



National Pg 3 Samia rues 2024 disasters, extolls all round progress



National Pg 4 TFS donates 96 corrugated roofing sheets for police post



National Pg 6 1,000 villagers in Malinyi relocate to other regions



Clerics raise fears of violence in elections

By Guardian Reporter

CONCERNS have been raised about potential violence during late this year's General Election, with top clerics citing disturbances seen during local government elections.

Bishop Christopher Ndizeye of the Kahama Catholic Diocese said in a New Year homily that some of those involved in the violence are church members, emphasizing that such actions are driven by greed for power.

He said that the government needs to address these issues before the general election to prevent a recurrence, pointing out that the main victims of election violence are often children and women as they are the most vulnerable.

In Babati, Bishop Antony Lagwen of the Catholic Diocese of Mbulu urged leaders with a thirst for power and wealth to stop, as these motives often lead to the loss of peace.

He also stressed the importance of defending the rights of the people and helping them understand their entitlements.

Pastor Warehema Chamshana of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) at Pangani, Tanga Region, also underscored the importance of prayer as the country heads into the general election.

He called on Tanzanians to register to vote as

TURN TO PAGE 2

'Clean cooking energy drive uplifts our image'

By Guardian Reporter

TANZANIA has gained in its global standing with efforts in promoting clean cooking energy. Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa has declared.

He made the remarks on Tuesday at the Kizimkazi Declaration Festival, entailing the distribution of 1,000 gas stoves as part of the clean cooking energy initiative, held at Kilimahewa Majumbakumi in his native Ruangwa constituency, Lindi Region.

He stressed the need for the entire public to lend support to President Samia Suluhu Hassan as this agenda was largely her personal initiative. "The world has recognized Tanzania by hosting a major clean energy summit here. Let us not fall behind; let us be leaders," he urged.

This initiative is based on recognizing the vital role of clean energy in safeguarding human health and protecting the environment, he said.

As a result of these efforts, international organizations have expressed interest in supporting the initiative, including organizing a major African clean energy summit held in Tanzania in the outgoing year, he recalled.

"We must stand behind the president in this campaign and ensure that we lead the way in adopting clean energy across Africa," he emphasised, while observers point out that Tanzania is lagging behind in renewable energy

TURN TO PAGE 2



Members of the Mlandege parish of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania in Iringa Urban welcome Year 2025 with prayers for the nation yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Francis Godwin

Teaching post 'exams' now slated for Jan 14

By Guardian Correspondent, Dodoma

RECRUITMENT exams for teaching applicants, which were temporarily suspended, will now take place from January 14 to February 24.

Lynn Chawala, the head of communication at the public service recruitment secretariat in the President's Office, said in a statement here on Tuesday that the necessary preparations have been completed to hold the nationwide exercise.

Holding the teacher recruitment exams was suspended on October 17, a day before the exercise was scheduled to start.



It will be found on the secretariat's website, official social media accounts as well as applicants' portal

fore the exercise was scheduled to start.

While not detailing the circumstances of the suspension of the keenly awaited exercise, she said that all teaching post applicants whose exams were temporarily suspended need to turn up from January 14 to February 24.

She reminded applicants that the written exams (screening) and interviews will take place in regions where the applicants live, noting that after the exercise is completed successful applicants will be assigned work stations relating to their

TURN TO PAGE 2



Positive shift in forex rates dips fuel prices

By Guardian Reporter

A favourable shift in foreign exchange rates has enabled a slight decline in fuel prices for January 2025 compared to December 2024.

Dr. James Mwainyekule (pictured), the Energy and Water Utilities Regulatory Authority (EWURA) director general, made this observation in a statement yesterday, outlining countrywide cap prices for this month, showing a drop in fuel prices.

Setting out prices for produce sourced at different ports, the agency said the price for petrol sourced from the Dar es Salaam port decreased from 2,898/- per litre in December to 2,793/- per litre.

Similarly, ex-Tanga port petrol prices slid from 2,905/- per litre in December to 2,800/- per litre, and at Mtwara port, petrol offloaded from there declined from 2,908/- per litre in December to 2,866/- this month, it stated.

Diesel prices also saw a decrease, as at Dar es Salaam port the price dipped from 2,779/- per litre in December to 2,644/- in January.

Ex-Tanga port diesel price slid from 2,792/- in December to 2,656/- in January, while ex-Mtwara port diesel prices



These price changes reflect a combination of global market trends and local adjustments in the fuel supply chain

dropped slightly from 2,851/- per litre in December to 2,716/- in January.

The downward trend in fuel prices are linked to changes in foreign exchange rates and import costs, the statement affirmed, underlining that the cost of fuel (free on board) and premiums are paid using foreign currencies, including the US dollar.

In the days to the start of January 2025, the average exchange rate had decreased by 11.27 percent, the director intoned.

While fuel import costs have risen slightly with some import sources, these increases were offset by declining foreign exchange rates, he said.

Import premiums for petrol increased by 5.45 percent, diesel by 13.01 percent, and kerosene by 8.82 percent for fuel sourced at the Dar es Salaam port.

However, ex-Tanga port and ex-Mtwara port premiums for petrol decreased by 6.67 percent, while diesel premiums dropped by as much as 10.33 percent.

"These price changes reflect a combination of global market trends and local adjustments in the fuel supply chain," the statement added.



Zanzibar President Dr Hussein Ali Mwinyi (C) in a festive mood yesterday with Naima Said Shaame (R), a financial institutions official, in a walk to mark the national exercise day in Wete District, Pemba North Region. Left is Second Vice President Hemed Suleiman Abdulla, Education and Vocational Training minister Lela Mohammed Mussa (2nd-L) and Zanzibar Body Exercise Association chairman Said Suleiman Said (2nd-R). Photo: Guardian Correspondent



9 770856 542009 >

'Clean cooking energy drive uplifts our image'

FROM PAGE 1

initiatives.

Experts say that some wind, biogas or solar energy installations can be a bit costly at the start, but their maintenance and assured flow of energy is more sustainable.

The premier appealed to local government authorities to embrace the clean cooking energy agenda and promote the use of clean energy sources, pointing at electricity, gas and what is known as eco-friendly charcoal.

Zainab Telack, the regional commissioner, remarked that the Kizimkazi Declaration would be transformative for women by improving access to clean cooking energy.

Hawa Mpinga, a beneficiary of the gas cylinder distribution programme residing at Nachingwea ward, said that they will be less exposed to health complications arising from using unclean energy. The smoke from firewood has severe effects on the eyes, she said.

Of the 1,000 gas cylinders distributed, 800 units were donated by Bongo FM, a subsidiary of the Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation (TBC), and 200 stoves donated by Taifa Gas.

The government has set a ten-year national clean cooking strategy where 80 per cent of households will be applying clean cooking solutions by 2034.

ACT-Wazalendo cadre to seek Z'bar presidential nomination

By Guardian Reporter, Zanzibar

THE First Vice President of Zanzibar, Othman Masoud Othman, has officially announced that he will seek the approval of his party, Alliance for Change and Transparency (ACT-Wazalendo) for presidential nomination of Zanzibar in this year's General Election.

He made the announcement yesterday in Unguja while speaking to editors during his New Year's greetings for 2025.

Othman has made it clear that, regardless of the circumstances, even without a new constitution, ACT-Wazalendo will participate in this year's General Election.

"This is a year of decisions. We will participate in the election. It does not matter what the circumstances are. However it turns out, that is how we will fight," he said.

He listed 11 key reasons driving his desire to pursue the presidency, emphasising his belief that they will rescue Zanzibar from its current state, which he described as "backward in development compared to the resources it has."

The reasons include demanding the rights and authority to enable Zanzibar to utilise its resources to build economic prosperity equal to or surpassing that of other island nations such as Mauritius, Seychelles, and Cape Verde; restoring citizens' right to hold their leaders accountable through free and fair elections; and establishing the foundations of good governance based on transparency and accountability.

Another priority is the need for constitutional and legal reforms to remove what he referred to as "royal powers for the President" and to establish solid foundations for checks and balances, offering more opportunities for citizens to participate in the governance of their country through strong, people-serving Local Government Authorities, rather than being another burden on the citizens.

Othman also highlighted his goal to build true national unity that reflects social cohesion by strengthening equality, citizens' rights, and solidarity; creating an effective and efficient system to combat corruption in all its forms and prevent the misuse of public office and resources; and establishing a robust economic framework that will sustainably utilise Zanzibar's resources, including productive tourism that protects the environment and leverages Zanzibar's unique geographical position.

He further stated that he intends to create opportunities for citizens to participate in the economy by safeguarding their land rights and economic resources; enabling those who have attained appropriate professional levels to grow and produce goods and services for both local and international markets; empowering youth to be employed and self-employed; and strengthening social welfare services, including education, healthcare, care for the disabled, and sustainable social security.

Othman, who is also the National Chairman of ACT Wazalendo, said that during his more than 30 years of public service, he has identified the core problems facing Zanzibar as the weak performance of the current system in terms of implementa-

tion, policies, and management.

He noted that despite his experience, including holding a top position in the legal profession as the Attorney General, he believes he can lead Zanzibar out of its current problems, emphasising that "it urgently needs saving."

He also mentioned that to achieve all this, it is essential to ensure that there is a free, fair, credible, and transparent election in 2025.

Othman criticised the current electoral system, explaining that it allows the ruling CCM party to have a disproportionate number of members of parliament and representatives in decision-making bodies - both in the national parliament and the House of Representatives - who "fight for their party's interests rather than the national interest."

He urged government and CCM leaders to reflect deeply on the situation in Zanzibar during the election period, stressing that they do not want to see again the chaos and even deaths reported in the previous election.

He continued to criticise unethical conduct in government, referring to the 2022/23 Report by the Controller and Auditor General (CAG), which highlights the lack of discipline in the use and management of public funds in both Zanzibar and Tanzania in general.

He stated that this situation persists despite being part of the Government of National Unity (GNU), yet they do not have the authority to hold accountable those who violate laws and procedures, leaving them as mere observers, much like the CAG.

"There is also a major problem of youth unemployment, including university graduates, and there have been reports of obstacles in job provision, where politics has interfered," he said.

Othman also strongly criticised the holding of the General Election over two days in Zanzibar, warning that this time, they will not accept such an arrangement, as they have identified it as an attempt to facilitate the theft of opposition party victories.

He stated that the legal changes which introduced provisions for a two-day voting process, in his professional opinion as a legal expert, have created what he called a "mockery of the law."

He also mentioned that they are continuing discussions with CCM regarding the future of the GNU, hinting that they have identified a lack of intention to implement the agreements made during negotiations that led to the formation of the GNU.

"In the final meeting of the Central Committee, we indeed decided to withdraw from the Government of National Unity, and while discussing this with the other side, there were promises made, and we are following up on them. We have not reached the end of these discussions."

"Our decision remains the same. Even if it is only one day left, we will withdraw if our concerns are not addressed," he said.

Othman also criticised the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the Cabinet being led by a chairperson from outside the opposition, which he argued is against the operation of Parliaments in Commonwealth member countries.



Vice President Dr Philip Mpango and other worshippers take part in a procession heading into the Catholic Parish of Blessed Maria Theresa Ledochowska. The event was held during the New Year eve at Dodoma Airport grounds. Photo: VPO

Clerics raise fears of violence in elections

FROM PAGE 1

this is a critical step in ensuring that capable leaders are chosen to guide the country for the next five years.

Religious leaders' messages underscored the importance of peace, unity, and responsible leadership as Tanzania approaches its 2025 elections.

They encouraged citizens to make this year one of success, rooted in harmony, solidarity and the pursuit of development needs.

Said Mtanda, the Mwanza regional commissioner, also stressed that 2025 is an election year and that political parties have the right to compete for power.

He urged Mwanza residents not to let themselves be manipulated into undermining peace and thus to make the year a success, marked by peace and solidarity.

In the neighbouring Shinyanga region, a top cleric demanded that

leaders should this year dedicate themselves to governing with responsibility and avoid resorting to violence or disruptions that may threaten the peace, a top cleric has appealed.

Bishop Liberatus Sangu of the Catholic Diocese made this appeal in his New Year Eve address at the Ngokolo parish.

His remarks reflected the tone of various religious leaders across the country who appealed for peace, unity and responsible leadership as the country approaches the 2025 general election.

The Shinyanga prelate said that Tanzanians need to pray for the country's peace throughout the year, noting that 2025 is an election year, "a time to elect the president and members of Parliament."

"This process often leads to disruptions in peace. Let us stand together to protect the peace we have and not allow anyone to jeopardize

it," he emphasized.

Tanzanians need to celebrate the New Year peacefully by helping those in need and avoiding excesses, he told the worshippers.

Sheikh Hassan Kabeke of Mwanza also echoed the message of peace, stating that the country cannot prosper without it. He stated that it is every Tanzanian's responsibility to help maintain peace, particularly as elections approach.

He pointed at growing tensions, with accusations being made while acts of charity are being seen as political maneuvering.

He reminded the Muslim faithful that the New Year is a shared time for all people, regardless of their individual beliefs, "so everyone needs to recognize its significance and participate fully in the celebrations."

Pastor Edward Kibiti of the Anglican Church in Mwanza cited prayer as vital in choosing the right lead-

ers, likening elections with picking leaders who can help the country achieve its dream, for instance taking the country out of a situation similar to famine.

He urged that Tanzanians focus on building a strong foundation for the future, ensuring that the next five years maintain peace and development.

In Dodoma, Auxiliary Bishop Wilbroad Kibizi encouraged the faithful to devise strategies to assist the less fortunate and help them progress.

True faith involves dedicating oneself to helping others, particularly those facing hardships so that they too can experience dignity and progress, he stated.

He appealed for personal and wider transformation in the New Year, stressing the role of parents in raising children with strong morals, helping to create future leaders for religious and public institutions.



Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa listens to Hope Mahokola (L), marketing officer of the National Mining Corporation (STAMICO), who briefed him on energy-efficient stoves at the STAMICO exhibition booth. The event was held at Azimio Kizimkazi - Kilimahewa Majumbakumi in Ruangwa District on Tuesday. Photo: PMO

Teaching post 'exams' now slated for Jan 14

FROM PAGE 1

performance.

Teaching position applicants, as well as those who applied for vocational and business-studies positions, need to update their current physical addresses on the jobs portal.

This will facilitate their being as-

signed to exam centers near their present residential location, she said, highlighting that a list with the names and exam locations will be released on January 6.

It will be found on the secretary's website, official social media accounts as well as applicants' portal, she stated, pointing out that all

candidates must bring their school or college certificates, birth certificates and identification documents for verification.

Recognized identification documents include national identity cards (issued by the relevant agency, NIDA), residence, voter registration card, passport, driver's license,

employment identity card or a letter of identification from local government offices, she specified.

The recruitment process is intended to observe merit, fairness, equality and transparency, with applicants directed to avoid temptations of bribery or disseminating false information, she added.



Mtwara District Commissioner, Abdallah Mwaipaya (L-seated) go through a document detailing the sales of cashew auctions at the farmers' cooperative union in Masasi, and Nanyumbu districts in Mtwara Region at the end of the 12th and final auction held in Mikindani District yesterday. On his left is MAMCU general manager, Biadia Matipa. A total of 116,825 tons were sold at auctions during the 2024/2025 season. Photo: Correspondent Hamis Nasri

Dr Mwinyi hails banking sector for supporting Z'bar economy

By Guardian Correspondent, Zanzibar

PRESIDENT of Zanzibar, Dr. Hussein Ali Mwinyi, has hailed the banking sector for its contribution to supporting ongoing government initiatives, including the 61st anniversary celebrations of the Zanzibar Revolution.

Dr. Mwinyi made the remarks while leading thousands of Zanzibaris during solidarity walk at Mnazi Mmoja grounds in Wete District, North Pemba Region.

The event is part of the celebrations marking the 61st anniversary of the Zanzibar Revolution, culminating on January 12th. NMB Bank

sponsored and participated in the walk and the Mapinduzi Cup tournament.

The President expressed gratitude to NMB Bank for funding the event, providing 100 tracksuits for leaders, valued at 9m/-, and sponsoring the Revolution Cup 2025 with a contribution of 50m/-.

"I extend my sincere thanks to NMB Bank for consistently supporting various activities in Zanzibar. Their significant participation in this event is crucial for the health of Zanzibaris, and they have enhanced our participation with the attire provided," Dr. Mwinyi said.

He emphasised that Zanzibar recognises and appreciates NMB's significant contributions to the development and welfare of the people, expressing confidence that this cooperation will continue.

NMB's Zanzibar regional manager, Naima Said Shaame, highlighted that the bank has been a long-time partner of both the Zanzibar government and the United Republic of Tanzania, having sponsored the Revolutionary celebrations for 12 years.

Shaame emphasised that the sponsorship of the Revolution Cup and the tracksuits underscores NMB's commitment to sports, pro-

moting health, which is vital for economic growth.

"It is a great honour for us to continue partnering with the government, and NMB is proud to be integral to the events for 12 years," said Naima in her speech to the thousands of Tanzanians present, led by the hosts from Pemba Island.

Recently, NMB Bank's Zanzibar branch manager, Ahmed Jumaa Nassor, handed over the 100 tracksuits and a dummy cheque of 50m/- for the Revolution Cup sponsorship to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Information, Youth, Culture, and Sports Zanzibar, Fatma Hamad Rajabu.

Samia rues 2024 disasters, extolls all round progress, peaceful elections

By Guardian Reporter

PRESIDENT Samia Suluhu Hassan yesterday rued over hectic challenges faced during 2024, including the impact of El Niño rains and cyclone Hidaya, which caused floods, landslides and infrastructure damage.

In recorded remarks for end of year message to the nation, she also commented on shortage of foreign currency, particularly US dollars, in a year otherwise marked by solid successes in various fields.

She similarly regretted that the country faced a surge in road accidents, with 1,735 accidents reported in 2024, resulting in 1,715 deaths and 2,719 injuries.

Human error, particularly driver negligence, reckless driving and speeding was the leading cause of these accidents, she stated, citing ongoing road network improvement as likely to diminish the frequency of accidents in the coming year.

She expressed optimism for Tanzania's future, emphasizing the country's growth potential, underlining that 2024 was a historic year for Tanzania.

Significant progress was made across various sectors, including political reforms, infrastructure development plus health and agriculture sector investments, paving the way for a prosperous future, she said.

She pointed at the completion of the Dar es Salaam to Morogoro section of the standard gauge railway (SGR) and start of power generation at the Julius Nyerere hydropower project, ultimately expected to boost the country's electricity production to 3,169 megawatts.

The progress made in various sectors would lay a strong foundation for further growth, she said, projecting 2025 as a crucial year for the political landscape, with the presidential, parliamentary and ward councillors elections.

2024 was a milestone for the union, the Zanzibar Revolution and the Tanzania People's Defense Forces (TPDF), she stated, noting that the country saw peaceful local elections and removing option of being elected unopposed, describing it as a major step in democratic progress.

The government similarly established a task force to address the currency shortage, introducing the national strategy to strengthen foreign currency availability, she said.

Economically, Tanzania's GDP grew by 5.4 percent in the first half of 2024, surpassing the previous year's growth of 4.8 percent, attracted 865 investment projects valued at \$7.7bn likely to generate 205,000 jobs, she further noted.

The government also made strides in promoting a digital economy, launching a digital economy strategy and initiating a national identification system to digitally register the country's population, she stated.

In the diplomatic field Tanzania gained global recognition by participating in the G20 summit and advocating for clean energy and agricultural investment.

The country's international relations were strengthened through state visits to 16 countries, including the Republic of Korea and the People's Republic of China, which led to significant investments and trade agreements, she said.

A major example is the \$2.5bn loan from South Korea for infrastructure projects and the opening of new markets for Tanzanian products in China, she elaborated.

Over 1.2m trips have been made on the SGR in five months, meanwhile as significant progress was achieved in improving market conditions for key crops.

Advancing irrigation systems and implementing reforms aimed at enhancing productivity and efficiency across various sectors were also pursued, she added.

KILIMANJARO
DRINKING WATER

A PRODUCT OF
The Coca-Cola Company



Winner of
**SUPERBRANDS
EAST AFRICA
2022-2024**



Thanks to you
our customers

kilimanjaro_drinking_water kilimanjarodrinkingwater kdw@bbl.co.tz

+255 762628166 | +255 659785276 | +255 272754422

TFS donates 96 corrugated roofing sheets for police post

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbeya

THE Tanzania Forest Services Agency (TFS) through Kiwira forest plantation in Mbeya Region, has donated 96 corrugated roofing sheets to support the construction of Igoma police station, which is being built through community efforts.

The donation, made recently, is part of TFS's contribution to the local community surrounding the forest plantation, aiming to acknowledge their role in forest conservation and the overall protection of the plantation.

While handing over the roofing sheets to the Mbeya District Commissioner, the chief conservator of the Kiwira Forest Plantation, Thadeus Shirima, said the TFS leadership decided to support and complement the efforts of Igoma Ward residents, who are constructing the police station with their resources.

He explained that the station is located near the Kiwira Forest Plantation, and as part of the community, they felt it was important to participate in the project by donating the roofing sheets.

"The residents living around our plantation collaborate with us in protecting forests and other resources within the plantation. In recognition of their contributions, we decided to support their efforts construct the police station," Shirima said. "We also believe that, as part of the community, we will benefit from the presence of this police station, and that's why we felt compelled to make our contribution," he added.

The roofing sheets were handed over to Mbeya District Commissioner Benno Malisa, who noted that the police station being built by the Igoma Ward residents will help improve security in the

area. He emphasised that the station will enhance safety in Igoma Ward and neighbouring areas, which have a large population and take part in various economic activities.

"The people in this area are excellent farmers of potatoes and other cash crops. Additionally, there is a government-owned forest plantation as well as private ones. These economic activities result in significant human interaction, which necessitates the presence of a police station to ensure security," Malisa said.

He also mentioned that the police station would help curb crime, including the prevention of forest fires.

Speaking on behalf of the residents, Igoma Ward Councillor Andrew Mwaipopo expressed gratitude for the donation and highlighted the community's ongoing development projects, which require additional support. Apart from the construction of the police station, the residents are also building a Vocational Education and Training Authority (VETA) centre, with some of its buildings at the roofing stage. He called on more stakeholders to assist in completing the projects.

Mwaipopo further noted that the ward is also constructing a health centre, which is progressing steadily. Once completed, the projects will significantly benefit the residents and neighbouring communities.



The people in this area are excellent farmers of potatoes and other cash crops

Gold mining threatens Zira river

By Correspondent Nebart Msokwa,

Chunya

RESIDENTS of Ifumbo Ward in Chunya District, Mbeya Region, have appealed to the government to remove gold miners who had invaded Zira river because the human activity destroys environment and the river as well.

The residents also argue that the activities violate directives issued by President Samia Suluhu Hassan when she was Vice President. During her tenure, she banned mining activities in two rivers in the district—Zira and Lupa rivers to protect the environment.

The complaints were raised during a visit by the Minister for Minerals, Anthony Mavunde. The purpose of the visit was to inspect mining activities in the area and assess compliance with the country's laws.

One resident, Abel Mlangali, noted that President Samia's directive was aimed at protecting Lake Rukwa, into which the rivers flow. The ban sought to prevent siltation and sedimentation that could raise the lake's water level.

"Despite the ban, some miners, including investors, continue their activities in the river using advanced machinery, causing significant environmental degradation," Mlangali said. He added that the community had made various efforts to prevent the destruction, but it persists, with some investors allegedly assaulting locals and confiscating their means of transportation, particularly motorcycles.

"We have been enforcing the president's directive by protecting this river, but we are being attacked with tear gas, and our motorcycles are confiscated. We ask for your intervention to ensure the safety of the river. No investor or local miner should remain; all must leave," Mlangali urged.

Michael Sanga, another resident, said some miners in the area hold licences and government permits, which suggests deliberate violation by certain government officials. He called for the licences to be revoked to safeguard the river and

ensure that environmental laws are respected.

He also decried the use of tear gas against unarmed residents as a legal violation and appealed to the government for protection.

Ifumbo Ward Councillor Weston Mpyela reported that, due to their efforts to protect the river, they have faced threats from some investors who have warned of taking them to court for unclear reasons.

"Despite these threats, we will continue to safeguard the river to ensure its safety for the development of our community," Mpyela said.

Mbeya Regional Commissioner Juma Homera acknowledged the significant environmental damage in the area, noting that it was caused not only by investors but also by local residents participating in mining activities. He said he had never visited the area before but had accompanied the former Minister of State in the Vice President's Office for Union and Environment, Seleman Jaffo, along with officials from the National Environmental Management Council (NEMC), to a nearby location that had also been degraded.

Minister of Minerals Anthony Mavunde pledged to collaborate with the Minister of State in the Vice President's Office for Union and Environment to form a team of experts to investigate activities in the river before taking any action. He stated that if the team's report confirmed environmental harm, necessary measures would be taken, including revoking licences. However, if the report indicated no significant damage, mining activities would be allowed to continue.

"For mining activities to begin, there must be a licence, and the license holder must obtain an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) certificate issued by NEMC. I cannot revoke a licence if procedures were followed, but the team's report will guide our actions," Mavunde explained. He further announced that while waiting for the team to be established, all mining activities in the river must halt to allow for the investigation, assuring residents that the team's work would be completed swiftly.



Mines minister Anthony Mavunde (with black cap) accompanied by Mbeya Regional Commissioner Juma Homera (L) and other government officials from Chunya District after their visit to inspect the environmental impact of Zira river in Ifumbo Ward in Chunya District recently. Photo: Correspondent Nebart Msokwa

'Improved rural roads sustain, boost Z'bar agricultural sector'

By Guardian Reporter, Zanzibar

ZANZIBAR government has said over the past four years, it has successfully built 80 per cent of the rural and urban roads, which will strengthen and boost the agricultural sector by enabling farmers to achieve significant economic progress.

This was stated by the Minister of State in the President's Office, Ali Suleiman Ameir, during the inauguration of a 15.7-kilometer road from Donge to Chaani in North Unguja Region.

He said the government's

objectives have been met to construct road network that will elevate farmers economically.

He further explained that the construction of good roads leading to rural areas would greatly enhance farmers' productivity and facilitate the transportation of their produce to towns, especially during the rainy season when roads are often impassable.

He urged farmers and the public to seize the opportunities of the infrastructure to diversify their crops and bring them to market.

"The construction of rural roads is part of implementing the

CCM party's election manifesto. This will ease transportation and agricultural activities, benefiting both farmers and the wider community," he said.

The deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Infrastructure, Communication, and Transport, Dr. Makame Machano, said the government is committed to creating network of roads in Unguja and Pemba, including major rural roads of 275 kilometers, which will unlock economic opportunities in Zanzibar.

He added that the roads linking

economic zones and tourism projects have already been implemented, bringing significant relief to both locals and investors in the country.

"The Ministry of Infrastructure, Communication, and Transport has made substantial progress in building infrastructure, particularly roads leading to rural for investments, which will boost economic opportunities," he said.

Some residents of Donge and Chaani expressed their happiness about the improved road, saying it as an opportunity to open up many avenues for markets.



A maternity ward nurse at Muheza District hospital in Tanga Region, Neema Ngoda (R) holds one of the infants born during the New Year's eve yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Steven William

RC: Grasp govt projects to enhance economic welfare

By Guardian Correspondent, Dodoma

DODOMA Regional Commissioner, Rosemary Senyemule, has urged the region's residents to take advantage of the various government projects in 2025 to improve their economic welfare.

Senyemule made the comments recently during a speech to religious leaders at the national prayer vigil in Dodoma.

Representing President Samia Suluhu Hassan at the event, Senyemule urged citizens to utilise existing and upcoming

opportunities to improve their lives and overcome economic challenges.

She stressed that it would be meaningless if the government invested in infrastructure and income-generating projects, only for people to remain in poverty despite having access to the potential resources.

"The existing investments in infrastructure enable individuals to earn income, whether by starting businesses or working on the projects. I urge you to take advantage of the opportunities," she said.

Senyemule also called on the public to pray for the upcoming general elections in 2025, ensuring peace and justice prevail, and that the country elects leaders who will serve all Tanzanians regardless of their political affiliation.

"In 2025, we will have the presidential, parliamentary, and local elections, so each of us must take responsibility and pray for peace and fair elections," she said.

She further urged parents and guardians to ensure that children who are of school going age are not left at home but are enrolled

to exercise their basic right to education.

The chairman of the National prayer vigil, Archbishop Dr. Godfrey Malasi of the Tanzania Fellowship of Churches (TFC), said the purpose of the event was to give thanks for the past year and pray for the new year, 2025.

"Another goal is to encourage Tanzanians to pray together for the upcoming elections and for the spiritual, social, and economic development of our nation, as well as to demonstrate our unity as a peaceful and stable country," he said.

Report insecurity incidents for timely intervention, Mbeya residents cautioned

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbeya

POLICE in Mbeya Region had urged residents to report insecurity incidents for timely intervention and continue cooperating with law enforcement to curb crime by providing information that will help apprehend offenders and take action.

Mbeya Regional Police Commander, Senior Assistant Commissioner of Police (SACP) Benjamin Kuzaga, made the remarks recently during a press briefing on the security situation in the region and the force's preparations to combat crime in 2025.

He stated that in 2024, the police collaborated with residents to combat criminals in various parts of the region and would maintain this cooperation in 2025.

"The police are here to ensure the safety of citizens and their properties. To maintain security, there must be strong collaboration between the government and the public," Kuzaga emphasised. "If you notice unfamiliar individuals in your area, it's important to report them so we can investigate and take action. Our goal is to start 2025 peacefully and end it in the same manner," he added.

He explained that the police have implemented patrols in vulnerable areas to prevent these locations from remaining hotspots and to allow citizens to carry out their activities peacefully.

Regarding areas with steep inclines, he assured that measures are in place to regulate the movement of heavy and light vehicles alternately to reduce the frequent accidents that occur in these zones.

Kuzaga also reminded drivers of motor vehicles to strictly adhere to road safety regulations to avoid causing accidents. He warned that violators would face stringent legal consequences, including court proceedings and license revocation. He banned drivers from operating vehicles without valid licenses, stressing that it is illegal under national laws to drive without a license.



If you notice unfamiliar individuals in your area, it's important to report them so we can investigate and take action. Our goal is to start 2025 peacefully and end it in the same manner



Korogwe Town Council acting executive director, Burhan Ngulungu (2nd L) presents a gift to one of the children at Zubeiryah orphanage centre Kwamndolwa Ward in Korogwe, Tanga Region recently. Korogwe Town Council officials visited two centres including Kilimani. Other food items were donated to celebrate the New Year. Photo: Correspondent Cheji Bakari

Catch tuna fish to meet tourism growing demand, says minister

By Guardian Reporter, Zanzibar

ZANZIBAR fishermen have been urged to catch tuna fish in the open sea to meet the demand of the country's tourist hotels.

This was stated by the Minister for Fisheries and Blue Economy, Shaaban Ali Othman during Vumba Festival in Maisara, Zanzibar, where 'jodari' fish was distributed to the public.

Othman explained that the Fisheries and Blue Economy

Ministry has announced various opportunities for fishermen, enabling them to fish in the open sea and earn substantial income from the fish.

He outlined opportunities such as the construction of larger boats that would allow fishermen to fish in deep sea, where 'jodari' fish can be found.

The minister noted that 'jodari' fish has a guaranteed market both domestic and foreign markets and encouraged fishermen to prepare

to fish in deep waters.

The director of Fisheries and Marine Products stated that Zanzibar's waters and the surrounding areas in the open sea have an abundance of 'jodari' fish.

He urged fishermen to take advantage of the open sea fishing opportunities to harvest existing resources, pointing out that local fishermen have not fully utilised this potential.

The Ministry's Permanent Secretary, Capt. Hamad Bakari,

said they are working to engage large-scale fishermen and better understand their needs to facilitate their access to open-sea fishing.

He added that the ministry is in discussion with fishermen about the types of boats they need, ensuring that they have the capacity to reach the open sea for larger-scale fishing.

The government aims to ensure that fishermen own modern vessels that will enable them to access the open sea and catch larger fish.

AU commits to stabilisation efforts in Somalia, this year

MOGADISHU

THE new African Union peacekeeping mission in Somalia on Wednesday announced its commitment to the country's stabilisation efforts in 2025 and post-conflict recovery as it began operations the same day.

The African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) officially replaced the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), marking a further step in transitioning national security responsibilities to that country's own forces.

In his New Year message, Special Representative of the chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia Mohamed El-Amine Souef said 2024 marked a pivotal year for Somalia, characterized by significant strides in peace and security thanks to the concerted efforts of the Somali government in collaboration with the pan-African body's peace mission.

"AUSSOM has finally become operational, beginning Jan. 1, 2025, as per UN Security Council Resolution 2767 (2024). It will build on the achievements made under ATMIS to ensure Somalia realizes long-term peace and security," Souef said.

On Dec. 27, 2024, the UN Security Council (UNSC) endorsed the African Union Peace and Security Council's decision to replace ATMIS with AUSSOM.

He said ATMIS made significant strides by transferring military bases to the Somali Security Forces in 2024, in line with the Somalia Transition Plan. This, Souef said, shows that the Somali security forces have acquired the necessary expertise to independently take over the country's security responsibilities.

According to Souef, ATMIS, in collaboration with development partners, also initiated a range of quick-impact projects, including the construction of boreholes, classrooms, police stations, and rehabilitation of health centers, to improve the lives of residents in liberated areas.

The AU envoy said they would continue engagements under AUSSOM, guided by the AU Peace

and Security Council communiqués and UNSC resolutions.

The UNSC also authorized AU members to take necessary measures for 12 months starting Jan. 1, including supporting the Somali government in degrading al-Shabaab and affiliates linked to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, also known as Da'esh.

Somalia will in January join the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member following its successful election. "This marks a momentous achievement in the country's recent history and provides an opportunity for Somalia to contribute to global peace and security," Souef said.

Somalia continued the path to economic revitalization in March 2024 when the country became a full member of the East African Community, a regional trading bloc with a market size of over 170 million people, said the AU envoy. "Somalia, boasting the longest coastline in Africa at over 3,000 km and rich natural resources, is strategically positioned to emerge as a key player within the economic bloc."



AUSSOM has finally become operational, beginning Jan. 1, 2025, as per UN Security Council Resolution 2767 (2024). It will build on the achievements made under ATMIS to ensure Somalia realizes long-term peace and security



Lupembe Constituency MP in Njombe District, Edwin Swalle (with a cap), handing over an ambulance at Mtwango Health Centre. The vehicle will be a big relief to the residents of five wards in the district. Photo: Correspondent Eilza Kilindi

By Guardian Reporter, Zanzibar

ZANZIBAR'S Minister for Regional Administration and Local Government, Masoud Ali Mohammed, has said the government had decided to build modern hospitals and provide quality healthcare to keep up with current needs.

Speaking at the ground breaking ceremony for Sebleni Health Centre in Zanzibar, he explained that it is the government's responsibility to build such facilities and ensure they provide excellent services to the community.

He said the goal of the Zanzibar Revolutionary Government is

Zanzibar determined to improve health service quality - minister

not only to build good healthcare buildings but also to ensure the quality of healthcare services provided in the hospitals.

"While we have better health facilities, the aim is not just to have better buildings, but also to offer excellent services," the minister said.

He added that the construction of the health centre will require significant government funding, and it is the responsibility of

ministry officials to maintain the facilities to ensure they last for many years.

Dr. Mngereza Mzee Miraji, Ministry's Permanent Secretary mentioned that the government is continuing to implement the CCM party's 2020-2025 manifesto by strengthening healthcare infrastructure at all service levels.

He added that as part of the efforts, the ministry plans to rebuild health centres in all districts

of Unguja and Pemba to bring healthcare closer to the people, alongside strengthening referral guidelines.

"This health centre serves over 82,288 people from five wards: Amani, Nyerere, Sebleni, Kwawazee, and Kwamtumwa Jeni, as well as neighbouring areas. In 2023, a total of 47,348 outpatient visits were recorded (18,198 men and 29,150 women)," said the secretary-general.

1,000 villagers in Malinyi relocate to other regions

By Guardian Correspondent, Malinyi

OVER 1,000 residents of Ngombo village in Malinyi District, Morogoro Region, have begun relocating to Lindi, Coast, and Ruvuma regions from the Kilombero Game Reserve.

This move follows government efforts to educate them about the importance of vacating the area for conservation purposes and providing compensation amounting to 6.9bn/-.

In separate interviews, the villagers stated that the initiative has helped resolve conflicts between them and conservationists managing the Kilombero Game Reserve, which was upgraded in status by President Samia Suluhu Hassan.

One resident, Sharifu Mahamudu, noted that during the rainy season, communication was extremely disrupted due to floods cutting off roads.

The residents expressed their gratitude to President Samia for ensuring timely compensation, which has enabled them to relocate and start new lives in neighbouring villages.

"Since leaving Ngombo village, I have had no challenges in my life. I am doing well and living comfortably with my family. I thank the government for this initiative. I have received my compensation and have already started demolishing my house to take everything with me and move. So far, I have no complaints with the government," said Daudi Lyambu, a former resident of Ngombo who has relocated to Biro village in Malinyi District.

Malinyi District Commissioner, Sebastian Waryuba, said the relocation process is progressing smoothly, and the government continues to provide support, ensuring that citizens exercise their freedom to live anywhere in the country without breaking the law or being exploited by fraudsters.

"I have received reports that some fraudsters have started exploiting this opportunity by persuading some of you to hire lawyers to assist you. I warn you to avoid these people because what they want is your compensation

money," said DC Waryuba.

He added that over 1,000 residents have already been compensated to vacate the reserve and urged officials from the 32 villages in Malinyi District to welcome those relocating so they can continue their daily activities.

"There have been misleading claims from some individuals saying we haven't told Ngombo residents where to go. In my letter dated 04/09/2024 to officials of the 32 villages in Malinyi District, I instructed them to receive all the relocating residents, which is exactly what is happening," said Waryuba.

"Since the exercise began, I haven't received any complaints, either by phone or in person, about anyone being denied a place to settle. From the information I have, some residents have moved to various locations, including Lindi, Ruvuma, Coast, and the Mlimba Council. I believe the process is going well," he emphasised.

Regarding students who were studying in Ngombo village, Waryuba said he had already directed the education officer to welcome and enrol them in schools within villages in the district without any conditions to ensure they continue their education freely.

He noted that Ngombo villagers had been informed about the relocation from the Kilombero Game Reserve as early as August 2024, and they were prepared for the move. He urged them to ignore individuals attempting to misrepresent the objectives of the relocation process.

Biro Ward Executive Officer (VEO), Elizabeth Mnenuka, confirmed receiving over 50 residents in Biro village and more than 30 in Mbalinyi village. She added that some have already been allocated land for farming and settlement.

In February 2023, President Samia upgraded the Kilombero Game Reserve to a protected area with the aim of strengthening conservation in the wetland region, which features forests and water resources critical to the Julius Nyerere Hydro-Power Project (JNHPP).



Waste piled up in front of shops at Mugumu town, Serengeti, Mara region yesterday due to what is reported to be a contractor's refusal to collect it citing non-payment of his dues. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Police hold volunteer teacher over defilement of pupil (13)

By Guardian Correspondent, Mwanza

POLICE in Mwanza Region have arrested Paul Joseph, a volunteer teacher in Misungwi District for allegedly defiling a 13-year-old pupil.

Mwanza Police Commander Wilbrod Mutafungwa confirmed this at the weekend, explaining that the incident occurred on December 23, 2024 at around 12:00 noon when the suspect (26) allegedly committed the crime while the pupil was studying in the school

library.

He stated that the investigation was ongoing and the suspect would be taken to court "soon".

Meanwhile, Mutafungwa reported several incidents that occurred during Christmas period, including a murder and theft.

On December 24, Charles Hindya (19), residents of Mwasengela Village in Misungwi District, was arrested in connection with murder of his 62-year-old grandfather Charles Makula.

The suspect allegedly struck the

victim with a blunt object, leading to his death.

The RPC stated that the motive behind the murder was linked to Hindya's ongoing mental health issues.

On December 22, Novatus Mtesingwa (34), a mechanic from Nyasaka area in Ilemela Municipal Council, was arrested in Dodoma after fleeing scene of a murder he allegedly committed.

Mtesingwa is alleged to have stabbed his colleague, Ibrahim Zacharia (28) in the head with a

sharp object which led to Zacharia's death. The body of the victim was discovered on December 28 in Lukobe area in Ilemela with jealousy being reported as the motive for the crime.

Furthermore, Paskal Kiliyaya (24), residents of Isamilo area in Sengerema District was apprehended for allegedly stealing 28 herds of cattle belonging to John Swalala (61).

He said the suspect was being questioned and would be taken to court to face the law.

SADC seeks immediate end of conflicts in Mozambique

HARARE

THE Southern African Development Community (SADC) has called for an immediate cessation of hostilities in Mozambique to pave the way for dialogue to resolve the country's unrest.

"The SADC calls upon all parties to exercise restraint and refrain from actions that escalate violence and unrest. The SADC stresses the importance of embracing peaceful and constructive dialogue as the preferred avenue to address grievances," said President Samia Suluhu Hassan who is chairperson of SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, in a statement issued recently by the SADC Secretariat.

The SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, managed on a Troika basis, is responsible for promoting peace and security in the region. Zambia and Malawi currently serve alongside Tanzania as members of the SADC Organ Troika.

Samia said the regional bloc was deeply concerned by the continued loss of lives, injuries and destruction of private property and public infrastructure in Mozambique.

"The current situation has also caused significant economic challenges for the nation, disrupted cross-border trade, and hindered free movement of people," she added.

Recently, Mozambique's

Constitutional Council declared Daniel Chapo, the presidential candidate of the ruling party Frelimo, as the winner of the general elections held on Oct 9, 2024. According to local media reports, more than 100 civilians have died and hundreds have been injured in the post-election chaos.

Samia said that despite a generally calm and peaceful election, the post-election period has been marred by protests and violence, exacerbated by the official announcement of election results on December 23.

She reaffirmed SADC's readiness to assist, through appropriate mechanisms, in facilitating a peaceful resolution to the ongoing political challenges.

"Our collective aspiration remains the restoration of harmony and stability in Mozambique, aligned with our shared vision of good governance, social cohesion and sustainable development in the region," she said.

SADC, a regional economic community of 16 member states, includes both Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

Zimbabwean President and SADC Chairperson Emmerson Mnangagwa welcomed the ruling of Mozambique's Constitutional Council. He urged all parties to respect the court's decision, stressing that it provides a constitutional path forward for Mozambique while fostering peace, normalcy and stability in the country.



Chicken chasing during Dr Samia/Jumbe holiday bonanza marking the end of 2024 and ushering in 2025. The event was held at Kambarage grounds in Shinyanga on Tuesday. Photo: Correspondent Marco Maduhu

By Correspondent Gideon

Mwakanosya, Songea

THE Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has urged agents and leaders of political parties across the country not to interfere with the ongoing process of updating the permanent voters' register for the 2025 General Election currently taking place in various regions.

Instead, the commission has asked them to adhere to the electoral laws, guidelines and the commission's directives to maintain the integrity of the exercise.

The call was made here at the weekend by INEC Chairman Judge (rtd) Jacobs Mwambegele in a speech delivered by the Director of Voter Registration and IT Department Stanslaus Mwita during a meeting between the commission and election

Don't distract voter register update exercise, INEC urges political parties

stakeholders in the Ruvuma.

Mwambegele emphasized that if any challenges arise, it is crucial to follow the procedures outlined in the electoral laws or to submit the challenges to the commission for resolution.

He also called for provision of accurate and timely information to the public regarding voter registration exercise and encouraged eligible citizens to participate in large numbers on the designated dates set by the commission for each registration centre.

Mwambegele further announced that the commission has begun preparations for the ninth round of the 13 rounds of updating the voter register.

He added that as in the 2015 and 2020 updates, the process will involve the use of Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) technology.

According to Mwambegele, the system will be used to identify and distinguish individuals by capturing fingerprints, photographs and signatures, all of which will be stored in the voter database.

Meanwhile, Voter Registration Coordinator for Ruvuma Region, Salum Kateula, announced that there will be two phases of registration in the region.

The first phase will cover five districts: Songea Municipality, Songea District Council, Mbinga District Council, Nyasa District Council and Mbinga Town Council.

The second phase will cover three districts: Tunduru, Namtumbo and Nyasa, starting on 28th January and concluding on 3rd February this year. Ruvuma Region is fully prepared, with all necessary equipment already delivered to the councils, he said.

Archbishop of Anglican Church in Tanzania Ruvuma Diocese Raphael Haule commended the government through INEC for organising the exercise, saying it will help Tanzanians get accurate information about the voter register update.

He also noted that religious leaders would encourage their congregations to participate in large numbers when the exercise begins.

Ruto expects strong economic growth this year after reforms

NAIROBI

KENYAN President William Ruto said on Tuesday that reforms initiated by his government are expected to result in stronger economic performance, increased job opportunities for the youth and higher incomes for farmers and traders.

Ruto, who delivered his end-of-year address in Kisii, western Kenya, on New Year's Eve, said the government has successfully laid a solid foundation to hasten the country's socioeconomic progress in 2025, urging Kenyans to embrace the New Year with faith, hope and determination to achieve greatness for Kenya.

"The progress we have made has set us firmly on a path of rapid and sustainable growth. As a result, we can anticipate stronger economic performance, more jobs for our youth, and higher incomes for farmers and entrepreneurs," he said.

He said Kenya continues to outpace global trends, with gross domestic product growing 5.6 percent in 2023 and positioning the country among the world's fastest-growing economies. "We expect more investments will mature in 2025, leading to a considerable expansion of our manufacturing sector and an increase in exports."

Ruto lauded the Kenyan spirit that endured economic instability, climatic upheavals, and global inflationary pressures, noting despite these adversities, the nation continued to forge ahead, achieving notable progress in critical areas such as food security, healthcare, and education.

The president said reforms in basic and higher education would also bear fruit, providing new momentum and focus for the entire education sector. The Kenyan shilling, which began the year on a low note, has strengthened significantly, rising from 165 shillings to the \$ in February 2024 to 129 on December 31, 2024.

Inflation, a key indicator of economic health, fell from 9.6

percent in September 2022 to 2.8 percent in November 2024, the lowest in nearly two decades. Foreign exchange reserves have surged by \$2.4 billion to reach \$9.5 billion, providing five months of import cover and insulating the Kenyan economy from external shocks, noted the Kenyan leader.

Ruto outlined an ambitious roadmap to sustain and build on these achievements in 2025, noting that his priorities include strengthening manufacturing and export capabilities, bolstering food security and agricultural productivity, improving access to quality healthcare, and creating opportunities for youth through education and job creation.

He said the universal healthcare program, dubbed Taifa Care, will offer significant relief to households by reducing medical costs and delivering enhanced benefits through an efficient, inclusive, and high-quality public healthcare system.

He also assured Kenyans that subsidized fertilizer is already in stores, stressing that the goal is to ensure higher yields from every crop, guaranteeing greater rewards for farmers and food security for all Kenyans.



The progress we have made has set us firmly on a path of rapid and sustainable growth. As a result, we can anticipate stronger economic performance, more jobs for our youth, and higher incomes for farmers and entrepreneurs

Several people arrested as new wave of protests erupts in Kenya

NAIROBI

SEVERAL people, including an opposition politician, were arrested on Monday as protests erupted across Kenya over the rising abduction of social media activists. Businesses were also disrupted in various towns as angry youths took to the streets, demanding action from the Kenyan government.

Carrying placards and chanting anti-government slogans, the protesters marched through towns, including Kenya's capital, Nairobi. Police fired teargas and engaged in running battles with the youths in an attempt to disperse them.

"No more abductions, no more abductions," the youths chanted. On Kenyatta Avenue in Nairobi, protesters read aloud the names of social media activists who had been recently abducted or had disappeared without a trace. Some carried roses, offering them to police officers as a gesture of peace. Okiya Omtatah, an opposition senator and protester, decried the abductions before being arrested alongside other demonstrators. "If they have committed a crime, let them be prosecuted and presented in court to defend themselves," he said.

Police erected roadblocks on major routes into Nairobi, barring public transport minibuses, locally known as matatus, from entering the city center. Passengers were frisked as officers searched for potential protesters. In Kitengela,

a Nairobi suburb and previous protest hotspot, police carried out road checks and air surveillance to thwart gatherings.

Protests also erupted in Embu and Nyeri, where demonstrators clashed with police while demanding the release of a young social media activist.

This new wave of unrest came six months after youth-led protests in June over proposed tax increases, which were eventually shelved after public outcry. Although those demonstrations subsided following the dismissal of President William Ruto's cabinet, online activism persisted. Youths have used social media platforms to critique the government, often employing creative tools such as cartoons, short videos, and artificial intelligence-generated images.

However, a worrying pattern of abductions targeting vocal activists has emerged. The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, a state-funded body, reported that 82 people remain unaccounted for since the June protests, with at least 50 killed and over 300 injured during demonstrations in recent months.

Addressing the nation on Dec. 27, Ruto pledged to investigate the abductions and take action against those responsible. "What has been said about abductions, we will stop them, so Kenyan youth can live in peace, but they should have discipline and be polite so that we can build Kenya together," he said.



Eng James Jumbe (C) presents food stuff to orphaned children at Shinyanga Society Orphanage Centre located in Bushushu, Shinyanga Municipality during the New Year festival. The event took place recently. Photo: Correspondent Marco Maduhu

Sudan's leader rules out reconciliation with rebels, calls for civilian protection

KHARTOUM

SUDAN'S Sovereign Council leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan has declared that a return to the pre-conflict status with rival Rapid Support Forces (RSF) is off the table.

Speaking on the country's 69th independence anniversary, al-Burhan called the RSF "murderers and criminals" and ruled out any reintegration of the group into

Sudanese society.

"There is no going back to the situation before April 15, 2023, nor can we accept the presence of these criminals among Sudanese people," he said in a televised address aired on Sudanese state television Tuesday.

While rejecting reconciliation with the RSF, al-Burhan expressed willingness to engage in peace initiatives aimed at ending the

conflict and ensuring safe return of civilians displaced by the war.

Since clashes began in April 2023 between Sudan's military led by al-Burhan and the RSF commanded by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, the humanitarian toll has been devastating. The violence has claimed nearly 25,000 lives and displaced over 10 million people, according to the United Nations.

The fighting has engulfed 13 of

Sudan's 18 states, triggering massive destruction, famine and violations against civilians. Mediation efforts led by the U.S. and Saudi Arabia have so far failed to secure a lasting ceasefire, with both parties accusing each other of sabotaging peace negotiations.

Sudan remains in the grip of violence, with millions of lives at risk and little hope for immediate resolution.



Bajaj drivers look tired after waiting for over 7 hours in a long queue to refuel at Tabata gas station in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala

Zimbabwe abolishes death penalty, decision hailed as 'historic moment'

HARARE

ZIMBABWE has officially abolished death penalty following the enactment of a new law signed by President Emmerson Mnangagwa.

Published in the Official Gazette on December 31, 2024,

the legislation prohibits courts from issuing capital punishment sentences and commutes all existing death sentences to prison terms.

Although executions had been suspended since 2005 under a moratorium, courts continued to sentence individuals to death for

crimes such as murder, treason and terrorism. With this new law, the death penalty is fully outlawed for all offenses.

However, a clause in the law allows the reintroduction of death penalty during a state of emergency. As of late 2023, 59 inmates were on death row in Zimbabwe.

Amnesty International welcomed the abolition, calling it a "historic moment". In a statement, the organization urged Zimbabwe to go further by removing the state of emergency clause. "We call on authorities to fully abolish the death penalty without exceptions," Amnesty stated.

The Guardian Limited Key Contacts

Managing Editor: WALLACE MAUGGO
Circulation Manager: DENNIS NTAITA
feedback@guardian.co.tz

Newsdesk

News Editor: LUSEKELO PHILEMON
0757154767
General line: 0745700710
E-mail: guardian@guardian.co.tz

Advertising

Mobile: 0677020701
E-mails: advertise@guardian.co.tz
Website: www.ippmedia.com
epaper.ippmedia.com

Relocating Kilombero Game Reserve villagers with 6.8bn/- good if smooth

IT'S official that 6.8bn/- has been allocated for compensating residents of Ngombo village in Malinyi District, Morogoro Region, living within the Kilombero Game Reserve.

Not many of us will have heard much about the conservation area, largely owing to its more captivating neighbor - the world-famous Selous Game Reserve from which a vast area, Nyerere National Park, was carved out without hurting Selous image. It is what they often say is the problem with 'living beside a giant'.

Unlike the sort of commotion we are used to when it comes to relocating supposed indigenous people, relocating citizens not carrying an ecotourism brand mark is relatively easy.

It is often a matter of arranging compensation which makes shifting a clearly attractive position, as appears to be the case here.

Even without making the numbers, how many villagers, what is the pay on average, total assets of 6.9bn/- isn't what we can usually say of how village dwellings are valued, etc. It evidently makes a difference and makes moving out a rather palatable proposition.

This distinction between shifting people in one region merely as residents, entitled to satisfactory compensation, and touching those with ecotourism hallmarks is vivid for all to see.

As many will have noticed, there are no claims to ancestral lands in the Malinyi District area, whereas activists and militants have opened court cases in Europe to protest relocations in some parts of the country.

Tanzanian diplomats would at times remain bewildered on recategorising citizens on the one hand and those who are indigenous on the other. It is understandable if they resist that categorisation.

The sort of interaction in the Morogoro relocation drive is worlds

apart from the painful odyssey public authorities have faced over the Ngorongoro conservation area.

The Malinyi drive is patterned along areas where the East African oil pipeline project route traverses, where the procedure for the residents' relocation and the disbursement of funds through mobile phone accounts are similar.

It doesn't include inducements like building new houses for them, establishing special villages and seeking land titles for the newcomers and still largely fail in the initiative. It is a live and let live situation being reexamined.

Not that there were completely no quibbles about the Morogoro drive, as officials say it began three years ago with residents being sensitised about the need to move to support conservation efforts.

They did not face discouragement in the first phase of the initiative, as no 'human rights activists' came to protest any idea of relocation. Now, these are citizens like any other and not an ecotourism brand whose value is being threatened. That's it.

There was perfect harmony of wishes and expectations on the part of both the residents and the public authorities. The residents are even said to be grateful as to the government's approval of the compensation funds.

The government would clearly have wished to walk similar terrain far to the north, but wishes aren't horses; in that situation it has to defend its initiative, with some pain.

Indeed, the relocation raises potential for similar solutions in other areas where villagers are found within traditional or revised boundaries of national parks or other conservation units.

At times there is a quasi-judicial process to determine who has the land rights between villagers and conservation authorities. A usable modus operandi is to relocate and the government finds funds for that - simple. No?

- simple. No?

2024 saw disasters, even as Tanzania was joyous by far

MANY in various parts of the country will be ruing catastrophic incidents witnessed or experienced over the past year.

Compared to what other countries near and far experienced, though, ours would easily be classified as a generally good year.

The more hectic challenges faced included the impact of El Niño rains and a rare cyclone going by the name of Hiday. These caused floods and landslides ending in grievous damage to various infrastructure and other property.

Those were visible marks of climate change; our neighbours suffered much more.

The shortage of foreign currency, in particular the US dollar, taxed policy makers to come up with hypothetical responses. The dollar started being quoted lower not because we earned more dollars but essentially because selling in dollars is banned.

Administrators would be excused if they focused on solid successes in various fields, at times progress being noticed and then at some other moment seemingly halting.

There is plenty of optimism on the country's growth potential, given the remarkable progress witnessed across various sectors - particularly road, health and education infrastructure, where the government is making strides previously unheard-of.

Agriculture is meanwhile seeing a rising share of local and foreign investments for special produce, one being avocados.

The landmark moment in

socioeconomic change was opening to passenger traffic the Dar es Salaam-Morogoro stretch of the standard gauge railway (SGR).

This soon extended to Dodoma and starts making transit by car outdated, while air travel now looks unnecessarily expensive. The train ride is convenient enough for tourists to skip charter aircraft from the international airport, instead take speed train to Morogoro and then drive to the parks.

The start of power generation at the Julius Nyerere hydropower project, ultimately expected to boost the country's electricity production to 3,169 megawatts, was a noticeable moment as well as within a few years it more than doubles power outlays.

The result is all the same not rosy for city dwellers still need transformers, what with intermittent power cuts. Even with administrative effort on energy transition focused on natural gas, development partners were steadily preferring renewables as 2024 entered its last months.

Saying that 2025 will be a crucial year for the country's political landscape can be an understatement, except if one is hugely optimistic on prospects around the coming presidential and parliamentary elections.

With the rather civic polls now sliding out of memory, some traps remain for late this year's General Election, as the civic polls emboldened both sides. Yet there will be room for those who wish to survive in politics rather than rock the boat, and so far it appears that they will prevail.



Liberia should lead diplomatic efforts to keep Ecowas' unity

By Prof. Tom Kaydor

SOMETIME ago, the Republics of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso decided that they were preparing to withdraw from the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS).

The three countries had experienced undemocratic transitions or transfers of power that ECOWAS is opposed to. The ECOWAS Member States imposed selected sanctions on those countries and took other actions to help the 3 West African countries return to democratic leadership by holding free, fair, and transparent elections.

These countries have not returned to democratic governance as demanded by ECOWAS. They are all under military rule. Last weekend the ECOWAS Authority ended its 66th Summit in Abuja. ECOWAS officially received notification of the 3 countries' decision to withdraw from ECOWAS.

According to the President of ECOWAS, Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso have got up to 29th January-29th July 2025 to remain within the ambit of ECOWAS.

These countries have reaffirmed their commitment to break away or withdraw from ECOWAS and form their own sub regional union, the Alliance of Sahel States.

Geopolitically, the Sahel comprises more than the 3 states of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. The three countries as sovereign states have their right to decide what happens to their countries and peoples in terms of remaining within ECOWAS.

However, they need to act meticulously in the context of their National Interests. Let us make no mistake.

States must always protect their National Interests and that of their Peoples. National Interest means the security of the state and the wellbeing of its people.

Hence, the 3 countries' grievances need to be listened to, discussed, and diplomatically negotiated. This is why I welcome the suggestion of the Republic of Liberia articulated by Joseph Nyumah Boakai that ECOWAS should remove all sanctions against the 3 countries and increase diplomatic efforts in negotiating with them in the spirit of international Cooperation. No country is truly independent of others.

Joseph Nyumah Boakai is a

Liberian politician who has served as the 26th president of Liberia since 2024.

He previously served as the 29th vice president of Liberia from 2006 to 2018, under President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and as the minister of agriculture from 1983 to 1985.

The suggestion advanced by Liberia's President at the just ended 66th summit of ECOWAS heads of state and governments is great, welcoming, and relevant.

It is only through diplomacy that such intergovernmental negotiation can take place. Indeed, there is strength in Unity.

Regional Solidarity is required no matter what the issues are. There is a very strong connection between international cooperation and sustainable development (Kaydor, 2024).

Through international cooperation processes, the ECOWAS region can ensure that mutually agreed outcomes (Ibid) are obtained in the ultimate interests of all member states.

The practice of international cooperation either stalls or enhances the attainment of national, regional, and global public goods and amicable outcomes. Official Development Assistance (ODA) is one of the key components of international cooperation that remains a key pillar to the achievement of sustainable development in the mutually beneficial interest of stronger and weaker states.

International cooperation is the fulcrum for sustainable development (Kaydor, 2024). First, international cooperation impacts sustainable development because it is through cooperation that states can attain mutually beneficial outcomes to address both national, regional, and global challenges and problems.

Without international cooperation, states will fail to singularly achieve their national interests.

Simply put, all states are interdependent. Second, international cooperation has evolved over time moving beyond the traditional practice of bilateral and multilateral cooperation to now include global governance that involves trans governmental networks; transnational private governance; and transnational public-private partnership processes.

These global networks are complex but help states and

non-state actors to cooperate in attaining national, regional, and global development outcomes bordered on the security of states and the wellbeing of their people.

For instance, Liberia just documented citizens of Burkina Faso who have migrated to some counties in the South-Eastern Region. Regional solidarity is needed to support each other citizens and this is what Liberia is doing.

As I see it, there is a need to improve regional international cooperation in ECOWAS by enhancing diplomacy and negotiations to ensure that states and non-state actors further commit and fulfill the principles of global partnership.

Liberia is a brainchild of ECOWAS formation. The country also benefitted from the support and assistance of ECOWAS during the Liberian Civil War.

ECOMOG came to Liberia and some soldiers of West African States died in Liberia during our civil war.

These are terrible times for Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso.

The 3 countries need to advance economic growth and build strong institutions for sustainable development as required under SDG16 on the one hand, while they need to take concrete steps to radically end extreme poverty and pursue the path to sustainable development so their citizens can enjoy the benefits of their respective countries, on the other. This can only happen when peace and stability are in place.

This is where ECOWAS comes in. The Regional body needs to increase its diplomatic overtures to ensure peace, security, harmony, and National Unity in the region mainly in the countries affected by crises.

Liberia as the lead founder of ECOWAS therefore needs to lead the diplomatic efforts. To help to keep ECOWAS united as a bloc, the Government of Liberia Should Lead Diplomatic Efforts to Keep ECOWAS States together.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is made up of fifteen member countries that are located in the Western African region. These countries have both cultural and geopolitical ties and shared common economic interest. The region of West Africa is located west of north-south axis lying close to 10° east longitude.

The Atlantic Ocean forms the western as well as the southern borders of the West African region. The northern border is the Sahara Desert, with the Ranishanu Bend generally considered the northernmost part of the region. The eastern border lies between the Benue Trough, and a line running from Mount Cameroon to Lake Chad.

Colonial boundaries are still reflected in the modern boundaries between contemporary West African states, cutting across ethnic and cultural lines, often dividing single ethnic groups between two or more states.

The 15 members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

The main goal of ECOWAS is to promote economic cooperation among member states in order to raise living standards and promote economic development.

ECOWAS has also worked to address some security issues by developing a peacekeeping force for conflicts in the region. ECOWAS established its free trade area in 1990 and adopted a common external tariff in January 2015.

In September 2016, USTR hosted ECOWAS officials for the second meeting of the United States-ECOWAS Trade and Investment Framework Agreement Council. Among the topics discussed were a review of current activities in support of shared trade and investment objectives, a vision for the ECOWAS - U.S. trade relationship in the medium to long-term, and broadening ECOWAS - U.S. trade and investment cooperation to new areas.

U.S. goods exports to ECOWAS in 2022 were \$6.7 billion, down 3.3 percent (\$226 million) from 2021 and down 20 percent from 2012. U.S. goods imports from ECOWAS totaled \$9.4 billion in 2022, up 38.8 percent (\$2.6 billion) from 2021, but down 55 percent from 2012. The U.S. trade balance with ECOWAS shifted from a goods trade surplus of \$153 million in 2021 to a goods trade deficit of \$2.7 billion in 2022.

U.S. foreign direct investment (FDI) in Ecowas (stock) was \$6.8 billion in 2022, a 16.5 percent decrease from 2021.

ECOWAS'S FDI in the United States (stock) was \$0.8 billion in 2022, unchanged from 2021.

Entrepreneur nurtures growth, change in agriculture sector

By Special Correspondent

WHEN Quinty Rabophala (pictured) began her farming journey in 2018, she was inspired by her family's agricultural roots and her determination to make a difference in the sector.

In 2020 she combined her master's degree in Agricultural Economics with hands-on farming to create a business focused on sustainability, growth, and impact, officially launching Kenokatha Farms during the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This year, Rabophala's dedication was recognised when she won Top Entrepreneur for Siyakhula Programme and Woman in Business Champion at the 10th Annual National Enterprise Development Awards (NEDAs), hosted by Black Umbrellas, a Cyril Ramaphosa Foundation partner entity. Black Umbrellas supports the development of 100% Black-owned small through a digitally-enabled incubation programme.

"These awards confirm that what we thought could work actually is working. Now, I get to proudly call myself an award-winning farmer. It's a reminder to keep going and to inspire my team to realise their potential too," she says.

Starting with a 1.5-hectare plot in Midrand, Johannesburg, Rabophala has steadily scaled her operations. Today, Kenokatha Farms boasts an eight-hectare farm in Botlokwa, Limpopo, and her family's ten hectare farm in Mashite, Lebogakomo, which she integrated as an out-grower.

Kenokatha specialises in niche vegetables like baby marrows, broccoli, green beans, and sugar snap peas, supplying retailers and markets across South Af-



rica.

Key to her success has been overcoming challenges such as market access and compliance. Early setbacks like losses due to the lack of secure markets and necessary certifications motivated Rabophala

to seek solutions.

In 2023, Rabophala joined the Siyakhula Programme through Black Umbrellas, which she credits for transforming her business approach.

"The programme taught

me invaluable lessons, particularly the importance of compliance and the value of delegating tasks. It's not about doing everything yourself but empowering your team and growing together," she explains.

Compliance has been at the heart of Kenokatha Farms' growth strategy. Rabophala is currently working towards Global GAP certification, a benchmark for food safety and quality that will allow her to export her products. With support from a food safety programme by SPAR, she's implementing systems to meet these stringent standards.

"Compliance is essential. It's not that our products aren't good enough, but we need the paperwork to prove it. I've put everything I have into meeting these standards, and it's paying off. We're on track for an audit in December, and I'm confident we'll get there," she says.

Rabophala has also expanded her reach. While her Midrand operation hires up to 15 seasonal workers during peak times, her Limpopo farms are being prepared for similar levels of productivity. The integration of her family's farm has further strengthened her supply chain, ensuring consistent delivery to markets.

To achieve her goal of supplying top-tier retailers and expanding into export markets, Rabophala is pursuing funding to cover critical infrastructure needs. She recently applied for an Agri BEE matching grant, seeking R5 million to build a compliant packhouse, purchase refrigerated trucks, and improve logistics.

"The funding will help us eliminate gaps in the supply chain. Currently, we're delivering produce in open vehicles, which isn't ideal for maintaining quality. With proper infrastructure, we can ensure our products meet the highest standards," she explains.

While the grant requires a 10% contribution, Rabophala is working tirelessly to secure the necessary R500,000 to unlock these opportunities.

For Rabophala, farming is more than a business, it's a platform for empowerment. She's passionate about creating jobs and nurturing talent within her community, providing permanent employment to six staff members and seasonal opportunities to many more.

Her future plans include continuing to grow her core business. The Siyakhula Programme has inspired her to rebrand and refine her vision, positioning Kenokatha as a leader in innovation and sustainability.

Her advice to aspiring entrepreneurs is: "Start where you are and use what you have, but never stop learning. Surround yourself with people who share your vision and grow with them."

With her determination, Rabophala is proving that with the right support and resilience, South Africa's agricultural sector can thrive.

By Adonis Byemelwa

BY early January 2025, teacher trainees across Tanzania will embark on their teaching practice, a crucial period that tests their readiness for the profession.

This phase connects theoretical classroom learning to the real-world demands of teaching, providing an opportunity for trainees to refine their skills. However, as institutions gear up for this exercise, concerns about discipline and professionalism among trainees have sparked conversations about the future of teacher education.

Stedius Kazinduki, an experienced tutor at Katoke Teachers' College, describes teaching practice as the "true test" for aspiring educators.

"The classroom reveals who is prepared for this noble profession. While many rise to the occasion, there are worrying cases of trainees failing to adhere to basic standards of conduct, and this is troubling," he said.

Such concerns have prompted some private schools to reject hosting teacher trainees, citing disciplinary issues. These rejections highlight deeper systemic gaps in teacher preparation.

Constantine Raphael, a long-serving tutor at Butimba Teachers' College, shares that indiscipline among teacher trainees is not a new phenomenon but is becoming increasingly common. "Some trainees arrive late, dress unprofessionally, or disregard school norms. This damages their reputation and casts doubt on the quality of training institutions," he noted.

Raphael believes this issue stems from changes in the structure of teacher training programs. "In the past, rigorous mentorship and practical teaching in primary or secondary schools were mandatory for all trainees. Today, many tutors themselves lack hands-on classroom experience, making it challenging to instill the discipline they never practiced," he explained.

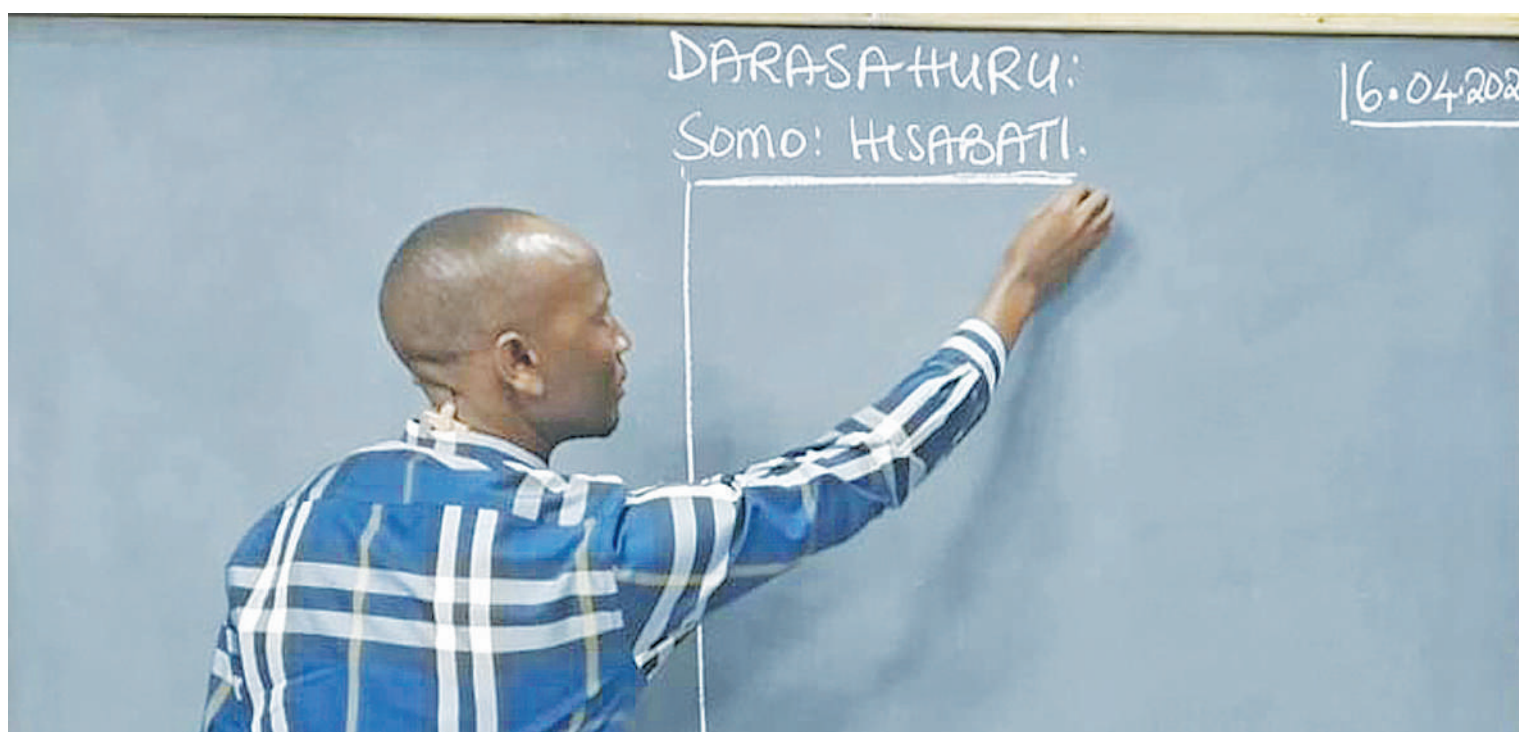
Prof. Emmanuel Babygeya, a retired curriculum developer and lecturer at the Open University of Tanzania, links the current state of affairs to the shift toward degree-focused training.

"When diploma and certificate programs were prioritized, discipline and foundational teaching skills were emphasized. Now, bachelor's degree trainees have more academic freedom, but this often translates to less accountability," he said.

Babygeya added that this independence can sometimes foster attitudes that conflict with the collaborative and disciplined environment of schools.

The issue of unpreparedness is compounded by gaps in mentorship. Justin Mukebezi, another experienced tutor at

Teacher trainees gear up for challenging teaching practice in 2025 amid setbacks



Back then, every tutor knew what it meant to manage a classroom.

Katoke Teachers' College, recalls a time when teacher training colleges ensured that all tutors gained experience teaching in primary or secondary schools before taking on training roles.

"Back then, every tutor knew what it meant to manage a classroom. Today, that foundational knowledge is missing, and it shows in the behavior of the trainees," he said. Mukebezi believes reinstating this approach would address some of the concerns raised by schools rejecting teacher trainees.

Prof. Abel Ishumi, an education expert from the University of Dar es Salaam, highlights the need for a stronger focus on professionalism in teacher training. "Teaching is not just about delivering content. It's about shaping young minds, which requires discipline, integrity, and respect for the profession."

These qualities must be ingrained during training," he said. Ishumi suggests that institutions should adopt stricter screening processes before deploying trainees for teaching practice, ensuring only those who meet

high standards of conduct are selected.

Dr. Apollo Mugenyi from Tumaini University Makumira emphasizes the importance of preparing trainees for the unwritten norms of the schools they join.

"Trainees often stumble because they don't understand the culture of the institutions they enter. For instance, knowing how to address parents, when to involve senior staff, or even where to sit during meetings are small but crucial aspects of school life," he said.

Dr. Mugenyi also stressed that trainees must demonstrate respect for the resources and routines of their host schools. "A trainee who uses the tools available effectively and respects the institution's way of working shows they are adaptable and resourceful," he added.

The experiences of countries like Finland and Singapore provide valuable lessons for Tanzania. Both nations have integrated long-term, hands-on mentorship into their teacher training programs. Prof. Babygeya points to Finland's model, where trainees

spend a year under the guidance of experienced teachers, learning both practical skills and professional etiquette. "This approach ensures that by the time a teacher graduates, they are fully equipped to handle the classroom and the broader responsibilities of the profession," he said.

Teacher trainees must also understand the critical role parents play in private schools, where they are often key stakeholders.

Raphael highlighted that a trainee who interacts respectfully with parents demonstrates a maturity that can set them apart. "Parents need to feel confident that the teacher handling their child is not only skilled but also empathetic and professional," he noted.

Understanding students on a personal level is another skill trainees must develop. Raphael stressed that calling students by their names and tracking their progress makes a significant difference.

"It's not just about teaching a subject. It's about teaching the child. A good teacher knows

their students as individuals, and that connection often starts with something as simple as knowing their names," he explained.

Effective teaching also requires collaboration with fellow teachers. Mukebezi urged trainees to observe and learn from the routines of their more experienced colleagues. "If other teachers participate in extracurricular activities or help with administrative tasks, trainees should follow suit. This shows initiative and a willingness to be part of the school community," he said.

Despite these challenges, trainees who excel during their teaching practice often find it to be a stepping stone to long-term opportunities. Kazinduki shared stories of trainees who performed exceptionally well and were immediately offered positions in their host schools. "Teaching practice is not just a requirement; it's an audition. Those who treat it as such often secure their future," he said.

To address current shortcomings, educators agree that reforms are urgently needed. Prof.

Ishumi advocates for the reintroduction of mentorship programs where trainees are paired with experienced educators who can guide them both professionally and ethically.

Dr. Mugenyi adds that curriculum changes are necessary to balance theoretical knowledge with practical skills. "Trainees need to be prepared for real-world challenges, from managing discipline to engaging with parents. Without this, they are likely to struggle in the field," he said.

Prof. Babygeya believes a cultural shift within training institutions is also required. "Discipline and professionalism must be emphasized from day one. Trainees should understand that teaching is not just a job but a calling that requires unwavering commitment," he said. He also called for greater collaboration between training institutions and schools to ensure that trainees are well-prepared for the environments they will enter.

As January approaches, the spotlight is on teacher trainees to prove they are ready for the profession. Institutions, trainers, and the trainees themselves all have roles to play in ensuring that this year's cohort meets the highest standards.

With the right attitude, proper mentorship, and a commitment to excellence, this generation of trainees has the potential to reshape the future of education in Tanzania.

The teaching profession stands at a crossroads, demanding a revival of discipline and values. Many school owners voice concerns over the poor conduct of some trainees, raising alarms about gaps in teacher preparation.

Unlike the past, where diploma and certificate tutors gained first-hand classroom experience, today's degree-focused system fosters individualism and erodes accountability. Some tutors even exploit trainees during field assessments, a stark betrayal of professional ethics.

The call is clear: trainee teachers must uphold teaching standards with integrity, while institutions must reinforce discipline and professional decorum. The future of education depends on restoring these foundational principles without compromise.

Brains before bridges: Prioritising human capital over infrastructure

By Kamrul Hassan

A glance at the recent history of the world's most developed nations reveals a compelling truth: no country has ever achieved sustainable development without first investing in education and research.

The stories of South Korea, China, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Singapore stand as powerful testaments to this principle. These nations prioritized human capital development over physical infrastructure, understanding that educated minds and innovative ideas are the true engines of progress.

Instead of focusing solely on roads, bridges, and skyscrapers, they built world-class educational institutions, fostered a culture of research, and invested in technology and knowledge-driven industries. This strategic approach enabled them to create self-sustaining economies with skilled workforces capable of driving innovation from within.

Today, these countries are global leaders in manufacturing, technology, and advanced research – a testament to the transformative power of prioritizing education before infrastructure. Their success offers a clear lesson for other developing nations: lasting development is not built with bricks and mortar alone but with minds and ideas that shape the future.

While Vietnam is currently following the proven path of prioritising education and research as the foundation for development, Bangladesh remains an exception. Over the past 14 years, Bangladesh has pursued a development strategy that places physical infrastructure ahead of human resource development.

The fundamental flaw in this approach lies in its misplaced priorities – infrastructure requires skilled people to build, operate, and sustain it, not the other way around. By focusing on constructing nuclear power plants, satellites, bridges, and metro rail systems without first developing a pool of skilled local experts, Bangladesh has become heavily dependent on foreign engineers, consultants, and technology.

These large-scale projects, financed by foreign loans, are operated and supervised by foreign experts, leaving little room for local capacity building. This approach creates a cycle of dependency, where the nation's pride in grand infrastructure is overshadowed by its reliance on external support.

True progress lies in empowering local human capital, for it is skilled people who create self-reliant nations – not merely bricks, steel, and concrete.

It is difficult to name a single country, other than Bangladesh, that has built a nuclear power plant using foreign loans and foreign supervision without having its own world-class nuclear physicists or engineers.

Likewise, launching a national satellite without the backing of skilled, home-grown engineers is nearly unheard of. Consider India as a case in point. India's rise as a technological powerhouse was not accidental – it was the result of deliberate investment in human capital.

Instead of rushing to build monumental infrastructure, India focused on creating a foundation of knowledge and expertise. The establishment of world-



A grim view of a Dhaka university dormitory, where students are forced to huddle together in overcrowded, substandard living conditions, offering minimal and wholly inadequate residential support

class educational and research institutions like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) enabled the country to produce a generation of engineers, scientists, and innovators.

This approach allowed India to develop and launch its own satellites, build its metro systems, and develop its nuclear technology, all with minimal reliance on foreign expertise.

The lesson is clear: a nation must first build its people before it builds its infrastructure. Without skilled human resources, infrastructure becomes a borrowed achievement – impressive to look at, but dependent and fragile at its core.

Why do we need institutes?

The recent Nature Index ranking of the world's top 200 science cities offers a profound lesson in the power of education and research. Beijing holds the top spot, followed by Shanghai and New York, with five of the top 10 positions occupied by Chinese cities.

This dominance is no coincidence. For over 30 years, China has relentlessly invested in education, research, and the development of world-class institutions. Today, multiple Chinese universities are counted among the world's top 20, reflecting the tangible returns on this long-term strategy. But the story doesn't end with China.

In India, Kolkata has re-emerged as the country's No. 1 science city, ranking 84th globally – ahead of Bangalore (85th), Mumbai (98th), Delhi (124th), and Hyderabad (184th). Surprisingly, Kolkata also surpasses renowned scientific hubs like Tel Aviv, Uppsala, Glasgow, and Leipzig. How did this happen?

The answer lies in the presence of well-established research institutions like the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science (IACS), and Jadavpur University, which have cultivated a rich

academic and research ecosystem. The success stories of Beijing, Shanghai, and Kolkata underscore a simple but vital truth: nations and cities that prioritise education and invest in top-tier institutes do not just compete – they lead.

Institutes are not mere buildings; they are crucibles of innovation, talent, and discovery. Without them, no nation can hope to achieve lasting progress or global influence in science, technology, or industry.

The power of world-class research institutions

The backbone of any nation's scientific and technological progress lies in its research institutions. Take India, for example, where institutions like the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science (IACS), S.N. Bose National Center for Basic Sciences, Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), and Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics have played a pivotal role in propelling the country's scientific standing.

These institutions boast world-class researchers, robust PhD and postdoctoral programs, attractive research facilities, competitive salaries for scholars, and collaborative research environments. Their contributions are consistently recognized in leading international journals like Physical Review Letters, Nature, and Science, underscoring their global impact.

In stark contrast, Bangladesh does not have a single world-class research institute. The absence of strong PhD and postdoctoral programs and a limited pool of internationally competitive researchers has hindered the country's ability to make a mark in the global scientific arena. This is a critical gap in development strategy.

Nations like the United States became superpowers not merely because of natural resources but because they built educational and

research giants like MIT, Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Caltech, and Stanford. Similarly, South Korea has the Institute for Basic Science (IBS), Japan has the National Institute of Natural Sciences, and India has the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR). Even Vietnam, once seen as a developing nation, has established advanced research institutions and is already reaping the benefits.

The lesson is clear: nations that prioritise education and research institutions create a self-sustaining cycle of innovation, skilled human resources, and technological independence.

For Bangladesh to break free from its reliance on foreign expertise and loans for major projects, it must invest in building its own world-class research institutions. Without them, the dream of self-sufficiency in science, technology, and industry will remain out of reach.

What about Bangladesh's universities?

Bangladesh currently has around 150 universities, but do we have enough competent faculty members to staff even 50 of them? The shortage of qualified teachers is a critical issue that threatens the quality of education in the country.

In addition to these universities, over 800 colleges under the National University offer honors and master's degrees, essentially functioning as universities themselves. For perspective, consider Imperial College London – though it is called a "college," it ranks among the world's top 10 universities due to its world-class faculty and research resources.

In Bangladesh, however, there is a growing trend to convert large colleges into universities under the misguided belief that a name change alone will ensure academic excellence.

But where are the qualified teachers to support this expansion? Without creating

a robust pipeline of highly trained faculty members, no university can hope to achieve world-class status.

Bangladesh needs to focus on developing world-class research institutes that can train scholars who will eventually become the next generation of professors. The key to this transformation lies in nurturing excellence, not merely expanding quantity.

What kind of institute do we need?

To build a world-class research institute, Bangladesh needs to create an environment conducive to deep thinking, research, and reflection. Here's a vision for what such an institute should look like:

Natural Setting: The institute should be designed like a serene park, filled with trees, birdsong, and tranquil spaces. Research and creativity thrive in natural, peaceful environments.

Collaborative Spaces: Outdoor benches under trees where researchers can reflect and engage in deep intellectual conversations should be a feature of the campus. Genius often emerges from moments of quiet reflection.

Comfortable Accommodation: The institute should have a world-class guest house to host visiting scholars from abroad. Comfortable accommodation is essential to attract and retain international collaborators.

State-of-the-Art Research Facilities: Advanced research infrastructure like super-computer laboratories are essential to attract the best researchers, both local and foreign. Cutting-edge equipment and modern technology are prerequisites for high-impact research.

Residency Programmes: The institute should invite top Bangladeshi researchers from abroad to return to the country for 2-3 months a year. This would create a dynamic research environment where local and international researchers can collaborate on high-impact projects. In addition, the institute should invite foreign scholars, and organise schools and conferences around the year.

Degree it may offer: The institute will offer world-class MS and PhD degrees. It must have its own renowned resident scientists and world-class post-docs. These resident scientists, post-docs together with guest scientists will supervise PhD and take classes at the graduate levels.

How will this help Bangladesh?

Supply of Teachers for Universities: With strong PhD and postdoctoral programs, the institute will create a continuous

pipeline of highly qualified faculty members for universities and colleges. This will address Bangladesh's chronic shortage of competent university teachers.

Attracting Global Talent: By establishing world-class facilities and offering competitive research opportunities, Bangladeshi researchers living abroad will be more inclined to return, even for short-term assignments. Additionally, international scholars can be invited to join collaborative research projects.

Promoting Research Publications: If the institute fosters research that is published in top-tier journals like Nature and Science, Bangladesh's visibility in the global scientific community will increase. This recognition can attract international grants and partnerships.

Postdoctoral Programs: Strong postdoctoral programs will ensure that PhD graduates remain in Bangladesh, contributing to local innovation instead of seeking better opportunities abroad. This will help retain the country's brightest minds.

Fostering a Research Ecosystem: The creation of this institute will spark an ecosystem of collaborative research and innovation. Such a research ecosystem has the potential to drive progress in various sectors, from technology to healthcare, ultimately benefiting the entire nation.

Instead of focusing solely on physical infrastructure, Bangladesh must prioritise human infrastructure. No nation has ever achieved sustainable development without first investing in education, research, and knowledge creation.

Countries like China, South Korea, India, and Vietnam have all demonstrated this path to progress. Without world-class research institutes, Bangladesh will remain dependent on foreign expertise for major development projects like nuclear power plants, satellites, and metro rail systems.

Bangladesh must establish at least one world-class institute for natural or fundamental sciences to achieve truly sustainable development. Such an institute would act as a hub for nurturing the next generation of scholars, engineers, and innovators.

While this path may not yield immediate results, it will, over time, produce a self-sufficient, knowledge-driven nation capable of sustainable and independent development. Only through cultivating human potential can Bangladesh achieve the status of a truly developed nation.

The Daily Star, Bangladesh

CAPITAL RADIO

RATIBA YA VIPINDI

JUMATATU - JUMAPILI

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

Tembelea mitandao ya kijamii ya CAPITAL RADIO



CAPITAL RADIO

Chinese foundation's clean water project transforms livelihoods in rural Ethiopia

ADDIS ABABA

GETACHEW Gemechu, a 25-year-old father of two, lives in a small, arid town in central Ethiopia, an area known for water scarcity that affects the livelihoods of agrarian community members.

In what looks like an oasis in the area, Gemechu's backyard farm is teeming with life, growing a variety of fruit plants, including avocado, mango, banana, and guava. They thrive alongside a selection of vegetables in the yard.

Gemechu said in a recent interview that access to safe water sources is "absolutely essential" for community members to grow fruits and vegetables and raise livestock, as the Melka community, located on the outskirts of Dukem Town, about 33 km east of Addis Ababa, the country's capital, is mainly dependent on agriculture.

"For years, the limited access to water had put our community in a difficult situation. We had to spend hours traveling to a distant stream, which cost us precious time, energy, and money," he said.

The challenges of finding a reliable water source meant that agricultural activities in the area were largely confined to the rainy seasons. "We have been yearning for a long-term solu-



tion to our water problem," Gemechu said.

The young father noted that the water shortage he and his fellow community members have endured for years is now "a thing of the past," thanks to an innovative project by the China Foundation for Rural Development (CFRD) and its partner

Xuzhou Construction Machinery Group Co., Ltd. (XCMG).

His family is one of 39 households in the Melka community that have been benefitting from water cellars built in their backyards.

"The newly-built water cellar facility collected a good amount of water during the recent rainy season, and we have been using the stored water

for the past few months," said Gemechu.

Gemechu's relief and happiness were echoed by his wife, Ake Adugna, who also emphasized the importance of the project in providing a better future for their family and ensuring food security in the area.

"Fetching water from the river was an exhausting task. This water cellar

has eased our struggle by providing reliable access to clean water in our backyard," said the 20-year-old mother.

Tsegab Demeke, project officer at CFRD Ethiopia, said the early harvests from the project are already showing improvements in the livelihoods of community members.

"The project is changing their lives

in many ways. Students used to miss school to help their families collect water, walking two to three kilometers a day, sometimes several times a day. This project has helped to address the problem," Demeke said.

The CFRD, which has been implementing the water cellar project in cooperation with the XCMG, has so far delivered more than 200 water cellars, providing safe water sources to over 12,000 vulnerable community members in arid parts of Ethiopia, according to Yin Qian, director of the CFRD Ethiopia Office.

With Ethiopia's multiple rainy seasons, community members can collect and store the rainwater during each rainy season for household, farming, and gardening use.

The project is the latest manifestation of the CFRD's continuous contribution to the area. The foundation has since 2021 implemented various projects at the Obay Primary School, on the outskirts of Dukem, including a school feeding program, donation of school supplies through the Panda Packs Project, and solar lights, benefitting both the students and the wider community.

CFRD officials said the water cellars were designed with sustainability in mind, using renewable and environmentally friendly construction methods.

Tamiru Tolosa, another member of the Melka community, voiced his hope that similar projects will be implemented to help others in need of life-changing interventions.

"They (CFRD) have made such a positive difference in our lives. We cannot thank them enough," Tolosa added.

By Guardian Correspondent, Msalala

FOUR years ago, Tanzania's mining sector reached a pivotal milestone. After extensive negotiations, the government signed a transformative mining agreement that created a win-win situation for both Tanzania and Barrick Gold. This agreement reshaped the sector, with a focus on improving tax compliance, royalties, and ensuring meaningful investments that would benefit Tanzanians.

The agreement granted the government full visibility and participation in operational decisions, marking a groundbreaking shift in Barrick Gold Corporation's policy with host countries. It ushered in a new era of collaboration between Tanzania and Barrick, accompanied by the introduction of regulations and new laws that made Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) mandatory in the mining sector, with a strong emphasis on local content.

The overarching goal was to ensure that local Tanzanians reaped the benefits from the mining sector, particularly through major projects. The local content regulations were designed to stimulate growth within the mining sector, expand the value chain, and facilitate technology transfer, enabling Tanzanians to capture more benefits beyond royalties and corporate taxes.

At a recent training workshop on local content and CSR implementation at Barrick's Bulyanhulu mining site in Kakola, Janet Lekashingo, Chairperson of the Mining Commission, explained that the regulations were designed to promote sustainability and inclusivity. She emphasized that these policies were aimed at ensuring communities near mining activities would be the primary beneficiaries of Tanzania's natural resources.

"This is not just about fulfilling obligations. It's about shaping a future where mining leaves a lasting positive impact. Since its inception, the Mining Commission has remained committed to ensuring Tanzanian goods and services take precedence in the mining sector," Lekashingo said.

Barrick's commitment to local content has been evident, with Barrick Twiga Minerals Corporation effectively implementing these policies. The company has focused on empowering local communities, creating jobs, and fostering local businesses. Lekashingo urged other mining companies to follow Barrick's example and prioritize local content.

"The role of local content is crucial in unlocking Tanzania's potential. It connects global expertise with local talent, ensuring that mining becomes the



Four years on: Tanzania's mining sector transforms through strategic agreement

cornerstone of our national progress," she added.

Lekashingo also praised Barrick for its leadership, which is largely Tanzanian, including its general managers. She encouraged other companies to empower local talent in a similar way.

Empowering local suppliers is critical to building capacity and fostering cooperation between the government and the mining industry. Lekashingo highlighted the importance of establishing local industries to support the mining sector and drive economic growth, rather than relying on imported machinery and equipment.

"The government is focused on seeing the establishment of indus-

tries that serve the mining sector, such as the special economic zone at Buzwagi, which aims to attract both local and foreign investors," she said.

Venance Kasiki, Director of Mineral Audit and Trade at the Mining Commission, congratulated Barrick Twiga for its commitment to local content compliance. He also announced plans to amend CSR regulations to make them more accessible and effective for all stakeholders, ensuring the successful implementation of development projects.

Kasiki noted that approximately 96.6 billion Tanzanian shillings had been spent on CSR projects since 2018, but challenges in the current regulations hinder the

effective delivery of benefits to local communities. He assured that the government would engage all stakeholders in the review process.

"We recognize the gaps in the current regulations, and we want to work with mining companies and local communities to create more effective, sustainable CSR strategies," Kasiki said.

Kasiki also highlighted the government's plans to introduce a digital procurement system to streamline local content and CSR implementation, replacing the current manual system. Additionally, efforts are underway to integrate local content and CSR teachings into higher education curriculums to raise awareness of

their impact.

The review of CSR regulations will align with a five-year socioeconomic development plan, aiding the effective implementation of CSR projects.

"This workshop is an essential part of our commitment to ensuring that the Mining Act, Local Content Regulations, and CSR mandates are properly implemented. Together, we will explore the successes, challenges, and opportunities to make mining more sustainable in Tanzania," Kasiki said.

Kasiki also explained that the review of CSR regulations would empower local communities to choose their own development priorities, ensuring that their needs are met through well-tar-

geted projects.

Victor Lule, General Manager of Bulyanhulu, shared that the mine allocates about \$1.2 million annually for CSR activities, which are part of Barrick's broader commitment to supporting local communities. Since 2020, more than 200 productivity projects focusing on education and health, including malaria prevention programs, have been implemented.

"We provide training programs for local entrepreneurs, helping them utilize opportunities in the mining sector and explore business ventures with the company," Lule said. "Currently, 82% of our procurement is done by local suppliers, with the remaining 12% sourced internationally."

Lule also pointed out that 96% of the company's employees are Tanzanians, with some holding management positions, underscoring Barrick's commitment to promoting local content.

Barrick Gold and the Tanzanian government jointly own the Bulyanhulu mines through Twiga Minerals Corporation.



Nigeria oil licence applicants must prove low carbon emissions, says Nigerian regulator

By Camillus Eboh, Abuja

NIGERIA will require applicants for oil licences and permits to show evidence of low carbon emissions and a renewable energy program from Wednesday before approvals are granted, the head of its upstream regulatory agency said on Tuesday.

Gbenga Komolafe, chief executive of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission, said the policy was to comply with the country's goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2060.

It issued a template, called the Upstream Petroleum Decarbonisation Template (UPDT), to guide applicants.

Komolafe said enforcement will start from Jan. 1, 2025, and will cover all approvals in the

upstream sector including investments.

"By this, the commission is deepening its efforts to align the upstream petroleum industry with national priorities and international climate goals while ensuring sustainable value creation from oil and gas resources for Nigeria's energy security and economic development," Komolafe said.

The new requirement will also compel operators to implement methane management programs such as leak detection and repairs, optimise operations with energy-efficient technologies and integrate renewable energy sources into projects.

Wall Street lost ground on Tuesday as investors closed the book on a remarkable year for equities.



One year after OPEC exit, Angola's oil production sees modest growth

LUANDA

ANGOLA'S average daily oil production reached 1.134 million barrels in the first three quarters of 2024, increasing by 4 per cent compared to the same period last year, according to data from Angola's National Petroleum, Gas and Biofuels Agency (ANPG).

The rise follows Angola's exit from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) on Dec. 21, 2023, driven by dissatisfaction with its production quota of 1.11 million barrels per day. ANPG data indicates that monthly output throughout the first three quarters and November generally exceeded the previous OPEC-mandated cap, except for April, when production fell below the quota, and October, when figures were not disclosed.

According to the Angola Press Agency, government stabilization measures have contributed to the uptick in production. However, output remains significantly below the 2015 peak of 1.8 million barrels per day. The gains were attributed to the commissioning of new oil wells and interventions in various concessions.

Last Friday, Diamantino Pedro Azevedo, Angola's minister of mineral resources, oil and gas, affirmed the government's commitment to sustaining oil production above 1 million barrels per day in 2025, aiming to reverse the sector's recent decline and ensure supply stability in both domestic and international markets.

A representative of a local petroleum company told Xinhua that the slight increase in Angola's oil production in 2024 is mainly the result of cumulative efforts to improve output over recent years.

He noted that the aging of Angola's oil wells remains a long-term challenge, a trend that is difficult to reverse over the next decade. However, the commissioning of new wells offers potential for continued growth and stability in production over the coming years.

According to both international and Angolan statistics, Angola remains sub-Saharan Africa's second-largest oil exporter, second only to Nigeria.

Nigeria to expand credit access to citizens

By Isaac Anyaogu, Lagos

NIGERIAN President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has unveiled a bold plan to enhance credit access for individuals and key sectors of the Nigerian economy, aiming to drive national economic growth and improve living standards.

In his New Year's address on Wednesday, the President assured citizens that his administration would tackle the persistent challenges that have hindered access to credit, particularly for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

Tinubu announced that the Federal Government would establish the National Credit Guarantee Company to facilitate risk-sharing instruments for financial institutions and enterprises. According to him, the company is expected to commence operations by the end of the second quarter of 2025.

"This initiative is a partner-

ship of government institutions, including the Bank of Industry, Nigerian Consumer Credit Corporation, Nigerian Sovereign Investment Agency, and Ministry of Finance Incorporated, alongside private sector and multi-

lateral institutions," Tinubu explained.

The President emphasized that the initiative would bolster the financial system's confidence, increase access to credit, and provide significant support

to underserved groups such as women and youth.

"It will drive growth, re-industrialization, and better living standards for our people," he affirmed.

Highlighting recent economic gains, Tinubu noted that 2024 ended on an encouraging note for the Nigerian economy. He cited a gradual decrease in fuel prices, foreign trade surpluses recorded for three consecutive quarters, and an increase in foreign reserves.

"The Naira has strengthened against the US dollar, providing greater stability. Additionally, record-breaking growth in the stock market has generated trillions of naira in wealth, while surging foreign investments demonstrate renewed confidence in our economy," he said.

However, he acknowledged that challenges persist, particularly concerning the high cost of food and essential drugs, which remains a burden for many Ni-

gerian households.

President Tinubu reiterated his administration's commitment to implementing reforms that would foster long-term economic stability and prosperity. He outlined his vision for transforming Nigeria into a trillion-dollar economy, calling for unity and cooperation among citizens.

"We are on the right path to building a great Nigeria that works for everyone. Let us not be distracted by a small segment of our population still clinging to divisions based on politics, ethnicity, region, or religion," he urged.

The President concluded his address with a message of hope and goodwill, stating, "As we enter 2025, I wish everyone a happy and prosperous New Year. May this year bring joy, success, and good health to all Nigerians. Together, we will fulfill our collective aspirations and achieve the Nigeria of our dreams."



AU recognises female innovators using technology to transform the education sector in Africa

By Special Correspondent

THE AU Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) recognises information, communication and technology (ICT) as a major tool for empowering graduates and ensuring they contribute to social economic development by ensuring they not only have universal access but also ensuring they enhance the quality of provision and delivery of services. ICT opens up possibilities for innovation, entrepreneurship and employability; flexibility in pedagogies; beating the limitation of time and space for varied learner needs; and enhancing confidence and dignity of graduates at all levels.

From the two editions of the Innovating Education Expo in Africa held in 2018 and 2019, five girls and young women in Africa have been awarded for their efforts towards achieving 'Aspiration 6' of Agenda 2063 which calls for a continent whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children.

The 2019 Expo held in August, identified two top winners from the eleven innovators awarded. This is a demonstration that empowering girls and young women, through Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), can play a key role in bringing solutions to daily challenges in the societies and give young women the possibility of

becoming the drivers leading change in their communities.

The strides by the young women contributes towards the work of the African Union International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa (AU/CIEFFA) whose mission is to empower girls and women through education, in line with the strategic objective 6 of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) which aims to "accelerate processes leading to gender parity and equity".

Through the 2019 Innovation Education Expo, AU/CIEFFA shed light on the work of these talented young women, the impact on their communities and how STEM significantly transformed them. The Centre had the opportunity to closely follow five of the innovators (from Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa) who attended the Expo and showcased what they have been doing in their respective countries.

Susannah Farr: Making education a co-creative journey

Susannah Farr, CEO of the Gold Youth Development Agency (GYDA) in South Africa, was the top innovator at the Expo. Her organisation is committed to serving young people at grassroots through a replicable scalable peer-education model that considers every young person on the continent as a future nation builder. The GYDA is harnessing the positive influence young people

have over their peers to drive sustainable outcomes in the area of education and behavioural change. The organisation is addressing education outcomes in challenging circumstances and looking at solutions to create jobs in areas where there are no jobs. Their evidence-based youth peer education model has been used to reach over 55 000 young people in 123 communities across 4 countries.

Anne Nyaboke Wakesho: Enhancing access to literacy through Digital Apps

Anne, representing eLimu Kenya, a leading digital educational content provider in East Africa, won the second prize at the Innovating Education Expo 2019. Her company created Hadithi Hadithi, a literacy app targeting young people out-of-school and early childhood kids in communities and refugee camps. Available in English, Swahili and Somali, Hadithi Hadithi provides an education content reflecting Africa's local reality through stories written and illustrated by Kenyan teachers and artists across East Africa. It also encompasses letter tracing, spelling and sentence making exercises. All these form a pedagogy known as "Reading to Learn" which aims at improving progress in reading and writing four times faster than traditional methods.

Amina Umuhoza: Empowering girls through e-counselling

Amina, a young Rwandan woman, stands up for women's empowerment in her country. Through the initiative Dukataze, an online platform aimed at equipping girls with the right skills, as well as to mentally, socially and economically empower them to reduce unwanted pregnancies. Some of the services of Dukataze include career guidance, counselling on sexual reproductive health, and start-up tutorials where young women access guidance on how to start up their businesses. Dukataze currently includes an e-commerce component where different products made by girls and young women can be sold.

Angèle Messa: Designing alternative methods to increase access to education

From Cameroon, Angèle was among the top innovators at the first edition of the Innovating Education Expo 2018 in Dakar, Senegal. She developed, Educlic, a platform designed to promote alternative teaching methods for children who cannot access the formal education system. Through online and offline technologies (internet, USSD, SMS), education content is designed and transmitted to vulnerable and marginalized categories including young people and children in refugee camps, orphanages as well as people living with disabilities. The Innovating Education Prize in 2018 helped Educlic completely digitise their services and design more education content. In order to

enhance girls' and young women's access to their content, the subscription is free. As of August 2019, more than 3,000 young people had benefited from the services of Educlic.

Anita Antwiwaa: Breaking down space science for young people

Ghanaian Dr. Anita Antwiwaa is a certified Engineer with a PhD in Electronics and Communications Engineering. She is the head of operations for All Nations University Space Systems Technology Laboratory (SSTL), which successfully launched the historic GhanaSat-1, developed by young Ghanaian Engineers from the University in 2017 to take photographs of the Earth and to monitor Ghana's coastal areas. One of her current projects is teaching Space Technology to the Youth using CanSat in order to boost their interest in choosing a career in that area as well as teaching young women in the field of technical and vocational studies, entrepreneurship; as well as using ICT to stand out in branding and marketing their innovative products. Her ambition is also to establish an electronics institution which will train young women in the area of electronic circuits design and assembling as well as give informal training in the area of electronics and electrical devices troubleshooting and servicing to young women who dropped out of school but still want to pursue a career in STEM.

Tigray leader says region losing gold without benefit

ADDIS ABABA

ETHIOPIA'S prime minister recently touted the country's mining resources and said the industry could achieve a historic milestone by generating up to \$2 billion in gold revenue this year. He made the comment while inaugurating a gold exploration and mining factory in the Gambella Region.

On Dec. 10, Abiy Ahmed reported that Ethiopia's economy is "one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa and a beacon of opportunity on the continent."

"Among its many thriving sectors, the gold mining industry stands out as a significant driver of growth, presenting immense potential for both local and international investment," he said on social media.

But officials in Tigray, one of the richest gold mining regions in Ethiopia, say they are losing resources without benefit for their region at a time when Tigray is trying to recover from two years of brutal war between local rebels and the federal government.

The interim president of Tigray, Getachew Reda, speaking on Nov 15 said during the three and half months prior (August, September and October) "28.25 quintals of Gold entered into the Federal Government." "The government has not received a single penny," he said.

Ethiopia's Commercial Bank,

through its branch in Shire Inda Selasse, the hub of the gold in Tigray, recently bought \$132 million worth of gold in just three months, according to branch manager Tekie Giday. The Tigray region's entire budget for this year is nearly \$100 million.

Officials in Tigray said the region is struggling with budget shortfalls as it attempts to bring back services discontinued or destroyed during the war.

Environmental fears

In addition to lack of economic benefits, officials in Tigray reported that gold mining has exposed some of the region's residents to dangerous chemicals like mercury and cyanide, which are used for extracting gold.

Residents living close to the mining fields say the chemicals have been harmful to humans and livestock, with reports of deformed skin on cows and degraded farmland, witnesses and officials said.

Some residents in Tigray's Northwest region have gone to the courts seeking justice, to get judges to act against goldminers, who they accuse of polluting the environment and causing ill health to their children.

The president of the High Court of the Northwest, Judge Mengistu Teklay, told VOA that chemicals used by miners are becoming the source of health, security and sta-



bility concerns.

"Utilizations of natural resources must be governed by law and order. It shouldn't benefit the few individuals," Mengistu said. "Those individuals who benefit from these resources should not be allowed to bring safety concerns, existential threats, and health concerns to the unbenefited public."

Cyanide and mercury have both been used during the mining process in Tigray, according to multiple interviews conducted by VOA's Horn of Africa Service. The World Health Organization identifies mercury as one of the top 10 chemicals or chemical groups posing public health concerns.

Alarmed by the use of the chemi-

cals, Ethiopia's Bureau of Innovation and Technology, a government body tasked with overseeing the country's science and technological development, asked Tigrayan regional government institutions to take action to prevent unsafe use of the chemicals.

Gizachew Weldetsadik Beyene is director of the Radiation and Nuclear Safety Department in Tigray's Bureau of Innovation and Technology. He said a team from the bureau posing as traditional miners traveled to the mining areas and saw what he called a "sad" situation.

"It is so scary," Gizachew said, sharing a video of a cow affected by the chemicals, and pictures of women washing the soil using

chemicals in search of gold without safety protocols and with their bare hands.

"We've seen the damage to animals, to the land, the soil, to people who use running water and suffer, with their skin damaged, the animals which are drinking that water and exposed to dangerous diseases," Gizachew said.

Action taken

The Tigray region's Cabinet this week called for a halt to goldmining. The announcement was made by the deputy president of Tigray's interim administration, Lieutenant General Tsadkan Gebretinsae. He did not elaborate about when the suspension will start and how the measure will be implemented.

Prior to that, the Tigray Communication Affairs Bureau said in a statement that action was taken against people who were using illegal dangerous chemicals to process gold in Tahtay Koraro district near a dam that is a source of potable water for the city of Shire Inda Selasse.

No details were given about the actions and the type of chemicals used.

A security source who requested anonymity as he is not authorized to speak to the media alleged that foreign companies are working with Ezana Mining Development, a local mining company.

The head of Ezana company, Tesfatsion Desta, did not initially

respond to VOA calls.

After a VOA Tigrigna Service radio report aired, Ezana put out a statement saying it was not asked to comment on the story, which it called "distorted."

In the statement, Ezana said it worked with foreign companies before the Tigray war. The statement continued that because of insecurity and instability, however, these companies did not come back after the war.

The company said the gold factory located in Northwest Tigray's Asgede district, in the Tabia Lemat area, is free from pollution, waste and environmental distraction.

Without naming a specific country, Tigray President Getachew told the region's diaspora community in a Zoom meeting that he believes more gold than reported is smuggled out of Ethiopia.

Getachew said what is happening in Tigray is becoming "a crime."

"It is a very serious problem. It is not just robbery. People are losing their animals because of the dangerous chemical used by the miners. There are people who are known to participate in this network from top to bottom among government and security officials."

VOA's repeated attempts to get comment from the Tigray Bureau of Land and Mining and the Mining Ministry, as well as the National Bank of Ethiopia, were unsuccessful.



South Africa's Koeberg nuclear plant refit boosts power supplies

CAPE TOWN

SOUTH African power utility Eskom has successfully linked the second unit of its Koeberg nuclear power plant to the national grid after a major refit, further boosting electricity supply after years of power cuts, the company said on Tuesday.

After a bleak decade of controlled

power outages, Eskom has provided uninterrupted electricity supply for the past nine months, helping to improve business confidence in Africa's most industrialised economy.

Koeberg power station, north of Cape Town, is currently the only commercial nuclear power plant in Africa and its two units contribute around 1,860 megawatts or 5% of national power supply.

"Koeberg exemplifies how nuclear power can align economic and environmental priorities to create a sustainable energy future," Dan Marokane, Eskom's chief executive officer, said in a statement.

In July, the nuclear regulator extended the 40-year operating licence of the plant's Unit 1 by a further 20 years. The regulator is expected to make a deci-

sion to extend Unit 2's licence for a similar period before the end of 2025.

Advertisement · Scroll to continue

South Africa is planning an additional 2,500 MW of future nuclear power. It is also considering resurrecting development of its small Pebble Bed Modular Reactor design, discontinued more than a decade ago due to a lack of funding and partners.

Kenya's bourse wraps up 2024 higher as stocks rally

NAIROBI

THE Nairobi Securities Exchange (NSE) concluded 2024 on a strong note on Tuesday, with all key indices on an upward trajectory into 2025.

Market data from the NSE revealed that the benchmark NSE 20 Share Index ended at

2,010.65, gaining 16.91 points and surpassing the 2,000 mark for the first time in several years.

Meanwhile, market capitalization -- an indicator of investors' wealth -- closed the year up by 35 percent, reaching 1.939 trillion shillings (14.98 billion U.S. dollars). This surge

reflects a growth of 3.83 billion dollars in investors' wealth for 2024, according to analysis by the exchange.

The recovery was largely driven by gains in the stock prices of blue-chip companies, including major banks and telecommunications firms.

The Nairobi Securities Ex-

change (NSE) is a leading African Exchange, based in Kenya -- one of the fastest-growing economies in Sub-Saharan Africa.

NSE was established in 1954 as the Nairobi Stock Exchange, based in Nairobi the capital of Kenya. It was a voluntary association of stockbrokers

in the European community registered under the Societies Act in British Kenya.[4][5] The exchange had 66 listed companies in February 2021.

Between 1954 and 1999 was a voluntary association of stockbrokers in the European community registered under the Societies Act in British Kenya.

China-Africa relations continue to yield fruitful results in 2024: spokesperson

BEIJING

CHINA-Africa relations continued to yield fruitful results in a volatile and intertwined international situation in 2024, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said Tuesday.

Mao told a daily press briefing when asked to comment on the highlights of China-Africa cooperation in 2024 and the prospects for China-Africa relations in 2025.

She said nearly 6,000 Chinese and foreign guests, including leaders of 53 African countries having diplomatic relations with China, chairperson of the African Union Commission, and UN Secretary-General, attended the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in September.

Bilateral relations between China and all African countries having diplomatic ties with China were elevated to the level of strategic relations, and the overall characterization of China-Africa relations was elevated to an all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for the new era, Mao noted.

The FOCAC Beijing Summit affirmed that the two sides should jointly advance modernization characterized by six features and announced 10 partnership actions for China and Africa to advance modernization.

Mao added that a good number of signature programs and small and beautiful projects have been delivered in Africa.

"We have witnessed the great unity in the Global South and the collective rise of the Global South with China and Africa as key members," Mao said, adding that the FOCAC Beijing Summit adopted a declaration that expressed opposition to hegemonism, camp confrontation and "decoupling."

"Looking ahead to 2025, China will actively implement the outcomes of the FOCAC Beijing Summit and the important consensus reached by Chinese and African leaders," Mao said, noting that China will work with African countries to synergize policies and development strategies, deepen mutually beneficial cooperation across the board and strengthen cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

China is willing to work with African countries to continue to firmly support each other on issues concerning respective interests and major concerns, enrich the connotation of an all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for the new era, jointly safeguard the common interests of the Global South and international fairness and justice, and promote world peace and development, Mao said.

East Africa's AI revolution: growth, innovation and challenges

By Silver Kayondo

EAST Africa is beginning to explore the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI). While the AI landscape in East Africa is still nascent, countries in this region are increasingly using Generative AI tools and contemplating AI regulation. As the fastest growing region in Africa—with a growth rate of 4.7% in 2024 and an expected rate of 5.7% in 2025–26—East Africa may be positioned to lead Africa's AI movement.

In Uganda, for example, there has been a recent boom in the use of Generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Gemini and Perplexity AI. The Ugandan government has also established the National AI Taskforce, tasked with generating a comprehensive report to inform a national AI strategy. This is in line with regional peers such as Rwanda, Kenya, and Tanzania which are also at various stages of AI policy and regulatory development.

The African Union has also developed a Continental AI Strategy, which among other aspects, provides for AI governance frameworks, capacity building, AI safety, public-private partnerships, and regional and international cooperation. It is anticipated that global developments such as the European

Union AI Act will continue influencing AI evolution and regulation in the Ugandan and African landscape.

Some notable AI use cases in Uganda include research and development at the Makerere AI lab, the use of AI in managing electronic fraud and spam in the fintech sector, and music production. There have also been use cases highlighted in interactive chatbots in financial services, wildlife conservation to save elephants from poachers, and law enforcement uses in the form of surveillance AI facial recognition software supplied by Huawei.

Similarly, in Kenya, promising AI use cases have been reported in education, where applications have been developed to tailor a personalized learning experience for students based on their unique needs, as well as in healthcare to detect cervical cancer and cardiopulmonary diseases.

In Tanzania, a multidisciplinary AI lab was recently launched to assist the country in development of AI infrastructure in healthcare, digital economy and environmental conservation, and agriculture, among others.

In Rwanda, there are reported use cases of aiding healthcare facilities in procuring supplies in real-time by leveraging AI to man-

age supply chain processes, from shipping to warehousing, distribution, and inventory management. In Rwanda's international airport, robots have been deployed to provide vital information to travelers, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ The leading AI growth drivers across East Africa include fast-paced digitalization across the region, with Kenya leading in terms of digital maturity according to the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSMA). Furthermore, the expansion of e-payment and fintech solutions has facilitated digital payments has also acted as a major catalyst for digital growth. In Kenya alone, M-Pesa user rates have increased exponentially, reaching a financial inclusion level of over 80% in recent years, according to the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK).

As for regulatory frameworks, some existing electronic laws have provided a basic framework for software business regulation and development in East Africa. In Uganda, some of the major electronic laws include the Electronic Transactions Act, Cap 99; the Data Protection and Privacy Act, Cap 97; the Computer Misuse Act, Cap 96; the Electronic Signatures Act, Cap 98; and the Uganda Communications Act, Cap 103 which created institutions such as the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC),

which oversees the liberalized Communications sector.

In Kenya, the Kenya Information and Communications Act (1998) established the Communications Authority of Kenya (CAK), which performs the same functions as UCC. The Kenya Information and Communications Act, Cap.411A created a licensing framework for communication services.

In Tanzania, the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority Act (2003) created the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA); and in Rwanda, one of the first African nations to introduce a national AI policy, the major role players are the Ministry of Information, Communication Technology and Innovation (MIN-ICT) and the Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority (RURA).

Other factors fuelling AI growth include the expansion of data centers and cloud facilities coupled with their associated foreign direct investment (FDI) in the region. For instance, Microsoft and G42, an Emirati AI development holding company recently announced multiple AI initiatives across East Africa, including a \$1 billion comprehensive digital ecosystem initiative, which will include AI model development and research in local languages, like Swahili; an East Africa Innovation Lab for AI digital

skills training; international and local connectivity investments; and collaboration with the government of Kenya to support safe and secure cloud services across East Africa.² Such investments are anticipated to supply the massive computing power for processing and data storage required for ubiquitous AI deployment and scaling.

But despite the above positive highlights, there are some pain points that need further legal and regulatory intervention to address barriers that could inhibit or slow down AI adoption. The primary challenge lies in the inadequate AI infrastructure, highlighting significant gaps between the current technological capabilities and the resources required for widespread adoption, such as AI-optimized hardware and high-speed networks. The local talent pool in AI engineering, programming, data modeling and analytics, and data science remains limited, further hindered by a traditional education system that requires substantial reforms to address the technical and soft skill demands of today's global economy.

Another key challenge is the increase in digital taxes, such as mobile money and Internet taxes, which are common in East African countries. Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania have also imposed Value

Added Tax (VAT) and Digital Services Taxes (DSTs) on non-resident providers of electronic services. Such taxes on nascent ecosystems increase costs of devices and retrogress digital and financial inclusion. Comprehensive tax impact assessments could provide better insights and strategies to mitigate the harms of excessive taxation.

Other challenges include restrictive enforcement measures, such as internet and mobile money shutdowns, particularly during elections and contested political processes, which disrupt network operations. In Uganda, for example, the continued shutdown of Facebook negatively impacts investor confidence in the sector. Technological convergences driven by AI could result in wider ecosystem challenges for key sectors, such as communications, banking, health, education, and aviation, if networks are further throttled and/or blocked to limit public access resulting in economic disruption and system failures.

In sum, East Africa is positioned for AI expansion and growth in 2025. However, the speed and depth of such AI development will be determined by domestic and global factors such as the surge in global AI investment in the region and countries' approaches to regulation.

SEOUL

SOUTH Korean officials said will conduct safety inspections of all Boeing 737-800 aircraft operated by the country's airlines, as they struggle to determine what caused a plane crash that killed 179 people a day earlier.

Sunday's crash, the country's worst aviation disaster in decades, triggered an outpouring of national sympathy. Many people worry how effectively the South Korean government will handle the disaster as it grapples with a leadership vacuum following the recent successive impeachments of President Yoon Suk Yeol and Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, the country's top two officials, amid political tumult caused by Yoon's brief imposition of martial law earlier this month.

New acting President Choi Sang-mok on Monday presided over a task force meeting on the crash and instructed authorities to conduct an emergency review of the country's aircraft operation systems.

"The essence of a responsible response would be renovating the aviation safety systems on the whole to prevent recurrences of similar incidents and building a safer Republic of South Korea," said Choi, who is also deputy prime minister and finance minister.

The Boeing 737-800 plane operated by South Korean budget airline Jeju Air aborted its first landing attempt for reasons that aren't immediately clear. Then, during its second landing attempt, it received a bird strike warning from the ground control center before its pilot issued a distress signal. The plane landed without its front landing gear deployed, overshot the runway, slammed into a concrete fence and burst into a fireball.

Alan Price, a former chief pilot at Delta Air Lines and now a consultant, said the Boeing 737-800 is a "proven airplane" that belongs to a different

South Korea probes boeing Aircraft after crash kills 179



Experts from the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and joint investigation team between the U.S. and South Korea check the site of a plane crash at Muan Interna

class of aircraft than the Boeing 737 Max jetliner that was linked to fatal crashes in 2018 and 2019.

But South Korea's Transport Ministry said Monday it plans to conduct safety inspections of all of the 101 Boeing 737-800 jetliners operated by the country's airlines as well as a broader review into safety standards at Jeju Air, which operates 39 of those planes. Senior ministry official Joo Jong-wan said representatives from the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board and Boeing were expected to arrive in South Korea on Monday to participate in the investigation.

Ministry officials also said they will look into whether the Muan air-

port's localizer — a concrete fence housing a set of antennas designed to guide aircraft safely during landings — should have been made with lighter materials that would break more easily upon impact.

Joo said the ministry has determined that similar concrete structures are in other domestic airports, including in Jeju Island and the southern cities of Yeosu and Pohang, as well as airports in the United States, Spain and South Africa.

Video of the crash indicated that the pilots did not deploy flaps or slats to slow the aircraft, suggesting a possible hydraulic failure, and did not manually lower the landing gear, suggesting they did not have time, said John

Cox, a retired airline pilot and CEO of Safety Operating Systems in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Despite that, the jetliner was under control and traveling in a straight line, and damage and injuries likely would have been minimized if not for the barrier being so close to the runway, Cox said.

Other observers said the videos showed the plane was suffering from suspected engine trouble but the landing gear malfunction was likely a direct reason for the crash. They said there wouldn't likely be a link between the landing gear problem and the suspected engine issue.

Earlier Monday, another Boeing 737-800 plane operated by Jeju Air returned to Seoul's

Gimpo International Airport shortly after takeoff when the pilot detected a landing gear issue. Song Kyung-hoon, a Jeju Air executive, said the issue was resolved through communication with a land-based equipment center, but the pilot decided to return to Gimpo as a precautionary measure.

Joo said officials were reviewing whether there might have been communication problems between air traffic controllers and the pilot. "Our current understanding is that, at some point during the go-around process, communication became somewhat ineffective or was interrupted, ahead of the landing and impact," he said.

Ministry officials said Monday the plane's flight

data and cockpit audio recorders were moved to a research center at Gimpo airport ahead of their analysis. Ministry officials earlier said it would take months to complete the investigation of the crash.

The Muan crash is South Korea's deadliest aviation disaster since 1997, when a Korean Airlines plane crashed in Guam, killing 228 people on board.

The crash left many South Koreans shocked and ashamed, with the government announcing a seven-day national mourning period through Jan. 4. Some questioned whether the crash involved safety or regulatory issues, such as a 2022 Halloween crash in Seoul that killed 160 people and a 2014 ferry sinking that

killed 304 people.

The Transport Ministry said authorities have identified 146 bodies and are collecting DNA and fingerprint samples from the other 33.

Park Han Shin, a representative of the bereaved families, said they were told that the bodies were so badly damaged that officials need time before returning them to their families.

"I demand that the government mobilize more personnel to return our brothers and family members as intact as possible more swiftly," he said, choking down tears.

The crash was yet more major news for South Koreans already reeling from a political crisis set off by Yoon's martial law decree, which brought

hundreds of troops into Seoul streets and revived traumatic memories of past military rule in the 1970-80s.

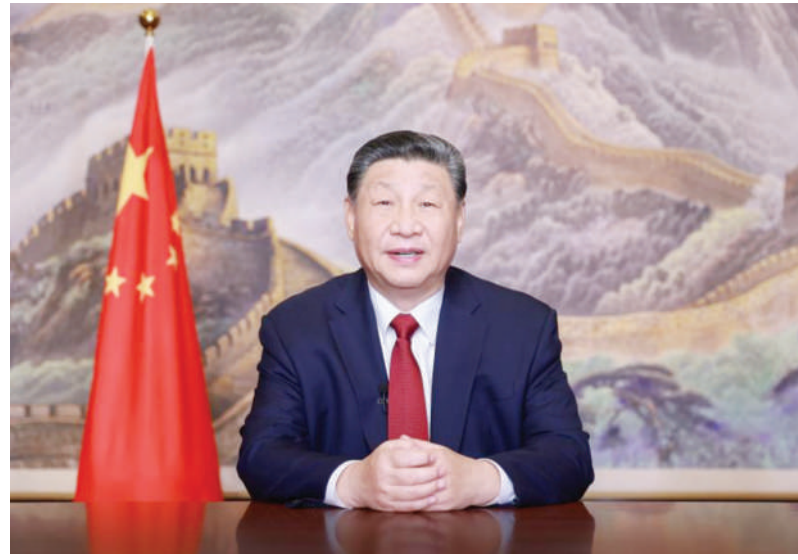
The political tumult resulted in the opposition-controlled National Assembly impeaching Yoon and Han. The safety minister stepped down and the police chief was arrested over their roles in the martial law enforcement.

The absence of top officials responsible for managing disasters has led to concerns.

"We are deeply worried whether the Central Disaster and Safety Countermeasures Headquarters really can handle the disaster," the mass-circulation JoongAng Ilbo newspaper said in an editorial Monday.

WORLD

Xi calls on nation to remain confident



Chinese President Xi Jinping delivers a New Year message through China Media Group and the internet on Tuesday evening in Beijing to ring in 2025. XINHUA

BEIJING

CONFIDENCE, people's livelihoods and a global vision were highlighted by President Xi Jinping on Tuesday in his New Year message, offering a glimpse into China's commitment to advancing its modernization drive, delivering a better life for people, and making the world a better place for all.

Delivering the message through China Media Group and the internet, Xi called on the nation to remain confident in the new year, adding that the world's second-largest economy can overcome challenges and pressures through hard work.

While reviewing China's accomplishments in 2024, which he described as "a momentous year", Xi said the economy had rebounded and was on an upward trajectory, with the GDP expected to pass the 130 trillion yuan (about \$18.08 trillion) mark and the country's grain output surpassing 700 million tonnes.

For the first time, China had produced

more than 10 million new energy vehicles in a year, and breakthroughs had been made in the fields of integrated circuit, artificial intelligence and quantum communications.

Xi did not shy away from mentioning the challenges on the way forward, saying the Chinese economy "now faces some new conditions, including challenges of uncertainties in the external environment and pressure of transformation from old growth drivers into new ones".

"But we can prevail with our hard work," he said. "We must be confident."

Noting that the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) will be completed in 2025, Xi said China will implement more proactive and effective policies, prioritize high-quality development, promote greater self-reliance and strength in science and technology, and maintain sound momentum in economic and social development.

Xi recollected some moments from his inspection tours around the country, saying he was happy to see that people's sense

of fulfillment had been enhanced thanks to policies such as increased pension, lower housing loan rate and the trade-in of consumer goods.

Stating that ensuring the people lead happy lives is of paramount importance, the president said the common aspirations of every household included good education for children, good elderly services for the seniors and more opportunities for young people.

"We must work together to continuously enhance social governance, consistently foster a harmonious and inclusive atmosphere, and address both major issues and minor concerns that matter to the lives of ordinary people to make them smile better and feel warmer," he said.

Regarding China's role on the global stage, Xi expressed China's

commitment to promoting global governance reform and contributing to maintaining world peace and stability.

China is willing to work with countries around the world to promote friendly cooperation, advance the mutual learning among civilizations and participate in the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, creating a better future for the world together, he added.

Xi also underlined the need to unwaveringly implement the policy of "one country, two systems" to maintain long-term prosperity and stability in Hong Kong and Macao.

"We Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one and the same family. No one can ever sever the bond of kinship between us," he added. *Xinhua*

Macron: Dissolution of parliament brought more divisions than solutions

PARIS

FRENCH President Emmanuel Macron acknowledged on Tuesday night that dissolving the French National Assembly in June created more division than resolution.

The dissolution aimed to give the voice back to the French and regain clarity, "but lucidity and humility require us to recognize that, at this time, this decision has produced more instability than serenity and I take full responsibility for that", Macron said in his annual New Year's Eve address.

Macron dissolved parliament in June after the far right trounced his alliance in European elections. He called snap parliamentary polls, which resulted in a hung parliament and the resignation of Prime Minister Gabriel Attal.

Michel Barnier succeeded Attal, but he was ousted in a no-confidence vote on Dec 4.

Macron extended his gratitude to the three prime ministers who served in 2024 - Elisabeth Borne, Gabriel



French President Emmanuel Macron is seen on screens as he delivers his televised New Year's address to the nation from the Elysee Palace, in Paris on Tuesday. AFP

Attal and Michel Barnier - and extended best wishes to Francois Bayrou, the fourth prime minister in 2024 appointed following Barnier's ouster.

On Europe's security, Macron stressed the importance of self-reliance, noting that the continent can no longer delegate

its security to other powers. "In 2025, France must continue investing in military rearmament to ensure sovereignty, protect our interests, and guarantee the safety of our compatriots," he added.

He also urged Europe to accelerate its efforts to take charge of its defense and bor-

der security. "There will be no prosperity without security and France, through its diplomatic and military power, always has a role to play in this regard," Macron said.

Reflecting on 2024, he highlighted France's role as host of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris and celebrated the reopening of Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral.

Looking ahead, Macron expressed the hope that 2025 would be a year of collective recovery, driven by action and unity, to bring stability, make sound decisions, and strengthen France's independence amid global instability. He called on the French to contribute to accomplishing the tasks laid out for 2025, bringing hope, prosperity and peace.

New gun laws rolling out in multiple US states on Jan. 1

NEW YORK

U.S. states have taken steps to pass their own gun regulations to effect on Jan. 1, as related violence kept on ravaging the nation with nearly 500 mass shootings occurring in 2024, reported USA Today on Tuesday.

In September, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed a series of laws aimed at strengthening gun safety regulations. Those include requiring schools to implement safety programs and plans, and establishing

an Office of Gun Violence Prevention, which have deadlines in the coming years. Some of those laws go into effect on Jan. 1.

As of Jan. 1, any handgun stored inside an unoccupied vehicle in Colorado must be in a locked, hard-sided container that is out of plain view, and the vehicle also must be locked, with some exceptions.

Later in 2025, Coloradans who want to apply for a concealed carry permit will be required to complete an eight-hour training class, which

includes a written exam and a live-fire exercise.

The only gun-related bills signed into law in 2024 in New Hampshire expanded gun rights. Going into effect on Jan. 1, HB 1186 strengthens privacy protections around gun laws by prohibiting the use of specific merchant category codes, and HB 1336 bars employers from forbidding employees from storing guns in locked vehicles.

Kentucky is one of 10 states that passed an MCC ban in 2024, accord-

ing to the National Rifle Association (NRA), and at least five other states have previously passed those laws while a handful of other states, including California, have passed legislation requiring it. The NRA touted that several states have passed laws to prohibit assigning a code for gun retailers, known as a "merchant category code (MCC)."

Minnesota passed a binary trigger ban, which goes into effect on Jan. 1. A binary trigger allows a gun to be fired once when the trigger is pulled, then again when the trigger is released.

One year after OPEC exit, Angola's oil production sees modest growth

LUANDA

ANGOLA'S average daily oil production reached 1.134 million barrels in the first three quarters of 2024, increasing by 4 percent compared to the same period last year, according to data from Angola's National Petroleum, Gas and Biofuels Agency (ANPG).

The rise follows Angola's exit from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) on Dec. 21, 2023, driven by dissatisfaction with its production quota of 1.11 million barrels per day.

ANPG data indicates that monthly output throughout the first three quarters and November generally exceeded the previous OPEC-mandated cap, except for April, when production fell below the quota, and October, when figures were not disclosed.

According to the Angola Press Agency, government stabilization measures have contributed to the uptick in production.

However, output remains significantly below the 2015 peak of 1.8 million barrels per day. The gains were attributed to the commissioning of new oil wells and interventions in various concessions. Last Friday, Diamantino Pedro Azevedo,

Angola's minister of mineral resources, oil and gas, affirmed the government's commitment to sustaining oil production above 1 million barrels per day in 2025, aiming to reverse the sector's recent decline and ensure supply stability in both domestic and international markets.

A representative of a local petroleum company told Xinhua that the slight increase in Angola's oil production in 2024 is mainly the result of cumulative efforts to improve output over recent years.

He noted that the aging of Angola's oil wells remains a long-term challenge, a trend that is difficult to reverse over the next decade.

However, the commissioning of new wells offers potential for continued growth and stability in production over the coming years. According to both international and Angolan statistics, Angola remains sub-Saharan Africa's second-largest oil exporter, second only to Nigeria.

How will the arrest warrant for S. Korean President Yoon be executed?

SEOUL

THE Seoul Western District Court on Tuesday issued a warrant to arrest the impeached President Yoon Suk-yeol and search the presidential residence on insurrection and other charges, marking the first time in the country's modern history that an arrest warrant was issued against a sitting president. Consisting of the Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO), National Office of Investigation (NOI) and the defense ministry's investigation headquarters, a joint unit in charging the investigation of the emergency martial law order issued by Yoon on Dec. 3 requested the warrants to the court on Monday, naming Yoon as a suspected ringleader on insurrection charge.

However, Yoon's side submitted a written opinion and appointed defense counsel to the Seoul Court just hours after the request for issuance of the warrants.

According to the country's Yonhap News Agency, the court may have concluded that there is substantial evidence supporting allegations of insurrection by Yoon and it may have accepted the CIO's view that Yoon declared emergency martial law to disrupt the constitutional order and must therefore undergo a compulsory investigation.

Yonhap said that Yoon's failure to respond to summonses by the joint investigation unit prompted the court's decision to issue the arrest warrant.

The unit asked Yoon to appear for questioning three times on Dec. 18, Dec. 25 and Dec. 29, but the impeached leader refused to receive summonses and submit documents for the appointment of his defense counsel. Yoon said in a televised address on Dec. 12 that he will not avoid his legal and political responsibility for the martial law that was revoked by the National Assembly only hours later.

Under South Korean law, an arrest warrant is generally valid for one week from the date of issuance. If not executed within this timeframe, its validity can be extended with court approval. According to Yonhap, the CIO has not yet determined the date for executing the arrest warrant. CIO officials told the media that the method and timing of executing the warrant will be carefully considered in light of various circumstances. When asked whether the CIO would coordinate the timing with Yoon's team, the officials said that this is not customary but could be considered if necessary. The CIO plans to detain Yoon and conduct investigations at the government office building in Gwacheon, Gyeonggi Province, after which Yoon will be held at the Seoul Detention Center.

China, US should expand list and make bigger pie of cooperation

CHINA and the United States recently signed a protocol to extend the 45-year-old Agreement Between the United States and China on Cooperation in Science and Technology for additional five years.

The international community widely welcomes the renewal of the agreement. They believe that sci-tech cooperation between China and the US not only serves the interests of both peoples but also facilitates their joint efforts in addressing global challenges.

This once again demonstrates that China-US cooperation can lead to fruitful results that are beneficial to both countries and the rest of the world.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations 45 years ago, China-US

relations have gone through the tests of winds and rains but have largely sustained a positive momentum.

From the "Ping-Pong Diplomacy" that broke the ice of bilateral relations to the group "Kuliang Friends" that continued the legacy of friendship, each small step of "harmony" and "cooperation" between China and the US has injected impetus into the historical development of their relationship.

Over the past four years, China-US relations have gone through ups and downs, but the two sides have also been engaged in dialogue and cooperation. The relationship has remained stable on the whole.

Facts have proved that when the two countries treat each other as partners and seek common ground

while shelving differences, their relationship will make considerable progress. But if they regard each other as rivals and pursue vicious competition, they will roil the relationship or even set it back.

To steer China-US relations to the right course and foster a stable, sustainable and productive China-US relationship, it is necessary to draw inspiration from the past experiences and grasp the general direction of bilateral cooperation.

The interests of China and the US have been closely intertwined. Win-win cooperation is a defining feature of bilateral relations, and dialogue and cooperation remain the only right choice for the two countries.

The total trade between China and the US has exceeded \$660 billion.

Over 70,000 American companies are doing business in China, earning a profit of \$50 billion annually. In terms of employment, exports to China alone support 930,000 jobs in the US.

Chinese products have not only offered American customers more choices, but also lowered costs for them, and Chinese investment has not only created more jobs in the US, but also bolstered local economies.

Around two-thirds of Qualcomm's global revenue and a quarter of Intel's global revenue come from the Chinese market. Out of Apple's 200 major suppliers worldwide, over 80 percent have set up factories in China. Tesla alone accounted for 28.6 percent of China's new energy vehicle exports last year.

These examples illustrate the vast

potential for China-US cooperation. The two countries stand to gain mutual benefits and win-win outcomes from cooperation.

The two sides should expand the list of cooperation and make a bigger pie of cooperation based on their complementary advantages. The success of one side should be an opportunity rather than a challenge for the other, and one's achievement should help rather than hinder the development of the other.

The world economy is facing many difficulties and challenges, and each country faces its own set of challenges. The right choice is to build an open world economy through cooperation. Neither decoupling nor supply-chain disruption is the solution. "Small yard, high fences" is not what

a major country should do.

History and facts have proved that tariff war, trade war, and tech war are against the trend of history and laws of economics. Imposing restrictions or engaging in unilateralism and protectionism will inevitably disrupt normal trade cooperation and the stability of industrial and supply chains.

It is a clear-cut choice that China and the US should choose cooperation over confrontation, and win-win cooperation over zero-sum games.

Former US Treasury Secretary Larry Summers recently said that centuries of economic studies and past practical experiences have shown that for major economies, initiating a global trade war is a highly detrimental choice.

It's all about the tree: How Russia celebrates New Year

MOSCOW

RUSSIA'S main New Year's fir tree arrived at Moscow Kremlin's Cathedral Square at midnight on December 12.

The 90-year-old fir was felled near the settlement of Znamenka, located not far from the town of Mozhaysk, approximately 110 km west of Moscow. The tree was chosen from over 25 'candidates.' The process of carefully packing the tree and loading it onto a special truck took around two days. Several young spruce saplings will be planted at the site where the tree was cut down.

On January 1, 2025, the new year will begin. TASS has prepared this factbox with background information on the history of Russia's traditional New Year's celebration.

Origins of the New Year's holiday

The first Christmas trees in Russia appeared during a period that historians often refer to as the Time of Troubles (1598-1613), which followed the Polish invasion. This tradition failed to take root then. During the reign of Peter the Great (1672-1725), conifer trees began to be set up on New Year's Eve on Moscow's Cathedral Square and in Merchant Yard (the then equivalent of today's indoor shopping malls). The custom was borrowed from the Europeans that resided in Moscow's German Quarter.

On December 29 and 30, 1699 (December 19 and 20 according to the Julian Calendar effective in those days) Peter the Great issued two decrees – one on a new system of chronology and the other, on celebrating the New Year. Under the decrees, the years were to be counted from the day of Jesus Christ's birth and the beginning of the new year would be celebrated on January 1, in accordance with the custom adopted in European Christian countries. Before that, Russia had stuck to the Byzantine Calendar, which calculated historical time from the moment of the world's creation (believed to have been at 5509-5508 BC). According to the Byzantine Calendar, the first day of the new year was on September 1. That said, Peter the Great decided against adopting the Gregorian Calendar, which European countries had introduced in the 16th century. Russia retained the Julian calendar.

It was ordered to decorate Moscow's main streets and the homes of the nobility with conifer trees and branches. The New Year festivities lasted for seven days, topping the holiday off with a bonfire display lighting up Moscow's Red Square, the site of the main events.

Spruces were put up and decorated for Christmas, December 25, and remained in place until the New Year. Originally, the trees were adorned with sweets, fruit, ribbons, and candles. Later, they were decked out with special toys, most of them associated with biblical stories: jingle bells, stars, holiday lamps and tiny figures of angels and shepherds. Presents for all members of the family were placed under the tree – an unmistakable allusion to the Gifts of the Magi. Later, toys made from glass began to be brought from Germany. At the end of the 19th century, glass baubles and Russian-manufactured beads were already available. At about the same time, the country borrowed the European custom of making artificial Christmas trees. With that, the initial ones were made from pieces of fabric.

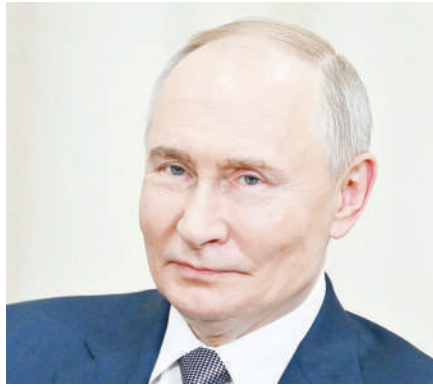
The first Christmas tree meant for public display was placed inside St. Petersburg's railway station in 1852. Later, trees began to be installed and decorated at other public sites.

The Christmas tree tradition was interrupted by World War I. In 1915, German prisoners of war, kept at a hospital in Saratov, arranged a Christmas party, consequently triggering enraged comments from Russian dailies. Thus, Emperor Nicholas II banned the custom of decorating trees for Christmas.

Consequences of the October Revolution

After the October Revolution of 1917, the tsarist ban was lifted, and on December 31 of that year the first public Christmas tree was put on display at the Mikhailov Military School in Petrograd (the wartime name of St. Petersburg). There was no celebration in the Moscow Kremlin, which suffered from shelling in November 1917.

In January 1918, the Council of People's Commissars of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) passed a decree introducing the Western European Gregorian calendar. The Russian Orthodox Church did not accept the change and continued to adhere to the traditional Julian calendar. This is why Russian Orthodox Christians celebrate Christmas on January 7, which under the Julian cal-



Russia's president Vladimir Putin

endar corresponds to December 25. At the same time, a new unofficial holiday emerged – the Old New Year – which is celebrated on January 14.

In the first years of the Soviet Union, the tradition of Christmas and New Year's celebrations continued. Special New Year's parties for the children of government and Communist Party officials were held at the Grand Kremlin Palace. However, in the mid-1920s, a campaign against religious practices was launched across the country. As a result, Christmas was banned in 1929. At the same time, there were proposals to move the New Year's celebration from January 1 to November 7 (Day of the October Revolution). While the Soviet authorities did not take this step, Christmas celebrations were condemned as an alien "bourgeois and religious" legacy and outlawed in 1929.

Revival of the holiday

On December 28, 1935, the Pravda newspaper published an article by Pavel Postyshev, a senior Soviet politician, entitled "Let's organize a great New Year's tree for the kids on New Year's Eve!", in which the author urged an end to the "wrongful condemnation" of the holiday tree, and called on the authorities to hold collective festivities for children. On December 29, Pravda published a resolution by Alexander Kosarev, the secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Leninist Young Communist League (Komsomol), that on January 1 all Komsomol members and Young Pioneers (a youth organization for children and adolescents aged 9 to 14) would hold New Year's tree celebrations at schools, children's clubs and orphanages.

On January 1, 1936, Pravda's front page featured a photo of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin and the text of his New Year's greetings. At the same time, a New Year's party for children and youngsters took place at the House of the Unions' Column Hall. The party involved the key personage associated with the New Year's holiday, Ded Moroz (or "Grandfather Frost"), who was joined by his helper Snegurochka (or the "Snow Maiden") a year later.

On the night of January 1, 1942, the first official New Year's greeting to all citizens of the USSR was broadcast on the radio, which was read out by the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets. His speech was dedicated to the dramatic events then taking place on the combat fronts of the Great Patriotic War.

On New Year's Eve 1944, the national anthem was performed for the first time in the USSR, the text of which was written by Sergey Mikhalkov and El-Registan (real name: Gabriyel Ureklyan), while the music was composed by Alexander Alexandrov.

Starting from 1954, New Year's celebrations for kids and teens were held at St. George's Hall in the Grand Kremlin Palace. Since 1962, these events have been held in the Kremlin Palace of Congresses (now the State Kremlin Palace). The country's best students were invited to the unveiling of the first Kremlin New Year's tree. The event was broadcast on the radio, and detailed reports were published in newspapers. Since then, the celebration in the Kremlin has been referred to as the "main New Year's tree of the country." Moscow trade unions organized the event. Since the mid-1960s, the holiday has been held in the form of a festive gala performance.

In the 1970s, Soviet leaders initiated the tradition of addressing the nation on New Year's Eve. General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Leonid Brezhnev was the first to make such an address, which was aired on national TV on December 31, 1970.

In the Soviet era, the holiday's features changed. The Star of Bethlehem was replaced by a five-pointed red star and wax candles were replaced by garlands of electric lights. Figurines depicting the Kremlin towers, cosmonauts, satellites, sheaves of wheat and other symbols were now used instead of nuts, fruits and figurines of Christmas characters.

Agencies

'PM Modi's visit to Russia-Ukraine, expanding ties with Middle East, Africa': How India's Foreign Policy progressed in 2024

NEW DELHI

AS we enter the year 2025 with more challenges and opportunities, it is a good time to take a look at how India's foreign policy progressed in the year 2024 and the major developments on that front.

2024 served as the year where India's international efforts aimed at global peace and prosperity found recognition on the global stage.

From the highest awards by foreign countries being conferred to PM Modi (pictured) to indigenous Indian government policies being adopted across the world by global partners of India, the year saw how sustained efforts consistently worked upon, presenting India as a firebrand of trust, and achieving its aim of being a "Vishwabandhu" and "Vishwamitra".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's swearing-in ceremony after winning a historic third term also reaffirmed India's commitment to its 'Neighbourhood First' policy and 'SAGAR Vision' as the heads of states of Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives, Mauritius, Bhutan, Nepal and Seychelles attended the ceremony.

The Prime Minister emphasized that in his third term, India will continue to work for the peace, progress and prosperity of the region in close partnership with the countries, even as it pursues its goal of 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047.

In this context, he called for deeper people-to-people ties and connectivity in the region. He further added that India would continue to amplify the voice of the Global South in the international arena.

China

The biggest development for India's foreign policy last year was reaching an agreement with China on patrolling arrangements along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

This came after a long border standoff triggered following Chinese aggression at the border in June 2020.

Following this, Prime Minister Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping met after five years on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia. PM Modi reaffirmed the need to maintain peace and tranquillity on the border.

The 23rd Meeting of the Special Representatives of India and China, was also held in Beijing in December, with discussions focussed on maintaining peace and tranquillity along the border. The meeting was attended by Ajit Doval, National Security Advisor (NSA) and Wang Yi, China's Foreign Minister and Member of the CPC Central Committee.

Pakistan

In a first since 2018, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar visited Pakistan to attend the SCO Summit, however, no discussions took place on the bilateral ties between the two countries, despite visible expectations from the Pakistani side.

India, however, has continued with its stance that 'talks and terror can't go hand in hand'. EAM Jaishankar, at multiple occasions, pointed out to the challenges of dealing with a neighbour which perpetrates terrorism at "industry level."

Responding to the question posed on Pakistan in the Parliament, Jaishankar said, "In terms of improving ties with Pakistan, like any other neighbour, we would like to have good ties. But like with any other neighbour, we would also like to have ties free of terrorism. So, this has been the position of the government. We have made it very clear that it is for the Pakistani side to show that they are changing their behaviour of the past and that if they don't, of course, there are implications for the relationship and for them. So, I think the ball is very much in Pakistan's court in this regard."

Bangladesh

While the year started with a re-election of Sheikh Hasina – a long-time ally of India – as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, by the time of August, student protests in the country turned into a violent uprising which eventually led to Hasina's ouster. This brought an interim government led by the Nobel Laureate Mohammed Yunus.

However, following that, there have been multiple attacks on religious minorities, especially Hindus and their places of worship. India has repeatedly raised its concerns on the issue and called on the interim government to ensure the protection of minorities.

The situation was further exacerbated after a Hindu priest Chinmoy Das was arrested by Bangladesh authorities on sedition charges.

Prime Minister Modi in a call with Muhammad Yunus, reaffirmed India's support for a democratic, stable, peaceful and progressive Bangladesh. He emphasised India's commitment to supporting the people of Bangladesh through various development initiatives. Prime Minister also underlined the importance of ensuring the safety and protection of Hindus and all other minority communities in Bangladesh.

The protests which saw the ouster of Sheikh Hasina had resulted into violence against religious minorities in Bangladesh, and the subsequent arrest of Chinmoy Das that further deteriorated the issue in the country.

Recently, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri in December visited Bangladesh. During this, he



expressed India's continued support for the people of Bangladesh. The FS also expressed India's concerns regarding the situation of minorities.

Bhutan

India and Bhutan saw flourishing ties with visits by both the Indian and Bhutanese top echelons to their countries. India's steadfast support for Gelephu Mindfulness City, among other initiatives was also reiterated.

Bhutan PM Tshering Tobgay visited India in March 2024. This was followed by Prime Minister Modi's visit to Bhutan.

In March, PM Modi was conferred the Order of the Druk Gyalpo, Bhutan's highest civilian decoration by the King of Bhutan. Prime Minister Modi became the first foreign leader to be given this prestigious award which recognises contribution to strengthening India-Bhutan friendship and his people-centric leadership.

Maldives

The arrival of Maldivian President Muizzu initially posed a challenge for India, as Muizzu ran his whole presidential campaign on an 'India Out' plank. Coming to power, Muizzu exited from several engagements with India.

Muizzu strongly opposed the presence of Indian troops in Maldives. Upon subsequent discussions, India decided to replace the personnel with professional civilians to perform medvac services there.

The derogatory remarks by some of Muizzu's ministers against Prime Minister Modi led to strong opposition from India and led to diplomatic row between New Delhi and Male.

However, India's persistent efforts on diplomatic channels and long-standing ties with the island nation, slowly brought the ties back on track.

Mohammed Muizzu attended PM Modi's swearing-in ceremony and came on an official visit to India in October. Calling India as Maldives' "closest ally" he thanked New Delhi for financial support to Male amid economic hardships. Several agreements were signed between the two nations, including the start of FTA talks.

Middle East

India continued with the deepening of its engagements with the Middle East. PM Modi visited several Middle Eastern nations; UAE, Qatar, and Kuwait in 2024 and welcomed several leaders names from the region.

During PM Modi's visit, India and the UAE saw several high-level delegations visit the two countries.

From the inauguration of the BAPS Hindu Temple to the launch of Bharat Mart and an agreement on inter-linking domestic debit/credit cards - RuPay (India) with JAYWAN (UAE), the two countries saw development across all fronts.

A major achievement for India this year was getting the death sentence of ex-naval officers in Qatar remitted, and the personnel being brought back to India. This diplomatic triumph was followed by the Prime Minister's visit to Qatar to thank

Latin America and Africa

The outreach to African countries saw momentum, a year after under the G20 under India's presidency saw African Union became a permanent member of the grouping.

In the spirit of forging deeper ties with Africa, the President of India, Droupadi Murmu's state visits to three African countries namely Algeria, Mauritania and Malawi took place in October. This was the first-ever visit by an Indian Head of State to the three African nations.

PM Modi's visit to Brazil saw the Brazilian leadership commending Indian efforts during India's G20 Presidency and the continuation of Indian initiatives.

In a historic visit to Guyana, PM Modi received several national honours and attended various events to strengthen relations. He held meetings with the PMs of Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Trinidad and Tobago, Dominica, Bahamas, Barbados, Saint Lucia, Presidents of Guyana and Suriname

A Decade of Act East Policy

In his address at the ASEAN Summit, PM Modi reiterated India's support for ASEAN Unity, ASEAN Centrality and ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. Calling the 21st century as the Asian century, he noted that India-ASEAN ties were critical to guiding Asia's future.

Emphasizing the vibrancy of India's Act East Policy, PM noted that in the last 10 years, India-ASEAN trade had doubled to over USD 130 billion.

In keeping with the Chair's theme of "Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience", the

PM announced a 10-point plan which includes people-centric activity, organise ASEAN-India Women Scientists Conclave under ASEAN-India Science and Technology Development Fund; Enhancing Disaster Resilience for which India would make available USD 5 million.

Visits to Singapore and Brunei also showed India's commitment to deepening ties in the region.

Prime Minister of Laos, Siphandone thanked the Prime Minister for India's flood relief assistance provided to Lao PDR in the aftermath of Typhoon Yag- a step which reiterates India's role as the first responder.

United States

The ties between India and the United States progressed with several developments on varied fronts, including the agreement on semiconductors and the USD 4 billion deal for acquiring MQ-9B Drones.

PM Modi participated in the Quad Meeting in Delaware. The meeting saw the leaders reiterating that the Quad remains a "force for global good."

The Quad leaders recommitted to working in partnership with Pacific island countries to achieve shared aspirations and address shared challenges. The Quad nations also affirmed that, in consultation with partners, they will work collectively to address attempts to unilaterally undermine the integrity of the UN, its Charter, and its agencies.

An area of concern remained the alleged assassination attempt at Khalistani terrorist Gurbatwant Singh Pannun. India has formed a committee to probe the matter and the US has called Indian "satisfying". New Delhi, however, has also raised concerns about Pannun issuing repeated threats to India with no legal action against him.

The end of the year saw a change in US administration as Donald Trump is set to take over the presidency later this month. But, the India-US ties are expected to continue to grow as Trump and Prime Minister Modi also enjoy a great camaraderie, and there seems to be a bipartisan consensus for working towards strong India-US ties.

Russia and Ukraine

Russia is one of the most steadfast allies of India. PM Modi visited Moscow for a two-day official visit at the invitation of Russian President Putin to attend the 22nd India-Russia Annual Summit. The visit saw several positive developments and further cemented India-Russia ties.

PM Modi was also conferred with Russia's highest national award "The Order of St. Andrew the Apostle" for his contribution to fostering India-Russia ties. From a warm hug to driving an electric car for 'dost' PM Modi, the chemistry between the leaders hogged the limelight.

Later in the year, PM Modi again visited Kazan, Russia for the BRICS Summit.

India has repeatedly asserted that the solution to the conflict can't be reached on the battlefield, but only through dialogue and diplomacy. New Delhi has also affirmed its readiness to contribute in resolving the issue between the two sides.

In a major development, PM Modi also visited Ukraine, the first by an Indian PM. This marked a significant moment, as the visit to both Moscow and Kyiv, came at a point when the two nations were embroiled in a nearly three-year-long conflict.

"India was never neutral, we have always been on the side of peace," PM Modi told Zelenskyy. He said that India was ready to play an active role in the path to peace and progress.

PM Modi also presented four BHISHM (Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog Hita & Maitri) Cubes to the Government of Ukraine to help in the expeditious treatment of the injured and contribute to saving precious lives.

Cultural Connect

Elements of Indian culture found recognition on a global stage. During PM Modi's visit to Laos, 'Phra Lak Phra Ram', the Lao adaptation of Ramayana was showcased with great fervour. The Prime Minister also witnessed the adaptation of Indian elements such as the spread and influence of Sanskrit shlokas which were chanted and performed by the local residents and diaspora members during several of his international trips this year such as those to Guyana, Russia and Brazil.

Another significant development was the popularity of Indian sports like Kabaddi in countries like Poland, with whose players PM Modi interacted during his visit to Poland this year.

In February, Thai Deputy PM Nukara visited India and expressed appreciation to India for sending the Holy Relics of Lord Buddha together with his two disciples, Arhata Sariputra and Arhata Maudgalyayana to Thailand for exposition which will give an opportunity to millions of Thai nationals to pay reverence.

The establishment of the Thiruvalluvar Chair of Tamil Studies at the University of Houston, US by PM Modi is another testimony to the growing impact of Indian culture abroad.

The Guardian

SPORT



Melbourne defeat brings fresh calls for Rohit, Kohli to exit test arena

By Amlan Chakraborty

SPECULATION that India captain Rohit Sharma and batting stalwart Virat Kohli are set to call time on their test careers has snowballed as the veteran pair continue to struggle in the five-test series in Australia.

India, who won their last two test tours in Australia, went 2-1 down in the series after their stunning defeat in Melbourne on Monday, with the hosts needing only a draw in Sydney to reclaim the Border-Gavaskar Trophy (BGT).

Opener Rohit has just one fifty and 10 single-digit scores in his last 15 test innings, and even a move down the order failed to pay dividends for the 37-year-old.

Under his captaincy, India have lost five tests this season, equalling their unwanted record from 1999-2000 under Sachin Tendulkar.

Kohli (pictured), one of the greats of the modern game, has not fared much better.

The 36-year-old struck a century in the opening test in Perth but had a wretched season overall with nine single-digit scores in 17 innings this test season.

Both New Zealand and Australia have exploited his vulnerability to left-arm spin and outside the off-stump line, rendering him a walking wicket at times.

"Is it time to take a call on seniors Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli?" the Hindustan Times newspaper asked on

its front page after the defeat in Melbourne, where India lost seven wickets after tea on day five.

That sentiment was echoed among fans in the cricket-mad country where Rohit and Kohli are practically worshipped, with the term "happy retirement" trending on Monday.

Both players quit Twenty20 Internationals immediately after guiding India to their second 20-overs World Cup title in June.

"Is the Rohit-Kohli retirement announcement round the corner?" asked the Indian Express.

"The curtain is beginning to slide down from above; will they give themselves one more test at Sydney with BGT still open and out there for the taking or ...?"

The Times of India called for an immediate changing of the guard, saying the senior batters were "in danger of being termed as liabilities".

The Melbourne defeat not only dented India's chances of retaining the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, it effectively ended their hopes of reaching the World Test Championship final for the third time in a row.

Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar said another failure in Sydney could prompt Rohit to quit test cricket and that India should draft in new faces for their England tour next year.

"The next cycle of the World Test Championship will be the cycle for 2027. You should see new faces for that," Gavaskar told Sports Tak.

REUTERS

Celtics win by 54, hand Raptors 11th straight loss

By Field Level Media

JAYSON Tatum had 23 points and eight rebounds Tuesday as the Boston Celtics crushed the visiting Toronto Raptors 125-71 for their 10th straight win in the all-time series.

The loss extended Toronto's losing streak to 11. The Raptors, who committed 21 turnovers, have lost their last five road games and haven't beaten Boston since the 2021-22 season.

Payton Pritchard (5-of-8 on 3-point attempts) came off the bench to score 19 for the Celtics.

Derrick White (16), Jrue Holiday (14), Jaylen Brown (12), Sam Hauser (12) and Jordan Walsh (10) also scored in double figures for Boston, which made 22 of 43 3-point attempts (51.2 percent). No Boston starter played more than 29 minutes.

The Celtics entered the contest with three losses in their last four games.

Scottie Barnes led Toronto with 16 points and 13 rebounds but was 1-of-8 from 3-point territory. The Raptors received nine points from Davion Mitchell, while Jakob Poeltl contributed seven points and 13 rebounds.

The Celtics scored more points in the second half (80) than the Raptors scored in the game. Toronto's 71 points were the fewest scored in an NBA game this season.

Toronto played without R.J. Barrett (illness) and Grady Dick (hamstring).

Kristaps Porzingis, Boston's No. 3 scorer (18.3 points per game), missed his third straight game with an ankle injury.

Although they missed 10 of their first 11 shots, the Celtics had a 23-12 lead after one quarter. The Raptors were 5-of-23 from the field in the quarter, including 0-for-12 from 3-point



Boston Celtics guard Derrick White (9) shoots the ball while Toronto Raptors forward Scottie Barnes (4) defends during the first half at TD Garden in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, on December 31, 2024. Agencies

range.

Toronto was within seven late in the second quarter but trailed 45-35 at halftime.

The Celtics used a 24-3 run to extend their lead to 87-51 late in the third quarter and led 90-53 entering the fourth. Boston made 10 of its 12 3-point attempts in the third, outscoring Toronto 45-18.

Boston improved to 2-0 against Toronto this season.

Meanwhile, Jarrett Allen scored a season-high 27 points and grabbed 14 rebounds as the Cleveland Cavaliers led nearly wire to wire en route to their eighth straight win, a 122-110 decision against the host Los Angeles Lakers on Tuesday.

Donovan Mitchell added 26 points for the Cavaliers, who were playing the second game of a back-to-back set.

The Cavaliers came out hot, building a 15-point lead nearly seven minutes into the

first quarter. Los Angeles rallied briefly to take a lead in the second quarter, but it was all Cleveland for most of the night.

Allen shot 12-for-14 from the floor to key the Cavaliers' interior scoring, while Mitchell's 6-of-13 3-point shooting paced Cleveland to an 18-for-46 night (39.1 percent) from long range.

Max Strus, who scored 15 points off the Cavaliers' bench, hit 4 of 8 shots from deep, with three of his treys coming during a pivotal stretch lasting 2:11 in the third quarter. Strus' three 3-pointers and another from Darius Garland, who finished with 14 points, fueled a 12-2 Cleveland run.

Another Cavaliers run of 17-2, beginning late in the third quarter and carrying over into the fourth, blew the game open. Mitchell hit half of his six 3-pointers during the decisive spell as the Cleveland advantage swelled to a game-

high 16 points.

Georges Niang made one of his two 3-pointers off the bench during the run. He finished with nine points to contribute to a balanced scoring effort from the Cavaliers. Evan Mobley added 20 points and six rebounds.

Los Angeles' Austin Reaves matched his career high with 35 points and added 10 assists and nine rebounds. Anthony Davis added 28 points, 13 rebounds, three steals and two blocks as the Lakers fell after winning five of their previous six games.

LeBron James scored 23 points and dished out seven assists, but he, Reaves and Davis were the only Lakers to score in double figures. Shake Milton and Dorian Finney-Smith, making their Los Angeles debuts after a trade from the Brooklyn Nets over the weekend, scored six and two points off the bench, respectively.

Dimitrov advances in Brisbane, end of Djokovic-Kyrgios doubles journey

BRISBANE

GRIGOR Dimitrov stayed on course for his title defence but women's second seed Emma Navarro was stunned by local favourite Kimberly Birrell at the Brisbane International yesterday.

Two-time men's champion Dimitrov (pictured) downed Aleksandar Vukic 6-2 7-6(5) to advance to the quarter-finals, overcoming late resistance from the Australian wildcard.

"It's such a home atmosphere, honestly. It doesn't feel like a tournament to me," the Bulgarian said.

"That's why I think the excitement is different. My attitude I think also changes quite a bit. It's a very special week."

Birrell gave the local fans something to cheer about as she pulled off the biggest win of her career, beating Navarro 7-5 7-5.

Egged on by the vociferous crowd at Pat Rafter Arena, the 113th-ranked wildcard broke to serve for it at 5-4 in both sets before closing it out on her second attempt.

"I've spent so many hours on this court since I was little," the 26-year-old said.

"I watched the Brisbane International when I was a kid and to get to play here and have the tournament that's basically at home is so special."

The journey of Novak Djokovic and Nick Kyrgios as a doubles pair ended with a 6-2 3-6 10-8 defeat by top seeds Nikola Me-



tkic and Michael Venus, who advanced to the quarter-finals.

Kyrgios, playing his first tournament since a wrist surgery in September 2023, was beaten by Frenchman Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard in a battle of big servers in

men's singles on Tuesday.

The Djokovic-Kyrgios duo came within two points of a win but an untimely double fault in the match tie-break allowed Mektic and Venus to clinch the nailbiter.

"Down three points in the match tie-break it wasn't look-

ing great, but somehow we got back in there and Mekta hit a great return on match point," Venus said.

Daria Kasatkina overcame Peyton Stearns 7-6 4-6 7-5 in a slugfest lasting nearly three-and-a-half hours.

REUTERS

New Milan coach Conceicao targets top four finish

MILAN

AC Milan's new manager Sergio Conceicao has targeted a Champions League qualifying spot after a disappointing start to the season has left them eighth in Serie A outside the European places.

The Portuguese was appointed Milan manager on Monday after compatriot Paulo Fonseca was sacked following six months in charge due to the team's inconsistent run of form.

Conceicao will depart with his players for Saudi Arabia and his first game in charge when Milan take on Juventus in the Italian Super Cup semi-final in Riyadh on Friday. Inter Milan face Atalanta in the other semi on Thursday.

But the main target is the top four and a qualifying place in Europe's elite club competition, which they have won seven times. They are 12th in this season's 32-team Champions League table among the seeded playoff spots.

"We all want one thing: for Milan to return to the Champions League. We are Milan," Conceicao said at his first Milan press conference on Tuesday.

"If I'm here, it's not a good sign - it means something didn't go well. There's not much time to prepare for the match against Juventus. We don't complain and we don't make excuses."

Milan have 27 points from 17 games, eight points adrift of the top four and five behind sixth-placed Juve, who currently occupy the final European qualifying spot.

Conceicao reflected on the challenges ahead and said he expected the players to give their all to the cause.

"There will always be 11 players who are happy and others less so. But they all need to give their maximum, that is the standard," he said. "Pressure is part of football, especially at a big club like Milan."

The 50-year-old declined to discuss the January transfer window, focusing instead on becoming familiar with his squad.

"I want to know the players, from the seniors to the youth. It's not fair to speak about the market before that," he said.

Senior adviser at Milan Zlatan Ibrahimovic, who had several spells playing for the club, spoke before Conceicao's presser to reflect on Fonseca's short spell in charge.

"Before we begin with Conceicao, I want to thank Fonseca for what he has done and for the professional that he is," the former Sweden striker said.

"But he wasn't able to achieve consistency in results and when you're at Milan results are decisive."

Ibrahimovic acknowledged Fonseca should not have had to face the media after the 1-1 draw at home to AS Roma on Dec. 29 when the Portuguese said he had not heard about his sacking.

"We decided to dismiss him after the match and we made a mistake by sending him to the press conference. I apologise to Paulo and the fans," Ibrahimovic said.

The Swede added he understood the supporters' disappointment with recent results and the overall leadership of the club.

"We won't be satisfied until we achieve our goals. And the Supercoppa is one of those goals. The responsibility is not solely the coach's - we all have to take responsibility."

REUTERS

Barcelona request licence from RFEF as pressure mounts to register Olmo

BARCELONA

BARCELONA applied for new players' licences for Dani Olmo and Pau Victor with the Spanish FA (RFEF) on Tuesday, while the club denied claims of requesting any delay from governing bodies for their registrations.

The announcement was made hours before the midnight registration deadline.

Barcelona lost a second appeal to register the players for the remainder of the season on Monday, with the club unable to meet LaLiga's wage cap.

"Barcelona informs that it has applied for a new license for the players Daniel Olmo and Pau Victor to the RFEF," the Catalan club said in a statement.

"Club would like to deny having requested or receiving any moratorium to any governing body for these inscriptions."

Barcelona signed Olmo in August for around 55 million euros (\$57.22 million) but the attacking midfielder was registered for only the first half of the season.

The club managed to register Olmo and forward Victor after long-term injuries kept first-team players out of the squad for months, allowing them to allocate a portion of their wages.

Efforts to extend both registrations have hit repeated road blocks, with Barcelona's appeals dismissed by LaLiga and various judicial authorities.

While Olmo and Victor will be free agents after the deadline, Barcelona could meet the economic requirements to sign them before the transfer market closes in February.

However, according to the RFEF rules, a player cannot be signed by the same club twice in the same season.

REUTERS

Unstoppable Isak can get even better, says Newcastle boss Howe

LONDON

NEWCASTLE United striker Alexander Isak probably does not want the year to end after setting the Premier League alight in December with a scintillating burst of form.

The Swede, who joined Newcastle for a club record 63 million pounds (\$78.95 million) in 2022, scored his eighth goal of the month in Monday's 2-0 win at Manchester United -- a result that means Eddie Howe's side end the year fifth in the table.

Isak, 25, also has two assists in December when Newcastle won five successive league games to put themselves right in the hunt for a top-four finish and a return to the Champions League.

"I evaluate his game on a daily basis and I just try to keep pushing him for more," Howe said of the former Real Sociedad striker who took a while to get up to speed this season.

"His game is in a good place. But my job is to find areas in which he can improve. He has all the ingredients in there."

Isak's form has put him on the wish list of some of Europe's biggest clubs and keeping hold of him could well hinge on Newcastle qualifying for next season's Champions League.

He is contracted until 2028 and media reports say Newcastle have slapped a 100 million pounds plus price tag on him.

Sky Sports pundit Gary Neville said on Monday: "I think he is the best striker at this moment in



Newcastle United's Alexander Isak scores their first goal against Manchester United during their Premier League match at Old Trafford, in Manchester, Britain on December 30, 2024. REUTERS

time in the country, purely because I watch (Manchester City's) Erling Haaland a lot who is a world-class striker but his overall play is nowhere near Isak's level at this moment in time."

Howe, asked after the win at Old Trafford whether Isak was nearing his best, said: "He is getting there. His goal was really pleasing, he was where he needs to be in the middle of the six-yard box. He affects games in the way only he can."

Newcastle are the form team in the Premier League and are only three points behind fourth-placed Chelsea, who have suddenly hit a rough patch with two consecutive defeats.

Howe is only looking as far as the next game, though -- a trip to unpredictable Tottenham Hotspur on Saturday.

"We are going through a spell of tricky away games, Tottenham and then Arsenal, two massive games, but we will approach them as we did this one," he told Sky Sports.

(£1 = 0.7980 pounds)

REUTERS

Arsenal must keep hammering away at Liverpool's lead, says Arteta

LONDON

ARSENAL must be consistent in the second half of the season to keep the pressure on Premier League leaders Liverpool and give themselves a chance of winning their first title since 2004, manager Mikel Arteta said.

Arsenal are third in the standings with 36 points from 18 matches, nine behind Liverpool and one behind second-placed Nottingham Forest, who have played one more game.

"It (title race) doesn't depend on us. But we have to

continue to be like a hammer, be there every day, every day," Arteta told reporters ahead of their match at Brentford later on Wednesday.

"If someone wins all the matches then we congratulate them and go to the next season. If they don't - and in history, it hasn't happened - then we will be there."

Arsenal finished second in the last two seasons, but the Spanish manager said his side had shown a marked improvement in this campaign.

"We've proved that al-

ready this season, I'm sure of that," he said.

"If this had happened last season - the number of games we've played with 10 men (after red cards), the injuries in the squad, for sure it would be difficult to be in the stages of the competitions we are in now."

"So, for sure, the team has made another step. The team is evolving and adapting to new circumstances and now we have another one with more games with less players. So let's face it."

REUTERS

Special night for Ipswich as Portman Road sees league success

IPSWICH, England

IPSWICH Town manager Kieran McKenna hailed a special night for his club as they won a home match in the Premier League for the first time in more than two decades, and suggested more victories would come for the relegation-threatened club.

Goals from Liam Delap and former Chelsea player Omari Hutchinson on Monday saw a first top flight triumph at Portman Road since the April 2002 success over Middlesbrough.

The victory, only their third this season, saw Ipswich move above Leicester City in the standings. They remain in the bottom three and one point from safety, but McKenna believes better days lie ahead.

"Halfway through the season and we've been competitive in the large majority of our games. It's only some small improvements we need to make to win more games. We're a humble group with belief," he said.

The win over high-flying Chelsea was one to savour, McKenna added.

"To do it against Chelsea was fantastic. Most of

the supporters who have been here for 22 years, every moment here is a landmark for them. Winning the home game is another special little landmark. But I think the time of year, the night game, the opponent make this a special night and I want everyone to enjoy it a lot."

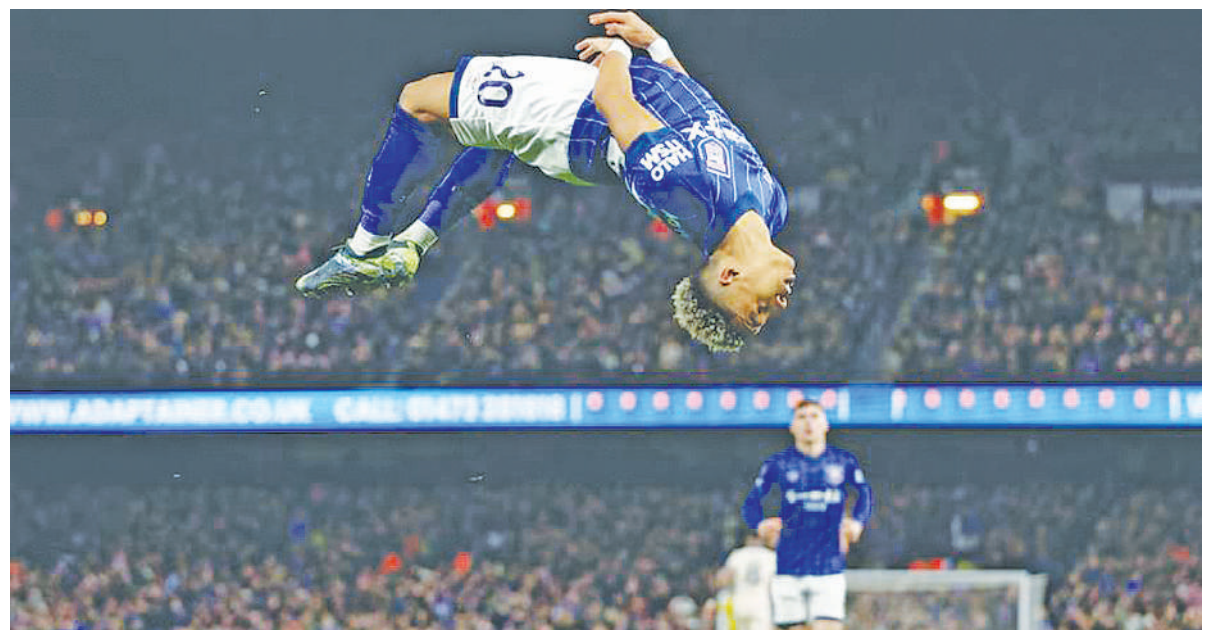
The 38-year-old, who has steered the club through successive promotions, said beating the Blues put the seal on an incredible year.

"Everyone involved with Ipswich can probably enjoy a glass of sparkly stuff (on Tuesday) night and think about some of the games we've had and moments over the last couple of years. I don't want to point backwards too much but I think six of the starting line-up today were in our League One team, so that's the journey this group has been on."

The players return to work on Wednesday as they are away to Fulham on Sunday.

"When you have moments like this, you have a little pause and enjoy it, but then move on to the next one," the manager said.

REUTERS



Ipswich Town's Omari Hutchinson celebrates scoring their second goal against Chelsea during their Premier League match at Portman Road, in Ipswich, Britain on December 30, 2024. REUTERS

Gwiji by David Chikoko

To save THE TEAM'S MONEY...

...YOU WILL SERVE AS BOTH THE COACH AND THE REFEREE

COACH FOR HIRE

AS THE MASCOT AS WELL



Unstoppable Isak can get even better, says Newcastle boss Howe

PAGE 19

Singida Black Stars set top-four target for new coach Miloud Hamdi



By Correspondent Seth Mapoli

SINGIDA Black Stars have outlined an ambitious strategy for their newly appointed head coach, Miloud Hamdi, tasking him with steering the team to a top-four finish in the Premier League this season and securing qualification for continental football next season.

Hamdi (pictured), who was officially introduced on Monday, inherits a team sitting fourth in the league standings with 33 points from 16 matches.

The club's management has made it clear that their primary objective is to qualify for the CAF club competitions, signaling their intent to challenge the league's traditional heavyweights.

"The coach has been told that next season the goal is to participate in the CAF championships," a club insider revealed. "This clear directive ensures he understands the expectations from the very start of his tenure. With the quality of players we have, there is no reason the team cannot achieve this."

Hamdi brings a wealth of experience to Singida Black Stars, having managed several notable clubs across different continents.

His coaching experience includes stints at Algeria's USM Alger and JS Kabylie, Kuwait's Al-Salmiya, Saudi Arabia's Al-Ettifaq (U-23), and French outfits Athletic Marseille and ES Vitrolles. His most recent position was at Al-Khaldiya FC in Bahrain.

To support his mission, Hamdi will be assisted by Nassim Anisse and David Ouma. Additionally, former acting head coach Ramadhan Nswanzurimo will return to his role as the club's technical director, ensuring continuity within the technical team.

The club's management expressed confidence in Hamdi's ability to guide the team to greater heights.

"The club has great faith in the coach. With his experience managing high-profile teams, he is well-equipped to achieve the set goals," the insider added.

Singida Black Stars have been one of the surprise packages this season, showcasing their potential to compete at the highest level. The club's current position reflects their solid performances, and Hamdi's appointment is expected to provide the tactical edge needed to sustain their challenge for a top-four finish.

The coach's immediate focus will be maintaining the team's momentum and ensuring consistency in results as the season progresses.

The management's clear vision for the club, combined with Hamdi's expertise, has raised hopes among fans and stakeholders that Singida Black Stars can establish themselves as a force in Tanzanian and continental football.

Simba depart for Tunisia ahead of crucial CAF Confederation Cup clash against CS Sfaxien



Simba Sports Club players are pictured yesterday morning arriving at the Julius Nyerere International Airport ready for their trip to Tunisia. Photo: Courtesy of SSC

By Correspondent Seth Mapoli

SIMBA Sports Club departed Tanzania early yesterday morning for Tunisia, where they will face CS Sfaxien in a decisive CAF Confederation Cup Group A match on Sunday, January 5, 2025.

The team, comprising 22 players, aims to secure a positive result that will strengthen their chances of qualifying for the quarter-finals.

Simba's Media and Communications Manager, Ahmed Ally, emphasized the team's determination to secure victory against CS Sfaxien, describing it as a mission-driven trip.

"We are heading to Tunisia with one objective - to win and strengthen our position in the

group," he said.

The match will take place behind closed doors as CS Sfaxien serves a two-game fan ban imposed by the Confederation of African Football (CAF) due to crowd trouble in their previous home fixtures.

Simba will need a win or at least a draw in Tunisia to keep their quarter-final hopes alive. CS Sfaxien has been the weakest team in Group A, losing all their first-round matches, mak-

ing them a key target for other teams to capitalize on in the second round of group games.

Simba's final group-stage match will be a home fixture against CS Constantine, and the Tanzanian giants aim to secure at least 10 points to ensure progression to the next stage.

The next three weeks will be critical for Simba as they complete their remaining group-stage matches. After the game in Tunisia, Simba

will travel to Angola to face Bravos on January 12 before returning to Tanzania for the final group match against CS Constantine on January 19.

Simba, CS Constantine, and Bravos all currently have six points each, leaving Group A finely poised. With every team having an equal chance of advancing, results in away matches will be pivotal.

Simba's qualification scenario is straightforward -

winning their home game and securing points on the road will significantly boost their chances of reaching the quarter-finals. While nine points might suffice for qualification, attaining 10 or more points would provide a stronger assurance of advancing.

As the group-stage campaign enters its final stretch, Simba are determined to maintain focus and deliver performances that will propel them to the next stage of the CAF Confederation Cup.

Full squad traveling to Tunisia:

Goalkeepers: Moussa Camara, Hussein Abel, Ally Salim

Defenders: Karoubé Chamou, Che Malone Fondoh, Abdulrazak Hamza, Valentin Nouma, Mohamed Hussein, Shomari Kapombe, Kelvin Kijili

Midfielders: Mzamiru Yassin, Fabrice Ngoma, Yusuph Kagoma, Elie Mpanzu, Augustine Okejepha, Kibu Denis, Debora Fernandes, Ladaki Chasambi, Awesu Awesu, Jean Charles Ahoua

Forwards: Leonal Ateba, Steven Mukwala.

Tz Blue edges Tz Green in ICC Men's CWC Challenge League B build-up

By Correspondent Japheth Kazenga

TANZANIA's senior national men's cricket team's preparations for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Challenge League B began earnestly in Dar es Salaam recently, with prospective cricketers featuring in trial matches.

The matches - organized by the Tanzania Cricket Association (TCA) - are termed the TCA 50 Overs Trials Tournament.

They aim at keeping the cricketers in great shape ahead of the global showdown, slated for February in Hong Kong.

Cricketers forming a squad known as Tz Green came up against Tz Blue in the 50-over formatted event, with Tz Blue commanding a four-run victory.

The Dhrumit Mehta-led Tz Blue cricketers took the crease first at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) venue and ended with 114/10 in 31.3 overs.

They were forced to find stability in batting following opener Ivan Ismail's early exit, with the prolific batsman making his way back with four runs.

The fellow opener, Mehta, made several good shots for several overs, chipping in with 18 runs.

Top-order batsman Akhil Anil was, in the end, the batsman with the most runs for the squad, as the cricketer notched 20 runs.



Senior national men's cricket team. PHOTO: COURTESY OF TANZANIA CRICKET ASSOCIATION

Senior cricketer Ally Mpeka and youthful performer Arslan Premji also made their presence felt with two digits, playing a pivotal role in Tz Blue's acquisition of the total.

Mpeka ended with 17 runs and Premji made his way back with 16 runs.

Promising cricketers Yalinde Maurice and Mohamed Yunus impressively led Tz Green's bowling unit plan to keep Tz Blue's batting unit in check.

Maurice took 3-14 and Yunus equally ended his bowling quota solidly, taking 3-35. They were ably assisted by spinner Kassim Nassor, the performer, notched 2-16.

Needing 115 runs from 50 overs to come out with a victory, Tz Green cricketers cov-

ered every blade of grass but they fell short - scoring 110/10 in 22.1 overs.

Top-order batsman Amal Rajeevan was the only player with an impressive figure given the cricketer notched 42 runs.

Skipper Nassor, who notched 16 runs, and Yunus who ended with 15 runs as well made their presence felt in the otherwise fruitless chase.

Pacer Mpeka solidly led Tz Blue's bowling unit to neutralize Tz Green, commanding an impressive 4-29.

Fellow bowlers Asuri Rajendra and Khalid Amiri made matters worse for Tz Green after notching two wickets apiece for Tz Blue.

Tanzania would play against Bahrain, Italy, Singa-

pore, Uganda and host Hong Kong in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Challenge League B.

The ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Challenge League is a cricket competition contested in the List A format, and the bottom level of the three-league Cricket World Cup qualification system, which was introduced in 2019.

Twelve teams participate in two groups, with the top team of each group advancing to the World Cup Qualifier Play-off, which is a pathway to qualification for the next Cricket World Cup.

The Challenge League replaced Divisions Three, Four and Five from the World Cricket League in determining World Cup qualification.

The first edition was in 2019-2022.

The 2024-2026 ICC Cricket World Cup Challenge League is the second edition of the ICC Cricket World Cup Challenge League and a cricket tournament which forms part of the 2027 Cricket World Cup qualification process.

The league features 12 teams - those finishing second-fourth in their respective league in the 2019-2022 ICC Cricket World Cup Challenge League Play-off, and two teams from the 2023 Cricket World Cup Qualifier Play-off.

That tournament saw Canada, winner of League A in the previous Challenge League being promoted to League 2 status, while Papua New Guinea was relegated.

The other Challenge League winner, Jersey, was not successful in obtaining promotion.

The top two teams from both groups, A and B, will secure a spot at the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Qualifier Playoff.

Each group in the ICC Cricket World Cup Challenge League is scheduled to play three times in a single round-robin tournament format, once each year from 2024 to 2026.

This amounts to 15 matches per team and a total of 90 matches.

Flexibles by David Chikoko

