



AGRICULTURE



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Police arrest 395 in month-long swoop

By Guardian Correspondent, Musoma

POLICE in Mara Region have arrested 395 individuals on suspicion of various criminal activities, including suspected murder, livestock theft plus the trafficking and sale of narcotics.

SACP Pius Lutumo, the regional police commander, said in remarks to journalists here on Wednesday that the suspects were apprehended during a special operation conducted in the outgoing month.

It was meant to curb criminal activities during the year end festive season, covering Musoma, Butiama, Bunda and Serengeti districts.

Police seized a total of 2,877 litres of illegal local hard liquors in 10 barrels of 200 litres each, along with 14 distilling equipment, he said.

Law enforcers also seized 14,000 rolls of cannabis sativa (bhang), 30 bundles of khat, he said, noting that fines were meted out for 3,341 road safety violations with some cases taken to court.

A range of stolen items were recovered including radios, TV sets, mobile phones, computers, gas cylinders, motorcycles and a boat engine, he further noted.

Eight suspects are being questioned in

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Handeni road accident leaves 11 dead, 13 injured



Industry and Trade minister Dr Selemani Jafo (2nd-R) pictured in Dar es Salaam on Wednesday gifting China's Ambassador to Tanzania, Chen Mingjian, Tanzanian honey in marking the first shipment of the product to China. Looking on are Tanzania Trade Development Authority (TanTrade) director general Latifa Mohamed Hamis (L) and Tanzania Forest Services Agency official Karim Solyambingu. Photo: Correspondent James Kandoya

Regional authorities attributed the accident to driver negligence, urging passengers to speak up if a driver is driving recklessly

By Guardian Reporter

ELEVEN people died and 13 others injured in a crash involving a Coaster bus and a Fuso truck in Handeni District, Tanga Region, a few days after eight people died in a car accident in the same district.

Albert Msando, the district commissioner and chairman of the defence and security committee, said that the c accident which occurred about three hours after midnight on Wednesday in Kwenkwale area, Kitumbi ward in district.

The vehicles involved in the crash were a Fuso truck travelling from Lushoto to Dar es Salaam and a Coaster passenger bus travelling from Mkata to Tanga city, he stated.

Those who died include the drivers of both

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Azam face JKT Tanzania in Premier League showdown

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The top 30 men's footballers in Britain today

Faith leaders, VPO pact on climate change roles

By Guardian Reporter

FAITH leaders have presented recommendations to the government on the urgent need for a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Azgard Stephen, the director of development and advocacy at the Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT) presented the proposals drawn up by representatives from CCT, the Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC), the Muslim Council of Tanzania (BAKWATA), the Seventh-Day Adventist Church (SDA), and the Mennonite Church, stressing the

importance of a standalone climate change policy.

The call was issued on Tuesday in the capital, at a meeting between faith-based organisations' leaders and officials of the Union and Environment ministry at the Vice President's Office (VPO).

In his remarks, the director asserted that such a policy would facilitate streamlining the translation of strategies into actionable measures.

The proposals are a move to address the growing impact of climate change, based on idea of a standalone climate change policy,

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Stakeholders hail first honey cargo to China

By Correspondent James Kandoya

TRADE history was at midweek made with the first-ever shipment involving 10 metric tonnes of honey priced at 100m/-, destined for China.

Dr Selemani Jafo, the Industry and Trade minister, said at a ceremony in Dar es Salaam on Wednesday the first honey export to China is a proud moment for Tanzania.

The shipment showcases the quality of local produce and the country's rising potential to thrive in the international market, he said, explaining that the shipment is not just about exporting honey.

"It is a testament to Tanzania's growing capacity to meet global demand and establish itself as a competitive player in the in-

ternational market," he declared.

The shipment also marks the start of a promising partnership that will strengthen Tanzanian honey's presence in the Chinese market and beyond, he said.

He reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting the honey industry and other sub-sectors enhancing export diversification, fostering an enabling environment by investing in infrastructure and seek out partnerships that drive progress.

Tapping into global demand for natural and organic products improves livelihoods, creates opportunities for local communities and supports the country's industrialization agenda, he said.

Lisa Wang, the East Africa Commercial

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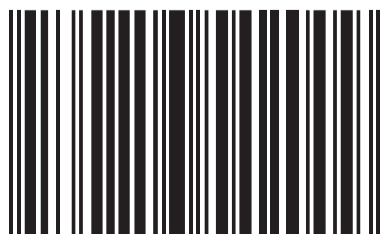
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Handeni road accident leaves 11 dead, 13 injured

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vehicles, while the injured were taken to the district hospital. The condition of nine of the injured was still critical, he said.

Bodies of the deceased were placed at the hospital mortuary for identification, ahead of delivery to their relatives for burial proceedings.

He could not establish how the accident came about, pointing at ongoing investigations. The relevant authorities will provide answers once the investigation is completed, he said.

At daybreak on Tuesday, eight people died and many others were injured in a collision between a lor-

ry and a Toyota Coaster in Michungwani village, Segera ward in the same district.

Regional authorities attributed the accident to driver negligence, urging passengers to speak up if a driver is driving recklessly.

Earlier this month, President Samia Suluhu Hassan directed the police to design procedures where the traffic police monitor driving licences, where committing traffic offences endanger the safety of road users elicits action.

This initiative followed an accident in Morogoro that left more than 15 people dead, in a series of road crashes that scarred the outgoing month.

Stakeholders hail first honey cargo to China

FROM PAGE 1
and Logistics Co. (EALCLC) chairperson, noted the centre's dedication to fostering China-Africa trade cooperation, citing this effort as actively supporting the Belt and Road initiative.

"The introduction of this honey project reflects our deep affection for Tanzania and our belief in the potential of China-Africa trade. By bringing Tanzanian honey to the Chinese market, we aim to support local agricultural development and meet consumer needs," she asserted, informing the gathering that the shipment from Dar es Salaam is expected in Weihai port in 27 days.

Chen Mingjian, the resident ambassador, praised the milestone as a testament to the strong bond between the two countries.

"This shipment represents a significant step forward in our trade partnership and reflects the enduring friendship between Tanzania and China," she stated.

Jackson Mponela, erstwhile production manager for commerce and development at the Tanzania Future Enterprises Co. Ltd said that the company can supply 10 tonnes of honey annually, sourced from apiaries and local beekeepers.

"Today, we delivered our first batch of honey to China. This step will not only boost exports but also create jobs, strengthen the beekeeping industry and enhance Tanzania's economy," he said.

The milestone promises a brighter future for Tanzania's honey industry and its position on the global stage, he added.

Police arrest 395 in month-long swoop

FROM PAGE 1
connection with a shop burglary on the night of December 22 in the Kariakoo area of Bweri ward, he said, urging the public to provide information on crimes and criminals, to ensure peaceful and safe celebrations.

In October this year, the Drug Control and Enforcement Authority (DCEA) arrested 17 individuals for involvement in the cultivation of 3,007.5 acres of cannabis, which was destroyed during a three-week

operation in the Serengeti and Tarime districts of the Mara Region.

Marijuana cultivation has become a significant illegal activity in the Mara River valley, often in remote and less-policed areas, as the region offers the ideal conditions for growing the plant, with rich soil, reliable rainfall and the right temperatures.

The cultivation is largely driven by local and cross-border demand, especially from nearby countries, where marijuana is sought for recreational and medicinal purposes, the agency intimated.



Dar es Salaam residents have a good time along the Jangwani-Mbezi beach yesterday in marking Boxing Day. Photo: Getrude Charles

Faith leaders, VPO pact on climate change roles

FROM PAGE 1
setting up a comprehensive coordination framework for climate interventions and the promotion of science and innovation in agriculture.

"A clear, standalone policy will make it easier to implement climate change mitigation efforts and ensure cohesive strategies," he stated.

Additionally, the faith leaders called for the development of a national climate change framework that integrates coordination, financing and planning to harmonize policies across various sectors.

The framework would facilitate stakeholder engagement and ensure that climate change actions are cohesive and impactful, the proposals indicated.

Faith leaders, VPO pact on climate change roles

In the agricultural sector, the leaders advocated for the increased use of science, innovation and technology to help communities adapt to climate change while boosting productivity.

"Technology and innovation in agriculture are critical to responding effectively to climate change and ensuring food security," the presenter emphasised.

Abdallah Hassan Mitawi, the VPO deputy permanent secretary (Un-

ion), acknowledged the importance of involving faith-based organisations in climate change efforts.

The VPO is in the process of establishing a coordinating unit for engaging FBOs on issues like climate policy, he said, underlining the critical role faith organizations in educating communities/

"We are working to strengthen this partnership," he said, addressing the challenge of coordination between stakeholders. Steps are

already being taken to ensure that FBOs have a designated coordinator to streamline their involvement in climate change efforts, he explained.

The faith leaders are doing well in using their platforms to raise awareness on climate change and its impacts, with VPO strongly committed to collaborating with faith leaders in promoting climate change education for greater resilience, he added.



Shinyanga Regional Police Commander Janeth Magomi addresses residents of Mhongo in Kahama municipality at earlier this week's launch of a police station in the ward. The availability of the facility, realised through a community fundraiser, is primarily meant to support the war on drug abuse and other forms of crime. Photo: Correspondent Shaban Njira

UNHCR, Burundi and Tanzania reaffirm commitment to support refugees return

BUJUMBURA

The governments of Burundi and Tanzania, and UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, met this week for the 25th meeting of the Tripartite Commission for the Voluntary Repatriation of Burundian refugees living in Tanzania.

Recognising the generosity of the government and people of Tanzania in hosting Burundian refugees for decades and the Burundian government's intensive efforts to support development in areas of return, all parties agreed to continue voluntary repatriation to Burundi in accordance with the provisions of the Tripartite Agreement of May 2001.

All parties committed to enhance information-sharing on cross-border labour mobility prospects between Burundi and Tanzania, as well as procedures for accessing these for returnees. Participants noted that these movements should

be undertaken in line with existing bilateral legal and administrative frameworks, and as provided for by East African Community (EAC) Protocols and policies.

"The policy of both our countries is that refugees return to contribute to the Burundi's vision 2040 as an emerging country, and 2060 as a developed country. The Government of Burundi will honour its commitments to seek durable solutions for its compatriots hosted in Tanzania," said Martin Niteretse, Minister of the Interior, Community Development and Public Security, Government of Burundi.

The parties agreed to support Tanzania in undertaking comprehensive protection and solutions-based assessments in 2025. Steered by a joint technical team comprising of the government and UNHCR, these assessments seek to identify appropriate solutions for Burundian refugees who are yet to return.

"In 2025, Tanzania with support from UNHCR will conduct a comprehensive protection and solution-based assessments with all Burundian refugees in Tanzania to understand their challenges. This initiative aims to identify and implement durable solutions such as voluntary repatriation, resettlement, and local integration. The process will be transparent and inclusive to all relevant stakeholders at every stage," said Daniel Baran Sillo, deputy minister of Home Affairs in Tanzania.

Participants emphasised the importance of access to education and livelihood opportunities in Burundi for returnees, which not only influences their decisions to return but also ensures their return is sustainable.

For UNHCR, this collaborative effort underscores a shared commitment to ensuring the well-being and long-term reintegration of Burundian refugees through coordinated and sustainable responses.

"Seeking durable solutions for Burundian refugees, including helping them to return home safely and restart their new lives in dignity, remains a high priority for UNHCR," said Fatima Mohammed Cole, UNHCR's deputy director for the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region. "We deeply appreciate the unwavering support from donors and partners for Burundian refugees and returnees. We will continue to work closely with both the governments of Tanzania and Burundi to find durable solutions for refugees and call on the international community for their continued solidarity," added Cole.

Since the start of the voluntary repatriation exercise in September 2017, more than 178,000 Burundian refugees have voluntarily returned to Burundi from Tanzania.

As of the end of November 2024, around 144,500 Burundians refugees are hosted in Tanzania's Nduta and Nyarugusu camps.



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Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute, Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority and Tanzania Forest Services Agency officials set up camp in Doroto Forest, Manyoni District, earlier this week ready to train residents of the area on how to deal with invasions by destructive wildlife, including animals and insects. The training focused on using beehives in preventing elephants from wreaking havoc on farms. Photo: Correspondent Tobias Mwanakatwe

Minister underscores the need for careful conservation of Z'bar's historic Stone Town

By Guardian Reporter, Zanzibar

MINISTER of State in First Vice President's Office, Harus Said Suleiman has emphasised the importance of conservation of Zanzibar's historic Stone Town, which holds the prestigious UNESCO World Heritage status granted in 2000.

Speaking during the foundation stone laying ceremony for the improvement of Africa House Garden in the Shangani, Urban West-Unguja, Suleiman highlighted that the Stone Town's unique history, remarkable architecture, and cultural heritage make it essential to protect this legacy for future generation.

The ceremony, part of the celebrations marking the 61st anniversary of the Zanzibar Revolution, drew attention to the significance of the Shangani area, the birthplace of Stone Town. The area, known for its rich history in trade, indigenous culture, and development, remains central to the island's identity and growth.

"This garden has been a vital part of the social and cultural life of Shangani's residents and Zanzibar's visitors," said minister Harus.

He pointed out that, although the area had been neglected in recent years, leading to the collapse of coastal walls and a loss of its former charm, the government was committed to revitalising it as part of a broader effort to improve the town's landscape and preserve its heritage.

The Africa House Garden is set to play a key role in the revitalisation plan, becoming a hub for community gatherings, festivals, and relaxation for both locals and tourists.

"This will be a space that combines both historical preservation and modern development, reflecting

the mission of the Stone Town authority to balance conservation with development," he said.

In addition to enhancing the physical landscape, the project will include boats to transport visitors, addressing the challenges posed by limited transport infrastructure to access different parts of the island.

The introduction of maritime tours will offer tourists the opportunity to explore other parts of Zanzibar, such as Nungwi, further expanding the island's tourism offerings.

Dr Aboud Suleiman Jumbe, Principal Secretary in Zanzibar's Ministry of Tourism and Heritage, Dr Aboud Suleiman Jumbe confirmed the government's commitment to strengthening and preserving Zanzibar's historical landmarks, particularly the Stone Town.

"This World Heritage site provides significant benefits and adheres to all the criteria for historical city heritage worldwide," Jumbe said.

The project, with an estimated cost of \$8,000, is expected to enhance both the cultural significance and tourism appeal of Stone Town.

Eng. Ali Said Bakar, Director General of the Stone Town Conservation and Development Authority, noted that the completion of the Africa House Garden will further strengthen the area, attracting more tourists and contributing to the growth of Zanzibar's economy.

He noted that with its UNESCO status, Zanzibar's Stone Town continues to stand as a symbol of the island's rich cultural heritage, and the ongoing preservation efforts underscore the government's dedication to balancing historical conservation with modern development to benefit both the local community and the growing number of international visitors.

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbeya

PCCB Mbeya sets sights on corruption-free 2025 polls

THE Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB) in Mbeya Region has pledged to closely monitor the process of the 2025 General Election to curb bribery.

Maghela Ndimbo, Mbeya Regional head of PCCB, made the commitment early this week during a meeting with political party leaders and election stakeholders.

The meeting, which also assessed the recent local government elections, focused on strengthening efforts to combat corruption ahead of the upcoming national elections.

Ndimbo emphasised the importance of collaboration with all stakeholders, including political parties and the public, in identifying and addressing any signs of

corruption early on. He highlighted that no corruption-related cases were reported during the recent local government elections, which was a positive outcome, and assured that PCCB is now better equipped to tackle any challenges in the 2025 elections.

"Through our 'Takukuru Rafiki' campaign, we urge the full cooperation of all involved, including political parties and citizens, to ensure we achieve our goal of eradicating corruption," Ndimbo said.

Political leaders also voiced strong support for the initiative.

Hamad Mbeyale, the secretary of the opposition-Chadema in Mbeya, called for continued public education on citizens' rights and the need for strict penalties for those involved in corrupt practices.

He stressed that corruption robs people of their rights and undermines democracy.

Godfrey Davis, Alliance for Democratic Change (ADC) Chairman recommended that anti-corruption education begin

in primary schools, fostering patriotism and ethical values among future generations.

He expressed confidence in the PCCB's ability to fulfill its mandate effectively.

Sheikh Idd Tua, chairman of the Imams and member of the Muslim Council of Tanzania (BAKWATA) in Mbeya Region, also condemned corruption, citing its prohibition in sacred texts.

He urged strict legal action against those engaging in corrupt activities.

Harare City Council seeks govt help to resolve water shortages

HARARE

HARARE's mayor, Councillor Jacob Mafume has acknowledged the city's ongoing struggle to provide adequate water supply to residents, with the local council turning to the central government for assistance in resolving the water crisis.

During a visit to the Morton Jaffray Water Works recently, Mafume highlighted the severe shortage of water supply, emphasising the urgency of a coordinated government response to address the issue.

"There is still a significant shortage of supply in terms of what we need to supply on a day-to-day basis, and that had to be dealt with through a number of measures that require a whole of government approach," Mafume said.

To mitigate the situation, the Harare City Council has formally approached the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works for help.

The mayor explained that the council has requested support in increasing the city's pumping capacity and upgrading the civil works at the Morton Jaffray plant. The city also seeks an update on what further actions are necessary to improve the water supply system.

According to Mafume, once the improvements are made, the city would be able to increase water delivery to 500 mega litres per day, a significant step towards alleviating the ongoing water shortages.

Harare's water crisis is attributed to several factors, including outdated water infrastructure, ongoing corruption and mismanagement within the city council, and persistent power cuts that affect water treatment operations.

The issues have compounded the difficulties in providing residents with consistent and clean water.

The mayor's plea for government intervention comes as residents continue to face daily challenges due to unreliable water supplies, with many areas experiencing intermittent access to water, which has sparked frustration and concern. The situation has prompted calls for long-term solutions to improve the city's water infrastructure and ensure a steady supply for its growing population.

With the government now involved, officials are hopeful that concerted efforts from both the city council and central government will bring relief to the millions of Harare residents grappling with severe water shortages.

Maasai communities turn to sunflower cultivation

By Guardian Reporter, Longido

THE implementation of the "Land for Life" project in Longido District, Arusha Region, has begun to show positive results, with the majority of Maasai communities now turning to modern sunflower farming as a sustainable alternative to poaching.

The initiative, led by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), is focused on educating Maasai pastoralists about alternative income-generating activities, particularly sunflower farming, alongside conservation efforts in areas bordering wildlife corridors.

WWF has been providing training to the Maasai communities in Longido,

teaching them how to grow sunflower crops, which are less vulnerable to wildlife interference compared to traditional crops such as maize and beans. The shift in agricultural practices has led to a reduction in the need for poaching and destructive environmental activities, such as deforestation and charcoal burning.

Reguli Marandu, the project manager for "Land for Life," explained that the initiative aims to create a balance between sustainable farming and wildlife conservation.

"The goal is to provide a viable economic alternative that reduces poaching and environmental degradation while enhancing the

livelihoods of the Maasai communities," he said.

Farmers in the region, such as Alex Sanka from Mairowa, have expressed how sunflower farming has provided a more secure income. "Sunflower farming has changed my life," Sanka said. "The elephants do not disturb the crops, and I am able to harvest every three months, which provides a steady income."

The project not only addresses the immediate issue of poaching but also improves food security and promotes sustainable agricultural practices.

Neema Stamagunda, the agriculture officer for Mairowa, highlighted the broader benefits of the project.

"Sunflower farming has created new

job opportunities and increased food security. The local production of cooking oil also reduces our dependency on imported products," she said.

With the opening of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the Maasai community is now poised to tap into regional and international markets, further strengthening their economic position and contributing to both conservation and economic development.

She said the project stands as a successful example of how community engagement and alternative livelihoods can support environmental protection while improving the well-being of local populations.

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There is still a significant shortage of supply in terms of what we need to supply on a day-to-day basis, and that had to be dealt with through a number of measures that require a whole of government approach

All in marking Xmas, Boxing Day in Dar..



Young boys take memorable picture at Dar es Salaam's Coco Beach recreation centre on Christmas Day (Wednesday). Photo: Selemani Mpochi



A beach boy hunts for a person to hire his tyre tubes for swimming yesterday. Photo: Selemani Mpochi



Enjoying a swim in the Coco Beach segment of the cool and reportedly rejuvenating Indian Ocean waters. Photo: Selemani Mpochi



Holidays hardly ever go without recreation, snacks and drinks... The most popular delicacies at the Coco Beach 'resort' include popcorn. Photo: Guardian Correspondent



Assisting a colleague yesterday in adjusting a tyre tube ready for a swimming session.... Photo: Selemani Mpochi



Residents of Dar es Salaam's Kivule suburb skin a goat on Wednesday ready for Christmas. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma



A young girl has a rare feel of sea water at Coco Beach yesterday. Photo: Selemani Mpochi



Having a good time at Coco Beach yesterday, with the cool sea breeze generously around.... Photo: Selemani Mpochi



Mkalamla district commissioner Moses Machali (6th-R) leads the inspection of progress in the construction of buildings at Kidarafa Secondary School. The completion of the project will spare students in the area the need to travel a daily 14 kilometers from home to school and back to attend classes at the school nearest their residences. Photo: Correspondent Thobias Mwanakatwe

Njombe avocado farmers blame revenue loss on govt's policy on foreign companies

By Guardian Correspondent, Njombe

TRADERS in Njombe Region have called on the government to closely regulate foreign companies involved in the purchase of raw materials, particularly avocado in order to increase revenue.

According to them, the foreign firms have been opening foreign bank accounts to avoid paying taxes and hence reducing the country's revenue.

The traders made the remarks during a recent meeting with officials from the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA), highlighting concerns over the loss of foreign currency and revenue.

The traders pointed out that many foreign companies, including about 26 Kenyan avocado buyers operating in Njombe, have business accounts abroad, while maintaining small local accounts solely for paying their employees.

The arrangement, according to the traders, results in substantial foreign currency being transferred out of the country, depriving Tanzania of potential revenue.

Hamfrey Milinga, one of the traders, expressed frustration, stating: "If the avocado trade is profitable, why can't our companies do the same? These foreign businesses exploit loopholes to avoid taxes because the funds are

sent abroad and don't benefit our country."

Angelus Nziku, another trader, echoed the concerns, urging the government to consider reducing tax rates and the accumulation of fees in sectors such as hotels and manufacturing to encourage local business growth and investment.

In response, Richard Kayombo, Director of Services and Taxpayer Education at TRA, assured that all the traders' concerns would be addressed.

He explained that some of the issues raised are operational, legal, and policy-related, and that the government is already working to resolve them.

He also urged the business community to continue production while awaiting further action on these matters.

Specioza Owure, TRA manager for Njombe Region, shared that the region's revenue collection target for 2024 is 35.817bn/-, and by November, they had already collected 14.155bn/-.

Sifael Msigala, chair of the Njombe Regional Traders Association, thanked the government for removing over 400 taxes and reiterated the need to reduce the accumulation of fees in the hotel and manufacturing sectors to foster favourable business environment.

Tanzania urged to nurture gender-aware approaches in agricultural programmes

By Guardian Correspondent, Morogoro

TANZANIANS have been urged to promote gender-sensitive approaches in agriculture sector to ensure women are fully included and empowered in the country's farming sector, where they play a vital role.

Dr Musa Ally Musa, Morogoro Regional Administrative Secretary made the call yesterday here during the opening of a rice farming training programme for farmers from Iringa Region as well as Ulanga and Malinyi districts in Morogoro Region.

The training was supported by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and funded by South Korea. Its focus was on equipping local farmers with modern rice farming techniques and strengthening the rice value chain.

Dr Musa emphasised the need for agricultural training programmes to be gender-inclusive, noting that women constitute a significant part of the agricultural workforce in Tanzania, especially in rural areas.

Despite their critical role in farming, women are often underrepresented in agricultural training programmes.

"Women are integral to the agriculture sector, especially in rural areas where they form the backbone of farming activities. It's crucial that agricultural training programmes take gender into account to ensure that women can fully benefit from advancements in agricultural technologies," Dr Musa said.

The training programme, which also addressed market access for farmers, aims to tackle the challenges faced by many farmers, such as securing reliable markets for their produce.

Dr Musa highlighted the importance of empowering farmers with knowledge not only on farming techniques but also on strategies for accessing markets to sell their crops at fair prices.

"Agricultural training must include education on how to access markets. Without guaranteed market access, farmers can struggle to sell their produce, which can reduce their motivation and impact their livelihood. The government is committed to supporting farmers

in overcoming these challenges," he said.

Dr Sophia Kashenge, Director of Technology Transfer and Relations at Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute (TARI), stressed the need for youth to engage in agriculture.

She noted that Tanzania's population is growing rapidly, and if the agricultural sector does not keep pace, food security could be at risk.

"Tanzania's population growth rate of 3.2 per cent is high compared to the African average of 2.0 per cent. This means we must urgently address the challenges in the agricultural sector to ensure the country remains food secure," Dr Kashenge said.

Despite the challenges, she also highlighted the positive outlook for the country's food production, citing an annual food surplus of 4 million tonnes.

She emphasized that for the agriculture sector to thrive, it needs to grow at a rate of 10 per cent annually by 2030.

Diomedes Kalisa, FAO representative, lauded the success of the training programme, which has helped position Tanzania as the leading rice producer in East Africa and the third-largest producer in Africa, after Nigeria.

He emphasized the importance of such training initiatives in boosting the competitiveness of Tanzanian farmers.

The programme, which started in 2020 and is set to conclude by December 2024, aims to improve the livelihoods of farmers and ensure food security at both the household and national levels.

Kalisa commended the strong collaboration between the government, FAO and farming communities, which has been key to the success of the programme.

Felista Malilo, a farmer from Iringa, shared her success story, noting that the training had helped her expand her rice farm from one acre to three acres, enabling her to build a house and support her children's education.

She called on the government to ensure farmers have guaranteed access to markets to avoid post-harvest losses.

"We need a stable market for our rice so we can sell on time, avoid losses from weather damage, and ensure fair prices," Malilo said.



These are some of the mothers who gave birth on Christmas Eve night at Tarime District's Bomani hospital - pictured on Christmas Day (Wednesday) while still under expert care at facility. Photo: Correspondent Timothy Itembe

Hundreds escape Mozambique prison amid election protests

MAPUTO

MORE than 1,500 prisoners have escaped from a prison in Mozambique, taking advantage of ongoing political unrest triggered by disputed election results, police say.

Thirty-three people were killed and 15 injured in clashes with guards, police chief Bernardino Rafael told a press conference.

About 150 more fugitives have since been recaptured, he added.

Protests erupted on Monday in response to Mozambique's highest court confirming that the ruling Frelimo party, in power since 1975, had won October's presidential elections.

Rafael said groups of anti-government protesters had approached the prison in the capital Maputo on Wednesday. Prisoners used the unrest to knock down a wall and escape, he said.

Mozambique has been rocked by unrest since disputed elections in October. Official results showed the ruling Frelimo's candidate for President, Daniel Chapo, winning.

Fresh protests erupted on Monday, when the constitutional court ruled that Chapo had won the election, while revising his margin of victory downwards.

Initial results in October said Daniel Chapo gained a 71 per cent share of the vote to his main rival Venâncio Mondlane's 20 per cent. The court has now ruled that he won 65 per cent to Mondlane's 24 per cent.

Almost all businesses shut and people staying at home to avoid being caught up in the worst unrest in the city since Frelimo first rose to power in 1975.

Frelimo's offices, police stations, banks and factories have been looted, vandalised and set ablaze around the country. Since Monday, at least 21 people have been killed in the unrest, the interior minister said late on Tuesday.

Mondlane, who has since fled Mozambique, had been calling on his supporters to demonstrate against what he said was a rigged vote.

In a weekend social media message, he said there could be a "new popular uprising" if the result was not overturned.

About 150 people have been killed in three months of protests since the elections.

High prices of cashew bring joy to farmers at 11th auction in Mtwara

By Guardian Correspondent, Mtwara

CASHEW farmers from the Masasi-Mtwara and Nanyumbu Cooperative Union (MAMCU) have experienced a prosperous season, having sold 579 tonnes of cashewnuts at favourable prices in the 11th auction of the 2024/2025 season.

The auction, held early this week at Mpapula village in Mtwara, saw cashews selling for higher price of 2,140/- against 1,810/- under the Tanzania Mercantile Exchange (TMX) system.

Farmers, who gathered in large numbers at the auction, expressed their satisfaction with this season's prices, which are significantly higher compared to previous years.

Ally Mohamed, a farmer from Mpapula village, praised the steady prices since the start of the auctions in October and

thanked the government under President Samia Suluhu Hassan for supporting farmers in the southern regions.

"These prices are a great relief. We are grateful to the government for ensuring good prices and treating us with respect as farmers. This has boosted our confidence in the sector," Mohamed said.

Asha Juma, another farmer, shared the same statement, saying good prices had allowed her to sell over six tonnes of cashewnuts and build a house for her family, a milestone she had not achieved in previous seasons.

"Thanks to the government's support, we are seeing real progress. This season has been a game-changer," Juma said.

Fadhili Salumu, a farmer from Libobe village, also expressed satisfaction with the prices, confirming the sale of cashewnuts at the agreed prices of 2,140/- for high-

quality nuts and 1,860/- for others.

Azam Julajula, chairman of MAMCU, highlighted that the union had successfully conducted 11 auctions, with farmers receiving more than 365bn/- in payments.

Over 115,000 tonnes of cashews from MAMCU farmers have been sold, and payments have been made on time.

"Thanks to the support from the government, our farmers are benefiting from timely payments, and we look forward to continued success in the coming years," Julajula said.

The farmers expressed optimism that with sustained government efforts to maintain fair prices and secure markets, the cashew sector will continue to thrive, contributing to the overall economic growth of the southern regions and Tanzania as a whole.

TRADE KINGS TANZANIA PTY LIMITED
REG. NO. 124014

NOTICE OF FINAL GENERAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Final General Meeting of the above named Company will be held on the 28th day of January, 2024 at 10:00 hours at the registered office of the Company, Girl Guides Building, 1st Floor, Tower B, Kibasila Road, Upanga, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Members or their proxies who will not manage to attend physically are invited to join the Meeting virtually through the link and passcode that will be provided through their respective emails.

Agenda

- To receive the winding up report from the liquidator;
- To lay down accounts of the Winding up of the Company; and
- Any Other Business.

By Order of the Company liquidator

Florian Mutagwaba
Liquidator

Dated at Dar es Salaam this 27th day of December, 2024

Circulation:
To all members

Tanzanians urged to cultivate reading culture to gain new skills, knowledge

By Guardia Reporter

TANZANIANS have been urged to develop a reading culture to enhance their knowledge and skills, including strategies for economic advancement. T

The call was made in Dar es Salaam early this week by the Commissioner for Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) David Kafulila during the launch of a new book 'I Am Positioned' authored by Leah Karunde, a tax consultant.

Kafulila emphasized the importance of knowledge in driving individual and national progress.

He pointed out that while Tanzania has abundant resources, a knowledgeable population is key to unlocking its full potential.

"This book contains invaluable insights on financial freedom, investment strategies, and the discipline needed for effective spending," he said.

"Therefore, it is crucial for people to read it as it offers practical lessons on improving economically."

He highlighted the importance of fostering a society with a positive financial outlook to

encourage disciplined spending and investment in various sectors.

Kafulila also urged Tanzanians to take advantage of the numerous economic opportunities presented by the government, suggesting that the book could serve as a guide to help achieve business and investment goals.

Karunde explained that the book is designed to empower individuals, particularly young people, by teaching them financial literacy and how to build a strong economic foundation.

"The book is not just about money; it's about setting goals, building resilience and creating multiple sources of income," Karunde said. "It offers personal stories of overcoming challenges such as youth unemployment in Africa and provides a roadmap for transforming family businesses into thriving corporations."

She added that the book is intended to inspire readers to pursue financial success and support the government's efforts to improve livelihoods of Tanzanians.

"My goal is to help others through this book and inspire society to achieve financial success," she said.

Pope Francis kicks off yearlong Jubilee set to test his stamina, Rome's patience

VATICAN CITY

POPE Francis kicked off the 2025 Holy Year on Tuesday, inaugurating a celebration of the Catholic Church that is expected to draw some 32 million pilgrims to Rome in a test of the pope's stamina and the ability of the Eternal City to welcome them.

From his wheelchair, Francis knocked a few times and the great Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica swung open. He was wheeled across the threshold as bells tolled across Rome and the choir inside the basilica began Christmas Eve Mass.

In his homily, Francis said the Holy Year is an opportunity to relieve the debt of poor countries and commit to protecting the planet. The aim of the Jubilee, he said, is "to bring hope to the interminable, dreary days of prisoners, to the cold and dismal lodgings of the poor and to all those places desecrated by war and violence."

The ceremony inaugurated the once-every-25-year tradition of a Jubilee, in which the Catholic faithful make pilgrimages to Rome.

Francis has dedicated the 2025 Jubilee to the theme of hope, and he underscored that message when he opened a Holy Door yesterday at Rome's Rebibbia prison in a bid to give inmates hope for a better future. Francis has long incorporated prison ministry into his priestly vocation, and has made several visits to Rebibbia and other prisons during his travels.

Security around the Vatican was at its highest levels following the Christmas market attack last week in Germany, the interior ministry said.

Italian authorities were using extra police patrols and camera surveillance around Rome, while pilgrims faced metal detectors and other security checks to access St. Peter's Square via a reinforced police barricade passage.

Francis, who turned 88 last week, went into the Christmas week and Jubilee launch with a cold that forced him to deliver his weekly Sunday blessing from indoors. But he appeared in fine form Tuesday night. His health and stamina, already compromised because of his tendency to get bronchitis, are a concern given the rigorous calendar of events during the Holy Year.

One of the highlights will be the canonization of the teenage internet whiz Carlo Acutis, considered the first millennial and digital-era saint, during the Jubilee dedicated to

adolescents in April.

This week, Francis also delivered his annual "Urbi et Orbi" (to the city and the world) speech on Christmas Day from the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica. In addition to the outing at Rebibbia, he will celebrate New Year's Eve Mass and a New Year's Day Mass.

The city of Rome entered the Jubilee with some trepidation. It has undergone two years of traffic-clogging public works upgrades of transportation, hospital emergency rooms and other vital services, testing residents' patience.

But only about a third of the 323 projects have been completed, and the city is already groaning under the weight of overtourism. Visitors have returned to Italy in droves following COVID-19, and the explosion of short-term vacation rentals has exacerbated a housing crisis.

Some of Rome's prized monuments have reopened recently, including the Trevi Fountain. And the main Jubilee project was finished just in time: A pedestrian piazza linking Castel St. Angelo to the Via della Conciliazione, the main boulevard leading to St. Peter's Square, was unveiled on Monday.

Vatican officials insist that Rome has a tradition of welcoming pilgrims and point to how past Jubilees have left their mark on the Eternal City's urban and spiritual landscape. The Sistine Chapel was commissioned by Pope Sixtus IV for the Jubilee of 1475, and the big Vatican garage was built for the 2000 Jubilee under St. John Paul II.

Pope Boniface VII called the first Holy Year in 1300, and in recent times they are generally celebrated every 25 to 50 years. Pilgrims who participate can obtain "indulgences" – the related to the forgiveness of sins that roughly amounts to a "get out of Purgatory free" card.

Francis declared a special Jubilee in 2015-2016 dedicated to mercy and the next one is planned for 2033 to commemorate the anniversary of the crucifixion of Christ.

The last regular Jubilee was in 2000, when St. John Paul II ushered in the church's third millennium. The one before that, in 1975, was notable because Pope Paul VI was nearly hit by falling plaster when he opened the Holy Door. The door was still behind a fake wall and Paul had used a ceremonial hammer to bang on it three times to open it. The fake wall now is removed well in advance.



Amon Mpanju (in brown suit), Deputy Permanent Secretary in the Community Development, Gender, Women and Special Groups (Community Development and Special Groups) ministry, pictured on Wednesday presenting Christmas gifts to children cared for at the National Children's Home at Kurasini in Dar es Salaam. He did so on behalf of President Samia Suluhu Hassan. Photo: Correspondent Raymond Ishengoma

MAPUTO

AT least 21 people have been killed in violent unrest across Mozambique following the Constitutional Council's decision to uphold victory of the long-ruling Frelimo party in the October presidential election, Interior Minister Pascoal Ronda announced late on Tuesday.

The court ruling on Monday confirmed Frelimo's candidate, Daniel Chapo, as the winner with 65.17 percent of the vote, dismissing allegations of widespread fraud. This sparked a wave of protests led by opposition supporters who insist the election was rigged.

Protests have erupted nationwide, with demonstrators blocking roads, burning tires, and clashing with security forces. In several provinces,

At least 21 dead in Mozambique unrest after court ruling on polls

public buildings and vehicles have been vandalized as anger boils over.

The violence has resulted in the arrests of at least 78 people, with the government warning of more detentions as protests continue.

"The armed and defence forces will increase their presence in critical and key points," Ronda told the state broadcaster TVM, emphasizing that security measures are being reinforced to restore order.

The opposition, led by politician Venâncio Mondlane, has rejected the court's decision and accused

Frelimo of electoral manipulation. Mondlane's party claims the election was marred by voter intimidation, ballot stuffing, and irregularities in vote counting.

Despite Frelimo's denial, allegations of vote rigging are not new. The ruling party has governed Mozambique since independence in 1975 and has often been criticized for consolidating power and stifling opposition.

The Constitutional Council's announcement reignited tensions in a nation already struggling with economic hardships, widespread

poverty, and an ongoing insurgency in the northern Cabo Delgado province.

Protesters in urban centres like Maputo, Beira, and Nampula have been particularly vocal, with police deploying tear gas and live ammunition to disperse crowds.

Reports from local activists indicate that several of the deaths occurred during clashes between demonstrators and security forces. Human rights groups have urged the government to exercise restraint and ensure safety of peaceful protesters.



A small trader (L) engaged in the sale of dried fish pictured at Mbezi Mwisho in Dar es Salaam yesterday negotiating the price with a would-be customer. Photo: Correspondent Imani Nathaniel

Egypt, Kenya seek to boost trade exchange, investment

NAIROBI

EGYPTIAN Ambassador to Kenya Wael Nasr al-Din Attia met Kenyan Cabinet Secretary for Investments Moses Kuria on Wednesday to discuss strengthening bilateral trade relations and increasing investment opportunities between the two nations.

During the meeting, the two officials explored ways to revive activities of the joint trade technical committee which had previously worked to enhance cooperation between Egypt and Kenya.

Both sides emphasized the importance of further expanding trade exchanges, highlighting sectors where both countries have shown notable growth.

Kuria highlighted the growing trade between Egypt and Kenya, specifically Egypt's rising imports of Kenyan tea and its exports of textiles and construction materials.

He also underscored the potential benefits of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) trade exemptions which offer businesspeople in both countries opportunities for reduced tariffs and improved

market access.

The official also expressed Kenya's eagerness to attract more Egyptian investors, particularly in industrial sectors. He pointed to various incentives available for Egyptian businesses looking to invest in Kenya's burgeoning industrial projects, emphasizing the country's strategic position as a gateway to East Africa.

Ambassador Attia reaffirmed Egypt's commitment to strengthening trade relations with Kenya, a key economic hub in East Africa.

He emphasized Egypt's private

sector's interest in exploring investment opportunities in various sectors, including construction, transport and energy.

Noting that Kenya is one of the most promising markets in the region, Attia called for continued collaboration to unlock the full potential of bilateral trade and investments.

Both leaders expressed optimism about the future of Egypt-Kenya trade relations, with a shared vision to expand cooperation across various economic sectors and drive mutual growth for both nations.

No threat to Kariba Dam from recent earthquakes, says ZRA

By Guardian Reporter and Agencies

THE Zambezi River Authority (ZRA), which manages the Kariba Dam, has said a series of recent earth tremors in Mashonaland West Province do not pose a safety threat to the dam wall.

In a statement issued yesterday, ZRA revealed that seven earth tremors have hit the region since December 1, 2024.

ZRA said that, in the interest of dam safety, they focus on the ground accelerations or vibrations generated by the tremors rather than their magnitudes.

The magnitude of an earthquake is a measure of the energy released at the source of the earthquake.

"The Zambezi River Authority wishes to confirm that it has noted the occurrence of earthquake incidents in the Kariba and surrounding areas," reads the statement from ZRA:

The most recent earthquake incident with a magnitude M4.9 occurred at 05:39 hours CAT on 23rd December 2024.

Its epicentre was triangulated to approximately 19km on the SSE direction from Kariba Dam, at a depth of 10km.

The region is located within the Kariba reservoir, directly behind the Antelope Island in Zimbabwe.

Six other earthquake incidents occurred in the Kariba and surrounding areas, as well as the Hurungwe District in Zimbabwe on 7th December (M4.3), 8th December (M4.1), two incidents on 11th December (one M4.3 in Hurungwe area with insufficient details to locate the second one). Two other earthquake incidents occurred on 20th December (M4.4 and M4.7).

The epicentres of six of the seven earthquake incidents that have occurred since 1st December 2024 were located between 19km and 40km SSE of Kariba Town, either within the Kariba reservoir or Charara Safari Area.

The epicentre of the seventh earthquake incident (M4.3) which occurred on 11th December was located approximately 106km away from Kariba Dam in the Hurungwe District of Zimbabwe.

"In view of the occurrence of the said earthquake incidents, the Authority wishes to advise its stakeholders and the public at large that earthquakes are primarily reservoir-induced-seismic (RIS) activities that

are triggered by not only the presence, but also the water level fluctuations from the drawing down of the Kariba reservoir."

The earthquakes are not only limited to Kariba as they have been reported from the filling and subsequent operation of several other large dams and reservoirs worldwide.

"The authority further wishes to inform its stakeholders and the public at large that in the interest of dam safety, it does not focus on magnitudes of the earthquakes, but the ground accelerations or vibrations that are generated from the event."

The vibrations are further influenced by such characteristics as distance and depth of the epicentre.

Therefore, an earthquake with a smaller magnitude but with its epicentre closer to the dam wall could be more damaging than a large earthquake with an epicentre located far away from the dam wall.

Within this context, the earthquakes that have been experienced in Kariba, Siavonga and surrounding areas since the construction of the Kariba Dam are relatively small and have not generated large ground accelerations or vibrations as to cause concern regarding the safety of the dam wall.

As part of emergency preparedness and Standing Operating Procedures (SOP) requirements regarding the operation of Kariba Dam following the occurrence of unusual incidents, the Authority inspects the dam and analyses data from the various dam monitoring instruments each time that there is an occurrence of an earthquake incident including that which took place on 23rd December 2024.

The inspections and analyse is of data from the various monitoring instruments after the earthquakes referred to above did not reveal any unusual observations and the dam continued to exhibit normal behaviour that is consistent with prevailing loading conditions.

"The authority further wishes to reiterate its commitment to carrying out and delivering on its mandate in respect of ensuring that the long-term safety and reliability of the Kariba Dam is maintained for public safety and for the benefit of the Republics of Zambia and Zimbabwe and the region at large."

Study highlights key trends in Africa's early startup funding

By Special Correspondent

A NEW report by the African Business Angel Network (ABAN) has revealed key trends in the evolving landscape of early-stage startup funding across the continent, with a strong emphasis on balancing financial risk and social impact.

The study, conducted in collaboration with the Briter analytics platform, surveyed 110 angel investors, uncovering investment patterns and priorities in African start-ups from 2022 to 2024.

The findings indicate that 77 percent of angel investors commit less than \$25,000 to start-ups, with a notable shift towards investments in the \$50,001 to \$250,000 range.

Half of the surveyed investors prefer using Simple Agreements for Future Equity (SAFE), highlighting a long-term investment outlook while 28 percent lean towards debt instruments such as convertible notes, seeking quicker returns with potential for equity acquisition.

Social impact is a major driving force behind the investments.

The survey found that 59 percent of angel investors prioritize job creation and poverty reduction while 19 percent focus on empowering youth and women entrepreneurs. Additionally, climate-conscious investments are on the rise, with 10 percent of investors directing funds towards

startups working on climate solutions.

The report also reveals that technology-driven startups, particularly in fintech, e-commerce, and energy tech attract significant attention from angel investors. Some 42 percent of the investors surveyed are focused on tech innovations, mirroring broader venture capital trends, with \$1.8 billion invested in these sectors in 2024 alone.

However, 25 percent of investors maintain a flexible, sector-agnostic approach, supporting a wide range of industries, including agriculture and healthcare.

Between 2008 and 2023, total angel investment in African startups reached \$35 million, with angel networks playing a crucial role in fostering growth through training programs and providing essential data resources. These networks help investors make informed decisions and expand their reach within Africa's rapidly growing startup ecosystem.

Despite challenges such as limited access to venture capital in certain markets, African angel investors are finding innovative ways to mitigate risk.

Enhanced education and improved data access are empowering investors to make more strategic decisions. The availability of diverse investment instruments allows investors to tailor their strategies to different risk profiles and startup needs.



Food items, mainly vegetables and spices, on retail sale on the roadside just outside the Muheza town main market, as found yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Steven William

KHARTOUM

AT least 12 children have died from malnutrition this month in an area of Sudan's capital controlled by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), according to a local aid group.

The deaths highlight the escalating humanitarian crisis in the war-torn country.

The South Belt Emergency Room, a medical facility operating in the RSF-controlled neighbourhoods of Al-Ingaz, Al-Azhari, Al-Salama and Mayo, reported that over 5,300 children are suffering from severe malnutrition in the areas. The conflict, which erupted in April between the RSF and the Sudanese

Malnutrition kills 12 children in Khartoum as aid groups struggle

army, has left large swathes of the capital without access to basic resources and medical care.

"We received reports of 12 child deaths and over 5,340 cases of malnutrition this month alone," a member of the Emergency Room team told Sudan Tribune on the condition of anonymity.

The situation has worsened due to the closure of 55 community kitchens, known as "Takayas," which had previously provided

meals to those in need. In addition, soaring food prices and the dwindling financial resources of local residents have compounded the crisis. Furthermore, nine health centres in the area are no longer operational, and medical supplies have become increasingly scarce.

Aid organisations have repeatedly warned that the ongoing conflict and its consequences threaten to push Sudan into a full-scale

humanitarian catastrophe, with malnutrition rates particularly high among children. The prolonged war has displaced millions, leaving vast numbers of Sudanese without access to food, shelter and medical care.

As the conflict drags on, aid groups continue to struggle in delivering critical assistance, and the situation remains dire for vulnerable communities in Khartoum.



Residents of Mhongolo ward in Kahama municipality pictured yesterday digging a drainage canal, primarily in a bid to tame seasonal floodwaters. Photo: Correspondent Shaban Njia

Famine worsens in Sudan, expected to persist in 2025

KHARTOUM

FAMINE is spreading in Sudan and likely to continue well into the New Year, an international monitoring organization has concluded.

Twenty months into a civil war, Sudan "continues to slide into a widening famine crisis characterized by widespread starvation and a significant surge in acute malnutrition," said a new report from the Famine Review Committee (FRC) of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC).

The IPC is a global partnership that provides food security and nutrition analyses for decision-

making in over 30 countries facing food crises.

The war between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces broke out in April 2023 and has led to millions of people fleeing their homes - both as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees to neighbouring countries.

Famine exists in at least five areas of Sudan: Zamzam, Abu Shouk and Al Salam camps in North Darfur and both residents and IDPs in the Western Nuba mountains, the FRC said.

FRC estimates that five additional areas will face famine between December 2024 and May 2025.

"Furthermore, there is a risk of

Famine in seventeen additional areas. Half of the population (24.6 million people) is facing high levels of acute food insecurity," the FRC said.

"This marks an unprecedented deepening and widening of the food and nutrition crisis, driven by the devastating conflict, which has triggered unprecedented mass displacement, a collapsing economy, the breakdown of essential social services, and severe societal disruptions, combined with poor humanitarian access. Food insecurity and malnutrition have reached these unprecedented levels of severity despite the mitigating effects of the ongoing harvest season."

Conditions are anticipated to worsen as food stocks will likely be exhausted ahead of the usual lean season, the FRC said.

"This lean season is expected to begin unusually early, well before May. ... The ongoing conflict is expected to further constrain food supply chains, while the purchasing power of IDPs is projected to decline further."

The organization also warned that in areas forecasted to experience famine conditions, the healthcare system has largely collapsed, and access to sanitation and hygiene services is critically undermined.

Famine was first declared in Sudan in August.

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Enhancement of cross-border security means unified action

RESIDENTS of several villages in Ngara District, Kagera Region on Tanzania's side of the border with Burundi are in the process of ensuring that a police station is built in the area.

They are meanwhile also appealing to the government to beef up security there in the wake of a recent rise in cases of robbery.

They mainly blame the incidents on cross-border criminals from a fairly restive country nearby, and the legislator for the area has promised to join hands with the police and other authorities towards ensuring that more patrols are conducted in the area. Thugs from across the border habitually strike in Tanzania's western regions.

There was a time around 2006-2007 when the police headquarters moved to create a special contingent to rein in criminals fond of waylaying buses travelling at night, and at times even in broad daylight, the likes of which seem to be on the way back.

As he handed over construction materials for the construction of a police station in one ward, the legislator was asked to see to it that security in the area was strengthened as a matter of urgency.

Generally, hope is being laid on the new police station to curb the recurring of robbery incidents, the development commonly leaving residents, traders compelled to flee exposed villages.

Several people affected have been recounting how they were forced to relocate businesses and families, fearing the criminals.

Some families were attacked and shops ransacked, with affirmations that three prominent traders succumbed to injuries, whereupon more traders left the border area to a safer ward.

Specific incidents were cited as having occurred back in May - with

several traders attacked by robbers who broke into shops and vehicles, stealing valuables. Police action took too long to stop some of the criminal elements from escaping, with only a few apprehended or killed.

Reports on police reactions differed, depending on the incidents, as there were instances where the residents alerted the police, who responded swiftly and apprehended one of the robbers.

Thus the residents are convinced that security will be enhanced with a rise in the frequency and intensity of patrols while the police station is being built.

What is somewhat disappointing is that it has taken well over six months since the wave of insecurity started surfacing, or incidents became rather notorious, before a public meeting was held and rectification pledges started being heard.

The story goes further back as one resident said that some years ago businesses in the area were attacked, resulting in the death of one young man for refusing to give money.

Just how far the construction of a police station will improve security, or action taken right away to start conducting regular patrols with well-equipped motorcycles where one police officer rides and another looks out for thugs hidden in the woods, remains to be seen.

Security breakdown has a way of engendering panic and a profound sentiment that things need to change so that the authorities get more mindful when a portion of the public is suffering.

Cross-border crime can undermine public confidence even in the current law enforcement and other authorities do a lot more - and do so more vigilantly - than spending time in office waiting for complaints.

UN treaty to combat cybercrime, check digital threats, pioneering

THERE is noticeable progress around the world in relation to the handling of internet-based hazards, with the United Nations General Assembly having moved to adopt a treaty aimed at strengthening global cooperation to combat cybercrime digital threats generally.

As is often the case, definitions will be at the centre of disputes, both in setting out treaty terms or detailed provisions, also likely to be at issue when the treaty is placed with national legislatures for ratification.

Vexing issues in treaty making reflect a range of levels of freedom in each country, as some treaties are designed to reinforce wishes for protectionism.

UN observers say the convention against cybercrime marks a significant milestone in the fight against online criminal activities, becoming the first international criminal justice treaty in over two decades.

That summation nearly tells it all in that, despite all the woes there is in the world, it has taken well over 20 years for a criminal justice treaty to be put across and generally agreed.

The latest pact is said to be the culmination of a five-year effort involving UN member states, civil society, information security experts, academia and the private sector. Left at that description, it doesn't explain what orientation guided the effort and how consensus ultimately became possible.

Much the same can be said when reports cite remarks by UN Secretary General António Guterres, who praised the treaty as a testament to

successful multilateralism.

He saw it as a collective global effort to address the growing challenge of cybercrime, noting that the protocol showed that multilateralism could succeed even during difficult times.

It even reflects the collective will of UN member states to promote international cooperation to prevent and combat cybercrime - that meaning overcoming their usually divisive, ingrained positions.

The convention against cybercrime will open for signature by UN Member states early next year by diplomatic notification of ratification, entering into force 90 days after it is ratified by 40 state parties.

Plenty will have to be done by individual member states for the treaty to become a comprehensive platform for international collaboration in evidence exchange, victim protection and cybercrime prevention.

A clincher will be the various parameters involved in ensuring the safeguarding of human rights in digital space, which is altogether different from assuring individual liberty on the one hand, while many will seek to safeguard cyber sovereignty.

While there is no doubt that online child sexual abuse, sophisticated scams, money laundering and other serious offenses are detestable, a whole range of such actions are in the interest of state parties, or private interests linked with those in authority.

It is thus easier cooperating across countries on the isolated issue of cybercrime. Yet even the low level of action on 'lone gunman' cybercrime will still be a helpful deterrent.



The primary healthcare leadership challenge

PREGNANT mothers and patients requiring medical care are compelled to embark on a two kilometre journey to access fundamental laboratory and scanning services at other facilities, due to the Primary Health Care's (PHC) lack of essential medical equipment and deteriorating infrastructure.

This account came from a weekly Community Health Watch report produced by Nigeria Health Watch, where community reporters share the experiences of people in Niger and Kano State regarding the quality of healthcare they receive at primary health centres.

These stories offer a glimpse into the challenges of healthcare delivery at the grassroots level. Primary healthcare is meant to be the first point of contact for individuals seeking medical services. The Alma-Ata Declaration of 1978, which focused on health equity, laid the foundation for global health by emphasising the critical role of primary healthcare which is supposed to deliver 80-90% of an individual's health needs in the course of their lifetime.

However, this has not been the case even despite the attempts of Professor Olikoye Ransome-Kuti to implement a primary healthcare policy in Nigeria based on the Alma-Ata Declaration.

Key barriers like inadequate infrastructure and funding have limited its success. Winning an Award for Primary Health Care

So, why are we not seeing improvements in primary healthcare, despite the many initiatives and funds dedicated to improving outcomes? Political leadership plays a crucial role in accelerating progress toward achieving effective primary healthcare. This is why the Primary Health Care Leadership Challenge Fund (PHC-LCF), a strategic initiative designed to address critical leadership gaps within the Primary Healthcare (PHC) system, is vital. Strengthening leadership ensures better decision-making, accountability, and resource allocation in healthcare delivery.

Conceptualised to build the capacity of states to deliver high-quality and sustainable health services to all citizens, the challenge encourages states to fully implement the "Primary Health Care Under One Roof" initiative, as well as the Abuja Declaration and Seattle Declaration. The initiative is a collaborative effort between the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the Nigeria Governors' Forum, and the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA), with technical



assistance from UNICEF and financial support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Aliko Dangote Foundations.

In its second year of awarding, Borno State emerged as the inaugural overall winner of the Primary Health Care Leadership and Governance Award (PHC-LCF) in 2023. This achievement included both the Overall Best Performing State award and the Zonal Prize for the Northeast.

The selection process for the best performing state was conducted by an Independent Judging Panel (IJP), comprising 17 members who reviewed and validated the report of the Independent Verification Agency (IVA). The IVA assessed 12 key indicators, including leadership and governance, financing, service quality, data quality for monitoring, and service coverage.

In total, 14 awards were presented at the 2024 PHC-LCF. These included:

Six awards for the Best Performing State in each of the six geopolitical zones with a prize fund of \$500,000

Six awards for the 1st Runner-up in each of the six geopolitical zones with a prize fund of \$400,000

Two special awards: one for Most Innovative State, given to Gombe State, which introduced an electronic system in 2021 to monitor health worker absenteeism. This system, integrated with payroll and performance, saved the state 800 million Naira annually.

The award for the Overall National Best Performing State in 2024 was presented to Anambra State, which earned an additional \$700,000 based on the PHC Performance Monitoring Framework. His Excellency, Governor Charles Soludo, accepted the award during

the Gala evening, which celebrated this significant achievement. This recognition highlights Anambra State's achievement in delivering primary healthcare services and performance in health system management.

The Role of Citizens in Strengthening Primary Health Care Delivery

"Accountability is the glue that ties commitment to the result." -- Bob Proctor

While the winning states of the Primary Health Care Leadership and Governance Award (PHC-LCF) deserve recognition for their achievements, the real winners should be the citizens of these states. The transformation of the primary healthcare system should ultimately result in the delivery of quality and affordable healthcare, leading to improved health outcomes. This progress requires greater citizen accountability.

Citizens must play an active role in tracking how the funds awarded to states for the PHC-LCF are utilized. In addition, they must hold their governments accountable by demanding transparency and asking important questions about the delivery of primary healthcare services.

For example, a parent with a child suffering from a high fever or diarrhea should be able to visit the nearest primary healthcare facility rather than rushing to a tertiary hospital, which may not be the most cost-effective option. This highlights the need for better integration of primary, secondary, and tertiary care to ensure a seamless continuum of care for all healthcare seekers.

In his keynote address at the PHC Leadership Award, the Coordinating

Minister of Health & Social Welfare urged governors to be "deliberate in investing in the health of your people, not only because health is a fundamental human right, but also because the citizens you govern deserve to survive, thrive, and have access to basic healthcare when they need it."

Initiatives like Tracka play an important role in tracking the implementation of government projects. By using various platforms, they amplify their findings, promoting transparency and accountability. However, accountability must be a collective effort. Communities need to be empowered with information to hold decision-makers accountable for their actions.

The recent Supreme Court ruling on Local Government autonomy now requires local government councils to take greater ownership and accountability for primary healthcare delivery. This shift highlights the need for capacity strengthening in primary healthcare systems. Besides community members also bear the responsibility of monitoring the performance of primary health services.

While this may seem like a complex process, the key to accountability lies in data. This data, which originates from the community, should not only inform decision-making but also serve as a tool for accountability.

So until the next PHC-LCF, citizens must look out for continued improvements in healthcare delivery, transparency in fund usage, and a stronger commitment from local governments to prioritise primary healthcare services.

Nigeria Health Watch Report

Organisation pioneers sustainable solutions for thriving communities

By Correspondent

Constantine Akitanda

IN the journey of life, transforming communities doesn't always require monumental acts or extravagant efforts; often, it is the small, deliberate steps of compassion and skills that create the most profound and lasting change, igniting hope and rewriting the destinies of those in need.

Sometimes, addressing a single pressing issue can profoundly change lives, leaving behind a legacy of hope and gratitude.

Acts of genuine compassion and selflessness resonate deeply, etching themselves into the hearts and conversations of those impacted.

The Community Development Trust Fund (CDTF) embodies a spirit of innovation and solid commitment, emerging as a beacon of hope by addressing critical needs and inspiring transformative change in communities.

CDTF's transformative interventions at Mwembe Primary School and Sangara Secondary School in Msongola Ward, Dar es Salaam, have turned stories of water scarcity into inspiring narratives of opportunity and abundance.

Established in 2022, Mwembe Primary School faced significant challenges, particularly with water accessibility.

The school, with 766 pupils and a dedicated teaching staff of ten, operated in an arid environment, a stark reminder of



its origins as grazing land.

Reflecting on early days, the Head Teacher, Benjamin Masangya, described the dire situation: "When the school began, it felt like we were in the middle of a desert—no trees, no water, just a wasteland."

Determined to bring change, the school administration, alongside the School Development Committee, sought assistance from CDTF. Their response was swift and transformative.

"We wrote to them explaining our dire need for water," Masangya recalls. "They visited, assessed the situation,

and quickly mobilized their experts. Soon, we had a borehole, a water tank tower, and, most importantly, a renewed sense of hope."

But CDTF's intervention went beyond providing clean water. They introduced an organic agriculture programme to make optimal use of the newfound resource.

The school now thrives with horticulture projects, cultivating fruit trees, vegetables, and herbs like lemongrass. Despite limited land, they have maximized its utility by planting trees for shade, conservation, and sustenance.

"The water has breathed life into our school," Masangya shared. "Our once-barren environment is now lush and green—a testament to our progress and commitment."

This transformation has opened doors to countless opportunities for the pupils. Under their teachers' guidance, they actively participate in environmental conservation and organic farming projects.

"We've turned this once-desolate space into a vibrant learning environment," said environmental teacher Theresia Magessa. "Today, we proudly showcase our progress to

other schools as a model of sustainability and conservation."

Students, too, are excited about the skills they are acquiring. Fourth-grader Nasir Nurdin beams: "I love farming. It's not just about growing food; it's about securing our future. We're learning skills that will help us create jobs and provide for our families."

Third-grader Theodora Francis echoes this sentiment, adding, "Water is life, and I'm grateful to CDTF for bringing it to us, they've given us a new lease on life."

At Sangara Secondary

Some parents with children at Mwembe Primary School gathered within the school premises during a meeting with teachers that was held before the end of this year's final term. Photo: Constantine Akitanda

School which was established in 2007, water crisis was just as critical. Originally a day school, its transition to accommodate boarding students strained the already limited water supply. Previous attempts by other organisations to drill wells had failed. When CDTF stepped in, they conducted meticulous research and successfully installed a reliable water source, ending years of struggle.

This breakthrough paved the way for the school to embark on an ambitious organic agriculture project, including a thriving one-acre papaya farm sustained through consistent irrigation. "The project is expected to generate significant revenue from papaya sales," explained Discipline Master Luitfried Haule.

The initiative has been embraced with enthusiasm by students and staff. Student Levina Lumela Kiterero expressed her gratitude: "CDTF's intervention has transformed our school. The organic agriculture programme not only benefits us now but also prepares us for the future. We're proud to be part of this journey."

CDTF's interventions at Mwembe Primary and Sangara Secondary Schools are a testament to the profound impact of targeted community support. From barren landscapes to flourishing environments, these transformations underscore the power of collaboration and compassion.

As these schools continue to thrive, they stand as living proof that even a single act of kindness can touch countless lives, leaving an enduring legacy of hope and resilience.

CDTF's project officer, Seleman Mpendo, highlighted the significant investment made:

"Our organisation has spent approximately 50 million Tanzanian shillings to restore joy and hope for these schools.

By Adonis Byemelwa

STANDING amidst a dozen women at a gender equality workshop in Ngorongoro District, Tanzania, Neema Manana's frustration is palpable.

At just 19 years of age, the young mother of two from Sale village carries an invisible weight that grows heavier with each passing day. Her eyes, once bright with youthful ambition, now reflect sorrow and desperation.

Abandoned by her husband, who left in search of employment in an urban center, she finds herself trapped in a harrowing web of responsibilities—both physical and emotional—that threatens to unravel her spirit.

Behind the closed doors of her grass-thatched shelter, every creak and whisper echoes her silent cries for help, cries that remain unheard by a society that has grown accustomed to ignoring the struggles of women like Manana.

Traveling from Arusha through Monduli and Longido to Ngorongoro reveals a pervasive isolation many young wives face. This journey uncovers a vast landscape of private anguish—a generation of women ensnared in a novel form of matrimonial bondage.

These women are left behind, both literally and figuratively, as their spouses venture into urban centers seeking opportunities that rarely trickle back to their families.

This has created a silent epidemic of loneliness and despair, where the open plains mask the hidden tribulations of those navigating rural life with little support.

Within their sheltered confines, their stories await to be heard, calling for community empathy to bring about hope where resignation once reigned.

A cry for help: Silent fight of young wives in northern Tanzania's patriarchal society

In the picturesque landscapes of rural Tanzania, vibrant pastoralist communities are quietly grappling with a growing crisis.

Deep-seated societal traditions coupled with modern socio-economic shifts compounded by climate change effects, such as prolonged dry spells, have created a perfect storm.

Mesha Singolyo, a prominent activist and founder of PWDWT, working in strategic partnership with the Global Fund for Widows and Diane Foundation, has been at the forefront of unveiling and challenging these regressive practices.

She describes a form of oppression she terms "matrimonial slavery," which disproportionately affects young wives in pastoralist communities.

For generations, pastoralist customs have dictated stringent family roles: women as caregivers and men as providers, wielding power and wealth.

However, contemporary pressures, like rural-to-urban migration, have shifted these dynamics, leaving young wives in precarious social and economic positions.

These pressures compel young men, often lacking formal education, to migrate to urban centers for low-paying jobs such as security guards.

This search for better prospects leaves young wives to fend for their families in rural homesteads, a task made even harder by customary laws that restrict women's rights.

"Imagine, their husbands have migrated to urban areas, and these women have



For the Maasai community, women are caregivers while men are providers with power and wealth in the latter's hands

no rights whatsoever to sell a cow to buy food for their children," explains Singolyo.

Instead, these women resort to selling charcoal, firewood, or grass to sustain their families. "They have to burn charcoal in a bid to eat, sometimes facing the wrath of the law, but often worsening the effects

of climate change," she laments.

The absence of their husbands, who may return sporadically, often leads to pregnancies without additional support, further compounding the women's burdens.

Consequently, these women become the de facto breadwinners while

remaining powerless in environments where they cannot legally own property or engage in economic activities without male consent.

This "matrimonial slavery" creates a silent epidemic of "social widows," a term coined by Singolyo to describe women who effectively live as single parents

under the cultural guise of marriage.

"Challenges are countless in juggling their roles as mothers with their counterparts nowhere to be seen," says Singolyo. "Not the society alone is to blame; even nature does not support them."

The psychological toll of these circumstances is immense. "Mental health is real in most pastoralist young wives, as they are left to live very tough lives, unprepared," observes Singolyo. The stress of sole responsibility, isolation, and lack of autonomy pushes many to extreme mental distress.

Singolyo's grassroots activism sheds light on this overlooked crisis. Working tirelessly within the community, she advocates for urgent intervention, calling upon both the Tanzanian government and civil societies to awaken to this issue.

"It's high time the government and civil societies gave attention to this new form of social widowhood and assisted these women before it's too late," she urges.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive understanding of both traditional practices and modern socio-economic forces.

Empowering pastoralist women with legal rights, access to education, and economic opportunities could mitigate these pressures.

Singolyo's work is pivotal in starting these crucial conversations. She aspires for a future where pastoralist women are empowered, seen, and heard, bridging the gap between traditional customs and modern realities.

By fostering dialogue and implementing practical solutions, society can ensure

these women find a place of dignity and autonomy, free from the invisible chains that bind them today. As Dr. Hoyce Temu observed in her PhD thesis on gender equity within media companies, meaningful change begins with understanding the systemic barriers that perpetuate inequality.

Although her focus was on organizational settings, her insights resonate broadly: "Equity is not merely about policy but about shifting mindsets to recognize and value the contributions of women as equals in all spaces."

In regions like Northern Tanzania, where traditional roles often confine women to caregiving, the journey toward equity requires addressing deeply ingrained cultural norms. Gender activists worldwide echo this sentiment.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a prominent voice for gender equality, has argued that changing the narrative starts with re-educating society about the roles women can and should play.

"Culture does not make people; people make culture," she has famously stated, emphasizing the power of collective will in dismantling oppressive traditions.

Practical solutions, however, must accompany cultural shifts. These include providing young wives with access to education, vocational training, and microfinance opportunities to help them gain financial independence.

Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai's advocacy for girls' education demonstrates the transformative impact of empowering women through learning.

Similarly, the Grameen Bank's microcredit initiatives highlight how economic tools can break the cycle of poverty and dependency, offering women a path to self-reliance.

Twenty years on: 'My boat was metres from the shore when the tsunami hit'

By Geeta Pandey

BOXING Day, 2004 – when the earthquake struck at 06:30 (01:00 GMT), I was on a ferry, headed towards Havelock – an island in the Indian archipelago of Andaman and Nicobar.

Known for its silver sand and clear blue waters, the Radhanagar beach there had recently been crowned "Asia's Best Beach" by Time magazine.

My best friend from college and her family had lived in Port Blair, the capital of the archipelago, for a decade and a half, but this was my first visit to the islands, where I had arrived on Christmas Eve.

We had planned to spend three days in Havelock and in the morning we packed snacks and sandwiches, gathered excited children and headed out to catch the ferry from Phoenix Bay jetty in Port Blair.

Not wanting to miss out on anything, I was standing on the front deck, looking around, when disaster struck.

Just as we pulled out from the harbour, the boat lurched and suddenly the jetty next to where we had boarded crumpled and fell into the sea. It was followed by the watchtower and an electricity pole.

It was an extraordinary sight. Dozens of people standing alongside me watched open-mouthed.

Thankfully, the jetty was deserted at the time so there were no casualties. A boat was due to leave from there in half an hour but the travellers were yet to arrive.

Getty Images This aerial view from an Indian Navy Helicopter taken 28 February 2005, shows an abandoned waterlogged coastal village on Kamorta Island, part of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. India has given up hope of rebuilding six islands in the tsunami-hit Andaman and Nicobar archipelago where 5764 people are still listed as missing and some 40,500 people are placed in makeshift camps waiting for their homes to be rebuilt

By Special Correspondents

IT'S never been easier to stay connected to work. Even when we're on leave, our phones and laptops keep us tethered. Many of us promise ourselves we won't check emails during our break. But we do.

Being away from the workplace, and even in a new location, is often not enough to detach psychologically. We might still be thinking about a demanding project we raced to finish or even feel guilty about leaving others to cover for us.

'Digital presenteeism'

It mightn't be spelt out by our employers but having phones and laptops can create an underlying expectation we are constantly available, even outside the usual work hours.

This feeling of connection or "digital presenteeism", can impact our health by making us stressed, anxious and burnt out.

Switching off our work tools when we are out of the office or on leave can remove these problems as well as helping improve and enjoy our non-work activities and relationships.

Right to disconnect

While recently passed right to disconnect laws in Australia legally support workers to switch off, there's another option already available to workers. Taking annual leave.

Unfortunately, many workers don't take advantage of this valuable resource, with an estimated 160 million annual leave days banked up by Australian workers. One in five have more than the typical yearly allocation of four weeks unused.



Just as we pulled out from the harbour, our boat lurched and suddenly the jetty next to where we had boarded collapsed into the sea

by the Integrated Relief Command (IRC), comprising the military and the civilian administration, set up by India to restore the Andamans.

A member of the boat's crew told me it was an earthquake. At the time I didn't know, but the 9.1 magnitude quake was the third most powerful ever recorded in the world – and remains the biggest and most destructive in Asia.

Occurring off the coast of northwest Sumatra under the Indian Ocean, it unleashed a devastating tsunami that killed an estimated 228,000 people across more than a dozen countries and caused massive damage in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Maldives and Thailand.

The Andaman and Nicobar islands, located just about 100km north of the epicentre, suffered extensive damage when a wall of water, as high as 15 metres (49 ft) in places, hit land just about 15 minutes later.

The official death toll was put at 1,310 – but with more than 5,600 people missing and presumed dead, it's believed that more than 7,000 islanders perished.

While on the boat, however, we were oblivious to the scale of



Thousands of people were left homeless

destruction around us. Our mobile phones didn't work on the water and we only got snippets of information from the crew. We heard about damage in Sri Lanka, Thailand and Maldives – and the southern Indian coastal town of Nagapattinam.

AFP Indian men stand exhausted after searching for missing relatives at Silver Beach in

Cuddalore, some 185 kms south of Madras, 27 December 2004, after tidal waves hit the region.

But there was no information about Andaman and Nicobar – a collection of hundreds of islands scattered around in the Bay of Bengal, located about 1,500km (915 miles) east of India's mainland.

Only 38 of them were inhabit-

ed. They were home to 400,000 people, including six hunter-gatherer groups who had lived isolated from the outside world for thousands of years.

The only way to get to the islands was by ferries but, as we later learnt, an estimated 94% of the jetties in the region were damaged.

That was also the reason why,

on 26 December 2004, we never made it to Havelock. The jetty there was damaged and under water, we were told.

So the boat turned around and started on its return journey. For a while, there was speculation that we might not get clearance to dock at Port Blair for safety reasons and might have to spend the night at anchor.

This made the passengers – most of them tourists looking forward to sun and sand – anxious.

After several hours of bobbing along in rough seas, we returned to Port Blair. Because Phoenix Bay had been closed following the morning's damage, we were taken to Chatham, another harbour in Port Blair. The jetty where we were dropped had huge, gaping holes in places.

The signs of devastation were all around us as we headed home – buildings had turned into rubble, small upturned boats sat in the middle of the streets and roads had great gashes in them. Thousands of people had been turned homeless when the tidal wave flooded their homes in low-lying areas.

I met a traumatised nine-year-old girl whose house was filled with water and she told me she had nearly drowned. A woman told me she had lost her entire life's possessions in the blink of an eye.

In Port Blair, buildings had turned into rubble, small upturned boats sat in the middle of the streets and roads had huge gashes

Over the next three weeks, I reported extensively on the disaster and its effects on the population.

It was the first time a tsunami had wreaked such havoc in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the scale of the tragedy was overwhelming.

Salt water contaminated many sources of fresh water and destroyed large tracts of arable land. Getting vital supplies into the islands was tough with jetties unserviceable.

Ultimately, the best vacation is the one that fits your preferences and budget – there's no such thing as a perfect holiday.

How to make the most of your next break

If you haven't already, book some time off and get away from the workplace. Here are five ways to make the most of the time:

Finish up your to-do list and clear out your inbox: returning to work after a summer holiday with fewer unfinished tasks allows the positive effects of the holiday to linger longer.

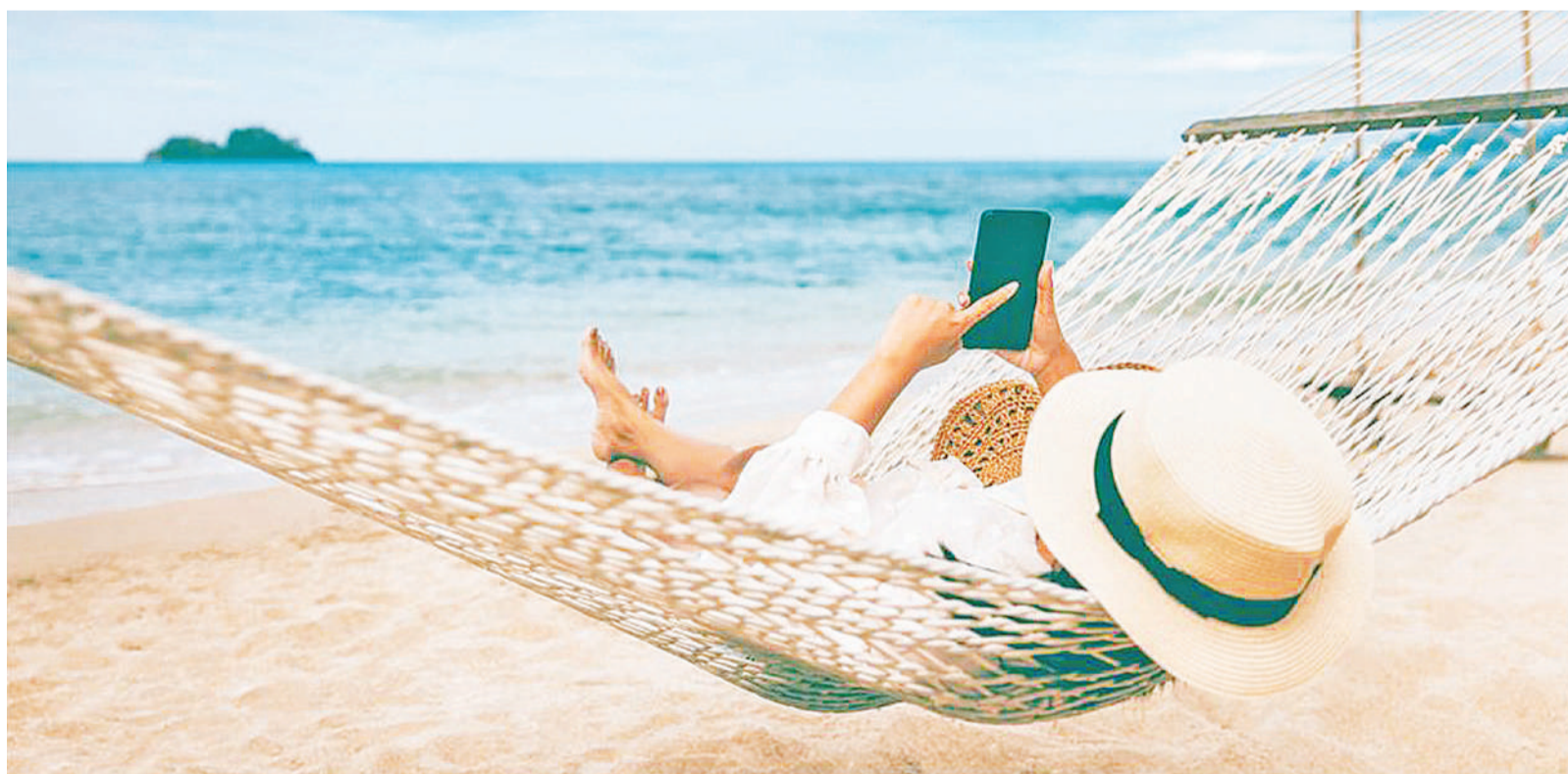
Step away from the normal routine: try to limit work-like activities (such as shopping, cleaning, computer-based tasks) and find environments that feel removed from your typical routine and obligations.

Engage in "soft fascination" activities: exploring nature is an example of an activity that gently holds your attention while leaving headspace for reflection. These types of activities have been shown to provide restorative mental benefits.

Reduce the friction and chaos: avoid putting yourself in settings of conflict (such as visiting a difficult family member), confusion (busy, unfamiliar environments) or tension (excessive travel and/or tight timelines).

Take more frequent breaks: aim for multiple short breaks throughout the year, rather than a single longer vacation. This spreads out the benefit with more lead-in time and longer comedown.

The research is clear: vacations are essential for our health and wellbeing. So, if you haven't already, book some time off and get away from the workplace.



The Cerrado is the largest grassland in the world and hosts 5 percent of the world's species

Switching off from work can be difficult but taking a proper break is good for your health

The benefits of taking a break

Taking a break doesn't just feel good, it's been shown to benefit your health.

A 2017 meta-analysis of 86 studies revealed taking holidays can lead to reduced stress and less exhaustion during the holiday period.

So what do we do with all the extra time we have? Sleep more? Do more exercise? Studies show that's exactly what happens when we are on holiday. We studied movement patterns of 375

adults during annual leave. We found people were more physically active, less sedentary and had more sleep each day – all of which are good for our health.

Holidays can also be associated with changes in how our body functions. A study of 112 holiday makers who attended a wellness resort for six days in the United States had increased heart rate variability which indicates greater resilience to stress.

Also, the odds of meeting metabolic syndrome criteria decreased with each break taken

each year in a cohort of workers who took on average five holidays each year.

If you're male and still not convinced, there is evidence that taking holidays is linked with living longer. Men who take more frequent holidays and more leave days a year have lower mortality rates than those who don't?

The best type of break?

Simply taking leave is beneficial. Longer breaks do not have increased benefits and where you go is also unimportant.

S.African suburb fights food deficit with climate-smart farming methods

By Lucas Ledwaba

IT'S December, yet the farms' landscape in Onverwacht, near Polokwane in Limpopo, north-east South Africa, is a dull brown and dry. Red dust rises into the sky as a hot wind sweeps in the late morning. Usually, the land looks green at this time of the year, but the rains have not been good.

Frustrated farmer Rosa Ramaipadi, 58, is still hopeful, though. "We don't have much rain, so we haven't yet planted. But we still have a chance [if it rains] in late December," says the agroecological farmer from her 12-hectare farm.

Ramaipadi is the president of Mzansi Climate Smart Agriculture, a network of rural-based small-scale and backyard farmers who engage in organic farming and permaculture to reduce their negative environmental impact.

"So far, we have more than 100 farmers, and I encourage them to do organic farming and plant their indigenous food and fruits," Ramaipadi says.

'While you pour billions into corporate-driven false solutions, we farmers are already holding the real answers,' Leodegario Velayo tells negotiators in Baku, Azerbaijan

Meet SwagBot, the AI-powered robot cattle herder preventing soil degradation

SwagBot, once a simple herding robot, can now determine the health, type and density of pasture and monitor the health of livestock

Negros Island confronts growing threat of food fraud in organic farming Organic food fraud doesn't just deceive consumers; it strikes at the very heart of the government's organic agriculture programme.

The network also works to build a seed bank of indigenous



crops. The seeds for crops such as millet, beans, vegetables, and herbs are distributed to farmers to increase their use.

"The indigenous crops are very resistant to drought," says Ramaipadi. "That is why the old people planted them every year. Even though [sometimes] there was not too much rain, they could harvest."

Ramaipadi says indigenous farming systems that sustained generations have been replaced by nonorganic systems that have increased the impact of climate change.

"Our farming systems are no longer working like in the past. Too many chemi-

cals and synthetic fertilizers have destroyed our land and soil. So we need to go back to our roots and plant our indigenous food," she says.

Agroecology promotes organic farming methods, such as green fertilizers, rainwater harvesting, composting, and soil and water conservation.

"What we are doing now is about food security and sovereignty, and we are also looking at climate justice," Ramaipadi says. "When we farm organically, we are at least trying to clean the air because our surroundings are full of chemicals."

A 2020 report by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and the Environ-

ment says significant impacts of climate change include a reduction in the amount of suitable arable and pastoral land, a shortening of the growing season, and a decrease in crop yields. Rural-based communities, where economic opportunities are limited and poverty levels high, are more likely to feel the impact of climate change.

Inclusive, sustainable approach

But Ramaipadi and her colleagues are working to encourage communities to use climate-smart farming methods to produce their food and sell the excess harvest.

"Our communities have

come to understand what we are doing. As an organization, we are going to the villages, going house to house to say, let everyone have a backyard garden where you grow your food."

Ramaipadi's love for farming was nurtured during her upbringing in Sekhukhune, where her parents had a dairy farm. "I grew up milking cattle. My mother ran that dairy farm. After school, I would go to the farm and be there with my mother milking the cows," she says.

One of the important lessons she learned during this period was to process sour milk, a skill she is now using well as a trainer and agro-processor.



That is why the old people planted them every year. Even though [sometimes] there was not too much rain, they could harvest.

After matriculating, Ramaipadi enrolled for a teacher's diploma and later earned a degree in education at the University of Limpopo. Although she taught mathematics and physical science for years at various schools, she eventually quit teaching in 2007 and began life as a farmer.

However, she continues to teach with a different curriculum and works with different NGOs to organize farmers and facilitate workshops. "I teach them plant production, animal production, and other farming skills," says Ramaipadi.

She is encouraged that many emerging farmers participating in these workshops and programs are young.

"A lot of them are into agro-processing. One boy is processing moringa and making moringa soaps, drinks, and juices. They're producing detergent using moringa and other natural products like turmeric and bay leaves – they are producing many things."

In June, the Polokwane Local Municipality gave the farmers space in the provincial capital to set up their inaugural farmer's market. The event drew an overwhelming response from members of the public who were fascinated by types of crops such as millet that have all but disappeared from their communities.

The United Nations and its Food and Agricultural Organization underlined millet's significance as an important food source by declaring 2023 the International Year of Millet.

"What we are trying to do is to ensure that people go back to eating healthy food. We are trying to say we're eating a lot of genetically modified crops. It doesn't work for us because too many illnesses and sicknesses exist. We can't even explain what's happening," says Ramaipadi.

The effects of climate change continue to weigh heavily on farmers, but Ramaipadi doesn't believe all is lost. "The climate is not going to go back to normal. We should go back to normal to help the climate to go back to normal," she says.

By Guardian Correspondent, Mwanza

AS climate change, urbanisation and environmental degradation threaten communities across the globe, the urgency of implementing robust disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies has never been more critical.

In response to the challenges, stakeholders from Tanzania, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Malawi, South Africa, Ghana and other nations recently convened in Mwanza for the learning and exchanging on knowledge and best practices in disaster risk reduction. The event attracted participants from various organisations dedicated to sustainable development and climate resilience.

Among the key stakeholders were the Centre for Community Initiatives (CCI Tanzania), GIZ/Resilience Initiatives Africa (RIA), Mwanza Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Authority (Mwauwasa), Slum Dwellers International (SDI), and the Tanzania Federation of Urban Poor (TFUP).

It focused on sharing expertise, learning from global best practices, and forging partnerships to build more resilient communities in the face of natural hazards.

Mwanza, a city situated on the shores of Lake Victoria, faces a range of environmental and social challenges. From flooding and pollution to the vulnerability of informal settlements built on rocky hillsides, the risks are compounded by rapid urbanization and climate change. It was against this backdrop that experts, local authorities, and practitioners gathered to explore how both urban and rural communities can better



Disaster risk reduction: Stakeholders meet to plan for resilient communities

prepare for and respond to disasters.

The Learning Exchange was a vital platform for disaster management professionals, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), and local government officials.

During the event, acting Mwanza Regional Administrative Secretary Mangabe Mnilago praised the collaborative effort, emphasizing the importance of improving disaster management, especially in the city's vulnerable communities. Local government officials from Mwanza City Council, along with representatives from Nyamagana and Ilemela Districts, stressed the need for

practical solutions that address the unique challenges faced by their residents.

Sanitation at the heart of disaster risk reduction

A key focus of the event was the role of sanitation in disaster risk reduction, particularly in informal settlements.

Residents from Mabatini Kusini Street, one of Mwanza's most at-risk areas, shared how improved sanitation facilities had drastically reduced health risks.

Rhobi Samwel, a local resident shared that before the installation of modern toilets, many people in the settlement resorted to def-

ecating in open spaces, including the grass.

"This poor sanitation posed significant health risks, particularly during outbreaks of diseases like cholera. However, with the introduction of modern sanitation facilities with support from CCI and Mwauwasa, the situation has drastically improved, reducing the spread of disease and ensuring a healthier environment for the residents," she said.

Jackline George, another resident, highlighted the positive impact of the improved sanitation, noting that cholera outbreaks, which previously started in

the area, had become less frequent since the installation of modern toilets.

Dr Tim Ndezi, Executive Director of CCI, underlined that proper sanitation not only safeguards public health but also prevents pollution from reaching Lake Victoria, a critical resource for the region.

He said the organisation works with federations to address sanitation challenges in poor and unplanned settlements.

"We have invested our efforts to educate communities to protect rivers which include planting trees for greener environment," he said.

Building resilience through nature-based solutions

The field visits to Mabatini and the Mirongo River provided participants with hands-on examples of local initiatives aimed at reducing disaster risks. In Mabatini, which is particularly vulnerable to flooding and rockslides, residents have embraced rainwater harvesting systems, disaster response training, and the construction of public toilets as part of an integrated approach to improving resilience.

Neema Daniel, also resident of Mabatini, shared how the improvements in

sanitation had made a significant difference in her health and safety during her pregnancy.

At the Mirongo River, local communities have engaged in a conservation project focused on tree planting and bamboo usage to prevent soil erosion and mitigate flooding. The initiative, led by the Mirongo Conservation Committee under the guidance of Adam Shija, is a textbook example of nature-based solutions, which utilise natural systems to manage disaster risks in a sustainable and cost-effective manner.

One of the most valuable aspects of the exchange was the opportunity to learn from successful initiatives elsewhere. Ghana's approach to participatory policy development in disaster risk reduction was a key focus.

By involving marginalized communities, NGOs, and civil society organisations in decision-making, Ghana has achieved notable successes in urban resilience. Initiatives such as rooftop solar installations and greening projects in urban areas have not only mitigated disaster risks but also promoted climate resilience.

Vivian Temu, head of communications for Mwauwasa, emphasized that local communities, government agencies, and NGOs must work hand in hand to develop integrated solutions that can address challenges like urban flooding and pollution. She also stressed the importance of knowledge exchange between nations to combat shared environmental threats.

BoT cracks down on digital lending misuse to protect consumers, ensure fair practices

By Correspondent Emmanuel Onyango

As the world advances technologically, digital transformation is revolutionizing industries, including financial services. However, this progress is also creating opportunities for fraudsters to exploit online payment and lending systems, undermining user trust and safety.

Digital lending, a significant innovation, offers numerous advantages. It enables borrowers to access funds quickly, often with instant approval decisions, thus eliminating the need for lengthy traditional loan processes.

Through online platforms or mobile applications, borrowers can apply for and repay loans entirely digitally. This streamlined approach enhances convenience, reduces paperwork, and accelerates the loan lifecycle—from application to repayment.

For businesses and individual borrowers alike, digital lending provides unparalleled speed and flexibility. Licensed lenders approved by government authorities, such as the Bank of Tanzania (BoT), adhere to strict regulations designed to protect consumers and ensure fair practices.

In Tanzania, the digital credit landscape has grown significantly. Telecommunications companies and major commercial banks now offer digital credit services, delivering funds as e-



money directly to borrowers' mobile wallets.

Since regulating digital lending in 2014, BoT has implemented numerous guidelines, including the Guidance Note on Digital Lenders under Tier 2 Microfinance Service Providers, issued in August 2024. These regula-

tions aim to enhance transparency, curb abusive practices, and protect consumers.

Challenges in digital lending

Despite the benefits, BoT has identified significant challenges in the digital lending sector. A

recent BoT report revealed that 69 unlicensed and unauthorized digital lending platforms are operating illegally in Tanzania.

These platforms have failed to comply with regulations, prompting a crackdown by BoT in collaboration with the Tanzania Communications Regulatory

Authority (TCRA).

Mary Ngassa, Assistant Manager for Micro-Finance at BoT, emphasized the severity of the issue at a seminar for senior journalists in Dar es Salaam.

She highlighted cases of harassment by rogue debt collectors, including public shaming and, in extreme cases, physical assaults on borrowers. These practices violate the 2018 Microfinance Act and harm the credibility of both traditional and digital lending systems.

BoT has also uncovered instances of microfinance institutions managing multiple online lending platforms without proper approval. Some institutions operate up to 10 applications under a single license.

To combat these violations, regulations now prohibit the sharing of customer data with foreign entities and restrict unauthorized access to users' phone contacts, messages, or photos.

Strengthening consumer protections

New rules require transparency and accountability from digital lenders. Providers must obtain consent from guarantors before approving loans and are prohibited from demanding early repayments or applying unauthorized charges.

Professionalism in customer service is mandatory, with providers required to handle com-

plaints efficiently.

Licensed digital lending platforms must clearly display their identity, BoT license number, and contact information. To further ensure compliance, BoT plans to assign unique identification numbers to registered apps for monitoring purposes.

Digital lending holds immense potential to transform financial access and inclusion. However, as the sector evolves, robust regulatory frameworks are essential to safeguard consumers and maintain trust.

It revolutionizes the way individuals and businesses access credit, offering numerous benefits that address modern financial needs. Digital lending platforms enable borrowers to apply for loans from anywhere, at any time, without visiting physical branches.

It expands financial services to underserved populations, including those in remote or rural areas, who may not have access to traditional banking infrastructure.

By making credit more accessible, digital lending drives economic activity, supporting consumer spending and business expansion. Increased liquidity in financial markets stimulates growth across various sectors.

By addressing challenges and enforcing regulations, BoT and TCRA are paving the way for a secure, fair, and efficient digital lending ecosystem in Tanzania.

Opportunities, challenges for women leaders in Tanzania's primary, secondary schools

By Lydia Wilbard

DESPITE national policies supporting gender equality and global commitments like the African Union Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, women continue to be underrepresented in leadership within Tanzania's education system. What is holding women back?

As an Echidna Global Scholar, I researched women's leadership pathways in Tanzania's secondary education sector from July to October 2024, seeking to identify the factors enabling or hindering women's advancement into leadership. I also examined how current policies, strategies, and practices support or impede progress.

Findings reveal that social narratives about gender roles and about leadership translate into opportunities and barriers. These narratives manifest in perceptions held by women themselves as well as in their relations with others around them, and they interact with institutional policies, practices, and structures. Taken together these limit women's advancements into leadership positions, and while promotion policies and guidelines exist, they often fail to address these issues.

Highlighting women's leadership potential

Patriarchal norms position men as leaders and women as caretakers, lowering expectations for women in leadership. Women are expected to prioritize family responsibilities, including caring for husbands, limiting their availability for leadership roles. Women of reproductive age are frequently perceived as "unreliable" because it is assumed they will get pregnant and/or have children, which is believed to disrupt continuity and create leadership "gaps."

On the flip side, however, women in leadership are recognized as demonstrating strong capabilities. They are seen as responsible, empathetic, inclusive, and trustworthy. They are said to



The promotion of women to the position of DEO, for example, has impacted school management in those districts, where we have seen an increase in the number of female Heads of Schools (HoS).

show deep commitment, foster teamwork, and adhere to rules. This narrative creates opportunities for leadership roles, with women expected to inspire others and promote inclusive leadership.

Social narratives shape how women view themselves and how other people perceive and respond to the idea of women's leadership. Many of the women in this study had internalized negative narratives in the form of low self-esteem or self-doubt, believing that men are better suited for leadership. This was compounded by the ways in which these social narratives were enacted by others around them; lack of family support as well as rejection and biases limited opportunities and created significant barriers to women's leadership advancement.

Women in school management often have caregiving roles, making family support crucial for women's leadership success. But this is not always guaranteed. Women with supportive families, including spouses, tend to progress faster. For example, one female District Education Officer (DEO) advanced her career significantly with her husband's en-

couragement to pursue higher education. Conversely, societal and family expectations to prioritize home responsibilities can hinder progress. Perceptions of inadequate support often led to fear of failure and limited women's leadership aspirations.

Women were also often underestimated for leadership promotions due to biases about their capabilities. Promoters doubted women's ability to balance leadership with family and social duties, assuming they should or would prioritize home responsibilities. Assumptions such as these are often made about their availability or interest in leadership, denying them leadership opportunities.

In contrast, the presence of women in leadership positions interrupted some of these narratives and created space for positive ideas about women's commitment, trustworthiness, and ability to solve complex issues. In these sense women leaders serve as role models who can open up opportunities for more women to take on leadership roles. The promotion of women to the position of DEO, for example, has impacted school management in those

districts, where we have seen an increase in the number of female Heads of Schools (HoS).

Structural and institutional barriers

Most of the participants in this study perceive progress in women's leadership roles due to national policies, such as Tanzania's Education and Training Policy, amended in 2023 that seeks to advance women's representation in education leadership. Local leadership promotion guidelines aim to guarantee fair access and minimize bias, with DEOs and HoS adhering to these to reduce favouritism and ensure thorough selection processes.

While progress has been noted, these policies fail to account for the unique barriers women face which hinder their access to leadership roles and limit the pipeline of qualified women. The "merit-based" promotion policies establish minimum educational standards, for example, yet women face greater challenges than men in advancing their education and careers due to limited professional development and access to higher education (only 30

percent of teacher trainees at the bachelor level are women).

As a result, many highly experienced women teachers with diplomas are excluded from leadership roles. Rural women face additional barriers like inadequate infrastructure and limited support. One female HoS took 14 years to earn her bachelor's degree while caring for a child with special needs.

Yet despite these challenges, there are no targeted support programs to build a pipeline of women leaders. Women often have less access to financial resources, hindering their ability to invest in education or pursue leadership roles. And when resources are scarce, they often prioritize family needs over personal advancement, delaying their qualifications.

Recommendations

Achieving gender equality in educational leadership in Tanzania requires targeted strategies to address systemic barriers and empower women through a multi-faceted approach that requires collaborative efforts between multiple stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education and development partners.

Develop a gender strategy in education and training

The Ministry of Education, with stakeholders, should conduct a gender analysis to further identify barriers to educational leadership and develop equitable strategies to address these. Policies should be updated with targets for women's representation, and gender-disaggregated data should be included in annual education statistics for accountability. Regular gender audits and a leadership database should support evidence-based interventions and track gender parity trends in leadership.

Establish transparent promotion criteria for teachers

Local government administrations should establish transparent promotion criteria for teachers, shared through meetings and published on the Ministry's website to ensure equal access. Kenya's TPad sys-

tem, which improved morale and accountability by outlining promotion criteria and reducing bias, serves as a model. Similarly, Tanzania's Teachers Professional Development program can provide coaching to help teachers understand the promotion criteria and pursue leadership roles. Transparency combined with targeted support promotes fairness, inclusivity, and equitable career growth.

Promote women's leadership development, engage role models

Development partners should set gender parity criteria in educational leadership and support initiatives addressing social barriers. Collaboration with government agencies can raise awareness of the norms affecting leadership representation. They should support programs that build women's confidence and leadership skills through training, mentorship, and workshops.

Establish a female independent teachers' education fund

The Government should establish a fund for grants or low-interest loans to help in-service female teachers pursue education and leadership training, in collaboration with other ministries and the private sector. A mentorship framework could have women in leadership mentor other female teachers. Integrating this initiative with existing programs and establishing local hubs for leadership training could reduce costs and increase accessibility.

I will be discussing details of these findings and recommendations in the upcoming Brookings annual Research and Policy Symposium on Gender Equality in and Through Education during my workshop on "Leading with women to achieve transformation: Breaking barriers in education sector leadership in Tanzania" on Wednesday December 4th from 11:00amET/7pmEAT. Kindly join me as we discuss this pertinent and timely topic.

Lydia Wilbard is the Executive Director, Learning and Engagement—CAMFED International and 2024 Echidna Global Scholar.

TASAF-FUNDED HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE BENEFIT COMMUNITIES ACROSS DODOMA, RUVUMA REGIONS

By Francis Kajubi

THE Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF) has invested an average of 180mn/- in renovating and building new health infrastructure for delivering decent health services.

The projects cover the construction of blocks for patients to rest alongside housing projects for health professionals to reside in Dodoma and Ruvuma regions.

In the village of Mdundualo, Peramiho Ward, Songea District, Ruvuma Region, the project of a health center and a residential property has reduced the risk of access to health services and reduced the deaths of pregnant women who lose their lives while on the way to receive health services away from the village.

Speaking about the benefits of the projects in the village of Mdundualo, interviewed residents have said that the presence of nurses and a medical doctor for 24 hours has accelerated the provision of health services.

Agustino Luhwoga, a resident of the village who is also the custodian of the health center, said that previously the service at the center was limited, provided only from morning to evening from Monday to Friday.

He explained that on Saturdays and Sundays there



Mdundualo health centre's residential house for nurses and a medical doctor as captured recently in Peramiho District. Photo: Francis Kajubi

was no service because the nurses and doctors were not available. The health professionals had to incur back and forth costs every day to provide services as their residence was in Peramiho town.

"Some of the patients were losing their lives on the way to seek treatments. They went to the town, but now the service providers are here, we don't need to travel far. We are grateful for the completion of the construction of the residen-

tial units," said Luhwoga.

Mdundualo Village Executive Officer, Zawadi Mlapone, said the construction project of the residential houses, a water well and eight toilets has helped to improve health services at the center.

"We are asking the government and TASAF to help us buy an ambulance for emergencies when required to refer patients to Peramiho or Songea hospitals for specialist treatment," said Zawadi.

TASAF Coordinator for Songea Municipality, Hosana Ngunge, said the project commenced last year after being requested by the citizens and was completed in March this year.

"This project worth 179mn/- covered construction of a residential house for a lead nurse and a doctor, eight toilets, a deep drilled well and an incinerator," said Ngunge.

On his part, the Acting Director of the Songea District Council, Hassan Mtam-

ba, thanked TASAF for the project in which the government collaborates with citizens to sustain the infrastructure.

In Dodoma, TASAF has implemented a 3mn/- project to build a mother and child care block. The block has been constructed at Makole health center and has helped to enable women to be treated in a decent environment.

Before the construction of the building, the people of Makole Ward followed

the mother and child services such as vaccinations were being held in the tarpaulin at the center's premises.

Makole Ward Executive Officer Suzan Yohana said that before the block was built, the people were experiencing great hardships in offering health services attributed to rain, wind and dust.

"Women were coming from different places to receive the mother and child care clinic here. Providing

services in a tarpaulin was not easy. At the moment, we are thankful that we have found a good building and the people are getting services in a good environment," said Suzan.

Suzan commended TASAF for bringing comfort to mother and child services and now women have been receiving services in a decent and safe environment.

"We thank TASAF for this building which is now used to provide services in the best environment. TASAF have been very good stakeholders in improving mother and child services," said Suzan.

Joyce Kimario, Acting Nurse in-charge at Makole health center said the block was built last year.

Tumaini Myeule, a midwife at the center, said women are enjoying the service after the construction of the building.

Makole Ward Community Management Committee member Neema Tandji said the residents of Makole Ward who are the beneficiaries of the building are enjoying the services because in the past they faced difficult circumstances.

"When we used the tarpaulin, there were times when services stopped due to wind or rain. Today we have found this building where women enjoy the services of vaccination," said Neema.

Malaysia and China Communications to run east coast line

KUALA LUMPUR

CHINA Communications yesterday signed a deal to share the operation and maintenance of the forthcoming, 665km-long East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) in Malaysia.

The company, which is currently building the line, concluded the deal with Malaysia Rail Link (MRL), the owner of the project. The signing ceremony took place in Putrajaya, and was witnessed by Anthony Loke Siew Fook, Malaysia's transport minister, and Chinese Ambassador Ouyang Yujing.

Loke said the agreement would allow the parties to share operating costs as well as technical expertise, and was beneficial to the Malaysian side.

"As we all know, turning a profit in the rail sector is very hard. But through this agreement both parties will share the losses 50-50," he said report the Malay Mail.

"As far as operational profits go, the government of Malaysia will take 80 percent, and they will only take 20 percent. This agreement was renegotiated back in 2019 and has now materialised."

MRL will also retain ownership of all assets.

Ouyang Yujing said the ECRL would "inject new impetus" into regional development.

As well as making the joint venture announcement, Loke launched the official ECRL logo and unveiled the design of the trains that will ply the line when it opens in 2026. These are to be made by Chinese train-maker CRRC Dalian, and the first will be delivered by the end of next year.

Expected to cost about \$10bn to build, the ECRL will connect the relatively underdeveloped states on the east of the Malaysian peninsula with the Klang Valley, a conurbation that includes Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya. Trains will run at 160km/h, making an end-to-end journey around four hours.

Work on Malaysia's East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) passed the half-way mark in August, said Datuk Hasbi Habibollah, the country's deputy transport minister.

According to the New Straits Times, he told Malaysia's parliament that the bridge construction using beam launcher machinery, dredging, and tunnel construction were being carried out along the line.

He added that work had begun on two of the line's biggest civil engineering elements, the first and second Genting tunnels. The first tunnel had progressed 3.10km and the second 4.3km, out of a total distance of 16.4km, he said.

Nippon Steel extends closing date for US steel acquisition

TOKYO

NIPPON Steel said Thursday it has extended the closing period for its \$15 billion purchase of U.S. Steel, expressing confidence that the acquisition will protect and grow the American company.

The estimated closing date was revised to the first quarter of 2025 from the third or fourth quarter of 2024 previously.

On Monday, a U.S. for-

eign investment committee referred the decision on whether to approve or block the deal to U.S. President Joe Biden, who has 15 days to decide.

Biden and his incoming successor, Donald Trump, have both expressed opposition to the acquisition by Nippon Steel.

"Nippon Steel hopes that the President will use this time to conduct a fair and fact-based evaluation of the acquisition. We remain



confident that the acquisition will protect and grow U.S. Steel," Nippon Steel said Thursday.

It added that the review process of the antitrust division of the U.S. Department of Justice was also underway, without specifying

when it may end.

Nippon Steel's \$15 billion bid for U.S. Steel has been referred to U.S. President Joe Biden, a White House spokesman has said, giving the president 15 days to decide on a tie-up he has previously said he opposes.

The Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), which reviews foreign investments in the U.S. for national security risks, referred the bid to Biden after it was unable to reach a consensus.

Nigeria spends N8.73 billion powering airports in 2024

LAGOS

The Nigerian government spent N8.73 billion keeping the lights on at airports in 2024, mainly at the new international terminal of Abuja's main airport. This information comes from Budget's GovSpend report released on Wednesday.

Most of the money went to a company called J. Marine Logistics Ltd for providing power. They were paid: N5.67 billion for power between March and September 2023; N2.19 billion in May 2024 for October to December 2023; Another N874.42 million on the same day.

The Abuja airport has had ongoing problems



with electricity, which has affected important things like runway lights, baggage systems, and security equipment. These problems have been especially worrying at night and dur-

ing busy travel times.

Looking ahead, the government has set aside N105.95 billion for aviation in 2025, which is much more than the N63.32 billion spent in 2024. This

includes N5 billion to improve power supply at airports in Lagos, Abuja, and other places, and another N5 billion for aerospace facilities in Abuja.

The Aviation Minister,

Festus Keyamo, revealed in May 2024 that just running the Lagos airport takes N1 billion in electricity costs every month. He said they're working on using solar power instead of diesel to save money. "Lagos airport alone, I am told, we spend N1bn monthly on electricity. That is still something I am trying to crack," he said.

When it comes to air travel, airports are more than just transit hubs; they are gateways to memorable journeys. Among the thousands of airports worldwide, a select few stand out for their exceptional service, blending efficiency, comfort, and world-class amenities.

TATA EYES EIGHT SMALL REACTORS

MUMBAI

A subsidiary of Tata Chemicals North America has signed a letter of intent with nuclear engineer BWXT Advanced Technologies to explore deploying up to eight micro reactors at its soda ash factory in Green River, Wyoming.

Tata Chemicals Soda Ash Partners has been looking at the feasibility of installing BWXT's BANR reactors at the factory since September last year. The letter envisages their potential deployment "by the early 2030s".

BANR (BWXT Advanced Nuclear Reactor) is a 50MW high-temperature gas design that is small enough to be transported by truck. BWXT was formerly a subsidiary of US engineer Babcock & Wilcox; it was spun off in 2015.

Tata says it wants to make its soda ash - also called sodium carbonate - a greener product.

Its Green River facility mines the world's largest reserves of trona ore, the raw material for soda ash which is used in many industrial processes.

The site combines a trona mine and a refining plant that processes the ore into soda ash around the clock, seven days a week, 365 days per year.

Last year, the Wyoming Energy Authority (WEA) contracted BWXT to assess the viability of microreactors in the state.

WEA executive director Rob Creager called the Tata agreement "an incredibly positive step forward for



Tata chemicals soda ash facility.

the expanding nuclear sector in Wyoming".

Tata Chemicals North America announces its subsidiary, Tata Chemicals Soda Ash Partners LLC (TCSAP) has signed a letter of intent (LOI) with BWXT Advanced Technologies LLC (BWXT) to explore the deployment of up to eight nuclear microreactors. BWXT and TCSAP have been collaborating since September of 2023 on the feasibility of integrating BWXT's Advanced Nuclear Reactor (BANR) for electricity and industrial processing at TCSAP's Green River, Wyoming manufacturing site.

With this LOI, TCSAP and BWXT agree to expand their collaboration to include the development of commercial terms and conditions to con-

ditionally purchase BANR microreactors from BWXT and establish the schedule and key milestones along the path to deploying them by the early 2030s, as well as jointly determining the techno-economic parameters necessary to turn conditional reactor purchase commitments into an energy purchase agreement.

Once deployed, BANR microreactors would deliver on-demand electricity and process heat that is both carbon-free and resilient from external disruptions for one of the world's leading producers of high-quality soda ash. TCSAP sees nuclear power as an important energy source in its pursuit of a more secure and sustainable supply chain and in providing a low carbon

footprint product.

John Mulhall, Managing Director of Tata Chemicals North America shared, "the LOI represents an important next step in our vision of generating energy in an efficient and sustainable manner that will benefit the company, our customers and the community." "We are excited to expand our collaboration with TCSAP and believe we are laying out a credible path, both technically and commercially, to bring nuclear reactors to southwestern Wyoming," said Joe Miller, President of BWXT Advanced Technologies LLC.

"This LOI is an incredibly positive step forward for the expanding nuclear sector in Wyoming," stated Rob Creager, Executive Direc-

tor of the Wyoming Energy Authority. "As a longtime energy leader, it is crucial for us to continue to bring public-private investments like this to Wyoming. Supporting the trona industry while creating and extending the state's portfolio of baseload power is a win for everyone."

TCSAP has been mining and processing trona ore, a mineral that contains soda ash, at Green River, Wyoming since 1968. The Green River facility is located on the 'mile high' prairies of southwestern Wyoming, home to the world's largest reserves of trona ore. Here, more than 60 billion tons of trona can be found extending over 1,000 square miles at depths of up to a third of a mile.



BMW new construction site.

BERLIN

GERMAN consultant Drees & Sommer has described how it is steering a €650m conversion of BMW's main factory in Munich to prepare it for producing cars with electric-only drive systems from 2026.

It is using a form of partnering as well as "lean" construction principles and a digital twin to deliver new production halls without disrupting operations at the site, where nearly 7,000 employees produce a thousand vehicles a day.

Drees & Sommer is working with German contractor and engineer Porr on the project.

"The biggest construction challenge is the tight schedule," said Drees & Sommer's senior team head, Maximilian Lammel.

"We started the demolition work in April 2023 - the new vehicles must roll off the production line in November 2026. During this period, the construction work must not inter-

Building BMW's new EV plant inside the old one

fere with ongoing vehicle production. For this to work, an efficient construction workflow is crucial."

The project uses a delivery method known as "general contracting in partnering" in which the client, project manager, and construction firm interact as partners in all phases.

"Mutual and joint responsibility improves the communication between stakeholders and enhances the quality of construction projects," says Maximilian Lammel.

"In conventional delivery methods there are many sub-areas of responsibility, with communication being conducted via several interfaces. This often leads to misunderstandings and hampers the flow of information, especially in large-scale projects. The consequences could be disastrous."

The team is applying "lean" production principles borrowed from the automotive industry itself.

One lean principle is the precise timing of each step in production. If timing slips, supervisors find and fix the fault right away.

"On a conventional building site, on the other hand, defects often go unnoticed for a long time - sometimes so long that, at some point, all work comes to a standstill," Drees & Sommer noted.

The company's automotive division head Florian Langlotz said the project's programme was developed "in as much detail as necessary, so that all trades work together to the best possible effect".

That led to a clear definition of which employees, machines, materials were needed at a given place and time.

"To avoid any nasty surprises on the building site, we use virtual planning," said Drees & Sommer's senior team head Simon Rogalski.

"Each building is initially planned in the form of a digital twin, which brings together all the relevant data. In this method, the construction planners not only describe the geometry of the new halls. The model can be enhanced with different kinds of data on the materials used, their cost and service life, as well as sound insulation and fire safety properties."

All parties in the project use the same model, so any conflict in the model shows up right away.

"Errors are not left unnoticed until the construction process, where they would then lead to expensive delays," the company said.

This level of planning

does increase the planning effort at the start, but pays off over the course of the project, it added.

With daily production of around 1,000 vehicles and almost 7,000 employees, the historic main site in Munich is an indispensable part of BMW's global production network. Production of the new vehicle architecture, New Class, which uses only electric drive systems, will begin here from 2026. The automaker is investing 650 million euros in a new vehicle assembly facility, including logistics areas and body manufacture.

The extensive conversion work is being carried out while operations remain ongoing. Drees & Sommer SE specializes in construction and real estate consulting. The company's interdisciplinary team supports the large-scale project with expertise in the areas of project steering, construction management and building information modeling (BIM). Together with BMW Group, PORR AG and PDE, Drees & Sommer is focusing on an innovative collaboration method.

Maximilian Lammel, senior team head at Drees & Sommer comments: "The biggest construction challenge is the tight schedule. We started the demolition work in April 2023 - the new vehicles must roll off the production line in November 2026. During this period, the construction work must not interfere with ongoing vehicle production. For this to work, an efficient construction workflow is crucial. This requires that everyone involved in the project pulls together and communicates with each other on equal terms."

FRENCH INVESTMENT CONSORTIUM BUYS MAJORITY STAKE IN SYSTRA

PARIS

Two French investment companies, Fimalac and Latour Capital, have acquired a 58 percent stake in Systra, a Paris-based engineer that specialises in the transport sector.

Systra commented that the deal would allow it to increase its geographical coverage beyond the 80 countries it presently works in.

Jean-François Beaudoin, senior partner at Latour Capital and new chair of Systra's supervisory board, said the company operated in "an extremely buoyant market" and offered "unique and sought-after expertise". He said: "We have every confidence in its growth potential."

Beaudoin has set a target of achieving a turnover of €2bn by 2030, compared with 902m in 2022.

Systra also announced that Pierre Verzat would leave his role as chief executive, to be replaced by Jean-Charles Vallery, who has been at the group for 28 years, most recently as chief operating officer.

As well as the two new shareholders, Systra is owned by rail operators RATP and SNCF, each of which retains a 20% interest. The remaining 2% is held by the company's employees.

Laurent Trévisani, SNCF's deputy chief executive for strategy and finance, said: "At SNCF Group, we are proud of our role in co-founding a world-class company capable of promoting French railway engineering excellence globally. That was 65 years ago."

"Since 2011, under Pierre Verzat's leadership, Systra has made a name for itself in the world arena, and we will continue to lend our active support to its growth trajectory."

RATP Group, SNCF Group, Latour Capital and Fimalac today announced that Latour Capital and Fimalac have completed their acquisition of a 58 percent stake in SYSTRA, one of the world's top engineering and consultancy groups in public transport and mobility solutions.

Legacy shareholders SNCF Group and RATP Group each retain a 20 percent interest, with the remaining 2 percent held by SYSTRA employees. SYSTRA CEO Pierre Verzat is taking advantage of this opportunity to step down and will be succeeded by Jean-Charles Vallery.

In the fast-growing public transport market, this transaction is aimed at supporting the growth and international development strategy of SYSTRA, which operates in 80 countries.

SYSTRA employs over 11,000 people around the globe, and is one of the world's top engineering and consulting groups specializing in public transport and mobility solutions. The arrival of new shareholders Latour Capital and Fimalac will help strengthen its position as a global champion in sustainable mobility.

After 13 years at the helm, Pierre Verzat has taken this opportunity to step down as CEO and head of SYSTRA's Management Board. His successor is Jean-Charles Vallery, who will be pursuing and accelerating SYSTRA's development.

Jean-François Beaudoin, Senior Partner at Latour Capital and the new Chairman of SYSTRA's Supervisory Board, added: "SYSTRA operates in an extremely buoyant market, boasts unique and sought-after expertise, and we have every confidence in its growth potential. We are proud to lend our support as it works to achieve its goals around the globe. We would like to thank Pierre Verzat for his outstanding contribution to SYSTRA's growth and are fully confident in Jean-Charles Vallery's ability to pursue the company's successful journey."

Marc de Lacharrière, Chairman and CEO of Fimalac, said: "As part of our strategy of supporting forward-thinking industry leaders with strong international growth prospects, Fimalac is delighted to team up with Latour Capital, SNCF and RATP to write this new page in the history of SYSTRA, the French champion in engineering for sustainable mobility solutions."

Jean-Yves Leclercq, head of Strategy, Finance and Sustainable Performance at RATP Group, commented: "Since its re-foundation in 2012, under the leadership of Pierre Verzat and with the support of its industrial shareholders, SYSTRA has become an international champion in transport engineering, tripling its turnover and significantly improving its operating performance."

By opening up its capital to Latour Capital and Fimalac, we wanted to enable SYSTRA to open up a new chapter in its history, which will enable it to accelerate its development. RATP, by retaining 20 percent of SYSTRA's capital, is continuing the adventure alongside SYSTRA."



Fimalac and Latour Capital

CONSTRUCTION

STOCKHOLM

SWEDISH contractor Skanska and Swedish engineering consultancies Sweco and Rejlers are picking up light rail-related work in Helsinki as the Finnish capital enters a decade of tram-line expansion to accommodate a growing population.

An alliance of these three along with two Finnish firms - geotechnical engineer Sipti Infra and architects Arkkitehtiyöhuone APRT - have won a €252m contract to design and build a replacement for the city's Koskela tram depot.

Covering 41,000 sq m in area, the new depot replaces a facility dating back 80 years. It will be able to store and maintain up to 50 trams.

Skanska is the main contractor for the project. Work starts in the first quarter of next year and is scheduled to finish in the second quarter of 2029.

Work on the Koskela depot can start because a €100m expansion of Helsinki's main depot at Ruskeasuo - with space for 100 trams - is due to finish, thus freeing up depot capacity.

Skanska and Sweco were part of the design-build team behind Ruskeasuo depot, as well.

The new-and-improved depots are needed to manage the growing fleet of trams as the city expands its network at what it calls "record speed".

Helsinki has a well-developed tram network already, with 11 lines spanning 110km and an annual ridership of around 57 million. But the company managing the network, Metropolitan Area Transport, lists seven new planned lines totalling more than 50km of new track.

The 10km Crown Bridges light railway will connect western suburbs - Korkeasaari, Kalasatama, and Laajasalo - with the help of three new bridges, one of them 1.2km long. It's under construction and due to open in 2027.

Other planned light railways include the Vantaa line, run-

SWEDISH FIRMS JOIN HELSINKI'S BONANZA FOR TRAM INVESTMENT



A section of Helsinki well-developed tram network

ning 19km from Helsinki Airport to Mellunmäki Metro Station; and the Vihdintie line, running 10.5km north-south from Erottaja in Helsinki city centre to Kannelmäki.

Sweco said it was looking forward to providing design and engineering services for the tram bonanza.

"We will provide all necessary multidisciplinary design services for the alliance and thereby support Helsinki in transforming into a true '15-minute city', with

sustainable and efficient public transport systems," said Thomas Hietto, business area president of Sweco Finland.

Skanska has signed a contract with City Transport Ltd to build a tram depot in Helsinki, Finland. The contract is worth EUR 252M, about SEK 2.9 billion, which will be included in the Nordic order bookings for the fourth quarter of 2024.

The new depot consists of 41,000 square meters, and it will serve about 50 trams. It has

space for their daily maintenance, cleaning and repair work.

The depot will be built by an alliance consortium where Skanska is the main contractor. The alliance also includes City Transport Ltd, Sweco, Sipti Infra, Rejlers and Arkkitehtiyöhuone APRT.

The project has high environmental ambitions. The aim for the depot building is to be certified according to BREEAM level Outstanding. The certification system sets goals for example

for carbon footprint, energy and resource efficiency and waste recycling.

The construction will begin in the first quarter of 2025 and will be completed in the second quarter of 2029.

Ruskeasuo depot is one of the major infrastructure projects in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, and both Skanska and Sweco have extensive responsibilities regarding its low-carbon solutions. Skanska utilised the carbon footprint calculation tool de-

veloped by Sweco for comparing its alternatives.

The Ruskeasuo depot project is part of the development plan of tram depots, the purpose of which is to prepare for the growth of the tram transport fleet in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area as well as the needs of the new light rails. Skanska has total responsibility for the project, in which it will build a tram and bus depot for 100 trams and 200 buses, comprising an area of nearly three football fields. The development stage of the depot, to be completed in 2024, was guided by the BREEAM Excellent environmental certificate and the Carbon Neutral Helsinki 2035 goal.

"However, the carbon neutrality goal of Helsinki was advanced by five years during the project, and we had to find new measures to complement those we had already agreed on," says Skanska's Project Engineering Manager Teemu Saarinen. A list with nearly 90 measures was collected through on-site workshops, comprising feasible emission reduction measures, and the best-suited measures were selected for implementation. "We were able to refine the plans so that the depot's functionality has improved while the CO2 emissions have been reduced with more than 30 different measures."

Skanska is executing the extensive project worth more than EUR 100 million through the combined forces of its infrastructure, building services and office buildings business units. Sweco also has extensive responsibilities in the project, for example in the areas of structural, energy and building safety engineering, fire safety planning and data model coordination.

CHINA'S OPERATING HIGH-SPEED RAILWAY HITS 47,000 KILOMETERS

BEIJING

THE total length of China's operating high-speed rail tracks has reached about 47,000 km, according to the National Railway Administration on Thursday.

The total operating mileage of China's railway network amounted to 162,000 km, according to data revealed at an administration work conference.

Fei Dongbin, head of the administration, said the fixed-asset investment in the country's railway sector is expected to exceed 800 billion yuan (\$111.3 billion) in 2024.

A total of 3,000 km of new tracks went into operation this year, including about 2,300 km of high-speed railways, Fei said.

"The high-quality development of the railway sector has supported China's economic recovery momentum," said Fei, citing steady

growth in railway passenger trips and freight volume.

China's railway is forecast to transport 4.3 billion passengers in 2024, up 11.7 percent year-on-year, while railway cargo delivery volume is expected to rise about 3 percent year-on-year to reach 5.18 billion tons, according to the administration.

The robust mobility clearly indicates the positive momentum in China's broader economic upswing thanks to a string of pro-growth policies.

The surge in railway passenger transport is also closely linked to the thriving tourism sector in China. Government policies, including measures to stimulate consumption and enhance China's visa-free transit policy, have spurred increasing interest from domestic and international travellers.



A view of the Hangzhou-Huangshan high-speed railway.

SAUDI ARABIA TO BE 'WORLD'S LARGEST CONSTRUCTION MARKET' COME 2028



A team of engineers inspects a construction project

RIYADH

SAUDI Arabia will be the world's largest construction market, according to a report by property consultancy Knight Frank and covered in the business press.

It said industry output reached \$141bn in the first half of this year, an increase of 43 percent on 2023, and is on course to reach more than \$181bn by the end of 2028.

The Kingdom has launched more than \$1.25 trillion worth of projects since Vision 2030, its blueprint for a diversified economy, was launched eight years ago.

"We are witnessing an historical transformation unfolding in Saudi Arabia, with construction projects standing out in their design scale and

value," said Mohamed Nabil, a regional partner with Knight Frank.

"Given the scale of the development pipeline, the government is hoping to attract more than \$3 trillion in investments by 2030."

The Riyadh metropolitan area accounts for nearly 40% of the value of existing contracts in Saudi Arabia.

This is followed by the provinces of Mecca and Tabuk in the north of the country, which both have contracts worth \$29bn.

The residential sector is getting the most investment. That amounted to \$43bn last year, and is expected to reach \$57bn by 2028. The energy and utilities sector received \$35bn and is forecast to increase to more than \$46bn by 2028.

Saudi Arabia's new Civil Transactions Law entered into force on 16 December 2023. It's a cornerstone of the Kingdom's broader Vision 2030 initiative, which aims to invigorate the economy by encouraging foreign investment and modernising the Kingdom's legal framework.

The law affects contracts generally in the Kingdom, but construction is particularly suited to take advantage of it.

Construction is booming there with "giga-projects" like Neom, the vast Red Sea tourism developments, the New Murabba projects, and more.

Industry output is expected to grow annually at a rate of 4% between 2024 and 2026.

The Civil Transactions Law, comprised of its 721 Articles and underlying Sharia law

maxims, includes various provisions which expressly provide for muqawala (construction) contracts.

Such provisions aim to encourage consistency in contractual interpretation and thus promise a more predictable environment for contractors and investors.

The law is not a mere codification of Sharia laws, and nor is it a carbon copy of laws in similar Islamic jurisdictions. Instead, it's a clear and defining contractual regime in the Kingdom.

Article 1 confirms the hierarchy of applicable provisions, with the Articles under the new law ranking as foremost important. The relevant Sharia law maxims apply only where the statutory provisions in the Articles are silent.

WORLD

Trump repeats call to acquire Panama Canal, Canada, and Greenland in Christmas greetings

BY BLOOMBERG

ANI | Updated: Dec 26, 2024 06:43 IST
Washington DC [US], December 26 (ANI): US President-elect Donald Trump has repeated his call to acquire the Panama Canal, Canada, and Greenland, citing national security and economic benefits, in his Christmas greetings.

Through a series of posts on his social media platform, Truth Social, on Wednesday, Trump reiterated his long-standing views on the importance of these territories for the United States.

"Merry Christmas to all, including to the wonderful soldiers of China, who are lovingly, but illegally, operating the Panama Canal (where we lost 38,000 people in its building 110 years ago), always making certain that the United States puts in Billions of Dollars in "repair" money, but will have absolutely nothing to say about "anything," Trump wrote.

Trump added, "Also (Merry Christmas),

to Governor Justin Trudeau of Canada, whose Citizens' Taxes are far too high, but if Canada was to become our 51st State, their Taxes would be cut by more than 60%, their businesses would immediately double in size, and they would be militarily protected like no other Country anywhere in the World."

On Greenland, he said, "Likewise, to the people of Greenland, which is needed by the United States for National Security purposes and, who want the U.S. to be there, and we will!"

Trump also took a jab at his political opponents, saying, "Merry Christmas to the Radical Left Lunatics, who are constantly trying to obstruct our Court System and our Elections, and are always going after the Great Citizens and Patriots of the United States but, in particular, their Political Opponent, ME. They know that their only chance of survival is getting pardons from a man who has absolutely no idea what he is doing. Also, to the 37 most violent criminals, who killed, raped, and plundered like



virtually no one before them, but were just given, incredibly, a pardon by Sleepy Joe Biden. I refuse to wish a Merry Christmas to those lucky "souls" but, instead, will say, GO TO HELL!"

"We had the Greatest Election in the History of our Country, a bright light is now shining over the U.S.A. and, in 26 days, we will, MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN. MERRY CHRISTMAS!" added Trump.

Earlier, Trump's son, Eric Trump, fuelled speculation further by posting a meme showing Trump purchasing Canada, Greenland, and the Panama Canal, captioned, "We are so back!!!"

Trump has long expressed interest in Greenland, calling its ownership necessary for "national security and freedom throughout the world."

He also referred to the Panama Canal as a "vital national asset for the United States due to its critical role to America's economy and national security."

Trump had also taken a jibe at Canada and said that the country should consider becoming the 51st state of the United States as this move would benefit Canadians through reduced taxes and military protection.

ANI

Lavrov sees ceasefire in Ukraine as road to nowhere, calls for reliable agreements

MOSCOW

IDLE talk about resolving the Ukraine issue cannot satisfy Moscow because a ceasefire would be a dead-end at this point, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in an interview with Russian and foreign media.



"A lot has been said on the issue. The [Russian] president has repeatedly spoken about it, particularly during his question-and-answer session, the Valdai Discussion Club event and on other occasions. We won't be satisfied with idle talk.

What we have heard so far is talk about the need to come up with a ceasefire, and no one actually hides that the goal of the ceasefire is to buy time in order to continue flooding Ukraine with weapons and make it possible for them to put themselves together, carry out a mobilization and so on," he noted.

"A ceasefire is a dead-end," Lavrov stressed. "We need final, legally binding agreements that will document conditions for ensuring Russia's security and, of course, the legitimate interests of our neighbors, but in a manner based on international law, which will make it impossible to violate those agreements," he added.

The top Russian diplomat pointed out that those accords should first and foremost address the root causes of the Ukraine crisis. "The first of the two main causes was the violation of all promises not to expand NATO to the east and the aggressive policy of NATO countries aimed at absorbing the entire geopolitical space up to our borders.

The same fate was prepared from Ukraine, and they continue talking about it. As for the second root cause, it's certainly about the absolutely discriminatory actions that the Kiev regime took after the coup, officially proclaiming and legally establishing a policy to destroy all things Russian, including the language, media outlets, culture and even the use of the Russian language in everyday life, as well as a ban on the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church," Lavrov emphasized.

PM Modi extends Hanukkah greetings to Netanyahu

NEW DELHI

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi extended Hanukkah greetings to Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and people across the world celebrating the festival.

PM Modi wished that the radiance of the festival illuminates everyone's lives with hope.

"Best wishes to PM Netanyahu and all the people across the world celebrating the festival of Hanukkah. May the radiance of Hanukkah illuminate everybody's lives with hope, peace and strength. Hanukkah Sameach!" PM Modi said in a post on X.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday extended Hanukkah greetings to Israeli Foreign Minister Gidon Sa'ar and the global community celebrating the festival.

Sa'ar thanked "dear friend" Jaishankar for his wishes. "Thank you, S Jaishankar, dear friend, for your warm Hanukkah wishes and your kind words."

Meanwhile, Israeli Ambassador to India, Reuven Azar extended Hanukkah greetings to people and explained the significance of the Jewish festival.

Azar shared a video on X that explains the history of the Jewish festival.

In a post on X, the Israeli Embassy in India said, "This year, Hanukkah coincides with Christmas. But have you ever heard of Hanukkah? Come, listen to our Ambassador Reuven Azar as he shares the Jewish history of resilience and acceptance. The Embassy of Israel in India wishes everyone Happy Hanukkah, Merry Christmas and joyful holiday season!"

Azar said, "In Hanukkah, we celebrate the victory of light over darkness. More than 2,300 years ago, the greatest empire of the time, the Seljuks, tried to completely erase our faith, the Jewish faith. But thanks to a small family in the middle of Israel called the Maccabees, we managed to re-inaugurate our temple in Jerusalem and keep our identity."

Azar added that in the feast, they light the menorah, a symbol of respect to other faiths.

ANI

King Charles thanks medics for his and Kate's cancer care

LONDON

KING Charles thanked the medics who have cared for him and his daughter-in-law Kate, after they both underwent treatment for cancer this year, in a Christmas Day message that touched on global conflicts and the summer's riots in Britain.

In his third Christmas TV broadcast since becoming king, Charles struck an unusually personal tone for the royal seasonal message, a tradition that dates back to a radio speech by George V in 1932.

The year has been traumatic for the royals after Buckingham Palace said in February the 76-year-old had been diagnosed with an unspecified form of cancer detected in tests after a corrective procedure for an enlarged prostate.

A month later, Kate, the wife of his son and heir Prince William, said she was undergoing preventative chemotherapy for cancer that concluded in September. William has said the year has been brutal for the family.

"All of us go through some form of suffering at some stage in our life, be it mental or physical," Charles, who became king in 2022 after the death of Queen Elizabeth, said.

His words were accompanied by footage of a visit he made to a cancer treatment centre on returning to public duties in April and of one of Kate's



Britain's King Charles III (right), with Queen Camilla (center), and Kate Princess of Wales (left), Prince Louis, and Prince William walk as they go to the Christmas day service at St Mary Magdalene Church in Sandringham in Norfolk, England on Wednesday. AP

first engagements when she resumed working.

"From a personal point of view, I offer special heartfelt thanks to the selfless doctors and nurses who this year have supported me and other members of my family through the uncertainties and anxieties of illness, and have helped provide the strength, care and comfort we have needed," Charles said.

"I am deeply grateful too to all those who have offered us their own kind words of sympathy and encouragement," he said in the pre-recorded broadcast that was filmed at an ornate chapel of a former London hospital.

Last week, a palace source said the king's treatment was progressing well and would continue into next year.

Earlier on Wednesday, Charles was joined by his family, including Kate,

William and their children, for a traditional church service on his Sandringham estate in eastern England.

Charles' brother Prince Andrew, who was embroiled in another scandal this month when a close business associate was banned from Britain over government suspicions he was a Chinese agent, was a notable absentee from the royal get-together.

Diversity a strength

The king spoke about nationwide riots, which broke out following the murder in July of three girls at a Taylor Swift-themed event in northern England, and mainly targeted mosques and immigrants.

"Diversity of culture, ethnicity and faith provide strength, not weakness," he said.

"I felt a deep sense of pride here in the United Kingdom when in response to anger and lawlessness in several towns this summer, communities came together not to repeat these behaviours, but to repair, to repair not just buildings, but relationships," he said.

Charles also referenced ongoing wars.

"On this Christmas Day, we cannot help but think of those for whom the devastating effects of conflict in the Middle East, in central Europe, in Africa and elsewhere, pose a daily threat to so many people's lives and livelihoods," he said.

Agencies

Japan Airlines confirms system restoration, resumes ticket sales for same day flights following cyberattack

TOKYO

FOLLOWING a cyberattack, Japan Airlines (JAL) announced that it has resolved a system malfunction caused by a large-scale data attack, confirming that there were no customer data leaks or virus infections.

While ticket sales for flights departing on the same day have resumed, JAL said that certain services, including the "Airport Standby" and upgrade service for

domestic flights remain suspended.

Sharing a post on X, Japan Airlines wrote, "We have identified the cause and scope of the malfunction, and the system has been restored. The issue was due to a large data attack and did not result in any customer data leaks or virus infections."

In another post, it said, "Ticket sales for flights departing today have resumed. For domestic flights departing today, the "Airport Standby" service and

the Upgrade service on the JAL website and JAL app are suspended. Please check the latest information on our website before departure."

Earlier in the day, JAL had announced that its network had been targeted by a cyberattack, leading to delays of up to an hour for at least 14 domestic flights and disruptions to some international flights as well, Kyodo News reported.

The airline reported that the issues began at approximately 7:25 am, prompt-

ing it to suspend ticket sales for all domestic and international flights for the remainder of the day. Passengers who had already purchased tickets were advised that their bookings remained valid.

JAL had said that it was working to counteract the cyberattack and determine its source, adding the attack may have a larger effect on its flights. The airline succeeded in temporarily shutting down the router believed to have been compromised.

ANI

China's internet development expands 'blue oceans' of economic growth

AT the 2024 World Internet Conference Wuzhen Summit held in the ancient water town of Wuzhen, east China's Zhejiang Province, a series of cutting-edge technologies captivated visitors - such as a headset that allowed people to see virtual products in real-world scenarios, and a robotic hand that could dexterously move its "fingers" and even make a "thumbs-up" gesture.

These technologies highlight the latest achievements of China's technological innovation. In recent years, China has made historic progress and transformations in cyber affairs and information technology. It has truly become a global internet powerhouse.

"From zero to one" and "from one to infinity," the internet has reshaped how nations are governed,

how goods are produced, and the way people work and live. The virtual cyberspace has brought many tangible and positive changes, demonstrating China's determined efforts to strengthen its internet development.

In the past, cab-hailing could be quite annoying for many, but today, online ride-hailing services have become part of Chinese people's daily life; long queues at train station ticket counters were always seen during holidays, while the advent of smartphones now allows people to book tickets, select seats, and even order meals online with just a few taps. These visible changes highlight how the internet has profoundly empowered economic and social development.

The internet has permeated ev-

ery aspect of society. It has injected remarkable vitality into the Chinese economy and society, making the country a pioneer and leader in the global digital economy.

For instance, e-commerce and e-government services have transformed consumption patterns and streamlined administrative procedures. Social media platforms like Weibo, WeChat, and short-video apps have changed how people communicate. These transformations are accompanied by the rapid development of emerging technologies such as big data, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence (AI), as well as digital cultural products like web series, online literature, and digital animations.

The internet is characterized by exceptional adaptability and

penetrability. The notion of "internet plus" is invigorating countless industries and bolstering the real economy.

According to a recent report by the International Federation of Robotics, China has made significant strides in manufacturing automation, surpassing Germany and Japan to claim third place in global industrial robot density rankings in 2023. The deep convergence of the industrial internet and intelligent robotics is giving rise to a new era of smart industrialization.

For example, smart factories are driving a shift from "made in China" to "intelligently made in China." Unmanned terminals and intelligent ports have enabled remote handling of goods, and robotic dogs and drones have become the new "por-

ters" at tourist destinations.

The deep integration of the digital and real economies is transforming traditional industries at every level and across the entire value chain, which is amplifying, multiplying, and accelerating economic growth to continuously foster new quality productive forces.

Breaking through key technologies

China's internet development demonstrates its persistent efforts to break through key technologies.

Recently, a research team at Tsinghua University developed the "Taichi-II" optical training chip, marking a leapfrog progress in the chip industry. China has made successive breakthroughs in mobile communication technologies, from having no presence in 1G, to catch-

ing up in 2G, making breakthroughs in 3G, running parallel with other countries in 4G, and leading the world in 5G, which demonstrates its relentless drive for innovation.

In recent years, with the rapid advancement of software and integrated circuit technology, China has seen broader application of its independently developed operating systems.

The country has also achieved breakthroughs in pioneering sectors such as quantum communication and quantum computing, while making significant progress in critical foundational technologies, including high-end chips, core components, and basic software, gaining a global competitive edge in certain areas.

People's Daily

Syrian refugees find home and hope in Egypt

CAIRO

AHMED Enaba, a master of Middle Eastern dish Shawarma and a Syrian by birth, embarked on a new chapter in Egypt in 2016 when he opened a restaurant in 6th of October City, a bustling hub near Cairo.

His culinary creations, a fusion of Syrian flavors and Egyptian hospitality, quickly won over the local palate, turning his eatery into a cherished community spot.

"I always dream of having my own place," said Enaba, a 32-year-old with a proud gleam in his eyes. "It's truly a blessing to see it come to life here in Egypt."

A militant alliance led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham waged a major military operation from northern Syria on Nov. 27. It swept southwards, captured the capital Damascus, and overthrew former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government within 12 days.

Following the recent power shift in Syria, Enaba started to feel the pull of his hometown, Aleppo. But the middle-aged man has already cultivated a deep-rooted life in Egypt, which he holds dear. "This is my home now. I have built a life and a future here," he said.

Yet, his heart remains tethered to Syria, and he envisions a day when he can contribute to its revival by opening a branch of his restaurant in Aleppo once the situation becomes more stable.

"I want to be part of the solution to bring jobs and hope back to my people," he said, his voice resolute. To make that possible, Enaba plans to split his time between Egypt and Syria, nurturing his businesses and contributing to both communities at the same time.

"Egypt has given me so much, but I also want to give back to Syria," he said.

When Enaba first set his foot on Egypt, "the gift of the Nile," he was struck by the generosity of the Egyptian people, who offered him shelter and guidance.

"I was overwhelmed by their kindness," Enaba recalled. "They made me feel like family. I found work quickly, and with the support of the local community and government services, I was able to establish my restaurant."



Syrians work at a Syrian restaurant in 6th of October City near Cairo, Egypt, on Dec. 21, 2024. Xinhua

Enaba said he cherishes the friendships he has forged with Egyptian colleagues and customers, sharing laughter and stories over plates of steaming Shawarma. "I will never forget what the Egyptian people have done for me," he said earnestly.

According to the International Organization for Migration, Egypt is home to 9 million migrants and refugees, including 1.5 million Syrians, among whom is Khaled Omar, who has been living on the other side of Greater Cairo for 10 years.

Omar, a Syrian tailor with a passion for design, has also carved out a successful life for himself in Egypt. His wedding dress shop, nestled in the bustling downtown area, is a haven of creativity and craftsmanship.

"I pour my heart into every dress," Omar, a 38-year-old father of three, told Xinhua. "Each one is a dream come true."

"Cairo has been good to me. I have built a successful business and a good life here," Omar said. Still, the latest developments in Syria have rekindled his dream of returning to his beloved hometown of Damascus.

"Damascus is in my blood," he said, his voice filled with yearning. "I can almost smell the scent

of my mother's cooking filling our Damascus home."

He envisions walking the familiar streets, inhaling the intimate scents of spices and jasmine, embracing his family after years of separation, and contributing to the rebuilding of his war-torn city.

"I want to be part of its rebirth," he said, already considering how he can contribute to Syria's economy after he returns. "Maybe I will open a workshop in Damascus. I may share my skills and create jobs."

Omar said his heart will always hold a special place for Egypt. "I will never forget the kindness I have experienced here. This is my second home, and I will always cherish it."

Omar is particularly grateful for the opportunities he has been given in Egypt, where he felt welcomed and supported from the moment he arrived. He credited Egypt for allowing him to live and work freely, build a life and a career, and integrate into the society.

"Egypt gave me a chance to rebuild my life. I was able to live like any other Egyptian, with no restrictions, and for that, I am eternally grateful," he said, with a touch of warmth in his voice.

Letter from Mideast: Walled city of Bethlehem falls quiet

JERUSALEM

BEFORE visiting Bethlehem, the city best known as the birthplace of Jesus Christ, I scoured countless online travel guides for tips and advice. "Expect long lines," many reviews cautioned. Yet what I encountered was jarringly different: a place wrapped in an unsettling silence. Standing alone in Manger Square, in the shadow of the Church of the Nativity, I struggled to reconcile the bustling scenes described in guidebooks with the emptiness before me.

The square, which should have been teeming with pilgrims as Christmas approaches, felt like a stage after the final curtain. "In the past, this place was alive with tourists," said Hamza, a Palestinian guide I met outside the church.

A seasoned veteran of Bethlehem's tourism industry, he nostalgically recalled the crowds that once filled the square, gesturing toward the vacant space where queues once stretched for hundreds of meters. "The war changed everything here," he lamented.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict that erupted in October 2023 has transformed this historic city, though not through direct violence. While Bethlehem has been spared the bombs, the shadow of conflict has driven visitors away, leaving behind a profound silence that speaks volumes about the region's turmoil.

"The tourists are afraid, and I can understand that," said Hamza, pointing to bullet holes still visible in the walls of the church, left by Israeli soldiers during a 39-day siege in 2002. "In Palestine, nowhere is spared from bullets. Not even the church where Jesus was born."

The church's entrance, intentionally built low and narrow centuries ago to prevent intruders from marching into the church on their horses, seemed like a metaphor for the city's isolation. Where tourists once waited patiently to bend their heads and pass through this humble opening, I walked through alone, my footsteps echoing in the emptiness. Inside the church, the grotto marking Jesus's birthplace, typically surrounded by crowds of worshippers, stood quiet and unattended.

Under the wooden roof of the basilica, unlit candles lined the table, waiting for prayers that wouldn't come. Hamza told me that, for a second year in a row, there would be no lavish Christmas celebrations due to the lack of tourists and the intense atmosphere caused by the ongoing bloodshed in Gaza, just 70 kilometers away.

"I used to love Christmas here," Hamza said. "The church would be packed, the square full of joy. But this year, I doubt we'll see any of that. All we can do is pray -- for the conflict to end and for Bethlehem to return to normal."

Tourism, once the city's economic lifeblood, has evaporated completely. Walking through Bethlehem's ancient streets, I witnessed firsthand the economic devastation. Hotels stood vacant, and many restaurants were closed. Shopkeepers sat waiting in doorways, hopeful yet resigned to the absence of visitors.

I stopped to speak with an elderly juice vendor. His cart was pristine but lacked customers. "Tourists are gone, and so is our income," he told me, his words carrying a weary acceptance that seemed to echo throughout the city. As the afternoon light waned, I approached the stretch of the West Bank barrier dividing Bethlehem from Jerusalem. Its towering concrete wall casts a sharp shadow over the city's structures.

In the time of Christ, the journey from Bethlehem to Jerusalem took mere hours on foot. Today, Palestinians face a complex maze of security checkpoints, making the 10-kilometer journey an unpredictable ordeal. Israel states that the wall is necessary for the protection of its citizens from terrorists.

Palestinians, however, argue that the wall was constructed within Palestinian territory, serving as a means for Israel to seize more land. I stood at the foot of the wall, feeling insignificant under its weight. Steel wires jutted out like thorns at the top, while watchtowers monitored everything sternly.

But the Palestinians had answered its gray dominion with color and wit, turning this monolith into an unlikely gallery. The wall now bears vibrant murals and street art, featuring works by both Palestinian and international artists.

Near the wall, I met Elias, a student at Bethlehem University. His favorite mural depicts a dove wearing a bulletproof vest and clutching an olive branch. "It feels like us -- trapped, unable to soar," he explained. While visitors like myself could easily come and go, for Elias and his neighbors, even the simplest journey meant navigating a maze of checkpoints, their time consumed by questions, paperwork, and waiting. "It's not that I don't love my country," Elias confided, "but we also need to fly away to see the bigger world." I wished him luck, knowing how inadequate those words felt under such constraints.

China's top legislature concludes standing committee session

BEIJING

THE Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) concluded its 13th session here on Wednesday.

At the closing meeting, lawmakers voted to adopt a law on value-added tax, a decision on amending the Supervision Law, and a revised Science and Technology Popularization Law.

They adopted a decision on removing Wang Guanghua from the post of minister of natural resources and appointing Guan Zhi'ou to the position.

President Xi Jinping signed four presidential orders to promulgate the laws and the decisions.

Zhao Leji, chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, presided over the closing meeting.

The meeting decided to submit

a draft amendment to the Law on Deputies to the National People's Congress and Local People's Congresses at All Levels to the third session of the 14th NPC for further deliberation, and entrusted Li Hongzhong, vice chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, to make explanatory remarks to the NPC session.

The meeting adopted a decision on convening the third session of the 14th NPC. According to the decision, the third session of the 14th NPC will open on March 5, 2025.

Lawmakers ratified an extradition treaty between China and Zimbabwe and another one between China and Suriname.

They voted to adopt the name list of the members of the sixth-term Macao Special Administrative Region Basic Law Committee of the NPC Standing Committee.

They also adopted a deputy qualification report and personnel-related bills.

Addressing the closing meeting, Zhao urged lawmakers to maintain the correct political orientation in their work, fulfill their duties in accordance with the law, take on responsibilities, and continuously improve the quality of the work of people's congresses.

He called for practical, efficient, thorough and meticulous preparations and organization for the upcoming third session of the 14th NPC.

Zhao also called on lawmakers to make thorough preparations and arrangements for next year's work in accordance with the key tasks of the NPC Standing Committee for 2025, as well as its work plans on legislation, oversight, deputies and foreign affairs.

Zhao chaired a meeting of the Council of Chairpersons of the NPC Standing Committee before the closing meeting and presided over a lecture for lawmakers after the closing meeting.

He also granted letters of appointment to members of the sixth-term Macao Special Administrative Region Basic Law Committee of the NPC Standing Committee. *Xinhua*



The meeting adopted a decision on convening the third session of the 14th NPC. According to the decision, the third session of the 14th

Zoom into China's integrated urban-rural development via rural road infrastructure

RURAL roads, as a thoroughfare for the conveyance of traffic, contribute significantly to rural prosperity. By enabling the flow of factors between urban and rural areas, they serve as important engines propelling integrated urban-rural development.

In the past decade, China has built and upgraded over 2.5 million kilometers of rural roads, ensuring that all towns, townships and administrative villages where conditions allow are connected to paved roads as well as bus and postal services.

To be specific, during the period, a total of 821 towns, townships and 70,600 administrative villages have been connected to paved roads; more than 1,000 towns and townships and over 50,000 administrative villages have joined the list with access to bus services; and over half of the administrative villages across the country have been accessible by bus services.

The interconnected rural roads promote the flow of factors between Chinese urban and rural areas, injecting vitality into all-round rural revitalization. Fuping village in northwest China's Gansu province is a vivid example of China's rural road development. At an altitude of 2,100 meters, it is one of the most remote villages in Xinzhai township, Tanchang county, Longnan city. Surrounded by steep mountains and rugged roads, it was susceptible to landslides and road damage during



Photo taken on Aug. 27, 2024, shows a picturesque view of Pingshu village, Sansui county, Qiandongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture, southwest China's Guizhou province. (Photo: Yang Jian / People's Daily Online)

heavy rains, even though a road had been built in 2017.

To address the problem, local transport authorities made great efforts in strengthening the landslide-prone slopes, repairing damaged sections, and reinforcing the roadbed.

"Transport has become much easier. In the past, I could only ride a motorcycle to these villages, but now I can drive a truck without any trouble and don't have to worry about blocked roads on rainy days," said Xu Zhijie, a local villager who has been working in e-commerce for over 10 years. He often travels between villages to collect agricultural products like pepper and mushrooms. Recently, Xu's truck

pulled up at farmer Yao Zhangwei's home. Handing a package of pepper to Xu, Yao could not hide his delight. "After years of selling pepper, I can finally wait for buyers to come to me instead of driving mules door-to-door to market my produce."

Lately, Xu received a large order and delivered a truckload of pepper to the cities of Lanzhou and Zhangye in Gansu province. "This single order is worth about 100,000 yuan. With better roads, my business prospects are brighter than ever," said Xu.

Improved transport infrastructure and removed logistical bottlenecks have paved a "fast track" for the development of rural e-commerce.

China has built logistics nodes in all towns and townships, and expanded express delivery services to over 80 percent of villages. More than 1,500 county-level administrative units in the country have achieved the integration of rural passenger transport, freight transport, and mail delivery, handling over 900 million parcels during the first six months of this year. Last year, China's online retail sales of agricultural products reached 587.03 billion yuan (\$80.5 billion), a year-on-year increase of 12.5 percent.

Improved transport infrastructure is also driving the upgrading of rural industries.

In late autumn, a visit to Tuqiao

township in Tongliang district, southwest China's Chongqing municipality, unveils a charming landscape: white-walled, black-tiled villages scattered among green hills, as if stepping into an ink painting. "In the past, narrow and poorly maintained mountain roads made it hard to drive and reach scenic spots," said Qin Ke, Party head of Tuqiao township.

A few years ago, followed by the upgrading of a 13-kilometer road from Liuying village to Heshui village, a loop road was created in the west suburb of Tongliang district, connecting scenic areas along the route, said Qin. The loop road was further extended into the mountains, linking fruit-growing bases across six villages to build a unique industrial cluster, Qin added.

Now, Liuying village has become a popular destination for rural tourism. After the loop road was completed, farmer Chen Tianlong saw an opportunity and returned to the village. He planted 750 mu (50 hectares) of peach trees on Liuying Mountain, leading the way in eco-agriculture and agritourism.

"With better roads, more city dwellers are driving here. Our village is bustling with tourists during the peach blossom season," Chen said. Thanks to the rural road development, local residents are embracing greater prosperity. In the first half of this year, Tuqiao

township welcomed over 2 million tourist visits, generating 180 million yuan in tourism revenue. Sales of primary agricultural products exceeded 60 million yuan, and processed agricultural goods brought in over 100 million yuan. The per capita disposable income for rural residents in the township reached 27,000 yuan, a year-on-year increase of 9 percent.

The rural roads, while connecting beautiful scenery, have brought greater prosperity to industries and helped improve people's lives. By the end of 2023, 14.7 percent of villages in China had been engaged in leisure agriculture and rural tourism, hosting over 3 billion tourist visits that year.

In the first three quarters of this year, China has made more progress in the integrated development of rural industries, marked by increased profits from agricultural processing and emergence of new industries and business models. The per capita disposable income of Chinese rural residents has reached 16,740 yuan, a year-on-year growth of 6.3 percent in real terms after adjusting for inflation. The income ratio between urban and rural areas has narrowed to 2.46, down by 0.05 compared to the same period last year.

People's Daily

India fight back after wonder boy Sam Konstas thrills MCG

By Ian Ransom

INDIA fought back with four late wickets to leave Australia on 311 for six on day one of the fourth test yesterday after teen debutant Sam Konstas had lit up the Melbourne Cricket Ground with a thrilling knock in the morning.

Tempers rose in blazing heat in front of a bumper Boxing Day crowd of 87,242, with Virat Kohli booed by home fans after bumping shoulders with Konstas (pictured) on the pitch after the 19-year-old smashed India's bowlers around the park early on.

Konstas shrugged off the clash on the way to scoring 60 from 65 balls as Australia's top order rewarded captain Pat Cummins's decision to bat after he won the toss.

"It was quite surreal, obviously, with the big crowd, biggest crowd I've ever played in, and I feel like the boys welcomed me," said Konstas, who has 11 first class matches under his belt.

"So just playing with that freedom and backing myself and lucky to get a few runs today. Obviously a bit disappointed with the way I got out, but hopefully we get a bit of momentum for tomorrow."

It was left to Jasprit Bumrah to keep India in the fight, the pace spearhead bowling danger man Travis Head for a duck with the ageing ball and getting all-rounder Mitchell Marsh to nick behind for four.

Seamer Akash Deep later chipped in with the wicket of Alex Carey



for 31, breaking a rapid, 53-partnership with Steve Smith.

Smith was 68 not out, with tailender Cummins on eight.

Having sailed past 150 for the loss of one wicket, Australia were only narrowly ahead of the game by stumps.

Opener Usman Khawaja and number three Marnus Labuschagne both squandered chances for drought-breaking centuries.

Khawaja pulled Bumrah straight to KL Rahul at midwicket to be out for 57 before tea and Labuschagne was caught for 72 trying to slog all-rounder Washington Sundar over mid-off.

Labuschagne's wicket ended an 83-run partnership with Smith as Australia lost three wickets for nine runs.

Konstas earlier had the crowd in the palm of his hand as he took to Bumrah

with gusto and got under the visitors' skin.

An irked Kohli bumped shoulders with him at the end of the 10th over and he shrugged off a barrage of invective from paceman Mohammed Siraj.

Trapped lbw by Ravindra Jadeja after the second drinks break, Konstas trudged off with huge cheers and the third quickest half-century (50 from 52 balls) by an Australian test debutant behind

Adam Gilchrist and Ashton Agar.

'SEE BALL HIT BALL' Konstas, replacing the dropped Nathan McSweeney in the side, had promised to keep things simple with a "see ball hit ball" approach in his first test.

But Bumrah beat his bat four times in the first over before Konstas whipped two off his pads to get off the mark, triggering a roar from the crowd.

India's players sniggered when Konstas failed to put bat on ball with two botched ramp shots facing Bumrah but he wiped the smiles from their faces with a four, a six and another four with his next three efforts in the quick's fourth over.

Dancing down the wicket at Siraj, he swung and missed at a ball, prompting a long stare and some choice words from the fiery quick, who was booed by the crowd.

Konstas charged Siraj again on the next delivery to hit him for three.

After Konstas raised his fifty with two runs off Siraj, the bowler gained a small measure of revenge when he sent a delivery crashing into the Australian's crotch but the young batter recovered to linger at the crease for another six overs.

With the five-test series level at 1-1 after the Gabba test was drawn, India dropped number three Shubman Gill and promoted similarly out-of-form skipper Rohit Sharma to the position.

Selectors sprung a surprise by adding Sundar as a second spin option rather than including another fast bowler.

Scott Boland replaced injured paceman Josh Hazlewood in Australia's XI, the fan favourite returning to the side for his second test of the series after bowling in Adelaide.

REUTERS

SPORT

Kohli under the microscope after clash with kid Konstas

By Ian Ransom

VIRAT Kohli's conduct came under the microscope in the Boxing Day test in Melbourne yesterday after a clash of shoulders with teen debutant Sam Konstas but the incident did little to knock the Australian wonder boy off his stride.

With Konstas well on top of India's bowlers on day one, Kohli was booed by the Melbourne Cricket Ground after bumping into the 19-year-old as he walked down the pitch for a chat with opening partner Usman Khawaja at the end of the 10th over.

Kohli (pictured) and Konstas turned to face each other and exchanged words, prompting umpire Michael Gough and Khawaja to step in to defuse the moment.

Former Australia captain Ricky Ponting, who was covering the game for host broadcaster Seven Network, said veteran batsman Kohli was clearly the offender.

"That man (Kohli) might have a few questions to answer," Ponting said.

"When you're out there batting, the batsman owns the wicket. The crease is his. Especially between overs like that."

Former England captain Michael Vaughan also put the blame on 36-year-old Kohli.

"Virat Kohli is such an experienced pro, being wound up by a 19 (year old)," the Fox Cricket pundit said.

"It's Virat that walks into Sam."

Konstas, who replaced the dropped Nathan McSweeney in the side, appeared unruffled by the clash, smashing Jasprit Bumrah for four on the next delivery and hitting a six over the Indian pace spearhead's head on the way to 18 runs from the over.

Konstas downplayed the incident in a brief interview with Fox Cricket during a drinks break.

"Whatever (happens) on the field stays on the field. I love competing. It doesn't get any better for a debut at a packed stadium," he said.

It is unclear whether any action will be taken against either player. The International Cricket Council bans "inappropriate physical contact" and



those found guilty can be suspended for matches if the offence is deemed serious enough.

Batting maestro Kohli had shrugged off a dire run of form with a century in the series-opener in Perth but has managed just 21 runs in three innings since in the series.

With the temperature racing past 30 degrees Celsius in the morning, his mood may not have been helped by Konstas surviving a nick off Bumrah that fell just short of him in the slips.

Kohli had earlier laughed openly at Konstas when the teenager botched two attempts to scoop Bumrah behind the wicket. But there was little mirth among the Indians as Konstas succeeded on his next three efforts, scoring boundaries on each.

Having also smashed fiery seamer Mohammed Siraj around the ground, Konstas was eventually dismissed for 60 off 65 balls when trapped lbw by Ravindra Jadeja before lunch.

REUTERS



Los Angeles Lakers guard Dalton Knecht (4) shoots against Golden State Warriors guard Buddy Hield (center left) during the second quarter at Chase Center in San Francisco, California, USA on Dec 25, 2024. Agencies

Austin Reaves' heroics lead Lakers over Warriors in Christmas thriller

By Field Level Media

AUSTIN Reaves drove for a go-ahead layup with one second left to cap a triple-double, LeBron James added to his Christmas Day lore with 31 points and the Los Angeles Lakers overcame an injury to Anthony Davis to outlast the Golden State Warriors 115-113 on Wednesday night in San Francisco.

Despite losing Davis for good to a twisted left ankle in the eighth minute of the game, the Lakers held the upper hand for almost the entire final three quarters, leading to a fourth win in five games.

The lead was 109-100 when James assisted Max Christie's basket with 1:30 remaining before Stephen Curry nearly singlehandedly stole the show.

After Jonathan Kuminga's dunk and Dennis Schroder's 3-pointer got the Warriors closer, Curry sank a layup before burying a pair of improbable 3-pointers in the final 12.2 seconds, including a game-tying 31-footer with 7.6 seconds left.

The Lakers then tried to inbound to James, but opted for Reaves when the Warriors double-teamed the Los Angeles star. Reaves didn't hesitate,

taking the ball straight to the hoop for a contested layup that produced the game-winning points.

The all-time leading scorer in NBA Christmas games, James hit 12 of his 22 shots while also finding time for a game-high 10 assists and two steals.

Reaves took up the slack for the missing Davis, drilling four 3-pointers en route to 26 points that complemented a team-high 10 rebounds and 10 assists. The triple-double was the third of his career, his first this season.

Rui Hachimura chipped in with 18 points, Christie 16 and Dalton Knecht 13 for the Lakers, who were appearing on the NBA's Christmas menu for the 26th consecutive season.

Curry won his scoring duel with James, going for a game-high 38 points, a majority of which came on eight 3-pointers, tying the NBA record for a Christmas game.

Andrew Wiggins backed Curry with 21 points for the Warriors, who lost for the fifth time in their last six games. He completed a double-double with a game-high 12 rebounds.

Kuminga finished with 14 points, while Schroder and Trayce Jackson-Davis added 11

apiece for Golden State. Draymond Green had 10 rebounds to go with six assists, four blocks and three points.

Meanwhile, Tyrese Maxey collected 33 points and 12 assists to lead the visiting Philadelphia 76ers to a 118-114 victory over the Boston Celtics on Wednesday.

The 76ers received 27 points and nine rebounds from Joel Embiid and 23 points from Caleb Martin, who made 7 of 9 3-point attempts.

The Celtics, who trailed by 15 in the fourth quarter, trimmed their deficit to 116-114 with 4.9 seconds to play, but Embiid made two free throws to put the 76ers up by four with 2.8 seconds left. Philadelphia has won six of its past eight games.

Jayson Tatum led Boston in points (32) and rebounds (15). Jaylen Brown added 23 points and seven rebounds but shot 10 of 23 from the field. Payton Pritchard missed all eight of his 3-point attempts.

Boston, which was coming off a 108-104 setback against the Orlando Magic on Monday, lost back-to-back games for the first time this season.

Jrue Holiday didn't play for Boston because of a right shoulder impingement. The

Celtics also played most of the game without Kristaps Porzingis, who sustained a left ankle injury and didn't play in the second half.

Philadelphia was without Andre Drummond (sprained left toe), who missed a game for the first time since Dec. 4. Drummond leads the 76ers in rebounding (8.0 boards per game).

The 76ers had a 30-25 advantage after one quarter and stretched the lead to 52-36 after a Paul George dunk capped a 17-2 run with 5:22 remaining in the first half. Philadelphia had a 66-58 halftime lead even though the Celtics made 13 of their 28 3-point attempts in the first two quarters.

Boston tied the contest, 74-74, on a Brown 3-pointer and took a 78-76 lead on a Tatum jumper with 4:03 left in the third quarter. The Celtics led by as many as four points in the frame, but it was 82-82 entering the fourth.

Philadelphia began the final quarter with a 12-2 spurt and led 94-84 after a Maxey jump shot with 8:50 to play. The 76ers extended their lead to 103-88 on a Martin 3-pointer with 6:37 left.

REUTERS

Manchester City might miss out on Champions League, says Pep Guardiola

Simon Stone

MANCHESTER City boss Pep Guardiola says the club are in danger of missing out on a place in next season's Champions League.

City are currently in their 14th consecutive season in European football's most prestigious club competition.

Only Arsenal between 1998 and 2017, and Manchester United between 1996 and 2014, have a longer record of qualifying among English clubs.

City are seventh in the Premier League after 17 matches, four points behind Nottingham Forest in fourth and a point behind fifth-placed Bournemouth.

England are currently top of Uefa's European Performance Spot table and well placed to secure a fifth place in next season's Champions League, although City would still not qualify on current standings.

"When I said before, people laughed," said Guardiola. "They said, 'qualifying for the Champions League is not a big success'."

"But I know it because it happens with clubs in this country. They were dominant for many years and after they were many years not qualifying for the Champions League."

Guardiola's side host Everton on Boxing Day, before a trip to Leicester on 29 December and a home match against West Ham on 4 January.

Given all three opponents are in the bottom seven, it offers City a chance to improve on an appalling recent record of four points from eight games, which Guardiola acknowledges has left their lofty European ambitions in doubt.

"The one team that has been in the Champions League for the past years has been Manchester City," he added.

"Now we are at risk, of course we are. Definitely." Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool and Manchester United finished in the Premier League's top four from the 2005-06 season to 2008-09. At least three of them also occupied the top four spots for 15 successive campaigns until 2012.

But United have spent five out of the past 11 seasons outside the Champions League. Arsenal spent six seasons out of the competition before returning last term. Liverpool missed out all but one year in seven from 2010, while Chelsea are in their second successive campaign outside Europe's elite.

This term the threat to City comes from unexpected sources. As well as Forest and Bournemouth, Aston Villa are ahead of City, while Newcastle, Fulham and Brighton are also within a couple of points.

"There are a lot of contenders," said Guardiola, whose side have lost nine of their last 12 games in all competitions. "For every club it is so important and if we are not winning games, we will be out."

"If we don't qualify it is because we don't deserve it, because we were not prepared and because we had a lot of problems and didn't solve them."

BBC

Barcelona sporting director pushes for clarity amid current challenges

Barca Universal

BARCELONA's sporting director, Deco, is reportedly taking significant steps to address the current challenges faced by the club.

As revealed by AS, Deco is working closely with manager Hansi Flick and the team captains in an effort to uncover the root causes of the team's struggles.

With the club's financial limitations preventing major signings in the upcoming winter transfer window, Deco's focus has shifted towards internal improvements to stabilise the team.

*What is Deco aiming to do?

Deco's main priority is strengthening his connection with the dressing room. Since last weekend, he has been engaging in discussions with Flick and the team leaders to gather crucial insights.

The objective is to understand the team's recent dip in performance, which has seen them enter a worrying run of results.

While their performance against Atletico Madrid showed promise, it is clear that Barcelona are still grappling with inconsistencies that need urgent attention.

Deco aims to analyse various aspects, including the physical condition of players, tactical shortcomings, and the team's morale, to provide a comprehensive diagnosis.

*Deco's role has improved... A LOT

The sporting director's role has become even more critical given the delicate situation the club finds itself in.

Flick, who has the support of both the board and the president, is under growing pressure as he approaches a decisive phase in his tenure.

With the first matches of 2025 likely to set the tone for the rest of the season, success on the pitch is imperative for both Flick and Deco.

Agencies

The top 30 men's footballers in Britain



By Sam Dean

AS 2024 draws towards a close, Telegraph Sport will be assessing the top 30 players in Britain across the biggest sports this week.

Here is our list of the best men's footballers in Britain, based on performances this campaign.

30. Carlos Baleba (Brighton)

At the age of just 20, Baleba has established himself as one of the Premier League's most dynamic and exciting central midfielders. Brighton sold Moises Caicedo for £115 million and Baleba now appears to be treading the same path. Bigger clubs are watching.

29. Jhon Durán (Aston Villa)

Is there a more entertaining footballer in the Premier League than Durán, Villa's agent of chaos? He started this season as the super-sub who seemed to score whenever he touched the ball, and now he has seemingly displaced Ollie Watkins as Villa's first-choice striker. Durán has only just turned 21. His potential is frightening.

28. Alex Iwobi (Fulham)

Iwobi has endured difficult moments in his career, including in his patchy spell at Everton, but he has found a home at Fulham and is now playing the best football of his life. With five goals and three assists this season, he has been the most important attacking player in Marco Silva's team.

27. Boubacar Kamara (Aston Villa)

The likes of Durán and Morgan Rogers feature in more headlines but Kamara is the midfielder who provides the platform for the attacking players at Villa. It could be argued that the Frenchman is the most underrated player in the Premier League, with his tactical intelligence helping him always to be in the right place at the right time.

26. Amad Diallo (Manchester United)

The last few weeks have demonstrated Diallo's enormous talent and the 22-year-old has been one of the obvious winners of the change in manager at Old Trafford. For United supporters, he is probably the main source of hope for the future. His winning goal at Manchester City was a masterpiece.

25. David Raya (Arsenal)

The standout goalkeeper in the Premier League at the moment, Raya has made a series of spectacular saves and has hardly put a foot wrong all season. His distribution is phenomenal. The Arsenal fans loved Aaron Rams-

dale but, to be blunt, they have now moved on from him. They can all see Raya's class.

24. Milos Kerkez (Bournemouth)

Bournemouth are the surprise package of this season and it has been a collective success for Andoni Iraola's side. There is not one obvious star of their team. Of all their players, though, Kerkez has been perhaps the most consistently impressive. The 21-year-old left-back is clearly heading for the very top.

23. Marc Cucurella (Chelsea)

What a year it has been for Cucurella. Not so long ago, he was an outcast at Chelsea with an uncertain future. Now, he is a European Championship winner with Spain and one of the first names on the team sheet at his club. He is intense, energetic, dangerous on the overlap and clever when he drifts into midfield.

22. Antonee Robinson (Fulham)

Robinson has been playing for Fulham since 2020 and he seems to be improving with each year. His current level of performance is surely the highest of his career, with the United States international impressing with his aggressive and front-foot approach. No defender has assisted more than his six goals so far in the league.

21. Morgan Rogers (Aston Villa)

Now a full England international, Rogers has been one of the breakthrough players of the season. The 22-year-old is the most powerful runner in the division and he regularly runs through his opponents like a rugby player. If he can add a more clinical edge in the penalty area, he could be unstoppable.

20. Luis Díaz (Liverpool)

It is a measure of Díaz's technical quality and footballing intelligence that he has thrived as a roaming central striker in recent weeks. The Colombian has shown he is so much more than just a winger, and his stamina is extraordinary.

19. Nikola Milenkovic (Nottingham Forest)

Milenkovic is arguably the signing of the season, at just over £10 million. A commanding presence in the air, the Serbia international has helped Forest to address one of their biggest weaknesses last season: set-pieces. He has proved to be the perfect partner for the similarly impressive Murillo at centre-back.

18. Bruno Fernandes (Manchester United)

Fernandes might not be everyone's taste but there can be no denying his importance to United's attacking efforts. Since Erik ten Hag's sacking, the Portuguese has been hugely productive in the final third, scoring six goals and registering five assists in 13 appearances.

17. Gabriel Magalhães (Arsenal)

Gabriel receives less praise than his centre-back partner, William Saliba, but there are those at Arsenal who believe the burly Brazilian is the more important of the two. Not least because he is such a threat at set-pieces. The 27-year-old has grown into a reliable, commanding presence at the back.

16. Bryan Mbeumo (Brentford)

The softly spoken, piano-playing forward continues to go from strength to strength and is now Brentford's star man. Mbeumo works hard for his team, creates chances and scores goals. It is only a matter of time, surely, before a top club comes in for him.

15. Nicolas Jackson (Chelsea)

The undisputed front man of Enzo Maresca's team, Jackson has reduced £52 million forward Christopher Nkunku to the role of occasional back-up. Jackson is not the most clinical finisher but he has still scored nine league goals and his energy makes him a fundamental part of Chelsea's game, on and off the ball.

14. Chris Wood (Nottingham Forest)

Forest are the Premier League's biggest overachievers so far this season and Wood is their star man, even at the age of 33. His return of 10 goals in

17 league appearances reflects both Forest's quality as a team and his individual brilliance in front of goal.

13. Martin Odegaard (Arsenal)

Where would Arsenal be if Odegaard had not missed two months of this season through injury? On top form, the Norwegian is the league's most artful and watchable player. He is also crucial to Arsenal's defensive efforts without the ball, often leading their press in the opposition's half.

12. Matheus Cunha (Wolves)

It might seem unusual for a player in a struggling team to feature so highly on a list such as this, but Cunha's brilliance is all the more impressive because he is playing for a Wolves side that have endured such a painful start to the campaign. The Brazilian has moved into a different gear this season, scoring a series of spectacular goals and almost single-handedly keeping Wolves competitive in many of their games.

11. Alexander Isak (Newcastle United)

A return of 10 goals and four assists in 15 league appearances has underlined why many consider Isak to be the best player outside of the so-called 'big six'. At 25, the Sweden international is approaching his peak years and has all the ingredients required to play at the very highest level. Composed, quick, skilful and aggressive.

10. Ryan Gravenberch (Liverpool)

The smooth start to Arne Slot's Liverpool career would not have been possible without Gravenberch's unexpected success as a deep-lying midfielder. Liverpool spent much of the summer trying to find a new player for this role, but Gravenberch has now made it his own with his skill and ability to disrupt the opposition.

9. Trent Alexander-Arnold (Liverpool)

No player in the Premier League can pass the ball like Alexander-Arnold. Even though

his role has changed following Jürgen Klopp's departure, Alexander-Arnold remains the stand-out full-back in the division. Liverpool must do all they can to keep him.

8. Dejan Kulusevski (Tottenham Hotspur)

Spurs have had a patchy campaign but Kulusevski has impressed, both on the flank or in an attacking midfield position. He regards the more central role as his natural position and he has excelled in and out of possession this season. He is by far the most consistent of Ange Postecoglou's players.

7. Erling Haaland (Manchester City)

Haaland has dropped down this list after a spectacular start to the season in which he scored nine goals in the first four league games. As City's form has collapsed, the Norwegian has appeared an increasingly isolated figure. It is surely only a matter of time before he is firing again... isn't it?

6. William Saliba (Arsenal)

This season has not gone entirely to plan for Arsenal but Saliba's development has continued apace. The Frenchman has established himself as one of Europe's finest defenders and is still adding layers to his game, seemingly, with each passing week.

5. Virgil van Dijk (Liverpool)

Liverpool's captain remains as imperious as ever, providing the defensive platform that has allowed Slot's team to take control of the title race. The 33-year-old has so far played every minute of Liverpool's Premier League and Champions League campaigns.

4. Moises Caicedo (Chelsea)

Caicedo is probably the best central midfielder player in the country at the moment. The £115 million signing from Brighton needed time to adapt but, in Maresca's well-structured Chelsea team, he is now at his dynamic and aggressive best.

3. Bukayo Saka (Arsenal)

Saka continues to improve with each season. The Arsenal winger is so devastating that he is now often attracting the attention of three defenders at once. Strong, fast, intelligent and clinical, he is the leader of Arsenal's attack. His hamstring injury could prove to be a debilitating blow for his club.

2. Cole Palmer (Chelsea)

Palmer has proven that his remarkable first season at Chelsea was no fluke. The 22-year-old's creativity and decisiveness has made him the standout playmaker in the Premier League this season.

1. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool)

At the age of 32, Salah is arguably better than he has ever been as an all-round attacking force. The Liverpool forward is scoring and creating at a relentless rate, and is the first player to reach double figures for both goals and assists before Christmas in a Premier League season. Is it possible that the uncertainty over his future is pushing him to even greater levels of performance?

THE TELEGRAPH

Gwiji by David Chikoko



SPORT

Manchester City PAGE 19
might miss out on Champions League, says Pep Guardiola



Namungo FC now to restructure squad amid disappointing Premier League start

By Correspondent Seth Mapoli

NAMUNGO FC have announced significant changes to their squad as the club prepares for the second round of the Premier League.

The management has decided to part ways with three players, including former Young Africans defender Djuma Shaban, in a bid to revamp their team following a poor start to the season.

The decision comes after Namungo endured a challenging first half of the campaign, securing only 17 points from 16 matches. This has left them in 11th place, just five points above the relegation zone.

With only four wins, five draws, and six losses so far, the club's performance has been below expectations.

Namungo coordinator Ally Suleiman confirmed the departures, stating that the club has reached mutual agreements with the players involved.

The players leaving the club include Shaban, who joined Namungo on a one-year contract after a successful stint with Young Africans where he won league titles and reached the CAF Confederation Cup final. Shaban's time at Namungo lasted just six months.

"We have reached an agreement to terminate Djuma's contract. The process to find his replacement is already underway," Suleiman said.

In addition to Shaban, Namungo have parted ways with Raphael Daud, on loan from Singida Black Stars, Moubacrak Amza, on loan from Kagera Sugar, and Ritch Nkoli.

"Most of the players we are releasing were with us on loan. Djuma (Shaban) was the only one on a permanent deal. On Friday, we concluded the agreements to part ways with them," Suleiman added.

To strengthen the team, Namungo have brought in new players, including Najim Mussa, on loan from Singida Black Stars, Emmanuel Charles, on loan from Kagera Sugar and Derrick Mukombozi, who has joined the team on a permanent deal.

Suleiman also revealed that the club is negotiating with several players to bolster its attack and defense.

"We are in talks with some players, and if things go as planned, we will introduce them soon," he said.

Namungo's struggles this season have been highlighted by their poor home record. They have managed just six points from six home matches, suffering defeats to Young Africans, Azam FC, Fountain Gate, and Tabora United. Their only home victories came against Tanzania Prisons and Pamba Jiji.

The team's underwhelming performances at home and inconsistency throughout the season have prompted the management to act decisively during the mid-season transfer window.

With these changes, Namungo hope to improve their fortunes in the second round of the league. The club's management is keen to avoid relegation and push for a stronger finish in the standings.

Ramovic hails Yanga's stellar performance after 4-0 victory over Dodoma Jiji

By Correspondent Seth Mapoli

YOUNG Africans head coach Sead Ramovic was full of praise for his team following their commanding 4-0 victory over Dodoma Jiji in the Mainland Premier League on Wednesday.

Speaking after the match, Ramovic (pictured) commended his players for their teamwork, discipline, and intensity, highlighting their ability to maintain control despite a grueling schedule.

"A big congratulations and a lot of credit to my players. What an amazing performance from the first minute until the end," Ramovic stated. "Despite playing three games in seven days, we controlled the game right from the start, aiming to entertain our wonderful supporters who showed up in numbers."

Ramovic lauded the collective effort of his squad, emphasizing their compact style of play.

"The effort, attitude, and intensity of the players were exceptional. This is exactly what we strive for. We want to stay compact and close to each other on the pitch because pressing as a unit is crucial. If we are stretched, it becomes very difficult.

"The key is to work as a team - everyone has to run, sprint forward, and sprint back. If one player doesn't do their job, the entire team suffers, and that's something we want to avoid," he explained.

The coach also highlighted the importance of teamwork in both defense and attack, which he believes defines Young Africans' playing philosophy.

"Credit goes to the whole



team for how they defended together and attacked together. This collective effort is what defines us," he concluded.

Young Africans' win was powered by a clinical display from their forwards, with Zimbabwean striker Prince Dube and Tanzanian forward Clement Mzize delivering standout performances. The duo scored three of the four goals, continuing their fine form in front of goal.

Mzize opened the scoring in the 19th minute, converting a corner kick from Pacome Zouzou to net his fourth goal of the season. He doubled Young Africans' lead in the 38th min-

ute, finishing a well-placed pass from Mudathir Yahya.

Between Mzize's goals, Young Africans were awarded a controversial penalty in the 29th minute after Dube appeared to be fouled in the box. Despite replays suggesting minimal contact, Stephane Aziz Ki stepped up to convert the penalty, extending Young Africans' lead to 2-0.

Dube capped off the scoring in the 63rd minute with his fifth league goal of the season and sixth in all competitions. The striker finished off another assist from Mudathir, cementing his status as one of Young Afri-

cans' most reliable scorers in recent matches.

The win marked Young Africans' seventh consecutive away victory in the Premier League this season, during which they have scored 12 goals without conceding. It was also their ninth win out of ten encounters with Dodoma Jiji since the latter's promotion to the top tier in 2020.

Wednesday's victory lifted Young Africans to 36 points, just one point behind league leaders Simba SC, who have also played 14 matches.

Under Ramovic's guidance, Young Africans have now se-

cured four consecutive league wins, scoring 13 goals and conceding just two in the process.

The team's top scorers, Dube and Mzize, have now netted five goals each in the league, contributing significantly to Young Africans' title charge. They are followed by Ibrahim Bacca, who has four goals, while Maxi Nzungeli and Kennedy Musonda have scored three and two goals, respectively.

Dodoma Jiji's defensive frailties were on full display as they struggled to cope with Young Africans' relentless attacking pressure. Goalkeeper Mohammed Hussein, nicknamed 'Muddy Colour', endured a tough outing, failing to contain Young Africans' pace and precision.

The home side's woes were compounded by defensive lapses that led to Young Africans' third and fourth goals. Their inability to clear a loose ball allowed Mzize to score into an open net in the 38th minute, while poor marking in the second half gave Dube the space to finish Mudathir's pass with ease.

Dodoma Jiji remain in 12th place with 16 points from 14 matches. The loss highlights the challenges they face in climbing the league standings, particularly against stronger opponents like Young Africans.

Young Africans' next league fixture is against Fountain Gate FC on Sunday, a match where they will look to extend their winning streak. Meanwhile, Dodoma Jiji will need to regroup quickly as they aim to reverse their fortunes in upcoming matches.

The victory also brought financial benefits to Dodoma Jiji, as the packed stadium provided significant gate revenue. While Young Africans left with three points, their presence left a lasting impression on the fans and the home team's coffers.

Ramovic will be keen to build on this momentum as Young Africans continue their pursuit of league glory, with their recent performances showcasing the depth, determination, and tactical discipline of the team.

Azam face JKT Tanzania in Premier League showdown

By Correspondent Michael Mwebe

AZAM and JKT Tanzania are set to meet this evening in a high-stakes Premier League encounter at Chamazi Complex.

Hosts Azam begin this round of matches in third place on 33 points, four and three points off leaders Simba and second placed Young Africans respectively.

Earlier last week, they bounced back, defeating Fountain Gate 2-0 to maintain momentum in their title pursuit.

That result underlined their attacking strength and their ability to handle pressure in intense situations.

Head coach Rachid Taoussi (pictured) will be licking his lips with the thought of JKT Tanzania coming to Chamazi.

Trends show Azam have won four of their five most recent home matches in the Premier League.

They also have a really positive head-to-head against JKT Tanzania, recently winning three out

of the four matches they played, including both last season.

However, they were held to a goalless draw when the two sides met early this season in August.

JKT Tanzania make the short journey to Chamazi on the back of a heartbreaking 1-0 loss away to Simba on Tuesday.

It was a game JKT Tanzania were hoping to draw against the team at the top of the table but

conceded a last-minute penalty in the match.

The defeat to Simba means JKT Tanzania have lost just one game in their last five fixtures, all of which were played in the Premier League.

However, JKT Tanzania have won only one of those five games, with the victory coming on the road to Fountain Gate.

There have been draws with Pamba Jiji and Mashujaa at home plus Namungo away.

In addition, statistics show JKT Tanzania have lost three of their last five away games and they have failed to score a goal in four of their last five league matches on the road.

While the army side has scored just nine goals as a team this season, they have conceded nine high-lighting defence as their main area of strength.

It is JKT Tanzania's defence keeping them in most games.



Flexibles by David Chikoko



EATV FRIDAY
FRIDAY NIGHT LIVE
TONIGHT @ 9:00
FRIDAY NIGHT LIVE

11:00 DADAZ
12:00 KIPENGA XTRA
13:00 Movie
13:55 Dondoo Za Michezo
14:00 Movie
15:00 Funguka
15:30 Mpera Mpera
16:00 Zote Kuntu
16:55 Dondoo Za Michezo
17:00 SSELECT
17:55 Kurasa
18:00 Kaili Za Wana
18:30 Skonga
19:00 EATV SAA 1
20:00 DADAZ (r)
21:00 Friday Night Live
23:00 Kurasa (r)
23:05 EATV SAA 1 (r)

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09:00 MAMAMIA
12:00 Kipenga Xtra
13:00 Planet Bongo
16:00 EA Drive
19:00 Kipenga
21:00 Friday Night Live

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