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Arusha City receives school desks



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Stop harassing small traders



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Research on Mount Kilimanjaro



National Pg 6

Leverage on solar energy compulsory



Rare seed varieties sought in climate change survival drive

By Guardian Reporter and Agencies

OVER the last six years, more than 100 scientists have combed the globe looking for seeds of wild plants related to the crops that humans rely on for food. The goal: to find varieties that can better survive climate change.

"If we are to feed a growing population, we need to make our food crops more resilient," Marie Haga, executive director of the Crop Trust, the nonprofit that managed the project to collect the seeds, said in a press release. "And crop wild relatives can help breeders develop new 'climate-proof' varieties."

Researchers in the project visited 25 countries to collect 4,644 seed samples, representing 371 wild relatives of 28 important crops. The work was often difficult. In Nepal, scientists searching for wild rice traveled on elephants to try to ward off attacks by tigers and rhinos, while in Nigeria progress was delayed by Boko Haram and flooding.

But it's critically important that the seed collection happens now, they say, particularly because some varieties of plants are already being lost. In Costa Rica, for example, a former wild area where previous collectors had found wild rice had been replaced by



Researchers in the project visited 25 countries to collect 4,644 seed samples, representing 371 wild relatives of 28 important crops. The work was often difficult

urban sprawl and farming. In Ethiopia, a dam under construction was quickly destroying another swath of wilderness. While this isn't the first project to save seeds, it tried to fill in gaps, since some important species were underrepresented in gene banks or completely missing.

As climate change progresses, it's already getting harder to grow food—global yields of key crops such as rice and wheat are beginning to shrink. By the middle of the century, as the global population grows and there's an even greater demand for food, there will be more pressure on farms from extreme weather. Farmers need tougher varieties of plants that can better survive heat waves, drought and flooding. And wild plants have adapted in unique ways that could help. A carrot relative in the seed project, for example, evolved to grow in salty water. An oat relative is resistant to a disease that can decimate farmed oats. A relative of Bambara groundnut, an important African crop, is better adapted to hot weather and drought.

The seeds are now stored in gene banks, where breeders can begin to cross them with domestic varieties of the plants to create versions that look and taste like standard crops but are better able to survive.

Xmas homilies: Clerics decry acts of violence



Dar es Salaam Roman Catholic Archbishop Yuda Thadeus Ruwaichi preaches at the Christmas service at the St Joseph Cathedral yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma

Poverty also exists amongst people since there are still many Tanzanians who cannot afford to meet their daily family needs

By Guardian Team

BISHOPS of the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT) yesterday on numerous podiums in their Christmas homilies called on Tanzanians to maintain unity, peace and love since they are the country's main pillars of development.

The clerics also warned that Tanzanians should avoid tormenting one another and instead condemn harsh acts against innocent citizens.

In his Christmas message, the head of the Evangelical Lutheran of Tanzania (ELCT), Bishop Dr Fedrick Shoo said Tanzanians should shun tormenting one another and shouldn't be happy seeing acts of cruelty. "When we torture others, we also torture

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JPM order closes NARCO, villagers land use dispute

By Guardian Reporter, Kagera

THE government has formally solved the 15-year old land dispute pitting Misenyi residents and the National Ranching Company (NARCO) following a ruling by the Minister for Livestock and Fisheries, Luhaga Mpina that villages housed inside the ranches remain and continue farming and grazing.

The minister's ruling follows a decision by President John Magufuli to apportion government-owned land including ranches to villagers living in the ranches instead of evicting them.

He was speaking to villagers who were lined up for eviction to give room to investors inside the ranches, many of whom occupy large tracts of

land but had failed to develop them.

Speaking at a rally in Bubale village that borders Misenyi and Rutolo ranches in the proximity of Kagoma Ranch, the minister announced that Kankuyu, Bugango, Bweju, Gubal, Mishambya, Kiobuheke, Buyegelegele, Chobokwe and Rutolo villages should not be moved and that the residents located therein should be left to engage in their day to day activities.

The decision was jubilantly received by people in the areas, expressing gratitude to President Magufuli for allocating the farms to them.

Following the decision, the minister directed NARCO General Manager Masele Mipawa

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Stakeholders raise alarm as donkey numbers slide

By Polycarp Machira, Dodoma

SHOCKED by the rate of reduction in the number of donkeys, stakeholders in the animal sector have called on the government to stop slaughtering of the domestic animal in the country.

They also want that the government conduct a countrywide identification of the animal species to control their unregulated exportation to neighbouring countries.

The Tanzania Veterinary Laboratory Agency (TVLA) says that there were about 1.5 million donkeys in the country before 2016 but the number dropped to 595,000 in 2018.

Various stakeholders meeting here recently called on the government to conduct a thorough study to establish among others the exact number of donkeys in the country as well as their lifespan

and reproduction cycle.

They discussed the issue at a meeting organized by Inades Formation Tanzania, a non-governmental organization based here, and appealed to the government to immediately ban the slaughtering of donkeys in the country.

"It is important that the government stop slaughtering and exportation of donkeys bearing in mind that the animal is of great importance to many rural dwellers," said January Kilunga, manager of the Kizota animal market in Dodoma.

Despite having such a ban, the government should also engage the Kenyan authorities to observe such a rule as most donkeys slaughtered in Chinese restaurants across the border are purchased from Tanzania.

His sentiments were echoed by Dr Rowenya

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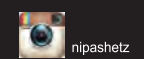
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Group of 305 Israeli tourists arrived at Killimanjaro International Airport on Tuesday for visiting the country's attractive national parks the northern circuit. Photo: Correspondent Sheiba Bulu

Xmas homilies: Clerics decry acts of violence

FROM PAGE 1

the spirit of God. Let us spread love and be good ambassadors of peace," he appealed.

Dr Shoo who heads the ELCT Northern Diocese urged those in decision making positions in the judiciary to stand for truth and always ensure justice is observed.

"The cries of people in prison who have been convicted over forged charges reach God, in like manner as the cries of Israelis while in slavery," he told the congregation.

Bishop Augustine Ndeliakyama Shao of Roman Catholic Diocese of Zanzibar insisted on the need for Tanzanians to maintain unity, equality and peace. Since Tanzania opted for the multiparty system, political differences shouldn't be used to divide the people, he declared.

Bishop Ndeliakyama said the multiparty system provides chances for Tanzanians to compare party manifestos, to criticize and reveal some negative practices within the government.

"Ongoing conflicts in some political parties signify complexity of the desire for peace, justice and equality," he asserted.

He gave an example of the recent civic polls to elect local leaders saying the exercise did not depict a good picture of the country's peace internationally.

"Suspects should be convicted after they have been given the chance to testify. Statements by officials shouldn't be considered as law but rather as directives," the cleric intoned.

ELCT North Central Diocese Bishop, Dr Solomon Massangwa said Tanzanians still face challenges of poverty, ignorance and diseases. Existing challenges have resulted into people losing hope, calling upon Tanzanians to start new life chapters by giving priority to faith.

He lashed out at churches and clerics who order worshippers to bring their valued goods so as to qualify for specific prayer services.

Poverty also exists amongst people since there are still many Tanzanians who cannot afford to meet their daily family needs, he stated.

Bishop Massangwa urged Tanzanians not to give up in life despite

the challenges, insisting that the hopes attached to the birth of Christ bring new light in their hearts.

"Our savior Jesus is born, and we Christians have been taught to take up his word as he is the savior," he stated, underlining that even in difficulties one ought to thank God for despite everything the grace of God is prevalent.

Dr Dickson Chilongani, Anglican Church Bishop in the central zone diocese expressed discontent over the behavior of some politicians who seek help from traditional healers especially during elections.

In his homily during Christmas gathering in the Anglican Church in th city, Bishop Chilongani urged such politicians to seek help from God and not from witch-doctors, noting that the country needs leaders who are humble and fear God.

At the Catholic Archdiocese of Arusha, Archbishop Isaac Amani urged Tanzanians to live in unity and patriotism.

He appealed to Christians to pray for the country's leaders to enable them to continually observe the rule of law, value individual rights and resist creating fear.

The archbishop urged people to live peacefully without discrimination for the country to attain progress.

"We should also use this festival to caution and fight against violence upon children. Parents, guardians and relatives have a big role to play to ensure that our children are safe. We also have a role to fight against abortions," Archbishop Amani intoned.

For his part, Rev Hosea Stephano of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) in Mekodonia, Ilemela in Mwanza city emphasized on the need for Tanzanians to work hard.

He said that for the country to attain its goals and have a strong economy, it was vital for everyone to work hard.

Bishop Michael Hafidh of the Anglican Church in Mkunazini, Unguja Island commended the Isles' government for maintaining peace.

"We really recognize the efforts done by the government to ensure that the Isles remain peaceful. It is our request that this peace should be maintained even during elections next year," he

said. The cleric further emphasized all people including Christians to ensure that they register in the voter register as it is their vital right.

"Actions arising from gender-based violence (GBV) are mounting. This should be fought with all possible vigour to ensure that women and children are safe," he emphasized.

In his preaching on Christmas Eve at Ngokolo Cathedral, Bishop Liberatus Sangu of the Catholic Diocese of Shinyanga spoke against selfishness and the desire to have it all.

He said this desire has been the cause of conflicts in families and the killing of people with albinism, as well as the elderly.

He said many people in Tanzania have developed a tendency of accumulating wealth to themselves by any means, which is threatening peace and co-existence in the society.

"There are people who are ready to kill someone for them to get rich and this is because of wrong beliefs that most of these people are nurtured to

hold," said the clergy man.

He called upon Tanzanians to refrain from such evils, as avoiding evil will guarantee peace and co-existence among Tanzanians, and put an end to incidents of killings of people with albinism.

Father Dr Moses Mapela of the Catholic archdiocese of Mwanza mentioned abortion, use of some contraceptive methods, drug abuse and conflicts in marriage are challenges that the society and Christians have to work upon.

He said it is sad that Christians and other members in the society keep supporting abortion, use of contraceptives and such other positions without taking account of their impact to the wellbeing of the people.

Fr. Dr Mapela said it is worrying that in the 21st century people are killing one another, mistreating each other in conflicts all over the world, and at times even parents quarrel in front of their children.

Stakeholders raise alarm as donkey numbers slide

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Mushi from TVLA in Arusha, who highlighted the urgent need to save donkeys in Tanzania from looming extinction.

Harrison Gabriel, a veterinary researcher at the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries said that there is need for intervention since the animal is of great help especially to women in the rural areas.

He pointed out that it is becoming common to find carcasses of donkeys in forest areas after illegal slaughtering and taking away of skin by unknown people.

The Chief Executive Officer for the Arusha Society for the Protection of Animals (ASPA), Livingstone Masija, stated that Tanzania does not have a

reliable compilation on numbers of donkeys as many people complain of theft of their animals.

The government ought to close all donkey markets throughout the country and provide public education on the animal's welfare, he urged.

He asked that Tanzania and Kenya consider coming up with legislation against trading in donkeys, its meat and other products.

Inades Executive Director Herman Hishamu on his part noted that the reduced number of donkeys has a negative effect to the national economy.

"Leaders at the zonal level should cooperate in efforts to help create public awareness on donkey welfare to help alleviate challenges facing the survival of the rural farm aid animals," he declared.

JPM order closes NARCO, villagers land use dispute

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to ensure that the new ranches' boundaries are set up within a month.

He also directed NARCO to revise its agreements with investors in those areas and if any of them have not invested as per the agreements, the land should be allocated to local residents who are in need.

He similarly expressed dismay for investors not paying appropriate taxes and failure to invest in livestock keeping, in accordance with the agreements they signed, while villagers find it difficult to graze their cattle.

If an investor has no intention to invest in any part of the land he is holding, he should apportion it to villagers in need and remain with a smaller area of land, the minister

underlined.

However he hailed short time investors for paying government taxes, in particular land rent.

He therefore gave one month within which to pay land rent and in case they fail to do so the government will reallocate the land to residents who are ready to pay the rent, to move in with their livestock.

Misenyi District Commissioner Col Denis Mwila assured the minister that they will ensure that government directives are implemented, including land rent payment by defaulting investors.

The minister had done well to resolve the drawn out land conflict that at times caused a breach of the peace, he added.

CLARIFICATION

In our yesterday edition we referred to the money laundering case facing LHRC official Tito Magoti and another person as LHRC duo. In fact the other person isn't LHRC staffer. The reference was inaccurate. The error is regretted. - Editor



Dodoma residents buy pineapples at Dodoma market yesterday at affordable prices. Photo: Correspondent Ibrahim Joseph

By Guardian Correspondent, Kalambo

PREGNANT mother, Maria Kalunde (42) and her daughter Magreth (9) drowned into Kalambo river.

The incident happened yesterday at Kasitu village in Sopa Ward, Kalambo district in Rukwa region when they were crossing the river.

Speaking about the tragic incident one villager Robert Mwanawima said the woman died because the area had no ordinary bridge, hence many villagers have to use the wooden bridge.

He said when the woman with her daughter were crossing they fell into

9-year-old boy and his pregnant mom drown in Kalambo river, say officials

the river and started screaming for help but since the people in the vicinity were far away they failed to reach in time to save them.

He added: "Two days later they received information that their bodies were recovered by villagers at a nearby village and since they could not identified them they decided to bury them."

Another Kasitu villager Jeremia Shigoma said due the challenges from lack of safe bridge, people have been drowning from time to time, especially during the rainy seasons, and appealed to the government for assistance in building a safe bridge for them.

Kasitu village executive secretary Gasper Kateka confirmed the tragic incident and added that in the past

the situation was even worse as there weren't any bridge at all, but it was later constructed after the wananchi contributed 10,000/- each to pay builders.

The Ward Councillor Richard Kamagari said the issue of drowning had been happening many times and he had already reported the matter at the councilors' meetings.

Arusha City receives 3,900 school desks for new Form One entrants

By Guardian Correspondent, Arusha

ARUSHA City Development Director Dr Maulid Madeni has presented 3,900 school desks valued at 105m/- to the city's secondary education officer for use by new secondary school entrants in 2020.

Handing over the furniture here yesterday Dr Madeni said Arusha City has spent the money to make the desks at Kaloleni trade school which is under Kaloleni primary school and saved 200m/- if private contractors were to do the job.

Dr Madeni said the city has used the government owned centre to make the furniture after being satisfied with the high quality of its work as compared to the work by private contractors.

"The money we have saved can be directed to other uses including the building of new classrooms in order to improve the education sector," he said.

He also hailed the Arusha District Commissioner Gabriel Daqqaro for managing well the Arusha District Council and for accomplishing the school desks project, and President John Magufuli for his efforts in improving the education sector.

Arusha City education officer Valentine Makuka said the desks will fill the gap of the shortage especially for new secondary students who will join Form One next year. She said the procurement of the desks had gone simultaneously with building of new classrooms so as to enable new students to have both classrooms and desks.



Mbeya Regional Commissioner Albert Chamilila (3rd R) hands over 300 iron sheets to district commissioners in the region for the construction of 59 classrooms for Form I students next year. Photo: Correspondent Nerbert Msokwa

‘National leaders should visit national parks to promote domestic tourism’

By Guardian Correspondent, Arusha

CHIEF Conservator of Lake Manyara national park Noelia Myoga has called upon national leaders and their families to tour the country's national parks during the end of year holiday season so as to encourage other wananchi to do so in efforts to promote domestic tourism.

Speaking with this paper yesterday Myoga gave an example when he was chief conservator of Gombe National Park in Kigoma region he found local tourists at the park numbered only 134, hence he communicated with the office of the regional commissioner who visited the area and also encouraged others to do so and by 2016 local tourists who visited the park were 1,600.

He said in Manyara they have started the same efforts in promoting domestic tourism for government departments and institutions and other private institutions through various functions and conferences.

Myoga mentions attractions in Manyara national park including a large number of elephants, buffaloes, antelopes, monkeys and tree-climbing

lions. The lake also attracts various kinds of birds, including heroes, water ducks, cranes and many others.

The conservator also mentioned other attractions which include many species of birds- over 390 at the rift valley wall, hot water springs, marshy forests and herd of hippos.

He said in 2012-13 139 local tourists visited the Park, in 2013-14 1,132 local tourists visited the park, 2014-15 (1,356), 2015-16 (1,508) and 2016-17 (1,690).

He said only five per cent of Tanzanians or five million of them who visit tourist attractions in the parks at an entry fee of 11,800/- including tax, the nation could have earned 59bn/-.

Lake Manyara national park was commissioned in 1960 and occupies an area of 330 square km and is part of Tarangire-Manyara ecosystem.



The lake also attracts various kinds of birds, including heroes, water ducks, cranes and many others

Police hold couple over death of their child

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbeya

POLICE in Mbeya region are holding a couple, residents of Pambogo Street in Ilyela Ward, Mbeya City over the murder of their child who they later buried.

Speaking to reporters at his office on Tuesday, Mbeya Regional Police

Commander ACP Ulrich Matei said the incident occurred on December 22 at around 6.30 in the morning, adding that the couple- Ally Mbavu (23) and Sabina Alex (19) are allegedly to have caused death of their baby boy aged one year and 11 months.

RPC Matei said the suspects had reported at the police station since

December 21 this year that their child had disappeared and hence by the help of wananchi of the area they started looking for him, ultimately they found in the morning the child was buried with the body parts sticking out.

“This is a very disgraceful incident and it is in fact very inhuman as we suspect the couple to be involved

with the child's death from the circumstantial evidence,” said Matei.

He said the suspects are being held while investigations are continuing and thereafter they will appear before to court.

Speaking on the incident, Pambogo Street chairman Mwaikambo Mwalwisi said after the couple reported the

matter to the police; he sounded an alarm calling wananchi to assist to hunt for the child.

He said when their efforts were not successful they decided to go to sleep so that they continue with the search the next morning, and when they woke up their efforts paid off- they found the child buried near his parent's house.

He said the couple was living in a rented house hence no one knows what actually happened.

Meanwhile RPC Matei called on wananchi in the region to be careful during the festive season and avoid acts that may breach peace, and added that the police will beef up security in the region's various areas.

21 Kagera war veterans seek help from govt for their discharge benefits

By Guardian Correspondent, Kahama

TWENTY ONE Kagera war veterans in Kahama district, Shinyanga region have written a letter to the Minister for Defence and National Service Hussein Mwinyi urging for payment of their benefits which they were shortchanged.

These veterans fought in the 1978-79 Kagera War some of have since died without receiving their benefits.

One of the veterans Samson Lutende told reporters in his office here that the continual non-payment of their lawful benefits has made many of them live like paupers.

He said in their letter to the minister dated December 23 2019 they said during the Kagera War they were in the front line but they were not being paid while

their families back home were not receiving any money either.

“My brothers in the media, the money we are claiming was supposed to be paid to us immediately the war ended in 1979 but we have not been paid to date and other veterans have already died... we are asking the minister to help us to get our money,” Lutende said.

He said as they were fighting for their country against Idi Amin forces their families lived through hard times at that time while they were fighting and added that up to now their lives have been devastated.

He said when they made a follow up on the issue to the Shinyanga Regional Commissioner Zainab Tellack, she told them their money was a challenge in making trips to Kahama as it is a costly undertaking.



Musoma Rural MP in Mara region Prof. Sospeter Muhongo (with blue T-shirt) hands over plough to representative of 20 groups in efforts to adopt modern farming practises in the constituency. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Stop harassing small traders at mineral markets areas - Biteko

By Guardian Correspondent, Arusha

MINISTER for Minerals Dotto Biteko (pictured) has said the government wants to see officials in the state organs and those in the mining sector stop harassing small entrepreneurs who conduct their businesses in the areas where mineral markets have been opened.

He called for the immediate stop of the acts of harassment and instead they should build up an enabling environment for them to reap the opportunities found in the areas.

Biteko was speaking at Arusha at meeting with officials from state organs

and mining stakeholders when he said he received complaints from the wananchi in the mining areas.

He said many victims from the harassment were women who are often forbidden to do business in the areas where mineral markets have been opened.

He said it was better for the authorities to assist the small entrepreneurs instead of harassing them.

Speaking on challenges faced by the Arusha mineral market, the Regional Commissioner Mrisho Gambo said there is a big problem of the lack of good relationship between big and small miners who instead of



cooperating they have been engaged in back-biting, the habit that hampers in the attainment of goals.

On their part, some of the miners and business persons said together

with the government's good intentions to assist them there are still exists many challenges from middle and lower government officials including tax institution.

Tanzania Mineral Dealers Association (TAMIDA) Chairman Sammy Mollel said despite mineral sellers ensuring they pay all taxes imposed by the government; there are still some acts of harassment as some taxes have reappeared and appealed to the minister to make a follow up to help them.

Mollel mentioned some of the taxes that include inspection and clearance levy which basically are paid already through other taxes.

Another challenge that Mollel cited include obstacles placed in the implementation of government directives that called all minerals

must be processed locally, and said in as much as they have secured donors from abroad to help them, difficult conditions have been placed for them to come in.

Small miners of Tanzanite asked the government to translate mining laws into Kiswahili, the move that will help many of them, especially the youths to understand them so as to avoid unnecessary confrontations with law institutions.

They also asked the government to continue with the improvement of infrastructure at mineral markets areas including beefing up of security at places where minerals are stored.

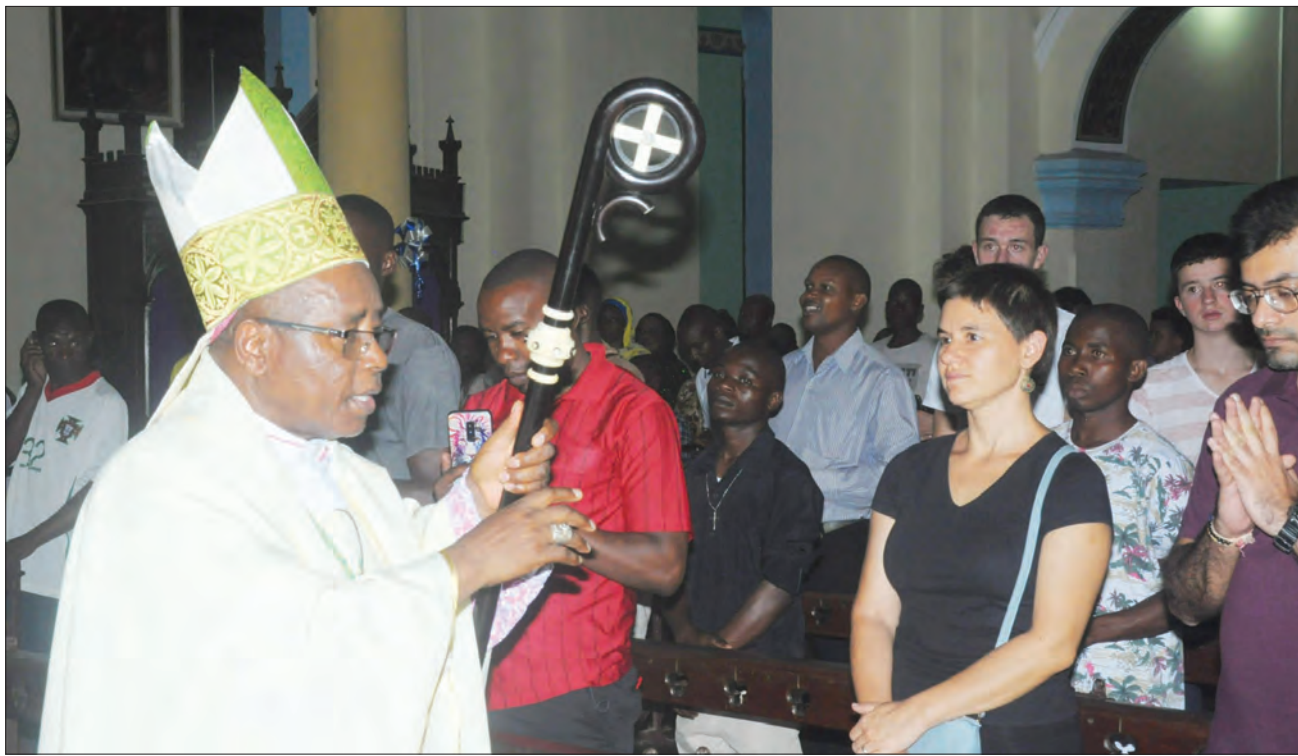
COUNTRYWIDE CHRISTMAS SERVICE PICTORIAL



Rev. Christian Ndossa (R) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania, Diocese of Dodoma exchanges good wishes with Rev. Humphrey Sam at the Christmas service held in Dodoma yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Ibrahim Joseph



Rev Christian Ndossa (R) of Kisasa Street Paris of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania Diocese of Dodoma gives best wishes to people who attended the Christmas service yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Ibrahim Joseph



Bishop Augustino Shao of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Zanzibar blesses worshippers who attended the Christmas service held at St. Joseph's church in Zanzibar yesterday. Photo: Martin Kabemba



Roman Catholic believers attend Christmas service at St Joseph's church in Zanzibar yesterday



Student nuns attend Christmas service at Ngokolo church in Shinyanga Urban yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Marco Maduhu



Former Foreign Affairs and International Relations minister Bernard Membe (L) exchanges greetings with Dar es Salaam Roman Catholic Archbishop Yuda Thadeus Ruwachi, after the Christmas service yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma



Members of the Anglican denomination attend Christmas service at St. Alban's church in Dar es Salaam on Tuesday. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma



The St Joseph's Cathedral choir performs during the Christmas service in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma

African women battle to access finance, says AfDB president

By Guardian Reporter

THE African continent has a US\$42 billion financing gap between men and women leaving 70 per cent of women excluded financially.

This was revealed by the African Development Bank (AfDB) president, Akinwumi Adesina at the Global Gender summit held recently in Rwandan capital, Kigali.

Adesina said despite the fact that women are bankable, and are the majority of farmers in Africa, they face a financing gap of close to US\$16 billion (N\$240 billion).

The bank's president added that 90 per cent of women pay back their loans, "yet, there exists globally close to US\$1.5 trillion (N\$22 trillion) financing gap for women-led small and medium sized enterprises."

"Smart nations [ought to] invest in women," he stated.

Adesina said the challenges are not just about gender, they are about under-representation and lack of empowerment of women.

"So, let's focus on women. Let's focus on solutions for the gender disparities we see that affect women," he said.

Adesina urged fellow African policymakers to focus on how to fast-track economic, social and political opportunities for women, and girls.

"A smarter world must invest in women and girls. Let's be smart and

let's be wise: women are the best investments any society can make, he reiterated.

The AfDB has launched the Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa (AFAWA), to mobilise US\$3 billion (N\$45 billion) of new lending by banks and financial institutions for women in Africa.

The over US\$3 billion targeted funds will finance women-led enterprises, providing technical assistance and strengthening the enabling business environment in favour of women.

Director for agriculture and agro-industry at the AfDB, Martin Fregene, indicated that bank-financed agriculture projects, half of the beneficiaries are women.

He said the bank is working to empower young agripreneurs, especially young women, through its jobs for Youth/Enable Youth programme; at each stage of the agribusiness value chain, with innovative skills and technologies.

Fregene indicated that each of the programmes also link up the agripreneurs to financial institutions to fund their agribusinesses.

Under the multinational land policy and regulatory framework, the bank is supporting its regional member countries to improve land tenure security for all, especially women, youth and marginalised groups.



Arusha city director Dr. Maulidi Madeni (R) shakes hands with Arusha city secondary education officer Valentine Makuka during the handing over of 3,900 desks and tables worth 105m/- for Form One students. Photo: Correspondent Cynthia Mwilozezi

By Correspondent James Lanka, Moshi

A 61-year-old man of Kirua Vunjo in Moshi Rural District, Kilimanjaro region, Epimark Theobald Ombela shot himself using his rifle for unknown reasons.

Kilimanjaro Regional Police Commander (RPC), Salum Hamduni told journalists here yesterday that the incident took place December 23 at around 06:00hrs at Kirua Vunjo Westward.

The Kilimanjaro regional police boss explained that the deceased pointed

Man (61) shoots himself

the rifle to his chin and shot himself and died immediately after the bullet penetrated from his lower part of his head.

He said reasons behind the deceased's decision to kill himself was yet to be established as the law enforcers were still investigating.

"The deceased body is preserved at the Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Centre (KCMC) mortuary for further post-mortem and the incident is

still a case under investigation" ACP Hamduni explained.

In another development, a primary school pupil, a resident of Kitandu Shinga village, in Uru South ward, in Moshi rural district, Kilimanjaro region Doris Peter Mushi (13) was found dead at Malongwe dam which is a storage facility for coffee irrigation owned by the Kilimanjaro Plantation Limited (KPL).

The incident took place on December 23, 2019 at around 5pm according to Kilimanjaro Regional Police Commander (RPC), Salum Hamduni. Hamduni explained that, preliminary investigations showed that, the young girl died after falling in the dam while collecting firewood around the dam. "The deceased was collecting firewood around the dam before she fell inside the dam where she was found dead, and her body is preserved at KCMC mortuary for further investigations," RPC Hamduni further explained.



Shia Ithnasheriya spiritual leader Maulana Sheikh Hemed Jalala wishes Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all Christian dominations at the Masjid Ghadir, Kigogo Post in the outskirts of Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala

USA student traveling to Tanzania for research on Mount Kilimanjaro

By Guardian Reporter and Agencies

NORTHWEST college student and biology major Tawna Herrera recently learned her winter break will be vastly different than it's been in the past.

Set to fly out on Christmas Day, Herrera is headed to East Africa for a 27-day research expedition through National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), where she'll experience cultural exposure, outdoor skills and scientific research opportunities in the heart of Tanzania.

"It's just such an unreal opportunity to go on an adventure doing what you love," Herrera said. "I am looking forward to immersing myself in scientific field research and examining the microbiome in the soil located on Mount Kilimanjaro."

Herrera's participation is aided by scholarships and grants from the Colorado-Wyoming Alliance for Minority Participation, which supports and encourages participation in STEM education. She will participate in microbiome sampling and high-elevation research on Kilimanjaro, implementing bioinformatics skills gained through participation in NWC's Idea Networks for Biomedical Research Excellence (INBRE) program.

"I am also looking forward to learning the language and the culture of the Masaai people, who we will be staying with for a week. Overall, I am looking forward to the whole expedition," Herrera said.

In addition to conducting research and gaining exposure to new cultures, she'll go on a safari, walk among zebras, giraffes, ostriches and wildebeests, and travel through the plains and forests of Tanzania.

The next component of the expedition includes a day-long drive through the Ngorongoro Crater, where the group will see African wildlife in their natural habitat.

The final two weeks of the course will be spent on Mount Kilimanjaro, the tallest mountain in Africa. Students will focus on scientific research projects including sampling and analysis, formulating scientific hypotheses,

collecting original field data and learning best practices for discussing and presenting data.

The backpacking route length spans approximately 40 miles, with the average pack weighing anywhere from 50-60 pounds.

During the excursion, the group will hone their outdoor living and leadership skills. Participants will return home seasoned backpackers, world travelers and international expedition scientists.

INBRE is supported by the National Institutes of Health in an effort to train aspiring scientists and health practitioners in biomedical research. NWC has been involved in the project since 2004, broadening the education for more than 200 students in that time.

Many NWC INBRE students have gone on to medical, pharmacy and naturopathy schools as well as earning advanced degrees in various aspects of biology.

Wyoming INBRE funding is intended to enhance biomedical research capacity, expand and strengthen the research capabilities of biomedical faculty, and provide access to biomedical resources for promising undergraduate students throughout the eligible states.

The Wyoming INBRE network is composed of the students, teachers and researchers at the University of Wyoming and Wyoming community colleges.

The project described was supported by an Institutional Development Award (IDeA) from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences of the National Institutes of Health.

Herrera is set to graduate from NWC in May 2020.



It's just such an unreal opportunity to go on an adventure doing what you love

NARCO urged to establish butchery along Dodoma - Morogoro highway

By Polycarp Machira, Dodoma

THE government has directed the National Ranch Company (NARCO) to establish butchery along Dodoma - Morogoro highway within 38 days in efforts to increase own revenues.

The directive was issued by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, Prof Elisante Ole Gabriel during a visit at Kongwa based NARCO branch on Tuesday afternoon.

Ole Gabriel was on a tour at Kongwa ranch to inspect various income generating activities, especially the slaughtering and selling of cows at the ranch. He said there is increased

population of people along the highway since the government relocated to Dodoma.

"There is need to have butcheries along the road where passersby can easily buy meat instead of going some two kilometers deep in the ranch for that purpose," he said, adding that by so doing, NARCO will increase own revenues.

He said the company has until 31st January, 2020 to do so, adding that the respective minister will inaugurate the butcheries, noting that waiting for people to go for meat in the ranch is outdated.

On a different note, the PS warned the company's management for bad language on their subordinates, saying

he has been receiving complaints from workers, decrying poor treatment from their leaders.

Kongwa ranch manager, Raymond Lutege while reading the report noted that the centre produces quality meat that is sold in different butcheries in Dodoma city, Morogoro, Kibaigwa and Kongwa Narco.

He said the ranch has 9919 cows, 1336 goats, 748 sheep, 127 pigs and seven horses. The manager said however they are facing challenges of lack of capital to increase production.

"In addition to the above mentioned challenge, we are also facing serious debts from our clients who have taken too long to pay back," he said.

For his part, NARCO acting nation manager, Mipawa Masele, said that plans are underway to invest further in all ranches in the country despite invasion by people leaving near the ranches.

He said in 2019/20, NARCO aim to collect 9 billion/- whereby Kongwa alone had collected 1.1 billion/- within six months. He warned that all lessees at the ranch who have not paid back the rightful fees by January next year will be kicked out.

"In efforts to increase revenues and stop dependence at Kongwa, we plan to increase the number of cows to 12,000 as part of the plan to purchase animals from other stakeholders in the country," he said.

UNHCR introduces biomass briquettes to address refugees, energy challenges

By Guardian Reporter

THE United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has embarked on a pilot project aimed at producing biomass briquettes to serve refugees in Kigoma camps.

The move among others is aimed to boost refugees' access to safe and sustainable energy, while minimizing environmental impact in the area.

James Mwangi, UNHCR environmental officer in Kibondo district, said use of firewood as a source of energy in refugee camps is now becoming a huge threat to environment.

According to the environment officer, the strategy focuses on ensuring that refugees meet their essential energy needs from the beginning of an emergency; improving refugees' access to clean and affordable energy to cook.

"We are working with the Relief to Development Society (REDESO) to train farmers at Mvugwe village in Kasulu district to enable them produce the briquettes.

More than 200 farmers in the surrounding villages are set to benefit from this project," he added.

Mwangi further said that some 1200 refugees at Nyarugusu camp in Kasulu have been trained on how to produce the biomass briquettes.

"This is a simpler, cheaper and cleaner cooking. Biomass briquettes provide an alternative and environmentally-friendly solution for cooking...with this project, women will no longer be needed to travel long distanced searching for firewood."

Early this month when the UNHCR assistant High Commissioner-Operations George Okoth Obbo visited the Burundian refugee camps of Nduta and Mtendeli in Kigoma region he pledged that he is going to continue mobilizing efforts and funds to ensure that the camps are sustainably served with alternative sources of energy to save the environment.

"Reducing the amount of firewood needed in refugee camps can have a great impact on the local environment, so our priority for now will be addressing the issue," he said.

He however said that "More support, partnerships and joint efforts between humanitarian, development and private actors will be required to finance and deliver sustainable energy in the camps."

Earlier, the director for refugee services in the Home Affairs Ministry Sudi Mwakibasi said that environmental degradation in the refugee camps and surrounding communities is soaring thus needed instant measures to address.

"We are calling for the humanitarian actors to increase funding to energy sector specifically in cooking energy for refugees...as the government we continue ensuring that the refugees have a safe stay while in the country," he said.

According to current estimates, more than 90 per cent of refugees in camps have limited access to electricity. More broadly a lack of energy makes it difficult for them to cook, keep warm, learn, work or find their way around at night while also exposing them to various protection and health risks.

This poses significant humanitarian and environmental challenges. We need to ensure that those forced to flee are able to meet their basic energy needs in exile, while also minimizing environmental degradation and protecting the livelihoods of host communities.

A Global Compact on Refugees which was forged in December 2018 by member states of the United Nations calls for increased investment in renewable energy in refugee host countries to secure refugee access to fuel and energy. It also encourages integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems in or near refugee hosting rural and urban areas.



Following the ongoing rains some drainage system had been blocked. Mbezi Mwisho resident in the outskirts of Dar es Salaam clears mud to allow water flowing smoothly. Photo: Sabato Kasika

By Guardian Correspondent, Tanga

POLICE in Tanga have netted more than 80 people alleged to be members of a gang group—'Watoto wa Ibilisi' who have been engaging in various crime incidences within the region.

The police force also arrested some 77 illegal migrants from Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya who are said to have entered the country without relevant permits.

Tanga Regional Police Commander, Edward Bukombe told journalists here that the 87 people were arrested at different places within the city during a routine police patrol.

According to Bukombe, the force has

Tanga police nabbed over 80 people allegedly members of a crime gang

from January to December this year conducted a number of patrols and managed to seize 43 firearms, among them, two were shotguns and 41 locally made firearms.

The RPC elaborated that out the 77 arrested illegal migrants, 15 are from Somalia, 58 Ethiopians and 11 Kenyans.

Commenting on road accidents, RPC Bukombe said the number of road crashes has gone down to 55 in 2019 compared to 82 road accidents

recorded in the previous year.

He said the number of people injured as a result of road accidents in between January and December 2019 is 95 compared to 201 injured during similar period last year, a decrease of 52.73 per cent.

On illegal importation of commodities, he said that police managed to seize 26 sacks of rice, 180 bags of sugar, 23 cartons of the banned plastic bags, 37 packets of cosmetics, 42

gallons of edible oil and 187 pieces of women clothes. He said following the seizure, a total of 20 cases are going on at different courts in the region.

The RPC warned city residents to shun away from criminal incidences as well as taking safety precaution especially on this holiday season. He said the force is determined to ensure safety of people and their properties and that police will conduct patrols day and night.



Fish monger at the main market in Iringa urban, Zakaria Haule waits for customers at his kiosk yesterday. He says business is tough especially at the end of year because most of the clients were preparing for school fees and agriculture inputs. Photo: Correspondent Friday Simbaya

African states challenged to diversify economies, further trade exchanges

By Correspondent Crispin Gerald

AFRICAN countries have been challenged to diversify economies and production in order to boost trade among member states by considering youth population and embrace gender mainstreaming.

Country representative for United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) Stephen Kargbo made the call in Dar es Salaam recently during the event to mark African Industrialisation Day; the day was adopted by the assembly of heads of states and government of the organisation of Africa Unity at its twenty-fifth ordinary session held in Addis Ababa.

He said effective participation of all groups, especially women and youth in line with the demographic composition of the continent, should be key if the continent intends to reap the full benefit.

"We therefore, urge African states to deploy energies towards implementing the ancillary, yet strategic activities during the intervening period leading to 2020, when formal free trade

commences, to ensure a seamless transition to the Free Trade Agreement (FTA)," he said.

The success of the African Continental Free Trade Area Market (AfCFTA) in increasing the supply response hinges largely on the continents' determined efforts to remove supply-side rigidities and infrastructural bottlenecks to reduce significantly the cost of production and cost of doing business across borders.

Kargbo added that the geographical expansion of commodity belts through value addition, benefiting from the new ingredients of industrial modernization available across countries, could indeed be an effective means to climb the ladder of value addition.

Themed; Positioning African Industry to Supply the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Market, it present a very important occasion to raise awareness of the industrialization challenges and strides being made on structural transformation on the continent.

This is also an opportunity for stakeholders to share ideas and best practice together with

fostering regional, continental and global cooperation for accelerated industrialisation in Africa.

This year's celebration provides us a renewed opportunity to re-affirm the commitments of African Union (AU) member states and the International community towards accelerating the inclusive and sustainable industrial development of the Africa continent under the theme, 'positioning African industry to supply the AfCFTA Market'.

This year's theme for African Industrialisation Day builds upon the positive outcomes of the inaugural 2018 Africa Industrialization week. Thus with free trade dawning on 1 July 2020, the need to reposition industrial production to enhance the supply response to the enlarged pan-African market requires prioritization in the programming frame at member states, regional and continental levels.

A message from United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres (UNSG) on Africa Industrialisation Day states that; Industrial development is of critical importance for sustained and inclusive economic growth in Africa countries.

This year's industrialisation Day marks a milestone as we highlight how the African Continental Free Trade Agreement will boost regional economic transformation and sustainable development.

Africa's manufacturing has been growing faster than the world average, but this pace needs to gain even more speed. With the new trade agreement ushering in a market of at least US\$ 3trn and consumer base of more than 1.3bn/- people, Africa's manufacturing sector is projected to double in size by 2025 and create millions of jobs.

He called on African countries to adopt a holistic approach to industrial policy, pursuing, through stronger multi-stakeholder partnerships, green and clean industrialisation strategies that promote equitable economic opportunities and take into account the urgency of addressing the climate crisis.

The United Nations remains strongly committed to accelerating these efforts and to working with Africa to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Leverage on solar energy compulsory in addressing energy poverty in Africa

By Molly Wasonga

Access to safe energy is undoubtedly a fundamental welfare to human beings without which, households are forced to rely on the easily available polluting and dangerous sources of energy.

An oxfam survey reports that energy poverty presents a serious challenge in sub-Saharan Africa, despite longstanding efforts to address it. That in 2014, 633 million people lacked access to electricity and 792 million people relied on traditional biomass as their primary energy source for cooking. This results to drudgery, poisoning, fires, burns, limited economic opportunity, and premature death due to respiratory diseases.

"Whereas developing Asia contains the largest number of people without access to modern cooking facilities, sub-Saharan Africa contains the largest number without access to electricity. Sub-Saharan Africa is also home to the largest number of countries with the lowest rates of electrification and has the highest rates of people forced to cook using traditional biomass," reads the report in part.

While the task of addressing the energy poverty seems daunting, alternative renewable energy technologies such as solar are creating new possibilities for achieving widespread energy access in Africa.

Mwezi Limited together with Greenlight Planet solars penned a partnership deal, to provide solar products and services that will improve the health, wealth, education and environmental impact to their customers in Kenya and developing Africa, for a complete overhaul of the traditional and unsafe sources of energy. "We realized an opportunity to replace the ubiquitous kerosene lamps used by every off-grid home in sub-saharan Africa with a more reliable, affordable, and cleaner lighting product," said Dhaval Radia, the Global Commercial Head and Senior Vice President at Greenlight Planet during an interview with CIO East Africa.

The realization that solar energy could power such a solution as Radia notes, compelled Sun King solar-powered lanterns to be developed by Greenlight Planet, about a decade ago, as replacement to kerosene lamps so as to serve the underserved population with access to clean and reliable energy.

"We build a network of local community-based branches and partner with best manufacturers to enhance access to alternative energy sources to our clients. We partnered with a mission to provide products and services that improve the health, wealth, education and environmental impact of our customers," noted Mike Sherry, the Founder and CEO of Mwezi Limited.

Since inception, Greenlight Planet has sold about 10 million clean energy products around the world, impacting on more than 45 million beneficiaries by enabling access to basic energy that has life-changing consequences.

"We often see that there aren't enough daylight hours to allow children in rural areas the study time necessary to succeed or businesses to run after sunset. Sun King solar solutions give back 3 hours of productive time each night giving beneficiaries a 75% increase in study time for children. Additionally, small businesses are able to stay open longer, increasing their monthly income by roughly 25% on average," added Radia.

Using clean energy systems decreases a household's dependence on kerosene and improves the quality of air people inhale.

Leveraging on technologies like Photovoltaics (PV), Concentrating Solar Power (CSP), which uses heat from the sun (thermal energy) to drive utility-scale, electric turbines and Solar Heating and Cooling (SHC), the solar generation systems are designed to provide electricity using solar panels and small batteries to both isolated and clustered households focusing on distributed renewable energy that are cheaper, faster to deploy, and not reliant on the power utilities that have served African countries so poorly in the past.

The partnership enables for opportunities through EasyBuy, a direct distribution channel that allows field agents called Sun King Energy Officers, to directly distribute products to rural households in Sub-Saharan Africa. The mission of the wide reach as intended, is to mitigate the local emissions from large, centralized, fossil fuel-burning power stations, which currently impose major health costs on communities in developing and under-developed countries and to encourage a friendlier pay-as-you-go payment model.

Lake Shore Savings Bank CEO prepares to climb Kilimanjaro

By Allissa Kline

THE president and CEO of Lake Shore Savings Bank is embarking on his third father-son mountain excursion, this time climbing 19,330 feet to the highest point in Africa.

Reininga, 61, is climbing with WorldServe International, a nonprofit organisation that provides clean-water wells in sub-Saharan Africa. He set a goal to raise \$3,500 by Dec. 31, 2020.

"My pledge is that anybody who donates to the cause, I will shout their names from the mountaintop, literally," he said.

Reininga's adventures in mountain climbing began in 2010, shortly after he became top executive of the \$597 million-asset bank headquartered in Dunkirk. Lake Shore is the 10th largest deposit-taker in Western New York.

Reininga says he was "substantially out of shape" and wanted to set a goal for himself in order to improve his physical health. So he set his sights on Mount Rainier, the highest mountain in the state of Washington at 14,411 feet, and decided to train with his friend and bank consultant Paul Wallenhorst.

"Both of us needed to get in shape," said Wallenhorst, who helps New York and Pennsylvania banks with organization development. "We made a deal to encourage each other, train together and never give up on a climb as long as the other guy was still climbing."

The pair started close to home by climbing up a 50-foot hill in Wallenhorst's backyard.

"We stopped eight times the first time we tried it," Reininga said.

Lots of training ensued - including treks up and down the hills at Holiday Valley Ski Resort in Ellicottville - and in July 2013, the pair ascended Mount Rainier along with their oldest sons. Two years later, Reininga and his middle son, Parker, tried to climb Mount Whitney in California, but the weather got in the way. They went back in 2016 and reached the summit, along

with Wallenhorst and his son.

Now Reininga and his youngest son, 22-year-old Alex, and Wallenhorst and his youngest son, 32-year-old Tim, are getting ready to climb Kilimanjaro.

Reininga said the opportunity came in October 2018 when a friend in Pennsylvania told him about WorldServe International and the upcoming trip.

"He said, 'We're going to do the trip,'" Reininga said. "I was on my way to Buffalo ... and I was so excited that when I looked down (at the speedometer) I was going 95 miles an hour."

The four will leave Buffalo on Jan. 3 and arrive in Tanzania the next day. On Jan. 7, they depart for Kilimanjaro. It will take five days to reach the glacial ice atop the summit and come back down.

They will be part of a 20-person entourage that will be led by sherpas and professional guides. They are allowed to carry 20 pounds only; the rest of the supplies, including food, are carried by the sherpas.

"This is the trip of a lifetime," he said. "The goal is to hit the summit, but there are so many components along the way that make it an amazing trip overall."



"We're going to do the trip," Reininga said. "I was on my way to Buffalo ... and I was so excited that when I looked down (at the speedometer) I was going 95 miles an hour"



Caterpillar levels the ground surface at Masasi bus stand as part of rehabilitation efforts by the district council. Photo: Correspondent Hamisi Nasri

Former premier says unity crucial factor in addressing country's economic challenges

By Correspondent James Lanka, Moshi

FORMER Prime Minister Cleopa Msuya has described unity as a key tool in solving people's problems in the society.

He said this at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Kilimanjaro Development Forum (KDF) held recently in Moshi Municipality.

"Unity is one of the key aspects that help in addressing the economic challenges in agriculture, education and industrial sectors for sustainable development of the region and the

country at large," he said.

"In 2004, some of the development stakeholders in Kilimanjaro region formed a Development Forum for partnering with government and various stakeholders in solving the challenges of the people and bringing them development," the ex-premier said.

Msuya who served as the Tanzania's Prime Minister in different various periods from 7 November 1980 to 24 February 1983 and again from 7 December 1994 to 28 November 1995 urged the forum to come together

and address the challenges facing the region's development sectors.

Speaking during the official opening of the meeting, the Kilimanjaro Regional Commissioner (RC) Dr Anna Mghwira said the government has been working closely with the KDF as the forum has played a major role in resolving the challenges facing economic development of the region.

The newly elected leaders of KDF namely Ambassador Abubaker Ibrahim who is now the chairperson of the forum, and his deputy Mahmud Mringo have said that, in 2020 they will

focus more on supporting education in all departments to ensure development is achieved.

"We will also make sure that we are increasing more KDF members as well as chartering our organisation in other regions in the country for sustainable development of our region and in Tanzania in general..." they said.

According to them, they will also engage Diasporas who are originated from Kilimanjaro region but work in various countries worldwide in their forum for sustainable development of the region and Tanzania in general.



Precaution as motorists negotiate to avoid a hole along Sokoine Drive at Old Post Office in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma.

Malawi farmers urged to turn to horticulture as tobacco market continues to falter

LILONGWE

OFFICIALS from the African Institute for Corporate Citizenship (AICC) and Dowa District Council chairperson have urged smallholder farmers in Malawi to seriously consider turning to horticulture as the market for the country's original green gold, tobacco, continues to falter.

Councillor Martin Luka Phiri stated that horticulture is fast becoming a lucrative business and can potentially replace faltering tobacco if government and its development partnership can put meaningful investment in the sector.

Phiri was speaking at Mponela in Dowa district during the launch of the horticulture fair on Wednesday. The fair is one of the activities under the Commercial Agribusiness for Sustainable Horticulture (CASH) Project, which AICC is implementing in Dowa district in partnership with the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA).

Under the project, a group of

selected small-scale horticulture farmers is experimenting drip irrigation technology as a measure to mitigate and build resilience to climate change while at the same time boosting production and productivity.

The major goal of the project is to boost production and productivity to a level where some of the profits can be re-invested for further growth. The council chairperson pleaded with AICC to consider established a structured market for horticultural products at Mponela, saying such a market could help boost the sector.

Grower Mary Chadzala, one of the project beneficiaries, said she is realising huge benefits from the sale of her horticulture produce: "I am now able to pay school fees for my five children, some of whom are in secondary schools with proceeds from sale of vegetables. I am very grateful to AICC for introducing this project in Mndolera Extension Planning Area, to which I belong to."

GABORONE

Rhino poaching at record levels in Botswana

RHINO poaching in Botswana's Okavango Delta has risen at an unprecedented rate with 23 white rhinoceros and eight black rhinoceros killed since October 2018, the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources Conservation and Tourism said.

"Between April and October 2019, nine rhinos were killed. The

unfortunate incidents have increased with 13 more rhinos having been poached from October to date," the ministry said in a statement seen by Reuters late on Monday.

Despite heavy rhino poaching in neighbouring South Africa, which has one of the world's largest rhino populations, only six rhinos were

killed for their horns in Botswana between 2007 and 2017 conversation organisation Save the Rhino said on its website.

The actual size of the Botswana rhino population is kept a secret by government officials but the Department of Wildlife and National Parks Rhino Coordinator, Dr. Mmadi

Reuben said in October that if the poaching "continued at this rate there will be no rhinos in Botswana in a year or two, especially the black rhino, a critically endangered species".

Botswana is believed to have benefited in 2015 when South Africa moved around 100 rhinos to

neighbouring countries as part of efforts to stem the illicit slaughter of the animals for their horns.

Widely regarded as a safe haven for wildlife, Botswana has a strict anti-poaching policy and says it has committed immense resources to combat poaching but poachers have taken advantage of the large size of

the Okavango Delta and its difficult wetland terrain.

Botswana said it has stepped up efforts to address poaching with interventions leading to the recovery of some horns and hunting weapons.

A rhino horn is estimated by conservationists to be worth more than \$65,000 a kg with demand rising, particularly in Asia, where a newly affluent class regards it as a status symbol and is used as medicine.

The Guardian

THURSDAY 26 DECEMBER 2019

Taking A New Look
At The News
ESTABLISHED IN 1995

Wanted global fight against human encroachment

EXPANDING the planet's protected natural areas to safeguard vanishing forests and other ecosystems, and the species they protect, is unlikely to be effective on its own as human encroachment into reserves grows, scientists warned recently.

A study of human activity in conservation spaces in more than 150 countries revealed that human beings are still encroaching upon environmentally sensitive areas that have been cordoned off to protect biodiversity. According to the research – the largest of its kind – published in the Proceedings of The National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) journal, protecting areas that need conservation has not reduced the pressure exerted on it by human beings.

Protected areas are necessary, as they aid the conservation of diverse species of flora and fauna and maintain vegetation levels – which boost the absorption of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas causing global warming. However, preventing human settlement and agriculture, plus investment, is the only way to keep these regions protected. This, according to researchers, isn't happening.

"Rapidly establishing new protected areas to meet global targets without providing sufficient investment and resourcing on the ground is unlikely to halt the unfolding extinction crisis," lead author Jonas Geldmann, PhD, from the University of Cambridge Conservation Research Institute, said in a statement.

Scientists used satellite evidence of lights visible at night and agriculture, as well as census and crop yield data, to assess the level of human encroachment in around 12,000 protected areas over 15 years. The majority of the protected areas had suffered increases in human encroachment. While the Northern Hemisphere and Australia had slowed

human encroachment, South America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia still saw significantly higher damaging human activity. Coincidentally, the latter regions are also home to the world's richest biodiversity.

Researchers also found that nations with fewer roads and a low rank on the Human Development Index were more likely to suffer human encroachment in protected areas. In African mangrove forests, pressure from agriculture in protected areas had increased by around 13% more as compared to surrounding, unprotected areas. Remote grassland habitats of South East Asia saw an 8% increase in agriculture practices carried out in protected regions. Forested areas in South America saw a 10% increase in agricultural encroachment in protected regions.

"Our study shows that agriculture is the driving force behind threats to protected areas, particularly in the tropics. ... Our data does not reveal the causes, but we suspect factors that play a major role include rapid population growth, lack of funding, and higher levels of corruption. Additionally, most unprotected land suitable for agriculture is already farmed," Geldmann said. "Important ambitions to protect 17% of land by the end of this decade, expected to increase to 30% at a pivotal meeting next year in China, will not mean much if not accompanied by enough resources to ensure the preservation of precious habitats."

However, the designation of protected areas is also known to undermine and displace local indigenous communities – a fact researchers agree upon. Research has also proved what is and should be the balanced solution – that indigenous communities who manage habitat reserves they hail from will help greatly mitigate biodiversity loss.

Much Kudos to Murdoch to empower entrepreneurs across Africa by 2022

MURDOCH University is a public university in Perth, Western Australia, with campuses also in Singapore and Dubai. It began operations as the state's second university in July 1973, and accepted its first undergraduate students in 1975. Its name is taken from Sir Walter Murdoch (1874-1970), the Founding Professor of English and former Chancellor of the University of Western Australia.

Murdoch is a verdant university and a member of the Innovative Research Universities. Since 2015 Murdoch University has become more teaching focused. In late 2018, the University faced scandal subsequent to an enrolment surge of international students, many "lacking English language and computing skills". In 2019, a Four Corners investigation by the ABC found further denigration of standards with foreign students recruited as 'cash cows'.

In 1962, the Government of Western Australia earmarked an area of land in Bull Creek to be the site of a future, second state university. Integral to the planning of the creation of Western Australia's second university was the planning for the School of Veterinary Science, which was to be the first professional faculty of the new university. It was decided that the new university would be named after Sir Walter Murdoch, a prominent local author, philosopher, and an Emeritus Professor at the University of Western Australia. When asked if he minded a new university in Western Australia being named in his honour, he was quoted as saying, "No, but it had better be a good one."

Murdoch University was formally constituted on 25 July 1973. It was opened with an inauguration ceremony on 17 September 1974. This date was chosen as it was Sir Walter Murdoch's 100th birthday. At the time, the young

university was notable for its admissions policy of taking into consideration eligibility factors other than the school leaving exam results of students.

A new partnership between Murdoch University in Western Australia and the South African-based Kingdom Business Network (KBN) took a first step towards formation after a visit to Perth for Africa Week by a delegation of five of its members.

The KBN is a programme created and funded by the South-African diversified investment company, the Beryl Group, to inspire entrepreneurs to create and acquire sustainable wealth, enabling them resources and training to build and develop their communities and positively impact their generation.

Murdoch hosted KBN Chief Executive Officer Joarina Matthys and four of its entrepreneurs to participate in a panel at the 9th Annual Africa Australia Research Forum and meet with Murdoch Alumni, members of the Perth African diaspora and entrepreneurial community.

The KBN was founded 10 years ago by Nevel and Beryl Kambasha and has a goal to empower 1,000 entrepreneurs across Africa by 2022.

After 10 years of operation in South Africa it had made the decision to expand our reach, to other parts of Africa and to seek partnerships.

Murdoch University Africa Research Group Chair David Doepel said Murdoch was keen to understand what structures facilitated creative and innovative thinking, and to harness the formidable African brain power globally. Doepel said there were 314 tech hubs in Africa in 2016, which had grown to more than 618 in 2018.

More than 50 per cent of those tech hubs have incubators with in-kind support for idea and early stage start-ups, developing innovations in agtech, healthtech and fintech focused on African solutions for African opportunities.

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Endless wait for the hangman

By Special Correspondent

THE rising cases of prisoners on death row is impacting negatively on the administration of justice. The revelation last week by the Nigeria Correctional Service (NCoS) that no fewer than 2,745 inmates condemned to death are awaiting execution in its facilities across the country is worrying. It also depicts the state of human rights in the country. It is an inherent violation on their rights and dignity to keep people interminably on death row, especially for cases that have been concluded by the Supreme Court.

To put it in context, prisoners on death row are condemned to a kind of existential limbo, existing as entities in cold storage rather than living as human beings. We therefore imagine the harrowing spell condemned prisoners go through daily in solitary cells, humbled by the force of an impending death that seems to be an eternity.

According to the NCoS Comptroller-General, Ja'afaru Ahmed, the

A battle of values will determine the next decade of aid

By Jan Egeland

WHAT a difference a decade makes. 2010 was considered an exceptionally challenging year for global aid operations. Humanitarians were stretched to the limit responding to two unfolding mega-disasters: a devastating earthquake in Haiti and massive flooding in Pakistan. Relief organisations appealed for an unprecedented USD11 billion to assist people in need across the world.

Fast forward ten years and the global aid appeal is two and a half times bigger. Twice as many people are in desperate need. On the eve of a decade that spawned tech billionaires and smart technology, more people are exposed to medieval cruelty than at any point since World War II.

This should not be how things stand. There are more innovative tools, funding and expertise available today than ever before to help communities in crisis. As UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, I initiated a humanitarian reform over a decade ago that has organised aid agencies to better assist millions of people in conflict and disaster areas. Fewer people now die on our watch because of a lack of lifesaving food, water and sanitation. Emergency education is reaching more children in conflict zones. Health services are available to communities previously left to fend for themselves.

reluctance by some state governors to sign death penalty sentence of the condemned inmates was one of the factors contributing to congestion in the correctional facilities. This is a recurring challenge. Whatever may be the justifications, prolonged solitude is a punishment that is detrimental for the psychology of death row inmates.

It kills its victims incessantly and unmercifully. It also negates the international treaties, declarations and other documents that establish the scope of prisoner rights to which Nigeria is a signatory. A clear reference is the adopted Standards Rules of 1955 by the United Nations which recognise solitary confinement and prolonged segregation as appropriate only in exceptional circumstances and to be used sparingly.

Two years ago, the large turnover of inmates on death row in the country prompted the National Economic Council to voice concern over prison congestion while asking the state governors to take prompt action on the matter. But apparently nothing has been done as the numbers keep rising.

However, we end the decade with a bleak realization: despite all our resources, we are still failing to protect the most vulnerable. A food ration or blanket offers little consolation to communities being bombed, besieged and terrorised. International law and humanitarian principles are under attack. And with populist waves of nationalism on the rise, a fierce battle of moral values must be fought in the years ahead.

From Syria to the Sahel, we are witnessing indiscriminate attacks on homes, hospitals, schools and aid workers. Acts of brutality were equally deadly in the 1990s, but more than before we see global and regional powers add fuel to the fire by supporting opposing sides in cruel civil wars.

The lack of principled and coherent international action for human rights also fuels a new age of impunity for horrific violence, from ethnic cleansing in Myanmar to the gang violence in Central America.

The Geneva Conventions saw their 70th anniversary this year. Their rules of war are still as relevant as they were in the aftermath of World War II. But what is sorely missing today are bold leaders standing united, ready to implement them at home and away, for allies as well as enemies. UN Security Council members should collectively demand justice and hold perpetrators to account, instead of turning a blind eye to such atrocities.

In 2010, conflict drove some 43

Statutorily, governors are not bound to sign the warrants for the execution of people on death row. They can exercise their prerogative to commute such sentences to lifetime in jail or reduced jail terms. They can also grant such convicts state pardon, therefore putting a closure to the matter. But it is morally reprehensible for them to leave inmates perpetually on death row.

The obligation on the governors is specifically enshrined in Section 212 of the 1999 Constitution as well as Section 221 of the Penal Code and Section 319 of the Criminal Code. All these codes prescribe capital punishment for murder while sections 37 and 38 of the Criminal Code prescribe the same punishment for treasonable felony.

There is of course a global campaign against capital punishment but it is still applicable in Nigeria. Majority of these death row inmates are in solitary confinement having been convicted for such offences as murder, treason, treachery and armed robbery. Some states in the country have also enacted

capital punishment for those convicted of kidnapping.

We state that a solution to the rising cases of prisoners on death row is to carry out a thorough judicial review that will reduce incidents of prisoners being held outside their states of conviction and allow governors to consider their sentences when such cases are brought forward. In the meantime, they must deal with the issue of those that are already condemned, one way or another. That is what leadership demands.

We can understand that some governors dither in signing death warrants on humanitarian, political, religious, emotional and ethnic grounds. But whatever may be the mitigating sentiments, the delay in carrying out this executive function is breeding congestion that has impacted significantly on the administration of justice in Nigeria. That is aside the helplessness endured in the roller coaster of emotions for these condemned inmates who have practically been reduced to the status of living dead.

million people from their homes. Ten years later well over 70 million have been ruthlessly displaced by violence and persecution. At the UN General Assembly in 2016, leaders vowed to better share responsibility for protecting and assisting people fleeing violence.

Sadly, a mosaic of broken promises will greet the new decade.

We walked away from the first Global Refugee Forum in Geneva this month resigned to the fact that most borders are firmly shut to people seeking protection. Refugee quotas are slashed. Low-income host nations are given little international support. Large Asian and Gulf economies still avoid sheltering refugees. Europe and the U.S. continue their race to the bottom.

We cannot demand that a few poorer nations like Lebanon and Uganda shoulder the burden of sheltering families, while the richest and safest countries seal their borders and send a modest cheque in the post.

Politicians will continue to bow to national populism if we do not reject the false narrative of anti-immigrant propaganda. Refugees will lie in limbo. Humanitarian principles are thus under mounting pressure. As independent aid organisations, we serve people most in need, wherever they are. But donor nations and governments parties to conflicts are increasingly penning 'anti-terror' legislation, making it more difficult for us to help civilians trapped in areas where listed terrorists operate.

The coming years will see governments set up a host of detailed regulations, commissions and control bodies that make it harder for us to access war zones where the most vulnerable communities are located.

Exceptions must be made to anti-terror laws for humanitarian operations, otherwise our negotiations with de-facto authorities will be criminalized, aid delayed, and innocent local communities - the victims of terror - struck twice.

Tomorrow's picture looks bleak, but it does not need to become our reality. Just as an awakening is being led by a million schoolchildren around the world to prevent a climate catastrophe, a more energetic defence of humanity is needed for people struck by and fleeing from violence and disaster.

We need stronger moral leaders if we are to make real improvements to the lives of the millions in crisis. Today's youth is acutely aware of our fragile, interconnected world, and the need for internationalism to meet the existential climate threat. They are more solutions-oriented, and less nationalistic and xenophobic than my own generation.

Herein lies hope. With these young people on the path to power, the next ten years could signal a turnaround from the negative trends of isolationism, nationalism and tribalism that we witness today.

We cannot let the 2020s become the decade of indifference.

Play labs project to address critical gap in early childhood development in Tanzania

By Correspondent Crispin Gerald

ABOUT 3,600 children aged 3-5 years from Mbeya and Dar es Salaam regions have benefited from BRAC early childhood development (ECD) project designed to stimulate the holistic growth of children through play.

The children, who included 1950 girls and 1650 boys, were enrolled in 80 ECD (Early Childhood Development) centres named Play Labs 2015 to 2018.

Speaking to reporters recently in Dar es Salaam, BRAC Education Programme Manager Susan Bipa said Play Lab project that was established in 2015 and funded by the LEGO Foundation from Denmark, is an initiative that targets children from low income families and provides them with an opportunity to receive early childhood education before joining pre-primary school.

BRAC Tanzania in collaboration with the local government was successful in establishing 80 learning centres for children, whereby 40 centers were operating in Dar es Salaam and the rest in Mbeya.

She said that in the financial year 2016/2017, 40 play labs were established with DSM having 21 play labs and Mbeya 19 play labs, about 1200 marginalized children



(DSM 630), (Mbeya 570) and 40 play leaders were trained to facilitate play lab sessions.

"While, during the next fiscal year 2017/2018, 40 other play labs were established in DSM and Mbeya with 1200 marginalized children and 40 play leaders were recruited and trained.

In the year 2018/2019 the project enrolled another batch of 1,200 children (Mbeya 600 and DSM 600) utilizing all the 40 first batch play leaders," she explained.

According to Bipa, BRAC Play Lab project is designed to address the critical gap in Early Childhood Development (ECD) services in

developing countries including, Tanzania to elevate the importance of learning through play in local communities and families.

"The project is geared towards establishing educational programmes for children aged three to five, their parents and caregivers, incorporating elements of social and emotional learning (SEL) and identity awareness using low cost but high impact approach," she added.

"The Play Labs therefore provides an opportunity for children from poor, under-served backgrounds to experience learning in a playful way," she said.

Enrolled children in Play Labs

engage in play-based learning through a curriculum that develops their physical, socio-emotional, cognitive skills and promotes language and communication development," said Bipa.

These skills will eventually help their successful transition from early years to pre-primary or primary education. Play Labs have also contributed to stitching the

generation gaps between parents and children and strengthening the bonds between a child and his/her primary caregiver, usually the mother.

"The five years project includes developing and piloting the Play Lab, a model for integrating learning through play into the lives of young children as well as designing safe and sustainable play materials and spaces with low-cost materials for children in the communities," the manager explained.

Most of the teaching materials and games in our Play Labs are created from recycled materials and made by parents with the assistance of our staff," the manager explained.

The other target group is Play Leaders; it's the most important group for the project. Play leaders are key anchor between projects, children and parents since they are the key facilitator to run the play lab sessions.

For her part, communications manager with BRAC Tanzania Emma Mbaga said Play Lab project is a very unique initiative in the country and its model is one of a kind because it teaches kids through playing games, singing and other fun activities that kids enjoy. Furthermore, through the project parents are totally engaged in the curriculum and play a big role in their children's education.

"Parents are the secondary target group in this project, the project builds capacity of parents by providing them with knowledge on various aspects of children matters including protecting them from harm, we

provide them with skills on child rearing practices and supporting their children's learning from early age," Mbaga said.

Parents are trained through parenting sessions and are also engaged through activities like the material development workshops where they work with the staff to create learning materials which are used in the Play Labs, parents also volunteer daily in Play Labs to assist Play Leaders during class and games periods, and as a result, parents assume a stronger role in their child's life.

According to Mbaga, the community is another secondary target group where communal play spaces have been provided to foster the development of future generations by the community. The project gives communities the responsibility to take ownership of the Play Labs and also be part of the project activities and participate in the protection of the children.

The impact of the Play Labs is not limited to the immediate target groups, as the project provides a spillover effect on the community, spreading from children to their parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and neighbours. This leads to a community-wide development approach as ideas about children's well being are being reevaluated through an exciting process of play-based activities.

Speaking on collaboration with other stakeholders the programme manager said that BRAC works closely with other stakeholders and key ECD players in project activities and events, including Right to Play, Plan International, UBONGO KIDS, EQUIP -T, Save the Children, Children in Crossfire, TECDEN, Tanzania Education Network (TEN/MET) and Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE).

And on sustainability and continuity, the manager noted that even though the current Play labs are located in community spaces, all current 80 play labs are near government primary schools for ease of transition of the children into the schools once they complete their early childhood education.

The Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children (MOHCDCGEC) and Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) being the custodian of the children, are directly engaged in the mainstreaming of play lab children into pre-primary education.

Moreover, BRAC continues to conduct meetings with local government and community leaders to create sustainability of the project through motivating the leaders to take over the Play Lab centers of which the government has agreed to take the centers and impose minimal fees from January, 2019.

By Anil Kija

THERE are areas of convergence in what various religions believe on the last days, and often these points go back right to the beginning, either of the formation of civilization as a whole or at least of those civilizations in which the religions emerged. Some of these narratives of the start of civilization or of religion are shared, and at times they have common but unknown points, for instance the breadth of the Abraham heritage, known directly along Jews and Arabs, but less well known between them and Indians. In South Asia the Lord Brahma is a creator god and his wife is known as Saraswati or Saraswati, and encyclopedia write ups say Hindu or rather Indian civilization started on the banks of the river Saraswati, implying that India had a Jewish ancestry.

The holy family is the religious name that is given to the family in which Jesus was born, that is, comprised of Yusuf the suitor of Mary when the latter 'strangely' became pregnant. There are two 'rival' explanations of that episode, whose morale is thus different while they don't differ in substance, as the Biblical narrative says Yusuf or Joseph was greatly troubled by his fiancée's pregnancy and dared not utter a word to her, but plotting to leave her secretly. The last thing he would wish to do was to create a scene and put her to shame, quite apart from the fear of stoning.

It was in these circumstances of his being troubled not just as to his future with Mary but also her fate, and especially this latter aspect, that the angel appeared to him in dream,

The holy family, ancient and modern paradoxes



telling him not to sever ties with Mary as what is in her is from divinity. The morale in that story is the fact that as Yusuf was righteous, it was easy for divinity to communicate with him about Mary; had he been arrogant and vengeful on the pregnancy, his fiancée could have been put to stoning, without that testimony, and proceeding to marry her. Often people take this aspect of things just for granted...

The other narrative concerning this episode is one

that has been given to Muslims, which may to an extent coincide with other narratives, emphasizing a miraculous aspect rather than righteous conduct saving Mary at that time. It is said that Mary kept her pregnancy out of sight to the best that she could until she delivered, and then when people started quizzing who was the father of the baby, it wasn't Mary who moved to explain but the baby. 'My mother is not adulterous,' the sacred infant was saying,

explaining that it was by the power of heaven that she had conceived.

What is less grasped in both narratives is that the latter day holy family is a reworking of the old, as the torment around it at the time of the nativity has plenty in similarity with what happened earlier. The difference is that the latter scene was more momentous and calamitous though its moral or ethical premise was much weaker, based on a hunch and a fear, which was in

a sense baseless. The old holy family split when principal wife Sarah demanded that the maid-wife Hagar or Hajirah leave with her son, as the life partner of Abraham could not stomach the son of the servant inheriting alongside her own son. That episode in fact gave rise to Indian civilization.

That brings up the question as to which part of Abraham's heritage moved to India, as the date is 628 BC as start of keeping records on the banks of river Saraswati, which implies they

were Jews from the northern kingdom, the ten 'lost' tribes. The reason is that the scale of destruction and non-retention of a semblance of cohesion as a community was nearly total, in that event around 720BC when Sennacherib, king of Assyria, overran the northern kingdom. It was usually called Israel to distinguish it from Judah, the southern kingdom centred on the sacred city of Jerusalem.

What makes this point pivotal to comprehending the later days is that Hajirah was

the servant and Sarah the lady of the house, in what looks like divine itinerary of what ethic would be followed in Abraham's heritage. What is not known is that the demand by Sarah, and Abraham resisted it until the Lord informed him that divinity is aware of that demand and it ought to be executed, as in any case the Lord had blessed the elder son of Abraham, and he would be father of a great nation (etc). Thus Abraham complied, knowing they were safe with the Lord in charge.

What is astonishing about this tale is that it can't be fathomed in its historical significance except by a person speaking Kiswahili, as Hajirah is work, so the ancient member of the Semitic holy family was a servant and it is this heritage that the Lord God wanted. It wasn't the pride of Sarah that was Abraham's heritage but the meekness and devotion of Hajirah, minus a blemish or two at an earlier period, on the basis of the Genesis narrative. When Mary was given the news of what was to take place, her celebrated answer was 'I am a servant of the Lord, so let it be done on me as the Lord has said,' and that is the spirit of Hajirah. At that same time there was Sarah's spirit working in Israel, with Herod the king, revolted that the new 'king of Israel' will later ask Jews to accept Roman rule as ordained by God, thus pressed Herod's spirit to destroy the boy. As if to confirm the point, the holy family found refuge in Egypt, a land of Yusuf and Hajira. In India of course Sarah has ruled for two and a half millenniums; the Harijans are servants forever.

Russia has no domestic violence law, but that could soon change

Moscow, Russia

For years, Mary Davtyan, a Russian lawyer who specialises in domestic violence, felt helpless when survivors approached her for support.

Russia currently has no law defining domestic violence and there is some resistance among conservative sections of society and politicians to criminalise it. They believe doing so would harm "traditional family values".

"I understood I couldn't do anything," Davtyan told Al Jazeera. "I lacked the legal tools to successfully plead their cause."

In 2012, one in five Russian women faced family-related violence, according to Rosstat, a national statistics body. More recently, independent polling centre Levada said the rate of domestic violence was higher, at about 25 percent.

It is believed that thousands of Russian women die every year because of domestic violence.

According to court statistics, 79 percent of women convicted for murder from 2016 to 2018 were defending themselves from abuse.

In a country that presents itself as a guardian of family values and where conservative voices are prominent, the notion of domestic abuse and violence against women is still taboo to a degree.

"The patriarchal tradition



At a recent rally in Moscow, protesters hold signs reading 'violence and humanity are not compatible' and 'beating doesn't mean love'. File photo

in Russia is still very deeply rooted," said Davtyan.

Along with a group of dedicated women and men, rights activists, politicians and feminists, she is leading the charge to try to stem domestic violence, which has seen Russian parliamentarians consider a new law against the issue.

In accordance with the legislative process, Oksana Pushkina - a legislator with the ruling United Russia party and a former TV host dubbed Russia's Oprah, launched a parliamentary working group to consult on a draft bill this summer.

Davtyan and renowned

activist Alyona Popova are both members of the group.

Before getting into the complex legal issues of punishment, the group is trying to raise awareness that domestic violence constitutes a crime.

"This would be a big step, because it would acknowledge such a thing exists," said Davtyan.

Political expert Ekaterina Schulmann, who was involved in the early stages of the legal project, said Russians tended to keep family and private matters behind closed doors.

"This problem [domestic violence] has a very high latency and is mostly hidden," she said.

Previous attempts to crimi-

nalise domestic violence have so far failed.

In 2017, the State Duma, or assembly, approved a bill to decriminalise some forms of domestic abuse. It meant first-time offenders would be fined, instead of being charged - and legislators said the goal was to defend family values.

"It was a terrible signal of impunity for offenders and by all accounts, offences have gone up," said Martha Khromova, a feminist activist from the SocFem Alternativa group.

She helped to organise recent demonstrations in Moscow, where hundreds have rallied in support of the draft law, which according to state-run

VtsIOM pollster, 70 percent of Russians would support.

It appears attitudes are changing in Russia. Over the past two years, online campaigns and petitions calling for the criminalisation of domestic abuse have mushroomed.

The Khachatryan sisters' case might have been a turning point.

In 2018, the three teenaged siblings killed their father after years of psychological and sexual abuse. There was an outpouring of sympathy for the sisters and people took to the streets to show their support. The sisters remain under house arrest pending trial.

"The sisters could have es-

caped the situation they were cornered into in they had somewhere to seek help," said Darya Shipacheva, a domestic abuse survivor and activist. "Their case is intertwined with the problem."

In another incident, Margarita Gracheva's jealous husband chopped her hands off with an axe two years ago.

After the case received significant media attention, he was sentenced to 14 years in jail, an unusually lengthy sentence.

Gracheva, with her robotic hands, is now a stark symbol of the fight against domestic violence.

"It's not enough to have a law, we need restraining orders, we need budget to help victims, shelters for women," said SocFem Alternativa's Khromova.

In the most recent case to shock the country, PhD student Anastasia Yeshchenko, 24, was killed and dismembered in November by her ex-teacher and partner, 63-year-old Oleg Sokolov, 63, in Saint Petersburg.

"There is definitely a change in attitudes and in public support, which pushed us to go forward with the legal process," said Schulmann.

Some conservative groups and sections of the powerful Russian church have pushed back against the draft bill, however, saying it is designed to "destroy the Russian family".

Pushkina said she has received online threats and

harassment for her work.

The first version of the draft bill was published on the Council of the Russian Federation website on November 29 and was open for comments and amendments for two weeks after publication; more than 10,000 were submitted for review.

Popova, the activist and parliamentary working group member, said: "It was not very good and failed to correctly define what actions are domestic violence, saying that all physical abuses are not violence. This is problematic."

Other activists also said the text appeared to once again prioritise "family values" over victims.

An improved version for first reading at the State Duma is expected within weeks.

Then the bill will go back and forth in three readings, with possible amendments along the way, before being presented to legislators for a vote.

The activists say they know there is a long path ahead, but are reassured by recent support.

Anna Rivina, the founder of Nasiliu.net, a women's shelter organisation which roughly receives 70 victims every month, said: "The high-profile cases are extremely symbolic and illustrate the society we have. It's easier now to explain what does not work, and why it doesn't. I'm sure the law will pass, but the question is how

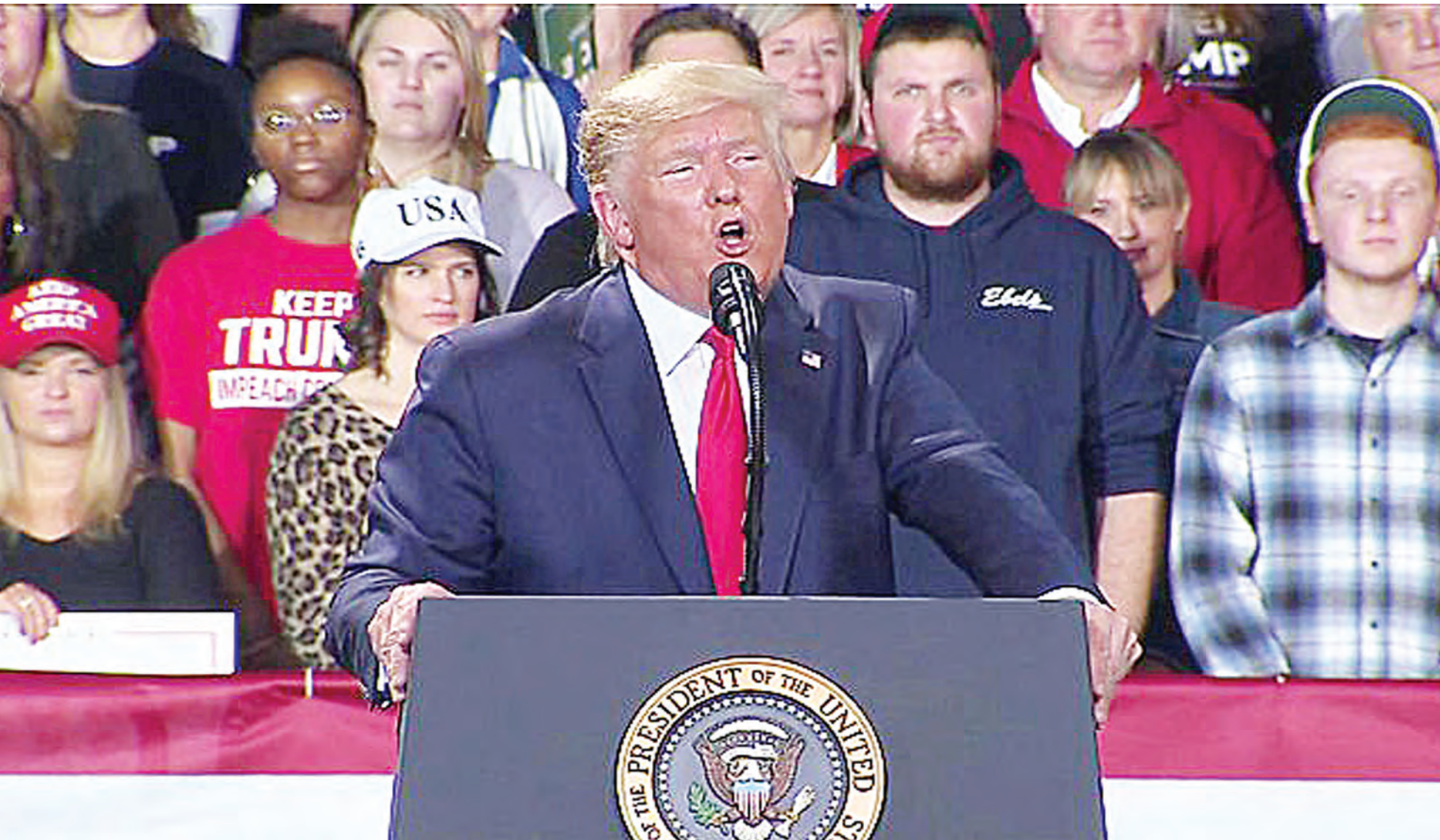
Agencies

DENVER, Colorado

When I decided to become a US citizen in 1990s, it was a deliberate decision to spend my life fighting for preserving and deepening democratic freedoms at a place where I have spent all my adult life. Having struggled against a brutal military dictatorship while I was a teenager, I knew that democracy is something you have to fight hard for. Therefore, when I became a citizen, for the swearing in event I took with me key documents of US democratic heritage. These included the constitution, the federalist papers and related documents from the 1780s. Since that ceremony I have tried to learn as much as I could about the crucial idea of democratic checks and balances among the executive, legislative and judiciary branches of our government. I have come to realize how prescient some of the revolutionaries from the 1770s and 1780s were in identifying the potential sources of tyranny and corruption of democracy. I have always looked at the impeachment provisions in this light.

As we know, George Mason, the author of Virginia's Declaration of Rights, over the course of the constitutional convention, realized the threat to democracy from the powerful executive branch of the new government he and his fellow revolutionaries were creating. Mason rightly concluded that the president of the republic could become a tyrant as oppressive as any absolute monarch. We also know that this line of thinking led to Mason's intervention in the debates on September 8, 1787, when he asked why were treason and bribery the only grounds in

Impeachment: An ordinary citizen's view



United States President Donald Trump. File photo

the draft Constitution for impeaching the president? His fear was that treason would not include "attempts to subvert the Constitution." And he was right.

It was his fellow revolutionary from Virginia, James Madison who helped Mason to develop a separate class of impeachable offenses. This was what by now should be familiar to us from the House Judiciary Committee hearings - "other high crimes and misdemeanors." It was clear also from the seeming lack of understanding of the Republican house mem-

bers why this phrase has been so contentious. It also underlined how the inclusion and interpretation can offer people fighting against tyranny of a dangerous executive power as the one at present some crucial assistance.

We have to thank the foresight and insight of three Virginians - Mason, Madison and delegate Edmund Randolph for this inclusion. These three men had very different positions on the Constitution; but their arguments in the debates in Philadelphia and at Virginia's ratifying convention

in Richmond produced crucial definitions of an impeachable offense. Ultimately, the delegates agreed that a president could and should be impeached for abuses of power that subvert the Constitution, the integrity of government, or the rule of law.

These three Virginians - Mason, Madison, and Randolph - all defended vigorously the rights of the legislative branch to carry on procedures of impeachment if the evidence pointed towards abuses of power that subvert the Constitution, the integrity of govern-

ment, or the rule of law. Thus on July 20, they opposed the arguments of Charles Pinckney of South Carolina and Gouverneur Morris of Pennsylvania who had moved to strike the impeachment clause. The arguments of Charles Pinckney of South Carolina and Gouverneur Morris of Pennsylvania were remarkably similar to what many Republican members of the House said during the debate on Dec. 18, 2019. In 1787 Morris had argued: "[If the president] should be re-elected, that will be sufficient proof of his innocence." "[Im-

peachment] will render the Executive dependent on those who are to impeach." Mason's response was forthright: "Shall any man be above justice? Shall that man be above it who can commit the most extensive injustice? Shall the man who has practiced corruption, and by that means procured his appointment in the first instance, be suffered to escape punishment by repeating his guilt?"

Consistently, James Madison argued that the Constitution must provide "for defending the community against the incapacity, negligence, or perfidy

of the Chief Magistrate." "He might pervert his administration into a scheme of peculation or oppression." Furthermore, Madison presciently warned. "He might betray his trust to foreign powers." This has turned out to be the key issue in the recent impeachment investigations and hearings dividing the pro- and anti-impeachment house members. At the end, as we also know, the delegates voted, 8 states to 2, to make the executive removable by impeachment thus following up on the English parliamentary model of impeachment.

We may debate whether the Founders got the balance on impeachment just right or settled for a vague standard that is often too weak to stop abuse of power by the president. This is clearly an issue in the current situation. Johnson's acquittal - in spite of Kennedy's defense of it in his 1955 book - may have enabled him to disable progressive legislation during the reconstruction.

But when as an ordinary citizen I look back on these debates and further practices in the US history, the brighter side of our historic legacy stands out. There have always been sincere and serious fighters for institutionalizing checks and balances to guarantee freedom. But the application is a complex process. The current situation looks bleak because of the more than usual dose of lies, half truths and plain ignorance of our constitution by some of our law makers. However, the constitutional arguments offered defending the right of the ordinary citizens' representatives to take the task of impeachment seriously shows that the spirit and wisdom of Mason, Madison and Randolph are still alive among the majority of the house members.

Agencies

How nursery school in Tanzania fosters love of learning to the underserved community

By Sara Barnes

It can be easy to forget that getting to and from school can be a challenge for some children. The children in Madale in the outskirts of Dar es Salaam region experience this struggle on a daily basis. They live in an underserved area for education, with over 400 children who reside there but only a couple of schools for them to attend. As a result, there is overcrowding in the classrooms, and many kids have to travel miles to go to school. (Some children just don't go at all.) This is where the Busungu Community Centre (BCC) has stepped in. Established in 2016, it is a non-government organisation (NGO) that provides learning for up to 100 children who become part of a nursery school that follows the international curriculum for nursery schools in Tanzania.

Ages three through six currently attend the BCC school. There, local teachers and international interns focus on fostering the skills that young children need to help them succeed later in life. Through a variety of activities, they learn to be curious, cooperate with others, be creative, and take ini-

tiative.

My Modern Met Store donates 1 per cent of its profits to a charity that benefits children and adults in helping them to experience art in a way that they might not have before. In 2018, our online shop donated money as well as drawing books and rainbow pencils for the children at the BCC school to use.

If you would like to help support BCC, you can do so by becoming a sustaining member. For just \$15 a month, you can help fund the school in providing healthy meals, buying supplies, and making renovations and upgrades to their space.

We spoke to three people involved with BCC: Edward Busungu, Co-founder and Director; Danny Kim, Co-Founder and Advisor; and Line Bickmann, head administrator. Scroll down to read our interviews with them and learn more about how BCC is helping change the lives of people in Madale.

What inspired you to start the Busungu Community Centre?

Danny Kim (DK): In my 20s, I traveled throughout several developing countries in Asia and Africa. At some places, I spent up to 10



weeks volunteering at NGOs. Unfortunately, from my experiences, I realised many NGOs operate for-profit, in which fundraising dollars or volunteer income goes to the owners (who are usually foreigners) so the money ends up going back to developed nations (there is very little legal oversight). I was disappointed by my experi-

ences. In my 30s, I wanted to return to Tanzania to create my own organisation with all Tanzanian board members to prevent such occurrences.

Edward Busungu (EB): What inspired me the most was my own background and childhood from where I lived as a boy from a young age. I had to walk very far

to go to school—around 45 minutes to the local transport and then on a bus for half an hour. I had to leave home around five o'clock every morning, and if anyone was late they used to get punished.

Before I started BCC, there were only two schools around the area and each school was overcrowded.

There were only a few teachers in each class with no proper structure. To get into a proper school, you have to pay a lot of money and go very far from the village of Madale. Most parents cannot afford it because most earn a living by driving motorbikes as taxis and cooking local food in the village for the workers and then working

budget construction.

Line, how did you become connected to BCC?

Line Bickmann (LB): I came to Tanzania to volunteer for the first time in 2009, and I have known Edward since then. I remember talking to him in 2015, where he explained to me that they were going to open a school and that I was the one going to run it. By that time, I was living in Greenland, where I was a lecturer at a university college, so that did not really sound like a realistic plan—but somehow it happened anyway. And here I am and have been since the opening.

What are the three key points of the BCC?

DK: To keep it short, our goals are to be Local, Transparent, and Sustainable. In terms of local, aside from myself, our five board members are all Tanzanian and provide their support for free. We also hire local teachers. Being local is important because so many NGOs in developing nations comprise of mainly foreign board members and managers. This creates a divide between foreign and local staff. As a preschool, I think it's important that the children have adults of their

own nationalities in the key positions so they look up to people of their own heritage as role models.

Transparency is also very important. Many nonprofits do not open their books or state where their donation money is going to. At the BCC, on our website, we list exactly where donation money is going to (primarily construction projects) and how much we've spent monthly operating our preschool. This ensures that we are operating aboveboard. If people give us a donation, they can have the peace of mind knowing how it's spent. As an organization, I am proud that 0 per cent of our fundraising money goes to administrative fees. 100 per cent goes directly to the project since all our board members are working free of charge.

Sustainability is our last goal and currently our most challenging. We charge a small fee of \$15/month for children to attend our school. That money goes to pay staff salaries and operating costs like food and water. Currently, we are losing money some months but our hope is that student tuition can go to running the school and that we can end up near even after each month.



Inescapable effects of climate change jeopardise livelihoods across E. Africa

By Rael Ombur, TRANS

NZOLIA, KENYA

As the Earth heats up, weather and climate patterns are changing dramatically around the globe. Africa felt the effects of those changes in 2019, experiencing cyclones, droughts and unstoppable rains that jeopardized livelihoods.

Sixty-two-year-old David Kemboi sorts out dry maize stalks on his 21-hectare farm in Kenya's Trans Nzoia County.

He turns the stalks of what could have been a bountiful harvest into silage – for feeding his 15 herd of cattle.

He said the heavy rains that have rocked different parts of Eastern Africa cause the crops to fail.

"At the time of growing crops we expected optimum yields, we had invested heavily on all the crops that we grew, but unfortunately, we were not able to get a good harvest out of all that, which means a lot of money was just thrown to the dogs. We didn't get anything out of

that and we do not expect to get anything elsewhere other than from this land because we depend on rain-fed agriculture," he said.

Trans Nzoia county where Kemboi settled after retirement in 2017 is known for growing predominantly maize, Kenya's staple food. Apart from the excessive rain, farmers in the area have faced pests and disease challenges.

"Every time we go to harvest the maize, there is rain and when it gets wet, it gets spoiled very quickly. That one has had adverse effects in growing of maize and also in beans. Beans, the first crop we didn't have any harvest at all. It all went bad because of these heavy rains," said Kemboi.

Millions of people have been displaced as a result of widespread flooding this year across large parts of Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan and Ethiopia.

The floods have led to hundreds of deaths. In November, South Sudan declared a state of emergency in 27 affected areas with close to a million

people affected.

The Kenya Meteorological Department attributes the rains to an irregularity known as Indian Ocean dipole, an oscillation of surface temperature of the sea, which brings weather extremes to countries neighboring the Indian Ocean.

Benard Chanzu is the deputy director of Kenya's Meteorological services. He said nearly all of Kenya has received above-average rainfall this year.

"In some stations, I can quote like Meru stations, we have seen records which are showing that what has been received is more than 200 per cent of the long term average, that is what is usually received in the area," said Chanzu.

People stand on debris blocking a highway after River Muruny burst its bank following heavy rains in Parua village, about 85 km...

FILE - People stand on debris blocking a highway after River Muruny burst its bank following heavy rains in Parua village, about 85 km northeast of Kitale, in

West Pokot county, western Kenya, Nov. 24, 2019.

More extreme weather ahead

With levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere climbing to new highs, Dr. John Recha, a scientist specializing in climate and agriculture research, said Africans can expect more extremes in years to come.

"We will therefore have more effects of climate change affecting the weather patterns specifically the rainfall patterns, climate change will be more intense and therefore the climate variability that is having these extreme events of the droughts and the floods will be more frequent and more intense going into the future," he said.

The solution for Kemboi and other farmers, according to experts like Recha, lies on adapting to climate change.

That, he said, would require help from government and agencies to implement new agricultural practices such as alternative irrigation methods and efficient water storage for farmers.

Energy watchdog unveils successes, challenges, future of petroleum, gas

By Guardian Correspondent, Dodoma

It's a deniable fact that the much-needed industrial drive engineered by the fifth phase government under directive of President John Magufuli will not see the light of the day if the country will not invest largely on petroleum, gas and water sub-sectors.

The three sectors are paramount incentives for the mushrooming and metamorphosis of diverse industries, in terms of facilitating transportation, industrial power, heating and lighting, lubricants, petro-chemical as well as use of by-products. However, every aspect of day-to-day life of Tanzanians is to a greater extent influenced by the uses of petroleum.

Oil and gas exploration in Tanzania has been underway since 1952, with the first natural gas discovery being made in 1974 at Songo Songo in the Kilwa district, Lindi region. In 1982 a second discovery was made in Mtwara region bordering Lindi, at Mnazi Bay.

Realising the imperative of the three sectors, the government in September 2016 decided to introduce the Energy and Water Utilities Regulatory Authority (EWURA) to undertake technical, economic and safety regulatory functions in the key three sub-sectors.

With the general mission of regulating energy and water utilities in a transparent, effective and efficient manner that ensures their quality, availability and affordability, the authority's key function majors on, among others, licensing, tariff review, monitoring performance and standards with regards to quality, safety, health and environment, to mention but a few.

Recently, EWURA organised a special media briefing forum in Dodoma, a vital gathering which was purposeful tailored to retreat over the authorities' successes, challenges and future plans, as well as gathering key inputs and experiences from members of various media outlets within the country.

During the recent forum held here, EWURA's acting Director, Nzinyagwa Mchany unveiled that the authority has successfully managed to counter a spate of fuel adulteration in the country from 78 per cent in 2007 to at least 4 per cent in this year. According to him, the laudable development in the country's petroleum industry has been reached due

to decision by the authority to adopt the use of Bulk Procurement System (BPS) in importation of the vital energy in the country. However, through the system –BPS- which was designed by the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) and then jointly agreed and put into practices by EWURA in cooperation with Energy and Mineral Ministry has so far enabled the authority to trim down a total of Sh121.6bn in a period between 2012 and 2013. Statistics depicts that fuel adulteration used to deny the government tax revenues to the estimated amount of Sh300bn in a year.

It was also revealed that, through the system (BPS) the authority managed also to lower costs of fuel transportation to a tune of at least Sh81.9bn as well as costs of demurrage to at least Sh25.7bn between 2012 and 2013. Moreover, since when the authority shifted from 'cost, insurance and freight system' to 'delivery at port' in fuel importation, ocean losses have been countered to at least 14bn/-. Since September 2010, EWURA embarked on an innovative fuel-marking program, code-named 'DNA' with an eye to counter a spate of fuel dumping, and the program has fetched sounding results.

According to a specific research conducted by the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) over the uses of the DNA program, between 2010 and 2013 the programme has helped to increase fuel's tax revenues to state coffer at a tune of 468.50bn/-.

To ensure for abundant access of fuel within the country, EWURA has so far issued a total of 1,561 fuel business license to various traders. Out of the number, 66 licences were for wholesale traders, 1,397 for retail fuel traders, 19 for domestic gas and 56 were based for lubricants businesses.

Other successes attained by the key authority include establishment of a fast-tracking system in issuing fuel business licenses, through which esteemed customers can now get their license within a period of just two months, establishment of power purchase agreements as well as establishment of a contact to TANESCO's customers, called Customer Service Charter.

Apart from that, the authority has also prepared Module Power Purchase Agreements with an eye to reduce a series of dialogue between TANESCO and

investors in hydro power, natural gas and coal, geothermal and wind power.

Despite of the above successes, the authority is however faces some challenges that dilutes it from delivering more professional, as it is intended.

Some fuel investors are often delay in complying to all regulations set for getting fuel business licenses which include, among others title deeds as well as in obtaining environmental impact assessment permits. Hitherto, the authority is a watchdog of at least 130 water authorities within the country, out of which, 95 authorities are based in districts and small urban, with a total of customers between 4,000 and 50,000, the situation which compel EWURA to use huge monies to ensure for smooth operations of each and every authority. Moreover, most of the authorities are reported to have no enough human resources and other key facilities for delivering smooth services.

At a forum, EWURA's manager of communication and public relations, Titus Kaguo itemized some future plans the authority has in ensuring for abundant access of petroleum and gas in all part of the county, especially in rural areas, but also in making sure the sub-sector is practices in accord to the set recommended standards.

To counter a problem of poor availability of reliable sources of fuel in villages, the authority expects to establish mobile fuel services in Tanzania's rural areas. It was observed that, in most villages fuel businesses were conducted in dangerous and unsafe environment. "The stations in question will be established in accord to Petroleum Retail Operations in Township and Village Rules, 2014. In villages some people are storing and selling fuel under gallons, which is poor and dangerous practices," Kaguo expressed.

He added, the envisaged fuel stations will serve the purpose of enabling villagers in rural areas to stand a chance of buying fuel in more healthier standards.

Kaguo insisted that EWURA will stand at fore front in ensuring for Good Petroleum Industry Practice (GPIP) from across the country, but also in making sure all fuel stations execute their daily businesses by complying to the set Health Safety Environment (HSE).

By Tiara Walters

While the astronomer Edwin Hubble was trudging up the mountains of Los Angeles exactly 100 years ago to rewrite humankind's place in the cosmos, a fledgling medical school on Africa's southern tip was preparing to take a giant leap into humankind's past.

In 1919, the Department of Anatomy at the University of the Witwatersrand ("Wits"), which marks its centenary this year, had been lucky to stagger to life at all. Yet, it would come to seed a trove of some of the most important insights into the opening chapters of the human story, such as 3.67-million-year-old "Little Foot", and the Taung child – just three and a half when its ignominious little life expired in an eagle's lair some 2.8 million years ago.

"Anatomy lectures and demonstrations were given in a wood and iron shed," recalls the late authority on human evolution Phillip Valentine Tobias in his typescript on the school, *Anatomia Witwatersrandensis*. The shed, tells Tobias, housed the founding anatomy chair, 13 students and "a single cadaver".

Under these circumstances, Tobias claims, the anatomy department – or the School of Anatomical Sciences, as it's known today – pioneered the human body's medical dissection for the first time between the Cape and Cairo. More famously, the anatomy school's contributions to evolutionary science over the next century would show where humanity had taken its first tentative steps.

The academic institution that began life as a shed would transform human history, adding more than a third of fragments, bones and skeletons belonging to the great hominin clan. This is the branch on the tree of life that supports all human species and their human-like ancestors after we diverged from other great apes some eight million years ago.

By reading these bones, and exploring the past through the time machines of geochemistry, the science it forged would show that our species, *Homo sapiens*, is both suited and vulnerable to the demands of the Anthropocene.

From the past we learn that our ingenious brain is uniquely adapted to forging smart solutions in harsh environments: the stimulating, challenging African wilderness gave us bipedalism – but overly specialised diets like fossil fuels can kill us.

Palaeo climates may offer the biggest portent of all. Of all human species confronted by catastrophic versions of Earth,

we're the last ones standing.

The unassuming shed at Wits was, therefore, no small miracle of scientific fortitude, especially against Cape Town's Union Government, Tobias writes. Had it been up to Minister of Education FS Malan, he would've wielded his powers under the Anatomy Act "to refuse to proclaim Witwatersrand as an area in which dissection of the human body could be carried out".

But it's these anomalous blips on the radar, as that shed would surely prove to be, that often surge into science's greatest epiphanies.

In his own quest to understand the laboratory of life, the famously unprepossessing Hubble didn't have an easy time of it either. Arriving at California's Mount Wilson Observatory in September 1919, to reach his research station on a 1,800-metre peak, the junior astronomer had to first navigate the 15-kilometre ascent. (By contrast, Table Mountain as the only terrestrial feature to give its name to a constellation – Mensa – is little more than a piddling 1,000 metres high.) Unrecognised for decades, Harvard's women astronomers had to be satisfied with the title "computers", but it was their research into pulsating stars that helped give Hubble's work the impetus to announce, in March 1929, that almost all galaxies seemed to be red-shifting away from Earth.

As the centre of the global economy in New York was about to contract and collapse in on itself, the universe was now appearing to do quite the opposite. It wasn't only expanding.

Its growth beyond the Milky Way was the first proof that we were living in an evolving cosmos.

Hubble's first significant excavation of the skies from his Mount Wilson perch had emerged about five years before in a small New York Times headline: page six of a November 1924 edition (so, it wasn't exactly front page news). It said, "FINDS SPIRAL NEBULAE ARE STELLAR SYSTEMS; Dr. Hubble Confirms View That They Are 'Island Universes' Similar to Our Own."

These "island universes" were, in today's terms, what we call galaxies. "Dr Hubble" had shown that the gassy, dusty swirls that had puzzled scientists were very far away. So far away that they were, in fact, floating outside our own Milky Way. Our spiral galaxy, in other words, was not alone.

Just five days after the "Hubble" announcement, two wooden crates brimming with rocks and fossils clattered onto

Part one

As giant of human origins turns 100, *Homo sapiens* teeters on its most daunting edge



Australopithecus sediba, far left, with other members of the greater human family. Second from left is Mrs Ples (*Australopithecus africanus*), followed by *Paranthropus robustus* and a *Homo sapiens* skull. Professor Lee Berger, palaeoanthropology chair at the Evolutionary Studies Institute, adds a human touch.
FILE PHOTO

an anatomy professor's driveway on the other side of the world.

Like starlight travelling three million years to reach Planet Earth, the second crate held a messenger from the Pliocene. The professor, Australian-born Wits anatomy head Raymond Dart, had despatched a geologist colleague to investigate a cache of primate fossils from a lime quarry outside the otherwise entirely unremarkable town of Taung in today's North West Province. There, the geologist would rescue a fossilised bone the quarry manager had resurrected as a paperweight. Then he gingerly sealed it into a crate and sent it on to Dart in Johannesburg. Sequestered into the impressions and curves of the fossil loot ... a secret biography about to reroute history.

"As soon as I removed the lid a thrill of excitement shot through me. On the very top of the rock heap was what was undoubtedly an endocranial cast or mould of the interior of a skull ...

"Was there, anywhere among this pile of rocks, a face to fit the brain?" asked Dart, who had a special interest in skull and brain morphology. He was working against the ticking clock. Dressed in "London-cut

morning clothes", Dart recalls in his book, *Adventures with the Missing Link*, he was about to host a wedding at his home – and he was best man. He "ransacked feverishly through the boxes".

"My search was rewarded, for I found a large stone with a depression into which the cast fitted perfectly ... I stood in the shade holding the brain as greedily as any miser hugs his gold ... Here, I was certain, was one of the most significant finds ever made in the history of anthropology ... These pleasant daydreams were interrupted by the bridegroom himself tugging at my sleeve. 'My God, Ray,' he said, striving to keep the nervous urgency out of his voice. 'You've got to finish dressing.'"

Tobias writes that "as a teacher" Dart was "lively, unpredictable, often inspiring and histrionic. Nobody went through his hands untouched: some later denied they had ever learned any anatomy from him, but they had got to know a remarkable personality, a flamboyant renaissance man and one of the most memorable persons ever to grace" the anatomy school.

This was the era before the aircsribes, the modern excavator's pneumatic pecking tool of choice. So, after the wedding Dart wasted no time setting to work with a hardware store chisel. Later he used his wife Dora's steel knitting needle to liberate the bone fragments from their indurate breccia encasing. Three months of scoring flakes off the matrix with his small arsenal of alternative tools followed.

Freed from the rocky time capsule through patient skill, was a blend of human-like and ape-like features. No member of our species had been lucky enough to behold such a sight through a magnifying glass of Raymond Dart's anatomical acuity.

For 31-year-old Dart, a revised historical narrative of the human universe glimmered into view. "On the 73rd day, the rock parted," he writes in *Missing Link*. "What emerged was a baby's face, an infant with a full set of milk teeth and its permanent molars just in the process of erupting."

The half-ape, half-child skull also displayed a foramen magnum – the hole at the base of the skull –

balancing neatly atop the spinal cord. In true apes, the foramen magnum is towards the rear. The child's brain was small compared with standard measurements of today's children. Dart took this as proof that the creature had relied on upright, bipedal locomotion before spawning a big brain. This observation subverted the universally accepted wisdom that it was the brain that had kindled the first flickers of humanity.

Dart knew that his "Man-Ape of South Africa", which he named *Australopithecus africanus*, was not just unique. It was preposterous. With Dora's heretical knitting needle, he'd cut down to size the role of the brain in the quintessential human identity.

"I doubt if there was any parent prouder of his offspring than I was of my 'Taungs baby' on that Christmas of 1924," the besotted anatomist remembers.

Placing in perspective the extraordinary value – and unlikelihood – of Dart's find, a world heritage dossier reveals that the "universal significance of the Taung skull fossil site is vested primarily in this single unique specimen". It was also "sheer fluke that it found its way into the hands of Dart, who was perhaps one of only two or three people in the whole of South Africa who were able to appreciate and give expression to its uniqueness".

Here someone had uncovered for the first time a hominin who had, at some point on the path to becoming human, placed a bigger reliance on "feet as organs of progression", as Dart puts it in his 1925 Nature article announcing the find.

By walking upright, africanus had freed up its hands as "instruments of growing intelligence" and "organs of offence and defence", Dart suggests in the article, rather than the regrettable alternative of "developing massive canines and hideous features".

Then, predating by 40 years primatologist Jane Goodall's crucial observations on apes and implements, Dart highlights tool use among primates as an obvious fact. At least to himself – and to none other than the architect of natural selection.

"Even living baboons and anthropoid apes can and do use sticks and stones as implements and as weapons of offence," Dart explains, referencing Charles Darwin's 1871 book, *Descent of Man*. This, in turn, lists a litany of anecdotal tool studies on a variety of animals in their natural habitat. Darwin himself had witnessed a Cape of Good Hope baboon "preparing mud for the purpose" of throwing "any object at hand at a person who offends him".

In his Nature article, Dart the showman punctuates his precision anatomical case with droll flourishes.

He indicates that the early human, big-brained species *Pithecanthropus*, the now-defunct genus for Indonesia's *Homo erectus*, was a "caricature of precocious hominid failure". It was a poor comparison to his "Taungs baby".

Nor could the easy pickings of Asia's "luxuriant forests of the tropical belts" properly explain the relatively dramatic brain capacity suggested by the diminutive Taung skull.

"Southern Africa, by providing a vast open country with occasional wooded belts and a relative scarcity of water, together with a fierce and bitter mammalian competition, furnished a laboratory such as was essential to this penultimate phase of human evolution," Dart writes.

The slender "Man-Ape of South Africa" thumbed its snout at Eurocentric views that Africa had given the science of human evolution nothing.

Before this insight, the only significant lineages known to prehistory detectives had been defined, by and large, by early human remains from Eurasia. Dart's real coup de grâce was that Africa, not Eurasia, had presented the bones in the opening credits of the proto-human biography. This was his missing link.

Transitional humanity as a miscreant anthropoid with an awkward gait that preceded the curve of its unambitious forehead? From South Africa's semi-dry backwaters no less? This was more than enough to set the teeth of European critics on edge. Largely steered by the English clique, European opposition dismissed africanus outright. It was nothing, they insisted, but a ju-

venile ape skull. They demanded comparative adult specimens if Dart's baby had any chance of unseating their Piltdown man. Named *Eoanthropus dawsoni* after its describer Charles Dawson, Piltdown man was southern England's answer to the hominin gold standard.

The icy reception shattered the nearly indefatigable Dart's enthusiasm in his own fieldwork. However, as the charismatic professor of anatomy, he continued to foster a culture that "encouraged his students to be interested in human origins, development and culture", anatomy school associate Ron Clarke told Daily Maverick. Clarke is the professor behind the beautifully complete *Australopithecus skeleton*, Little Foot.

In 1936, more than a decade after Dart's shunned Nature article, a neuroanatomist and a student from the anatomy school led the eccentric Transvaal Museum palaeontologist Robert Broom to the Sterkfontein Caves north of Johannesburg.

Here, in today's Cradle of Humankind world heritage site, Broom received from a quarry site manager exactly the type of specimen the school's decriers had been goading Dart to deliver. Feathers were ruffled. Some anatomy school insiders even insinuated that Broom – anatomy school lecturer as well as an ardent supporter of Dart's *Australopithecus* claims – had hijacked their glory.

Nonetheless, this was the first adult *Australopithecus* cranium known to science, which Broom had predicted, in a Natural History article a decade before, as a discovery that was "not improbable". He also underlined the possibility of someday sniffing out a "perfect skeleton" of africanus.

Broom was a Scot who made for a curious mix of teacher and spiritualist. Elected a Royal Society fellow in 1920, he was famous for his work in mammal-like reptiles. It is said he wore all or nothing out in the field: formal attire when the weather was tolerably cool, his birthday suit when it was not entirely. Apparently undeterred by the prevailing climate – whether this entailed inclement weather, intellectual opposition abroad or both – the emboldened Broom charted his way through the Cradle's limework quarries. He did use precision tools for cleaning fossils from breccia, but at the early stage of an excavation one cannot always employ such delicate predilections as knitting needles. That's where necessary evils like drilling and dynamite come in.

"Blasting was necessary to expose the fossils in the first place. Only afterward could they be cleaned with fine tools," Clarke explained. Broom blasted in two exactly the sort of bone he'd been keen to add to his armoury: Cradle rock star "Mrs Ples". (Recent authoritative research suggests our "Mrs" was indeed a Mister.) As South Africa's most complete africanus skull at that point, this 1947 discovery was an unwitting tribute to Broom's obsessive productivity.

Robert Broom worked with "impelling enthusiasm" until his death in 1951. He was 84. His Nature obituary celebrated the octogenarian's "most amazing collection of australopithecine material" from the Cradle area, involving "many more skulls, jaws, teeth and portions of the limb skeleton, including those of adults, adolescents and infants".

Although the obituary hints at taxonomic disagreement, it endorses unequivocally, a quarter century after controversy first erupted about africanus in that publication, the fruits of Broom's grit. "His work established clearly that the importance of these fossils lies in the remarkable combination of simian and hominid features which they present," it reads. "It is true to say that this is now generally recognised."

To be Continued

THE GUARDIAN SIMPLE WORD FIT // THE GUARDIAN CROSSWORD =025=

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

5 Letter word: WET, ASK,
4 Letter word: AGED, SURE, AIDE, LOSE,
5 Letter word: MOURN, ANGEL, DRAMA, FLOAT, SHARK
STONE, TREND, SISAL,
6 Letter word: MEADOW, URGENT, NATIVE, ANKLES
7 Letter word: NILOTIC, ENGULES, MALAISE
8 Letter word: INSTANTS,
10 Letter word: SLAVE TRADE

WORD FIT

CROSSWORD

Comments: 0/89 43/109

Clues: Across

- Unqualified barrister or solicitor (4,6)
- Attempt to overthrow government (9)
- Definitely true (4)
- Well established (6)
- Parasitic insect (5)
- Construct (5)
- Certainly not (5)
- fleshy underground plant part (5)
- Use tobacco (5)
- Maker, inventor (7)

Down:

- Weatherglass (9)
- Not intoxicated (5)
- Bounce along clumsily (6)
- Ages (4)
- wear away (6)
- Principles (6)
- Galleries (7)
- Tenancy (6)
- Give medical aid (5)
- Tenancy (6)
- Statement of beliefs (5)



Thursday 26 December 2019

Absa plans China office in Asia investment banking expansion

JOHANNESBURG

Absa's corporate and investment banking unit plans to open an office in China as part of an expansion that will also target other parts of Asia and the Middle East.

"Next year, we will be seeking strategic approval from our board for an on-the-ground presence in China," Charles Russon, the division's chief executive officer, said in an interview in Johannesburg. "My hunch is it will be Beijing. It's actually one of the questions we've asked the strategic team to figure out."

South Africa's third-largest bank has seen business involving the world's second-biggest economy and its operations across 13 markets on the continent more than double this year, albeit from a small base, he said. The Johannesburg-based lender is aiming for multinational firms, such as Huawei, as part of an effort to boost revenue from the region by more than 10% as economic growth at home stutters.

"We spent a lot of time this year building out some of the Chinese speaking capability and delivery capability in some of our core markets - Kenya, Zambia, South Africa," Russon said. "As you establish some of those relationships in mainland China you have actually got to have people on the ground who can execute on it and service the client locally. Middle East and Asia are probably further behind."

Absa is not the only local lender chasing China. Larger rival Standard Bank [JSE:SBK], which is 20% owned by Industrial & Commercial Bank of China, has said it plans to draw more of the \$147bn a year of bilateral trade between Africa and China. FirstRand's Rand Merchant Bank has a representative office in Shanghai and has entered partnerships with several Chinese lenders, while Nedbank [JSE:NED] in 2013 agreed to cooperate with Bank of China.

Absa, which has a transactional banking relationship with Huawei in Africa, has already opened a representative office in London and is waiting for final regulatory approval to open in New York to better capture "flows in and out of the continent," Russon said.

It is also considering ways to deepen its interests in African markets such as Nigeria. "We're in discussions with our board on exactly where we want to go with our Nigeria strategy," he said. "We are close to making some firm decisions on that."

The CIB division, which accounts for about a third of Absa's profit, will make one or two new hires in its mergers and acquisitions team, Russon said, without giving details. "We want a diversified portfolio across countries and businesses," he said. "We want a substantial CIB business that contributes in excess of 40% to group earnings, and not by shrinking other units."

BoT says interest rates fallen due to favourable monetary policy

By The Banker Reporter

LENDING rates by commercial banks fell from 17.32 percent in October 2018 to 16.77 percent this year thanks to Bank of Tanzania's accommodative monetary policy.

In its latest monthly economic review report released in November 2019, the Central Bank said interest rates on loans and deposits were relatively lower in October 2019 also due to efforts to reduce risk premium, and a streamlined fiscal policy.

"The decline in deposit interest rate was associated with improved liquidity in the banking system. The overall lending rate averaged 16.77 percent, down from 17.32 percent in the corresponding month of 2018, while one-year lending rate averaged 16.71 percent compared with 18.34 percent," the report stated.

It said, overall deposit rate decreased to an average of 7.30 percent from 7.93 percent, while one-



Bank of Tanzania Governor, Professor Florens Luoga.

year deposit rate averaged 8.84 percent compared with 8.11 percent registered in October 2018.

"As a result, the spread between one-year deposits rate and lending rate narrowed significantly

to 7.87 percentage points in October 2019 from 10.22 percentage points in similar month of 2018," the report noted.

The Central Bank further noted that credit to the private

sector continued to expand somewhat strongly, by 9.8 percent in October 2019 compared with 9.3 percent and 4.8 percent in the year ending September 2019 and October 2018, respectively.

"The strong growth was partly a reflection of accommodative monetary and measures implemented to improve the business environment and expansion of economic activities in the country. Credit to the central government by the banking system grew by 3.4 percent in the year ending October 2019 compared with 14.8 percent in October 2018, owing to build-up of government deposits at the Bank of Tanzania," the report noted.

The report also indicated that interbank foreign exchange market operated smoothly in October 2019 as in the preceding months, with total transactions amounting to US\$11.9 million compared with US\$190.1 million traded in the preceding month.

"The Bank of Tanzania participated in the market for monetary

policy and reserve management purposes, purchasing US\$40.5 million. The shilling remained stable against the US dollar consistent with moderate current account pressure and sustained low inflation rate, trading at an average rate of 2,300.70/- per US dollar compared with 2,300.75/- per US dollar in the preceding month," the report added.

The value of transactions in the interbank cash market was 1,018.24bn/- in October 2019 which was slightly lower than 1,050.51bn/- in the preceding month while the share of overnight transactions in total IBCM transactions declined further to 20.7 percent in October 2019 from 35.9 percent in September 2019 and 60.1 percent in October 2018.

"The overall interbank and overnight cash market interest rates declined to 5.22 percent and 4.28 percent in October 2019, from 5.37 percent and 5.15 percent in the preceding month, respectively," the report pointed out.

Bankers-turned-winemakers are transforming England into wine country

LONDON

Nicholas Coates doesn't miss the commute. In the latter years of his investment banking career, which he left at the age of 47 after working at Royal Bank of Scotland and ING Barings, he'd catch the 5:41 am train to London and arrive back at his manor house in the Hampshire countryside around 10:30 pm.

Now Coates, 60, just walks through the rose garden between his home and the bucolic headquarters of Coates & Seely, a maker of English sparkling wine that he co-founded to take on Champagne at its own game. It's a calling that beckons a growing number of financiers. Bankers, hedge fund managers, and corporate lawyers are quitting London's financial sector for England's burgeoning vineyards. They're buying up land in Kent, Sussex, and Hampshire and planting grapes among fields once reserved for wheat or cattle.

The path from rainmaker to winemaker is well-travelled. Historically, financiers fled to the châteaux of Bordeaux, the rolling hills of Tuscany, or sunny Napa Valley. So when Coates began telling friends and family in 2007 of his ambition to challenge Champagne in his wet and grey backyard, there wasn't a great deal of enthusiasm. His father likened the venture to building a car in North Korea and going up against Rolls-Royce.



Bankers, hedge fund managers, and corporate lawyers are quitting London's financial sector for England's burgeoning vineyards.

Since then, English wine has changed from a novelty or joke into a serious contender. In 2019, Coates & Seely's sparkling 2009 La Perfidie - named for "perfidious Albion," an 18th century French playwright's characterisation of Britain - beat out French rivals to win a trophy at the International Wine & Spirit Competition in London, sometimes called the Oscars of Alcohol.

"I wouldn't want people to think that it's easy, because it's

phenomenally hard work," Coates says in his living room, where the walls are hung with unsmiling portraits of his family's bewigged ancestors. "A lot of our blood, sweat, and tears went into this."

Other financiers who've taken to the life of the English vintner include Mark Driver, who left Horseman Capital Management to start Rathfinny Wine Estate; Eric Heerema, a former lawyer and asset manager who acquired Nyetimber; and Ian

Kellett, who bought Hambledon Vineyard after a career at Dresner Kleinwort Benson. Billionaire Michael Spencer, the founder of NEX Group, owns a stake in the Chapel Down winery.

The unusually hot summer of 2018 encouraged more producers to join the fray. For all its dangerous downsides, global warming also makes it possible to regularly ripen grapes at latitudes once considered marginal for cultivation. Overall output of wine in England and Wales in-

creased to 13.2 million bottles in 2018, from 5 million in 2015, according to trade body Wine GB. The area under vine has risen 83% since 2015, to more than 8,800 acres.

Vintners have focused on sparkling wine because the English growing regions' chalky soil is similar to that of Champagne, and producers of one of France's signature luxury products have responded. Vranken-Pommery Monopole SA last year introduced Louis Pommery England brut in partnership with Hattingley Valley in Hampshire, planting vines on about 100 acres in the area. It plans to begin harvesting in 2021.

Famed producer Taittinger joined with UK distributor Hatch Mansfield to create Domaine Evremond in Kent. The project, which initially included 50 acres of vines, will expand to more than 100 acres when a second round of planting takes place next year, according to the British partner's managing director, Patrick McGrath.

For the likes of Vranken-Pommery and Taittinger, producing in England is a way to hedge bets and protect a key market no matter what happens with Brexit. The UK is Champagne's biggest export outlet, with 27 million bottles shipped in 2018, according to trade organisation Comité Champagne. That's more than double the total production of wine in England and Wales, most of which is consumed domestically.

Festive season rush overwhelm transport companies



Passengers queue at Nyabugogo bus terminal yesterday.

KIGALI

It is a custom for people to join their families upcountry to celebrate Christmas and the New Year. This is evident by how Nyabugogo Bus Terminal is overcrowded two to three days before December 25.

Entering the bus terminal, long queues are at every booking office, and although security companies help with keeping order, in some places people shove each other to be served first. Judith Uwimana is a domestic worker going back to her home in Huye district.

"I arrived here at six in the morning, and I am leaving with the 12:00 bus. I am coming back after New Year's celebrations," she told The New

Times. Hakizimana (not real name) is a young man, who was also going to his family in Ruhango District.

"I haven't booked my ticket yet, because I couldn't even find where to step. People are pushing each other to get tickets." Some groups in the park are comprised of women carrying children, and the elderly, who choose to stick to the line than fight for tickets, since they can't.

"I just got here, someone booked the ticket for me early in the morning. Yesterday we came in the morning when tickets were sold out, so we decided to come earlier today", said an elderly man who was waiting for a bus to Karongi District.

Although the travellers complain of waiting for many

hours for the buses, travel agency owners say they try their best to cater to them. Speaking to The New Times, François Birohoza, of Alpha Tours in Nyabugogo, said the clients are very many and that they are doing their best to meet the demand.

"We had like 2,000 people yesterday, and today they will be so many times more than that. Now, (11:00 am), we have transported around 5,000 people. Usually, some of our buses are not fully occupied, we take like 600 people per day."

Birohoza further explained that they are extending their closing hours because people are many. Rwanda Inter-Link Transport Company, commonly known as RITCO is another

travel agency that goes to different locations across the country.

Junior Rugira, the Operations Manager at RITCO explained that clients increased hugely on Christmas eve and the day before. "We normally transport 50,000 to 60,000 people per week, but during this festive season, we have almost doubled the number. Yesterday, they were around 20 thousand, and today they are going to be much more."

Rugira explained that the tickets they were issuing then (it was almost midday) were for buses leaving at 4:00 pm, that evening. He also said that the agency would work 24 hours a day the whole festive season so as to meet the demand from their clients, for transport.

Wananchi Group, SimbaNET new top brass appointees promise fireworks in 2020

By Guardian Reporter

CUSTOMERS of leading information communications technology and entertainment companies, Wananchi Group Limited and its subsidiary, SimbaNET Company Limited should expect better services next year.

Newly appointed Wananchi Group's Country Manager, Sanctus Mtsimbe and SimbaNET's Managing Director, Kennedy Ojung'a said in Dar es Salaam last week after their appointments that they will re-energise performance at the two companies.

"I promise our customers and other stakeholders that they should expect improved services

and more innovation in 2020 because my management will stop at nothing but to give them value for their money," Mtsimbe said.

Mtsimbe who previously worked within the group as Head of Sales for ISAT based in Dubai, and for SimbaNET and Wananchi Group in senior capacities across east Africa, said he understands the local market better hence will work hard to maintain pole position for the company.

Prior to joining ISAT Africa, Mtsimbe who holds a Bachelor of Science in Geology, an Advanced Diploma in Computer Studies and a Master of Science in Hydrogeology from University College London, was producer and CEO of JTV /Bongo

Cinema. He has also worked as General Manager of Airsys Communications Technology (UK) and Regional Sales Manager for Danimex Communication of Denmark.

Commenting on his new role, Ojung'a said he will deliver to both customers and shareholders by ensuring that SimbaNET's services and products continue to dominate the market. "I understand the responsibility that comes with my new position and promise both my employers and customers better services," he noted.

Ojung'a who holds a Bachelor's degree in Biochemistry and Chemistry, a Master of Business Management specialising in marketing and is currently

undertaking a Master of Science in Bioinformatics, has extensive experience in the telecommunications industry having worked in senior capacities for various multinational organizations, including Econet Media and Technites, both subsidiaries of Econet Group.

He also worked for Vodafone Global Enterprise as a Strategic Business Manager for Africa and for Safaricom Plc of Kenya.

Established in 2008, Wananchi Group is one of Africa's leading business and residential information, communications and entertainment providers. The company operates across several markets in Africa including Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia.



Newly appointed Wananchi Group's Country Manager, Sanctus Mtsimbe.

Parliament clips CBK powers over State mortgage financier



Central Bank Governor Patrick Njoroge.

NAIROBI

Parliament has stripped the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) of powers to approve the opening, relocation and closure of any branch of a mortgage refinance company.

The National Assembly annulled sections 26(2) and 42 of the Central Bank of Kenya (Mortgage Refinance Companies) Regulations, 2019. The regulations, Central Bank Governor Patrick Njoroge developed, are intended to effect the mortgage refinance legal regime introduced to the CBK Act, Cap 491 through the Finance Act, 2018.

The Finance Act 2018 amended the CBK Act to provide for a legal framework for the CBK to license and regulate the mortgage refinance business. The Treasury in May unveiled the Kenya Mortgage Refinancing Company (KMRC), which is expected to make it easier for banks to access long-term funds for cheaper home loans.

The company is mandated to raise debt from markets, including mortgage-backed bonds, to lend to banks and co-operatives using their mortgage loan contracts with customers as security. The KMRC is designed to refinance primary lenders, enabling them to offer mortgage loans at single-digit rates.

Under the annulled regulations, the CBK, which published the instrument through legal notice number I34 of 2019, had given itself the power to unilaterally determine the manner in which a place of business may be opened, relocated or closed. "The bank may provide in guidelines other forms and the manner in which a place of business may be opened, relocated or closed," the annulled section reads.

The committee on Delegated Legislation, which approved the adoption of the regulations subject to deletion of sections 26(2) and 42 argued the two sections contravened section 13(m) of the Statutory Instruments Act as they inappropriately delegate legislative powers to the Central Bank of Kenya to issue guidelines.

"Guidelines are statutory instruments within the meaning of Section 2 of the Statutory Instruments Act and if made by CBK, must be submitted to the National for Approval," said Gladys Shollei, who chairs the committee, in a report the House adopted before MPs went on long recess on December 6, 2019.

China stocks see biggest drop in 6 weeks as tech firms sink

BEIJING

China's benchmark stock gauge suffered its first drop of more than 1% in six weeks after a state-backed fund said it would reduce its stakes in some tech companies.

The Shanghai Composite Index closed down 1.4% on Monday, its biggest decline since November 11. The CSI 300 Index slumped 1.3%, its fourth consecutive retreat, with technology-related shares leading the losses.

Three stocks that have surged at least 73% this year tumbled after the state-backed China Integrated Circuit Industry Investment Fund said it would reduce its holdings in them. Goke Microelectronics Co. fell by the 10% daily limit, while Shenzhen Goodix Technology Co. dropped 5.1% and GigaDevice Semiconductor Beijing Inc. slumped 6.7%.

The stake cuts were seen sending a bearish signal to investors. "The drop today was mainly due to mutual funds using the state fund cutting stakes as a catalyst to lock in gains before year's end," said Wu Yuefeng, fund manager at Funding Capital Management (Beijing) Co. "Investors are pricing in for the worst in the immediate term."

Baijiu-related shares also retreated, with Jiugui Liquor Co. tumbling by the daily limit after denying Chinese media reports that it added a sweetener to its products. Shede Spirits Co. and Anhui Yingjia Distillery Co. dropped at least 3%.

MARKETTRENDS

Saudi Arabia's largest lender abandons potential merger

RIYADH

National Commercial Bank (NCB), the biggest lender in Saudi Arabia by assets, ended talks for a merger with its smaller rival Riyadh Bank, which promised to create a banking giant with \$200 billion in combined assets.

The boards of the two lenders agreed to stop merger talks, the banks said in separate statements on Monday to the kingdom's Tadawul Stock Exchange without specifying the reason for terminating the talks.

NCB said it is committed to become the region's leading financial services group by "implementing its sustainable growth strategy", while Riyadh Bank said it will continue to develop its products, services and technologies that "serve the interests of its customers, shareholders and employees." The halting of talks comes almost a year after both lenders announced their intentions and initiating exploratory talks in December 2018.

Both banks had said they sought consultations from the kingdom's financial

regulator, the Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority, prior to merger discussions and both entities did not expect "forced dismissal" of employees if the merger went through. The Public Investment Fund, Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund that holds stakes in some of the biggest lenders, owns 44 per cent of NCB and about 22 per cent of Riyadh Bank.

NCB shares declined 2.4 per cent since the beginning of 2019, while those of Riyadh Bank have surged 23 per cent. That compares with a gain of 4 per cent for Saudi Arabia's benchmark stock index, according to Bloomberg.

The deal would have outshone the combination of Saudi British Bank (Sabb) and Alawwal bank in June that created a financial entity with more than \$73bn in assets. The two lenders formally merged to become the third-biggest lender by assets in the kingdom.

NCB and the Riyadh Bank deal was seen as the continuation of the consolidation trend in the Gulf banking industry. Bank mergers in the Gulf have picked up pace in recent years as lenders com-

bine their balance sheets to gain scale in a bid to better face tougher market conditions against a weakening global economic backdrop. The Sabb and Alawwal deal followed Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank's tie-up with Union National Bank and subsequent takeover of Al Hilal bank as its Sharia-compliant arm in the UAE.

Last month Dubai Islamic Bank, the biggest Sharia-compliant lender in the UAE, secured regulatory approval to buy Noor Bank. This follows the merger of National Bank of Abu Dhabi and First Gulf Bank to create First Abu Dhabi Bank, a banking powerhouse in the UAE.

Elsewhere in the region, the boards of Kuwait Finance House and Ahli United Bank in September agreed on a share swap ratio, a crucial step in the former's bid to take over its smaller Bahraini counterpart and create a combined Islamic banking entity with more than \$96.7bn in assets. The Bahraini entity, at the time said, its board approved a final exchange ratio between the two lenders of one KFH share for every 2.325581 AUB shares.



Stocks displayed on an electronic board at Tadawul Stock Exchange in Riyadh.

NMB's Ruth Zaipuna explains the bank's CSR investments in past 4yrs

NMB Bank Plc is one of the major financial institutions which allocate a substantial amount of resources to invest in community social services such as education, health, financial literacy and disaster relief assistance. In this interview with *The Banker*, NMB's acting Managing Director, Ruth Zaipuna explains the concept of the bank's corporate social responsibility activities for the past four year, excerpts:

What does corporate social responsibility mean to NMB Bank's employees?

To us as employees, corporate social responsibility is a vehicle through which the bank invests in community projects to supplement government efforts to improve delivery of social services which is very import for our economic growth.

Precisely which areas does NMB's CSR focus on and why?

Our CSR main focuses on key four three sectors or rather areas, namely;

education, health and provision of financial literacy and also disaster relief aid when communities are hit by natural or human error calamities. We focus on these four key areas because we understand that the majority of our people benefit from these services.

How do you fund these CSR activities?

As a policy, our bank allocates one percent of its net profits annually to finance community projects in the four areas mentioned above. Last year, the budget was a whopping 1bn/- and so



far we have already spend over 950m/-

How much has been spent to invest in community social services in the past four years and what tan-

gible changes have you made to the public?

Through our CSR in the last four years, we spent over 4bn/- which has significantly changed delivery of social

services a hundreds of public schools, health facilities but also saved or improved lives of millions of Tanzanians. During the period, we donated 31,150 desks to both primary and secondary schools which directly benefited over 93,000 students. Over 1,150 desk top computers were also donated to public schools to help improve information communication technology teaching.

In the health sector, we managed to cover 333 hospitals and health centers by donating beds, sheets, labour ward beds, blankets, curtains for wards and other medical devices plus medicines especially during disasters.

In financial literacy through our Wajibu Program which gives the public an opportunity to get financial literacy basics such as adopting a culture of saving for future success, we have directly impacted knowledge to over 60,000 people.

Is your CSR program financed by the bank's own resources only?

No, we also mobilise staff support through monetary contributions to invest in delivery of social services be-

cause NMB employees share the same understanding with management on the importance of quality education, health and disaster assistance services to the public. For example during the period under review, the bank's employees financed a girl known as Sheila to undergo surgery and get an artificial limb at CCBRT in Dar es Salaam after his leg was severed. We also funded treatment of several children with spinal bifida and hydrocephalous. But annually, NMB employees also donate blood to national blood bank to help save lives of those in need of blood transfusion.

Do employees donate cash only or materials as well?

Yes, they also donate materials things through 'Donation Box' such as clothes, books, toys which they no longer need but are in good shape to be used by those in needs including orphans and the elderly. As a major financial institution, NMB has a responsibility to support communities where it operate hence our CSR slogan, 'Our community, our responsibility.'

Why India's digital lending market is attractive for start-ups and tech giants alike

NEW DELHI

Gaurav Chopra and Mayank Kachhwaha spotted a gap in India's lending market four years ago and decided to do something about it.

The two entrepreneurs, who worked for a credit company in London, knew that many in India - individuals or small businesses - are unable to secure loans, or go to loan sharks who charge high interest rates, due to no credit history. To address the problem, Mr Chopra and Mr Kachhwaha set up IndiaLends, an online platform that assesses borrowers' credit worthiness using technology and helps them secure loans from banks and non-banking financial companies.

"Credit was available in the market but it was not readily accessible to everyone," says Mr Chopra, chief executive of IndiaLends based in New Delhi. "Currently, we are providing credit products and services to over eight million customers."

The company's clientele include people who have never secured a credit facility before, self-employed individuals and those from smaller cities. Through its associations with more than 50 banks and non-banking financial companies, IndiaLends extends financing facilities which could range from anywhere between 10,000 Indian rupees and 7 million rupees. "We've observed a sharp rise in loans for reasons varying from funding higher studies, to adding extra capital to further businesses, handling wedding expenses, to travel," says Mr Chopra.

Access to credit from formal channels of funding is becoming a major issue for people and even small enterprises. India's financial institutions are facing a liquidity crunch and availability of limited credit is affecting growth. Earlier this month, Moody's Investors Service reduced its 2018-19 fiscal year economic growth projections for India to 4.9 per cent from 5.8 per cent. The credit crunch among non-bank financial institutions, which have been major providers of retail loans, has exacerbated the slowdown, according to the credit rating agency.

Digital lending platforms such as IndiaLends are stepping in to fill the void. Digital lending in recent years has surged in India, primarily offering small loans to mobile phone users. Digital financing companies rely on algorithms and data to assess risk when disbursing funds to customers.

The rapid expansion of smartphone ownership, internet access and a shift towards consumerism in the country have helped fuel the growth of these enterprises, analysts say. There are 338 online lending start-ups in India, according to global financial technology research platform Medici.

The value of retail loans disbursed digitally in India is expected to reach a total of more than \$1 trillion between 2018 to 2023, according to the Boston



Getting access to loans without a credit history is difficult for individuals and smaller businesses in India.

Consulting Group. It forecasts the value of loans allocated via digital lending will more than triple in 2023, compared with 2019.

"When it comes to banking, a large part of the population is under-penetrated in India," says Vikram Pandya, the FinTech director at SP Jain School of Global Management. "Banks don't want to reach out to remote areas where the cost of on-boarding, management and recovery is very high. Online lending start-ups solve this problem and hence so many players find this space attractive." Start-ups are not the only companies trying to grab their share of digital lending sector in India. Global technology giants are equally enthusiastic and vying to grab a slice of the pie.

Last year, Amazon launched an online sellers' lending network, which links its sellers to third-party lenders. Google in 2018 partnered with four major Indian banks: HDFC, Federal Bank, ICICI, and Kotak Mahindra Bank.

Chinese smartphone company Xiaomi is the latest to enter the fray. This month, Xiaomi started Mi Credit, which connects smartphone users with lending companies for quick access to loans of up to 100,000 rupees. "For now, India definitely is our biggest market outside China, not only in credit but pretty much in everything else," Hong Feng, the co-founder and senior vice president of Xiaomi, told Reuters recently. "We need to focus ourselves to make it really successful. We need to bring in more partners, bring more products, bring more users to make it really scale up. That's our focus for the next 12 months," he said.

India is the world's second-largest smartphone market after China, with 450 million users, according to Counterpoint Research, and that number is bound to grow in the future. India also has the second-largest unbanked population after China, as more than 190 million people in the country do not have access to a bank account, according to the World Bank data.

These are the two prime factors that are supporting the prospects of

digital lending market's growth in the country, according to analysts. CASHe is one of the biggest home-grown companies in the digital lending sector in India. It has disbursed more than 17 billion rupees worth of loans since it started operations in 2017.

The average loan request it receives from customers is about 35,000 to 40,000 rupees. The Mumbai company primarily focuses on catering to millennials, which has proved to be a high-growth market. "For someone who is new into the job market, there is hardly any credit history," says Ketan Patel, chief executive of CASHe.

"This is when the big idea struck us. CASHe began its operations with a clear purpose to provide India's urban working millennials with a path to better financial health with the aid of technology through their smartphones."

Lending companies and banks are also benefitting from the growth of digital platforms, as they can now reach a new set of customers. "It's not just the consumers that are attracted to digital lending by FinTech companies, but it has also attracted the attention of traditional lenders with large balance sheets as well," says Mr Shah. Banks and financial institutions are looking at FinTech companies to collaborate and drive change.

There is also a growing number of online companies in India offering peer-to-peer loans, where people can earn interest by lending money to others on digital platforms.

Many are still wary of this market, though. "As a peer-to-peer investment that is just five years old, there is not enough material or data available for investors," says Bhavin Patel, the founder and chief executive of LenDenClub. "We are trying to develop more data points and information for our investors so that they understand peer-to-peer investment when they start investing." Nevertheless, he says the company has managed to grow five-fold over the past year to reach a total deal count of more than 50,000 loans.



Sabelo Dlamini, senior research and consulting manager at International Data Corporation in South Africa

SA's data prices can't be compared with other African countries

JOHANNESBURG

As the market continues to digest the Competition Commission's summary findings on the data services market in SA, some experts believe that their methodology in coming up with the findings was not necessarily the right approach.

According to Sabelo Dlamini, senior research and consulting manager at International Data Corporation (IDC) South Africa, the South African mobile industry cannot be compared to those in other African countries.

"There are two issues that need to be considered here," he says. "Firstly, the Competition Commission has focused quite strongly on the disparity between post- and prepaid pricing, but this requires further, more in-depth scrutiny."

"Secondly, they are comparing South African mobile data pricing to other African countries, but the comparison is not as simple as it seems." Dlamini says the South African mobile operators have gone the extra mile in deploying their networks while they did not have the required 4G spectrum.

"These network operators had to work with 3G spectrum, re-farming that spectrum to deliver 4G services. They have invested a lot in terms of technological design and engineering to achieve this. That means that the design and quality of service and experience in South Africa are much better when compared to other African countries."

He adds that in most other African countries, the operators have hand-picked certain cities or areas when deploying the networks or planning the coverage,

compared to South Africa where there is more-or-less full coverage across the country.

"The situation in South Africa is very different from that in other countries on the continent. The telcos have invested a lot in infrastructure in the country and they are therefore expecting higher returns." From a pricing perspective, Dlamini believes the Competition Commission should be delving deeper into the complex pricing models rather than just focusing on the price per Gig.

"The Competition Commission needs to unpack the current pricing structures in more detail to determine how they can be remodelled to benefit the poor. Yes, one could easily focus on the price per Gig, but that will result in blanket pricing, which will ultimately disadvantage end-users or customers," he says. The pricing models need to be unpacked technically as there are several innovative products that can be used to implement more adaptive and demand-based pricing, he notes.

"Just focusing on the standard price per Gig is a more primitive way of pricing. However, if, using technology if you adjust your pricing based on the amount of congestion and usage of a specific cell, coupling those with some free zones, free minutes and zero-rated content, it would have a far more beneficial outcome for end-users or customers."

Impact on MTN and Vodacom? Regardless of whether the Competition Commission pushes ahead with the findings, consumers will continue to communicate and use data as they are using it now, possibly even more, says Dlamini.

"The biggest impact on the op-

erators will be that they will take longer to repay the capex costs of their network investments. But, focusing on a standard price list model could result in customers losing the benefit of free zones, minutes and zero-rated content, which will disadvantage them even further," says Dlamini.

"That is why we are urging the Competition Commission to delve deeper into existing technically advanced pricing models to rather determine how those can be made more efficient and more affordable to the end-user," he says.

He believes there could also be a broader negative impact on the industry if both MTN and Vodacom half their prices. "Telkom and Cell C currently position themselves based on more affordable pricing. Should the two bigger operators bring their cost down significantly, it could have unintended consequences on the smaller operators, making it more difficult for them to compete."

Dlamini concludes that the mobile networks in South Africa have reached saturation level and alternatives must be explored to connect the unconnected efficiently. "There are several technologies available outside of mobile that can be used to connect the unconnected," he says.

"We have seen several organisations and projects within government, such as USAASA and SA Connect, that have not yielded the expected results. Building mobile networks is expensive, so if we are serious about connecting the unconnected, we need to start looking at alternative technologies, such as TV Whitespaces, WiFi and satellite."

WORLD

Khashoggi's fiancée says execution of those convicted would conceal truth

ANKARA

THE fiancée of murdered Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi described the sentencing of five people to death in relation to the killing as unfair and invalid, adding that their execution would further conceal the truth.

Khashoggi disappeared after going to the Saudi consulate in Istanbul on Oct. 2, 2018, to obtain documents for his planned wedding. His body was reportedly dismembered and removed from the building and his remains have not been found.

A Saudi court on Monday sentenced five people to death and three to jail over the murder, while dismissing charges against three others, finding them not guilty. A U.N. investigator accused Riyadh of making a "mockery" of justice by exonerating senior figures who may have ordered the killing.

The presiding Saudi court rejected the findings of a U.N. inquiry by ruling that the killing was not premeditated, rather carried out "at the spur of the

moment".

Hatice Cengiz, Khashoggi's fiancée, was waiting outside the consulate when he went inside to retrieve the documents.

In a statement on Tuesday, Cengiz said the trial did not reveal why those convicted had killed Khashoggi because the trial was held behind closed doors.

"If these people are executed without any chance to speak or explain themselves, we might never know the truth behind this murder," she said.

"I'm calling upon every authority in the world to condemn this kind of court decision and urgently prevent any execution, because this would just be another step in concealing the truth."

"SHAM TRIAL"

Turkey said on Monday the trial outcome fell far short of serving justice, and on Tuesday Turkish Communications Director Fahrettin Altun slammed the verdict as an "insult to



Khashoggi's fiancée Hatice Cengiz

the intelligence of any fair observer".

"The international media must pursue the case of Khashoggi until there is true accountability... Those responsible must face justice sooner or later," Altun said on Twitter, calling the case a "sham trial".

"This despicable murder was done at a diplomatic facility against every diplomatic norm imaginable! We will follow this case to the end regardless of how high it goes."

The murder of Khashoggi, a U.S. resident and critic of the kingdom's de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, caused a global outcry, and some Western governments, as well as the CIA, said they believed the prince ordered

the killing.

Saudi officials say he had no role, though in September the crown prince indicated some personal accountability, saying "it happened under my watch".

After Monday's verdict, a source familiar with U.S. intelligence assessments said key U.S. government agencies rejected the validity of the court proceedings and CIA experts still believed Prince Mohammad personally ordered, or at least approved of, the killing.

The source said the five men condemned to death were essentially foot soldiers in the killing, while two senior security officials acquitted played a more significant role.

20 years on, China-Japan-ROK cooperation embraces new opportunities

CHENGDU

AS this year marks the 20th anniversary of China-Japan-Republic of Korea (ROK) cooperation, the 8th China-Japan-ROK leaders' meeting offers a catalyst to further build consensus and advance ties to a higher level.

The meeting, held in the southwestern Chinese city of Chengdu on Tuesday, gathered Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, ROK President Moon Jae-in and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Before the two foreign leaders came to Chengdu, Chinese President Xi Jinping met with them separately in Beijing on Monday.

In a world undergoing profound changes rarely seen in a century, the three countries enjoy a sound momentum of development of ties and their cooperation faces huge opportunities at a new starting point.

FRUITFUL COOPERATION

The three countries have forged an all-round cooperation system with the leaders' meeting as the core and supported by 21 ministerial meetings. Their cooperation covers over 30 areas.

China-Japan-ROK trilateral investment agreement has already been signed, and 16 rounds of negotiations on free trade have been held so far.

"We should speed up the negotiations and establish a free trade area with high standard as early as possible, to realize high-level trade and investment liberalization and facilitation," said Premier

Li during the meeting.

The total trade volume of the three countries increased from 130 billion U.S. dollars in 1999 to more than 720 billion U.S. dollars in 2018.

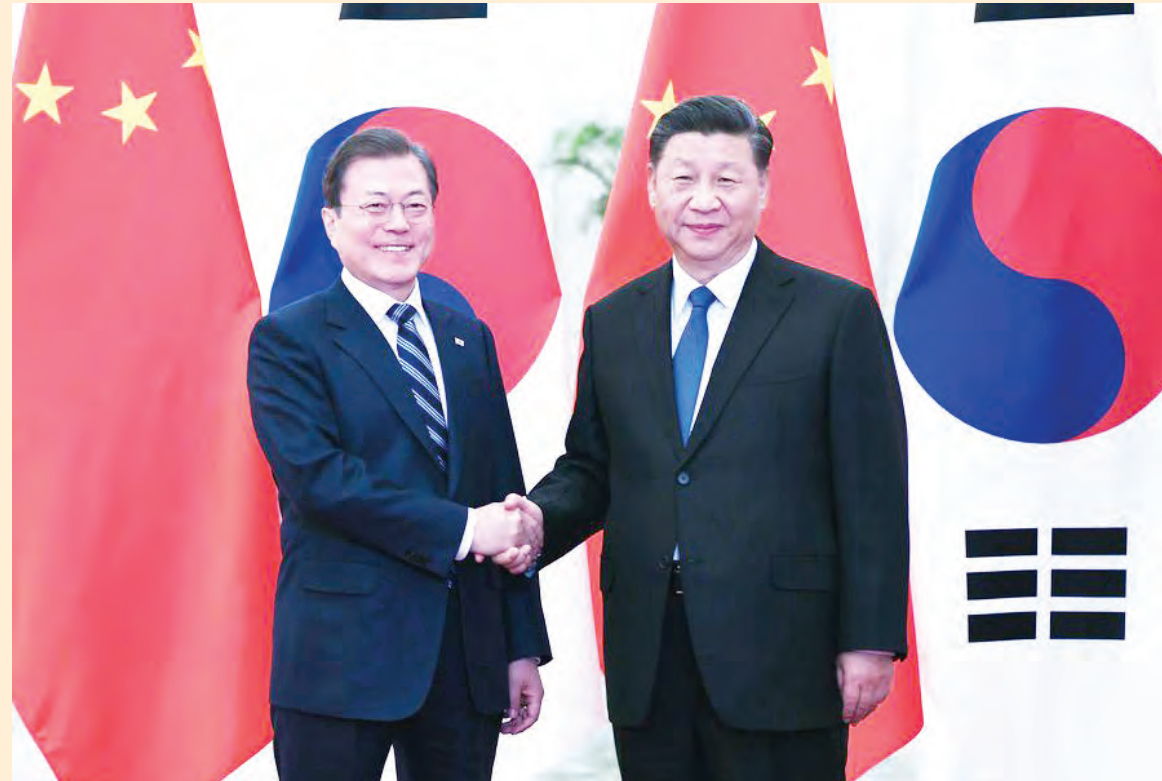
During the leaders' meeting, Li called for strengthening cooperation on innovation, environmental protection, as well as people-to-people exchanges. "We should enhance exchanges and pragmatic cooperation in such fields as health, aging, and climate change, and increase the sense of fulfillment and happiness of the people," he said.

A document, titled "Trilateral Cooperation Vision for the Next Decade," and another one on the "China-Japan-ROK+X" early achievement outcomes were released during the meeting.

"A trend for future cooperation is 'China-Japan-ROK+X', that is to say, the three countries will strengthen cooperation in other markets. For example, they can make use of their respective advantages and resources to promote connectivity along the Belt and Road," said Jiang Ruiping, former vice president of China Foreign Affairs University.

Japan and the ROK have considerable advantages in high-tech areas, including information and big data. Meanwhile, China boasts a huge market, as well as unique strengths in 5G and the Internet.

"We welcome enterprises from Japan and the ROK to seize opportunities of China's expanded opening-up and win more business opportunities, to better re-



Chinese President Xi Jinping meets with President of the Republic of Korea (ROK) Moon Jae-in at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, Dec. 23, 2019. (Xinhua)

alize mutual benefit," Li said at a business summit.

SAFEGUARDING MULTILATERALISM, FREE TRADE

Apart from bilateral and trilateral pragmatic cooperation, regional and global issues were also on the agenda of the leaders' meeting.

Li said the three countries should jointly safeguard regional peace and stability, adding that the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the setting-up of a peace mechanism will be in

their common interests.

The three countries should continue to promote dialogue to score progress, properly handle reasonable concerns of all parties, and work for a political resolution of the Korean Peninsula issue to realize lasting peace in the region, said Li. He called on the three sides to reinforce unity and jointly cope with common challenges.

The three countries should "carry forward the spirit of sharing weal and woe, and firmly support multilateralism and free trade," said Li. At a joint press briefing af-

ter the meeting, Moon and Abe expressed the readiness to lift trilateral cooperation to new heights, safeguard free trade and multilateralism, and play constructive roles in realizing the denuclearization of and lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Observers share the view that as the multilateral system is being threatened, and protectionism and unilateralism are on the rise, the cooperation among China, Japan and the ROK can play an exemplary role for the world.

Xinhua

Germany keeps its cool over US sanctions on Nord Stream 2

BERLIN

FOLLOWING a last-ditch effort by the United States last week to stop Nord Stream 2 through imposing sanctions against companies involved in the construction of the nearly finished gas pipeline, Germany has remained surprisingly calm and refrained from any direct counter-measures.

Although German Chancellor Angela Merkel was critical of the U.S. sanctions, she avoided any radical responses such as punitive measures on U.S. companies in return and is instead seeking to find a solution through negotiations.

"I see no other option than to hold talks, but very firm talks," Merkel said last week, noting "we are against extra-territorial sanctions."

With around 160 kilometers left, the pipeline is designed to transport natural gas from Russia to Germany through the Baltic Sea. Scheduled to start operation in 2020, the 1,230-kilometer-long pipeline could deliver 55 billion cubic meters of gas per year.

Following the U.S. sanctions, offshore service provider Allseas, a main contractor in laying the pipes for Nord Stream 2 which is headquartered in Switzerland, immediately announced to suspend its Nord Stream 2 pipelay activities.

Last year, ahead of a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summit, U.S. President Donald Trump called Germany a "captive of Russia" for obtaining 60 to 70 percent of its energy and a new pipeline from Russia which was "very inappropriate" and a "very bad thing for NATO."

Just before the U.S. sanctions were imposed, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas emphasized that "Europe's energy policy is decided in Europe, not in the United States," adding "We reject external interference."

Peter Beyer, coordinator of transatlantic cooperation in German federal government, warned that an escalation spiral with countermeasures would not make sense, but stressed that the United States also had an interest to develop their own liquid gas market in Europe.

However, liquid natural gas - mostly fracked - from the U.S. is considerably more expensive and is highly controversial in Germany.

"Fracking technology can lead to contamination of the groundwater," the German Environment Agency (UBA) found. Environmentalists are very concerned about the

China will continue steady growth in 2020 and beyond, says expert

CHINA, a country with a population of 1.4 billion, a substantial domestic market, an abundance of raw materials and land, full of qualified human resources, can strive under any circumstances.

China has witnessed an average GDP growth of 10 percent for the last four decades. The miraculous developments made by China are the result of reforms introduced by the visionary leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the continuation of policies, further opening up, and flexibility of policies.

Since China surpassed the Japanese economy in 2010, the country entered into the global spotlight. The US and EU began to see China as a threat. Especially in the last couple of years, anti-China sentiment has become more visible. The China-US trade war, instigation of unrest in Hong Kong, human rights issues, and Huawei; all are measures to contain China.

Despite all challenges, the Chinese economy has grown steadily, achieving GDP growth of 6.6 percent last year. It expects similar growth in the coming years.

China will stick to its policy of further opening-up to the rest of the world and pursue its current policy of globalization and trade liberalization to a higher degree. China will focus more on domestic issues like good governance, justice and legal systems, citizen welfare, and better fiscal policies for its domestic market.

China is a mature country and understands its global responsibilities. China will maintain its contribution to the global economy, trade, peace, stability, and prosperity. As of the end of October 2019, China had signed 197 Belt and Road Cooperation Agreements with 137 countries and 30 international organizations. Based on the benefits of BRI, it is expected that many new countries will join BRI in the coming year.

In 2020 and beyond, the Chinese agenda for globalization, multilateralism, and harmonization of culture and civilization, a community of shared future for humankind, will be even more vigorous.

People's Daily

China's invention patent applications amount to nearly 1.24 million in first 11 months

CHINA had seen 1.238 million invention patent applications and granted 417,000 invention patents from January to November this year. By the end of November, 2019, China's invention patent ownership per 10,000 of population reached 13.2, achieving the target number of 12 set in the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020) of the country ahead of schedule.

64.7 percent of the invention patent applications in China during the first 11 months this year were filed by enterprises, signaling stronger dynamism for innovation and creation.

"Companies are at the forefront of market, and therefore can always accurately sense the newest demand for technology," said Jin Chao, vice president of R&D at CyberInsight Technology Co., Ltd., a solution provider of in-

dustrial artificial intelligence (AI).

The company has filed 26 invention patent applications this year, covering such frontier fields as the Internet of Things (IoT), edge computing, and AI.

It has built more than 20 fault recognition models for the prediction of bearing faults of high-speed trains in its cooperation with China's rolling-stock maker CRRC Qingdao Sifang Co., Ltd. The accuracy of these models has exceeded 90 percent, significantly reducing maintenance cost of high-speed trains.

From January to November, service inventions accounted for as much as 91.4 percent of all the invention patent applications filed in China, indicating that the country's patent applications are moving from quantity increase to a new period featuring structural op-

timization and quality improvement.

"There was not much increase in the number of projects we've undertaken this year, but the quality of the projects was significantly higher," said Wang Xiaoxing, an executive of a patent agency based in Beijing.

According to Wang, many innovators are actively adjusting their applications in accordance with relevant requirements and regulations this year, which has greatly improved the quality of the applications.

Many applicants attach greater importance to the value that will come along after their technologies are protected, said Wang, disclosing that many people also seek special guidance and arrangements on patents.

During the Jan.-Oct. period, China had witnessed 5,163 newly added pat-

ent pledge financing projects, with the amount pledged reaching 93.7 billion yuan (about \$13.36 billion), up 27 and 31 percent respectively from a year ago.

"Our company is one of the enterprises that adopt the asset-light strategy. We don't own the house or the equipment, and we got a 3-million-yuan loan with only a patent," said Ma Xiufen, chairwoman of the board of Qingdao Robotfish Marine Technology Co., Ltd., referring to the patent of an underwater propulsor the company developed.

"Core technologies are generating more value for us," said Zhang Weibin, chief scientist of VoiceAI Technologies Co., Ltd., a Chinese voiceprint recognition and speech recognition solutions provider.

Thanks to a series of high-value patents in the field of voiceprint recognition, the technology startup that was established less than 3 years ago, has successfully received subsidy tailored for tech firms from local government and put its new technologies into application.

Foreign companies had filed more than 140,000 invention patent applications in China in the first 11 months of 2019, representing steady growth.

More and more multinational enterprises have chosen to file patent applications in China, showing international community's increasing confidence in China's protection of intellectual property rights.

"Microsoft has spent a lot of efforts in research and development since it entered Chinese market in 1992. This

year, it has applied for as many as 823 patents in China. The country has become an important site for the global research and development endeavors of Microsoft," noted a relevant executive of Microsoft Greater China Region.

Patent is a bond linking technological achievements and real productivity, said an official of China's National Intellectual Property Administration, explaining that the increase in patent applications signifies greater driving force for development.

Looking into the future, it's believed that China's ever-growing scientific and technological strength and innovative dynamism will serve as important drivers to boost high-quality economic development of the country.

People's Daily

US Legislation over Hong Kong is purely provocative and Interference in China's internal affairs

By George Muntu

IT is indisputable that the protests in Hong Kong are no longer a protest but a riot and chaos fueled by foreign interventions, especially by the UK and the US. The two countries have been at the forefront of supporting the protesters, regardless the violence and crimes they have committed.

The protests started when the government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) discussed the amendments to the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Ordinance this June.

The decision to amend the above two ordinances was made after a Hong Kong resident, Chan Tong-kai, was suspected of killing his pregnant girlfriend in Taiwan, and fleeing back to Hong Kong.

The purpose of amending the two ordinances is to allow the local government to cooperate with the mainland, Macao and Taiwan on extraditing criminal suspects and fugitives in individual cases through a special arrangement.

The protesters started marching in peace but as the days went on, a handful of radical protesters turned the protests into riots, causing massive damages to government property

and public facilities, injury of police officers and chaos in various corners of the city. In addition, a small group of hooligans burned the Chinese national flag and hoisted the English or American flags. Despite the violent nature of the protests, the then UK foreign secretary Jeremy Hunt expressed his "unwavering" support to the protesters.

Even after the Hong Kong Government declared to withdraw the controversial extradition bill on 4 September, the protesters continued to commit crimes.

On 6 November, Mr He Junyao, a member of the Hong Kong Legislative Council, was stabbed by a man disguised as his supporter with a sharp blade. Five days later, a 57-year-old man was doused with flammable liquid and set on fire by masked rioters who had vandalized an MTR station in Hong Kong.

What is more disturbing is the fact that, as the unrest continues, Western countries, especially the UK and the US, continued to lend their support to the protesters, while at the same time demanding the Chinese central government to give more autonomy. Indeed, this is deliberate aggression, interference in China's internal affairs and a violation of the international law.



Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam

The signing of the legislation Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act of 2019 by US President Donald Trump on November 27 is a sparsely disguised effort to push Hong Kong closer to the abyss of chaos, and the latest proof of the willingness of the US to undermine China's sovereignty. This is an abrasive intrusion into China's domestic affairs and a provocation against all Chinese people, including Hong Kong residents, by adopting a domestic law to interfere in Hong Kong affairs.

By endorsing violent crimes and going against the international law, the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act of 2019 is nothing but a hypocritical effort to intervene in China's

domestic affairs in the name of promoting human rights and democracy in Hong Kong.

The Act ignores the fact that Hong Kong is part of China, saying that "the human rights of the people of Hong Kong are of great importance to the United States ..." and that "Hong Kong must remain sufficiently autonomous from the People's Republic of China..."

It should be noted that before the handover in 1997, the Hong Kong people were second-class citizens suffering unequal treatment by the British colonial government, and the universal suffrage demanded by the protesters in Hong Kong was never granted by the British before.

It was only after the handover and

thanks to the Chinese central government that Hong Kong could begin to hope that it would get to elect its chief executive through universal suffrage within two decades.

However, it seems that some Hong Kong people have forgotten that period of history. Due to their ignorance, foreign nations have got the opportunity to intervene in Hong Kong affairs.

The passed US Bill aims at making use of the ignorant youth in Hong Kong to curtail Chinese central government's influence in the special administrative region. However, any attempt to encourage Hong Kong's independence is doomed to fail because China has the firm will and the adequate capacity to prevent that from happening.

The international community, especially the developing countries, should rebuke the behaviours of the UK and the US because their actions have violated one of the basic international norms, i.e. non-interference in other countries' internal affairs.

Should we allow such deeds to occur unopposed, the Western powers would take more actions to infringe on other countries' sovereignty and territorial integrity.

** The author is an independent writer based in Dar es Salaam.*

Zambia revenue agency intercepts 10 trucks with smuggled copper ore

LUSAKA

AUTHORITIES in Zambia have intercepted 10 trucks laden with copper ore which was supposed to have been smuggled into the country without paying any taxes, the country's revenue collection agency said on Tuesday.

The trucks were intercepted at a border entry as they attempted to enter Zambia from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) from where the copper was smuggled from.

Topsy Sikalinda, Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA) corporate communication manager, said the smugglers, who were foreigners, presented fake customs documents at the border but alert officers after verification, noticed the anomalies and impounded the trucks.

"During the interception, the officers were threatened with guns, but since the operation was jointly conducted with other security wigs, all 10 trucks were intercepted and have since been issued with seizure notices," he said in a release.

He said the country was losing millions of money per month due to a drastic reduction in the importation of copper ores by importers because smugglers are now supplying them with the commodity.

Xinjiang scores victories in the war on poverty

By Shan Jie

IN the rural areas of Northwest China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, many used to suffer from the scourge of poverty. They lacked education, jobs, and access to technology to finance.

According to the poverty alleviation plan for the 13th Five-Year Plan period (2016-20), China is set to lift all out of poverty by 2020.

In the past year, the poverty reduction has been paired with favorable policies. Government departments and companies in Xinjiang and in other areas have set up working stations in villages, working hard to develop rural areas. The added bonus of the region's social stability is also becoming more apparent. Villagers in Xinjiang have gradually shaken off poverty.

Recently, the Global Times reporters visited some of the rural residents in Southern Xinjiang to see the changes in their life.



Maryam Abuli and Palhama Islam show the honey walnut they produced in a nut company in Wushi county, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. They have worked here for six months and together can earn 4,000 yuan a month. They shook off poverty this year and plan to buy a car next year.



Hunqiemu Wubulikasimu checks the tomato plants in a greenhouse in Kalakuti village, Keping county, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Her family took charge of the greenhouse this year. Employees from the Sinopec Northwest Company who came to the village taught her how to use the best harvesting technology, which has boosted her confidence. (Photos by Shan Jie from Global Times)

Outlook positive as Hambantota Port grows with opportunities for Sri Lankans

COLOMBO

IT was early in the morning as 25-year-old Harshana Tennakoon zipped across southern Sri Lanka's Hambantota International Port (HIP) in his hatchback to welcome the first roll-on/roll-off (RORO) ship of the day.

The massive vessel, carrying automobiles manufactured in India and destined for markets as far off as South Africa and Cuba, dwarfed Tennakoon.

Armed with a walkie talkie, hardhat and reflective vest, the young duty manager-in-training must oversee a team of around 90, who would spend the next few hours discharging the ship's load and preparing it for the next leg of the journey.

It was a painstaking process, requiring precision, coordination and collective effort. But under Tennakoon's supervision, the team worked like a well-oiled machine, able to discharge over 120 vehicles in an hour.

This is Tennakoon's first job, of which his parents are quite proud. He joined the HIP in December 2017, shortly after the management of the port was transferred to the Hambantota International Ports Group (HIPG), a joint-venture between the China Merchants Port Holdings (CMPH) and the Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA).

For Tennakoon, it is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. "I love this job," he told Xinhua in mid-December when the Hambantota Port was celebrating the second anniversary since its operations were given on a 99-year lease to the HIPG. "My aim is to go as far as I can

in this industry," he said.

CATALYST FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

A master plan for developing industries around the Hambantota Port, undertaken by an international group of companies, has almost been finalized, said Ravindra Jayawickrema, CEO of HIPG subsidiary Hambantota International Port Services.

Once the plan is finalized, the port operator HIPG will go to the market to attract investors to set up export-oriented manufacturing to take advantage of the Hambantota Port's free port policy and strategic access to an international shipping lane in the Indian Ocean located just 10 nautical miles (18.5 km) south of the port.

Along with industrial development, the port operator hoped to catch the container overflow from the congested Port of Colombo and develop Hambantota's bunkering and fuel supply operations once the tank farm comes into operation early next year, Jayawickrema said.

"Sri Lanka lies between Singapore and Fujairah, two of the largest fuel depots in the world that supply over 60 million tonnes of fuel per year. We are trying to tap into that market to a certain extent," he said.

Pradeep Kumara, a security guard at the Hambantota Port, watched cautiously as a RORO ship began the berthing process, assisted by tugboats and ground staff.

He came to work in a relatively underdeveloped Hambantota just four months ago after quitting a job in the capital Colombo. "Thanks to the port I now have



Aerial photo taken on Dec. 14, 2019 shows a roll-on/roll-off (RORO) ship and RORO yard at the Hambantota International Port in Sri Lanka. (Xinhua)

a good income in my hometown and I can stay with my family," said Kumara.

Kumara's story is not unusual at the Hambantota Port. According to HIPG General Manager Human Resources Jeevan Premasara, 97 percent of the staff at the port are Sri Lankans, and 67 percent are recruited from Hambantota and surrounding districts.

The HIPG has been working closely with Sri Lanka's National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA) to upgrade facilities and provide training in port operations.

HIPG CEO Ray Ren, who worked at CMPH flagship port in south China's Shenzhen for 10 years before coming to Sri Lanka, said the company is

committed to providing training and skill transfer to local young workers.

"There are a lot of talents and potential in Sri Lanka," he said.

GIVING BACK TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Thero Karunasena, a monk from the Samudraramaya Buddhist temple located just a few meters away from the entrance of Hambantota Port, rested under a sacred bodhi tree after conducting weekly religious classes for some 100 local children.

"Two years ago, I received less than half that number of students, but things changed when the HIPG began providing us with free breakfasts for children," Karunasena said.

Hambantota used to be one of the poorest regions in Sri Lanka, with economic activity restricted to artisanal fishing and seasonal agriculture. But the emergence of Hambantota Port has provided many opportunities for local entrepreneurs. "In the past there were no jobs and no infrastructure, but today locals employed at the port benefit from a steady monthly income and their hard earned money circulates in the village," said Karunasena.

Thanks to automobile imports from the port, vehicle repair shops have mushroomed in the area. In Ambalantota, the closest town to the port, locals supplement their income by renting rooms to workers and

starting restaurants to feed new visitors.

In October, the China Merchants Charity Foundation donated a two-story building equipped with a computer room, music room and library to the Tissapura Junior School in Weerawila.

The project was the result of consultations between school principal A. H. Weerakeerthi and HIPG CEO Ren.

A young girl named Nethma declared the inauguration of the building as her "happiest day", saying that the new environment would make her studies more productive.

The company has donated supplies to locals displaced by heavy floods and supported local healthcare initiatives, including paying for free cataract surgeries. It also offered financial assistance to beach clean-ups and elephant and turtle conservation.

"At first people were misled by rumors about losing their land, but now their attitude is more positive. They see how this port benefits them and their children," Karunasena said, reflecting on HIPG's contribution to local communities since 2017.

"DEBT TRAP" HYPE DISMISSED

The Hambantota Port has witnessed remarkable growth since operations were leased to the HIPG and received steady support and praise from Sri Lankan leaders.

In December 2017 when the management was transferred to the HIPG, then Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said the

port fit in with Sri Lanka's own vision of "transforming into a hub in the Indian Ocean."

More recently, new Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa dismissed a "debt trap" hyped up by some Western media, saying that Sri Lanka was committed to strengthening ties with China for mutual benefit.

"We are very confident that Sri Lanka can very clearly repay the loans for the Hambantota Port and other development projects. Today, the economy has collapsed but when we rebuild it, paying back loans won't be a question," Rajapaksa told Xinhua in an interview earlier this month.

Sri Lanka's debt problem was not created by China, said Local scholar Dushni Weerakoon and Sisira Jayasuriya, professor of economics at Australia's Monash University.

Chinese loans comprise merely about 10 percent of Sri Lanka's total foreign debt, they said in a co-authored article. As for the 99-year lease of the Hambantota Port, Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa clarified on Thursday that he would not renegotiate the commercial agreement of the project that had already been signed.

According to data gathered by the HIPG, the port has seen a 60-percent growth in volumes from 2018 and a threefold increase from 2017.

For CEO of HIPG subsidiary Hambantota International Port Services Jayawickrema, the outlook is positive.

"We see the future to be very promising," he said.



Faf du Plessis

South Africa skipper looks for fresh start

PRETORIA

THE overhaul of South Africa's coaching structure has given the team a major boost as they get ready to take on England in a four-test series which begins on Thursday, captain Faf du Plessis said.

Former test captain Graeme Smith was appointed director of cricket, Mark Boucher coach and Jacques Kallis as batting consultant in the weeks leading up to the series after the side lost their last five tests.

"The last six months has felt like a lot of weight on my shoulders because I could see so many things happening off the field that weren't right," Du Plessis told reporters on Tuesday.

"That's never an excuse for the cricket that we are playing but for me now it has been a breath of fresh air to have these guys back.

"Now you sit and ponder, 'why have these guys not been here for the last 10 years?' It's so important to have people like that in an international dressing room and if you look around in international cricket, (other) teams have got that.

"I use the Australian cricket team as an example. When we played against them, they had (Justin) Langer, (Ricky) Ponting, (Steve) Waugh. Then you sit in our dressing room and go, 'we need that, we want that'.

But even with experienced heads now to guide them, South Africa have modest ambitions in the short term, Du Plessis said.

"We are at an infant stage as a test team and the plan is to get back to No. 1 but that will take some time.

"We do need to mature, we've got a year and a half of the world test championship. The plan is get out there and play a little bit better every time we go out."

Losing at home to Sri Lanka this year and then being trounced in India had knocked South Africa's confidence.

"We definitely need to start well, there's no

doubt about it. We've been training very well and all the things that have been happening off the field have been good," Du Plessis added.

"But we need to make sure we put our peg in the ground for this series and almost get the belief back through performances."

Meanwhile, Ben Stokes returned to practice with England on Wednesday after the condition of his critically ill father improved, but three others missed out as illness continue to plague the tourists, 24 hours ahead of the first test against South Africa at Centurion.

Stokes spent Tuesday at the bedside of father Ged, who was hospitalised the day before due to a "serious illness".

"He remains in intensive care, but has responded positively to treatment and is now in a stable condition," the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said in a statement.

"The Stokes family wishes to thank everyone for their support and in particular the medical practitioners in South Africa for their care of Ged."

Christmas morning practice went ahead, however, without Jack Leach, Ollie Pope and Chris Woakes, who are battling the flu bug that has hampered the tourists since their arrival in South Africa 11 days ago.

But an ECB spokesman said none of the trio had been ruled out of the first test of the four-match series with South Africa, which starts in Centurion near Pretoria on Thursday.

But it will certainly delay England's team selection for the opening test.

The flu bug hit England particularly hard soon after their arrival with pacemen Jofra Archer and Stuart Broad missing the two warm-up games and now racing to be fit to play on Thursday.

"It's quite frustrating," England skipper Joe Root said on Tuesday. "We have to handle it. We'll have to wait and see. We'll make a very late call on our side."

REUTERS



This Feb. 26, 2017 file photo shows Barry Jenkins and the cast and crew of "Moonlight" accepting the award for best picture at the Oscars in Los Angeles. (AP)

Pop culture in 2010s marked gains in diversity, inclusion

NEW YORK

WHEN the family-friendly Hallmark Channel recently pulled, under pressure from a conservative group, a set of ads featuring a kiss between two happy brides at the altar, backlash was swift – to say the least.

Within hours, stars like Ellen DeGeneres and William Shatner were tweeting in protest to their many followers, and LGBT advocates were mobilizing a boycott via social media. This was on Saturday; by Sunday evening, Hallmark had reversed its decision, and apologized for what it acknowledged as a mistake.

Whatever it says about corporate missteps, the episode also says something about how our popular culture has changed in a decade, with diversity and inclusion concerns taking center stage, says Sarah Kate Ellis, president of GLAAD, which advocates for LGBT people in Hollywood and played a key role in Hallmark's reversal.

"This decade has been about diversity and inclusion – at least the starting of the conversation," says Ellis. "Communities who have been left out of the seats at the table for decades and decades are finally starting to find their voice, and their footing." And a major element, obviously, is the power of social media: "It enables us to connect with each other, find each other and organize," Ellis says.

Speaking of viral protests, this was also the decade of #OscarsSoWhite, the hashtag launched by activist April Reign in 2015 when none of the 20 acting nominees were actors of color. Incredibly, the same thing happened in 2016, forcing the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to launch a major membership overhaul aimed at diversifying its overwhelmingly

white, male, older ranks.

The following year, "Moonlight," about the coming-of-age of a gay black man, won best picture (after "La La Land" was ... oh, never mind) and the winner list was more diverse. But true racial diversity in entertainment remains an elusive goal, despite slow progress.

"Things have certainly improved," says Gil Robertson, president of the African American Film Critics Association. "Ten years ago, you didn't have an Ava DuVernay, a Jordan Peele, a Shonda Rhimes, a Kerry Washington," he says. "And my God, you couldn't have even imagined 'Pose,'" he says, referring to the Ryan Murphy TV series set in the '80s ballroom culture with the biggest LGBTQ cast ever assembled for a scripted show.

"The door has opened," he says, adding that inroads have also been made for Asian American actors and stories, but less so for Latinos. "Has the industry reached the place that we want it to be? No, but things have gotten better."

In her speech at the 2018 Oscars, soon after the Harvey Weinstein scandal launched the #MeToo era, Frances McDormand urged women to demand an "inclusion rider" in contracts to help achieve gender parity. Almost two years later, evidence of progress for women in front of and behind the camera is slow but steady. The entry of streaming giants like Netflix has accelerated the pace of change, says Stacy L. Smith, director of the USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative at the University of Southern California.

An example: last year, 39 of the top 100 Hollywood films were led or co-led by a female character, Smith says; in 2007 the number was 20, so it has

essentially doubled in a decade. And there is progress behind the camera, too. "We're really seeing changes, slow but real significant movement in some of these institutions," she says.

Progress has also been seen in the music business, in diversity of film critics, and in scripted TV, she says. And yet there are areas sorely lacking: representation of female characters over 40 in films, for example, and women of color. And trans women characters are rarely seen in major films.

"Every group should be able to see themselves onscreen," Smith says.

A LONG WAY SINCE "ELLEN"

It's hard to imagine that back in 1997 when DeGeneres came out on her TV show, the words "I'm gay" were so groundbreaking. "We were all but non-existent in popular culture a few decades ago, and now we're very much grounded in popular culture," says Ellis, of GLAAD.

While no milestone this past decade matches the import of that "Ellen" moment, the decade began with the launch – actually in 2009 – of both "Glee," which put a spotlight on LGBT youth, and "Modern Family," which introduced the couple of Mitchell and Cam, two dads who adopt a Vietnamese daughter. "These were really big moments," Ellis says. Another was last year's best-actor Emmy for Billy Porter for "Pose," the first openly gay black man to win the award.

Inroads also were made in children's programming. "Doc McStuffins," the Disney Junior children's cartoon, featured a family led by an interracial, lesbian couple, and the Disney Channel kids' show "Andi Mack" introduced a key gay character.

And it was only a quick glance between male characters, but "Beauty and the Beast" took the

plunge and actually showed a gay moment. "It's a step in the right direction," says Ellis. Can Elsa's (hoped-for) coming-out in the "Frozen" franchise be far behind?

Caitlyn Jenner's revelation in 2015 that she was transgender helped shine a light on that community, and popular shows like "Orange is the New Black," "Transparent" and "Pose" featured transgender characters. TV, though, has been far ahead of film. "The top Hollywood studios have always been a decade behind," says Ellis. The reasons, she says: a years-long development pipeline for movies, the huge budgets of big films, and Hollywood's fear of breaking its own comfortable formulas. But things are slowly moving.

America is increasingly diverse. Movie audiences are increasingly diverse. And diverse movies make money, because people like to see stories and characters that reflect their own lives.

Despite all this, says Darnell Hunt, dean of social sciences at UCLA and an author of the annual Hollywood Diversity Report, progress toward racial diversity in the industry has been frustratingly slow, and lagging behind TV.

In their most recent report, issued in early 2019, the authors write that in Hollywood, "people of color remained underrepresented on every industry employment front in 2016-17."

Looking at the decade as a whole, Hunt notes in an interview that while TV has registered some "notable progress" both in front of and, to a lesser extent, behind the camera, there hasn't been much progress in terms of people of color in executive suites, which are still dominated by white men. And in movies, the situation is worse.

AP

Major shots and the ones that might not stand out



FILE - Tiger Woods hits on the 12th hole during the final round for the Masters golf tournament, Sunday, April 14, 2019, in Augusta, Ga. Woods leaned on experience over shots like this to help him win the Masters for the fifth time. (AP Photo/)

BY DOUG FERGUSON

BROOKS Koepka and Shane Lowry have a clear memory of one shot from the final round of the majors they won that not many would remember, and for good reason.

They each made bogey. Tiger Woods was two holes away from becoming a Masters champion again, and all he could think about was a shot from 14 years ago. The most memorable shot for Gary Woodland at Pebble Beach? One of them won him the U.S. Open. The other is what fans will remember more.

The four major champions shared what they consider the most memorable shot from their victory, along with a shot that was significant to them even if it wasn't shown on TV.

MASTERS
Woods took the lead for the first time with a two-putt birdie on the par-5 15th at Augusta National, but it was the next hole where he effectively delivered the game winner. He hit 8-iron with just the right distance to the right spot on the green, and he

watched the slope send it toward the hole to 3 feet below the cup for birdie and a two-shot lead.

"Almost hooped it," he said.

Game over, right? Think back to that chip-in on the 16th in 2005 that went up the slope, down the slope and paused at the edge before it tumbled in for birdie and a two-shot lead. Woods remembered it well. He followed with a couple of wild tee shots, made two bogeys and was forced into a playoff.

"That was one of the reasons why I was so focused and I didn't celebrate after I made that birdie on 16," Woods said. "Because I've been in that situation before."

And that's why his drive on the 17th this year was so special, even if it didn't look that way.

"That was the best shot I hit all year," Woods said. "Considering the moment, I needed to pipe that ball. I did. I gave it a little more than normal and hit a flat fade. And I think that was what allowed me to go on to win."

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP

Koepka said that when he gets to the end of his career, he will look back on the opening two days at Bethpage Black as "the best two rounds of my career."

Trouble is, the strongest memories are the last ones. And at times on Sunday, it was hard to look.

Six shots clear with eight holes to play, Koepka nearly lost the lead. And not even a two-shot lead on the 18th was safe when he pulled his drive into the native area. He wasn't in the clear until he managed to hack that out into the fairway. That shot is what Koepka considers as memorable as any he hit on the back nine.

"The one thing I don't think anyone realizes is that second shot on 18 out of the mess was an awkward lie," Koepka said, adding that caddie Ricky Elliott was "super worried" about it. "It was either going in the bunker or through the fairway into the rough. Me and Ricky talked about it and thought it was better to leave it in the bunker. I thought it was a good shot to get it in the fairway."

He made par from there to win by

two.

It was a bogey he kept from being worse that was most meaningful to him.

Right after his final birdie on No. 10 for a six-shot lead, Koepka began his run of four straight bogeys starting at No. 11. He drove left into a bunker, blasted out and then hit a poor wedge that came off the green 50 feet away. He knocked that 8 feet by the hole and had that left for bogey.

"You drop two shots and everyone goes, 'Oooh.' A bogey, you wouldn't think it," he said. "That was a big putt there."

U.S. OPEN

Woodland still doesn't know what the public will consider his signature shot at Pebble Beach – the 3-wood from 263 yards on the par-5 14th that set up birdie for a two-shot lead, or the lob wedge across the 17th green to save par.

"People on the outside will talk about the 17th," he said. "The shot on 14 won me the golf tournament."

He had the same shot on the 17th in the opening round and made a

10-footer to save par, but that wasn't on TV and it was only Thursday. It felt like the whole world was watching on Sunday.

"I've hit a lot of chip shots off greens, I just never hit one that far," Woodland said. "My whole idea was don't chunk it or blade. If you chunk it, you're screwed. Blade it, I could blade it in the ocean. That chip shot will go down as the best chip I've ever hit. And the swing on 14 will go down as the best swing I've ever made."

Woodland, though, goes back to early Saturday for what he feels was a shot equally important. He drove left into a fairway bunker on No. 2, leaving him an awkward lie with the ball above his feet.

"The best swing I made all week," he said of his 8-iron into 10 feet. "So much could have happened there. If I made bogey or double bogey there, I lose my lead early, who knows what happens the rest of the week? That shot gave me confidence that I could hit any shot under pressure."

AP

Pogba hailed as 'best midfielder in the world' by Solksjaer

LONDON

PAUL Pogba has been hailed as the "best midfielder in the world" by Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solksjaer after the Frenchman returned from a long injury lay-off.

The World Cup winner was in action for United for the first time since late September as a substitute in their chastening 2-0 defeat at Watford on Sunday.

He could be in the starting team against Newcastle on Thursday as Solksjaer desperately seeks the creativity the team needs to break down stubborn opposition defenses.

"Let's see how he reacts to this, how he feels," said Solksjaer. "He did really well when he came on. Big, big plus and it might be that we do get him in from the start."

Pogba, who had only played twice since the end of August due to an ankle injury, was introduced on Sunday with United already trailing by two goals and went close to scoring during a late attacking flurry from the visitors.

"He can play anywhere, he can play the whole midfield," said Solksjaer.

"He's a box-to-box midfielder. He can drop deep, get it, play long passes. He can get it higher up and combine like he did today."

"That's the beauty of having Paul, because he is the best all-round midfielder in the world," added the United boss, who has

said the 26-year-old will not be leaving in the January transfer window despite links with Real Madrid.

- Reaction -

Solksjaer said he was looking for a reaction from his players against Newcastle after United again failed to turn dominance of possession into a positive result at Watford.

"One of the good things about the team this year, we have reacted after bad results," he said.

"We haven't kept the consistency as we would have liked the other way but we've never gone on a big (bad) run like we did towards the end of last season so there will be a reaction, definitely."

United are struggling in eighth place in the Premier League, seven points behind fourth-placed Chelsea despite recent morale-boosting wins against Tottenham and Manchester City.

Solksjaer admitted progress had been slower than expected but said he was focused on developing a team that could dominate and break sides down.

"It's taken Liverpool a few years to get to that stage and we need to keep on building because that's what we want to get to," he said.

"Yes, we're good at counter-attacking. Yes, we've got pace and fast players. We should always keep that because that's in our tradition. Now we need to be better at breaking lower blocks."

AFP

Arteta's lack of experience 'doesn't mean anything' to Bournemouth's Howe

LONDON

BOURNEMOUTH boss Eddie Howe has played down the importance of managerial experience ahead of Thursday's Premier League game against Arsenal, who will play their first match under newly appointed head coach Mikel Arteta.

Arteta, 37, was appointed Unai Emery's successor last week and the former Arsenal midfielder comes into the role having spent the last three years as Pep Guardiola's assistant at defending champions Manchester City.

Former Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger had said before Arteta's appointment that he had "no experience" as a manager and would need help but Howe, who was named Bournemouth's permanent manager at the age of 31 in 2009, begs to differ.

"It doesn't mean anything," Howe, 42, told reporters when asked about the advantage he

had over Spaniard Arteta. "It's not about me and Mikel, it's about the players, how we implement what we do against Arsenal."

Howe, who had a short stint at Burnley before returning to Bournemouth in 2012, has already managed more than 500 matches in his career.

"The experience side of it - as I found when I first came into the job when I was coming up against managers who had had all sorts of games - the game is there to win, regardless of how many games you've got behind you," Howe said.

"He's taking over a fantastic club with great players and he'll have his own ideas and philosophies, built up over a number of years of how he wants his team to play."

Bournemouth, who are 14th, can move within a point of 11th-placed Arsenal with a home victory while the Gunners are looking for a first win in three matches.

REUTERS

Lampard defends Rudiger after Mourinho criticism

LONDON

CHELSEA boss Frank Lampard has defended Antonio Rudiger's integrity following criticism from Jose Mourinho for his role in Son Heung-Min's red card during the Blues' 2-0 win at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium on Sunday.

Tottenham forward Son was sent off after kicking out at Rudiger following a VAR check. After the match, Spurs boss Mourinho had suggested Rudiger should "stand up and play."

In the same game, Rudiger had been the victim of alleged racist abuse from someone in the crowd and Lampard said he was unhappy for the Germany international's integrity to be put into question.

"With Toni, in this incident when he's having to post after the game about something we know is a huge deal [racism], I think to question his integrity in that time is disappointing for sure," he said in a news conference ahead of Chelsea's Boxing Day clash with South-

ampton.

"Pretty universally, certainly what I heard in the commentary and the post-match reflection was that the Son incident was a red card.

"It wasn't brutal but it was instinctive that warrants a red card in the modern day. It was pretty clear that was the case. I wouldn't question Toni's integrity on that. So I do defend Toni firmly on it."

Meanwhile, Lampard said club captain Cesar Azpilicueta suffered a knock during the win over Tottenham.

"Azpilicueta had a small issue at the end of the game, hence he came off when he never comes off," he added. "We need to check that one this morning."

"Other than that, we're pretty much where we are, but there were some bumps and bruises so there's nothing clear. We'll see."

(Agencies)

Vardy dilemma for Leicester as champions-elect Liverpool lie in wait

LONDON

LEICESTER City face runaway Premier League leaders Liverpool on Boxing Day knowing their own title hopes are very much in the balance.

Thursday's match will see the second-placed Foxes, the shock 2015/16 champions, kick off 10 points adrift of Liverpool, who will arrive in the East Midlands fresh from winning a maiden Club World Cup title following a 1-0 victory over Brazilian side Flamengo in Qatar.

One of the more remarkable statistics in English football is that it is nearly 30 years since Liverpool were last crowned domestic champions in what was then the First Division.

But Premier League silverware is now in sight following a successful 2019 that has also seen Liverpool take the Champions League and UEFA Super Cup trophies back to Anfield as well as the Club World Cup.

One of the enduring peculiarities of the English game that has not changed, however, is the packed programme of matches that take place during the Christmas and New Year holiday period.

The congested schedule is again causing headaches for managers, with Foxes boss Brendan Rodgers saying the fixture list is a "nonsense".

Leicester kick off against Liverpool at 2000 GMT on Thursday before they play West Ham on Saturday.

- 'Game about money now' -



Jamie Vardy

They then complete four games in 10 days with a trip to Newcastle on New Year's Day, before hosting Wigan in the FA Cup on January 4.

This presents Rodgers with a problem about how often to field Jamie Vardy, the league's leading scorer so far this season, given the striker is now aged 32.

"The game is about money now. You can't say it's about the welfare of players," insisted Rodgers, himself a former Liverpool manager who added that Vardy, for all he has scored 16 goals this term, had "no chance" of being involved throughout the festive

period.

This season sees the Premier League experimenting with a 'winter break' that will see all teams get a weekend off in February.

But that pales into insignificance compared to the Bundesliga's long-established winter break.

The German top-flight closes down for several weeks in December and January, with Rodgers saying the English break was a "let's pretend" version.

Liverpool will be without Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain after the midfielder

suffered an ankle injury against Flamengo as Jurgen Klopp's side, unbeaten in the Premier League this season, bid to go 13 points clear and all but end the title-race before by the halfway stage.

"If anyone wants to think things are over before they are over we cannot stop them doing that, though it is not important to us," said Liverpool manager Klopp.

"As a group we are pretty good at shutting the doors all around us to keep out the noise from outside," the German added.

Fourth-placed Chelsea, fresh from a 2-0 win away to Tottenham Hotspur marred by allegation of racist abuse, are at home to Southampton while Spurs will be without the suspended Son Heung-min for the visit of Brighton after the South Korean's red card against the Blues.

Mikel Arteta's reign as Arsenal manager starts away to Bournemouth, while new Everton boss Carlo Ancelotti is in charge at home to Burnley.

Newcastle, managed by former Old Trafford favou-

rite Steve Bruce, will look to complete a league double over Manchester United with both sides presently level on 25 points and looking to break into the top six.

Sheffield United face Watford, still bottom despite last week's win over Manchester United.

"We're halfway through this season and we knew this season was going to be a season of some ups and downs," said Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solksjaer.

Meanwhile reigning champions Manchester City are away to Wolves on Friday.

Fixtures (1500 GMT unless stated):

Thursday: Aston Villa v Norwich, Bournemouth v Arsenal, Chelsea v Southampton, Crystal Palace v West Ham, Everton v Burnley, Leicester v Liverpool (2000 GMT), Manchester United v Newcastle (1730 GMT), Sheffield United v Watford, Tottenham v Brighton (1230 GMT)

Friday: Wolves v Manchester City (1945 GMT)

AFP

Chelsea want to keep Willian faith against Saints

LONDON

WILLIAN's performance at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium last weekend highlighted just why Frank Lampard is keen to see the Brazilian's future at Chelsea resolved.

While much of the focus this season has been trained on the outstanding contribution of the youngsters in Blues manager Lampard's squad, Willian's performances on the right of a front three have been consistently excellent.

The winger appeared to have lost his way in recent seasons, particularly last term when he struggled for consistency under Maurizio Sarri and appeared in danger of leaving the London club.

This campaign has been different, though, and Lampard will hope the player can inspire a return to home form when Southampton visit Stamford Bridge on Thursday following Chelsea's impressive 2-0 defeat of Jose Mourinho's Spurs.

- Season of transition -

Willian was certainly the stand-out performer in a display Lampard admitted was probably his side's best of the season after a worrying run of form that had brought four defeats in the previous five Premier League games, included home losses to Bournemouth and West Ham.

There were always going to be frustrating periods for Lampard and his players in what is a season of transition for Chelsea, who are nevertheless now fourth in the Premier League.

The task of bedding in a number of graduates from the club's academy against the backdrop of the pre-season transfer embargo has inevitably presented challenges.

Willian, though, has maintained impressively high levels, appearing rejuvenated under the club's new manager.

Certainly Lampard appears to have found the key to drawing the best out of the 31-year-old whose work on the right has contributed to striker Tammy Abraham making such a significant impact in his breakthrough season at west London club Chelsea.

Willian's work ethic had been questioned previously, with his failure to track back and support his full-back at times highlighted last season.

This time around, there can be no doubt about his willingness to put in the hard yards.

And he has strengthened his hand in his contract negotiations with the club as he seeks a new deal that will keep him at Chelsea beyond the end



Willian

of this season.

Willian's existing deal runs out at the end of the current campaign, along with those of fellow thirtysomethings Pedro and Olivier Giroud.

With Chelsea's two-window transfer ban having been halved, leaving the club to bring in new recruits next month, Giroud is likely to leave in a bid to find the regular football he believes will boost his chances of being a member of hosts France's squad for Euro 2020.

Pedro has been reduced to a fringe player and is also expected to move on at the end of the season.

Willian, though, is a different matter and while Chelsea are notoriously reluctant to offer extended deals to players over the age of 30, the Brazilian could become an exception.

For his part, Lampard has made it clear he wants the South American to stay.

And while the manager has no intention of shifting his policy of promoting young players, he knows the value of experience.

"He's a very important member of the club and of course I want it to be done but obviously both sides have to be happy for that," said Lampard when asked last month about Willian's future.

Chelsea captain Cesar Azpilicueta faces a late fitness test following a hamstring problem sustained at Spurs.

Meanwhile the Saints, flirting with the relegation zone, could be without Shane Long for the whole of the busy Christmas programme because of a knee injury the striker suffered during last week's win at Aston Villa.

Meanwhile, Tottenham Hotspur have failed with their appeal against Son Heung-min's red card, the Football Association announced Tuesday.

The South Korean winger saw red in the second half of Spurs' 2-0 loss at home to Chelsea in a spiteful London derby on Sunday after VAR confirmed he had kicked out at Blues defender Antonio Rudiger after being fouled.

Tottenham launched an appeal but the FA upheld his red card, meaning Son will now serve a three-game ban ruling him out of the matches at home to Brighton on Boxing Day, and at Norwich and Southampton on Saturday and New Year's Day respectively.

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho was unhappy with Rudiger's reaction in the build-up to Son's dismissal, saying he should "stand up and play man" but Blues boss Frank Lampard defended his player's conduct on Tuesday.

"It (the sending off) wasn't brutal but it was instinctive that warrants a red card in the modern day," said former England midfielder Lampard, who played under Mourinho when the Portuguese was in charge of Chelsea.

Gwiji by David Chikoko



SPORT

Vardy dilemma for Leicester as champions-elect Liverpool lie in wait

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT, PAGE 19



Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB)'s Dodoma Branch's Head, Sosthenes Kibwengo (2nd L) graces the launch of Magereza Darts Club in the region recently. Looking on (R) is the region's Prisons Department's Head, Kenneth Mwambije. PHOTO: GUARDIAN CORRESPONDENT

Simba SC tightens grip on VPL top spot

Guardian Reporter

VODACOM Premier League leaders, Simba, have tightened their grip on the league's top position, cruising to 4-0 rout of Lipuli FC at the Uhuru Stadium in Dar es Salaam yesterday.

Lipuli FC keeper Agathon Mkwanda had gone for his first save of the duel on the sixth minute of the first period when he calmly collected Simba's Francis Kahata's poorly executed cross.

Simba went close on two occasions in the next few minutes and forced Mkwanda to make good saves.

Simba thereafter found Lipuli FC's back of the net on the 11th minute when Kahata slammed in a good assist from

the edge of Lipuli FC's area.

Lipuli FC grew in confidence after falling back, creating several good opportunities, which were nevertheless wasted.

Lipuli midfielder Mwyni Elias could only blast over from within Simba's area after he was set by team mate on the 26th minute.

Lipuli FC made full use of the wings to unlock Simba's defense, marshalled by central defenders Serge Wawa and Tyrone Santos.

Lipuli FC defenders David Kameta and Emmanuel Kichiba that were in great form pressed forward time and again and floated in dangerous crosses, which forced Simba defenders to defend solidly.

With Lipuli FC tightening their defense in the remain-

ing minute of the first period Simba reverted to stringing passes, building attacks from the back, the approach however failed to help them get the better of their opponents.

Simba led by the lone goal after the completion of the opening half. Medd Ka made it 2-0 for Simba on the 49th minute, running onto Serge Wawa's good pass and beating keeper Mkwanda with a low shot from close range.

Lipuli FC later opted to mark Simba strikers near the half-way line, making themselves prone to counter attacks.

Midfielder Hassan Dilunga netted Simba's third on the 56th minute, expertly sending Mkwanda the wrong way.

They won the spot kick as a Lipuli FC center back was

judged to have attempted to block the ball with his hand.

Dilunga notched Simba's fourth on the 64th min, outpacing Lipuli's Kichiba to confidently slam home with his right foot.

Much as they were trailing Simba by the huge margin Lipuli FC posed threat at times, stringing passes and creating opportunities which were which nevertheless wasted.

Lipuli FC later on made several substitutions seeking to get on the back of Simba's net, their efforts nevertheless ended in vain.

Lipuli FC had occupied the eighth spot in the league log going into yesterday's match, whereas Simba were enjoying the driver's seat prior to the game.



Simba players take part in drills at the outfit's ground in Dar es Salaam recently to shape up for the Vodacom Premier League assignments. PHOTO: COURTESY OF SIMBA SC

Bangladesh insist on neutral venue for Pakistan tests

DHAKA

BANGLADESH are ready to play Twenty20 Internationals in Pakistan next month but the test series must take place in a neutral venue, the chief executive of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), Nizamuddin Chowdhury, said.

Test cricket returned to Pakistan after a decade with a two-test series against Sri Lanka earlier this month.

Rawalpindi and Karachi hosted Pakistan's first tests on home soil since a militant attack on Sri Lanka's team bus in Lahore in 2009.

Enthusied by the smooth staging of the series, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has announced its team would no more play their 'home' matches abroad as has been the practice with test teams shunning the country citing safety concerns.

PCB's assertion notwithstanding, Bangladesh remain wary of touring Pakistan for a lengthy period, Chowdhury told the Daily Star newspaper.

"We stand firm on our ground. We only want to play T20Is in Pakistan," the BCB CEO was quoted as saying.

"The stakeholders related to the series do not want us to play longer-version cricket in Pakistan," Nizamuddin said.

Bangladesh are expected to play three Twenty20 Internationals in Lahore before a two-test series against Pakistan who completed a 1-0 series victory against Sri Lanka on Monday.

"Actually, we have no other option here. We can play the T20Is but if we are to play tests then it should be in a neutral venue," Nizamuddin added.

PCB chairman Ehsan Mani has hinted raising the matter with the governing International Cricket Council should Bangladesh refuse to play the tests in Pakistan.

"No one should be under any misapprehension as to where Pakistan's home Tests will take place," Mani told reporters on Monday.

"All of Pakistan's matches, against Bangladesh or anyone else, will take place in Pakistan.

"I still hope the BCB will reflect on the matter and accept there is no reason for them not to visit Pakistan."

REUTERS

THURSDAY
11:00 DADAZ (live)
12:00 Mpya
13:00 FUNGUKA
14:00 Bongo Hits
15:00 #HASHTAG
17:00 SILENT
17:55 Kuraso
18:00 eNews
18:30 Music
19:00 EATV SAA 1
19:30 MJIADALA
21:00 Bongo Hits

eastafrica RADIO
05:00 EA Breakfast
09:00 Supamix
12:00 Kipenga Xtra
13:00 Planet Bongo
16:00 EA Drive
20:00 Kipenga
21:00 The Cruise

88.1FM
DAR ES SALAAM

TODAY @ 18:00

eNews is your one stop show for everything entertainment. It covers celebrity interviews, gossip, what's hot, what's not, trending online and offline and what happened in history.

Kieron Pollard's West Indies mean business

PORT-AU-PRINCE

FOR those who don't follow the CPL, regional rivalries run deep there. So deep that there were reports of protests in Barbados when Trinidadian Kieron Pollard was appointed captain of Tridents ahead of locals like Dwayne Smith and Kirk Edwards in 2014. Pollard, however, swiftly turned from villain to hero, winning the hearts of Barbadians by marshalling them to their maiden CPL title. Now the captain of the West Indies white-ball sides, he might not have triggered a revolution, but there are signs that good things might be around the corner.

Pollard's proactive, in-your-face captaincy won approval from the then Tridents coach Desmond Haynes as well as Viv Richards. Pollard then turned into a T20 gun for hire and even had run-ins with the West Indies administration.

After leaving his imprint in various T20 and T10 leagues around the world and gaining a wealth of experience, Pollard has been appointed full-time limited-overs captain of West Indies, under a new management, in the lead-up to the side's T20 World Cup defence in Australia in 2020.

More recently, in CPL 2019, Pollard's aggressive approach worked for Trinbago Knight Riders and nearly put them in the final. Questions were asked of his captaincy throughout West Indies' tour of India, and although they had just one trophy to show for in four series against Afghanistan and India, there are enough signs that this is now Pollard's team.

In the T20I series against India, some sparks flew when seamer Keshav Williams and India captain Virat Kohli had a go at each other. Although Kohli had the last laugh, Williams showed that he's no pushover and made a statement that this side won't back down from a challenge.

Pollard provided a throwback to CPL 2014, when had he deployed twin short midwickers - a catcher and another at the edge of the circle - and unleashed Sheldon Cottrell's left-arm inswingers on Kohli in Hyderabad. The India captain struggled to get the ball off the square in the early exchanges and even flapped a couple of inswingers in the air, but wide of those two fielders. Kohli somehow saw off the incisive burst from Cottrell and ushered India home.

Pollard's plan, however, reaped rewards in the ODI series opener in Chennai. Cottrell was moving the ball around - both in the air and off the seam - at Chepauk, and most captains would have preferred having a slip in such a scenario, but Pollard went against the grain. He whisked slip to short mid-off and blocked Kohli's straight drive. Cottrell then shortened his length and dared Kohli to dink the ball down through vacant slip. Kohli took the bait and chopped on for 4. **AGENCIES**

Flexibles by David Chikoko

MIND YOU, I'M THE BIGGEST TAX PAYER AROUND

