling about 60 to 70 births a day, working around the clock with just six midwives," she recalled.

She also was not able to go home for about three months. The pressure on the hospital and the perilous nature of moving around Nuseirat kept her in al-Awda.

"The delivery room couldn't accommodate the numbers. We had to assist some deliveries on the floor or in prenatal preparation rooms that weren't equipped for childbirth," Nour explained.

The pressure on al-Awda grew after it became the only maternity facility in the Central Governorate after Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir el-Balah had to close its maternity ward to focus on treating the wounded.

"It was chaos - bombing all around, labouring women arriving in miserable conditions," Nour said with a deep sigh.

"Many women had complications, such as bleeding or stillbirths, and they needed special care.

"But it wasn't available, and they just got worse."

As if to prove her point, a nurse came in to tell Nour that 28-year-old Aya al-Kafarna had been admitted for a stillbirth.

Aya was 31 weeks pregnant, but her baby had died in the womb because she was so weakened by her displacement without access to enough food, clean water, medicine, supplements or medical care.

Aya's father, a 58-year-old paramedic, had been killed in an Israel bombing, she said. One day later, she noticed that her baby had stopped moving in the womb.

Inducing labour was the only way to help Aya, Nour explained. Induced labour would extract a



Nour Mwanis

further emotional toll on Aya as well as a physical one because her body was not naturally ready to deliver.

"I was in complete shock, and I couldn't stop crying at first," Aya said.

"But eventually, I tried to calm myself and reflect on the circumstances I'm living in.

"Maybe it's for the best that this child doesn't have to be born into such misery. Perhaps God has spared him from this suffering."

In December, the third month of the war, Nour was attending a delivery when she heard that her brother had been brought in, severely injured in an Israeli bombing.

"I nearly broke down because I hadn't seen my family for months and feared they were hiding the news of his death," she recalled.

"I ran through the hospital, screaming, until I reached him. He had severe injuries all over his body. I was crying uncontrollably."

But her brother was alive and eventually healed. He had been injured when the house next door was bombed, a strike that badly damaged the home they were sheltering in.

"Like all families, my family - my parents and nine siblings - was forced to move from one place to another during the war," Nour said.

Throughout, she worked hard, wanting to be there for the labouring mothers, many of whom are brought to the hospital alone, weeping and in despair because they have lost loved ones.

"Women would be crying on the birthing bed, telling us about losing their children, husbands or families. This profoundly affects the birthing process," Nour explained.

"Psychological well-being is vital for the birthing mother. We'd try to offer some support. We'd embrace them or talk to them, try to comfort and reassure them.

"But there were so many cases that this wasn't always possible, especially in the early months."

Nour recalled one woman who went into labour on the day her husband was killed. In shock, she wept bitterly throughout the birth as she faced wel-

coming a new life into a world where her baby's father had just been killed.

"It was an incredibly difficult situation, and we were at a loss for words to comfort her," Nour recalled, adding that the woman had trembled uncontrollably throughout, unable to regulate her emotions.

She had a baby boy whom she named after her husband and left the hospital fretting about how she would be able to provide for his needs.

An orderly rushed in, interrupting Nour, with a newborn in her arms who was struggling to breathe. Nour hurried over to help, ensuring the baby was stable and connected to oxygen.

Once the situation was under control, she returned, though she got up occasionally to check on the infant.

Births in which the mother had been injured in a bombing, sometimes having just been pulled from the rubble, were possibly even more heart-wrenching, Nour said.

"When the injury is to the back of a woman's head, the birth becomes incredibly complex," Nour recalled. "We struggle to find a position for her to give birth safely."

"These situations ... weren't in my training or the books we studied," Nour reflected.

"Childbirth isn't a joyous welcoming of new life anymore," Nour reflected as she told the tales of women struggling to bring life into the world.

A woman eight months pregnant was brought in by neighbours and passers-by once, bleeding profusely from injuries she sustained while fleeing a bombing.

"The medical team tried hard to save her," Nour said sadly, adding that the mother and baby did not survive.

She also witnessed five occasions when mothers were killed in bombings and doctors struggled to save the babies, succeeding only twice.

The tragedies Nour witnesses have taken a toll on her, and the early months of the war were exceptionally difficult because she lost touch with her family as she stayed on in the hospital.

"Sometimes communication would be cut off, and I'd be overwhelmed with anxiety whenever I heard about an attack anywhere," Nour said.

"All us midwives shared the same fears, so we tried to comfort one another.

"Some of us would break down with exhaustion and worry, and we'd take turns when someone needed a rest."

But being around births also reminds Nour that life goes on.

"War doesn't stop life. People still have children. They still get married. It's normal for people to continue living, even in abnormal circumstances."

"Even I got engaged during the war," Nour said, describing meeting a young volunteer with the hospital's security team and falling in love.

She hopes the war ends soon so they can get married and start a new chapter of their life.

By Nour's count, nearly all the labouring women who come to the hospital have severe inflammations that hinder safe deliveries.

"There's no clean food, clean water or hygiene supplies," Nour explained. "All these factors raise the risk of inflammations."

"Women come to deliver having not bathed for days, hair full of lice, and she's coming to an unclean, unsterilised delivery area."

The hospital staff managed to set aside a bathroom for women before they give birth, providing them with basic personal hygiene kits, including a razor, soap and shampoo, so they can wash.

But once they've given birth, they have to go back to their makeshift tents.

"Many women even beg us not to stitch their wounds after giving birth," Nour added. "They say: 'Please, I live in a tent with no bathroom. I don't want stitches.'"

Nearly all the displaced women have no access to clean water or to the gas to run a stove and boil water to sterilise it.

"Many women come back with infected stitches due to the poor living conditions," Nour said.

It's not just water that these new mothers lack. The sanitary pads they need after delivery are very hard to find and expensive if they are available.

"Women also say they can't find privacy to breast-feed their babies because the tents are so overcrowded," Nour noted.

"We're talking about the bare minimum needs for a woman who has just given birth. They're not available to women in Gaza."

The newborns of Gaza are not immune from what is happening to their mothers as birth weights decline by about 30 percent and their general health suffers.

"This reflects the malnutrition of pregnant women," Nour said.

There are also infectious diseases, such as hepatitis A, that are spreading in the overcrowded displacement camps and exacerbating the risks for pregnant women.

According to the Ministry of Health, 45,000 cases of hepatitis have been recorded during the war, a stark increase from just 85 cases the year before the war.

"We received several labouring women infected with hepatitis," Nour said, explaining that infected women are at a higher risk for postpartum haemorrhaging.

"We had a woman with hepatitis. ... We tried so hard to save her, but she died. We don't have intensive care or an established protocol for cases like that," she added.

As the war goes on, the number of women in labour arriving at the hospital has decreased to about 15 a day.

"Palestinians are known for their love of family and children and how much they celebrate the arrival of births, but there are much fewer now," Nour concluded sadly.

**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 UMJUVYO 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



## Banana wine brings sweet taste of success to farmers in Malawi

A small-scale farmer in northern Malawi, Emily Nkhana used to discard over-ripe bananas or just let them rot, but she has now found a profitable use for them - banana wine.

Extreme heat was causing bananas to ripen too quickly, resulting in heavy losses for Nkhana and many other farmers who live in Karonga district.

"Then we discovered how to make banana wine," she tells the BBC, as she peels lemons that would be used to preserve the taste of bananas at the processing plant of Twitule Cooperative Group.

For the farmers, it is not just about making wine - but also survival, resilience, and embracing the new possibilities that come with a changing climate.

They used to farm next to the shores of Lake Malawi and their banana plantations were being washed away by rising water levels due to increased rainfall, forcing them to move to higher but hotter grounds, where temperatures soar to 42C.

"Down at the old farm, our challenge was loads of water from the lake. Some of the bananas used to drown in water. Some, you couldn't even see where we planted.

Lake Malawi is the second largest lake in Africa

"Up here, we have way too much heat. It makes our bananas ripen very fast and go to waste," Nkhana

says.

She is part of a group of women who have come together at the cooperative to improve their economic conditions through farming.

Wine production is a small-scale venture in the women's backyards, where they plant banana crops.

The wine-making process happens in a small compound with a four-roomed house in the village of Mchenjere.

The process is simple: the over-ripe bananas are peeled, cut into small pieces, weighed, and mixed with sugar, yeast, raisins, water and covered with lemons.

The mixture is then left to ferment for several weeks, transforming the banana pulp into a potent, aromatic wine, containing 13 percent alcohol - similar to wine made from grapes.

"It's very good quality wine. You have to drink it while seated so you can enjoy the sweet flavour," Nkhana says.

The women are waiting for the wine to be approved for export

Banana wine might sound unusual to those accustomed to the flavours of traditional wine, but for those who have tasted it, the experience is anything but disappointing.

The wine, which can range in colour from pale yellow to a rich amber, has a slightly sweet, fruity taste, often accompanied by a subtle aroma and a light lemon and banana flavour.

"It's smooth and light, almost like a dessert wine," says Paul Kamwen-



do, a local wine enthusiast who has become one of the biggest fans of banana wine in Karonga.

"I had no idea one could make wine out of bananas."

For Nkhana and her colleagues, the key to a good banana wine lies in the balance of sweetness and acidity.

"Timing is everything," she says. "You have to know when the bananas are at their best. Too ripe, and the wine becomes too sweet; too green, and it's too tart."

Bananas take around 10 months to grow in Malawi

The rise of banana wine in Malawi has been met with enthusiasm from both producers and consumers.

At local markets, bottles of banana wine, which sell for \$3 (£2.30), are now a common sight, with vendors eager to showcase their latest creations.

"We sell them at markets across Malawi, in the capital Lilongwe and in the biggest city Blantyre and it is always sold out," says Tennyson Gondwe, the chief executive of Community Savings and Investment Promo-

tion (Co ip), a cooperative that has trained the women in wine production to ensure quality and taste.

Nkhana says that making wine, rather than just selling raw bananas which often go to waste, has transformed her life, and those of the other women.

"Some of us built houses, some have livestock and some have chickens. We can afford to eat decent meals."

The Twitule co-operative produces between 20-50 litres of wine a month and is hoping to buy

machines to help them expand.

"We want to produce more wine. We want to move from this small production house to a factory," Nkhana says.

And the group has even bigger plans - Co ip has asked the Malawi Bureau of Standards to approve it for export.

"People are curious," Nkhana says, smiling as she stirs the wine mixture, preparing it for fermentation.

"They want to know what it tastes like. And when they try it, they're surprised by how good it is."

## Researcher looks at economic impact of reduced humanitarian assistance in E. Africa

By Melissa Vidmar

WHEN humanitarian assistance is reduced, the impact can extend from the household level to the broader local economy, according to a study led by Anubhab Gupta, assistant professor in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics.

The study highlights the potential impact of a 25 to 50 percent reduction in food and cash transfers by the United Nations World Food Programme on food security outcomes for the internally displaced population in Somalia and the refugees in Uganda.

The findings underscore the critical need for continued humanitarian support to address the challenges faced by vulnerable populations in these countries.

In 2021, the United Nations World Food Programme assisted 34.4 million people in East Africa through various initiatives, including providing nutritious meals to school children and specialized food transfers for at-risk populations. By the following year, the number of food-insecure individuals in East Africa had risen to 82 million, caused by climate change, global economic crises, and disruptions in food supplies from the conflict in Ukraine.

With the demand for assistance in Somalia and Uganda surging and with the United Nations World Food Programme facing significant funding shortfalls, this poses challenges in assisting those in dire need.

"Access to food and other assistance will impact families and local economies," Gupta said. "This study provides evidence of how detrimental reducing assistance would be to this region on food security and other welfare outcomes."

Millions of Somalis struggle with hunger and malnutrition amid ongoing conflict and climate challenges.

Somalia's food systems are under immense pressure from weather shocks, civil unrest, environmental issues, rising food prices, and limited infrastructure. The United Nations World Food Programme has been ramping up its efforts in Somalia, particularly after the severe drought of 2020-23. In January 2023, the organization disbursed \$45 million in cash and 7.1 metric tons of food to 4.1 million people, including vulnerable internally displaced persons and local households. Even with these efforts, Somalia still had a funding gap of \$378 million from November 2023 to April 2024, which threatened assistance to almost half of the population in need.

If United Nations World Food Programme assistance is reduced, the total impact on local income is \$2.63 in U.S. dollars per lost dollar of assistance, Gupta said. "Assistance to the internally displaced population in Somalia creates economic spillover to nonbeneficiary households through a multiplier effect. By curtailing monetary support for beneficiaries, income and production spillover diminish and the food insecurity situation in the local economy worsens."

The study also suggests that a reduction will result in the beneficiaries being able to access no more than three food groups. Gupta said such low levels of dietary diversity will have catastrophic effects over the short and long term. The groups that will be immediately affected are children and expecting mothers.

The effect on Uganda would be no less concerning, according to the study. The country hosts the largest refugee population in Africa, which quadrupled from 390,000 to 1.6 million from 2014-24. Most of these refugees are women, children, and older people fleeing conflict in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, or Sudan. In 2023, the United Nations World Food Programme provided food assistance to 1.4 million of these refugees.

"A reduction in assistance is projected to cause a substantial decline in Uganda's refugees Food Consumption Score," Gupta said. "Pushing many into a 'borderline or poor' dietary adequacy category."

The Food Consumption Score, developed by the United Nations World Food Programme, assesses the diversity and frequency of food groups consumed over the past seven days. This score is then weighted based on the nutritional value of the consumed food groups.

A market outside Rwamwanja refugee settlement in Southwest Uganda. Photo courtesy of Anubhab Gupta.



A market outside Rwamwanja refugee settlement in southwest Uganda. Photo courtesy of Anubhab Gupta.

A market outside Rwamwanja refugee settlement in southwest Uganda. Photo courtesy of Anubhab Gupta.

Next-generation economists "Growing up in India, I always had a curiosity about the decision-making of the poor and its impact on their lives and broader communities," Gupta said. "I believe in training the next generation of economists through research projects with my students. Experiential learning is crucial for students to apply knowledge effectively and make a global impact post-graduation."

Deepak Kumar and Tao Qi, Ph.D. candidates in the department, assisted Gupta with the study.

"Working in a multi-organizational setup taught me a lot, giving me hands-on experience in various research stag-

es," Kumar said. "The insights and skills gained from this study will be pivotal as I continue to develop my dissertation, which will include a chapter incorporating the Somalia work."

"Under Professor Gupta's mentorship, I conducted extensive data analysis and paper writing," Qi said. "He was incredibly supportive, encouraging me to persevere through the inevitable challenges and setbacks that come with rigorous academic research. His approach was not just about providing answers but also about teaching me how to find solutions independently, fostering a sense of self-reliance in my research abilities."

The study was conducted in collaboration with the International Development and Research Associates, UC Davis, Kagin's Consulting, and the

United Nations World Food Programme Regional Bureau in Nairobi, Kenya.

Ghana, Africa's largest gold producer, plans to buy oil from other countries and pay them in gold to ease pressure on local currency and lower high fuel prices.

Some economists say gold cannot solve the economic problems of some African countries.

According to the World Gold Council, countries should hold onto gold for its long-term value, performance during crises and its role as an effective portfolio diversifier.

Bright Oppong Afum, a senior lecturer at the University of Mines and Technology in Ghana, said some African countries want to use gold to reduce their reliance on the global financial system.

"If sanctions are laid on you, an African country, we know the devastating effects that it will have," he said. "The African countries are developing, or they are young, and they do not want to receive some harsh sanctions that will negatively or strongly impact the economics. And because of that, they are strategically reducing their dependencies on these external countries."

Afum said that although some Africans know and understand the value of gold, many trade away the metal to satisfy their daily needs.

"So, they just find a mere buyer who will... exploit them," he said.

The African Continental Free Trade Area introduced the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System, enabling countries to trade in local currencies. Experts say some continental payment systems, if implemented, can ease the economic pressures some countries are grappling with.

That, in turn, might make them less dependent on gold.



By Nneji Godwin Amako

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Africa lies on the cusp of a revolution innovation

Can you share your background?

I grew up in Freetown, Sierra Leone, excelling academically and driven by curiosity. I built a helicopter prototype at age nine and later pursued aerospace engineering at Buffalo University, United States. When my father fell ill, I returned home. I taught myself programming and created Sierra Leone's first job board, Careers.sl. This led to developing payroll systems, including one for Ebola workers, and eventually founding Mikashboks that cut across Africa.

How did you develop the payroll idea?

During the Ebola outbreak, I saw problems with the cash-based payroll system for frontline workers, leading to strikes. The government asked my company, iDT Labs, to find a solution. Using my experience with large-scale financial systems, I proposed a digital payment system with mobile wallets. We built it in 14 days, using open-source software like Odoo, Kannel, and Dedupe, and used OpenCV for facial recognition. Our solution reduced payment time from over a month to a week, preventing strikes and saving about US\$10.7 million over 13 months.

What inspired you to create Mikashboks, an SMS-based savings scheme?

Mikashboks was inspired by my experience developing the national Ebola Response Workers Payment System, showing how technology could transform financial processes. Personally, my mother's struggles with communal Osusu savings circles highlighted a gap where responsible participants lacked access to formal financial tools. Mikashboks bridges this gap by digitizing communal financing circles like Osusus, making savings more convenient and secure. The app builds verifiable financial identities and connects users to mainstream banking tools, enabling financial inclusion.

Tell us about some of your awards and how they have motivated you?

I was honoured to receive the Queen's Young Leader Award in 2017 and to be among the finalists for the 2022 Harvard Presidential Awards, for which I received a congratulatory note from President Joe Biden. These accolades affirm that our efforts are on the right track and prove the potential for enhancing financial inclusion through technology.



What key lessons guided your journey from college dropout to successful entrepreneur?

Several key lessons powered my journey. Dropping out of college revealed opportunities to uplift communities, showing that perceived failures can open new doors. Transitioning from engineering to coding taught me to evolve continuously. My innovations prioritize real impact over recognition, inspired by my mother's struggles with financial access. Mentors, partners, and teams have been crucial in transforming visions into sustainable ventures.

Transitioning from engineering to coding taught me to evolve continuously. My innovations prioritize real impact over recognition, inspired by my mother's struggles with financial access. Mentors, partners, and teams have been crucial in transforming visions into sustainable ventures.

community in Portloko, Sierra Leone. We met a Village Savings and Lending group that used Mikashboks to digitize their savings operations. Previously, their savings were recorded manually by the only literate member. With Mikashboks, they found it easier to trust the simple text message confirmations, which made the process transparent and trustworthy. This success mirrors our impact in Africa, where 20,000 users manage savings groups.

What are your future goals for Mikashboks and your role in Sierra Leone's fintech landscape?

Our goal is broader financial inclusion for the 400 million relying on informal financing. We aim to evolve Mikashboks into a full-stack social finance platform, integrating digital tools with communal structures to reshape access. We envision a marketplace for lending, asset financing, pensions, and insurance tailored to cash flow patterns.

What message do you have for aspiring entrepreneurs and innovators across Africa?

Have a strong belief in your ability to transform systems. Understand that challenges are growth opportunities, not failures. Use local insights to address genuine needs. Prioritize people over profit. Surround yourself with supportive allies, and together we can drive social justice and innovation across.

How do you see the future of fintech in Africa?

The future of African fintech is bright, with rapid technological advancements addressing persistent financial access barriers. Innovations must be hyper-localized, considering infrastructure limitations and user nuances. Supportive policies and regulatory frameworks are crucial for attracting investment and protecting consumers. Developing world-class talent in user experience, data science, engineering, and product development is essential. Collaboration among regulators, traditional finance, and startups is necessary to address foundational gaps like digital IDs, credit rating systems, and interoperability.

How can technology continue to address humanitarian crises in Africa, like it did during the Ebola outbreak?

While technology is modernizing humanitarian aid, gaps remain in adaptive systems that learn from communities. Digital interventions are often one-off efforts, discarded when headlines fade. During COVID-19, governments scrambled to provide social assistance from scratch. I revamped my Ebola payroll system into openG2P, an open-source economic resilience backbone for crises and routine use. Its modular infrastructure continues to protect marginalized communities during climate disasters and conflicts.

What challenges did you face while developing and implementing Mikashboks, and how did you overcome them?

A standout success story for Mikashboks is from a

Crossword puzzle grid with clues and solutions. Clues include: 1. a semi-arid region of North Africa, 4. to or at a distance, 5. a fleshy yellowish-red tropical fruit which is eaten ripe or used green for pickles or chutneys, 8. regulates National parks in Tanzania, 10. a feudal superior or sovereign, 11. a particular stage in someone's life, 12. a gutter on a roof, 13. an identification used by a person with access to a computer. Solutions include: DERIDER, OPENER, OEDEMA, DEER, LETAGERE, ERMINE, B EAGLES, U R LLGER, G REDOX, EASTERN, AIR, SNEER, ESSE, DESK, T SOME.

Word search grid with words: SALINA, OLEATE, FAMOUS, FAMOUS, AASIA, ERA, MALAIKA, AID, RIAL, FRIGATE, ADIT, KEBAB, IDLE. Contact: Felix: 0789437309 / felixmacezi@gmail.com

RADIO One RATIBA YA VIPINDI JUMATATU - JUMAPILI. Includes a detailed program schedule for Monday through Sunday with times and program names. Social media icons for Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter are also present.



## BUSINESS

## Gold bulls set sights on previously dismissed record \$3000/oz level

MUMBAI

Gold market bulls are locking in billion prices surging to fresh records, with a milestone of \$3 000 per ounce coming into focus, fired up by monetary easing by major central banks and a tight US presidential election race.

Spot gold reached a historic high of \$2 572.81 an ounce on Friday and is on track for its strongest annual performance since 2020, with a rise of over 24 percent driven by safe-haven demand, due to geopolitical and economic uncertainty, and robust central bank buying.

Gold could reach \$3 000 per ounce by mid-2025 and \$2 600 by the end of 2024 driven by US interest rate cuts, strong demand from exchange traded funds and over-the-counter physical demand, said Aakash Doshi, head of commodities, North America at Citi Research.

Last week, the World Gold Council said global physically backed gold exchange traded funds saw a fourth consecutive month of inflows in August.

With the next Federal Reserve meeting approaching on September 18, markets are gripped by the likelihood of the first US interest rate cut since 2020. Low rates tend to be supportive for gold,

which bears no interest.

Investors are currently pricing in a 55 percent chance of a 25-basis-point US rate cut and a 45 percent chance of a 50-bps cut, the CME FedWatch tool showed.

If incoming data points to growth risks and weakness in the labor market, it will raise the chance of a 50 bp rate cut in either November or December, which would increase the tailwind for gold and pull forward the timing for attainment of \$3 000, said Peter A. Grant, vice president and senior metals strategist at Zaner Metals.

Interest rate cuts from major central banks are well underway, with the European Central Bank on Thursday delivering its second quarter-point cut of the year.

"We're also evaluating other factors stirring up demand from the Western investor, including the upcoming US election arguably adding to the uncertainty and gold serving as a hedge against immediate event risks," said Joseph Cavatoni, market strategist at World Gold Council.

The upcoming November 5 presidential election could boost gold prices as potential market volatility may drive investors towards safe-haven gold.

Attaining the \$3 000 per ounce target is possible, said Daniel Pavilonis, senior market strategist at RJO Futures, adding that the scenario could be driven by political unrest following elections.

Investment banks and analysts have turned increasingly bullish on gold, with Wall Street bank Goldman Sachs showing the highest confidence in near-term upside in gold, which remains its preferred hedge against geopolitical and financial risks.

Australia's Macquarie raised its gold price forecasts this week and is now looking for a quarter average cyclical peak in the first quarter next year of \$2,600 per ounce, with potential for a spike towards \$3 000.

"While the backdrop of challenged developed market fiscal outlooks remains structurally positive for gold, a lot is arguably already in the price, with the potential for cyclical headwinds to emerge later next year," analysts at Macquarie said.

**Australia's Macquarie raised its gold price forecasts this week and is now looking for a quarter average cyclical peak in the first quarter next year of \$2,600 per ounce, with**

## DSE indices close the week on low note

By Guardian Reporter

The Dar es Salaam Stock Exchange (DSE) indices close the week in red, amid mixed trends on share prices among local and cross listed companies.

The DSE market report shows the Tanzania Share Index (TSI) closed the week at 4,614.70 points, a decline of 9.36 points compared to Thursday close, while the DSEI closed at 2,096.80 points, a decrease of 10.58 points and BI declined by 31.03 points, after closing at 5,736.69

points. Gainers during the end of the week were DCB counter, which its share price closed at 155/-, a decrease of 6.9 percent, self-listed DSE, which closed at 2,440/-, a depreciation of 1.67 percent and EABL, which its share price went down by 2.26 percent, after closing at 3,170/-.

The report shows three companies including CRDB, KCB and NICO closed the week with declined prices as CRDB share price decreased by 1.49 percent, while KCB and NICO share prices decreased by 5.56 percent and 1.37 percent respec-

tively.

Top movers during the day were CRDB Bank, which recorded the transactions of 327,922 shares, followed by DSE, which transacted 11,500 shares and Mkombosi Commercial Bank (MKCB), which transacted 7,812 shares.

A total turnover of 276m/- was recorded during the day, following the transactions of 363,708 shares, traded in 359 deals.

The buying side was dominated by local investors, who accounted for 93.56 percent of the total value of shares bought, while foreign inves-

tors sold shares valued 83.59m/-, which was 30.20 percent of total value of shares sold.

On normal board, Afriprice counter had 2,990 shares traded at a weighted average price of 230/- per share in 27 deals, CRDB counter had 327,922 shares traded at a weighted average price of 660/- per share in 246 deals and DCB counter had 3,652 shares traded at a weighted average price of 155/- per share in 14 deals.

DSE counter has 11,555 shares traded at weighted average price of 2,440/- per share in ten deals,

MBP counter has 400 shares traded at weighted average price of 350/- per share in three deals, MCB counter has 10 shares traded at weighted average price of 300/- per share in one deal and MKCB counter had 7,812 shares traded at weighted average price of 560/- per share in eight deals.

The report shows NICO counter had 4,560 shares traded at a weighted average price of 720/- per share in 18 deals, while NMB counter has 3,081 shares traded at weighted average price of 5,380/- per share in 14 deals.



## TRA imposes equitable tax on payers

By Correspondent Mary Kadoko

The Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) is set to impose equitable taxation to payers as it yields in accumulating the 2024-2025 30trn/- target.

Yusuf Mwenda (pictured), TRA commissioner general, announced the plan in Dar es Salaam over the weekend as he officially launched Large Taxpayers Customer Relationship meeting and Tax Reforms seminar.

He said all the taxation processes will comply with the respective laws, an approach that will coincide with educating taxpayers for them to know what, when to pay tax to avoid consequences.

"Tanzania Revenue Authority pledges to observe equity. We will ensure that taxpayers pay what is required and not beyond," he said.

He also stated the goal is to ensure that TRA is not vindictive to

taxpayers while taxpayers comply with reciprocating on respective laws.

Mwenda said: "Tax collection has generated public revenue that has helped the government finance investment in major projects such as Julius Nyerere Hydropower Plant Project (JNHPP) likewise the provision of social services.

He further cautioned over counterfeiting for people not to face lengthy jail terms or fines ranging from 5m/- to maximum 50m/- or both.

According to him, he Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) collected 27.64trn/- in tax revenue for the 2023-2024 financial year equivalent to 97.67 percent of the target of 28.30trn/-

Mwenda, also assured tax stakeholders that the other plan at hand is to ensure the Tax Revenue Appeals Board settles the prevail-



ing disputes before they are filed to the Court of appeal, underlining that the most challenging part has been different interpretations of the Tax Administration Act.

## China is raising its retirement age

BEIJING

Starting next year, China will raise its retirement age for workers, which is now among the youngest in the world's major economies, in an effort to address its shrinking population and aging work force.

The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the country's legislature, passed the new policy Friday after a sudden announcement earlier in the week that it was reviewing the measure, state broadcaster CCTV announced.

The policy change will be carried out over 15 years, with the retirement age for men raised to 63 years, and for women to 55 or 58 years depending on their jobs. The current retirement age is 60 for men and 50 for women in blue-collar jobs and 55 for women doing white-collar work.

"We have more people coming into the retirement age, and so the pension fund is (facing) high pressure. That's why I think it's now time to act seriously," said Xiujian Peng, a senior research fellow at Victo-

ria University in Australia who studies China's population and its ties to the economy.

The previous retirement ages were set in the 1950s, when life expectancy was only around 40 years, Peng said.

The policy will be implemented starting in January, according to the announcement from China's legislature. The change will take effect progressively based on people's birthdates.

For example, a man born in January 1971 could retire at the age of 61 years and 7 months in August 2032, according to a chart released along with the policy. A man born in May 1971 could retire at the age of 61 years and 8 months in January 2033.

Demographic pressures made the move long overdue, experts say. By the end of 2023, China counted nearly 300 million people over the age of 60. By 2035, that figure is projected to be 400 million, larger than the population of the US. The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences had previously projected that the public



pension fund will run out of money by that year.

Pressure on social benefits such as pensions and social security is hardly a China-specific problem. The US also faces the issue as analysis shows that currently, the Social Security fund won't be able to pay out full benefits to people by 2033.

"This is happening everywhere," said Yanzhong Huang, senior fellow for global health at the Council on Foreign Re-

lations. "But in China with its large elderly population, the challenge is much larger."

That is on top of fewer births, as younger people opt out of having children, citing high costs. In 2022, China's National Bureau of Statistics reported that for the first time the country had 850,000 fewer people at the end of the year than the previous year, a turning point from population growth to decline. In 2023, the population

shrank further, by 2 million people.

What that means is that the burden of funding elderly people's pensions will be divided among a smaller group of younger workers, as pension payments are largely funded by deductions from people who are currently working.

Researchers measure that pressure by looking at a number called the dependency ratio, which counts the number

of people over the age of 65 compared to the number of workers under 65.

That number was 21.8 percent in 2022, according to government statistics, meaning that roughly five workers would support one retiree. The percentage is expected to rise, meaning fewer workers will be shouldering the burden of one retiree.

The necessary course correction will cause short-term

pain, experts say, coming at a time of already high youth unemployment and a soft economy.

A 52-year-old Beijing resident, who gave his family name as Lu and will now retire at age 61 instead of 60, was positive about the change. "I view this as a good thing, because our society's getting older, and in developed countries, the retirement age is higher," he said.

Li Bin, 35, who works in the event planning industry, said she was a bit sad.

"It's three years less of play time. I had originally planned to travel around after retirement," she said. But she said it was better than expected because the retirement age was only raised three years for women in white-collar jobs.

Some of the comments on social media when the policy review was announced earlier in the week reflected anxiety.

But of the 13,000 comments on the Xinhua news post announcing the news, only a few dozen were visible, suggesting that many others had been censored.



# Trump wants huge tariff for dollar defectors

By Saleha Mohsin

Donald Trump pioneered new ways to use tariffs as a weapon of statecraft in his first presidency. He's promising to go full-bore next time – and even deploy a jumbo version to protect the US dollar.

The GOP candidate is signaling he'll ramp up America's economic arsenal if he beats Kamala Harris in November. Trump has talked down the utility of sanctions – even though he applied plenty himself – after a record-busting barrage of them failed to halt Russia's war in Ukraine. Sanctions, he's said, should be used “very judiciously” – but tariffs are “phenomenal.”

Tariffs will deliver all kinds of domestic gains, according to Trump, like stocking a new sovereign wealth fund or offsetting revenue loss from income-tax cuts. Economists are skeptical, saying the trade barriers will slow growth, dent profits, raise prices and squeeze consumers – though that didn't stop Trump hitting the theme in response to the very first question in Tuesday's debate: “I had tariffs and you had no inflation,” he said.

But it's on the international scene that the tariff threats will resonate most. As a new Cold War looms and the world economy splinters, recent presidents have kept finding new ways to weaponize America's economic and financial clout. Trump says he'll dial back some of them – but only because he's eyeing some new and perhaps more disruptive ones.

“We're going into the unknown,” said Heather Conley of the German Marshall Fund of the United States. “Not just tariffs and sanctions, but the use of industrial policy and protectionism to help shelter future economies and competitiveness.”

Trump's first-term agenda largely focused



on rewiring trade with China, and he's vowed to continue by raising import duties as high as 60 percent. But there were also signs back then that he saw tariffs as a way to tackle problems that didn't have much to do with trade at all.

For example, in 2019 he threatened to impose a 5 percent charge on Mexican exports and then jack it up steadily until the flow of illegal migrants across the border was stemmed. The countries swiftly reached an immigration deal, and the tariffs were never imposed. That's the kind of stick Trump apparently envisages wielding more often in a second term.

One dramatic new proposal is

aimed at foreign countries that seek ways to trade outside the dollar-based financial system – often in response to US sanctions. Trump says he'll slap on 100% tariffs to deter them.

“We will keep the US dollar as the world's reserve currency, and it is currently under major siege,” Trump said at a rally Saturday in Wisconsin, when he first outlined the plan. “You're not going to leave the dollar with me.”

Essentially, the idea is to leverage access to the lucrative US consumer market in order to maintain the dollar's hold over the world economy – instead of aggravating sanctions fatigue that's putting it

at risk.

The appeal to a deal-maker like Trump is clear. Tariffs are relatively easy to turn on and off, making them an effective carrot-and-stick bargaining tool. And presidents have been able to tweak them without Congressional involvement, though some analysts expect legal hurdles to arise if Trump tries to push this much further.

Among the downsides: Targeted countries can reply tit-for-tat – and if they're big economies like China, that hurts US exporters. What's more, some adversaries like Iran don't sell much stuff on American markets anyway.

Sanctions, on the other hand,

are sticky – and even when they're lifted, it can be difficult to convince businesses that it's safe to invest in a country once it fell foul of Washington. But there's less room for retaliation in kind, because the world runs on greenbacks, so nobody else has that kind of financial leverage.

“There are probably more alternatives to the US consumer market than there are to the dollar as a currency that you can settle international transactions in,” said David Loevinger, a former Treasury official who coordinated US-China policies.

A global backlash against US sanctions has gathered pace after Washington and its allies unleashed a raft of penalties against Russia, freezing its central bank reserves and targeting thousands of officials and businesses.

The aim was to weaken the Kremlin's war effort. But with Russia's economy growing on the back of military spending, its currency stable and its army on the advance, the Biden administration has struggled to convince anyone that the tool has been effective.

Meanwhile, and partly in response, the BRICS club of major emerging economies has made trading outside the dollar an explicit goal. The bloc includes China and India as well as Russia – and it's steadily adding members, with oil powerhouse Saudi Arabia weighing an invitation to join and NATO member Turkey among recent applicants.

Even though BRICS countries

haven't abandoned the dollar, or figured out a coherent alternative, their effort has triggered a consternation about the greenback's status, as well as catching Trump's attention.

His proposed fix – the threat of a 100 percent tariff – is being widely panned.

“This would be a bizarre use of tariffs that could have the opposite effect of encouraging countries to reduce their use of the dollar and their consequent exposure to the vagaries of US policies,” said Eswar Prasad, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and author of *The Dollar Trap: How the US Dollar Tightened Its Grip on Global Finance*.

In a note to clients, Commerzbank AG strategist Ulrich Leuchtmann said the move “would cause massive disruption to the global economic system.”

Trump's first-term tariffs caused some disruption, too – but since then the US has shifted toward a bipartisan appreciation for what they can accomplish. Biden largely kept them in place, adding a few of his own, and Harris hasn't given any indication that she'd change course if she becomes president.

Financial sanctions are also a consensus tool among both Republicans and Democrats. Their use has skyrocketed since the start of this century – causing adversaries and even some allies to wonder if dollar-dependence leaves them too beholden to American foreign policy goals.

## US consumer sentiment rises in September

WASHINGTON

US consumer sentiment improved in September amid subsiding inflation, though Americans remained cautious ahead of the November presidential election, a survey showed on Friday.

The University of Michigan's preliminary reading on the overall index of consumer sentiment came in at 69.0 this month, compared to a final reading of 67.9 in August. Economists polled by Re-

uters had forecast a preliminary reading of 68.5.

“A growing share of both Republicans and Democrats now anticipate a Harris win,” said Surveys of Consumers Director Joanne Hsu. “Consistent with their divergent views of the implications of a Harris presidency for the economy, partisan gaps in sentiment inched up.”

The survey was conducted before Tuesday's debate where Republican candidate Donald

Trump squared off against Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic Party's nominee for the Nov. 5 election.

The survey's reading of one-year inflation expectations fell for the fourth straight month to 2.7 percent. That was the lowest reading since December 2020 and compared to 2.8 percent in August.

Its five-year inflation outlook edged up to 3.1 percent from 3.0 percent in the prior month.

## IMF in Kenya for fact-finding after protests

NAIROBI

Kenya's President William Ruto announces the nominees to the Cabinet Secretaries at State House in Nairobi

Kenya's President William Ruto (pictured), announces the nominees for Cabinet Secretaries in his government, in the wake of nationwide protests over new taxes, at State House in Nairobi, Kenya July 24, 2024. REUTERS/Thomas Mukoya/File Photo Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tab

NAIROBI, Sept 13 (Reuters) - A team of staff from the International Monetary Fund is visiting Kenya on a fact-finding trip, the IMF said late on Thursday, part of efforts to craft a way forward in the wake of deadly protests that scuppered the government's

planned tax hikes.

President William Ruto abandoned this year's finance bill in June, leaving the heavily indebted government with a bigger budget deficit for this financial year, mounting unpaid bills, and a delay in disbursement of IMF funding.

“This is a fact-finding mission and is part of our ongoing and constructive dialogue with the Kenyan authorities to find a balanced path forward,” Julie Kozack, the head of communications for the IMF, told a news briefing.

She did not provide more details, saying further updates will be given when the team completes its mission.

Kenya agreed a four-year loan with the IMF in 2021, and signed

up for additional lending to support climate change measures in May 2023, taking its total IMF loan access to \$3.6 billion.

The IMF requires regular reviews of reforms – in Kenya's case every six months – before it releases tranches of funding.

Kenya reached a staff level agreement with the IMF in June on the seventh review of its programme, but the protest and ensuing withdrawal of the finance bill put a sign-off by the fund's executive board, and subsequent payout, on hold.

Kenyan government officials have previously said they expect the IMF board to consider approving the disbursement of a \$600 million tranche later this month, but no date has been set for a meeting to discuss this.



## Zambian copper mines are desperate for power

LUSAKA

Zambia's biggest mines are turning to a surprising power source as the copper-producing nation battles an unprecedented energy crisis: South African electricity company Eskom Holdings, which until March faced its own severe deficit.

An historic drought has stifled hydropower turbines that Zambia relies on for about 85 percent of supplies. Households have power for just three hours a day. And firms like First Quantum Minerals have had to look beyond the nation's borders for electricity to keep their mines and smelters running.

The shortfall is worse than anticipated just a few weeks ago. Zambia has almost run out of water for generation at Kariba, the world's biggest man-made reservoir, where it's weeks away from having to completely shut down for the first time. Maintenance work at the nation's only coal-fired plant has exacerbated the crunch, raising risks for mine operators in the coming months.

“Power imports from Eskom that were not factored into earlier assumptions are mitigating the impact of this decrease,” Anthony Mukutuma, a

director at First Quantum's Zambian unit, said by email. “As such, we expect power supply to First Quantum Minerals operations to continue uninterrupted.” Eskom's transmission unit has a deal to supply 250 megawatts of power to Zambia, and has been doing so since August, the utility said in reply to questions this week. That's equivalent to more than 10% of Zambia's normal national demand.

And there are plans to double that within a month under a separate deal with the help of a regional electricity-trading company called Africa GreenCo, Chief Executive Officer Ana Hajduka said in an interview.

That's largely thanks to the government's new rules allowing open access to power-transmission lines, enabling customers like mines to source their own energy through companies like Africa GreenCo. Previously, state-owned Zesco dominated the grid.

First Quantum accounts for about half of Zambia's copper output, and operates Africa's biggest nickel mine there. The mining industry typically makes up about half of national power demand. While normal generation capacity is about 3 777 MW, the plants are currently producing 1 019 MW.

The government has sought to

shield the mining industry that generates about 70% of export earnings. Still, Zesco told mines that 40 percent of their normal supply is subject to emergency restrictions. Operators are sourcing pricier power from the region to make up the shortfall.

Some relief may be on the way. The government forecasts that most of Zambia will receive normal to above normal rains, with thunderstorms starting in October in the western part of the country that feeds Kariba.

The La Niña weather phenomenon, which the World Meteorological Organization predicts will begin by year-end, brings increased chances of good rains for Zambia's hydropower dams. But much of the water takes months to reach the reservoirs. Kariba's waters usually start rising from January or February. It takes years of good rainfall to refill.

A new gas-fired power plant in neighboring Mozambique will by early 2025 add about 450 MW to the regional grid.

Yet even with the imports, Zesco still sees a deficit for at least the remainder of 2024. That will hit Zambia's economic growth, which the government previously estimated will slow to 2.3 percent this year.





# Start-up uses microgrids to bring reliable electricity in Nigeria

LAGOS

**S**tart-up ICE Commercial Power is working to connect Nigerian SMEs to clean power via solar microgrids.

Transforming lives through technology is also a key aim of the World Economic Forum's EDISON Alliance, which convenes public and private sector leaders to prioritize affordable access to digital solutions.

Small businesses are a powerful force in Nigeria, with the country's informal market of around 40 million enterprises contributing over half of its GDP.

But in a country where less than 50 percent of the population has access to a regular power supply many of these businesses - traders, tailors, grocery stores, electronics shops and more - get their power from an expensive, dirty and inefficient energy source: petrol generators.

Not only is the cost of generator electricity substantially higher than from the grid, with users spending almost half of their monthly income on

power. But they also have a negative impact on people and the planet. They release concentrations of harmful particulate matter higher than those recommended by the World Health Organization. And it is estimated that the annual CO2 emissions from generators in Lagos alone are equivalent to those of more than 326,000 passenger cars.

Nigerian entrepreneur Emmanuel Ekwueme, who moved back to the country after studying in the US, and two friends wanted to tackle the problem. They came up with what Ekwueme describes as "a new concept for deploying affordable clean energy solutions" for underserved businesses.

"From a young age, I had noticed how prominent clusters of small businesses were throughout Nigeria," Ekwueme says. "A major source of economic activity, especially in peri-urban and rural areas, these commercial plazas inspired our targeted approach to deploying an affordable clean energy solution for emerging markets."

Today, Ekwueme is co-



founder and CEO of ICE Commercial Power, which connects businesses to clean, affordable electricity through solar-powered micro-utilities. Such solutions could have a vital role in expanding electricity access in Nigeria, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA).

With no upfront costs for customers, ICE's rooftop solar energy

systems - which consist of solar panels, smart inverters, battery storage technology and smart meters - allow local businesses to connect to clean energy on a pay-as-they-go basis. ICE works with landlords and property owners to install the systems, and individual businesses are connected via smart meter. Customers then manage their services through a mo-

bile app.

Prospective project sites and target customers are identified by ICE's young workforce. The company collaborates with local universities to provide the digital and market surveillance skills graduates need to do this work, as well as other relevant careers including solar installers and

data analysts.

"This approach allows us to effectively develop strong pipelines of distributed solar projects that are ready for deployment, while simultaneously working to increase the employability of Nigerian youth," Ekwueme says.

Supported by partners including the US African Development Foundation and Microsoft, ICE has helped hundreds of businesses connect to reliable, clean energy that, according to Ekwueme, saves them up to 35 percent on energy costs.

The company plans to connect 10,000 small businesses in the Niger Delta region by next year, with a goal of reaching more than 100,000 small businesses in the next three years.

"In five years, we intend to have a presence in over five emerging markets in sub-Saharan Africa and connect over one million small businesses to clean energy," Ekwueme adds.

Alongside these aims, the company is working to upskill thousands of young people across Nigeria for potential careers in renewable energy or technology. ICE's partnership

with companies including Microsoft is helping it achieve this, giving ICE access to cloud computing credits and technical and business development support.

It's an example of how the private sector can create new partnerships to help support social innovation and an economy that benefits all people and the planet. The World Economic Forum's Global Alliance for Social Entrepreneurship is working toward this goal, with a network of more than 100 investors, philanthropists, governments and more.

It says technology, including AI - which ICE uses to support maintenance and reduce costs - has shown "immense promise in helping organizations leapfrog social and environmental challenges".

Transforming lives through technology is also a focus for the Forum's EDISON Alliance, which convenes public and private sector leaders to prioritize digital inclusion through affordable access to digital solutions across healthcare, finance and education.

# Banana wine brings sweet taste of success to Malawian farmers

LILONGWE

A small-scale farmer in northern Malawi, Emily Nkhana used to discard over-ripe bananas or just let them rot, but she has now found a profitable use for them - banana wine.

Extreme heat was causing bananas to ripen too quickly, resulting in heavy losses for Nkhana and many other farmers who live in Karonga district.

"Then we discovered how to make banana wine," she tells the BBC, as she peels lemons that would be used to preserve the taste of bananas at the processing plant of Twitule Cooperative Group.

For the farmers, it is not just about making wine - but also survival, resilience, and embracing the new possibilities that come with a changing climate.

They used to farm next to the shores of Lake Malawi and their banana plantations were being washed away by rising water levels due to increased rainfall, forcing them to move to higher but hotter grounds, where temperatures soar to 42C.

"Up here, we have way too much heat. It makes our bananas ripen very fast and go to waste," Nkhana says.

She is part of a group of women who have come together at the cooperative to improve their economic conditions through farming.

Wine production is a small-scale venture in the women's backyards, where they plant banana crops.

The wine-making process happens in a small compound with a four-roomed house in the village of Mchenjere.

The process is simple: the overripe bananas are peeled, cut into small pieces, weighed, and mixed with sugar, yeast, raisins, water and covered with lemons.

The mixture is then left to ferment for several weeks, transforming the banana pulp into a potent, aromatic wine, containing 13 percent alcohol - similar to wine made from grapes.

"It's very good quality wine. You have to drink it while seated so you can enjoy the sweet flavour," Nkhana says. Banana wine might sound unusual to those accustomed to the flavours of traditional wine, but for those who have tasted it, the experience is anything but disappointing.

The wine, which can range in colour from pale yellow to a rich amber, has a slightly sweet, fruity taste, often accompanied by a subtle aroma and a light lemon and banana flavour.

"It's smooth and light, almost like a dessert wine," says Paul Kamwendo, a local wine enthusiast who has become one of the biggest fans of banana wine in Karonga.

"I had no idea one could make wine out of bananas."

For Nkhana and her colleagues, the key to a good banana wine lies in the balance of sweetness and acidity.

"Timing is everything," she says. "You have to know when the bananas are at their best. Too ripe, and the wine becomes too sweet; too green, and it's too tart."

The rise of banana wine in Malawi has been met with enthusiasm from both producers and consumers.

At local markets, bottles of banana wine, which sell for \$3 (£2.30), are now a common sight, with vendors eager to showcase their latest creations.



## ITV PGM SCHEDULE

SATURDAY 14 Sept	SUNDAY 15 Sept	MONDAY 16 Sept	TUESDAY 17 Sept	WEDNESDAY 18 Sept	THURSDAY 19 Sept	FRIDAY 20 Sept	SATURDAY 21 Sept	SUNDAY 22 Sept	MONDAY 23 Sept	TUESDAY 24 Sept	WEDNESDAY 25 Sept	THURSDAY 26 Sept	FRIDAY 27 Sept	SATURDAY 28 Sept	SUNDAY 29 Sept
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## WORLD

## US election: Trump says no more debates with Kamala Harris

WASHINGTON

REPUBLICAN nominee Donald Trump said on Thursday he would not participate in another presidential debate against Kamala Harris ahead of the Nov 5 election, after several polls showed his Democratic rival won their debate earlier this week.

"THERE WILL BE NO THIRD DEBATE!" the former president wrote on social media site Truth Social. Trump had participated in a debate against President Joe Biden in June before his

debate against Harris on Tuesday.

Although Trump touted his performance on Tuesday against Harris, six Republican donors and three Trump advisers who spoke to Reuters earlier this week said they thought Harris had won the debate largely because Trump was unable to stay on message.

The debate attracted 67.1 million television viewers, according to Nielsen data.

Harris, speaking at a rally shortly after Trump's post went live, said: "I believe we owe it to the voters to have another



This combination of file pictures created on Aug 3, 2024 shows US Vice-President and Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris (L) speaking on March 26, 2024, in Raleigh, North Carolina; and former US President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaking in Atlanta, Georgia, on June 27, 2024. (PHOTO / AFP)

debate."

While Trump said in his post that polls showed he won the debate, several surveys showed that respondents thought Harris did better.

Among voters who said they had heard at least something about Tuesday's debate, 53 percent said Harris won and 24 percent said Trump won, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll released on Thursday.

The poll showed that 54 percent

of registered voters believed that the single debate between Trump and Harris was enough, while 46 percent had wanted a second debate.

A majority of debate watchers said Harris outperformed Trump, according to a CNN flash poll released shortly after the debate. YouGov showed 54 percent of those surveyed said Harris won while 31 percent said Trump was the victor.

Agencies

## Europe's central bank pushes ahead with rate cut as economic outlook bleaker

FRANKFURT

THE European Central Bank (ECB) on Thursday decided to cut its policy rate by 25 basis points, a sign to scale back the restrictive monetary policy.

The rate cut, the second of its kind since June, came at a time when the central bank is not ready to drop its guard against inflation but expects a gloomier economy in the euro area this year. The inflation in the euro area dropped to 2.2 percent in August from 2.6 percent in July, according to the flash estimate published by the statistical office of the EU.

The latest inflation reading, slightly higher than the medium-term target of the ECB, has not brought relief to the central bank, which is sticking to its June forecast about inflation in the bloc in the September staff projections.

The ECB staff see headline inflation averaging 2.5 percent in 2024, 2.2 percent in 2025 and 1.9 percent in 2026. The drop of energy prices played a predominant role in bringing down the inflation in the euro area in August. While other factors registered little change, energy prices went down by 3 percent in August.

Meanwhile, domestic inflation remains high as wages are still rising at an elevated pace. Heightened geopolitical tensions could push up energy prices and freight costs in the near term and disrupt global trade, the ECB warned. "We are determined to ensure that inflation returns to our two percent medium-term target in a timely manner. We will keep policy rates sufficiently restrictive for as long as necessary to achieve this aim," it said.

Given that latest data broadly confirmed the ECB's previous projections about the development of inflation in the euro area, its decision to cut interest rates, as analysts observed, can be mainly attributed to the bleaker economic prospect.

The economy in the euro area grew by 0.2 percent in the second quarter, down from 0.3 percent in the first quarter. The weaker-than-expected growth was attributed to weakened private consumption, dampened business and housing investment. In an unprecedented move, the ECB raised key interest rates by 450 basis points for 10 consecutive times since July 2022 and pushed them to the historically highest levels by September 2023.

The aggressive tightening has weighed on demand, bank lending and investment to the point where the ECB becomes alert that "growth could also be lower if the lagged effects of monetary policy tightening turn out stronger than expected."

In its latest projections published on Thursday, the ECB staff expect the economy to grow by 0.8 percent in 2024, 1.3 percent in 2025 and 1.5 percent in 2026. ECB president Christine Lagarde insists that the central bank is not recommitted to a rate path and will remain data dependent to decide on its future course of action when it comes to rate cuts.

As the next staff projections are due in December, the "ECB will probably also want to bank on something when taking the next rate decision," which is likely in December, said Carsten Brzeski, global head of Marco division of ING Research, in a note.

The ECB will be pressured to act more aggressively to cut rates unless the projections about the euro area economy improving later this year materialize.

Brzeski considers it "a matter of time before a bleaker growth outlook will translate into more aggressive rate cuts," citing the central bank's structural "overestimating the timing and the strength of the eurozone economy." "Looking ahead, we expect the ECB to eventually step up the pace of further rate cuts," he said.

## Peru declares three days of national mourning for ex-president Fujimori's death

LIMA

PERU'S government declared three days of national mourning after former President Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000) died Wednesday from cancer, the state-run daily "El Peruano" said on Thursday. An executive order issued by Peru's President Dina Boluarte and endorsed by Prime Minister Gustavo Adriansen, when planning "the corresponding funeral honors" for Fujimori, called for national mourning from Sept. 12 to 14.

As part of the honors, the national flag will fly at half-mast at all public buildings, military installations, bases, ships and other state entities. Fujimori, who had been out of prison since December 2023 after having been granted a pardon, died Wednesday around 6:00 p.m. local time "following a long battle against cancer," his daughter Keiko Fujimori confirmed.

The ex-president's remains will lie in state through Saturday at the Museum of the Nation, located at the headquarters of the Culture Ministry in the city of Lima, and from there will be taken to the Campo Fe Cemetery in Huachipa for burial. Keiko Fujimori expressed gratitude for the "support" and "great displays of solidarity in these painful times."

Xinhua

## UK PM Starmer promises 10-year plan to fix health service in crisis

LONDON

BRITAIN'S Prime Minister Keir Starmer will say on Thursday his government is working on a 10-year plan to fix the National Health Service, after an independent report found the system to be in critical condition.

The state-run NHS has been in crisis and endured some of its toughest winters in recent years, struggling to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, long backlogs for elective procedures, and industrial action.

The previous Conservative government failed to reduce waiting lists, blaming strike action, and Starmer, whose Labour Party won a landslide victory in a July election, made reaching pay agreements with health staff an early priority.

But he said the NHS would also need "major surgery not sticking plaster solutions" to cope with the rising costs of looking after an aging population without hiking taxes.

"We know working people can't afford to pay more, so it's reform or die," Starmer will say according to advance extracts of Thursday's speech released by his office.

"This government is working at pace to build a 10-year plan ... Instead of the top-down approach of the past, this plan is going to have the fingerprints of NHS staff and patients all over it."



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer (center) and Britain's Health Secretary Wes Streeting react during a visit to University College London Hospital where they were shown how Proton Beam Therapy is used, and met the staff who operate it, in central London on Wednesday. AFP

Starmer's speech comes after the publication of a report by Ara Darzi, a surgeon who sits in the House of Lords, who the government commissioned to examine the state of the NHS.

Darzi's report found the NHS

entered the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 with resilience at an "all-time low", due to a lack of investment and a confused top-down reorganization in the decade beforehand.

"I have been shocked by what

I have found during this investigation - not just in the health service but in the state of the nation's health," Darzi said.

"Far too many people are waiting for too long and in too many clinical areas, quality of care has gone backwards."

The impact on health of the health service's struggles also has a knock-on effect on the economy, Starmer said, with Britain's labour market suffering from the 2.8 million people who are economically inactive due to long-term sickness.

Starmer said he wanted to frame the new plan around shifting the NHS from analogue to digital, putting more care in the community rather than in hospitals, and a greater focus on preventing people from getting sick to start with.

Starmer's government is responsible for the NHS in England, but responsibility for the service in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is devolved.

## Iran summons European envoys over claims of arms supply to Russia

TEHRAN

IRAN summoned the heads of the diplomatic missions of Britain, France, the Netherlands, and Germany on Thursday to protest their governments' statements about Tehran's alleged involvement in the Russia-Ukraine conflict and recent sanctions, Iran's official news agency IRNA reported.

Majid Nili Ahmadabadi, director for Western European nations at Iran's Foreign Ministry, met separately with the envoys, condemning what he called a "propaganda campaign" and "destructive actions" against Iran.

The diplomatic move follows

a joint statement by British, French, and German foreign ministers on Tuesday, which accused Iran of exporting missiles to Russia for use against Ukraine. The statement also announced plans to cancel bilateral air services agreements and impose sanctions on Iran's national carrier, Iran Air.

Ahmadabadi denied the allegations, calling claims of Iranian ballistic missile sales to Russia "baseless and false". He criticized Western nations for arms sales to other countries, including Israel, saying they should be held accountable for their policies.

The United States also imposed new sanctions on Tuesday targeting individuals and



entities in Iran and Russia, including Iran Air, over alleged drone and missile sales to Moscow.

Meanwhile, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Akbar Ahmadian met with Russian

President Vladimir Putin in St. Petersburg on Thursday. Ahmadian affirmed that Tehran will continue to expand its relations with Moscow under its new administration, according to IRNA.

For his part, Putin expressed Russia's commitment to expanding bilateral relations, noting that trade between the two countries increased by nearly 10 percent in the first half of 2024, IRNA reported.

Iran has consistently denied providing Russia with weapons for use against Ukraine, despite Western accusations. The country maintains it supports a diplomatic solution to the conflict.

Agencies

THE 2024 World Robot Conference was recently held in Beijing. Nearly 170 Chinese and foreign robot enterprises joined the 2024 World Robot Expo, part of the World Robot Conference, unveiling more than 600 innovative products, including 27 humanoid robots.

In recent years, the Chinese robot industry has experienced rapid growth, integrating deeply into people's daily work and life. China has become the world's largest market and producer of robots.

Recently, humanoid robot Walker S Lite developed by UBTECH Robotics Corp. Ltd., a leading robotics firm based in Shenzhen, south China's Guangdong Province, completed training at the 5G smart factory of Chinese electric vehicle brand Zeekr in Ningbo, east China's Zhejiang province, after work-

## Chinese robot industry strides toward high-quality development

ing three weeks alongside its human counterparts. With a maximum load of 15 kilograms, it can assist workers in carrying work bins.

According to Zhao Chunlin, head of the 5G smart factory, Walker S Lite has become the first humanoid robot in China to perform the entire process of moving cargo boxes, showcasing exceptional task completion and difficulty levels that ranked at the forefront of the industry.

To meet the growing individualized demands, the Chinese manufacturing industry is transitioning from high automation to comprehensive intelligentization. "Humanoid robots enabled by artificial intelligence (AI) possess multimodal perception and autonomous decision-making

capabilities. They have a competitive advantage when facing complex and changing work environments, showing great potential and broad prospects in intelligent manufacturing," Zhao noted.

According to the latest statistics from China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the country's newly added robot installations accounted for more than half of the global market over the past three years, and the number of robots per 10,000 workers in China's manufacturing sector reached 470, surging 19 fold in the past decade.

Service robots have been widely applied in areas such as family services and medical care, while specialized robots

play a crucial role in areas such as air and sea exploration and emergency rescue.

Apart from the growing size, China's robot industry has seen a continuous increase in technological capabilities, marked by constant breakthroughs in cutting-edge technologies such as multi-sensor fusion perception and natural human-machine interaction, increasingly sophisticated key components like reducers, controllers, and servo systems, and enhanced performance and safety levels of industrial robots engaged in welding and spraying and service robots for surgery and logistics. As of July 2024, China boasted over 190,000 effective robot-related patents, accounting for about two-thirds of the

global total.

At the same time, governance and regulation of China's robot industry are becoming increasingly comprehensive. The Chinese government has implemented effective policies and measures, such as a development plan for the robotics industry, a "Robot +" action plan, and industry norms for industrial robots. China has participated in the revision of 26 international robot standards, established the World Robot Cooperation Organization, issued the Shanghai Declaration on Global AI Governance, and promoted international cooperation in robot ethics research, regulation and governance.

At the opening ceremony of the 2024 World Robot Confer-

ence, the upgraded TianGong L2MAX humanoid robot was unveiled by the Beijing Embodied Artificial Intelligence Robotics Innovation Center, China's first innovation center focused on core technologies, product development and application ecosystems for humanoid robots.

Standing 173 centimeters tall and weighing 60 kilograms, the robot featured 42 degrees of freedom. It carried the emblem of the conference and placed it precisely on a launch pad in the center of the stage. This marked the first time that a humanoid robot demonstrated long-range task capabilities.

"TianGong L2MAX is equipped with multiple visual perception sensors, six-dimen-

sional force sensors, an inertial measurement unit, and 3D vision sensors, which allow it to perform 550 trillion calculations per second," said Xiong Youjun, the center's general manager.

Twenty-seven humanoid robots made their debut at the 2024 World Robot Conference, attracting considerable attention. When will these products be available for mass production?

"The humanoid robot G1, launched in May this year with a starting price of 99,000 yuan (\$13,922), is close to completing the design modifications for mass production, and is expected to be mass-produced by the end of the year," said Wang Xingxing, founder, chief executive officer, and chief financial officer of Unitree Robotics, a Hangzhou-based robotics startup. **People's Daily**



## Kenya commits to protect heritage sites in line with UN goals

NAIROBI

KENYA on Thursday pledged to safeguard its cultural and heritage sites to foster unity and sustainable development in alignment with the goals of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Julius Ogamba, cabinet secretary for the Ministry of Education, said at a UNESCO forum in Nairobi, the country's capital, that pro-

tecting the sites is integral to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by all United Nations member states in 2015. "Kenya is rich in cultural diversity and heritage. We have eight World Heritage Sites across the country which we must protect to foster unity and understanding between people," Ogamba said. He further observed that Kenya is working with UNESCO to reform its education system and enhance the use of science and technology, which is crucial in addressing

societal challenges, including climate change. Peter Ngure, permanent representative of Kenya to UNESCO, said Kenya is collaborating with the UN agency on various programs including leveraging artificial intelligence to improve public service delivery. In July, UNESCO added Kenya's historic town of Gedi in the coastal region to the World Heritage List, increasing the number of World Heritage Sites in Kenya to eight.

Xinhua

## Putin warns West against direct involvement in Ukraine conflict

MOSCOW/KYIV

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin warned on Thursday that by providing Ukraine with long-range weapons, Western countries risk involving directly in the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

In such circumstances, Russia would be forced to make "appropriate decisions" based on the new threats, Putin was quoted by Russian media as saying.

Ukraine has been pleading with its Western allies for it to use their missiles, including long-range ones, to fire deep into Russian territory, according to Western media reports.

"In fact, only service people from NATO countries can make flight assignments to these missile systems. Ukrainian service people cannot do that," Putin told Russian state TV.

"So this is not a question of allowing the Ukrainian regime to attack Russia with these weapons or not. It is a question of deciding whether NATO countries are directly involved in a military conflict or not."

"If this decision is taken, it will mean nothing else than direct participation of NATO countries -- the USA and European coun-



In this pool photograph distributed by the Russian state agency Sputnik, Russia's President Vladimir Putin delivers a speech at the X St. Petersburg International United Cultures Forum in Saint Petersburg on Sept 12, 2024. (PHOTO / POOL VIA AFP)

tries -- in the war in Ukraine," he said.

According to a report by Politico, the White House is finalizing a plan to ease restrictions on Ukraine's use of US-donated weapons in battles against Russia, including the use of British long-range missiles that contain American parts to strike targets inside Russia.

Also on Thursday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Moscow is prepared to find

a peaceful settlement to the Ukraine crisis while the West is not ready for sincere diplomatic dialogues.

Western countries are attempting to do everything possible to control Kyiv through their ultimatums, Lavrov said during a roundtable discussion on Ukraine with ambassadors at the Foreign Ministry's Diplomatic Academy.

The West and its allies view Ukrainian President Volodymyr

Zelensky's peace formula as the only negotiating proposal, he said.

Lavrov further said that NATO specialists were providing Kyiv with reconnaissance data to help identify targets deep within Russian territory, including civilian infrastructure.

On the latest development of the conflict, Lavrov said Russian forces were continuing to push Ukrainian troops out of Russia's Kursk region bordering Ukraine.

Early Thursday, 14 civilians were injured as Russia struck Ukraine's northeastern city of Konotop with combat drones, Ukraine's Prosecutor General's Office said in a statement.

Seven apartment buildings, a private residence, a bank, and healthcare and educational institutions were damaged in the attack, it said.

The attack was part of a broader overnight assault, in which Russia launched a barrage of 64 combat drones and five missiles, Ukraine's Air Force said.

The Main Intelligence Directorate of the Ukrainian Defense Ministry said it had destroyed a Russian Su-30SM fighter jet over the Black Sea.

Agencies

## Xi urges breaking new ground in Yellow River basin ecological conservation, high-quality development

LANZHOU

CHINESE President Xi Jinping on Thursday called for breaking new ground in the ecological conservation and high-quality development of the Yellow River basin.

Xi (pictured), also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks when he convened a meeting in Lanzhou, capital of northwest China's Gansu Province.

Xi said efforts in this regard should be powered by further deepening reform comprehensively.

He called for promoting ecological protection across the entire river basin to a new level, achieving new progress in green transformation, and bringing new improvements to the lives of the people.

It is necessary to continuously improve the holistic framework of ecological protection and collaboration in the Yellow River basin to strengthen the national ecological security shields, Xi said.

Xi urged continuous efforts to intensify the battle against pollution, highlighting the management of important tributaries and key lakes



and reservoirs.

He stressed accelerating the upgrades toward ultra-low emissions in key sectors and vigorously promoting the clean and efficient use of coal.

Efforts should be made to implement fiscal, tax, investment and pricing policies and standards to support green and low-carbon development, he added.

Xi urged efforts to explore establishing a basin-wide, market-based and diversified compensation mechanism for ecological conservation.

The strictest system for the protection and utilization of water resources should be implemented,

he noted.

Xi emphasized the need to improve the disaster prevention and reduction system. He said the water regulation system centered around major water conservancy projects such as key reservoirs should be improved.

He underscored efforts to ensure the safety of important embankments, reservoirs and other infrastructure projects.

Xi urged efforts to develop the green and low-carbon economy and accelerate the substitution of clean energy for fossil fuels in key industries.

Xi stressed the need to comprehensively deepen reform and expand opening up, calling on local areas to actively participate in the building of a unified national market and resolutely eliminate all forms of local protectionism.

Efforts should be made to deepen reform related to state assets and state-owned enterprises, and fully implement policies and measures to promote the development of the private economy, Xi stressed.

The country must coordinate the pursuits of new urbanization and rural revitalization, Xi said.

Employment needs to be placed in a prominent position,

Xi said, adding that expanding employment capacity should be prioritized in urban industrial development and rural industrial cultivation.

Efforts should be made to protect and promote the Yellow River culture, strengthen the comprehensive and systemic protection of cultural and natural heritage, and further advance archaeological work, Xi stressed.

Party committees and governments of provinces and regions along the Yellow River must take on the principal responsibilities, and people from all sectors of society should be motivated, Xi said.

He also urged ensuring sound economic work at the end of the third quarter and throughout the final quarter, and striving to meet the annual economic and social development targets.

Cai Qi, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and director of the General Office of the CPC Central Committee, and Ding Xuexiang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Chinese vice premier, attended the meeting.

Xinhua

## India's PM adviser says never conveyed any statements from Zelensky to Putin – Kremlin

ST. PETERSBURG

NATIONAL security adviser to India's prime minister, Ajit Kumar Doval, did not convey any messages to Russian President Vladimir Putin from Ukrainian leader Vladimir Zelensky, Russian Presidential Spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Thursday.

"There were no delivered messages," Peskov told journalists in response to a question whether Doval conveyed any message to Putin after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit last month to Ukraine.

Peskov also said that Doval described to Russian President Vladimir Putin his country's approaches regarding the settlement of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

"He described the main content of [Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's] contacts in Kiev and the main basics of Modi's approach to resolving the conflict over Ukraine," Peskov said. "However, we are not speaking here about a clear-cut peace plan."

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Kiev on August 23. It was the first-ever visit by the Indian prime minister to Ukraine since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1992.

He spent several hours in the city.



At a meeting with Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky, he said that Moscow and Kiev should gather at the negotiating table and find a resolution to the crisis. The prime minister assured that India is ready to contribute to every effort for achieving peace.

Earlier this month, the Hindustan Times daily reported that Zelensky had offered to hold the next "peace summit" on Ukraine in India if New Delhi agreed to sign the communique of the first meeting, which was adopted without Russia's participation.

Agencies

## Six UK diplomats working in Moscow engaged in intelligence, subversive activities – FSB

MOSCOW

SIX employees of the UK embassy in Moscow have been stripped of their accreditation for engaging in intelligence and subversive activities incompatible with their diplomatic status, the press office of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) reported.

"The Russian Federal Security Service has received documentary materials confirming London's coordination of the escalation of the international military-political situation," the press office said.

"The said documents show that in the UK the main unit coordinating subversive activities in Russia's direction (and in the countries of the former USSR) is the Directorate for Eastern Europe and Central Asia of the UK Foreign Office, which after the beginning of the special military operation in Ukraine was transformed into a special service

whose main task is to inflict a strategic defeat on our country," the press office pointed out.

"On the basis of documents provided by the FSB, as well as in response to numerous unfriendly steps of London, the Russian Foreign Ministry, in cooperation with the concerned agencies, terminated the accreditation of six employees of the political department of the UK Embassy in Moscow. The FSB detected signs of intelligence and subversive activities in their work," the FSB said.

"The revealed facts give grounds to consider the activities of UK diplomats sent to Moscow by the Directorate as a threat to Russia's security," the press office added.

"Subsequently, if similar actions are detected in the employees of the UK diplomatic mission, the FSB will demand early termination of their business trips in Russia," the FSB emphasized.



## To rally more than 2.8 billion Chinese, African people into powerful force that drives the two sides' modernisation

CHINESE President Xi Jinping recently attended the opening ceremony of the 2024 Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in Beijing and delivered a keynote speech.

He proposed that bilateral relations between China and all African countries having diplomatic ties with China be elevated to the level of strategic relations, and that the overall characterization of China-Africa relations be elevated to an all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for the new era.

Establishing strategic partnerships with all the 53 African countries having diplomatic ties with China and elevating the overall characterization of China-Africa relations to an all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for the new era are impor-

tant outcomes achieved by the summit.

It will rally the more than 2.8 billion Chinese and African people into a powerful force that drives the two sides' modernization.

The solid bilateral relations between China and all African countries having diplomatic ties with China are the foundation for China-Africa friendship.

Before the summit, China has established partnerships with more than 20 African countries in different forms. During the summit, Xi held bilateral meetings with African heads of state and government leaders, engaging in in-depth discussions on major strategic issues. China forged or elevated strategic partnership with 30 countries.

African leaders gave high evaluation on China. Some said China is "a great exam-

ple of a partner that gives you a hand, so you can achieve your own dreams." Some said China represents hope and the future, and that only by deepening cooperation with China can an African country achieve national development. Some said for Africa, China represents the future and is a brother.

This proves that China and its 53 African strategic partners, standing shoulder to shoulder, will play a greater role in improving the well-being of the Chinese and African people, and safeguarding world peace and stability.

The friendship between China and Africa transcends time and space, surmounts mountains and oceans, and passes down through generations. Thanks to nearly 70 years of tireless efforts from both sides, the China-

Africa relationship is now at its best in history.

Over the past 24 years since the inception of the FOCAC, especially in the new era, China has advanced forward hand in hand with its African brothers and sisters in the spirit of sincerity, real results, amity and good faith.

The two sides stand shoulder to shoulder with each other to firmly defend their legitimate rights and interests as once-in-a-century changes sweep across the world. They get stronger and more resilient together by riding the tide of economic globalization, delivering tangible benefits to billions of ordinary Chinese and Africans. They share weal and woe in fighting natural disasters and epidemics together, creating touching stories of China-Africa friendship. They always empathize with

and support each other, setting a stellar example of a new type of international relations.

From a new type of partnership to a comprehensive strategic and cooperative partnership, and to an all-weather community with a shared future for the new era, the China-Africa relationship has kept reaching new heights, with clearer characterization and greater substance. This progress demonstrates the firm resolve of the over 2.8 billion Chinese and African people to share weal and woe and march forward hand in hand amid once-in-a-century transformation of the world.

The world today is living through accelerating changes unseen in a century, which confronts humanity with unprecedented challenges. The more com-

plex the international situation becomes, the more the Global South countries must uphold independence, strengthen unity and cooperation, and jointly safeguard international fairness and justice.

During the summit, China and Africa compared notes on strategies regarding international situation and global governance.

The two sides agreed to firmly support each other on issues bearing on each other's core interests, defend the common interests of developing countries, and promote international fairness and justice.

The two sides agreed to jointly practice true multilateralism, implement the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative, advocate an equal and orderly multipo-

lar world and a universally-beneficial and inclusive economic globalization.

The two sides agreed to break "small yard with high fences," reject discrimination and bias, correct historical injustice, and bring the benefit of modernization to all people.

The unanimous voice for peace and development made by Chinese and African leaders has become another milestone of China-Africa relations and another example of Global South cooperation.

The voice of justice made by China and Africa for the Global South, and their efforts to make global governance more just and equitable are conducive to safeguarding the common interests of developing countries and will inject more stability and positive energy into the world. **People's Daily**



## Kagera Sugar coach Nkata admits squad lacks quality after third straight defeat

By Correspondent Nassir Nchimbi

KAGERA Sugar head coach, Paul Nkata, has voiced his frustration with his team's recent form, blaming their three consecutive league defeats on a lack of quality among his players.

In their last three matches, Kagera Sugar failed to score a single goal, with their only recent goal coming in a friendly match against Geita Gold during the international break.

Following a 1-0 loss to Tabora United, Nkata (pictured) admitted that his team lacks the competitiveness to match their opponents. Despite a stronger second-half performance, Kagera Sugar couldn't capitalize on their chances and secure a favourable result.

Tabora United came into the match with growing confidence after a 2-1 victory over Namungo in their previous league fixture. In their first domestic outing, Tabora were soundly beaten 3-0 by league leaders Simba, but rebounded well against Kagera Sugar.

The Ugandan tactician, clearly disappointed by the recent struggles, acknowledged his team's shortcomings. After Kagera's third straight loss to Tabora United on Wednesday, Nkata admitted that his squad lacks the quality to effectively compete against stronger teams.

"At this point, it's clear that I have an average team that can't quite match the competition," Nkata said. "Winning away games is never easy, and although we fought hard, luck wasn't

on our side. We performed well in the second half, but I'll keep working to ensure my team remains competitive."

Despite their poor start to the season, Nkata remains optimistic that Kagera Sugar's struggles are only temporary. The coach believes his team has the potential to improve and turn their fortunes around.

"We've had a tough start, but this is not the end for Kagera Sugar. I'm confident we can change things and start getting positive results. We have a lot of work ahead, but I believe in my players' ability to overcome these challenges," Nkata added.

Kagera Sugar have conceded four goals while failing to score in their two home matches and one away game. Their defeats include a 1-0 loss to Singida Black Stars, a 2-0 loss to Young Africans, and the latest 1-0 defeat to Tabora United.

In his first season with Kagera Sugar, Nkata emphasized the need to strengthen the squad to compete effectively.

"Given the high level of competition, I will ensure that my team is well-prepared to challenge for success in upcoming games," the coach emphasized.

Kagera Sugar are set to host JKT Tanzania on Monday at Kaitaba Stadium, and Nkata will be hoping his side can take advantage of JKT Tanzania's limited match experience. The visitors have only played one Premier League game so far, which ended in a 0-0 draw



Lions C cricket outfit. PHOTO: COURTESY OF LIONS CRICKET CLUB

## Lions C cricketers cruise to TCA Dar 20 Overs Cup final

By Correspondent Japheth Kazenga

LIONS C has booked a spot in the 2024 TCA Dar 20 Overs Cup-Division C final following the squad's 10-run win over Malabar Cricket Club (MCC) in the semi-final which took place at Annadil Burhani Club's oval recently.

The Lions C side, a third-string squad of Lions Cricket Club, went in to bat first in the pulsating duel and ended with 147/7 in the allotted 20 overs.

Openers Ashfaq Imtiyaz and Dylan Manish made their squad's intention to end with a convincing total known via the stellar showing the duo put up at the crease.

Imtiyaz, the batsman with the most runs in the team, surpassed the half-century mark and made his way back with 52 runs.

Lions C had reached 111 runs with four wickets down when Imtiyaz was dismissed in the 15th over.

The MCC wicket-keeper Vindal Sharma went for a catch to dismiss the promising batsman from Roshan Gaussian's bowling. Imtiyaz nailed five boundaries in his stint, whereas his fellow opener, Manish, scored 24 runs which included five fours.

Johnson David, who came at number seven, made his presence felt with equally solid batting - which saw him notch an unbeaten 25 runs.

There was as well a significant contri-

bution with the bat from team captain, Mubin Hassan, as the cricketer posted 15 runs.

Augustine Mwamele, batting at number five, also made his way back with two digits - chipping in with 11 runs.

Karim Kisetu, a reliable top-order batsman, was one run short of two digits in his brief stint with the bat for the batting team.

Ali Asgar (2-23 in four overs) was by far the only MCC bowler with a significant showing when the team fielded.

Asgar completed his bowling stint with a 5.75 economy rate in his four-over stint.

Fellow bowlers - Sabbirhussain Husamudin, Gaussian, Tinoby Thankachan and Sreejesh Puthiyaveetil - finished their spells with one wicket each for MCC.

Needing 148 runs to come out with victory, MCC put a spirited showing but they fell short, managing to score 137/9 in 20 overs and suffer defeat.

Opener Gaussian was one of the cricketers with significant contributions for MCC having scored 47 runs.

The opener had MCC reaching 58 runs with two wickets taken when he exited the crease in the ninth over.

The MCC batting unit suffered a wobble early on following an early dismissal of the other opener, Muhammad Faisal, as the performer was eight runs short of two digits.

Thankachan - batting at number eight - had MCC attempting to put up a fightback later on, having notched 20 runs.

There were further encouraging performances by Shajil Ayadathil (11 runs) and Gokul Nair (10 runs) for MCC.

Team captain Vinesh Kv was three runs short of two digits as his efforts to help MCC get down to a successful chase ended in vain.

Husamudin (six runs not out) and Puthiyaveetil (three runs not out) ended the innings with bat in hand even though they could not win the tie for MCC.

The MCC total was somewhat buoyed by 13 extras given away by Lions C's bowlers, which included one bye, three leg byes, and nine wides.

Brijesh Bhadrera (3-29 in four overs) and Kisetu (2-21 in four overs) played an important role in Lions C's successful quest for foiling MCC's chase.

Wickson Costa and Rehaan Atif - who took one wicket apiece - made matters worse for the MCC batting unit.

Lions C's Imtiyaz was deservedly presented with the Player of the Match prize for his scintillating batting display.

Lions C will play against Dar Indian Titans in the 2024 TCA Dar 20 Overs Cup-Division C final slated for Sunday.

The C. Nehra-led Dar Indian Titans garnered a 12-run win over Patel Titans in the semi-final on Sunday.



## Denzel Washington hands over to his son Malcolm and keeps August Wilson in the family

TORONTO

AUGUST Wilson's "The Piano Lesson" deals profoundly with ancestry and heritage, which makes it all the more fitting that the new film adaptation, produced by Denzel Washington and directed by his son Malcolm, is a family affair.

"The Piano Lesson," which premiered Tuesday at the Toronto International Film Festival, is the third in Washington's ongoing project to bring Wilson's plays to the screen. It follows "Fences" and "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" and, like those films, features several powerhouse performances, including Danielle Deadwyler as Berniece and John David Washington, Malcolm's older brother, as Berniece's brother Boy Willie.

In 1930s Pittsburgh, Boy Willie has arrived at his sister's home with plans to sell a family heirloom, a piano engraved by their ancestors who took it from their enslaver. In the tortured family drama that ensues, Berniece, Boy Willie and others (the cast includes Samuel L. Jackson, Michael Potts and Ray Fisher) wrestle with the haunting shadow of slavery and the weight of family legacy.

"There are so many legacies tied into this," says Malcolm Washington. "I think it's part of our duty when you're in the position to make a film like this to honor that and uphold it. We're here because so many people fought and sacrificed and acted to give opportunity for the next generation. This film and the story of it, ultimately, is much

bigger than my family." Malcolm, 33, was sitting alongside his older brother and Deadwyler a few hours before the premiere of "The Piano Lesson," which Netflix will release Nov. 8 before it streams Nov. 22. As the interview was wrapping up, Denzel Washington burst into the room.

"It really all started with me," Denzel jokingly declared as the other three howled with laughter. "Then I had two sons, and the next thing I knew I was out of work!"

Denzel, joined by his producing partner Todd Black, said it was his son's idea that he might direct "The Piano Lesson." A 2022 Broadway production had run of Wilson's Pulitzer Prize-winner with much of the same cast, including John David.

"Malcolm said he had a take," recalls Denzel. "He said, 'Let me put something together.' So he made a little short. I looked at it like, 'Whoa, OK. You want to make the movie? This is great, make the movie.'"

Yet Malcolm didn't immediately go for it. He told his father: "Let me see if I see the movie first." He began working on a treatment and ultimately co-authored the script with Virgil Williams ("Mudbound").

"At first, I was like, 'See the movie?' But I get it now," says Denzel. "He's a real filmmaker. He took his time, and he didn't just jump in."

While John David, the 40-year-old star of "BlackKlansman" and "Tenet," has firmly established himself as his own leading man in Hollywood, Malcolm, an alum of the American



Malcolm Washington, right, the director/co-screenwriter of the film "The Piano Lesson," poses with his brother and cast member John David Washington, left, and cast member Danielle Deadwyler at the Shangri-La Hotel during the Toronto International Film Festival, Monday, Sept. 9, 2024, in Toronto. (AP Photo)

Film Institute's directing program, is just stepping into the spotlight. "He knew what he wanted," says Black. "And he wasn't afraid to reach out to people who knew more than he knew."

During the making of "The Piano Lesson," Denzel largely kept his distance to let Malcolm work. Still, his passion for Wilson's plays pervaded throughout the production.

"He's such a fan of August Wilson and it's such an important part of his legacy to continue telling August's stories," Malcolm says. "His main thing with all of us was to

keep that focus: We're here to honor one of our greats."

"The Piano Lesson" is a Washington family production in other ways, too. Malcolm and John David's mother, Pauletta Washington, plays the role of Mama Ola. The movie is dedicated to their mother.

"I started with a clear idea of this is about fathers and sons," Malcolm says. "As we were shooting, I just really started to see this mother-daughter story, and my mom is such an inspiration for me. I always saw my mom as tied into the Berniece story."

Malcolm's sisters are also involved. Olivia Washington plays Mama Ola as a young woman, and Katia Washington is an executive producer. Ironically, their father, Denzel, is almost the only one in the family not in the movie. But Malcolm, wanting everyone in the family somehow represented within the film, asked his father to participate with a brief voice recording.

"Am I in it?" Denzel says. "I recorded something. I didn't get credit. Did I get credit? I don't think so!"



# 'Sport's trial of the century to begin': Premier League v Man City on 115 charges

By Dan Roan

**F**INALLY, after years of build-up, perhaps English football's biggest and most controversial contest is set to begin.

On one side, the Premier League. On the other, its defending champions and dominant force Manchester City.

City face 115 charges for allegedly breaking the financial rules of the competition they have won for a record-breaking four consecutive seasons.

Those charges will be heard at an independent hearing, which is set to start on Monday at an unknown location, subject to any late legal delays. Billed as sport's 'trial of the century', it is expected to run for 10 weeks, with a verdict expected in early 2025.

It marks a defining stage in a legal dispute the like of which the game has never seen and which could bring seismic consequences for both sides.

This, after all, involves one of the world's most successful clubs being accused of serial cheating by the very league it has dominated for years. A club at the centre of a global network of 13 teams across five continents, owned by a billionaire member of Abu Dhabi's ruling family, whose sovereign wealth has transformed the landscape of the sport.

The case involves an unprecedented catalogue of 115 allegations spread over 14 seasons, including multiple charges of subverting the regulations by failing to provide accurate financial information.

City have always strongly denied the charges, and while the speculation is intensifying, no-one knows what the outcome - expected early next year - will be.

If found guilty of the most serious charges, City would risk being forever associated with one of the biggest financial scandals in sport. City could, in theory, face a points deduction serious enough to condemn them to relegation - or even expulsion - from the Premier League.

Such a fate would cast a long shadow over City's achievements, plunge the future of the manager and squad into uncertainty, and possibly spark claims for compensation from other clubs. It has been suggested that such a stain on the reputation of City and the club's owners could even affect Britain's relationship with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a key Gulf ally and trading partner - whose president is the brother of the club's majority owner Sheikh Mansour.

Equally, if City are cleared following a legal battle that is already thought to have cost both sides tens of millions of pounds, the viability of rules intended to safeguard the league's sustainability and competitiveness will be in grave doubt.

But whatever verdict is reached after a hearing set to last several weeks, the impact could be profound, dictating



Manchester City have been the Premier League's most successful team of the past 10 years, winning four titles in a row up to the 2023-24 season. Agencies

the story of this season.

## 'It is time now' for case six years in the making

It is difficult to overstate the seriousness and scale of a saga threatening to exacerbate widening divisions in the game, and which has become a test case for the Premier League's authority and credibility at a time when it already faces an array of challenges.

Last month, at a London launch event celebrating the start of the new season, but dominated by questions over financial regulations, the Premier League's chief executive Richard Masters told BBC Sport that "it is time now" for the City case to be resolved.

Choosing his words carefully, but perhaps hinting at the toll the case has already taken and the turmoil it has unleashed, he added: "It's been going on for a number of years and I think it's self-evident that the case needs to be heard and answered."

So 10 years after City were first punished by Uefa for breaching its financial rules, six years after the Premier League opened an investigation into the club, and 20 months since they were charged, how did we finally get here? What exactly does the club stand accused of? What forces are at play? And what is at stake?

## \*Background - how did we get here?

In June this year, a Portuguese computer hacker in witness protection called Rui Pinto was reported to have told a conference that he was in possession of "millions of documents" that could be relevant to the City case.

Pinto was well known to the game's authorities. The 34-year-old was the man behind the Football Leaks website which has exposed confidential football transfer and contract information.

Despite always claiming he was a whistleblower, last year he was handed a four-year suspended sentence by a court in Lisbon after it found him guilty on counts of attempted extortion, illegal access to data, and breach of correspondence. But his

threat to release more information - confirmed by his lawyer - was a timely reminder of the continuing role of one of the key figures in this remarkable story.

Back in 2018, the German publication Der Spiegel claimed City had manipulated contracts to get round Uefa rules, and said that its source was a whistleblower they called 'John' - the pseudonym Pinto created Football Leaks under.

Der Spiegel had published leaked documents, including emails purportedly sent between top City executives (some of whom remain at the City Football Group), across several seasons following the club's Abu Dhabi takeover in 2008.

They alleged that these showed the club had inflated sponsorship revenue from state-owned airline Etihad and state-controlled telecoms firm Etisalat by disguising direct investment from its holding company (Mansour's Abu Dhabi United Group, or ADUG) as sponsorship income by channelling the funds through the companies' accounts.

This, it was alleged, was a means of meeting 'financial fair play' (FFP) rules introduced by Uefa in 2011, and Profit and Sustainability Rules (PSR) brought in by the Premier League in 2012, limiting clubs' permitted losses.

There then followed further allegations of misreporting financial information centred on documents that claimed to show secret 'off-the-books' payments to then-manager Roberto Mancini via consultancy fees from a club in Abu Dhabi, and giving players more money than was officially going through the accounts so that recorded spending was less than it actually was.

City - who have always maintained that ADUG is a private fund rather than an arm of the state - refused to comment on any of Der Spiegel's revelations, saying the leaked emails were obtained illegally, and that they were an "attempt to damage the club's reputation".

City - along with the companies involved -

strongly denied breaking any financial rules. But that did not stop both Uefa and the Premier League launching investigations as a result.

City had already been fined millions of pounds by Uefa back in 2014 as part of a settlement after they were found to have breached FFP rules that were meant to make the game more sustainable, but which critics argue protect the historically biggest clubs by restricting investment by rivals, especially those with Middle Eastern backers.

Then, in early 2020, the club was hit with a two-year ban from European club competition after being found to have committed "serious breaches" of the governing body's regulations. An independent panel of Uefa's Club Financial Control Body concluded that City had been "overstating its sponsorship revenue in its accounts... submitted to Uefa between 2012 and 2016", adding that the club "failed to cooperate in the investigation".

Criticising what it called a "prejudicial" decision following a "flawed and consistently leaked process", City referred to a "comprehensive body of irrefutable evidence in support of its position", and appealed.

A few months later they were successful, the Court of Arbitration for Sport (Cas) overturning the ban, saying that it had found "no conclusive evidence that they disguised funding from their owner as sponsorship", and that most of the alleged breaches of rules were either not established or 'time-barred' because they fell outside the five-year statutory limit for prosecution.

Cas revealed that Sheikh Mansour had written a letter to the court insisting that he had "not authorised ADUG to make any payments to Etihad, Etisalat or any of their affiliates in relation to their sponsorship of MCFC".

However, it also found that City had committed a "severe breach" by failing to co-operate with Uefa's investigation, with an initial £25m fine reduced to £8m.

For more than two years, the saga seemed to go quiet, but behind the scenes, the Premier League's investigation had continued. In July 2021 there was a dramatic glimpse of it, when a High Court judge revealed that the Premier League had effectively accused City of delay tactics by failing to agree to hand over documents, ordering the club to do so.

And then, in early 2023, came the most sensational twist in this saga to date, when, with City on their way to the third of four consecutive titles, and their first Champions League triumph, they were hit with that catalogue of charges, relating to every one of the years since the club was bought by Sheikh Mansour.

## \*What are the 115 charges against Man City?

Man City are accused of:

- 54x Failure to provide accurate financial information 2009-10 to 2017-18.
- 14x Failure to provide accurate details for player and manager payments from 2009-10 to 2017-18.
- 5x Failure to comply with Uefa's rules including Financial Fair Play (FFP) 2013-14 to 2017-18.
- 7x Breaching Premier League's PSR rules 2015-16 to 2017-18.
- 35x Failure to co-operate with Premier League investigations December 2018 - Feb 2023.

The club immediately expressed their "surprise", referring once again to a "comprehensive body of irrefutable

evidence that exists in support of its position", and insisting that it would "look forward to this matter being put to rest once and for all".

But the sheer scale and severity of the charges that City are contesting has inevitably focused questions on a decade in which they won the Premier League three times - alongside other trophies.

If the case against them is found proven it will suggest City broke the rules, fastforwarding the foundations for the domination Pep Guardiola masterminded after his arrival in 2016, culminating in the Treble triumph of 2023, and that it may have cost other clubs titles and trophies they would otherwise have won.

The prospect of guilty verdict would raise various questions; would Guardiola leave, how would Sheikh Mansour respond having invested so much in the club and in the city of Manchester?

How would the UAE - which has faced allegations that City is being used as a sports-washing tool to improve the country's image - handle such a PR disaster?

Would there be an appeal? Would there be calls for titles and trophies to be re-allocated?

Would it dent the immense pride that City fans feel for the outstanding teams the manager has produced?

"Who will win? It is impossible to say because there is no precedent for anything quite like this, and sanctions can be applied on a sliding scale depending on whether City are found guilty of any charges.

There have been suggestions it will come down to which side has the best lawyers, or what weight is given to whichever documents City have handed over, or whether Pinto provides any more leaked emails.

City's hierarchy - along with Guardiola - have always appeared confident that they will be cleared. In football's extremely tribal world, many others watching on will have reached a different conclusion. But ultimately it will be up to the three members of an independent disciplinary commission, a body armed with limitless powers, to decide.

"We have a big thick rulebook and part of any sporting competition is a commitment to uphold those rules," Masters said, when explaining why such cases had been brought by the Premier League.

"While it does create difficulties, there is no happy alternative to enforcing rules... It's important we get those processes correct and people have confidence in them... the Premier League is on the up, we've got a fantastic football competition, we're in growth, we're really well placed to tackle the future. While there are some tough things ahead we will work our way through them."

Some could interpret such comments as evidence that the league wants to be seen to have teeth, and show they are serious about upholding their regulations. Others however are very sceptical that the league would really want its best team kicked out of the competition.

But, it should be stressed again, it is the independent panel not the Premier League that decides the punishment, having heard all the evidence and taken representations from all parties throughout the estimated 10-week case.

Some highly-experienced sources BBC Sport has spoken to have suggested that both sides would be wise to employ mediation to reach some kind of compromise or settlement.

Both City and the Premier League - both of whom told BBC Sport that they could not comment specifically on the hearing because they were bound by the strictest confidentiality - have reasons to be both encouraged but also concerned.

The fact that Uefa banned City from their own competition leads some to speculate that the disciplinary commission in the current case

could settle on an equivalent punishment if City are found guilty; ie a severe points deduction that would mean relegation, or expulsion from the Premier League.

City however, can argue that they were ultimately vindicated when Cas found in their favour. But - while either side could appeal and a fresh hearing arranged, going to Cas is not an option with the Premier League case, and nor are there any rules that would allow any breaches to be 'time-barred'.

The points deductions handed to Everton and Nottingham Forest last season for PSR breaches will have also troubled many City fans. But they may have then felt emboldened by the Premier League's recent bruising defeat to Leicester City who avoided a points deduction after winning an appeal that they claimed

hinged on "flaws" in the Premier League PSR rules.

## A watershed moment for the Premier League

This has all played out against a backdrop of mounting scrutiny in Westminster over the way the sport is run, and ahead of the expected establishment of an independent football regulator - one that could be given more powers under the new Labour government.

Defeat in such a landmark case would do little to help the Premier League convince its critics that its standards of governance are fit for purpose.

And, as this saga has progressed, the league has also had to contend with intensifying divisions between its clubs, with disagreement over the level of regulation required to reign in the spending of the richest clubs to protect competitive balance, while at the same time enabling investment and ambition.

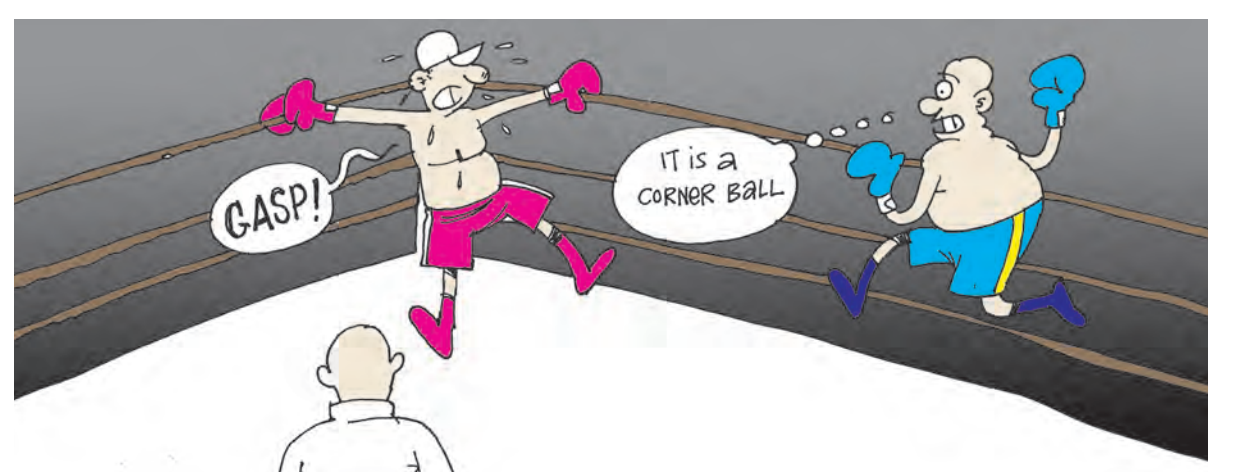
In recent times the league has found itself embroiled in a slew of disputes; deducting points from some clubs, facing appeals from others, issuing warnings over potential loopholes in its rules, and even being sued by City over restrictions on 'associated party transactions' - the deals conducted with companies linked to club owners.

All the time, the legal bills have been mounting, and the stakes have been heightened.

And now the biggest fight of all is about to play out.

BBC

Gwiji by David Chikoko





'Sport's trial of the century to begin': Premier League v Man City on 115 charges

PAGE 19

## Yanga face key CAF Champions League test against CBE in Addis Ababa



Young Africans players are pictured on Thursday during a training session in Addis Ababa readying for the CAF Champions League first leg of their second-round preliminary clash against Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (CBE) to be held today. Photo: Courtesy of YASC

By Correspondent Seth Mapoli

**Y**OUNG Africans Sports Club, Tanzania's representatives in the CAF Champions League, arrived safely in Addis Ababa on Thursday ahead of the first leg of their second-round preliminary clash against Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (CBE).

The Jangwani Street giants aim to reach the group stage for the second consecutive year.

The first leg takes place today at the historic Abebe Bikila Stadium in Addis Ababa, with kick-off scheduled for 3:00 pm East African Time (EAT).

Young Africans will look to

secure a crucial away victory before hosting the return leg in Dar es Salaam next week. The aggregate winner of the two-legged tie will advance to the group stages of Africa's premier club competition.

After a historic run last season, which saw them reach the CAF Champions League quarter-finals for the first time in 25 years, the Mainland Premier League champions are determined to make a deeper impact in the competition this year. Their previous campaign ended at the hands of South African heavyweights Mam-

elodi Sundowns.

Head coach Miguel Gamondi expressed confidence ahead of the tie, emphasizing the need for a positive result in the away leg.

"We have prepared well, and I want the players to make good use of every opportunity so that we can finish the job in Addis. However, I am aware that it will be a tough game, and we must be fully concentrated," Gamondi said.

Despite a smooth journey to Addis Ababa, Young Africans have faced challenges in their preparations, as many of their players were

on international duty.

Of the 27 players registered for the CAF Champions League, only 11 were available for final training sessions. Nevertheless, the club reassured fans that they are fully prepared.

In addition to squad limitations, injuries have plagued the team. Ivorian forward Yao Kouassi and Tanzanian winger Farid Mussa are both nursing injuries. However, Gamondi remains optimistic and confident in the squad at his disposal.

Young Africans come into this match with momentum, having dominated Burundi's

Vital'O FC with a 10-0 aggregate score in the first round.

The team's impressive performance has bolstered their confidence as they now face Ethiopian side CBE, known for their resilience at home.

Fans are excited for the team's quest to reach the CAF Champions League group stages for the second consecutive season.

Last year's quarter-final run ignited widespread support, and Young Africans are determined to deliver another successful campaign for their supporters.

## TCA Dar 20 Overs Cup-Division C final set for tomorrow

By Correspondent Japheth Kazenga

THIS season's 2024 TCA Dar 20 Overs Cup-Division C competition is slated for conclusion in Dar es Salaam tomorrow as Dar Indian Titans face Lions C in the final.

The C. Nehra-led Dar Indian Titans sailed through to the tournament's final after grabbing a 12-run thrashing of Patel Titans in the semi-final last week.

The low-scoring clash witnessed Dar Indian Titans notch 96 runs all out in 16.3 overs of the allotted 20 overs once they batted first.

Opener Nehra ended with 13 runs, consequently emerging as the batsman with the most runs in the squad.

The captain's efforts saw the batting squad post 19 runs after three overs, as his spell ended following a dismissal via a catch executed by Patel Titans' Rijali Fentu from Abubakar Juma's ball.

Nehra had the batting team fighting to amass runs after an early dismissal of the other opener, Kishan Chandra, who exited for a duck.

Sharwan Kumar (12 runs not out), Hemant Yadav (12 runs), and Ravikant Sharma (12 runs) made their way back with two digits.

There was, moreover, an encouraging game put to show by Sanjay Dangi as the cricketer chipped in with 11 runs, which included a boundary and a sixer.

Dar Indian Titans' total was slightly boosted by 16 extras leaked by the Patel Titans bowlers.

The extras were one bye, two leg byes, 12 wides, and one no-ball.

Medium pacer Fentu orchestrated Patel Titans' bowling attack, ending with a three-wicket haul.

The cricketer gave away 21 runs in his four overs and posted a 5.25 economy rate.

The bowler was ably assisted by Acrey Pascal, Juma Adidani, and Juma as the trio ended with two wickets each.

Needing a mere 97 runs to grab a win, Patel Titans surprisingly could not live up to your expectations - posting 84/10 in 15.5 overs.

The batting squad attempted to get off to a good start as opener Pascal scored 24 runs which included three fours and a six.

They were pegged back through an early exit of Harsh Khidkikar, who was caught and bowled by Dar Indian Titans' Dangi with a run to the Patel Titans' cricketer's name.

Abdallah Hassan (15 runs) and Ibrahim Job (14 runs) battled to keep Patel Titans within reach of their opponents' score, but their efforts ended in vain.

The remainder of Patel Titans' cricketers failed to prove their worth, leaving the crease in quick succession.

Imran Quresh had the best bowling figures when Dar Indian Titans fielded, amassing five wickets.

Qureshi's showing was instrumental in Dar Indian Titans' efforts to keep Patel Titans' cricketers in check, as the cricketer leaked 12 runs and ended with a 3.00 economy rate.

Dangi (2-15 in four overs) and Ally Hafidh, who took one wicket, compounded Patel Titans' woes.

In the other semi-final encounter, Lions C walloped Malabar Cricket Club (MCC) by 10 runs.

## Simba eye CAF group stage, first challenge begins in Tripoli

By Correspondent Seth Mapoli

SIMBA Sports Club are set to face a crucial first-leg encounter against Al Ahly Tripoli in the second preliminary round of the CAF Confederation Cup tomorrow at 8:00 pm.

The highly anticipated match will take place at the 11 June Stadium in Tripoli, Libya, with both teams eager to secure an advantage before the return leg in Dar es Salaam.

Simba SC head coach, Fadlu Davids, acknowledged the challenge ahead, emphasizing the importance of the match in their quest to reach the group stage of the competition.

"This match against Al Ahly Tripoli will be difficult because both teams are fighting for a win to progress to the group stage," Davids said.

He also called on Simba fans to rally behind the team, stressing the significance of focus across both legs of the tie. "I ask our fans to pray for the team to get good results on Sunday, but the most important thing is to be prepared for the second leg, which will take place in Dar es Salaam," Davids added.

Despite facing a tough opponent, Davids expressed confidence in his squad's readiness.

"We are prepared for this match, and I know Simba fans are following every step. Let me assure you that we are ready," he said, further emphasizing that the tie will ultimately be decided in Dar es Salaam.

Simba defender Shomari Kapombe echoed his coach's sentiments, stating that the team is determined to avoid defeat and continue competing in international tournaments.

"We cannot afford to lose this match because we want to keep playing in the competitions we love - international tournaments," said Kapombe.



Simba Sports Club players are pictured during a training session in Tripoli, Libya on Thursday. Simba are set to face Al Ahly Tripoli in the mouth-watering first-leg encounter in the second preliminary round of the CAF Confederation Cup tomorrow at 8:00 pm. Photo: Courtesy of SSC

He emphasized the importance of this period for both players and fans, noting that the international championship season is one that Simba cherishes.

Kapombe also pointed out the positive impact of new squad members, crediting their energy and dedication for boosting morale.

"Now it's time to take action. The preparation period is over, and I can confidently say that every player is ready for this game," he added.

Newly signed attacking midfielder Awesu Awesu, who joined Simba from KMC, also highlighted the importance

of reaching the group stage, stressing that it's crucial for both the team and its passionate fans.

"Simba fans always want to see the team in the group stage of the CAF competitions. Even if the team struggles in the domestic league, they are happy if we perform well internationally," Awesu said.

He expressed confidence that the squad is prepared to meet these high expectations.

As Simba enter this encounter, they know that securing a positive result in Tripoli is essential to their ambitions of progressing to the group stage of

the CAF Confederation Cup.

A win or a draw in the first leg would put the Tanzanian giants in a strong position heading into the return leg at the Benjamin Mkapa Stadium in Dar es Salaam.

With key players like Kapombe and Awesu ready to make an impact, Simba are focused on executing their game plan and maintaining discipline against a strong Al Ahly Tripoli side.

Guided by coach Davids and supported by their passionate fans, Simba are determined to fight for their place in the CAF Confederation Cup group stage.

## Flexibles by David Chikoko

