



National Pg 3
Kilindi DC urges relocation of villagers following mudslides, floods

National Pg 5
'Protect fish resources to propel processing industry'

National Pg 6
Maternal, child mortality rates in southern highlands drop by 18pct

'Reform electoral structure or postpone 2025 elections'

Religious leaders issue vibrant appeals for peace, unity and responsibility

By Guardian Reporters

BISHOP Antony Mlyashimba of the central zone of the Baptist Church in the capital has appealed for constitutional reforms and forming an independent electoral commission.

In his Christmas holy at the central cathedral, he said that without those reforms, the 2025 elections need to be postponed to avoid further divisions and conflict.

"To avoid hatred and division, the solution lies in adopting a new constitution and establishing an independent electoral commission. If these reforms are not in place, the elections should be delayed until 2026," the cleric intoned.

He also criticized the growing animosity in the country, referencing incidents where people celebrated others' misfortunes, citing past rumours about the health of the Head of State.

"We have reached a point where some people celebrate the suffering of others. This is a dangerous path for our nation," he warned.

Bishop Dr Dickson Chilongani of the Anglican Church of Central Tanganyika, urged the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) to avoid using force in tax collection, calling for a more business-friendly environment as advocated

TURN TO PAGE 2



Villagers want cross-border crime curbed

By Guardian Correspondent, Ngara

TRADERS and residents of Mabawe ward in Ngara District, Kagera Region on the border with Burundi, have appealed the government to strengthen security in the wake of rising robbery incidents presumably committed by thugs from across the border.

Ndasaba Ruhoro (pictured), the Ngara MP, was asked to see to it that security is strengthened in the area, as he handed construction materials for a police station in the ward.

Hope is being laid on the new police station to curb the recurring robbery incidents, where residents like Victor Ntamalengero of Mlugina village in the ward said he was forced to relocate business and family due to fearing the criminals.

Some families were attacked and shops were robbed, with three prominent traders dying after suffering injuries, compelling others to move to Kabanga ward.

Back in May traders were attacked by robbers who broke into shops and vehicles, stealing valuables. "We managed to notify the police, who responded swiftly and apprehended one of the robbers with firearms. If security is enhanced here and a police station is built, we will feel relief," the resident and trader affirmed.

Jane Mkandala, a resident, said that some years ago their business area was attacked, resulting in the death of one young man for refusing to give money, while a student was shot in the leg and missed school for



Christmas mass over at Majengo neighbourhood's Catholic Church of the Risen Christ in Muheza town yesterday, congregation disperses. Photo: Correspondent Steven William

SPORTS

Page 20



Yanga dominate Dodoma Jiji with a resounding 4-0 victory

Page 19



Manchester City's poor run is on everyone and not Haaland, says Guardiola

TRC lands 264 new SGR freight wagons

By Guardian Reporter

THE Tanzania Railways Corporation (TRC) on Tuesday received 264 cargo freight wagons for the standard gauge railway (SGR).

In a statement issued yesterday, TRC noted that the shipment is part of a larger order of 1,430 freight wagons being manufactured by Chinese company CRRC, on the basis of a major contract.

Of the 264 wagons received, 200 are designed to carry containers, while 64 are

The wagons are a critical addition to the growing SGR network

configured for transporting loose cargo, as components of ongoing expansion of rail transportation services at the local and regional level.

A cargo ship carrying the consignment departed Dalin port in China on November 12, with the delivery of the wagons billed to bolster Tanzania's transport capacity and streamline TRC logistics.

SGR facilities further support the government's broader goal of economic modernization through improved infrastructure.

TURN TO PAGE 2

MOI cautions on 8000 festival season injuries

Handeni District road crash leaves eight dead as lorry hits bus

By Guardian Reporter

THE Muhimbili Orthopedic Institute (MOI) has urged the public to take precautions and observe road traffic rules

during this festive season, revealing that it receives 8,000 accident victims annually.

Dr Mpoki Ulisubisa, the MOI executive director, made this appeal at an

event where gifts were handed over to 1,052 members of staff as part of Christmas and New Year celebrations, in Dar es Salaam.

He stressed adherence to road signs and

TURN TO PAGE 2

Anyone found collaborating with robbers will be brought to justice as such actions result in deaths and forced relocations

weeks.

Erick Mlindwa, the Muruguna village chairman, said that Kabanga police station was insufficient for their needs owing to the distance. Help arrives too late and the thieves have enough time to escape, he stated.

Mabawe councillor Safari Banigwa did confirm that some traders and residents relocated due to fearing robberies, thus the community is pushing for the construction of a police station to improve security.

This will reassure the pursuit of social and economic activities in the area, with the MP saying that the government is working closely with the residents to resolve the challenges being faced.

The new police station will be rapidly completed and made operational, to stem rising incidents especially of night time robberies, he said, intimating that he will liaise with police authorities for joint patrols along the border areas while work on the station is being pursued.

Anyone found collaborating with robbers will be brought to justice as such actions result in deaths and forced relocations, he added.



'Reform electoral structure or postpone 2025 elections'

FROM PAGE 1

by President Samia Suluhu Hassan. Archbishop Augustine Shao of the Catholic Diocese of Zanzibar also emphasized the need for stability and justice in the lead-up to the 2025 elections.

"Justice and peace are essential to fostering hope for all," he said, urging leaders to respect the constitution and encourage reconciliation within the community.

Bishop Dr Blaston Gaville, vice chairman of the Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT) and ELCT bishop of Iringa, praised President Samia Suluhu Hassan and the government for massive development efforts, citing the standard gauge railway and the Julius Nyerere hydropower project.

He urged Tanzanians to support these initiatives and pray for the president's leadership, also advising farmers to use drought-resistant seeds and encouraged responsible financial management.

Iringa Urban MP Jesca Msambatavangu urged Christians to live by word of scripture to tackle societal issues, while the situation as the country looks forward to the 2025 general elections dominated homilies.

Religious leaders issued vibrant appeals for peace, unity and responsibility, urging people country-wide to reject corruption, abductions and other forms of violence.

Top clerics delivering Christmas homilies yesterday spoke on key public concerns like public security, rising road accidents during the festive season, and moral decay.

Another sphere of concerns was criminal activities that are increasingly conducted within families, putting the family institution in peril in many areas.

Bishop Dr Frederick Shoo, head of the northern diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT), urged people to expel bad sentiments from their hearts.

Those with great wealth and knowledge need to be aware of the presence of negative influences which renders everything futile, he said at his homily for the Moshi central cathedral, stressing the need for unity to maintain the country's reputation as a beacon of peace.

Archbishop Isaac Amani of the Catholic Church in Arusha urged couples to end the destructive behaviour of harming one another due to the lack of empathy when faced with trials of life.

Married couples need to abandon

infidelity, which sows the absence of affection and also a result of the same, he said at his Christmas Eve mass at St. Theresia Parish in the city.

Couples need to stop quarrelling and fighting as such handicaps can lead to tragic outcomes, including murder, he cautioned, pointing at selfishness and occult designs tied to witchcraft as causing extreme cruelties.

Bishop Dr Msafiri Mbilu of the ELCT north east diocese called on those celebrating Christmas to observe traffic rules to reduce road accidents, which have caused many fatalities and permanent disabilities during festive seasons.

His statement was delivered by Julius Madiga, a senior parish worker, during the Christmas service led by Rev. Elias Majo of the Muheza Parish, where the bishop underlined the sadness of nearly 100 people dying in road crashes involving buses and motorcycles just in December.

The pastor encouraged church members to maintain prayer vigils for the country, especially in anticipation of the 2025 elections so that peace and unity may prevail.

Archbishop Emmaus Mwamakula, head of the Moravian Revival Church in Tanzania and East Africa, said this year's Christmas comes at a time when the public is gripped by doubt, fear and despair due to numerous challenges.

He expressed concern over the deteriorating security situation, citing acts of abduction and murder that have caused widespread panic.

He similarly pointed at severe unemployment as a veritable crisis in the country, with many young graduates turning to deviant behaviour, citing cybercrime as an illustration.

"The cost of living has risen significantly with the increase in prices of goods, while income levels remain stagnant," he stated, while Bishop Flavian Kasala of the Geita Catholic Church diocese called on Tanzanians to reflect on their actions and reject corruption, which he warned could undermine electing genuine leaders.

"We must not allow ourselves to be divided by politicians. Instead, let us uphold peace and solidarity as we approach the 2025 elections," he said, stressing the need for a peaceful election process.

Bishop Kasala objected to rising cases of abductions, saying they damage Tanzania's reputation as a peaceful nation. He demanded that such acts be curtailed for a calm and secure environment for the polls.



Vice President Dr Philip Mpango and his wife, Mbonimpaye Mpango, attend Christmas mass at the Catholic Church Parish of Blessed Maria Theresa Ledochowska in Dodoma city yesterday. Photo: VPO

FROM PAGE 1

MOI cautions on 8000 festival season injuries

traffic regulations, especially with the increase in road accidents during end of year festivals.

"It is our collective responsibility to prevent accidents by following the rules and respecting traffic guidelines," the top medic intoned.

This appeal comes in the wake of another heavy toll accident in the morning of Christmas Eve in Tanga, where eight people died and several others were injured

when a lorry hit a Toyota Coaster bus at Michungwani village, Segera ward of Handeni District.

Almachius Mchunguzi, the regional police commander, confirmed the accident, which occurred at around eleven on the

Segera-Chalinze main road.

Two days earlier 11 people lost their lives and 16 others were injured when a Capco One bus suffered brake failure, rolled backwards and collided with a smaller vehicle at Kabango village in Bi-

haramulo District, Kagera Region.

Brasius Chatanda, the regional police commander, said that the bus was stationary when the brake failure occurred, with the conductor helping a child to board another vehicle.



A Tanesco (Tanzania Electric Supply Company) technician repairs a high-tension power supply line in Shinyanga municipality yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Marco Maduhu

FROM PAGE 1

TRC lands 264 new SGR freight wagons

the statement indicated. "The wagons are a critical addition to the growing SGR network, which is expected to enhance cargo transport capacity and contribute significantly to the country's economic development," it said.

Arrival of the wagons takes TRC to proceed with a detailed process for their testing and commissioning, as upon being unloaded at the port, the wagons will be put to a series of trials.

The wagons are first tested while empty and then with cargo, with speeds of up to 120 kilometres per hour, as part of rigorous assessment to ensure the wagons meet the performance standards stipulated in

the contract.

TRC experts in collaboration with those from the contracting company will oversee the trials until they are satisfied with the performance level noticed, the statement indicated.

Once the tests are completed, the corporation will set a date for using the wagons for cargo freight, inviting business operators to book for

space.

TRC officials see the arrival of the wagons as a major development for the country's infrastructure, as it races to meet the growing demand for efficient and reliable transport for bulk goods locally and within the region.

The SGR project, part of the broader East African railway network, is expected to enhance trade

interaction and improve logistical reliability in the region.

Completing the SGR project, including the delivery and successful operation of expected wagon deliveries, is billed to have a transformative impact on the economy, reducing transport costs, improving trade and boosting efficiency in the transportation of goods across the country, the statement added.

WhatsApp Channel logo for The Guardian with the text 'Now Scan here to visit our channel' and a QR code.

Text 'Now Scan here to visit our channel' and a QR code.



Zanzibar's Information, Youth, Culture and Sports minister, Tabia Maulid Mwita (L), and permanent secretary Fatma Hamad Rajab in happy mood when following an entertainment session at the laying of the foundation stone for Zanzibar's Maisara grounds yesterday. Photo: Rahma Suleiman

Z'bar launches housing project for Wete District hospital staff

By Guardian Correspondent, Zanzibar

ZANZIBAR'S First Vice President, Othman Masoud Othman has reaffirmed the government's commitment to improving healthcare services across the island, highlighting the ongoing efforts to enhance medical infrastructure and support healthcare workers.

Othman made the remarks yesterday at a ceremony to lay the foundation stone for the construction of staff housing at Wete District hospital in Kinyasini, Pemba North Region.

The ceremony marked the ongoing celebrations of the 61st anniversary of the Zanzibar Revolution.

As part of the government's broader plan to upgrade healthcare facilities, the Vice President emphasized that the new housing for hospital staff would improve the overall delivery of healthcare services. "This step is not only about improving the living conditions for our healthcare providers but also about enhancing the efficiency of medical services for the people of Zanzibar," he said.

Othman, who also doubles as chairman of the opposition ACT-Wazalendo, stressed the importance of providing healthcare professionals with quality accommodation close to their workplaces.

"The provision of housing near hospitals will reduce the challenges of long-distance travel, making it easier for doctors and other healthcare workers to provide timely care," he said.

The Vice President also underscored the government's commitment to ensuring that medical personnel have access to modern medical equipment and emergency services.

"Our goal is to provide citizens with accessible healthcare services while reducing the impact of preventable deaths," he said.

Furthermore, Othman called on the Ministry of Health to establish a clear maintenance plan for the new housing to ensure its longevity, given the significant investment required for construction.

"It is crucial that these houses are well-maintained so that they continue to provide

a conducive environment for healthcare workers to perform their duties," he said.

In addition to the staff housing, the First VP urged the local community to make use of the hospital's services by adhering to proper healthcare protocols.

He emphasized the importance of preventative healthcare, encouraging residents to take steps to avoid preventable diseases, which would, in turn, lessen the burden on the healthcare system.

He also directed the Pemba North regional leadership to collaborate with the Ministry of Health in upgrading the access road to Wete District hospital.

"Improving the road infrastructure will make it easier for patients, especially expectant mothers, to reach the hospital without difficulties," he said, noting that easy access to healthcare facilities is critical for timely medical care.

The new staff housing will accommodate up to 16 families, offering much-needed support for medical professionals and their families, and is expected to improve healthcare delivery in the region.

Zanzibar's Minister of Health, Nassor Ahmed Mazrui underlining the Ministry's dedication to providing quality healthcare services and reducing maternal and child mortality rates.

"This project is part of our broader efforts to create better healthcare environments for both providers and patients," he said.

Pemba North Regional Commissioner, Salama Mbarouk Khatib commended the project as a significant step in the region's ongoing development.

She added that this year alone, the region is set to launch 16 major projects, including infrastructure upgrades, which will significantly contribute to the region's progress.

Miraji Mzee Mgereza, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health- Zanzibar said that total cost of the housing project stands at 4.1bn/-.

The project is expected to alleviate challenges faced by medical staff at the hospital, improving both their living conditions and their ability to serve the community effectively.

Minister calls on SUZA to boost research efforts

By Guardian Reporter, Zanzibar

DEPUTY minister for Finance, Hamad Hassan Chande has highlighted the essential role of the State University of Zanzibar (SUZA) in shaping the university's initiatives in research findings aimed at enhancing the institution's broader socio-economic development.

He said during the second academic symposium held at the university's tourism hall at Maruhubi recently.

"This gathering is an opportunity to contribute your invaluable insights, helping SUZA's plans to boost research.

He urged SUZA to intensify its research efforts to directly benefit the Isles and the broader Tanzanian community.

Chande emphasised the critical role of research in driving the social and economic development of Zanzibar and the nation as a whole. "Higher education institutions like SUZA play a key role in conducting in-depth research that contributes to the growth of our society," Chande said.

He added: "However, research requires significant time and resources, and unfortunately, many studies end up unused or forgotten."

He urged the university to ensure that its research is effectively utilised to address real-world challenges, highlighting the importance of moving beyond academic studies and translating knowledge into practical solutions.

Chande also emphasised that SUZA produces a generation of well-educated professionals across various fields.

He urged graduates to focus on contributing to national development, setting aside personal ambitions for the benefit of Zanzibar and Tanzania.

"We are proud of the professionals emerging from this university, and now it is time for them to apply their skills for the greater good of our nation," said Chande. "They must be patriots, working for the country's progress, not just their own interests."

Chande encouraged graduates to embrace all available opportunities for employment, stressing that they should not be selective but instead focus on contributing to Zanzibar's ongoing development across all sectors.

For SUZA to succeed in nurturing future leaders, the deputy minister underlined the importance of accountability among university staff.

He called for a collaborative and strike-free environment to ensure higher education professionals can effectively contribute to societal well-being and sustainable national growth.

The academic symposium's chairperson, Minister for Community Development, Gender, Elderly, Women, and Children-Zanzibar Riziki Pembe Juma, added that the event provides significant benefits for students, shaping them into future leaders of the nation.

SUZA Vice Chancellor Prof. Makame Haji highlighted the university's progress since its establishment, noting that it has already produced highly qualified professionals ready to lead in various sectors.

Kilindi DC praises relocation of Mgera villagers following mudslides, floods

By Correspondent Cheji Bakari, Kilindi

KILINDI District Commissioner, Hashim Mgandilwa, has issued an urgent directive to residents of Mgera village, who have built homes along the banks of the Lukigula river, to relocate immediately.

The District Commissioner's remarks come after ongoing downpour which had caused a series of mudslides, exacerbating the risk of flooding in low-lying areas.

He issued the call recently during a visit by along with members of the District Defence and Security Committee, who were inspecting the aftermath of the flooding that swept away the Mgera bridge.

The bridge had been a vital link between Mgera and surrounding villages, and its destruction has disrupted access to essential services, including healthcare and education.

"The recent flooding caused by continuous heavy rains had devastating effects. The destruction of the Mgera bridge has cut off access to key services, including schools, dispensaries, and the Mgera division office, all of which are located across the river," DC Mgandilwa said.

He further emphasised the dangers posed by living near the riverbanks, urging residents to immediately relocate to safer areas to prevent further loss of life and property. "Staying in these areas is a direct threat to your safety. We cannot risk further casualties," he said.

He also called on the Tanzania Rural and Urban Roads Agency (TARURA) in Tanga Region to urgently begin construction of a new bridge across the Lukigula river to restore access to services and facilitate communication with the rest of the district.

The destruction of the Mgera bridge has a particularly big impact on the availability of health services, education, and government facilities.

Residents of Mgera and nearby villages have faced difficulties in accessing schools, medical care, and government services, which are located on the opposite side of the river.

"The immediate construction of a new bridge is crucial to restoring access to these vital services," he said.

Local authorities also work closely with humanitarian organisations to provide temporary relief to those displaced by the flooding, including food aid and medical support.

While the relocation order may disrupt the lives of those affected, the government has assured villagers that they will be supported throughout the process.

Kilindi district is known for its agricultural activities, and many residents rely on farming as their primary source of livelihood. The ongoing heavy rains have not only displaced villagers but have also disrupted agricultural activities, with crops being washed away or damaged by the floodwater.

3,590 households in Mpwapwa to access health services - TASAF

By Polycarp Machira, Mpwapwa

AT LEAST 15,151 people from 3,590 households in Wangi and Wotta Wards in Mpwapwa District, Dodoma Region will soon be able to access health services, thanks to Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF).

Through support from TASAF, currently there is ongoing construction of health facility with a total of four buildings reaching over 75 per cent of construction, eliciting confidence among 7,389 women and 7,763 men in the wards.

This isolated community has long endured the devastating impact of inadequate healthcare infrastructure, travelling for over 25 kilometres to the nearest dispensary, but a new dawn is on the horizon.

Indeed, the facility signifies a pivotal turning point for the villagers. Against a backdrop of loss and hardship, the community is poised for transformation as

This was revealed during a tour by the Minister of State in the President's Office for Public Service Management and Good Governance, George Simbachawene to the area.

In her report to the minister, TASAF's Mpwapwa District Coordinator, Francisca Mloka said the Mpwapwa district council received a total of 587,547,289.70/- from the fund in September, 2023 and the construction started in November, 2023.

She explained before the start of the project, the residents had the opportunity to decide on what kind of project in support of provision of health services

and they chose to have a health centre.

Mloka observed that the total cost for the project was 834,011,540.91/- where by the 754,923,340.91 was from TASAF and other 79,088,200 being contribution from the community.

The coordinator added that the project was to be completed in April, 2024 but was delayed mainly due to bad weather, during rainy season, unavailability of some building materials, among others.

"Upon completion of the project, it will serve some 3,590 households with a total of 15,152 residents, 7,389 being women and 7,763 men from the two wards with six villages" she said.

Speaking after inspecting the construction, Simbachawene expressed satisfaction with the quality of work on

the ongoing project, applauding the villagers for their contributions.

"This is one of the biggest projects, ever to be undertaken in this area and it is going to touch lives of people since it is on the crucial sector" noted the minister.

Simbachawene who is also the area Member of Parliament also thanked TASAF for the gesture, noting that it is part of the government initiatives to improve provision of health services in the country.

Eng Julius Mwakalebela from TASAF also expressed gratitude on how the projects was undertaken. "As a construction engineer, I am convinced that the project is well implemented", he said, stating his institutions commitment to continue supporting such projects.

Wishing you cheerful holidays!

We sincerely appreciate and value your continued support.

From the Management and Staff of
The Guardian Limited

www.ippmedia.com | epaper.ippmedia.com

The Guardian **Nipashe**

Christmas celebrated in Zanzibar, Dar, Dodoma, Iringa, Muheza and Mwanza



Bishop Augustino Shao of the Zanzibar Diocese of the Catholic Church leads Christmas Eve service at St Joseph's Church in Zanzibar yesterday.



Christian faithful follow Holy Mass at St. Peter's Church in Dar es Salaam. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala



Stephano Musomba, Assistant Bishop of the Archdiocese of Dar es Salaam leads Holy Mass for the Christmas Eve at St. Peter's Church yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala



Vice President Dr Philip Mpango participates in Christmas prayers at Dodoma city's Catholic Church of the Blessed Maria Theresa Ledochowska yesterday. Photo: VPO



ELCT's Iringa Diocese choir performs during Christmas prayers held at national level in the Iringa Diocese yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Francis Godwin



Father Switbert Massao, assistant priest with the Nyegezi parish of the Catholic Church of St. Charles Luhanga Parish, blesses a replica of the manger where the biblical Jesus Christ was born. Photo: Vitus Audax



Pastor Elias Majo of ELCT's Muheza Parish leads Christmas mass yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Steven William



A choir performs during Christmas prayers in a Mwanza city church yesterday. Photo: Vitus Audax

Deputy minister calls for plan to augment TAZARA operations

By Guardian Reporter

DEPUTY minister for Transport, David Kihenzile has instructed the management of the Tanzania-Zambia Railway Authority (TAZARA) to develop a comprehensive plan aimed at improving the railway's operations, focusing on increasing freight transport volumes and ensuring long-term sustainability.

Kihenzile made the call recently during his visit to the TAZARA station in Tunduma, Songwe Region, where he assessed the performance of the railway, which is jointly operated by Tanzania and Zambia.

He emphasised the need for innovative strategies to address the challenges facing the railway, including deteriorating infrastructure.

"The underperformance of the railway has led to numerous issues, such as the inability to transport large volumes of freight and delays in employee salaries due to the organisation's financial struggles," Kihenzile said.

He stressed that modern operating methods must be implemented to make the railway profitable, benefiting both the railway and the national economy through dividends.

Additionally, Kihenzile highlighted the environmental impact of the railway's underperformance, pointing out

that the shift of freight from rail to road has led to road deterioration.

He also addressed challenges faced by neighbouring countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, many of which lack ports and rely on the Port of Dar es Salaam for imports and exports.

"The failure of TAZARA to operate efficiently affects not only Tanzania and Zambia but also our neighbours who depend on our railway for goods transportation," he said.

TAZARA's Tanzania manager, Fuad Abdallah, shared that the government has allocated over 2.5bn/- for the construction of two new railway lines at the Tunduma station and the purchase of modern freight scanning equipment.

He explained that the new scanners will improve security and ensure that trains do not carry illegal or harmful items, thereby strengthening relations with neighbouring countries.

"The acquisition of this advanced scanning equipment will improve service reliability, enhance security in both passenger and freight transport, and we are very grateful to our government for this support," Abdallah said.

He encouraged stakeholders in the freight transport sector to continue using TAZARA's services, reassured by the enhanced security measures in place.



An overloaded Bajaj, as captured yesterday at Kimara Temboni in Dar es Salaam by our roving photographer Sabato Kasika.

By Guardian Reporter

MINISTER for Livestock and Fisheries Dr Ashatu Kijaji has called on those involved in fishing activities to prioritise the protection of fish resources, ensuring that fish processing plants have a consistent supply of raw materials.

Dr Kijaji made the remarks during her recent visit to the Pride of Nile PVT Ltd fish processing plant in Muleba District, Kagera Region.

She stressed that sustainable fishing practices are vital for the success of investments in the sector, aligning with the government's efforts to foster a conducive environment for private sector growth.

"For investments to thrive, we must safeguard our fish resources

Kijaji: Protect fish resources to propel processing industry

carefully. These resources not only create jobs and income for individuals but also contribute significantly to our national economy," Dr Kijaji said.

The minister also encouraged the expansion of fish farming, particularly in cages, to ease pressure on traditional fishing and allow native fish species to multiply.

"We also need to intensify efforts in promoting cage fish farming," she said.

Muleba District Commissioner, Dr Abel Nyamahanga highlighted

that 70 per cent of the district is surrounded by Lake Victoria's waters, making the community highly reliant on fishing and underscoring the need to protect these vital resources.

During the visit, Hamza Mustapha, the quality manager of the Pride of Nile plant, explained that the plant employs 125 Tanzanians and contributes to the economy through royalties and taxes.

However, he raised concerns about the limited supply of Nile

perch, which has led to the plant operating at less than half of its capacity.

"We request the government, through the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, to develop a strategy to ensure a steady supply of Nile perch for production, which will help boost exports and generate foreign currency," Mustapha said.

Dr Kijaji is on a special tour in Lake Zone regions, including Mara, Mwanza and Kagera to assess the performance of the sector and gather feedback from stakeholders.

Tobacco farmers in Chunya set plans to boost production

By Guardian Correspondent, Chunya

TOBACCO farmers in Chunya District, Mbeya Region have unveiled plans to improve productivity and ensure long-term sustainability of the tobacco industry, despite previous challenges.

The farmers under Lualaje Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Society (Lualaje AMCOS) made the commitment at the cooperative's recent annual general meeting.

During the meeting, Alberto Kacheza, Lualaje AMCOS chairman announced plans to increase tobacco production from 1.3 million kilogrammes to 1.5 million kilogrammes in the current farming season, depending on weather conditions and market demands.

The move is part of a broader effort to strengthen the cooperative and improve its financial sustainability.

"By improving our production and implementing better management practices, we aim to secure a prosperous future for our farmers and the local economy," Kacheza said.

He acknowledged that the previous season faced setbacks due to climate change but expressed optimism about overcoming the challenges this year.

As part of their commitment to financial responsibility, the cooperative has called on members to settle outstanding debts on time.

Kacheza emphasized that farmers who fail to repay loans risk having their assets, including farms, auctioned to cover debts. The measure aims to ensure that

the cooperative remains financially healthy and capable of supporting all its members.

He said with the initiatives in place, the farmers are poised to improve their output while ensuring the financial health and sustainability of their cooperative.

Isaya Hussien, vice-chairman of the Chunya Tobacco Cooperative Union (CHUTCU), also urged stronger debt collection strategies, suggesting the establishment of a cooperative fund to support farmers without relying solely on government subsidies, which can sometimes be delayed.

Kipembawe Ward Officer Kassim Salum said that the government supports the cooperative by ensuring that necessary actions are taken against farmers who evade debt repayment, including seizing assets if needed.

In an effort to enhance tobacco farming success, 500 soil samples have been collected for research into soil quality, with the aim of boosting efficiency and productivity across the region.



By improving our production and implementing better management practices, we aim to secure a prosperous future for our farmers and the local economy



Officials of a community-based organisation operating from Mugumu in Serengeti District pose for a souvenir photo in Bunda town yesterday with children living in difficult circumstances shortly after presenting them with Christmas gifts. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

UN General Assembly adopts special treaty to combat cybercrime globally

By Special Correspondent

THE United Nations General Assembly has adopted a special treaty aimed at strengthening global cooperation to combat cybercrime and protect societies from digital threats.

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.

The treaty, which was adopted on Tuesday, culminates a five-year effort involving UN member states, civil society, information security experts, academia, and the private sector.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres praised the treaty as a testament to successful multilateralism and a collective global effort to address the

growing challenge of cybercrime.

"This treaty is a demonstration of multilateralism succeeding during difficult times and reflects the collective will of Member States to promote international cooperation to prevent and combat cybercrime," Guterres stated in a spokesperson's message.

The new Convention aims to create a comprehensive platform for international collaboration in areas such as evidence exchange,

victim protection, and prevention, all while ensuring the safeguarding of human rights in the digital space. The treaty covers a wide range of cybercrimes, including online child sexual abuse, sophisticated scams, money laundering, and other serious offenses.

Philémon Yang, President of the General Assembly, emphasized the importance of the treaty in today's digital world, where information and communication technologies

have both immense potential and increased risks.

"With the adoption of this Convention, Member States now have the tools to enhance international cooperation and protect people and their rights online," he said.

The treaty's adoption is hailed as a major victory for multilateralism, with Ghada Waly, Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), describing it

as a crucial step in the global effort to address cybercrime.

She pledged the UNODC's commitment to helping nations sign, ratify, and implement the treaty, providing the necessary support to protect economies and secure the digital sphere.

The Convention against Cybercrime will open for signature in Hanoi, Vietnam, in 2025 and will enter into force 90 days after it is ratified by the 40th signatory.

Dodoma registers 24pc rise in modern contraceptive use

By Polycarp Machira, Dodoma

Dodoma region has seen significant increase in the use of modern family planning services, with the number of users rising from 40 percent to 64 percent, an upsurge of 24 percent.

The positive change is largely attributed to an ambitious project being implemented by Jhpiego Tanzania in collaboration with regional authorities.

Dubbed 'The Challenge Initiative (TCI)', the three-year project seeks to improve access to family planning services through city and district councils.

According to Jhpiego Country Lead of TCI project Rose Mnzava, the initiative that comes to an end in the next six months was being implemented in Dodoma City Council and Chamwino District Council.

Also, the similar project was being implemented in different local government authorities in Morogoro, Mbeya and Geita regions, according to TCI country lead.

"The main target is all girls and women who have attained reproductive age and we targeted persons between 15 and 49 years," she said, adding that in youth category, the project targets girls between 15 and 24 years.

For 14 years, Jhpiego has been focusing on quality of health services for families, and in TCI project, the organisation has for almost six years been providing funding to local government authorities to implement family planning programmes with a view to improving access to family planning services.

According to Mnzava, TCI project kicked off in 2017 in Tanga, Dar es

Salaam and Arusha Regions, and that it was later rolled out in other regions including Dodoma.

In Dodoma Region, she said, the project kicked off in 2020 and that it was set to phase out in the next six months, adding that Jhpiego had issued a notice to the regional authorities to ensure that the project remains sustainable when the NGOs suspend funding.

Dodoma Regional Medical Officer, Dr Andrew Method gave an assurance on the sustainability of the project, saying that it had already been incorporated in the budget plans immediately after donors phase out their funding.

"At the beginning financing of the project was 80 percent from Jhpiego and the government was pumping in 20 percent but as the project nears an end, we provide more funding than the donor," he said.



At the beginning financing of the project was 80 percent from Jhpiego and the government was pumping in 20 percent but as the project nears an end, we provide more funding than the donor

High-level conference to address financing challenges for small-scale farmers in Africa

By Zablou Oyugi

THE Pan African Farmers' Organization (PAFO) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) will co-host a high-level conference on financing small-scale farmers in the second quarter of 2025.

The event aims to mobilize stakeholders to tackle the financial challenges faced by small-scale farmers and explore sustainable solutions to improve their livelihoods.

This initiative follows a meeting between PAFO and AfDB, during which the organizations also agreed on an action plan emphasizing capacity building, technology integration, and access to finance, particularly for women and youth farmers.

PAFO President Ibrahim Coulibaly expressed optimism about the partnership, highlighting its potential to empower smallholders and align with AfDB's "Feed Africa" strategy to transform the continent's agriculture sector.

"The Bank's 'Feed Africa' strategy is an important step toward transforming Africa's farming sector, and we are excited to work with the Bank to help shape this vision," said Coulibaly. "Through this partnership, we are committed to helping farmers gain the support and resources they need to succeed, especially women and youth."

Coulibaly visited the Bank's headquarters on December 13, 2024, to advance the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in October 2023.

This partnership aligns with the Bank's 'High 5' priorities, particularly "Feed Africa," and builds on its commitment to fostering collaboration with civil

society organizations. The Bank recognizes the crucial role of such organizations in driving sustainable development.

Coulibaly outlined PAFO's mission and strategic priorities to empower smallholder farmers and advocate for their rights, stressing the need for greater strategic support from the Bank to address challenges in agriculture, which has the potential to solve 80% of the continent's problems.

Dr. Martin Fregene, Director of Agriculture and Agro-industry at AfDB, reaffirmed the bank's commitment to the partnership, highlighting its investments in agriculture, which have benefited over 14 million producers through initiatives that provide inputs and improve market access. He acknowledged persistent challenges in the sector and welcomed ideas from civil society organizations like PAFO to enhance the Bank's impact.



The Bank's 'Feed Africa' strategy is an important step toward transforming Africa's farming sector, and we are excited to work with the Bank to help shape this vision



Ernest Lukumay (R), chairman of the CCM Parents wing in Endiantu ward, Manyara Region, and secretary Agrippina Paulo (L) pictured yesterday presenting Christmas gifts to representatives of an orphanage and a special needs children's centre located at Mirerani. Photo: Correspondent Gift Thadey

Maternal, child mortality rates in Southern Highlands drop by 18pc

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbeya

MATERNAL and child mortality rates in Mbeya, Songwe and Rukwa regions have declined by 18 percent over the past three years, thanks to improvements in health services.

In 2021, maternal mortality rate in the Southern Highlands regions was recorded at 121 deaths per 100,000 live births. By 2023, the number had dropped to 83 deaths per 100,000 live births, reflecting positive impact of government investments in healthcare.

The achievement was discussed during a recent meeting here, attended by key healthcare stakeholders.

Dr Godlove Mbwani, Executive Director of Mbeya Zonal Referral Hospital, highlighted the critical role of improved infrastructure, modern medical equipment, and dedication of healthcare workers in reducing maternal and child deaths.

"We have made significant strides in improving healthcare services in this region, and it's essential that we continue

this work with dedication and compassion," Dr Mbwani said.

The meeting focused on sharing best practices and evaluating strategies to further reduce maternal and child mortality in the Southern Highlands.

He emphasized the importance of leadership in health facilities, calling on hospital managers to set high standards of professionalism and empathy.

Dr Mbwani added: "Leaders must ensure that healthcare workers are held accountable and provide the highest level of care

to reduce preventable deaths."

Dr Ulimbakisye Macdonald, Programme Officer at the Ministry of Health's Maternal and Child Health Department, reiterated the government's commitment to eliminating maternal and child mortality, citing initiatives like national strategic medical camps and ongoing training for healthcare workers.

He said the efforts have played a pivotal role in improving healthcare delivery and ensuring better outcomes for mothers and children across the country.



Vegetable vendors wait for customers at Mbezi Mwisho in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Sabato

By Guardian Reporter and Agencies

UNITED Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is alarmed by the rapidly worsening food security situation in Sudan, as access to food and nutrition for millions of people across the country continues to deteriorate, his spokesperson said in a statement.

According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) issued by IPC's Famine Review Committee, famine conditions are present in at least five locations in Sudan. Five other areas are identified as being at risk in the

UN chief 'alarmed' by worsening food, nutrition situation in Sudan

coming months.

After over 20 months of conflict, more than 24.6 million people in Sudan face high levels of acute food insecurity, the statement said, citing the latest UN-backed assessment.

The UN and our partners are scaling up the delivery of food assistance and other essential support for the most vulnerable, but ongoing fighting and restrictions on the movement of relief supplies

and personnel continue to imperil aid operations, the statement added.

The Secretary-General reiterated his call for the parties to facilitate rapid, safe, unhindered and sustained access so that humanitarian assistance and staff can reach people in need wherever they are.

The UN chief also underscored the need for an immediate

cessation of hostilities to save lives and prevent the crisis in Sudan and its impact on neighbouring countries from escalating even further in 2025.

He appealed for urgent international support and cooperation to bring the parties closer to a peaceful resolution of the conflict through a lasting ceasefire and step up funding for humanitarian action.

Seaweed farmers to benefit from \$20m fertiliser project aimed at boosting sustainable agriculture

By Guardian Reporter and Agencies

FARMERS in Tanzania Mainland are poised to benefit from a \$20m seaweeds fertiliser project aimed at boosting sustainable agriculture practices.

This follows a strategic partnership between Coastal Biotech Ltd., a Zanzibar-based company and Tanganyika Farmers Association (TFA) announced during TFA's annual meeting on December 2nd, 2024 in Arusha.

The initiative aims to establish an organic fertilizer production facility leveraging seaweed from Zanzibar as the primary raw material.

In this, Coastal Biotech plans to construct a new plant by beginning of 2025 and although the production capacity remains undisclosed, the project signals a commitment to advancing organic agriculture.

According to Coastal Biotech's Director, Steven Sillah, using organic fertilizers could significantly benefit farmers by reducing input costs by up to \$590 per hectare while boosting yields by as much as 35 percent.

This shift aligns with the global trend toward organic farming, driven by consumer demand for food free of synthetic chemicals. The seaweed-based fertilizers also capitalize on Zanzibar's rich marine resources, renowned for their purity and sustainability.

"Adopting organic fertilizers can cut costs for farmers by \$590 per hectare and increase yields by up to 35 percent," Sillah highlighted.

In Tanzania, the use of chemical fertilizers remains among the lowest in sub-Saharan Africa. However, data from the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC) shows a rising trend, with fertilizer consumption projected to reach 1 million tonnes in the 2024/25 season.

This marks a 20 percent increase

from the 840,000 tonnes used the previous year and highlights the growing acknowledgment of fertilizers' role in improving agricultural productivity and food security.

Despite this progress, Tanzania still relies heavily on imports, which currently account for 86 percent of its fertilizer supply. Fertilizer application rates remain low, estimated at 9.3 kg per hectare in 2021—well below the Abuja Declaration's recommended 50 kg per hectare.

To address this dependency, the Tanzanian government is focusing on boosting local production. A landmark initiative involves a partnership between the Tanzania Investment Centre (TIC), the Tanzania Fertilizer Regulatory Authority (TFRA), the Tanzania Petroleum Development Corporation (TPDC), and Indonesia's ESSA to establish a state-of-the-art fertilizer plant in the Mtwara Region.

Valued at \$1.3 billion (3.5trn), this ambitious project will leverage Tanzania's vast natural gas reserves, estimated at 54.57 trillion standard cubic feet. Construction is set to span from 2024 to 2029, promising to transform the country's fertilizer production capacity.



Adopting organic fertilizers can cut costs for farmers by \$590 per hectare and increase yields by up to 35 percent

Rwanda constructs chilli, onion drying facilities to address post-harvest losses

By Zablun Oyugi

RWANDA'S Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources through the National Agricultural Export Development Board (NAEB) has launched construction of chilli and onions drying facilities in five centres across the country with the aim of reducing post-harvest losses from 30 to 8 percent and boost the crops quality and marketability.

According to a statement by NAEB on its X handle, the National Post-Harvest Centre at NAEB headquarters will be among the facilities to be constructed.

"Four more will be built in Nyagatare, Bugesera, Rulindo and Rubavu districts. These state-of-the-art facilities the facilities will be game-changers for Rwanda's horticulture sector, particularly value addition for chilli and onions."

Launching the construction of the National & Local Post-Harvest Centres under Smart Food Value Chain Management Project (SFVCM), Hon. Mark Cyubahiro Bagabe, the Minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources of Rwanda said the facilities will add value to the horticulture produce and provide opportunities for bigger incomes for farmers.

"These facilities will enable farmers to store their produce for extended periods, allowing them to sell at better prices rather than being compelled to accept lower offers due to a lack of storage options thus they won't have to sell cheaply just because they can't preserve their produce," he said.

Claude Bizimana, NAEB CEO reiterated the importance of this game-changing initiative: "The establishment of these facilities will spur job creation in packaging, logistics, and agribusiness. Young entrepreneurs will thrive, while local communities will benefit from increased economic activity."

"This is a moment of great

pride and anticipation as we take another significant step toward transforming Rwanda's agricultural sector," he said.

The National Post-Harvest Center in Kigali (NAEB HQ) will span 2,070 m², cost RWF1.9 billion, and have a processing capacity of 40 metric tons (MT) of the crops per day.

Additionally, four regional centers in Nyagatare, Bugesera, Rulindo, and Rubavu districts, each 600 m² in size, will cost RWF 800 million each and process up to 9.6 MT of the crops daily while the installation of equipment will cost more than \$1.2 (approximately RWF1.7 billion).

The ambitious project is planned to be completed in June 2025 and it is expected to create about 2,000 jobs of which 60 per cent of them will be for the women.

Aimable Rusingizandekwe, Project Manager at NAEB said the overall aim of the project will be achieved by the end of 2026.



Four more will be built in Nyagatare, Bugesera, Rulindo and Rubavu districts. These state-of-the-art facilities the facilities will be game-changers for Rwanda's horticulture sector, particularly value addition for chilli and onions



Garbage piled up along a Kagera locality roadside in Dar es Salaam yesterday, emitting a foul smell and generally standing as a nuisance to the public. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala

NAIROBI

THE Kenyan State Department, in collaboration with the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the government of Denmark through DANIDA, hosted a two-day stakeholder validation workshop in Nairobi from December 10th to 11th, 2024.

The workshop focused on the integration of a "green supplement," focused on coffee and tea value chains, as a key component of the national implementation strategy for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Kenya is among the world's largest producers and exporters of coffee and tea and their associated value chains account for nearly half of the wage employment in agriculture. This features the significant role these sub-sectors

Kenya champions green value chains for tea under AfCFTA

play in the economy.

Nonetheless, coffee and tea sectors are facing climate-induced challenges, prompting the Government of Kenya to incorporate green value chain practices into its national AfCFTA implementation strategy to align trade with global sustainability goals.

Green value chain strategies and action plans supplement national AfCFTA implementation strategies and are seen as critical for countries seeking to boost the production and export of green products. Ultimately, they contribute to building climate resilience and

sustainability.

The workshop convened key stakeholders, such as policymakers, industry leaders, environmental experts, traders and producers. The aim was to assess and validate proposed strategies that promote sustainable practices within the coffee and tea sectors.

These commodities are important sources of earnings for many African countries and the integration of a green supplement into their value chains will help in the growth of the economies in these countries, support the sustainability of the environment and achieve the objectives of the

AfCFTA.

Participants learnt about ways to make coffee and tea production value chains more compliant in terms of safeguarding the environment, as well as how to incorporate green financing into the value chains and enhance regional trade integration.

UNECA is committed to supporting member states to attain sustainable and inclusive growth through the AfCFTA.

With the integration of green supplements into value chains, Africa's economic development will align with global sustainability goals.



Ndanda constituency legislator Cecil Mwambe (in gasses) pictured in Masasi town yesterday gracing the issuance of 160 gas cylinders and stoves to community leaders as part of an initiative to promote the use of clean cooking energy. Photo: Correspondent Hamis Nasri

JUBA

SOUTH Sudan's Council of Ministers in a regular meeting chaired by President Salva Kiir Mayardit recently approved \$28,414,236 for airspace operationalization.

Since its independence in 2011, South Sudan's airspace has been under northern neighbour Sudan's control.

Speaking to journalists after a cabinet meeting in Juba yesterday, Michael Makuei Lueth, Minister for Information, Communication, Technology, and Postal Services, said they approved the funds

South Sudan approves \$28m for its airspace management

for the operationalization of the Airspace Control Centre.

"It is worth mentioning that up to this moment, the airspace is controlled from Sudan, and this was simply because we did not have the facilities for this. Now, facilities have been built, and we are left now with the handing over so that ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization) can, after

this, license us," Makuei said.

He said the Ministry of Transport requested a sum of \$28,414,236 to enable them to take over this facility.

"Of course, once this centre is operationalized, it will serve us in terms of security because our airspace will be secure. It will also generate revenue because all these planes that pass over

South Sudan, they all pay for the use of the airspace, but we have not been getting it. The Sudanese government has been taking it all this time."

Lueth revealed that the centre may generate a sum of \$35,350,000 per annum since they will be charging all the planes operating in the country or passing through the airspace.

THURSDAY 26 DECEMBER, 2024

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

LATRA right in seeking views to finalise rail, road, cable rules

IT good that private investors are being asked to take up projects in rail transport services and special road transport in our country's major cities.

Given the overstretched transport situation in the city of Dar es Salaam and even other cities, this idea is timely so long as it is properly implemented.

The Transport ministry recently called a stakeholders' meeting in the commercial capital to discuss new regulations aimed at introducing cable-car transport and private railway operators, rapid bus services, etc. It isn't clear if all was agreed.

The key mover at the meeting was the Land Transport Regulatory Authority (LATRA), with whom the stakeholders shared their views on a series of proposed regulations.

The purpose is to improve governance and operational standards in the land transport sector, especially relating to licensing issues in railway operations, cable transport and an exclusive public transport licence set of regulations.

The reports in parts of the media explained at length intentions of the government or what the key presentation entailed, not stakeholder remarks.

Only the fact that the regulator will begin to register service providers in the various spheres or sub-sectors in transport as a whole was provided, not touching on a series of assurances.

That these are special licenses doesn't change the fact that certain assurances are required, for instance if investors will place such vehicles on their own, charging regulated fees in like manner as in city commuter transportation.

That could in a sense be taken for granted, as LATRA doesn't operate

bus or rail units, and is now taking over control there.

What this indicates is that public sector control of bits of transportation in the country is being eroded further, especially plans to purchase more than 600 buses for the city council to run rapid transit buses.

If LATRA is certain of being able to carry out the regulatory changes it suggested, it follows that rapid transit will be a matter of individuals placing buses on the special roads and cutting on the congestion inside buses. That would make a big difference.

For starters, this proposed change of licensing regulations is cutting into earlier plans for what was described as public-private partnership with a foreign investor who delivers and operates buses, while city council employees in DART collect fares.

They were looking over the shoulder to see if Treasury would release say half the money more or less as down payment while the private firm is gradually repaid the other half of the cash.

There was no reason for that approach as there are plenty of private buses, even air conditioned 'special hire' buses that can be placed on rapid transit road networks, easily.

In that case so long as investors will place buses, rail wagons or cable cars and charge the relevant fees, not enter into partnership with city council or other state corporate entities, it is likely to work.

LATRA did not demand some delivery of vehicles for state operators to use them, merely ironing out the licensing procedure, traffic flow procedure and the fares, by and large. When this is the case there is no reason for services not to start as soon as practicable.

Improving services for elderly persons needs livable pensions

MEMBERS of the National Advisory Elderly Council have reminded the public conscience that the elderly in Tanzania face social insecurity putting them at risk of a vast horizon of abuses, social exclusion, serious illness and abject poverty.

This acute concern was given at another instance of meetings convened by the Planning Commission in liaison with various civic bodies, this time the elderly council, to review the relevant proposals in discussing the draft development vision for 2050.

It isn't just a matter for the council but of conscience generally for what can be done to spare the elderly the shame syndrome.

There was a time that the matter was raised in public discussion and the overall view at least by higher state authorities was that parents and elders generally need to be taken care of by their offspring, as an unavoidable social duty.

This view is conceptually right if one is referring to culture in general as well as religious morality but falls far short of evident reality, that 'things fall apart.' There are sorry instances of efforts to do some manual labour while out of age.

Leaders of the elderly council made shocking revelations as to what happens to elders who don't have anyone to guarantee their security.

They said that one of the most prevalent forms of violence against the elderly is confiscation of their earthly belongings, often by family members or close relatives.

In sum, the situation of being a senior citizen is often close to being defenseless, with exhorting younger people to behave differently often not of much use.

Part of what is now being done to a section of families especially in urban areas via the Tanzania Social Action Trust Fund (TASAF) could be redesigned or expanded to include dirt-poor elders.

One problem is that there is a tendency to judge how they lived during their working lives, virtually with a view to ascertaining that they reap where they sow.

Even when such views or assessments are credible, society needs to come to their support as part of the pursuit of an inclusive society, and where indeed cohesion is true and practicable.

Even as the situation of the elderly was being aired in a meeting on the first draft of the development vision, strictly speaking this is a matter that ought to be tabled before the legislature urgently.

Unemployment and negative stratification have reduced the importance that elders once appeared to their younger family members, while neglect from some elders push sons or daughters not to have the best sentiments for parents.

It is one reason for deviant behaviour when youths don't have anyone in particular they care about, as in the past two decades data on sexual violence are traced to homes.

We need to take care of elders as society because we have failed as families, such that the elders who suffer are an illustration of what is known as family breakdown.

It is commonly identified with divorce but it has wider parameters since not just those who are divorced are likely to be in abject poverty, though their situation can be worse.

Children usually remember their mothers; taking the father seriously demands that the family unit was protected and educated.

The Guardian Limited Key Contacts

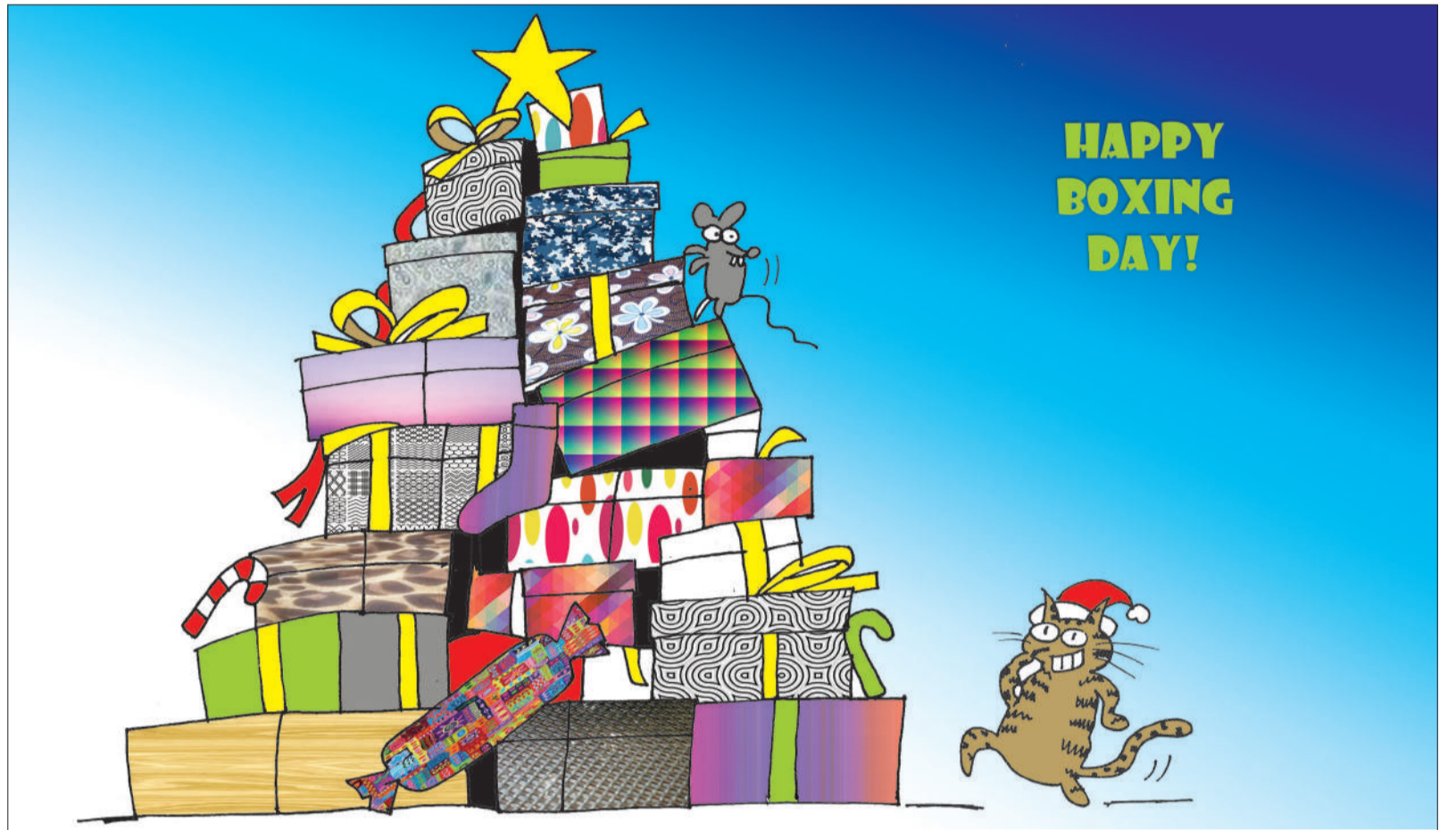
Managing Editor: WALLACE MAUGGO
Circulation Manager: DENNIS NTAITA
feedback@guardian.co.tz

Newsdesk

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

Advertising

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



By Charles Mangwiro

MOZAMBIQUE'S top court has declared election victory for the country's ruling Frelimo Party and its 47-year-old presidential candidate, Daniel Chapo, in an election process marred by widespread rigging that sparked nearly two months of violent protests, causing the deaths of more than 100 people and injuring several others. Frelimo has been in power for 49 years.

After more than 55 days of waiting, the chairperson of the Constitutional Council, Lucia Ribeiro, on Monday acknowledged irregularities in the election but said this did not substantially influence the results, and that Daniel Chapo of the governing Frelimo Party won with 65.17% of the vote, while opposition politician Venancio Mondlane had 24.29%.

The Constitutional Council also gave Frelimo a majority in parliament and all the 10 provincial governors.

The results were initially announced by the National Election Commission in late October and triggered protests for more than

By Special Correspondent

A Cost of Capital Commission which will investigate issues that impair the ability of low- and middle-income countries to access affordable capital is set to be launched under South Africa's G20 Presidency, said International Relations and Cooperation Minister Ronald Lamola.

"I wish to take this opportunity to announce that under South Africa's G20 Presidency, an ambitious Cost of Capital Commission will be established to investigate the issues that impair the ability of low- and middle-income countries to access sufficient, affordable, and predictable flows of capital to finance their environmentally responsible and socially inclusive development plans," Lamola said.

The Minister was delivering a virtual address at the Jubilee and Caritas Internationalis Leaders' Press Conference held at the at Salone San Pio X in Vatican City, on Monday.

The Minister said the Commission will deliver a comprehensive expert review on the issues impacting the cost of capital for developing economies, which could help address future debt sustainability issues and the related fiscal space challenges.

Having taken over the Presidency of the G20 on 1 December, South Africa's theme for the Presidency is: "Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability."

In his address, Lamola said South Africa has identified inequality as the most significant threat to our collective future.

Mozambique's highest court upholds victory for the ruling Frelimo party

eight weeks after Mondlane rejected the result and called for protests that resulted in at least 130 deaths in clashes with the police.

"One, proclaims citizen Daniel Francisco Chapo, elected president of the Republic of Mozambique. Two, validates the results of the parliamentary elections on October 9, 2024," said Ribeiro.

According to the final ruling, for parliament, Frelimo's number of seats was cut from 195 to 169. The Optimist Party for the Development of Mozambique, which supported Mondlane, remains the second-largest party. Its number of seats increased from 31 to 43.

Mozambique held several elections on October 9: presidential, legislative and provincial. The results announced by the National Election Commission in October gave victory to Chapo.

In his acceptance speech on Monday, Chapo said he is ready to serve the interests of all Mozambicans and not just for his

party and promised to introduce several reforms.

"It has become clear during these days that our electoral system needs profound reforms, and we all agree," said Chapo. "We need to build a new democratic architecture that responds to the aspirations of our society and not just partisan interests. I want to take this opportunity to say that I am willing to lead this reform process of our society and not just partisan interests. I want to take this opportunity to say that I am willing to lead this reform process."

Soon after the announcement of the results, Mondlane's supporters again protested in the capital, Maputo, burning tires and blocking roads.

Mondlane accused Frelimo of rigging the vote and called for a national shutdown starting this Friday. Human rights activist and director of the Center for Democracy and Human Rights Adriano Nuvunga says the results

proclaimed by the Constitutional Council will only bring problems to the country instead of solving them.

"It is unbelievable that the Constitutional Council read these results knowing that the general state of the nation in Mozambique feels attacked by these results. This would have been the moment for the Council bringing the nation together, mobilizing to find a formula for everyone to feel represented in what will be the next government," said Nuvunga.

Multiple human rights organizations reported that violent and repressive measures were used by security forces against protesters who were taking part in peaceful demonstrations. At least 300 protesters have been arrested since October in connection with these demonstrations.

With all the contesting parties rejecting the results on Monday, violent protests will continue in Mozambique at least for the coming weeks.

SA: Commission to probe access to capital for low- and middle-income countries

"This inequality is most prevalent in the Global South and is manifested through critical challenges such as a lack of predictable and sustainable financing, a dire shortage of capacity building for climate action, and crippling debt that forces many countries to abandon their developmental programs just to service exorbitant debts.

"The situation is so severe that it feels as if entire nations are being suffocated under the weight of these overwhelming burdens." The press conference launched the campaigns on debt relief in 160 countries for Jubilee 2025.

The 23 December St. Peter's Press Conference explains the themes of debt cancellation lifted for special Jubilee Years among faith communities.

The high-level press panel took place ahead of Pope Francis beginning Jubilee 2025 by opening the Holy Jubilee Doors and Calling for global debt relief. The Jubilee will officially end with the closing of the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica, on 6 January 2026.

Lamola added that South Africa acknowledges and appreciates the work of the Catholic Church, under the leadership of His Holiness, Pope Francis, to urge the world to do more to free developing countries from the debt trap, which is causing untold "misery and despair" and depriving the citizens of these countries of their human dignity, stifling their ability to reach their

full potential.

"We welcome the launch of debt relief initiatives in 160 countries for Jubilee 2025, which will undoubtedly significantly help alleviate the economic and social distress in these countries," said the Minister.

Lamola said tackling inequalities to enable developing countries to lift themselves out of the quicksand of debt also requires accelerating reform of the international financial architecture.

"We will use our G20 Presidency to contribute to reinvigorating and strengthening multilateralism and creating consensus around issues that affect our collective future. To effectively respond to global realities, multilateral mechanisms and institutions must be strengthened and reformed."

The Minister added that there was hope for the future.

"Indeed, we call on faith leaders from across the globe to continue to guide us with their wisdom, compassion, and deep spirituality to restore hope and trust to the most vulnerable," he said.

The G20 OR GROUP OF 20 is an intergovernmental forum comprising 19 sovereign countries, the European Union (EU), and the African Union (AU). It works to address major issues related to the global economy, such as international financial stability, climate change mitigation and sustainable development, through

annual meetings of Heads of State and Heads of Government.

The sovereign states of the G20 (without its international members, like the EU or AU).

The G20 was founded in 1999 in response to several world economic crises. Since 2008, it has convened at least once a year, with summits involving each member's head of government or state, finance minister, or foreign minister, and other high-ranking officials; the EU is represented by the European Commission and the European Central Bank. Other countries, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations are invited to attend the summits, some permanently. In 2023, during its 2023 summit, the African Union joined as its 21st member and was officially represented at the 2024 G20 summit in Brazil.

In its 2009 summit, the G20 declared itself the primary venue for international economic and financial cooperation. The group's stature has risen during the subsequent decade, and it is recognised by analysts as exercising considerable global influence; it is also criticised for its limited membership, lack of enforcement powers, and for the alleged undermining of existing international institutions. Summits are often met with protests, particularly by anti-globalization groups.

24News

Role of books, past papers in effective planning for teaching, learning activities

BENJAMIN Franklin, the renowned U.S politician and statesman, famously stated, "If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail." Success cannot be achieved by sitting idly; it requires thoughtful planning that accounts for various factors.

In the realm of professions reliant on planning, teaching stands out as one where meticulous preparation is indispensable.

Among the professions which are tied up to planning, teaching is inclusive. Any second lost in the teaching and learning process can hardly be compensated due to fixed timetable that schools operate through, thus making time the most precious resource for both teachers and learners.

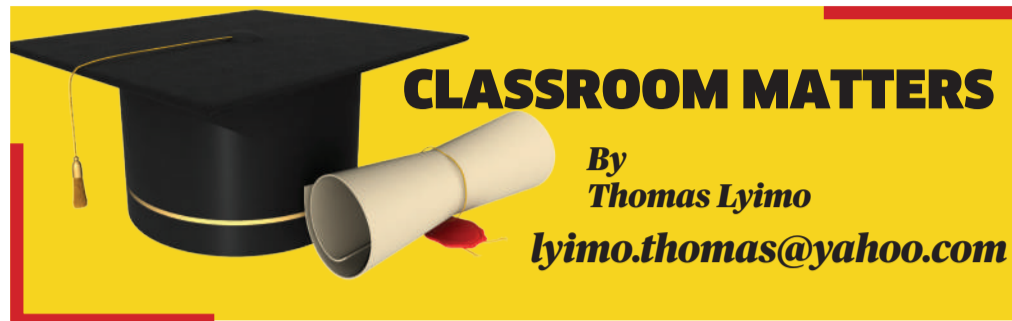
Teachers are instrumental in guiding students to acquire skills essential for their lives while adhering to strict time constraints. Success hinges on teachers' ability to plan effectively and manage their time, ensuring that learners also adopt good time management practices.

Syllabus as a guiding tool for teachers

Effective teaching begins with understanding and interpreting the syllabus. The syllabus serves as the foundational document outlining the learning objectives and guidelines. However, successful implementation requires adequate time for thorough interpretation.

Teachers often utilize school holidays, such as the December break, to prepare schemes of work and other essential planning documents. Rushing through this process due to competing priorities can adversely affect the quality of planning.

Creating a scheme of work should not be a mere copy-and-paste exercise, even if the syllabus remains unchanged. Each academic year presents unique challenges, such as variations in the number of weeks per term, changes in opening dates, or the introduction of new educational materials. These factors necessitate careful consideration and adaptation of teaching plans to reflect the current context.



Value of books in academic planning

Books are invaluable resources in academic planning. New publications often address gaps in knowledge or provide insights into emerging trends in education. Reading widely allows teachers to compare and contrast perspectives from various authors, enriching their understanding of the syllabus.

This informed approach helps teachers to craft effective schemes of work and allocate appropriate number of periods to topics based on their complexity or significance.

Relying solely on the syllabus to write a scheme of work can lead to discrepancies with other documents, such as lesson plans. By incorporating insights from

books, teachers can ensure alignment between their planning documents, ultimately enhancing the learning experience.

The role of past papers

Past papers are another critical resource for teachers and learners. They provide insight into the topics and subtopics frequently assessed in school and national examinations. Regular exposure to these significant concepts improves learners' mastery and boosts their chances of academic success.

Examination questions are crafted by experts who evaluate the educational value of different topics. Analysing the distribution of marks in these questions enables teachers to prioritize topics accordingly, en-

suring efficient use of time during the academic year.

Furthermore, past papers adhering to standards set by bodies such as the National Examination Council of Tanzania (NECTA) assist teachers in designing high-quality internal assessments. There must be more emphasis on the use of quality past papers from schools as well as those from NECTA to enhance effective academic planning and its subsequent result—which is good academic performance.

Good notes and well-structured teaching materials should aim to address relevant and valid questions, as they form the backbone of effective education. Emphasizing the use of quality past papers fosters better academic planning

and leads to improved performance outcomes.

Consequences of poor planning

Teachers who deviate from their schemes of work—either by rushing ahead or falling behind—can negatively impact learners. A mismatch between planning and execution often results from inadequate syllabus interpretation. This can lead to students struggling to grasp content due to hurried instruction or missing critical concepts entirely when topics are overlooked.

To avoid such pitfalls, teachers must conduct thorough research, considering the academic calendar and the relative weight of topics. Proper planning ensures balanced time allocation and comprehensive coverage of the syllabus.

Call for creativity, commitment

Creativity is a cornerstone of effective teaching, enabling educators to adapt, engage, and inspire their students in meaningful ways. Creativity enhances student engagement as creative teaching methods

capture students' attention and make lessons more enjoyable.

Creative teaching often involves open-ended questions, problem-solving tasks, and innovative projects. These approaches stimulate students' critical thinking, enabling them to explore new ideas, analyse situations, and develop their solutions.

Parents and students alike expect tangible results that pave the way for further studies or life opportunities. Achieving these outcomes requires teachers to leverage resources such as books and past papers to enrich their teaching and ensure alignment with academic standards.

The integration of books and past papers in teaching and learning activities is essential for effective academic planning. These tools enable teachers to deliver quality education, laying a solid foundation for learners' academic and professional journeys.

Teaching, therefore, is not just a profession but a commitment to shaping the future through well-informed planning and execution.

By Frank Abel

AFRICA, including Tanzania, is disproportionately affected by climate change, despite contributing less than 4 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Prolonged droughts, unpredictable rainfall patterns, and rising sea levels are threatening livelihoods, food security, and water availability across the continent.

Smallholder farmers in Tanzania, who form the backbone of the economy, are particularly vulnerable to these challenges, underscoring the urgent need for climate action focused on resilience and sustainability.

At successive Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings, including the most recent COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, developed nations promised to support developing countries in addressing the devastating effects of climate change. In Baku, one of the key deliberations was a new goal to triple climate finance for developing countries, increasing from \$100 billion annually to \$300 billion by 2035.

A broader target was set to raise \$1.3 trillion annually by 2035 from a variety of sources, including private investment.

While these promises remain critical, Tanzania and other African nations cannot afford to wait indefinitely. The country should adopt an integrated approach that combines climate action with existing development programmes, leveraging internal resources to build resilience and reduce dependency on external aid.

Despite the lofty promises made at various COPs, it is important to note that these commitments by developed countries are voluntary. There are no binding mechanisms or penalties for failure to deliver or fulfil their pledges.

While the funds remain uncertain, Tanzania and other African countries will continue to face the harsh realities of climate change as its adaptation requires significant financial resources, which many developing nations struggle to mobilize on their own.

When climate-related disasters strike in developed countries, their strong economic capacity allows them to recover quickly, minimizing the long-



Prolonged droughts and unpredictable weather patterns, affect smallholder farmers who are vital to the economy.

Building resilience: Integrating climate actions for sustainable development

term impacts on their people and economies.

For countries like Tanzania, the same climate scenarios often escalate into full-scale disasters, leading to widespread suffering and long-term setbacks in development. This disparity underscores the urgent need for African nations to take proactive steps, integrating climate adaptation into their broader development agendas and utilizing domestic resources to enhance resilience and advocate for equitable global climate finance.

This reality makes it clear that the most viable solution for Tanzania and other African nations is to integrate climate action into their existing development programmes.

By leveraging internal resources and aligning climate resilience initiatives with national priorities such as agriculture, health, education, and infrastructure, these countries can take proactive steps to protect their communities.

Integrating climate action into development

programmes allows developing nations to maximize limited resources, foster innovation, and create homegrown solutions that are tailored to their unique circumstances.

Tanzania must prioritize self-sufficiency in addressing climate change, transforming this challenge into an opportunity for growth and sustainability. This blueprint offers a practical path for nations striving to balance development and climate resilience in an uncertain global landscape. Here are some actionable strategies for integrating climate action into Tanzania's broader development programs.

Mainstreaming climate action in sectoral policies

Integrating climate action into Tanzania's policies is crucial for resilience and sustainable development. Agriculture, employing over 75 percent of the population, needs measures like drought-resistant crops, conservation farming and efficient irrigation

to address climate risks. Similarly, integrated water management, including storage and watershed protection, ensures reliable water for agriculture, energy and households.

Urban planning must adopt flood-resistant infrastructure and sustainable waste systems to mitigate urban flooding. Aligning policies with climate goals enhances resilience, supports economic growth, reduces poverty and attracts international climate finance.

Local government empowerment

Empowering local governments to address climate change is crucial for building resilience as they are on the frontlines of climate risks like floods and droughts.

Establishing district-level adaptation funds can bridge this gap by providing financial flexibility for tailored climate projects. These funds can support early warning systems, climate-resilient infrastructure, and livelihood diversi-

fication programmes.

Empowering local authorities to manage climate projects strengthens their capacity to integrate climate considerations into broader development efforts, ensuring context-specific and impactful climate action. This decentralized approach builds resilience and strengthens Tanzania's response to climate challenges.

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

Engaging the private sector through public-private partnerships (PPPs) is key to scaling climate actions. Private sector has financial and technical capacity to drive investments in renewable energy and climate-smart agriculture.

Incentives like tax breaks, green bonds, and subsidies can encourage private investment in these areas. PPPs can also fund large-scale infrastructure projects like climate-resilient housing and flood defences.

Companies Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

initiatives can support local climate adaptation, such as reforestation and renewable energy programmes. The government must create clear policies and incentives to attract private sector participation, thus enabling a transition to a low-carbon economy.

Capacity building

Securing and effectively using climate finance is vital for Tanzania's climate mitigation and adaptation efforts. However, the country faces challenges in accessing international funds due to gaps in institutional capacity and technical expertise needed to develop bankable projects.

Strengthening technical skills in government, local authorities, and the private sector is crucial, with training on preparing proposals that meet donor requirements for funds like the Green Climate Fund.

Establishing specialized units within key institutions to coordinate project proposals and align them with national climate goals is also critical.

Institutional reforms to improve transparency and accountability in managing climate finance are necessary to build donor trust. Collaboration with international organizations and neighbouring countries can further boost capacity. Addressing these gaps will enable Tanzania to mobilize climate finance effectively, implement impactful projects, and secure a sustainable, climate-resilient future.

Tracking climate finance

As Tanzania strengthens its efforts to secure climate finance and implement resilience projects, it is crucial to establish robust systems for monitoring and tracking climate-related expenditures. Effective financial tracking ensures proper expenditure of funds, enhances transparency and builds confidence among stakeholders. Without such systems, there is a risk of mismanagement and inefficiency, which could hinder progress in addressing climate challenges.

A centralized financial management system is essential for consolidating all financial flows related to climate action, regardless of the source. This system would provide policymakers with a comprehensive view of how funds are allocated and utilized across sectors, ensuring they are not disproportionately spent on mitigation projects at the expense of adaptation initiatives.

Transparency is key to managing climate finance effectively. Publicly accessible reports detailing the sources, allocation, and impacts of climate funds help build trust and demonstrate Tanzania's commitment to responsible fund management.

Frank Abel is a Senior Programme Accountant at Amref Health Africa Tanzania and one of the Stakeholders of Sustainable Development with more focus on the effects of Climate Change. He can be reached via +255 753 73 23 55.

‘Security through obscurity’: Swedish cabin on the frontline of a possible hybrid war

By Miranda Bryant

AT the end of an unmarked path on a tiny island at the edge of Stockholm’s extensive Baltic Sea archipelago lies an inconspicuous little wooden cabin, painted a deep shade of red. Water gently laps the snow-dusted rocks, and the smell of pine fills the air.

The site offers few clues to the geopolitical drama that has gripped Scandinavia in recent months, driven by accusations of infrastructure sabotage. But in fact the cabin houses a key cog in Europe’s digital connectivity, and a point of vulnerability in a potential hybrid war: a datacentre that amplifies the signal from a 1,615-mile fibre-optic cable running from northern Sweden to Berlin.

Last month, two nearby fibre-optic cables were severed, prompting a continuing investigation by Swedish authorities. Western intelligence officials from multiple countries have said they are confident a Chinese ship caused the cuts after leaving the Russian port of Ust-Luga, though views differ on whether the cuts were accidental or potentially deliberate.

Since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Sweden has experienced a rise in hybrid warfare – attacks on an adversary using methods other than traditional military action – blamed on pro-Russia groups. With governments in northern Europe on high alert over hybrid Russian activity, the Guardian was given exclusive access to the Stockholm datacentre site.

Daniel Aldstam, the chief security officer at GlobalConnect, which transports 50 percent of the internet capacity of the Nordics and runs the centre, described the approach to its location and ordinary outward appearance as “security through obscurity”.

“Essentially you have two differ-



The site offers few clues to the geopolitical drama that has gripped Scandinavia in recent months, driven by accusations of infrastructure sabotage.

ent approaches,” he said. “Either you put a lot of fences around it which make it obvious that there is something critical, or you do it like we have done it here and try to keep things a little more discreet. But of course we have the normal stuff in terms of alarms, CCTV, access control and all of that.” Inside, cages full of equipment emit blinking lights and different-coloured cables line the ceiling.

After a recent suspected sabotage incident, the Polish prime minister, Donald Tusk, proposed a “navy policing” initiative involving joint military patrols by countries around the Baltic.

Travelling from Stockholm by helicopter over the archipelago, formed of 30,000 islands, rocks and skerries, it is clear to see how challenging the coastline is to protect. But its vastness also sug-

gests how the “security through obscurity” approach could be effective – at least up to a point. Maps that show where all the undersea cables are laid are publicly available.

“We have hundreds of thousands of kilometres of fibre. How do you physically protect it? You can’t,” said Aldstam. “What is important here is the redundancy [using multiple cables offering alternative routes if one are cut off]. You need to have more fibres.”

With infrastructure seen as being particularly vulnerable to hybrid warfare, there are signs of tweaks to the “obscurity” approach, reflecting the fraught times.

GlobalConnect is in the process of setting up a bigger and more modern-looking datacentre nearby, which although still

unmarked and painted a similar shade of red, is more obviously a building doing an important function. Inside it has its own diesel-powered backup generator to ensure it could continue running if electricity was cut off.

The vulnerability to sabotage of undersea cables and other critical infrastructure – particularly in the relatively shallow and busy Baltic – has come into sharp focus since Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

In September 2022, the Nord Stream pipeline, which carried natural gas from Russia to Germany, was blown up. Initially, many assumed Russia was to blame. However, in August this year, German media reported that German authorities had issued an arrest warrant for a Ukrainian man on suspicion of being part of a team that planted



What is important here is the redundancy [using multiple cables offering alternative routes if one are cut off]. You need to have more fibres.

explosive devices on the pipeline. Both sides in the war in Ukraine have denied responsibility and blame each other for the attack.

Nato, which has established a dedicated centre for undersea security, has warned that the security of nearly 1 billion people across Europe and North America is at risk of hybrid warfare by the alliance’s adversaries, due to vulnerabilities in windfarm, pipeline and power cable infrastructure. Earlier this month, the Nato secretary general, Mark Rutte, urged Europeans to “shift to a wartime mindset”.

For all the warnings, undersea cables, which can lie on or be buried in the seabed, look surprisingly slight.

“We call it a super mega cable, but it doesn’t sound super mega or look super mega,” said Patrik Gylesjö, who is responsible for overseeing the whole of GlobalConnect’s Sweden to Berlin cable project, which was completed earlier this year. “The name refers to its capacity rather than the size.”

Inside the cable, which is little more than 2cm in diameter, is a small section formed of 96 hair-thin fibre pairs – enough to support 1bn simultaneous Netflix streams, he said. The rest is made up of steel armouring and a waterproofing substance. It would take only an anchor from a relatively small ship to break the cable, said Gylesjö. “If you would like to break this cable or cut it, you would not need a super-big tool. It’s quite fragile.”

Making it stronger, he added, would make it heavier, more expensive and “more complicated to deploy”.

Accidental breaks in undersea cables are incredibly rare. “It’s very rare that damage happens in general,” said Gylesjö. Very rare. During our time as an operator of sea cables [more than 20 years] I think it has happened two to three times maximum.”

By Ernesto Eimil

DURING the onset of the current session of Cuba’s National Assembly, Prime Minister Manuel Marrero spoke about the results of the government’s management in 2024, a year when Cuba’s crisis worsened significantly, and the measures they plan to implement in 2025.

Marrero’s speech oscillated between propaganda, acknowledgment of unmet objectives set for 2024, and a series of measures or promises for the upcoming year.

The National Assembly routinely meets a few times a year for a few days to receive and unanimously approve government plans and dictates.

This summary presents the most notable points of Manuel Marrero’s address.

Dollarization and “New Relationships” with the Private Sector

Marrero announced that the country will advance partially in the dollarizing its economy, with export sectors operating under partial dollarization schemes. Wholesale, retail, and tourism sectors will handle foreign currencies.

What the government refers to as “non-state management forms” (private) will also need to pay in hard currency for foreign trade-related matters. Contradictorily, Marrero also announced measures aimed at de-dollarizing other sectors but did not provide details.

On tax evasion, the prime minister reported inspectors had identified debts exceeding 6 billion pesos (\$50 million dollars at the official exchange rate of 120 X 1). As a collection method, more than 9,000 debtors were restricted from leaving the country. “All or nearly all of those immediately pay,” Marrero asserted.

A new exchange rate is expected to be approved in 2025, introducing a more flexible sys-

Promises of the Cuban government for 2025



Prime Minister Manuel Marrero

tem that adapts to market supply and demand. The current rate on the street is around 320 pesos X 1 USD.

Authorities claim inflation slowed in 2024, though it was estimated at 28% by late October. Marrero noted that money in circulation had decreased this year, albeit insufficiently. “It’s kept under the mattress,” he quipped [referring to the lack of confidence in the Cuban banks].

The government aims to improve business relationships between the state and private management

by signing administrative, marketing, and economic partnership contracts.

Promises of More Megawatts from Renewable Energy

Regarding the nationwide and rolling blackouts, the recovery of the National Electricity System will be overseen by Ramiro Valdes, a historic regime military figure who will turn 93 in April 2025. Marrero stated that 500 new MW of solar energy would be added in the first half of the year, with another 700 MW in the second half, totalling 1,200

MW by the end of 2025.

Experts note this partial transition to photovoltaic energy is highly complex given the resources required. Additionally, salaries for electricity company workers will be increased.

Marrero acknowledged the government’s failure to impose higher tariffs on heavy electricity consumers, intended to encourage saving – an outcome that did not materialize. To address this “distortion,” he announced that new private businesses (not just heavy consumers) will need to

seek their own renewable energy sources for self-sustainability, contradicting a recent decree.

Production

To boost production, tariffs on some imported goods and raw materials will be reduced by 50% or entirely. Conversely, tariffs on imported products like rum, tobacco, and cigars will increase.

The government’s 2024 production targets for basic foods such as milk, eggs, meat, and corn were unmet. However, targets for rice,

beans, vegetables, and tubers were achieved, albeit way insufficient to meet citizens’ demand.

Regarding the sale of basic rations, Marrero acknowledged product shortages and staggered deliveries. “We can’t sell rice to everyone at once. By the end of October, rice was distributed, but with delays,” he explained.

Importation of essential goods

Marrero referenced the ongoing tax exemption for non-commercial essential goods entering through customs – a measure extended since July 2021. Extensions will likely continue in 2025, although Marrero did not explicitly confirm this. He expressed concern about untaxed imports of items that end up for sale. “No measures will apply to medicines,” he clarified.

On purchasing, importing, and selling vehicles, the government approved updates to policies governing the transfer of ownership of motor vehicles, trailers, and semi-trailers.

Telecommunications

The government will implement measures to recover foreign income from telecommunications. Unlimited data packages previously purchased in local currency will be discontinued. “Etecsa has lost foreign currency income, and it needs foreign currency to invest,” Marrero said. New top-up offers in foreign currency will be introduced, unused Nauta Hogar home internet balances will roll over monthly, and roaming fees will now require payment in foreign currency.

Health: A self-financed sector

Marrero promised that the healthcare sector would be self-financed, with 100% of income from the export of medical services allocated to purchasing medicines and supplies. In 2024, medical diplomacy was the Cuban government’s most profitable export service. [Nonetheless, medicines remained in dire shortage for the Cuban population and medical services were increasingly deficient.]

Outlook for 2025

Key challenges mentioned for 2024 included reorganizing and protecting external financial flows, partial dollarization, and alleged intervention in the currency market. A year ago, in December 2023, Marrero falsely claimed the exchange rate was projected externally – a claim previously debunked by El Toque, as it reflects supply and demand on the island.

At the start of his speech, Marrero blamed part of the crisis on the usual culprits: US sanctions and external factors. “Lift [the sanctions] and put us to the test,” he declared.

Beyond the propaganda, the immediate outlook remains grim, even for the government itself. Total foreign currency income fell short, and foreign investment did not meet expectations. In recent years, it has become almost traditional for appointed President Miguel Diaz-Canel to claim the following year will be better. Marrero predicted 2025 would bring “greater challenges.”

The possibly most severe economic, social, and human rights crisis in 60 years has apparently diminished the traditional government optimism.

Malaria fight needs whole-of-society approach

By Paul Adepoju

FROM fixing open gutters to educating kids about the importance of bed nets, a “whole-of-society” approach is needed to successfully shut down malaria, according to Michael Adekunle Charles, CEO of RBM Partnership to End Malaria—a global grouping of over 500 organisations dedicated to fighting the disease.

It comes as the WHO’s World Malaria Report 2024 reveals that cases are rising, with sub-Saharan Africa carrying the heaviest burden.

The former diplomat and medical doctor said that the priority for malaria funding is ensuring that drugs get to hard-to-reach areas, and highlights the risks posed by *Anopheles stephensi*—the urban malaria-transmitting mosquito that can bite during the day.

How would you assess the current state of malaria control and elimination as highlighted in the World Malaria Report 2024?

The report provides a mix of optimism and challenges. It notes significant progress, with 2.2 billion cases and 12.7 million deaths averted since 2000. However, malaria remains a major threat, particularly in Africa, which bears 95 per cent of the global malaria burden. While we’re not progressing as fast as desired, the gains are undeniable.

To make further progress, we must approach malaria as a societal issue, not just a health challenge, involving sectors like education, infrastructure, and agriculture.

“Vaccines are an exciting addition to our toolbox, but they are not a silver bullet.”

We need to adopt a more optimistic and comprehensive approach to fighting malaria. It’s essential to move beyond viewing malaria solely as a health issue. Countries that have successfully eliminated malaria have approached it from a developmental perspective, addressing infrastructure, gender issues, agriculture, and education. Each of these aspects plays a critical role in malaria elimination.

For example, educating children in schools encourages them to use mosquito nets at home, while addressing infrastructure challenges—like stagnant water in potholes and open gutters—removes breeding grounds for mosquitoes. In places like Nigeria and other parts of Africa, such environmental factors remain major barriers. If we encourage people to sleep under nets but fail to address the stagnant water and open gutters outside their homes, we won’t win the fight against malaria. A whole-of-society approach, involving collaboration across all sectors, is the way forward.

The report highlights funding gaps in malaria control efforts. How can this be addressed?

Funding remains a critical issue, with only US\$4 billion of the US\$8.3 billion target achieved in 2023.

Engaging the private sector through initiatives like End Malaria Councils country-led forums to accelerate progress on the disease has shown promise, raising US\$80 million across nine countries. Resource optimization and innovative funding models are essential.

Funding is crucial to scaling up malaria control efforts. In countries where we’ve seen significant success, adequate funding has been a key factor. However, we do not currently have all the resources we need. This is where resource optimization becomes essential. For example, in Kebbi State, Nigeria, rice farming requires swampy water, which is a perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes.

Should the Ministry of Health allocate its malaria funds to larviciding [applying a treatment



Adaptive measures are essential where preventive treatment is provided to children during the rainy season when transmission peaks, says Michael Adekunle Charles.



A lab technician testing for malaria

to water to kill larvae) these areas, or should the Ministry of Agriculture contribute instead? By having the Ministry of Agriculture fund such efforts, resources within the Ministry of Health could be freed up and redirected toward other malaria control measures.

Similarly, addressing infrastructure issues such as gutters and potholes, which also serve as mosquito breeding sites, would reduce malaria cases, ease the burden on hospitals, and free up additional funds for prevention and treatment. Resource optimization is a key strategy, and every sector must understand its role in malaria control.

We also need to explore alternative funding sources. In Nigeria, for instance, the End Malaria Council has been reinvigorated with support from private sector leaders like [Nigerian businessman Aliko] Dangote and [Nigerian economist] Tony Elumelu. Through corporate social responsibility initiatives, the private sector can contribute significantly to malaria control efforts.

By linking other sectors to malaria control, we can free up health ministry resources and strengthen the overall fight against the disease.

What role does inequity play in malaria outcomes, and how can this be addressed?

If we look at malaria, it is clear that children under the age of five and pregnant women are the most affected, which is why we often link malaria with gender issues. Beyond the disease itself, inequity plays a significant role. For instance, in many cases, it is the mother

who brings the sick child to the hospital. If the child is admitted, it’s the mother who stays by their side. This same mother often has multiple other children at home that she still needs to care for. With the little resources she has, she ends up spending it all on the sick child.

This limits her ability to engage in productive activities like farming or trading, which would bring income to the household. In rural areas, this situation is compounded if the man of the household is unable to provide financially. The result is a vicious cycle of poverty and hardship, exacerbated by malaria. Women, already struggling under these pressures, bear the brunt of the burden—spending time and resources on treatment while losing opportunities to sustain their families. This is the inequity we speak of in malaria outcomes, where the disease disproportionately impacts women and children, both directly and indirectly.

Is the advent of malaria vaccines the breakthrough we’ve been waiting for, or just one step in a larger fight?

Vaccines are an exciting addition to our toolbox, but they are not a silver bullet. For instance, the malaria vaccine helps reduce severe cases and deaths, but must be used alongside other tools like bed nets and indoor residual spraying. Integration into existing immunization programs is key. Continued innovation is needed to develop vaccines that offer long-term immunity.

There are challenges in rollout, especially integrating it into existing vaccination programs like the Expanded Program on Immunization

[a WHO vaccine initiative]. The malaria vaccine should be handled by them, but because it’s specific to malaria and new, it’s often driven [in Nigeria] by the National Malaria Elimination Program. Ensuring seamless rollout is critical.

The vaccine is administered to children under two, the most vulnerable age group, to improve survival rates. When used alongside tools like bed nets and indoor residual spraying, it significantly reduces severe malaria cases.

We need integration, innovation, and continued development to reach a stage where a single vaccine dose provides long-term protection. For now, it’s an important tool, but it must be part of a comprehensive strategy that combines prevention and treatment.

How is malaria transmission being affected by climate change?

Climate change is exacerbating malaria transmission by altering patterns and increasing the frequency of conditions that favour mosquito breeding. For instance, flooding creates stagnant water, which serves as an ideal breeding ground for mosquitoes. It’s not just about changes in temperature and rainfall patterns, it’s also about how these factors create environments where mosquitoes thrive, accelerating malaria spread.

To combat this, adaptive measures are essential. Seasonal malaria chemoprevention is a key example, where preventive treatment is provided to children during the rainy season when transmission peaks. This intervention has seen significant scale-up,

from reaching 170,000 children in 2012 to 53 million in 2023. By targeting children for three to four months during this high-risk period, we are mitigating the impact of increased malaria transmission due to climate change.

What are the emerging challenges in malaria control, such as resistance and new mosquito species?

The way the mosquito behaves is constantly evolving. The longer we wait, the more adaptable it becomes, mutating into new strains that frustrate our efforts with existing tools. A prime example is *Anopheles stephensi*, a mosquito species originally found in Asia, now present in several African countries, including Nigeria. This species is particularly concerning because it thrives in urban areas and bites during the late afternoon and early evening, unlike traditional malaria-carrying mosquitoes that are most active at night.

This shift raises critical questions about the effectiveness of our current interventions, such as bed nets, which primarily protect people during the night. It underscores the urgency of securing adequate funding, driving innovation, and plugging knowledge gaps. If we don’t act swiftly, we risk losing the significant gains made in malaria control, such as the 2.2 billion cases averted and the 12.7 million lives saved since 2000.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, involving improved surveillance, development of new tools, and strengthening the resilience of our malaria control strategies to outpace the adaptability of mosqui-

toes like *Anopheles stephensi*.

What priorities should guide malaria funding and R&D efforts?

As of today, no child should be dying of malaria. The priority for malaria funding should be case management—ensuring drugs and treatment reach even the hardest-to-reach areas. This is crucial for saving lives, especially for children, who need access to treatment within 24 hours of falling ill. While research and development, as well as commodities like bed nets, are important, the immediate focus must be on delivering lifesaving interventions quickly.

Beyond that, we need to stay ahead of the mosquito’s adaptability. Supporting African researchers and building local manufacturing capacity are critical. Over 80 per cent of malaria commodities currently come from outside the continent, which is unacceptable. Investing in local manufacturing will not only create jobs and wealth, but also ensure greater health security for the region.

Although it’s difficult to prioritize in such a multifaceted fight, the key is balancing immediate life-saving needs with long-term investments in innovation, local capacity, and sustainable solutions.

What is RBM Partnership’s role in achieving global malaria targets?

RBM is a partnership of over 500 entities, including civil society organizations, countries, private sector players, pharmaceutical companies, academic institutions, and research organizations. Our role is to act as a catalyst for achieving global malaria targets, focusing on four key priorities. First, coordination is vital—bringing together efforts within countries, across regions, and globally. While everyone shares the goal of eliminating malaria, not all work aligns in the same direction, and our job is to streamline these efforts.

Second, advocacy is crucial to keeping malaria high on the global health agenda. This involves promoting a whole-of-society approach, addressing the education gap, and ensuring stakeholders understand their roles in fighting malaria. Third, we focus on data systems. Strengthening surveillance, ensuring last-mile delivery of rapid diagnostic tests, and improving data collection and analysis are all essential for understanding and reducing malaria’s burden.

Lastly, addressing the persistent funding challenges is key. We work to mobilize resources through End Malaria Councils, engaging the private sector, and fostering commitments that supplement traditional funding sources. By improving coordination, advocacy, data, and funding, RBM aims to drive meaningful progress toward the 2030 global malaria targets.

Connectivity for everyone is key to Africa's growth and prosperity

By Cosmas Zavazava

WE live in a world where more and more people are digitally connected. Connectivity means prosperity. It means opportunity. Access to the Internet is a passport to education, information, starting a business, getting health care, and finding a better-paying job.

But this increased global connectivity is uneven. Too many people are still being left behind.

ITU's 2024 estimates, released in November, show a persistent digital divide between high-income and low-income countries. Although the digital revolution is well under way in Africa, only 38 percent of the continent's population is using the Internet, significantly below the global average of 68 percent.

While 85 percent of the population in Africa has access to at least 3G mobile broadband services, only 60 percent is covered by 4G services and only 11 percent is covered by 5G, compared to the global average of 51 percent.

A deeper look into the numbers reveals inequalities within inequalities: In Africa, women are less connected than men – 31% vs 43% – and girls are less connected than boys. For economies to succeed, young girls need to feel comfortable and confident in their ability to use the latest technology.

Another startling statistic that emerged from ITU's new estimates shows that 25 percent of people living in rural areas in Africa still have no possibility at all of connecting to the Internet because of gaps in broadband coverage.

Rural people in Africa are still far less connected than urban people: 57 percent vs. 23 percent. Another main reason people don't use the Internet is their lack of dig-



Girls in ICT Day organised by ITU at the African Union, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, April 25th, 2019.

ital skills and an unfamiliarity with technology.

ITU is working with stakeholders – policymakers, business and community leaders, innovators – to bridge these gaps as quickly as possible by empowering communities with digital skills, making digital technologies and services affordable to everyone – women, girls, people with disabilities, vulnerable groups, those in rural areas – and guiding countries as they upgrade their regulatory frameworks and infrastructure.

Our projects in Africa are proving the power of these partnerships.

Our Digital Transformation Centres (DTCs) initiative, launched in 2019 with Cisco to improve digital

literacy and capacity in underserved communities, now has 14 DTCs and has helped almost 400,000 people gain the digital skills necessary to make them more employable or help them become better entrepreneurs.

The DTCs are also teaching school children programming and other digital skills. The demographics of Africa – the world's youngest continent; according to UN figures, 70 percent of the people in sub-Saharan Africa are under the age of 30 – present tremendous potential for growth.

But this is only if new generations, boys and girls alike, are empowered to reach their potential. Technology plays a critical role in making this happen.

The DTCs are also teaching school children programming and other digital skills. The demographics of Africa – the world's youngest continent; according to UN figures, 70 percent of the people in sub-Saharan Africa are under the age of 30 – present tremendous potential for growth. But this is only if new generations, boys and girls alike, are empowered to reach their potential. Technology plays a critical role in making this happen.

Among those to participate in DTC training was Yea Acheampongmaa, a hairstylist in Ghana with no formal education. She described learning to use the Internet as a “game-changer” for marketing her services.

In Bonwire, also in Ghana, artisans are using their newfound computer skills to discover markets around the world for the town's traditional fabrics.

Throughout 2024, other special initiatives led or supported by ITU welcomed many thousands of digitally underserved young people into the vast global community of Internet users.

To mention a few: 40,000 girls from 84 countries honed their digital skills during International Girls in ICT Day; 30 young change-makers from 28 countries participated in the Generation Connect Young Leadership Programme, co-led by Huawei; and more than 1,400 young women from 19 countries joined the Her Digital Skills

initiative, co-founded with EY, GSMA, and W4, and the AI Skills Accelerator for Girls, co-led by EY.

The benefits of their learning will be felt for years to come.

A glimpse of how youthful energy and creativity are already flowing into new digital enterprises was on display in October during ITU's Global Innovation Forum.

Among the three digital startups to receive the Forum's award for innovation, two were from Africa: the Muuni Fund in Malawi, for fostering entrepreneurship and building supportive ecosystems for innovation, and Bulamu Bridge AI Technologies of Uganda, which created the FemiHub app and WhatsApp chatbots to digitize access to women's health information and services.

On April 24, 2025, the world will once again celebrate International Girls in ICT Day, an annual event that encourages girls and young women to pursue education and careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). I encourage communities to organize events and activities to support girls as they learn about STEM and help them benefit fully from the power of technology.

Last year's event brought us an array of enriching experiences for girls, from an online blogging competition in Guyana, to the Girls in ICT Caribbean Hackathon, to web-based training that taught basic robotics skills to public school girls in Nigeria.

There is great hope for Africa with its current political will and vision. The year 2024 was declared by the African Union as the Year of Education, which opened doors for STEM and bridging the digital gender gap.

Furthermore, the African Union (AU) recently adopted the Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy in keeping with global trends. But for the benefits to be reaped, connectivity is a sine qua non - without which, not.

A combination of policy and regulatory interventions, matched with meaningful investment, will get the continent where it needs to be in terms of meaningful, affordable connectivity.

In Nigeria's crude capital, a plan to win the war against oil theft

By Fidelis Mbah

AT dawn, the dense creeks and swamps of the Niger Delta are enveloped in an eerie silence, which is interrupted only by the intermittent chirping of Herons, a rare water bird found in this part of Nigeria.

Suddenly, in a flash, the water bubbles and convulses, announcing the galloping approach of speedboats.

The boats usually carry heavily armed militiamen, often clad in work overalls, suggesting they are technicians, said Tonye Francis, who lives in the oil-producing Ogu-Bolo community in Rivers State that's been in the shadow of an oil conflict for years.

Also in the boats are several dozen empty mini-drums with hoses attached to the bases, that get connected to a nearby oil pipeline after it has been professionally ruptured, the young man said.

In no time, the mini-drums get filled with crude oil and loaded into barges. The barges, escorted by speedboats, then make their way out of the inlet - crisscrossing other dense creeks and swamps that dot the area - heading in the direction of a waiting foreign vessel, nautical miles away.

“It feels like a movie scene when these activities are going on,” Francis said.

“They [the oil thieves] operate unhindered. Sometimes, those involved are given security cover by their sponsors.”

For years, incidents like this one have become common in Rivers State, which prides itself as Nigeria's oil capital. But the scene is also a recurring one across the Niger Delta as thieves try to siphon crude from oil pipelines crisscrossing the region.

“We can't stop them without the support of the military men

deployed to the area,” Francis said.

Nigeria is one of Africa's leading oil exporters. But the industrial-scale oil theft has posed a major threat to communities and the wider economy. Oil theft costs Nigeria millions of dollars each month; about \$23bn in oil revenue was lost in 2022 - one of the highest in recent years.

This forced Nigeria to slip as the continent's largest exporter, according to figures from the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

But it appears to be bouncing back and authorities hope improved security measures to help tackle criminals will let them win the war against oil theft for good.

“Oil theft is a big problem” Rivers is one of the six states hosting oil installations in the country.

As part of a plan to boost the region's oil production, authorities in the state last week unveiled a batch of military-grade gunboats to help crack down on criminality and oil theft.

State Governor Siminalayi Fubara explained that “oil theft is a big problem that needs all hands on deck to tackle it.”

“These six gunboats donated by my government are meant to support the Nigerian Navy to ensure we drastically reduce the activities of oil thieves,” he said.

The gunboats will enhance waterway patrols and response times, especially near submerged oil export pipelines that are prone to attacks, officials said.

“We have set up local vigilantes to support the protection of oil facilities, acquired gunboats, and are protecting the ecosystem of the region,” Fubara added.

Rivers is home to pipelines that transport crude from other states to its Bonny export terminal, accounting for 6.5 percent of



Men walk past an abandoned illegal refinery in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria

Nigeria's entire revenue.

But for decades, theft has impacted negatively on the overall revenue of a country where about 90 percent of government earnings are generated from oil.

Thousands of oil spill incidents have occurred since oil was discovered in commercial quantities in Nigeria in 1958 - due to the activities of oil thieves. The dip in production often has adverse effects on government revenue.

This has continued to affect the people of the communities in these oil-rich areas. Those who depend on farming and fishing have felt a direct effect on their livelihoods and residents have reported numerous health issues.

To provide alternative opportunities for young people, Rivers State government plans to invest more in health, education and infrastructure in areas at risk of pipeline vandalism.

“We are doing our best to discourage any form of economic sabotage,” Fubara told Al Ja-



An unidentified man rides a speed boat with oil containers in the Niger Delta region

zeera, “which is why the country's output has increased in recent months given our support and protection of pipelines.”

“Recent gains can be sustained”

Oil export is Nigeria's mainstay as crude production and now av-

erages 1.8 million barrels per day compared with 1.3 million (bpd) in March, though the country has the capability to export close to 2 million bpd.

The group chief executive officer of the state-run Nigerian National Petroleum Company, Mele Kyari, has attributed the in-

creased production to improved security measures and the support of joint venture partners.

“We have reached a new peak in production that we haven't seen in the last three years. This is related to the sustained efforts by the armed forces and other security agencies to protect our critical assets,” Kyari said in Nigeria's capital, Abuja.

“I call for enhanced and sustained security engagement.”

Industry experts are optimistic the country's oil output will peak in a few months if the measures in place are sustained.

“There's every need to ramp up crude oil production above the current success numbers to help Nigeria defend a fast-falling naira and tackle the insufficient forex supply that has hit the exchange market so hard as the ripple-effect is felt on raising the cost of goods and services as citizens battles to curb the hard realities,” economist Steve Nwachukwu of Steward Asset Management said.

Nigeria has been struggling with soaring inflation and a sharply devalued currency since President Bola Tinubu introduced reforms more than a year ago aimed at reviving the economy. Recently, labour leaders and civil society led antigovernment demonstrations to voice discontent over government reforms they say have triggered high inflation.

The country's inflation rate rose to 34.60 percent in November due largely to soaring food prices and an increase in the pump price of petroleum products, according to figures released by the National Bureau of Statistics.

The federal government has maintained that this phase of the economic crisis is temporary and expects the increase in oil production to boost revenue.



Thursday 26 December 2024

Little hope for African women entrepreneurs

KAMPALA

AFRICA has the highest proportion of women entrepreneurs globally, but they face significant challenges securing funding for their ventures.

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2016/17 Women's Report shows that more than a quarter of all businesses on the continent are either started or run by women.

However, their access to finance has been disproportionately low, with the Africa Development Bank (AfDB) estimating a financing gap of US\$42 billion for African women across various business value chains, including US\$15.6 billion in agriculture alone.

The lack of traditional collateral, such as land, property, and guarantees, has often caused banks to perceive women as a higher risk - and have struggled for decades, according to the report, to understand and adequately respond to women entrepreneurs' needs.

However, the tide now seems to be changing.

Commercial lenders and development financiers in Africa are widening their gender lens and warming to female-led startups, the report indicates. These are usually small firms with little or no collateral but prove to be more creditworthy than their male-led counterparts, with a huge potential to improve Africa's economic outcomes and bolster profits for banks.

A Banking in Africa Survey 2024 by the European Investment Bank reveals that 72% of commercial lenders on the continent have implemented a gender strategy, with an additional 17% planning to introduce one.

It means that nearly nine out of ten banks on the continent could soon have a gender strategy in place.

"Two-thirds of banks have financial services or products specifically targeting women and a further 44% of banks offer preferential terms when lending to women, such as less stringent collateral requirements or lower interest rates," according to the report.

In the last few years, commercial lenders have been developing affordable products, services, and tailored financial solutions for women across various African countries.

In Kenya, for example, lender Gulf African Bank has a product called 'Annisaa' while Credit Bank offers 'ElevateHer' and Family Bank has a women-focused banking proposition called 'Queen Banking'.

In Nigeria, Zenith Bank has the "Z Woman", a loan product for female-owned businesses, while Access Bank features the "W" initiative, serving as a one-stop centre for all its women empowerment offerings.

Of the pan-African banks, Ecobank has the 'Elevate' program, which aims to empower and support women-led and women-focused businesses while, Absa runs the 'She Business Account'.

These women-centered products have increased female participation in finance to bolster social outcomes, and have improved the banks' financial performance, the report notes.

"Obtaining finance from sources other than banks can be difficult for women, due to reasons like lack of collateral, which is also linked to cultural barriers and land and property ownership," said the report.

Development financiers are also playing an increasingly significant role in promoting gender mainstreaming within commercial lenders.

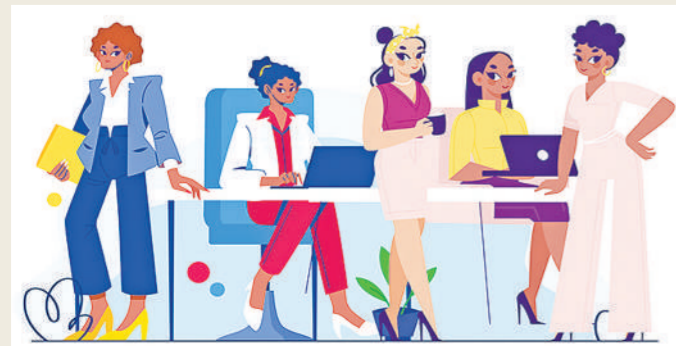
During the World Bank Group's Annual Meetings in October 2024, the institution launched its Gender Strategy 2030 targeting to provide capital to an additional 80 million women and women-led businesses, addressing a crucial constraint to entrepreneurial growth.

To enhance access to capital for women and women-led businesses, the Bank said it plans to collaborate with regulators, financial institutions, fintech companies, incubators, accelerators, and private equity funds to address gender biases in lending practices.

"By partnering closely with development finance institutions and investors, we will mobilize resources through gender bonds and other financial instruments while generating knowledge to support the necessary regulatory reforms," the development lender said in a statement.

The African Development Bank (AfDB) has its own Gender Strategy for 2021-2025, which is based on three pillars: empowering women through access to finance and markets, accelerating professional integration and job creation for women through skills enhancement, and improving women's access to social services through infrastructure.

In March, the AfDB reported that it had secured more than US\$1.5 billion in investment for Africa's women-led small and medium-sized enterprises through its Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa initiative (AFAWA) in less than two years. AFAWA incentivizes financial institutions to invest in women, by unlocking financing for women-led small and medium enterprises.



Motsepe's TymeBank now worth R27 billion



CAPE TOWN

TYME Group, a digital lender controlled by South African billionaire Patrice Motsepe, raised \$250 million in a funding round that made it one of Africa's few unicorns.

The bank is valued at \$1.5 billion after the capital raise, which included a \$150 million investment from Latin America's most valuable financial company, Nu Holdings Ltd.

"It is a unique vote of confidence in our business by the world leaders in our industry, essentially," Coenraad Jonker, chief executive officer and co-founder of Tyme, said in an interview with Bloomberg.

Nu Holdings's Nubank is the world's biggest standalone digital bank, with over 110 million customers across Brazil, Mexico and Colombia. "They do not have plans to organically grow into Southeast Asia," said Jonker, and its

investment "is really the bet that they are taking as Nubank in Southeast Asia and Africa."

M&G's Catalyst fund also put in \$50 million, while existing shareholders invested a further \$50 million, Tyme said. Its current backers include Tencent Holdings Ltd., Gokongwei Group, and Norrsken22.

Motsepe's African Rainbow Capital Investments Ltd. will remain Tyme's lead shareholder with a 40 percent

stake, Jonker said. "Our status as South Africa's only Black-owned and Black-controlled commercial bank actually remains in place."

Tyme is the latest fintech company to pass the \$1 billion threshold that marks a unicorn, and highlights recovering investor interest in the sector, after a bumpy few years when interest rates jumped around the world.

Tyme Group is headquartered in Singapore but oper-

ates as TymeBank in South Africa, where it has racked up more than 10 million customers, and in the Philippines via a joint venture with Gokongwei Group. The lender has more than 15 million customers across the group, Jonker said.

The lender started offering merchant cash advances in Vietnam in the second quarter, and has signed its first commercial transactions in Indonesia where it recently incorporated, he added.

Tyme is also looking at acquisition targets - and is willing to spend tens of millions of dollars - in order to gain an Indonesian banking license, according to the chairman.

"Job number one is to become the top retail bank in the Philippines. The next job is to repeat that in Indonesia," Jonker said. The digital lender is entering a competitive arena with big incumbents including Bank Mandiri and Bank Rakyat Indonesia, as well as several banks backed by the region's top tech companies.

The latest fundraise will likely be the last as the lender begins preparations for an initial public offering by the end of 2028.

"The next three to four years, we will be a lot more focused on our customers and on excellence and execution in the market and making sure we get the shape of the business right for listing, which includes making sure that in South Africa we operate the business at the return on equity level above 30 percent," Jonker said.

Rhetoric fails to match action as food crisis deepens in 2024

LAGOS

BUKOLA Shittu, a 38-year-old trader and a mother of five in Ibafo, Ogun State, has been struggling with her business and can no longer feed her children.

"The continuous rise in the prices of food is making it difficult for us to feed properly. My children now go to bed hungry most of the time because I can no longer afford to feed them three times daily," she said.

"Sales are dwindling and my shop is almost empty. I spend the little I get daily feeding and taking care of them," she explained.

She said that her husband, who is a painter, was forced to close the shop owing to low patronage and surging rental fees for the store. His joblessness is making feeding a daily struggle and leaving his family hungry most of the times.

"My husband does nothing now. People no longer paint their houses because they are rethinking their plans due to the current economic situation," she noted.

Despite declaring a state of emergency on the agricultural sector and Nigeria's emphasis on stabilising food prices, hunger and malnutrition levels have risen sharply in 2024.

Households are now grappling with the worst cost-of-living crisis in decades, which has deepened since President Tinubu introduced bold but unpopular economic reforms last year.

Tinubu inherited an economy that was already down with record debt, high unemployment, low oil output, worsening power supply and opaque subsidies that drained government finances.

In an effort to improve government finances, restore



credibility with investors and kick-start the economy, Tinubu embarked on the country's biggest economic shake-up by rapidly rolling out market reforms.

However, the reforms are robbing households of their spending power, inflicting more pain and renewing pressure on them. Latest unemployment data shows Nigeria's unemployment rate rose yet again, and inflation numbers showed the prices of goods and services are moving at their fastest clip in over 28 years, hitting a record 34.6 percent in November, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

The cost of food, which Nigerians spend the bulk of their income on, rose 39.9 percent in November as against 32.8 percent in November 2023.

Onyinye Anyiwara, a trader at Idumota Market, said prices have been high in the country and survival has been a daily struggle.

"The situation is so bad that my family cannot afford a big loaf of bread anymore. We have resorted to eating 'swallow' every morning so it takes us till evening," the mother of three said.

"This helps us to skip a meal without the children feeling very hungry."

Daily life in Nigeria is now characterised by a struggle to afford basic necessities. Households are in a dire strait as many are forced to skip meals to survive. One in three Nigerian households cannot feed, with families skipping meals, as they cannot afford enough food, according to a November report by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

The report stated that the number of households that reported not having enough food to eat owing to lack of money doubled to 62.4 percent in 2023, from 37 percent in 2019.

Nigeria, with a Global Hunger Index score of 28.8 in 2024 ranked 110th out of 127 coun-

tries. The index termed the level of hunger in the country as 'alarming.'

The average food prices have surged by over 100 percent since January to date, according to a BusinessDay survey across major markets in Lagos, on the back of lingering insecurity, climate change, high input costs and an acute dollar shortages.

To halt the continuous surge in food prices across the country and soften the blow of accelerating inflation, which is straining household incomes, analysts say the government must allow the importation of food in the short term while addressing issues that are hindering production and cutting supply in the medium term.

According to them, the federal government will have to make some efforts to stem insecurity, drastically reduce post-harvest losses, fix structural deficiencies across the value chain and increase technology usage on farms to boost

local food production in the long run.

Jude Obi, president of the Association of Organic Agriculture Practitioners of Nigeria, said lots of farmers do not cultivate in their farms owing to the worsening insecurity in the country.

"The government must address the issue of insecurity if it is serious about food security and diversifying the economy through agriculture," Obi, the general secretary of the Soil Science Society of Nigeria, said.

This Christmas, Omotola Cecilia Oloyede, a food vendor in Lagos, finds herself preparing fewer meals than usual at her bustling shop in Boundary Market. For years, the holiday season brought her brisk business as customers ordered steaming plates of jollof rice and chicken to celebrate. This year, however, the story is different. With food prices doubling and customers tightening their belts, her once-thriving business now struggles to make ends meet.

"People just aren't buying like they used to," Omotola laments. "I used to prepare two large pots of rice daily during Christmas week, but now I'm barely selling enough to finish one pot. Even my family had to skip buying chicken this year because it's too expensive."

Omotola's struggle reflects the harsh realities faced by millions of Nigerians as the country battles a relentless cost-of-living crisis. With inflation at a 28-year high and food prices soaring, families are being forced to prioritise basic survival over cherished traditions. Once-vibrant Lagos streets that were filled with festive joy now feel subdued, as the financial strain weighs heavily on residents.

Major South African bank sold for R2.8 billion

JOHANNESBURG

BIDVEST has agreed to sell Bidvest Bank for R2.8 billion, with the group planning to dispose of three businesses.

Bidvest announced that it will dispose of 100 percent of Bidvest Bank Holdings Limited to Nigerian-based Access Bank plc.

It did note that the conditions precedent, which is normal for a transaction of this nature, relate to the required regulatory approvals.

"Bidvest will continue to support Bidvest Bank to ensure that it remains financially sound and operationally stable throughout the disposal process," said the group.

Access Bank is a full-service commercial bank with over 60 million customers globally and is serviced through a network of over 700 branches in 23 countries across three continents.

"Through its strong presence in Nigeria, 16 subsidiaries in Africa, the United Kingdom and representative offices in China, Hong Kong, the United Arab Emirates, India and France, Access Bank employs over 8,400 people," said Bidvest Bank.

"As a diversified financial institution, it combines a strong retail customer franchise and digital platform with deep corporate banking



experience to service various markets through four business segments: retail, business, commercial and corporate."

"Access Bank has proven risk and capital management capabilities. As of the

last reporting period ended 31 December 2023, Access Bank's shareholders' equity exceeded US\$1.7 billion with customer loans and deposits of US\$6.0 billion and US\$12.5 billion, respectively."

Access Bank has operated

in South Africa since 2021 following its acquisition of Grobank Limited.

In South Africa, its strategy has expanded to align with the vision of becoming the gateway to Africa, and among the world's most respected

African bank.

The disposal price of Bidvest Bank is roughly R2.8 billion. The proceeds will then be used to settle the existing Bidvest debt.

Access Bank also intends to introduce Broad-Based Black

Economic Empowerment ownership, including an Employee Stock Ownership Plan.

Bidvest's management expects the regulatory approvals to take six months to achieve, which implies an expected effective date before

the end of the current financial year.

In FY24, Bidvest Bank generated trading profit and operating income of R371 million and R377 million, respectively.

The Bidvest Bank book, which mainly consists of leased assets, loans and advances, totalled R6 billion, which is funded by deposits of R8 billion.

Bidvest also announced that it had reached an agreement to dispose of 100 percent of FinGlobal to Momentum Group.

"FinGlobal's unique financial emigration solutions offered to South African expatriates will benefit from the scale and complementary capabilities of the acquirer. All employees will be retained as part of the transaction," said Bidvest Bank.

"Regulatory approvals form the key conditions precedent required to finalise this transaction."

Bidvest is also in the possession of binding offers from existing life insurers for 100 percent of Bidvest Life. The group said that one of these offers will be advanced to an agreement in the coming weeks.

"Bidvest Bank, FinGlobal and Bidvest Life will be disclosed as a Disposal Group held for sale in the consolidated Bidvest financial statements for the financial year, which commenced 1 July 2024."



The Bank of Japan buildings in Tokyo.

Hint on chances of January interest rate hike

TOKYO

Bank of Japan Gov. Kazuo Ueda avoided giving any clear signal that he might raise interest rates next month by sticking to his view that the bank needs to keep monitoring risks for the economy in comments that nudged the yen down a tad.

"The timing and pace of adjusting the degree of monetary accommodation will depend on developments in economic activity and prices as well as financial conditions going forward," Ueda said in a speech at a business conference in Tokyo on Wednesday.

"The bank needs to pay due attention to various risk factors at home and abroad, and to examine how these factors will affect the outlook and risks for Japan's economic activity and prices and the likelihood of realizing the outlook," he said.

The speech comes after Ueda indicated last week that the BOJ may wait longer before raising rates, a view that surprised investors expecting a January move if the bank didn't act at its December meeting. The unexpected dovishness then triggered a slide in the yen and warnings from the Finance Ministry about one-sided and speculative currency movements.

Ueda on Wednesday continued

in that vein. He appeared to want to keep his options open by noting the need to keep rates low to support the economy while at the same time flagging the risk of maintaining rates at low levels for too long.

"Gov. Ueda is keeping his hands free as there are lots of uncertainties including the yen and (Donald) Trump," said Masato Koike, senior economist at Sompō Institute Plus. "Today's speech keeps open the chance of a January rate hike but the likelihood of a March move is probably higher. It's just too early to commit to a hike or no hike in January."

The yen weakened to as much as ¥157.37 against the dollar following his comments in Tokyo from around ¥157.13 at the start of his speech. The move suggested a further recalibration toward a later rate hike among market participants.

Still, the speed of the move suggested little immediate chance of the yen breaking the five-month low of ¥157.93 touched last week, or the kind of movement that might trigger further currency intervention by the Japanese government.

As Japan transitions toward achieving stable 2% inflation, the BOJ will maintain easy financial conditions by keeping the rate lower than the neutral level to

firmly support the economy, Ueda said. "We have to make sure that Japan's economy will not return to a deflationary or low-inflation environment," he said.

The BOJ left its benchmark interest rate at 0.25% at its December policy meeting. In Wednesday's speech, Ueda said he has a lot to monitor by indicating he wants to see more data to gauge momentum in annual spring wage talks and the outlook for the U.S. economy.

"With regard to Japan's economy, a key issue in the short run is how the annual spring labor-management wage negotiations will develop," Ueda said.

The BOJ hiked interest rates in March for the first time in 17 years just a matter of days after the release of an initial tally of results of this year's annual pay negotiations between the nation's biggest union federation and employers.

Still, some economists and policymakers already feel the nation is ready for its next rate hike. Japan's inflation has stayed at or above BOJ's target for 2½ years and the economy has continued a moderate recovery. Ahead of a policy meeting last week, some 86% of BOJ watchers said economic conditions justified a rate hike at the gathering.

Naoki Tamura, a leading hawkish member of BOJ's policy

board, suggested raising the rate last week. He cited the economy staying on track with BOJ projections and increasing upside risks.

Raising rates might also relieve some pressure from the yen, which is approaching levels that saw a government intervention in markets earlier in the year. Tokyo has spent close to \$100 billion propping up the currency so far this year.

Concern over Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's minority government securing support for an annual budget may be among the factors making policymakers at the central bank cautious about raising rates for now. A small opposition party that Ishiba hopes will support the ruling party's budget plans has yet to fully back the initial proposals.

Traders see a 46% chance of a rate hike in January as of Wednesday, with about an 82% chance of a move by March, according to the latest overnight-indexed-swap rates.

This is Ueda's last public speech scheduled in 2024. The BOJ board meets again to deliver a next policy decision on Jan. 24.

"I still think the odds are that the BOJ will hike rates in January," said Kei Okamura, portfolio manager at Neuberger Berman. "But clearly some investors are beginning to price in the chances of no rate hike as well."

Businesses expect naira to strengthen in 2025: Survey

LAGOS

NIGERIAN firms see naira appreciating in the six months into 2025 as they anticipate an improved macroeconomic environment, according to a November 2024 Business Expectation Survey (BES) by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

The BES report revealed that businesses expect the naira to depreciate in the current month, next month and next three months but appreciate in the next six months. They were optimistic about the overall macroeconomy.

"Their outlook on volume of business activities, financial conditions, access to credit, volume of total order and average capacity utilisation, were pessimistic," the report said.

The naira has lost about 70 percent of its value against the dollar. In October, it was declared the third worst performing currency in the world after the Lebanese Pound and the Ethiopian Birr. In fact, it was one of the worst currencies in the world for much of 2024.

But the recent Electronic Foreign Exchange Matching System (EFEMS) which has brought more transparency and efficiency to the market, the local currency has begun to see some stability.

The naira, on Friday, appreciated against the dollar, gaining N4 to close at N1,541/\$ compared to N1,545/\$ closed on Wednesday at the Nigerian Foreign Exchange Market (NFEM), data from the CBN indicated. The local currency steadied at N1,660 per dollar in the black market.

According to the report, the overall confidence index (CI) on the macroeconomy indicated that the Agriculture sector recorded the highest optimism of 59.3 points and the highest expansion plan for the month of December 2024, three months and six months into 2025.

The monthly survey was conducted from November 11 to 15, 2024, with a sample size of 1,900 business enterprises across Nigeria. The survey achieved a response rate of 99.7 percent, covering three key sectors: Industry, Services, and Agriculture.

Further analysis of the report revealed that the Construction sector expressed optimism on its own operations in November 2024 with indices standing at 1.8 points. Manufacturing sector had less optimism with -1.2 points, Agriculture (-8.1), Market Services (-10.5), Non-market services (-11.1), Mining and Quarrying, Electricity, Gas and Water Supply (-12.5).

In line with the favorable expectations, businesses hope to employ more workers in December 2024. In the BES report, all sectors reported a positive outlook for employment and expansion for all the periods under review with Agriculture recording the highest prospect for expansion in December 2024.

Seyifunmi Oderinde, a Lagos-based Human resources manager and recruitment specialist said in a post on X (formerly Twitter) that companies would experience high turnover towards the end of the year.

"The end of the year naturally prompts introspection, leading many people to set development goals that may involve transitioning into new roles. Companies experiencing high turnover towards the end of the year due to workforce planning by hiring companies and their efforts to recruit ahead of the new year to meet their strategic objectives. For exiting employees, it is a fresh start mindset," she said.

The BES report highlighted that Agriculture had the highest prospect for expansion in December 2024 with indices of 64 points followed by Mining and Quarrying (60 points) and then Marketing services (50.6).

Confidence Index of Businesses on the Macroeconomy



Chart: BusinessDay Media • Source: CBN November BES report • Created with Datawrapper

Coffee offers lifeline for Kenyan farmers

NAIROBI

It was just past midday when Richard Muthie stood at the gate of the Mutira Farmers' Cooperative Society coffee factory, ready to deliver his harvest. Along with the 50-year-old farmer were 30 kilograms of ripe, red coffee berries freshly picked by him that morning.

Since the start of the year, Muthie has delivered 400 kg of coffee berries for processing at the cooperative's mill, located about 4 kilometers from his farm in Kenya's central county of Kirinyaga. The land, inherited from his father, has been his source of livelihood. "Coffee provides me with income to meet my household needs," Muthie said.

Muthie is one of 8,000 smallholder farmers who collectively own the Mutira Farmers' Cooperative Society. They play a vital role in the cooperative's operations, which are deeply intertwined with the region's agricultural rhythms. Martin Kinyua, the secretary of the cooperative, said the coffee harvesting season begins in October and typically concludes by the end of the year. Farmers then wait for the long rains, expected in March 2025, for the next harvest as their crops depend heavily on rainfall.

In 2023, the cooperative processed about 4.88 million kg of coffee berries from its members. Most of the cooperative's production was semi-processed and sold in bulk at the Nairobi Coffee Exchange. Only 1 percent was fully processed and sold as a final product to local consumers.

To maximize profits for farmers, the cooperative has set an ambitious goal of fully processing at least 5 percent of their coffee and tapping into overseas markets, including China.

Kinyua said that higher earnings have encouraged farmers to expand the land dedicated to coffee cultivation, which is expected to boost the mill's capacity this year.

Victor Munene, an agronomist at the cooperative, underlined the lucrative potential of coffee farming in the region. "A half-acre (0.2-hectare) piece of land can generate about 96,000 Kenyan shillings (\$743) in annual earnings," Munene said.

He said Kenya is capable of producing specialty coffee, which commands premium prices globally, because of its favorable acidic soils.

Statistics from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics underscore the sector's significance. In 2023, the country's coffee production reached 48,648 metric tons, generating about \$251.86 million in exports.

Japan, China due to discuss economic ties

TOKYO

JAPANESE Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya will visit China on Wednesday to hold talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and attend the second meeting of a high-level consultation mechanism on people-to-people and cultural exchanges between China and Japan.

The top diplomat's visit comes after President Xi Jinping and Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba agreed last month to continue high-level dialogues between the two countries on economy and culture.

The first meeting of the High-Level Consultation Mechanism on People-to-People and Cultural Exchanges between China and Japan was held in Tokyo in 2019, to which both President Xi and then Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe sent congratulatory letters.

"China attaches importance to Foreign Minister Iwaya's visit," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said at a news conference on Tuesday.

Iwaya was appointed as Japan's top diplomat in October. Ahead of his visit to China, the Japanese foreign minister said at a news conference in Tokyo on Tuesday that Japan's relations with China represent one of his country's most important foreign relationships.

While there are numerous challenges and pending issues between Japan and China, there are also many possibilities, Iwaya said, highlighting the two countries' shared responsibility for maintaining peace and prosperity in the region and across the world.

Iwaya said he hopes to engage in candid and in-depth exchanges of views with his Chinese counterpart in line with the goals of comprehensively advancing the bilateral strategic relationship of mutual benefit and building a constructive and stable Japan-China relationship.



A grassland wind farm in the Taobei district of Baicheng, Jilin province

Green energy spending to top \$1 trillion by 2030

JILIN

CHINA'S investment in its energy transition is expected to surpass \$1 trillion by 2030, with a focus on enhancing energy efficiency and accelerating electrification, according to a think tank.

In 2024, investment in China's energy sector is forecast to reach \$850 billion, accounting for nearly 30 percent of the global total, and standing at 1.5 to 2 times the level of the United States and the European Union, according to the China Energy Outlook 2060 report released by the Sinopec Economics and

Development Research Institute, a think tank that is part of China Petroleum and Chemical Corp.

The report highlights a shift in China's energy investment structure compared to 2019, with spending on fossil fuels declining while investments in renewable energy generation and efficiency improvements surging by about 70 percent.

However, investment in critical areas like grids and energy storage has lagged, increasing by less than 10 percent during the same period. This is in stark contrast to that of the European Union, where grid and storage investments slightly outpaced

renewable energy spending, it said.

While China has doubled the share of renewable energy in its energy investment mix – spending more than 40 percent of its energy transition funds on renewables, or roughly twice the amount allocated to fossil fuels – grid and storage development remains a weak link, said Luo Daqing, vice-president of the institute.

He cautioned that failing to align grid investment with the rapid growth of renewable energy could undermine the broader energy transition.

Zhou Libo, deputy secretary-general of the China Electricity

Council's electric transportation and energy storage branch, said investment is set to grow in integrated energy stations, photovoltaic-storage-charging hubs and supercharging stations, alongside upgrades to outdated infrastructure and adoption of advanced technologies such as automated and vehicle-to-grid interactive charging.

China remains the world's largest energy transition investor, contributing \$676 billion in 2023, or 38 percent of the global total, significantly contributing to global green transition, according to the National Energy Administration.

BloombergNEF's Energy

Transition Investment Trends 2024 report echoes this view, identifying China as a global leader in the green energy shift.

The report notes that China's grid investments in 2023 ranked third among energy transition sectors, totaling \$310 billion. Grid development is a critical bottleneck in China's energy transition, it said.

In 2023, global energy transition investments hit a record \$1.77 trillion, up 17 percent year-on-year, despite challenges such as geopolitical conflicts, high inflation and rising interest rates.

Key sectors driving the transition – including renewable energy, storage, nuclear energy, hydrogen, electrification, and grids – showed remarkable resilience in the face of external pressures, it said.

China's leadership in energy transition spending has been particularly evident in electrified transportation, renewable energy and grid development. Electrified transport was the largest single sector, with spending rising 36 percent year-on-year to \$634 billion, it said.

Domestic grid companies are already stepping up investment in the construction of ultra-high voltage power transmission projects, strengthening the connection between county-level grids and the main grid and upgrading grid digitalization and intelligence.

State Grid Corp of China said earlier this year that its annual grid investment surpassed 600 billion yuan (\$84 billion) for the first time in 2024.

Ultra-high voltage transmission lines refer to power transmission cables operating with greater than 800 kilovolts of direct current, or 1,000 kV of alternating current. Compared with traditional transmission lines, ultra-high voltage lines not only increase transmission capacity and extend transmission distances, but also reduce transmission losses.



An aerial photo shows a newly built road on Xianglu Mountain in Kaili, a city in southwestern China's Guizhou province.

Role in global poverty fight wins praise

GUIZHOU

WHEN addressing the G20 Summit in November in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, President Xi Jinping recalled his working experience at village, county, city, provincial and central levels, during which poverty alleviation was always a priority and a major task he was determined to deliver on.

With strenuous and unified efforts, China has lifted 800 million people out of poverty, and has met ahead of schedule the poverty reduction target of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

China's story is proof that developing countries can eliminate poverty, and that a weaker bird can start early and fly high, when there is

the endurance, perseverance and striving spirit that enable drops of water to penetrate rocks over time, and turn blueprints into reality, the president said.

"If China can make it, other developing countries can make it too. This is what China's battle against poverty says to the world," Xi said.

His speech has won wide recognition for its comprehensive vision and concrete implementation pathways for poverty alleviation.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said during a welcoming banquet for Xi in Brasilia after the G20 Summit that President Xi and he lead the two largest developing countries in the Eastern and Western hemispheres, respectively, noting that both are keenly

aware of the people's struggles and are committed to improving livelihoods and eradicating poverty.

Lula expressed deep admiration for China's development achievements under Xi's leadership, particularly the accomplishment in poverty reduction.

Song Wei, a professor at the School of International Relations and Diplomacy at Beijing Foreign Studies University, said that China has completed a suite of effective development tools in eradicating poverty, such as promotion of equitable education, full medical insurance coverage and integration of urban and rural development.

By openly and sincerely sharing its experiences through various platforms

such as the Belt and Road Initiative, China aims to provide developing countries with proven strategies and effective policy instruments to reduce poverty, Song said.

Ernesto Soberon Guzman, permanent representative of Cuba to the UN, said it is amazing what China has achieved in poverty reduction, because the country faced a huge challenge, considering the size of its population.

"China has the condition not only to reduce poverty in its own country, but also to help other countries to do it through cooperation projects, such as those under the Global Development Initiative," he said.

Joaquin Alberto Perez Ayestaran, deputy perma-

nent representative of Venezuela to the UN, said the Chinese experience in poverty alleviation is a model for countries of the Global South.

"We have increased our partnership in cooperation (with China) to try to adapt all these policies and programs to the reality of Venezuela, so that we can also achieve the first sustainable development goal, which is eliminating poverty in all its forms and dimensions," he said.

"China has this vision that we are going to be living in a community with a common destiny, this is something we embrace, understanding that we are part of the same planet and we need to live together," Ayestaran added.

Furthermore, he said: "As President Xi Jinping said, if China could make it, all other countries could make it. And if we make it, we should make it all together for the benefit of humanity."

According to a World Bank report published in October, based on the current trajectory, 622 million people, or 7.3 percent of the global population, are projected to be living in extreme poverty by 2030.

If growth does not accelerate and become more inclusive, it will take decades to eradicate extreme poverty and more than a century to lift people above the \$6.85 per day poverty line, the report said.

Xu Feibiao, a senior researcher and the director of the Center for BRICS and G20 Studies at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, said that China has on many occasions demonstrated its sense of responsibility and commitment in the global fight against hunger and poverty.

WORLD

On Christmas Eve, Pope Francis appeals for courage to better the world

VATICAN CITY

POPE Francis said the story of Jesus' birth as a poor carpenter's son should instill hope that all people can make an impact on the world, as the pontiff on Tuesday led the world's Roman Catholics into Christmas.

Francis, celebrating the 12th Christmas of his pontificate, presided at a solemn Christmas Eve Mass in St Peter's Basilica and opened the 2025 Catholic Holy Year, which the Vatican expects will bring some 32 million tourists to Rome next year.

In a sermon focused on the virtue of hope, which is also the theme of the Holy Year, the pontiff said hope "is a summons not to tarry, to be kept back by our old habits, or to wallow in mediocrity or laziness".

"Hope calls us ... to be upset with things

that are wrong and to find the courage to change them," he said.

A Catholic Holy Year, also known as a Jubilee, is considered a time of peace, forgiveness and pardon. They normally occur every 25 years. Pilgrims coming to Rome during the year can obtain special indulgences, or remission of their sins. This Jubilee will run through Jan 6, 2026.

At the beginning of Tuesday's ceremony, Francis oversaw the opening of a special bronze-paneled "Holy Door" at St Peter's, which is only open during Jubilee years. The Vatican expects up to 100,000 pilgrims to walk through the door each day next year.

At the papal Mass for an estimated 6,000 people in St Peter's Basilica and 25,000 more watching on screens in the square outside, the pope also repeated an earlier



Pope Francis opens the Holy Door to mark the opening of the 2025 Catholic Holy Year, or Jubilee, in St Peter's Basilica, at the Vatican yesterday. AP

call for developed nations to use the Jubilee to reduce the debt burden faced by low-income countries.

"The Jubilee calls us to spiritual renewal and commits us to the transformation of our world," said the pontiff. "A time of jubilee for the poorer countries burdened beneath unfair debts; a time of jubilee for all those who are in bondage to forms of slavery old and new."

A call for direct debt cancellation made by the late Pope John Paul II during the Jubilee year in 2000

sparked a campaign that resulted in \$130 billion of debt cancellation between 2000 and 2015.

Francis, who turned 88 this month, has been suffering from what the Vatican has described as a cold. He appeared on good form Tuesday evening, although his voice was a little raspy.

On Wednesday, the pope will deliver his Christmas Day "Urbi et Orbi" (to the city and the world) message and blessing.

Agencies



Pope Francis presides over the Christmas Eve Mass in St Peter's Basilica at The Vatican, yesterday, after opening the basilica's holy door marking the start of the Catholic jubilee year 2025. AP

China to hold 'two sessions' in first week of March

BEIJING

THE 14th National People's Congress (NPC) will open its third annual session in Beijing on March 5, 2025, according to a decision made by the NPC Standing Committee yesterday.

The decision was adopted at the end of an NPC Standing Committee session held from Saturday to yesterday.

The suggested agenda of the annual session includes reviewing the government work report and examining the report on the implementation of the annual plan on national economic and social development for 2024 and the draft plan on national economic and social development for 2025.

The annual session is expected to examine the report on the implementation of the central and local budgets for 2024 and the draft central and local budgets for 2025.



This March 8, 2024, file photo shows the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China. XINHUA

According to the decision, lawmakers are expected to deliberate a draft amendment to the Law on Deputies to the National People's

Congress and to the Local People's Congresses at Various Levels, and review the work reports of the NPC Standing Committee, the

Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate.

Meanwhile, the third session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) has been suggested to start on March 4, 2025, in Beijing.

The suggestion was made at a recent Chairperson's Council meeting of the 14th CPPCC National Committee.

The meeting also decided the 10th session of the Standing Committee of the 14th CPPCC National Committee to be convened on March 1 and 2, 2025, to prepare for the annual session of the CPPCC National Committee.

Xinhua

UN chief 'alarmed' about worsening food security in Sudan

NEW YORK

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday expressed concern about the escalating food insecurity in Sudan, warning of famine conditions in several areas amid the conflict.

"The Secretary-General is alarmed by the rapidly worsening food security situation in Sudan, as access to food and nutrition for millions of people across the country continues to deteriorate according to the Integrated Food Security



Phase Classification (IPC)," spokesperson Stephanie Tremblay said in a

statement.

Saying that the "latest report by the IPC's Famine Review Committee indicates that famine conditions are present in at least five locations in Sudan," the statement indicated displacement camps in North Darfur and the western Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan as areas of risk.

Additionally, five other areas are deemed at risk of famine in the coming months, according to the IPC.

Stressing that "more than 24.6 million

people in Sudan-over half the population-face high levels of acute food insecurity" with the conflict, the statement further noted that "ongoing fighting and restrictions on the movement of relief supplies and personnel continue to imperil aid operations."

Guterres renewed "his call for the parties to facilitate rapid, safe, unhindered and sustained access so that humanitarian assistance and staff can reach people in need wherever they are."

ANI

Donald Trump sparks controversy with territorial claims over Greenland, Panama Canal and Canada

WASHINGTON

US President-elect Donald Trump in a series of social media posts has stirred controversy by expressing interest in acquiring Greenland, Canada, and the Panama Canal, citing national security and economic benefits. His remarks have drawn sharp rebukes from leaders in Denmark, and Panama.

In the latest social media post, Donald Trump's son Eric Trump posted a picture depicting Trump purchasing Canada, Greenland and Panama Canal and wrote, "We are so back!!!"

Recently, Trump expressed interest in Greenland and said that "American ownership and control of the territory is an "absolute necessity" for national security and global freedom.

"For purposes of national security and freedom throughout the world, the United States of America feels that the ownership and control of Greenland is an absolute necessity," Trump wrote in a post on Truth Social.

Following Trump's remarks on Greenland, Rasmus Jarlov, a Member of Parliament in Denmark's opposition Conservative Party, said that "dictators" threaten to take control over other countries' territory.

Sharing a post on X, Jarlov wrote, "Not sure whether it is a joke or not. But certainly not funny. One week Canada is threatened. Now Denmark.

Greenland is Danish. It has been since 1380 and it will continue to be. This is undisputed, signed in rock in treaties and not open for negotiation at all. Dictators threaten to take control over other countries' territory. Free democratic countries do not."

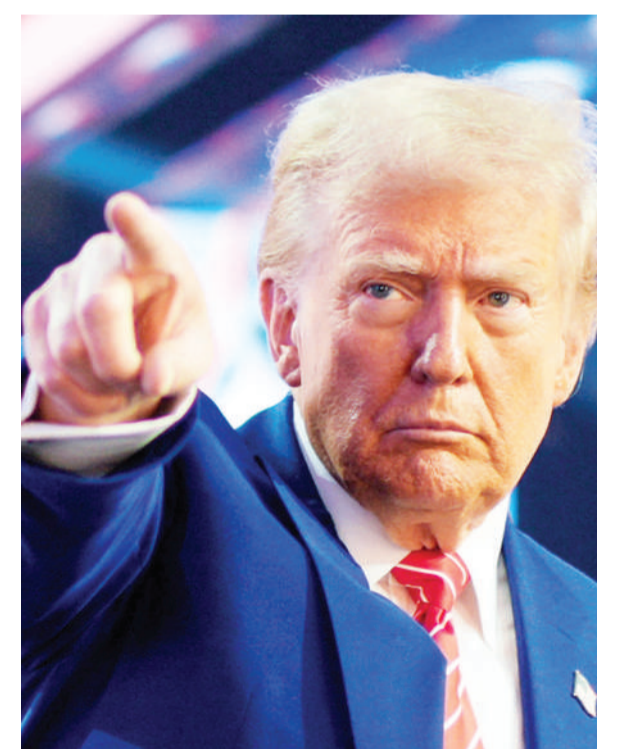
Earlier on Monday, Trump also posted a cryptic message on Truth Social about the Panama Canal. He posted a picture with the flag of the US flying above the Panama Canal, resonating with his threat to Panama that he would not let the canal fall into the "wrong hands."

He wrote, "Welcome to the United States Canal! The Panama Canal is considered a vital national asset for the United States, due to its critical role to America's economy and national security. If the principles, both moral and legal, of this magnanimous gesture of giving are not followed, then we will demand that the Panama Canal be returned to us, in full, and without question. To the Officials of Panama, please be guided accordingly!"

Following Trump's remarks on the Panama Canal, Panama's President Jose Raul Mulino responded to Trump and said, "Every square meter of the Panama Canal and the surrounding area belongs to Panama and will continue belonging so."

Earlier, Trump also created a stir by calling it a "great idea" for Canada to become the 51st state of the US, as Canadian leader Justin Trudeau faces a domestic political crisis linked to fears over a potential tariff war with Trump.

"Many Canadians want Canada to become the 51st State," Trump posted on his Truth Social platform. "They would save massively on taxes and military protection. I think it is a great idea. 51st State!!!" he added. ANI



China's automobile trade-ins spur business volume of recycling enterprises

TRUCKS loaded with scrapped vehicles pulled into a dismantling workshop of China Recycling Luoyang Renewable Resources Development Co., Ltd. in Luoyang, central China's Henan province. Inside the workshop, scrapped vehicles would be completely repurposed.

In the bustling workshop, machines operated at full capacity, accompanied by the rhythmic clanking of tools.

Components such as doors, wheels, batteries, and engines were meticulously disassembled, sorted, and sent to different destinations: steel materials were crushed and delivered to steel mills for reuse; old tires were recycled by downstream companies to produce rubber granules; and engines in good condition

were sent to factories for refurbishment in accordance with national standards.

"This year, favorable policies have encouraged many vehicle owners to scrap their old cars and purchase new ones. Once the required documents are prepared, they can claim subsidies," said Zheng Yinghui, deputy general manager of the Henan-based company.

The "favorable policies" Zheng referred to are China's recent initiatives to promote vehicle trade-ins. These policies include subsidies for consumers who replace their old vehicles with new ones through official scrapping and renewal programs.

Such measures have sparked enthusiasm for upgrading vehicles and have significantly increased the work-

load for dismantling enterprises like this one in Henan. According to Wang Gongxian, deputy manager of the scrapped vehicle division of China Recycling Luoyang Renewable Resources Development Co., Ltd., more than 10,000 scrapped vehicles had been acquired by the company as of early November; a nearly 70 percent increase compared to the same period last year.

At a deregistration inspection area for scrapped vehicles, Zhang Yaoshen drove his old car onto a weighbridge, where the vehicle's residual value was calculated based on its weight. For most old vehicles, owners receive around 2,000 yuan (\$276.48) per ton.

"My car has been running for over a decade, and the fuel consumption has become increasingly high. I've

been wanting to switch to a new energy vehicle (NEV). The current trade-in subsidies are a great deal, saving me about 20,000 yuan," Zhang said.

In about half an hour, the deregistration procedures were completed, and his old car joined others heading for the dismantling workshop.

Many car owners, like Zhang, are taking advantage of the policies to replace outdated fuel vehicles with newer, more efficient options. Whether it's an old fuel vehicle with declining performance or an early-generation new energy vehicle with limited range, these policies are driving a wave of vehicle upgrades across the country.

The vehicle trade-ins are injecting new energy into automobile consumption. By Nov. 18, over 4 mil-

lion subsidy applications for vehicle scrapping and replacement had been submitted nationwide. In the first ten months of this year, China's automobile production and sales both surpassed 24 million units, maintaining growth on an already high base.

Encouraged by subsidies, many people have opted for low-carbon, environmentally friendly alternatives.

From January to October this year, the production and sales of NEVs in China grew by 33 percent and 33.9 percent year on year, respectively, with nearly 40 percent of new car sales being NEVs. This reflects a growing embrace of green consumption across the country.

The trade-in program has also opened new opportunities for the

recycling industry. From January to October, 5846 million scrapped vehicles were recycled nationwide, a year-on-year increase of 55.9 percent. In October alone, the number of recycled vehicles reached 879,000, up 113.4 percent from a year ago.

Recycling enterprises across China are accelerating technological innovation and enhancing production efficiency. For example, companies are adopting tiered utilization methods for used power batteries to maximize their lifecycle.

In response to the increasing scrapping of city buses, diesel trucks, and agricultural machinery, businesses are expanding their operations to improve the speed and efficiency of recycling and reuse.

People's Daily

Putin to hold informal CIS summit in St. Petersburg

ST. PETERSBURG

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin will hold a traditional informal summit of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in St. Petersburg.

All CIS leaders will meet on December 25. An informal meeting before the New Year is a long-standing tradition of the Commonwealth. This year will be no exception.

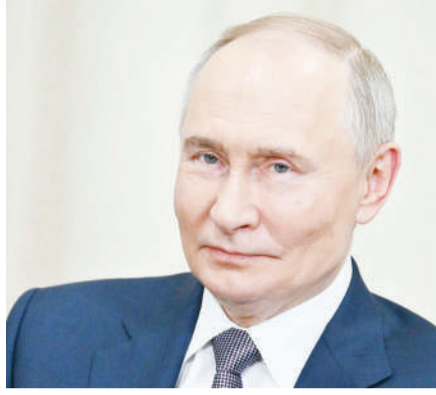
According to Presidential Aide Yuri Ushakov, Putin will sum up the results of Russia's presidency of the CIS in 2024 during the summit. After that, "the leaders will be able to communicate with each other in an informal setting and exchange views on current international issues," the aide added. Also, Russia will hand over the rotating presidency in the group to Tajikistan.

The CIS leaders are also expected to discuss preparations for the upcoming celebrations of the 80th VE Day celebrations in 2025. All of them were invited to attend the Victory Day Parade in Moscow.

Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov described the summit as "a traditional event ahead of the New Year." "Despite its informal status, as a rule, it is a very good opportunity to once again compare notes on all pressing issues and hold bilateral contacts on the sidelines - a chance that all leaders, as a rule, make use of," he said. Putin's work schedule does not mention a bilateral meeting with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, but the two leaders will have an opportunity to talk to each other should the need arise, Peskov added.

Putin's schedule

On December 24, Putin awarded Hermitage Museum Director Mikhail Piotrovsky with the Order For Merit to the Fa-



therland, First Class, and later met with his Tajik counterpart Emomali Rahmon.

On December 26, Putin will attend the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) summit with a limited circle of delegates and with the expanded circle of delegates. Not only the direct participants of the Union, but also observers - Uzbekistan and Cuba (Cuba's participation is planned in the form of a video address by the president) have been invited to it.

At the meeting, the heads of states and governments will discuss the functioning of the EAEU and the further deepening of its integration.

All EAEU events will be held at Igora, a year-round resort in the Leningrad Oblast, Russia.

The EAEU is an international economic integration of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. It became operational on January 1, 2015. They are also members of the CIS. Currently, the CIS comprises 11 countries: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine. De facto, Moldova and Ukraine have long been nominal participants and are not involved in the work of the association.

Agencies

Germany probes possible security lapses after Christmas market attack

BERLIN

GERMANY searched on Monday for answers on possible security lapses after a man drove his car into a Christmas market, killing at least five people and casting a renewed spotlight on security and immigration ahead of a snap election.

The possible motive of the arrested suspect, a 50-year-old psychiatrist from Saudi Arabia with a history of anti-Islamic rhetoric and a sympathy for the far-right Alternative for Germany Party, remains unknown.

The man, identified only as Taleb A., had left video messages on his X social media account on the day of the attack.

In rambling commentary, he variously blamed Germany's supposed liberalism for the death of Socrates, an ancient Greek philosopher, and accused police of stealing a USB stick from him and destroying a criminal complaint he had filed.

The Welt newspaper said he had undergone psychological treatment.

As a nation mourned, with citizens leaving flowers and lighting candles in Magdeburg where the incident took place on Friday, questions swirled about whether more could have been done and whether the authorities could have acted on warnings.

Around 3,500 people attended a rally of the anti-migrant AfD on Magdeburg's cathedral square late on Monday where co-leader Alice Weidel called for change "so we can finally live once again in security". Cries of "deport them" erupted from the crowd.

About 4,000 candle-carrying counter-demonstrators, according to a police estimate, formed a human chain to protest against what they called the political use of a horrible incident and hate.

Federal Interior Minister Nancy Faeser called for tougher internal security laws to be adopted, including a new act to strengthen police forces as well as the introduction of biometric surveillance.

"It is clear that we must do everything to protect the people of Germany from such horrific acts of violence. To do this, our security authorities need all the necessary powers and more personnel," Faeser told Spiegel news magazine.

The deputy head of a security committee in the Bundestag (parliament) announced he would convene a special session asking why previous warnings about the danger posed by Taleb A. were not acted upon. Taleb A. has lived in Germany since 2006.

The attack occurred two months before a snap election in February where the AfD is



People hold candles in memory of the victims and those affected by the attack at the Magdeburg Christmas market on Friday evening, in Magdeburg, Germany on Tuesday, AP

polling in second place and is particularly strong in eastern Germany, where Magdeburg is located.

"Everyone deals with this situation in their own way, some are grieving, others are angry," said Andreas Bohls, who was passing the Magdeburg attack site where mourners laid flowers, candles, teddies and other stuffed toys.

"Everyone has the right to express their opinion and this should not be used for any political purposes here. But I know that every political party somehow does it."

A local hospital said it was still treating 72 injured people, of which 15 were in severe condition.

Previous warnings

Germany's main opposition Christian Democratic Union, which polls indicate will form the next government, called for the strengthening of intelligence services.

Holger Muench, president of the federal criminal police office (BKA), told public broadcaster ZDF during the weekend that Germany was reviewing security measures at Christmas markets and addressing any vulnerabilities.

Muench said Germany had received a warning from Saudi Arabia as far back as

2023 about the suspect, which German authorities investigated but found vague.

"The man also published a huge number of posts on the internet. He also had various contacts with the authorities, made insults and even threats. But he was not known for acts of violence," Muench said.

Taha al-Hajji, a Saudi lawyer in exile and the legal director for the Berlin-based European-Saudi Organisation for Human Rights, said most Saudi opposition activists did not have a good relationship with the suspect.

"He made problems with everyone always ... He was really isolated," said al-Hajji.

"He felt that he was the only one right and people were wrong, he felt he was the center of everything, he was important. He always had problems with everyone."

Everyone has the right to express their opinion and this should not be used for any political purposes here. But I know that every political party somehow does it

South Korea's Yoon defies second agency summons over martial law

GWACHEON,

SOUTH Korea's suspended President Yoon Suk-yeol did not respond yesterday to a second summons by anti-corruption authorities who, along with prosecutors, are investigating his short-lived martial law decree issued early this month.

Yoon had not appeared for questioning as of 10 am (0100 GMT) on Christmas Day as requested by the Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials, after ignoring their first summons last week.

An agency official said it would continue waiting for Yoon on Wednesday, adding it would need to review the case further before seeking an arrest warrant, Yonhap news agency reported.

Yoon also did not respond on Dec 15 to a separate summons by prosecutors who are investigating the martial law declaration, Yonhap said.

Yoon's repeated defiance of the summons and failures to appear for questioning have sparked criticism and calls

from the opposition for his arrest, citing concerns over potential destruction of evidence.

In a televised address on Dec 7, four days after the martial law declaration, Yoon said he would not evade legal and political responsibility for his actions.

Yoon was impeached by parliament on Dec 14 over his brief imposition of martial law and must now face a Constitutional Court trial on whether to remove him from office or restore his presidential powers.

Prosecutors, the police and the corruption investigation office have all launched probes into Yoon and other officials, seeking to pursue charges of insurrection, abuse of power or other crimes.

Insurrection is one of the few charges for which a South Korean president does not have immunity.

A lawyer advising Yoon has said he is willing to present his views in person during legal proceedings related to the martial law declaration.

Agencies



China's BeiDou navigation system: Unique path of independent innovation

By Liu Shiyao (People's Daily) 14:49, December 11, 2024

A couple of months ago, China launched two new satellites for the BeiDou-3 Navigation Satellite System (BDS-3) from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in southwest China's Sichuan province.

The two satellites, the 59th and 60th in the family of BeiDou, were the second group of medium Earth orbit (MEO) satellites launched since BDS-3 was formally commissioned to provide satellite navigation services worldwide. They were also the final two satellites for BDS-3.

The BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (BDS) is a project built and operated by China. After many years in development, it has become an important new element of China's infrastructure, providing high-accuracy, round-the-clock positioning, navigation and timing services to global users in all weathers.

China began to develop its own navigation satellite system in 1994. At the end of 2000, BDS-1 entered service and began providing positioning services in China; in 2012, BDS-2 was completed to provide passive positioning services to the Asia-Pacific region; in 2020, BDS-3 was officially commissioned to provide satellite navigation services around the globe.

One of the keys that enabled BDS-3 to expand from regional to global coverage is that it has realized measurement and communication between satellites through inter-satellite links, or ISL.

The ISL, a bold and innovative approach, refers to a communication line between satellites - a wireless link capable of both data transmission and distance measurement between spacecraft. Based on Chinese domestic ground stations, this technol-



Engineers operate a BDS-enabled digital emergency response system in a tech firm in Fuzhou, southeast China's Fujian province. (Photo by Xie Guiming/People's Daily Online)

ogy enables the "out of sight" BeiDou satellites on the far side of the Earth to establish connections with other BeiDou satellites, thereby ensuring seamless communication across the entire constellation.

With the collaboration of over 400 organizations and the efforts of more than 300,000 researchers, BDS represents China's steady improvements and upgrades in satellite navigation.

In March 2015, China launched the first BDS-3 experimental satellite that involved 70 percent newly developed technologies, maintaining sound operations ever since.

Traditionally, the proportion of new technologies used in satellites does not exceed 30 percent. How was this satellite able to push this boundary to 70 percent? Lin Baojun, researcher with the Innovation Academy for Microsatellites of Chinese Academy of Sciences and chief designer of BDS-3, gives the answer.

"It usually takes about 10 years to develop a key technology, while a satellite often operates for more than 10 years. This means that by the time a satellite completes its mission, it's using

technologies that are already 20 years old. That's why it is crucial to adopt an innovative and forward-looking approach in satellite development," said Lin.

Lin streamlined the satellite's structure by merging more than 10 subsystems, such as structural components and thermal control, into four major functional chains: electronics, control, structure, and payload. This simplification improved the reliability of the whole system. After repeated selection and testing, Lin and his team adopted mature components and manufacturing processes to ensure the implementation of new technologies, making the satellite technologically advanced.

Sources say that BDS has made breakthroughs in a host of key technologies, achieving the independent development of multiple key components. All the core components of BDS-3 satellites are independently developed and produced by China.

Zheng Xiaodong, a senior engineer with the 54th Research Institute of China Electronics Technology Group Corporation, has been dedicated to developing BDS' ground system for over 20

years. His team has independently developed the short message communication system unique to BDS-3.

Distinguished from other satellite navigation systems which are limited to passive positioning and can only determine the position of users, BDS-3 can not only know "where I am" but also share "what I'm doing." When other communication methods break down in case of emergencies like sudden earthquakes or maritime distress, the short message communication services can be indispensable for sending distress signals and saving lives.

To bring satellite messaging to every household, Zheng's team innovatively came up with the idea of equipping mobile phones with the BDS-3 short message communication function.

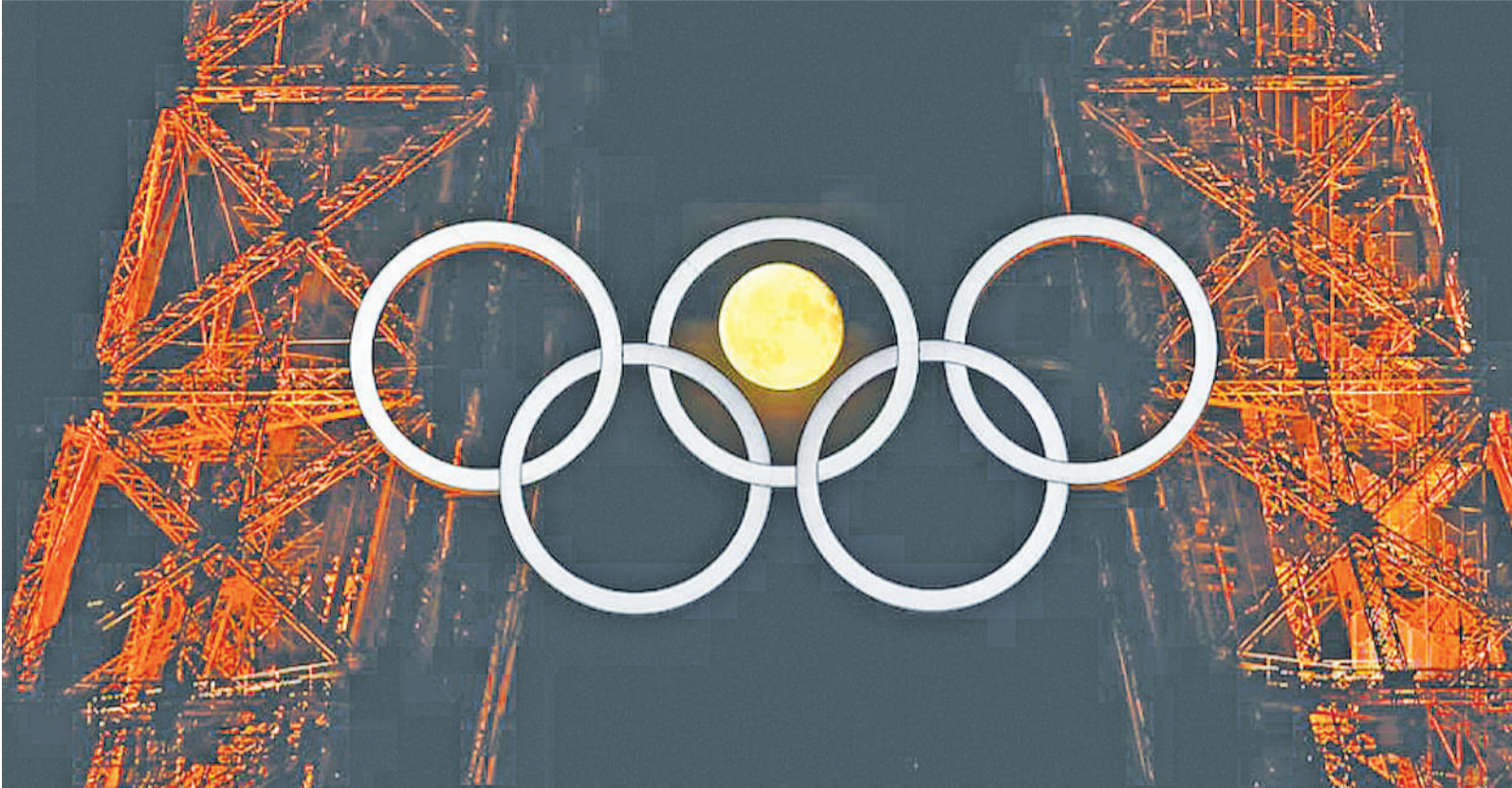
"This requires the product to achieve high-power transmission and high-sensitivity reception within an extremely compact design," Zheng explained.

The team has overcome key technological challenges, such as high-sensitivity rapid acquisition and integrated RF-baseband design, and developed the world's first low-cost, low-power chip for short message communication at the consumers' terminal.

Today, the BDS-3 short message communication services have been employed in over 2,500 reservoirs across the country for hydrological monitoring. More than 10 million shared bikes equipped with Chinese independently-produced BDS high-precision positioning chips have been deployed, and mobile phones equipped with short message communication services have been released.

BDS is now deeply integrated into a variety of industries, becoming an important engine for China's economic and social development. **People's Daily**

No standing still as innovation and change beckon in new sporting year



The moon is pictured with the Olympic rings on the Eiffel Tower ahead the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris, France, July 23, 2024. REUTERS

By Martyn Herman

As a jam-packed sporting year featuring a much-praised Olympic Games and four continental soccer tournaments rolls to a close it is tempting to expect that 2025 will be a more sedate one.

But that is not the nature of a sports industry continually evolving to sate the thirst of a demanding public that seemingly can never get enough of their chosen product.

What is becoming increasingly clear is that tradition and maintaining the status quo no longer cuts it in a competitive world intent on wringing every dollar out of sporting endeavour.

Novel ways of delivering sport to a high-tech generation are now paramount and the Christmas decorations will hardly have come down before golf, arguably the most conservative of all sports, welcomes the aptly-named Tomorrow's Golf League (TGL) which kicks off in

Palm Beach in January.

Created by Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy, the new made-for-TV indoor team format featuring state-of-the-art golf simulators and shot clocks resembles a cross between an arcade game and crazy golf. However, the world's best are on board for a venture designed to hook a generation of fans who no longer have the time or patience to watch five-hour rounds.

"The most interesting and fun aspect about TGL is the fact that it is an arena and you get to see us up close and personal," American Wyndham Clark said. "We're mic'd up, you'll see our personalities. It's almost a totally different sport."

Golf ended the year with a contrived Showdown between PGA Tour players and those of the Saudi-backed LIV Golf circuit in Las Vegas. Looking ahead, in September, American Ryder Cup players will, for the first time, be paid to take on Europe when the bi-annual clash takes place in New York.

BIG CHANGES

Other sports will also see big changes in 2025 -- a year lacking the biggest global showpiece events but still busy.

Soccer, in which its marquee names rarely have time to draw breath, will add to the load with an expanded 32-team FIFA Club World Cup in June and July in the United States.

While it has many critics, it will certainly be a tournament that, unlike previous editions, will be hard to ignore.

Tennis, too, is moving into the future at pace with tradition making way for innovation and the need to capture market share in an increasingly saturated landscape.

Who would ever have thought Wimbledon, of all places, would get rid of line judges from its lawns in favour of Hawk-eye technology and computer-generated voices. But that is what fans will witness at the All England Club this year.

In athletics, a blue-ribbon sport which often

struggles to attract eyeballs outside of Olympic years, American great Michael Johnson is launching a lucrative Grand Slam Track league in April with a \$12.6 million prize fund split over four events - but not including any field events.

"We're revolutionizing the track landscape," said four-times Olympic champion Johnson.

OLYMPICS CHIEF

While there is no Olympics, the movement faces a pivotal year all the same as the International Olympic Committee elects a new president to replace Thomas Bach in March.

Whichever of the seven candidates wins will need to steer the Olympic juggernaut into an increasingly fractured world of geopolitics, climate change, gender issues and doping.

Saudi Arabia's insatiable appetite to keep shaping the sporting map is unlikely to diminish any time soon and many will see the kingdom's staging of the inaugural Olympic

Esports Games next year as a precursor to a future bid for the real thing.

Tennis kicks things off in 2025 with the Australian Open in January -- a tournament that will unfortunately have to deal with the fallout of anti-doping cases involving men's champion and favourite Jannik Sinner of Italy and Poland's Iga Swiatek.

Women's soccer takes centre stage in July with the European Championship in Switzerland with England aiming to retain the title, while September offers the world athletics championships in Japan and the Ryder Cup golf in the United States.

Rugby fans have a Lions series in Australia starting in June to look forward to, while in cricket England host a five-test series against India before another eagerly-awaited Ashes series Down Under.

New Orleans stages NFL's Super Bowl in February and in Formula 1 another marathon season revs up in Melbourne in March.

REUTERS

Australia get Head boost as India now ponder Rohit switch

MELBOURNE

IN-FORM Australian batter Travis Head will be fit for the fourth test and India are considering restoring captain Rohit Sharma to the opener's slot for the match starting in Melbourne today.

Head is the leading run scorer in the five-test series but the left-hander suffered a quad strain in Brisbane.

Home captain Pat Cummins confirmed Head would retain his place in the middle order as Australia chase a 2-1 lead after rain thwarted their victory charge in the last game.

"He ticked off some final things today and yesterday, but no stress, no worries about injury for Trav," Cummins told reporters after training yesterday.

"He'll go into the game fully fit. I don't think you'll see too much management of him throughout the game ... maybe around fielding if he's a bit uncomfortable."

Head has 409 runs from five innings in the series, including two hundreds and a fifty, and averages nearly 82.

Australia have made two changes. Teenage opener Sam Konstas will make his debut in

place of Nathan McSweeney in front of a sellout Boxing Day crowd at the MCG.

Seamer Scott Boland comes in for the injured Josh Hazlewood with the temperature forecast to reach 40 degrees Celsius on day one.

India, lucky to escape with a draw in the rain-blighted third test, are also considering changing their opening combination.

Captain Rohit missed the opening test to be with his newborn son in Mumbai and KL Rahul, who replaced him as Yashasvi Jaiswal's partner, retained his place in Adelaide and Brisbane.

An out-of-form Rohit batted in the middle order in the last two tests but his run drought continued as he managed only 19 runs in three innings.

Rahul is likely to drop to number three, Indian media reported.

India are also considering bringing in a second spinner at the expense of pace-bowling all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy.

The series is level at 1-1 and India will retain the Border-Gavaskar trophy if they win in Melbourne.

REUTERS



Pakistan beat India by 180 runs at The Oval to win the 2017 Champions Trophy. Agencies

ICC announce Champions Trophy 2025 fixtures

LONDON

INDIA will face Pakistan in Dubai on 23 February as the International Cricket Council released the Champions Trophy fixtures on Tuesday.

The eight-team tournament will be held in host country Pakistan and neutral venue Dubai from 19 February to 9 March.

Defending champions Pakistan and India were

drawn alongside New Zealand and Bangladesh in Group A while England will face Australia, South Africa and Afghanistan in Group B.

The tournament opener will see Pakistan face New Zealand in Karachi on 19 February while India take on Bangladesh in Dubai the following day.

The Pakistan Cricket Board picked Dubai as a neutral venue after In-

dia refused to travel to Pakistan because of the ongoing political tensions between the countries.

As a result, India's three group fixtures and the first semi-final on 4 March will be played in the United Arab Emirates.

The final, scheduled to be held in Lahore on 9 March, will also move to Dubai if India qualify for the title decider.

Meanwhile, England

will begin their Champions Trophy campaign against Australia in Lahore on 22 February before facing Afghanistan on 26 February and South Africa on 1 March.

The 50-over Champions Trophy will be the first time Pakistan has hosted a global event since 1996.

Pakistan will also host the women's T20 World Cup in 2028, when neutral venue arrangements

will apply.

Pakistan will also play at a neutral venue in any event hosted by India until 2027, as per the agreement between the Board of Control for Cricket, PCB and ICC.

India and Pakistan have not met outside of men's major tournaments since 2013 and India have not played in Pakistan since 2008.

BBC



Dodoma's IBG football team goalkeeper Hassan Ibrahim pictured in action during their friendly match against Jakaya Kikwete Sports Park soccer team held on Tuesday at the centre's grounds in Dar es Salaam. PHOTO: CORRESPONDENT JUMANNE JUMA

Frustrated Man Utd boss Amorim not feeling Christmas cheer

LONDON

MANCHESTER United manager Ruben Amorim said on Tuesday that while dealing with the Premier League club's problems is frustrating, he is confident in his ability to resolve them.

United visit Wolverhampton Wanderers on Boxing Day, looking to bounce back from two straight defeats. Amorim (pictured) took charge last month with the team sitting 14th. In his six league games in charge, United have had two wins, three losses and one draw.

The Old Trafford side will spend Christmas Day in 13th place, their lowest position on Dec. 25 since 1986, when they were 15th during Alex Ferguson's second month in charge.

"This is maybe one of the lowest moments in our club. We have to face it and be strong," Amorim told reporters.

Asked why the club haven't made substantial progress, the Portuguese manager said: "If I knew, I would solve all the problems of this club, even this (leaky ceiling).

"I know what I am going to do. That is so clear for me. I will not say I am feeling relaxed because I am really frustrated. It is a very difficult moment but we will solve problems step by step and find answers for everything.

"I just want to win. I don't care about Christmas. I'm just focused on we need to win the next match. That's the only thing I care about.

"We are privileged (in England) we can play on Boxing Day to give some happiness to the fans and we want so bad to win it."

Amorim confirmed defenders Matthijs de Ligt and Victor Lindelof are still sidelined and said that he would rejig the squad to make sure there were no new injury concerns.

"In this moment it's not rotation to see the players and prepare the future (but) simply to not have injuries," he added.

"We are trying to address everything. I know that there is a long-term project and we are focused on that. If we have injuries it's a big problem."

The 39-year-old coach dropped Marcus Rashford from his squad in the last three games in all competitions and questioned the decisions from those around the striker after he said he was ready for a 'new challenge'.

"Some guys have a big responsibility here because they have been here for a long time," he said in reference to the 27-year-old United academy product.

"If you have big talent, we need big performance, big responsibility, big engagement to push everybody forward in this moment."

REUTERS



Struggling Valencia appoint Corberan after sacking Baraja

MADRID

VALENCIA have named Carlos Corberan as head coach on a two-and-a-half year deal following the Spaniard's departure from West Bromwich Albion, the struggling LaLiga club said.

Corberan spent three years at Leeds United as their Under-23 coach and a member of Marcelo Bielsa's backroom staff, before becoming Huddersfield Town manager in 2020.

The 41-year-old, who has since coached Olympiakos Piraeus and West Brom, also previously played for Valencia's youth team.

"Carlos Corberan becomes the new Valencia CF coach until 2027," Valencia said in a statement on Tuesday.

"The club has informed West Bromwich Albion FC of the execution of the exit option stipulated in his contract to leave the English club."

Corberan replaces Ruben Baraja, who was sacked on Monday with Valencia second from bottom in the standings on 12 points with only two wins in 17 league games and four points from the safety zone.

REUTERS

Man City's poor run is on everyone and not Haaland, says Guardiola



Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola and Erling Haaland look dejected after the Premier League match against Aston Villa at Villa Park, in Birmingham, Britain on December 21, 2024. REUTERS

Chelsea boss Maresca dismisses English Premier League title talk

LONDON

CHELSEA are second in the Premier League standings but manager Enzo Maresca played down talk of title pressure and said on Tuesday that he is only focused on areas where his team could improve.

Chelsea are on 35 points, four behind first-placed Liverpool, and play at Fulham in a West London derby today.

Maresca's side were denied an opportunity to top the table after a goalless draw with Everton over the weekend which also snapped Chelsea's run of eight straight wins in all competitions and five in a row in the Premier League.

"We are ahead of our expectation in terms of the way we are playing and points. For us, the main focus is to see how we can improve the players and how we can improve the team," Maresca told reporters.

"It's the reality for me, not about the pressure (of going for the title). I would like that kind of pressure. I say we are not there because that is the reality for me. The main point is to con-

tinue to improve and to win games."

Chelsea are already eight points ahead of struggling defending champions Manchester City, who are seventh, but Maresca said Pep Guardiola's side could still bounce back in the title race.

"It's almost halfway so the table reflects the teams and where they are. Liverpool are doing fantastic since the first day," Maresca said.

"...I think Manchester City in the end will be there. They are living something that probably never happened before. They have a new injury at the end of every game. It is a very bad situation."

Chelsea have defenders Wesley Fofana and Benoit Badiashile sidelined with long-term injuries.

Maresca said midfielder Romeo Lavia will also miss today's fixture as he is recovering from his thigh injury.

Mykhailo Mudryk is suspended after an adverse analytical finding in an anti-doping test. The Ukrainian has denied knowingly taking any banned substance.

Meanwhile, Chelsea midfielder Enzo Fernandez struggled to live up to his hefty price tag following his arrival at the club in January last year but the Argentine says his recent upturn in form is down to developing a good understanding with coach Enzo Maresca.

Fernandez, who cost Chelsea 106 million pounds (\$132 million), started six of their first seven league matches this season but failed to impress and was dropped to the bench in place of Romeo Lavia.

However, since his return to the side last month Fernandez has looked revitalised, bagging three goals and four assists in seven Premier League games and helping Chelsea climb to second.

"I learned the position in which I had to play, over time I got the idea of what the coach wanted," Fernandez told ESPN in an interview published on Monday.

"He (Maresca) explained to me what he wanted and I was getting the concept, reading the games. There is still a long way to go.

"On a personal level I have been feeling very good. The team has shown a very strong character, always working and with humility and showing that great things can be achieved. There is still a long way to go."

Chelsea next host London rivals Fulham on Thursday before travelling to face Ipswich Town on Dec. 30.

(\$1 = 0.7978 pounds)

REUTERS

LONDON

MANCHESTER City's dismal run of form, with one win in eight Premier League games, is down to the whole team and not one player, manager Pep Guardiola said on Tuesday, with struggling striker Erling Haaland not to blame.

City's current streak, which leaves the champions seventh in the standings and 12 points off leaders Liverpool, coincides with Haaland scoring just twice, after the Norwegian netted 10 times in their opening five games.

"It's about us, it's not just about one player," Guardiola told a press conference ahead of today's game with Everton.

"So when in the past we scored goals and Erling was so prolific in helping us, it's because of the team. And when you have problems at the back, in the middle, it's for everyone.

"If it was just one player, the reason why, it would be easy. It's not about that. Erling is so important for us, has been, and we try to do the things better, to use him better."

Guardiola is still uncertain if John Stones, Matheus Nunes or Ederison will be fit when City host Everton, and while the coach was unable to pinpoint a single reason for their poor run, he was optimistic of a return to form in the near future.

"All the tendency to say we don't run, we don't fight, the reason why is

this one, this situation or this player or this manager or this," Guardiola said.

"It's not about that. It's many little details or big details that all together make us not as good as we were.

"But we have another opportunity on Boxing Day to try and win time for the players to come back and in a certain time we'll be better."

Everton may be 15th in the standings, 11 points behind City, but they do have a better defensive record than Guardiola's side, and have kept five clean sheets in their last six games.

"Sean Dyche always has a really good defensive structure, really good patterns defensively, offensively," Guardiola said.

"And when they are able to do it against Arsenal and Chelsea, that means they are really good because they have good transitions and of course at set-pieces, long balls, they are really, really strong."

While City players will have some time with their families over Christmas, with the team playing on Dec. 26, there are sacrifices to be made.

"We train today, we train tomorrow night. We stay over here and we are going to play on Boxing Day," Guardiola said.

"Today we'll be at home with the families and tomorrow we'll be with the families during the morning and the night we'll be here.

"Hopefully they want to be here because it's our job and our duty."

REUTERS

Italy's Juve Stabia deny fans used fascist salute after Mussolini goal

ROME

JUVE Stabia have rejected media reports their fans used a fascist-style salute in celebration of a goal scored by the great-grandson of Italy's wartime fascist dictator Benito Mussolini.

Romano Floriani Mussolini, the son of politician Alessandra Mussolini, netted the winner as Juve Stabia beat visiting Cesena 1-0 in Italy's second tier Serie B on Saturday.

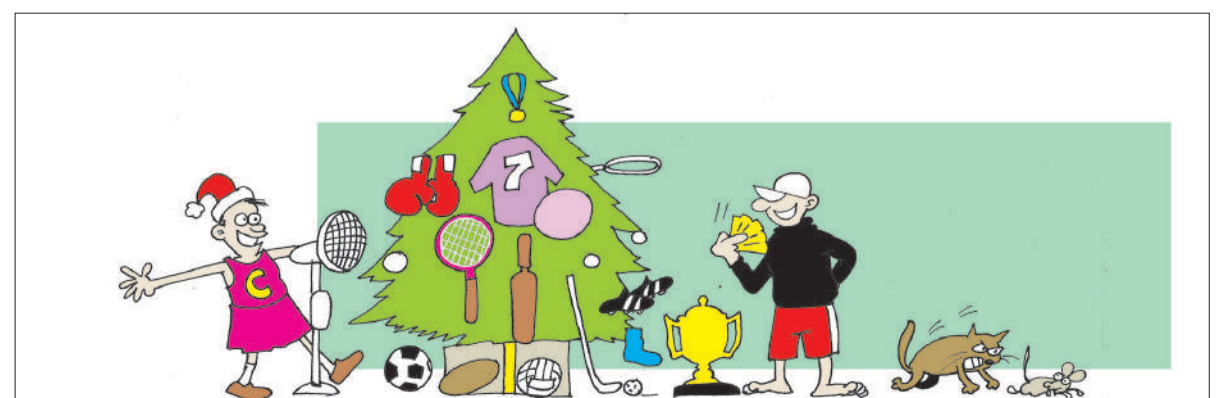
The stadium announcer shouted the player's first name, and the home crowd responded each time with loud chants of his surname, raising their right arms each time in celebration.

Italian and international media reported that the supporters had used the stiff-armed fascist salute used by followers of Mussolini.

"We do not accept exploitation for a golden boy like Romano Floriani Mussolini and the same thing goes for our fans who have cheered as they have always done in the past with any other athlete," Juve Stabia said in a statement on Tuesday.

REUTERS

Gwiji by David Chikoko



SPORT

Man City's poor run is on everyone and not Haaland, says Guardiola

PAGE 19



Jose Mourinho provides health update ahead of surgery in Portugal

By Chris Wilson

FORMER Chelsea and Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho has taken to social media to tell fans that he is well amid news that he will undergo surgery over the Christmas holidays.

Reports in Portuguese media say that the 61-year-old will have his gallbladder removed during the festive period, and Mourinho uploaded a video to Instagram to explain his situation.

"Happy Christmas and thank you so much for so many messages," he says in the video. The caption adds that, "for those of you that have shown concern", Mourinho "can confirm reports of my surgery have been greatly exaggerated."

"I will resume training on the first day back from the holidays, as always. I've never missed a session in 25 years, and I don't intend to start now," he added.

Mourinho did not specify the nature of the surgery, simply adding that "it's just a quick and minor procedure".

The Portuguese joined Fenerbahce in the summer and is looking to guide the Istanbul-based side to a first Super Lig title since 2013/14, though they are second in the league behind arch-rivals Galatasaray, and they trail by eight points.

Before the winter break, Mourinho told the club website that the players "will have a few days off but it will not be a happy time off for me".

"Actually, I would prefer not to have this time off but we promised the players long ago," he said.

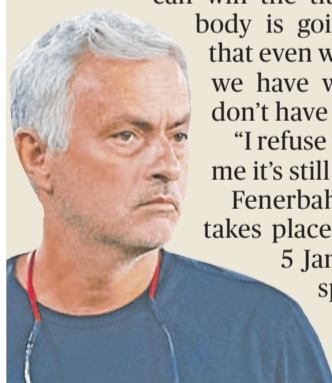
"Many players could not take more than 10 days off. Therefore, this was an important situation for them to rest. We have to do better."

Mourinho stated that he still believes his side can win the title, saying that "nobody is going to convince me that even with the distance that we have with the leaders we don't have a chance to win".

"I refuse to think this way. For me it's still open," he added.

Fenerbahce's next match takes place on the weekend of 5 January against Hatayspor at home.

THE INDEPENDENT



Yanga dominate Dodoma Jiji with a resounding 4-0 victory in NBC PL

By Guardian Correspondent

YOUNG Africans secured an emphatic 4-0 win over Dodoma Jiji at the Jamhuri Stadium, reinforcing their position as second in the Premier League standings.

A brace from Clement Mzize, along with goals from Stephane Aziz Ki and Prince Dube, ensured the Jangwani-based side walked away with three crucial points in their title race.

The match started with both teams displaying early intent. Young Africans almost took the lead in the 5th minute when Aziz Ki's corner kick struck the crossbar.

Dodoma Jiji quickly responded with a counter-attack, but Zidane Seleli's shot found only the side netting.

Mzize broke the deadlock in the 18th minute, heading home a perfectly delivered corner kick from Pacome Zouzoua. The goal lifted Young Africans' confidence as they continued to press their opponents.

The visitors doubled their lead in the 27th minute through a penalty. Dube was fouled inside the box by Dodoma Jiji goalkeeper Mohamed Hussein, who was shown a yellow card for the challenge.

Aziz Ki confidently converted the penalty, sending the goalkeeper the wrong way to make it 2-0.

The third goal came in the 37th minute, following a costly mistake by goalkeeper Hussein. Failing to clear the ball, it fell directly to Aziz Ki, who seized the opportunity to set up Mzize for an easy finish into an empty net.

Young Africans controlled the tempo in the second half, maintaining possession and neutralizing Dodoma Jiji's attempts to mount a comeback.

They scored their fourth goal in the 62th minute finishing superbly an assist from Mudathir Yahya.

Although no goals were added in the latter period, the defending champions' dominance was evident as they comfortably saw out the match.

The victory marked Young Africans' third consecutive league win, putting them back on track after a challenging spell of poor form earlier in the season.

With 36 points from



Young Africans winger Clement Mzize celebrates his side's third goal with teammates Khalid Aucho and Prince Dube during their Premier League match against Dodoma Jiji at Jamhuri Stadium in Dodoma yesterday. Photo: Courtesy of YASC

14 matches, they remain in second place, just one point behind league leaders Simba SC. The team has scored an impressive 27 goals while conceding only six, highlighting their strength in both attack and defense.

Dodoma Jiji, on the other hand, continued their struggles. Currently sitting in 11th place with 16 points from 15 matches, the team has managed only four wins this season, alongside four draws and seven losses.

Their recent form is concerning, with just one win in their last five matches, leaving them vulnerable to the relegation battle.

Young Africans will now shift their focus to their upcoming fixtures. They are set to face Fountain Gate FC in their next league match before turning their attention to continental duties in the CAF Champions League group stage, where they will take on TP Mazembe.

These matches will test the depth and resilience of the defending champions as they balance domestic and international commitments.

Dodoma Jiji, meanwhile, will look to bounce back in their next league games against Mashujaa FC, Pamba Jiji, and Namungo FC. The team will need to address their defensive frailties and inconsistent form to avoid slipping further down the table.

The victory over Dodoma Jiji keeps Young Africans firmly in the hunt for the Premier League title and puts pressure on their rivals, Simba SC.

For Dodoma Jiji, the loss highlighted the team's struggles this season, leaving them with much work to do to improve their form.

Dauids pleased to overcome 'tough' JKT Tanzania test

By Correspondents Seth Mapoli & Michael Mwebe

SIMBA SC head coach Fadlu Dauids commended his team's discipline and resilience after their dramatic 1-0 victory over JKT Tanzania in a Premier League match held at the KMC Complex on Tuesday.

Substitute Jean Charls Ahoua sealed the win with a stoppage-time penalty, extending Simba's lead at the top of the table.

"Compliments to the players for sticking to the plan and maintaining their efforts from the first minute until the end, constantly trying to score," Dauids (pictured) said in his post-match interview. "We had really zero shots against us that caused any trouble, so that's good for us."

Dauids also acknowledged the defensive effort from JKT Tanzania, stating: "We did not allow JKT Tanzania to capitalize on counterattacks, and for that, we have to give credit to our opponents."

He encouraged Simba fans to keep faith in the team, emphasizing: "We want our fans not to lose hope until the last minute. That's the spirit - we will fight until the end."

"We will never give up, and that is our mentality. That is the culture we are trying to create here. Mashujaa last minute, CS Sfaxien last minute, and today again."

The coach also acknowledged the challenges of the hot conditions and the importance of the victory, saying: "We knew with the heat it was going to be tough, but a huge compliment to the players. We have one more to go before we switch our focus to CAF and now a tough away trip to Singida."

The decisive moment of the game came in the 90+1 minute following sustained pressure from Simba.

Substitute Mohamed Bakari fouled Simba



defender Shomari Kapombe inside the box, and another JKT defender compounded the error by handling the ball.

Referee Kepha Kayombo promptly awarded a penalty and issued

Bakari a second yellow card, resulting in his dismissal.

Ahoua stepped up under intense pressure and sent JKT goalkeeper Yacoub Suleiman the wrong way, converting the penalty with com-

posure to secure the victory.

Simba's defensive discipline stood out as they allowed no significant threats from JKT Tanzania throughout the match. On the attacking front, they kept pushing for the breakthrough, demonstrating the persistence that has been a hallmark of their success this season.

With the win, Simba now lead the league with 37 points from 14 matches, maintaining a four-point gap over second-placed Young Africans, who have 33 points from 13 matches (before their match against Dodoma Jiji later yesterday).

Azam FC and Singida Black Stars are tied with 33 points from 15

matches, sitting third and fourth, respectively.

Simba now prepare for another critical league match against Singida Black Stars on Saturday before resuming their CAF Confederation Cup campaign.

Reflecting on the challenges ahead, Dauids stated, "We knew this would be a very tough match. Now we focus on the next challenge."

Simba's ability to grind out results in high-pressure situations continues to solidify their dominance in the league.

Their strong defense and relentless attack highlight their determination to retain the Premier League title and excel on the continental stage.

Flexibles by David Chikoko



5 EATV THURSDAY

TO NIGHT @ 9:00

11:00 DADAZ
12:00 KIPENGA XTRA
13:00 Movie
13:55 Dondoo za Michezo
14:00 Movie
14:30 Ujenzi (r)
15:00 Funguka
15:30 Ubungo Kids
16:00 Zole Kuntu
16:55 Dondoo za Michezo
17:00 SSELEKT
17:55 Kurasa
18:00 Kali Za Wana
18:30 #HASHTAG
19:00 EATV SAA 1
20:00 DADAZ (r)
21:00 TOP 10
21:30 Zole Kuntu
23:00 Kurasa
23:05 EATV SAA 1

TOP 10
It is a list of the hottest Bongo Flava music videos that are loved by the viewers

eastafrika RADIO

05:00 Supa Breakfast
09:00 MAMAMIA
12:00 Kipenga Xtra
13:00 Planet Bongo
16:00 EA Drive
19:00 Kipenga
21:00 The Cruise

88.1FM DAR ES SALAAM