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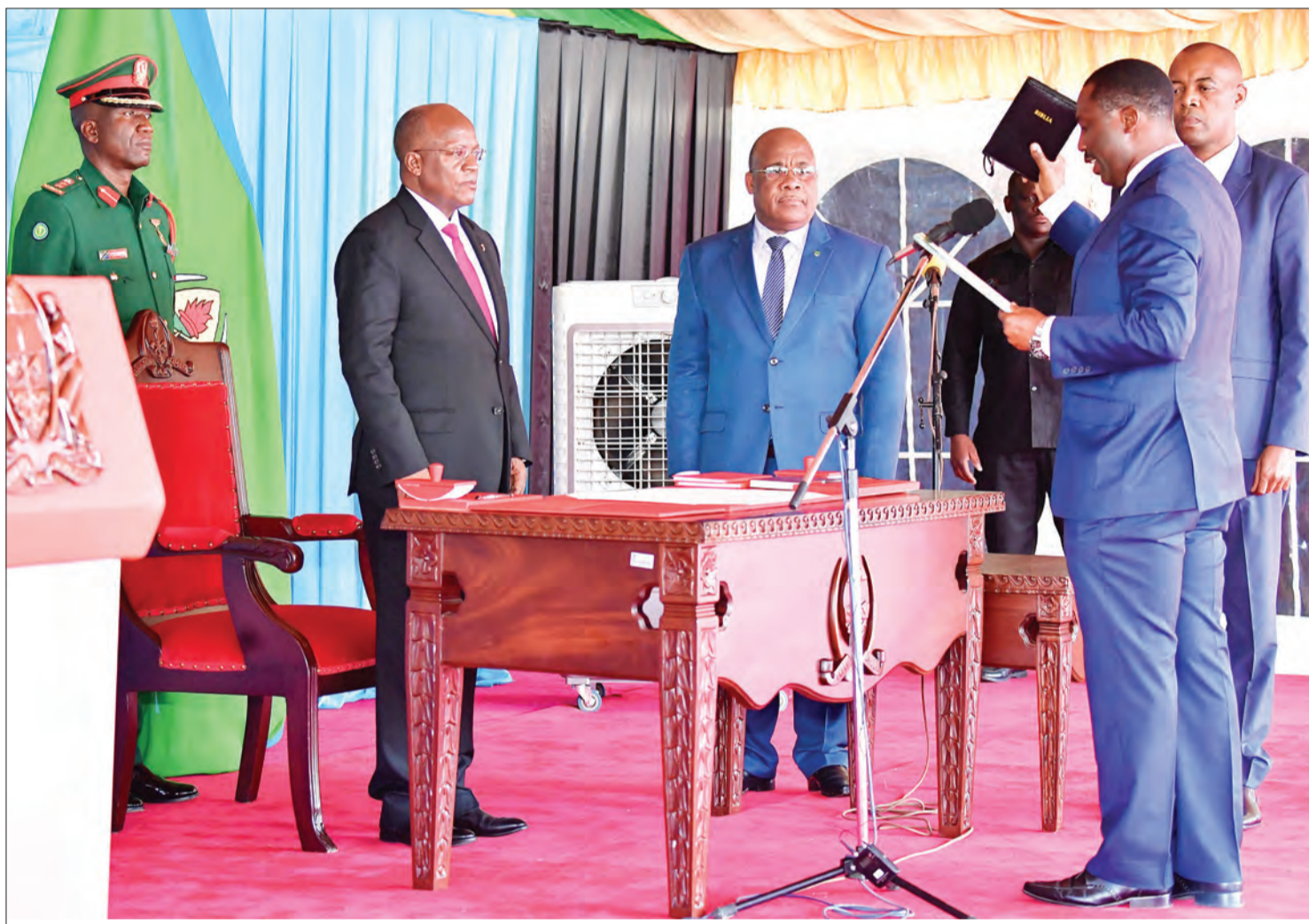
By Getrude Mbago

President John Magufuli yesterday appointed and sworn in Prof Shukrani Manya as new Deputy Minister for Minerals, directing the ministry's leadership to immediately come up with a strategic plan to start extracting untapped minerals in the country.

Prof Manya replaces Kilwa North MP Francis Ndulane, who lost the vacancy on Wednesday at the Chamwino State House after struggling to take the oath of office.

Speaking during the swearing-in ceremony, the president said that

“Coal can be used as a fuel alternative, using coal to produce energy. This is one of the major tasks of the minerals ministry, to work hard to ensure that all these minerals benefit the nation heavily. We have also received complaints from operators of cement factories on this deficiency”



President John Magufuli swears in Prof Shukrani Manya as Minerals deputy minister at Chamwino State House in Dodoma yesterday. Photo: State House

Debt relief, accessing vaccines dominate at OACPS, EU meeting

By Guardian Correspondent

TANZANIA has reiterated its request to the G-20 countries to write-off debts of members of the Organisation of African Caribbean and Pacific States

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Comoros seeking closer trade ties with Tanzania

By Henry Mwangonde

COMORO has invited Tanzanian traders to explore business and investment opportunities in the islands, asserting that existing bilateral trade between the two countries is quite below potential.

Investment and business potentials available in the Comoros include meat processing to meet the country's high demand of the product, given the lack of a vibrant livestock industry.

Dr Ahamada El Badaoui Mohamed, Ambassador Extraordinary and

“Dr Ahamada said investment, trade, health, agriculture, livestock, fisheries, research, tourism and higher education are of great interest for the two countries, underscoring the need to enhance economic co-operation”

Plenipotentiary of the Union of the Comoros in Tanzania made the appeal yesterday in an address to Comorian Agency for International Cooperation (ACCI) officials in Dar es Salaam.

The envoy was concerned that the current volume of trade between Tanzania and the Comoros is low and could be further improved since the islands solely rely on Tanzania for food import needs.

“We currently import almost all food products from Tanzania. There is high demand

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Dar, Paris agree on youth employment

By Correspondent Valentine Oforo,

Dodoma

Tanzania and France have agreed to establish bilateral partnership for youth development, which projects that about eight million youths will be drawn into formal and informal sector occupations.

This was highlighted in a joint meeting with journalists here yesterday



terday by French Ambassador Frederic Clavier and CCM Secretary General Dr Bashiru Ally Kakurwa (pictured). The envoy said the two sides agreed to set up a mechanism of co-operation concerning youth development.

Inaugurating his campaigns for the 2020 general election, President John Magufuli said the ruling party's manifesto

states that the fifth phase government will create eight million jobs in the next five-years, pledging to build a modern, inclusive, competitive economy embracing needs of Tanzanians of all walks of life.

“We will support the government's endeavours towards creating the eight million jobs targeted for the youth,” he affirmed, expressing the

view that the youth provide vital human power to push for change in diverse spheres of socio-economic development.

There is thus a need to provide them with wide opportunities and support in acquiring key entrepreneurship skills at various technical colleges across the country, he

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Dar, Paris agree on youth employment

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said, noting also that the two sides signed other agreements to enhance Tanzania's voice in the United Nations on peace issues.

Ambassador Clavier said that during the talks, the two governments agreed that France assists in addressing climate change in partnership with the African Union (AU), the East African Community (EAC) and the United Nations.

He commended the government's move to shift to the President's Office the ministry tasked with investment coordination, which is now led by Prof Kitila Mkumbo.

The portfolio is crucial for facilitating the empowerment of individuals alongside local and foreign investors by creating a conducive and enabling investment environment, he stated, assuring continued support to the government, to help in improving the newly formed Min-

istry of Communication and Information Technology (ICT) as it is crucial for the country's development.

Dr Kakurwa commended the French Embassy for the new arrangement, observing that what they agreed is meant to ensure successful implementation of the ruling party's election manifesto.

He similarly highlighted that the government of France has sent a letter of congratulations to President John Magufuli for being re-elected for a second five year term.

Tanzania and France have been cooperating in a number social and economic spheres, with France vowing to double its aid package 2018 when the current envoy took office. Ambassador Clavier said the French Development Agency (AFD) would double its support to Tanzania from US \$ 50 million to US \$ 100 million to be directed to sectors like industry, energy and water.



Vice President Samia Suluhu Hassan has an audience in Dodoma yesterday with senior staff from her Office and the National Environment Management Council. Left is Mwita Waitara, Deputy Minister of State in the Vice President's Office (Union and the Environment). Photo: VPO

Comoros seeking closer trade ties with Tanzania

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for meat in the Comoros. Traders exporting meat to the islands transport live animals, making meat expensive," he said.

About 1,200 Comorians visit Tanzania every month to buy foodstuffs, and the islands are working on linking up with Tanzania's development plans to facilitate an increase in the volume of trade, implying the need for banking on industrial growth for job creation.

Dr Ahmada said investment, trade, health, agriculture, livestock, fisheries, research, tourism and higher education are of great interest for the two countries, underscoring the need to enhance economic co-operation.

Fenella Forst, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) representative in the Comoros, said vast efforts are being made to facilitate trade with the islands.

Livestock is a key agricultural sub-

sector in the country, with about 36 percent of farm households engaged in livestock-keeping, one percent relying solely on livestock and 35 percent mixing crop farming livestock keeping. Tanzania is the third country in Africa in cattle numbers after Ethiopia and Sudan, with Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries data showing that Tanzania has a total of 30.5 million cattle compared to Ethiopia's 57 million. There are 18.8 million goats and 5.3 million sheep while by

contrast Ethiopia has a total of 28.8 million goats and 28.1 million sheep.

The problem is that regions which have larger numbers of livestock have scarcely any meat processing plants.

Despite Tanzania being among African countries with large numbers of livestock, it is yet to tap the potential to meet its meat demand of 450,000 tonnes, with current production standing at 350,000 tonnes annually.

Debt relief, accessing vaccines dominate at OACPS, EU meeting

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(OACPS) following effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

It also urged the group of industrialized countries to ensure that Covid-19 vaccines are made accessible and affordable in the African region regardless of country, race, religion or economic capacity.

Prof Palamagamba Kabudi, the minister for Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation, and President-in-Office of the OACPS Council of Ministers made this appeal at the 39th session of the ACP-EU joint parliamentary assembly at a virtual conference hosted in Dar es Salaam.

"The pandemic has transformed the social and economic well-being of the whole world, the consequences of which are yet to unravel. This global pandemic has also tested the resilience of our health systems beyond limits; as a result we have channeled huge amounts of our constrained fiscal resources to our not so strong health systems. This has resulted in the slowing down of economic activities in all sectors," the minister said.

"We also welcome the conclusion made by the EU Council at its meeting held in November 2020 on international debt relief particularly for African countries. We further commend the decision of the President in Office of the OACPS Summit, President Uhuru Kenyatta by convening an extraordinary summit held in June 2020, where world leaders including the EU gathered to find solutions to the socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic to our countries."

He asserted that most OACP States have suffered economic losses due to lockdown measures imposed to stop the spread of the coronavirus, noting that responses to the pandemic led to an increase in unemployment,

a decline of remittances, slow trade in goods and weakening the tourism sector.

"OACP States should design innovative strategies for economic recovery, while development partners provide appropriate debt relief measures," he stated.

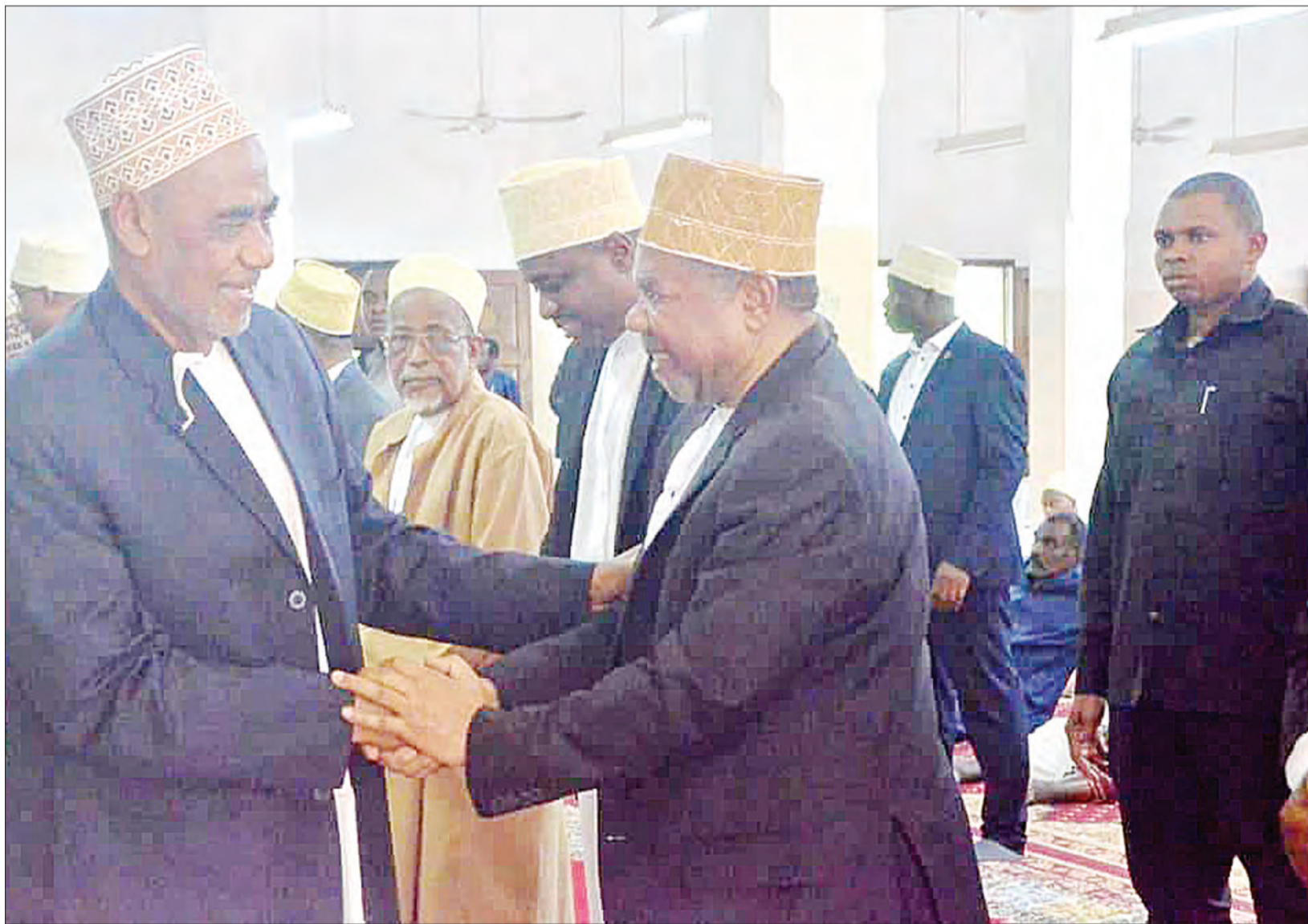
Prof Kabudi affirmed that the coming OACPS Council of Ministers meeting would discuss among other issues the fight against Covid-19, negotiations for a new partnership agreement between OACPS and the EU, entailing reforms in the OACPS Secretariat.

Another aspect is overseeing the signing of the revised Georgetown Agreement between EU and OACPS countries, and strategies to make community activities more relevant to the lives of citizens.

Dr. Gerard Muller, the current president of the EU Council of Ministers said that through the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly the council would strengthen their partnership agreement to jointly defend good governance, human rights, sustaining peace, and advancing sustainable development, among other objectives.

The EU is ready to work with the OACPS community to strengthen our economic and political ties as well as diplomatic relations, and prioritize all human rights issues for advanced sustainable development, he said. Tanzania was elected president of the OACPS in August, the third time since it joined the organization in 1975, where for the first time it chaired the group in 1992, and the second time in 2014.

Tanzania was chosen for the third time due to its influence in OACPS, its policies and various measures taken by President John Magufuli in sorting out national and international issues, capped by overall good performance, the EU top official intoned.



Zanzibar First Vice President Seif Sharif Hamad (L) exchanges greetings with Zanzibar's immediate former President, Dr Ali Mohamed Shein, at the venue of peace prayers for the country – Mushawarra Mosque in Zanzibar – on Thursday. Photo: Guardian Correspondent.

UDSM geologist becomes Minerals deputy minister

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the mining sector has a significant contribution in the country's economy but its potential is yet to be fully exploited.

He said Tanzania has huge deposits of iron, coal, graphite and many others which are yet to be tapped, a situation which denies the country required revenues.

"Coal can be used as a fuel alternative, using coal to produce energy. This is one of the major tasks of the minerals ministry, to work hard to ensure that all these minerals benefit the nation heavily. We have also

received complaints from operators of cement factories on this deficiency," he stated.

The Head of State said that if experts in the ministry work hard and as a team, the mining sector will contribute immensely to the country's development.

Five years ago, the ministry's revenue collections stood at 168bn/- but the amount has now risen to 527bn/-, he said, commending the newly appointed deputy minister and urging him to ensure that he goes to become a good link in the ministry.

"It is not that I have got no other people to

appoint. I have a good reserve of people in my database, so all the appointed ministers have to work hard to deliver the best. This is one among ministries which had some gaps in having professional top leaders; the minerals ministry previously had a lot of academicians but they did nothing to change the sector. The mining sector is a very essential sector which needs strong and focused leaders to supervise," he said.

He also cautioned ex-officials of the Tanzania Minerals Audit Agency (TMAA) that was abolished during his first term office and are now working in the mining

commission.

"I know that most of the TMAA staff have continued to receive high salaries of over 10m/-. We will not allow this, so Chief Secretary (Ambassador John Kijazi and the Permanent Secretary in the President's Office (Public Service Management and Good Governance) have to sit down and review these salaries," he said.

The former TMAA experts performed poorly when they were in the agency and they were supposed to be totally retrenched, the president affirmed, noting that if there is a need to review laws and regulation on the

salaries, the responsible authorities have to present the needed alterations.

Earlier, Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa commended Prof Manya for being appointed to the post, urging him to go and strengthen cooperation with other ministerial staff to achieve intended goals.

"Let's continue praying for the deputy ministry but also pray for the one who struggled to read the oath of office (Ndulane) because he is good and can deliver well. I believe that our president could think of him in the future," he added.

Solve country's problems, Mwinyi tells intellectuals

By Guardian Reporter

FORMER President Ali Hassan Mwinyi has challenged Tanzanians who have attained higher level of education to use their skills to solve many socioeconomic problems facing the country so as to make it a better place to live in.

In his speech during the third graduation ceremony at the Kampala International University -Tanzania (KIUT) in Dar es Salaam on Thursday, Mwinyi who is the institution's Chancellor said countries that have made strides in their development endeavours relied on their intellectuals.

"I would like to remind you that pace of development of any country depends heavily on skills of its manpower," he said.

The second phase leader who steered Tanzania from socialism to free market economy after taking over in 1985 said intellectuals are few and are trained at a high cost hence, they have a moral obligation to pay back by changing their communities and country for the better.

"The society believes and expects that you have the capacity to solve their developmental challenges; you should not disappoint them," he told graduands.

Mwinyi used the opportunity to heap praises on KIUT's immediate former coun-

cil chair the late Prof Tolly Mbwette as one of Tanzania's intellectuals who used their brains to solve problems.

Prof Mbwette who died in July this year, was credited with coming up with concrete benches in university gardens for outdoor studies which solved the problem of destruction and disappearance of wooden chairs. The concrete benches are called 'Vimbwette' to honour his innovation.

Some 1,067 graduated in various disciplines at KIUT this year.

In his speech, acting chair of KIUT Council Dr Mouhamad Mpezamihigo said the rationale of investing in higher education anywhere in the world is emancipation of society, adding that universities are a bridge between communities and development.

"It is for this reason that I commend the board of trustees of KIUT for its investment in education in Tanzania hence immense contribution in the ongoing efforts to emancipate people of this country," he said.

He said setting up private higher learning institutions that offer courses in science and technology such as KIUT require huge financial and skilled human resources but it is a worthy investment.



Kampala International University in Tanzania chancellor former President Ali Hassan Mwinyi officiates at the university's 3rd graduation ceremony in Dar es Salaam on Thursday. He challenged intellectuals to use their skills in solving the social and economic problems the country is grappling with. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

'Mixing old, leftover cashews ruins country's foreign market'

By Guardian Correspondent, Tunduru

THE Tanzania Cashew nut Board (TCB) has warned farmers to stop mixing the old and leftover cashews with the new ones because such behaviour reduces quality and ruins the country's foreign cashew market.

Francis Alfred, TCB director said on Thursday

while speaking to farmers of the Ligunga-Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Society (AMCOS) during the 8th cashew auction held at Ligunga village in Tunduru District, Ruvuma Region.

He said similar practices have been perpetrated by cashew farmers in warehouses of Mtama, Tunduru, Masasi and other areas.

According to him, the behavior has been also chas-

ing away potential buyers with others ending up offering low prices and thus affecting both farmers and the government.

"Reports show that only about 30,000 tonnes of cashew nuts were peeled during the 2019 season. This is out of a total of 232,600 tonnes of cashew nuts produced during the season, so farmers have been taking the left over

cashews and mix them with those produced in the new season thinking that they can earn more which is not true, doing this totally ruin the product's market," he explained.

He said: "This situation shows that we still depend much on the foreign market to sell our cashews, but we continue with this behavior, we are going to earn nothing, we have to ensure

that we persuade customers of our produce by producing quality products. Leaders of major farmers unions should strengthen collaborations with leaders of grassroots parties and increase their commitment to providing quality management education on the products especially during the collection period," he added.

He said conducting regu-

lar inspection on the quality of the farmers' cashew nuts before collecting them will help have cashews that are qualified to enter in the market and thus attract foreign buyers which in-turn benefits the local farmers.

Tunduru District Cooperative Officer Georeg Bisani said that a total of 2,143,846 kilograms of cashew nuts were included in the auction which had 12 buyers.

According to him, the traders who won the auction purchased the crop at the highest price of 2,226/- and the lowest price of 2,175/- per kilogram.

In his closing remarks, chairman of the Tunduru District Cooperative Union (TAMCU) Hashimu Mbala-bala urged buyers to look into the possibility of raising prices of the crop in future auctions so as to enable



Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency technicians busy with the construction of a 300,000-litre water tank at Nyakatende in Musoma District on Thursday. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

'Number of Tanzanian aviation industry experts still low'

By Correspondent Theresia Victor

DESPITE strides made by the government and stakeholders to raise the number of local experts in the aviation industry, the number of students studying professional's courses had remained low.

Rector of National Institute of Transport (NIT) Zacharia Mganilwa raised the concern yesterday in Dar es Salaam during the 7th convocation and 36th graduation ceremony which went along with a stakeholders discussion on the role of innovation and incubation centres in industrial development.

According to him, candidates taking bachelor degree in Aircraft

Maintenance Engineering in the college is not pleasing something which calls for coordinated efforts to promote and encourage more Tanzanians to pick the courses.

He said that there is still a huge demand for aircraft engineers in the country.

"With the pace of enrolling 20 students opting for bachelor degree in aircraft maintenance annually, we are still back from having the enough number of professional aircraft engineers in the country we need to make our very own aircraft engineers who can take care of our airplanes rather sending our planes for maintenance in abroad," Mganil-

wa said.

He said that the aircraft engineering course is a thrilling degree that equips candidates with in-depth engineering knowledge across a broad range of modern aircraft technology.

Mganilwa said: "This is the third convocation for bachelor degree in aircraft maintenance and since its establishment 50 aircraft engineers have graduated and are out there in the market but still not enough, he further explained."

The rector said the college currently offers both bachelor and diploma in aircraft maintenance. The program is intended to prepare skilled people who will work

as Aircraft Maintenance Engineer or technician.

Small Industrial Development Organisation (SIDO) director general Sylvester Mpanduji said these graduates should not only look for local employment but rather think beyond and search for the vacancies in other countries including the East Africa Community.

Joseph Mwijage, an automobile engineering graduate said: "With the knowledge that I have received, I am ready to face the market challenges and because I have innovative ideas, I am sure I will succeed to become a best entrepreneur on what I have learnt."

Ruvuma RC underscores need to safeguard Selous-Niassa Wildlife Corridor

By Guardian Reporter, Songea

RUVUMA regional commissioner Christina Mndeme has underscored the need for the residents to continue protecting the Selous-Niassa Wildlife Corridor (SNWC) which is an important landscape providing linkage between the protected areas of the Selous Game Reserve in southern Tanzania and the Niassa in northern Mozambique.

The Selous - Niassa ecosystem, which extends across southern Tanzania into northern Mozambique, is one of the largest trans-boundary ecosystems in Africa covering approximately 154,000 km² of miombo woodland interrupted by wetlands, open woodland and riparian forest.

Mndeme was speaking during a two days forum held in Songea District which brought together stakeholders involved in protection of the Selous-Niassa Wildlife Corridor. She said protecting the corridor would enable the residents to benefit from the various available natural resources.

"The Selous-Niassa Wildlife Corridor is endowed with variety natural resources including plants and wild animals such as elephants, black rhinoceroses, cheetahs, giraffes, hippopotamuses and crocodiles," said the Regional Commissioner.

According to her, the protected was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982, but also occupies the Julius Nyerere Hydropower Station (JNHS) in Rufiji District.

RC Mndeme asserted that protection of the corridor also boost's the country's tourism sector which has been immensely contributing to the government coffers. She said the country receives nearly 1.5 million foreign visitors per

year.

The tourism sector's contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has now reached 17 percent. It employs more than 2 million Tanzanians.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Representative in Ruvuma Region, Diana Shuma said they had previously held similar forums to discuss protection of the Selous-Niassa Wildlife Corridor which is in danger of extinction.

Shuma said the corridor is crucial for both Tanzania and Mozambique since it is a wild animal's passage. She claimed that increased human activities including farming and livestock keeping poses threat to the existence of the corridor.

"We have brought together stakeholders to discuss and come out with strategies to enhance protection of the important corridor which covers over 1.5 million hectares," she said.

Fidel Kimario is the Coordinator, Wildlife Conservation and Corridors in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism; he said they have already prepared regulations to be used in the management of wild animal corridors across the country.

Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority (TAWA) Assistant Commissioner for Lindi, Mtwara and Ruvuma regions, Enock Msocha said they have deployed new technicians in protecting the corridor including day and night patrols.

The TAWA Official added that to enhance protection, the authority works closely with villagers surrounding the game reserve.

He said they also provide conservation education to the villagers as well as insisting them to report to relevant authorities whenever the animals cross to their residential areas.



Livestock and Fisheries minister Mashimba Ndaki (3rd-L, in tie) views goats awaiting slaughter at a Dodoma city abattoir on Thursday. Others include his deputy, Pauline Gekul (R), holding a goat, the ministry's Permanent Secretary, Prof Elisante ole Gabriel (L), and the abattoir's manager, Victor Mwita (2nd-L). Photo: Correspondent



Water Minister Jumaa Aweso (2nd-R) shares a light moment with Pangani District CCM secretary Mohamed Moyo (2nd-L) at the swearing-in of councillors earlier this week. Others are Pangani district executive director Isaya Mbenje (L) and district administrative secretary Mwalimu Nyange. Photo: Correspondent Steven William



It's green bananas aplenty at Dar es Salaam's Mabibo market, popularly known as Mahakama ya Ndizi, as found yesterday. The going price was between 25,000/- and 27,000/- per bunch on average, largely depending on size and quality. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala



Residents of Gole village in Handeni District brandish placards earlier this week, pleading for intervention by the government, the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau and the Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development ministry in a long-standing land dispute between them and people reported to be illegally engaged in farming, cattle grazing and timber production in Gole Forest Reserve. Photo: Beatrice Philemon



Firefly Bagamoyo Beach Lovers founder Jo Turner (C) plants a seedling at the Old German Boma grounds in Bagamoyo District earlier this week in implementation of a greening campaign. Others are environmental officer Fulgence Cassian (L) and Tanzania Cleanup and Conservation Initiative founder Salum Kingungo. Photo: Beatrice Philemon



Longido district commissioner Frank Mwaisumbe (R) stamps an identification number on a goat at Ketumbeine village earlier this week shortly before distributing 400 goats, sheep and cows worth a total of 710m/- donated by Canada to a local child development project through World Vision Tanzania. Photo: Correspondent Daniel Sabuni



Dr Jim Yonazi, Deputy Permanent Secretary in the Communications and Information Technology ministry, inspects national fibre network at Uhuru Hospital in Chamwino District on Thursday. Photo: Guardian Correspondent



Deputy Commissioner of Police Ferdinand Mtui (L) makes remarks on behalf of the Inspector General of Police during one-day discussions held in Dodoma city on Thursday, the focus being on a human rights report compiled after an inspection of prisons and police stations in the country. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

TARI embarks on strategy to improve production of edible oil

By Correspondent Valentine Oforo, Dodoma

THE Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute (TARI) has embarked on implementation of a five-year strategy to heighten production of sunflower grains, seeking to spearhead the country's efforts to curtail shortage and importation of edible oil.

Tanzania annually import 365,000 metric tonnes (MT) of edible oil which costs the government at least 443bn/-.

The long-term initiative, to be masterminded at the Institute's Ilonga Center in Morogoro, will push for production of 2 million tonnes of sunflower grains with capacity to generate at least 700,000 tonnes of edible oil in a period of five years to come (2020-2025).

As part of preliminary preparations, the National

Coordinator for Sunflower Research, Frank Reuben told The Guardian in an interview that the institute has already developed a key road map to produce a total of 45 tonnes of Pre-basic and Basic seeds, to be distributed to different seeds companies for mass production.

He briefed, in order to implement the robust initiative successfully, TARI has set to work in partnership with several companies and institutions.

They are, the Agriculture Seed Agency (ASA), BioSustain Tanzania Limited, TERMAR, RUDDI, AGRI-SEED Technologies, Southern Highland Seed Growers, Lima Africa, Inades, Agricpays Tanzania Ltd, and registered farmers working with Clinton Foundation and World Vision Tanzania.

"The companies will be responsible to produce at least

4,500 tonnes of seeds, to be certified by the Tanzania Official Seeds Certification Institute (TOSCI)," he stated.

He expressed that, according to the set schedule, the seed tonnes to be produced will be used to produce 2 million tonnes of sunflower grains for processing.

"This programme is expected to play paramount role in helping the country containing shortage of edible oil as well as reduce importation of sunflower seed varieties," he insisted.

Moreover, he informed that plans are afoot for the center to embark on a major research programme to invent improved and hybrid seed varieties.

"At the center's Germplasm, we're currently possessing genetic conservation of 300 genotypes, to be used for the conduction of key researches in order to produce improved

and hybrid sunflower seed varieties," he observed.

According to him, the country's sunflower sub-sector has been experiencing poor development due to several challenges, among others, include absence of Agriculture Research and Communication Center (CGR) internationally for sunflower, as well as lack for enough funds.

He said TARI-Ilonga, has so far researched and invented at least two new sunflower improved seed varieties, which are in multiplication stage now to be distributed to farmers across the county.

The varieties are TARI-ILO 2019 and TARI-NA 2019. The varieties are of high yield of grains and oil, resistant to pests and diseases, but also are tolerant to drought condition.

He added: "These are appropriate seed varieties for small scale and large-scale

farmers. The reason is that, these seeds allow farmers to produce and distribute them in Quality Declared Seed (QDS) class within their farming community under the Tanzania Official Seed Certification Institute (TOSCI) supervision."

The Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP), in 2016 indicated that, sunflower is the most likely subsector to yield investable opportunities in Tanzania. But unfortunately, the country has yet to reap the economic fortunes the sub-sector has in offering, due to several factors, among others including absence of enough hybrid seed varieties as in most places farmers are reported to use recycled seeds.

Possible factors likely to propel to increased production of sunflower in the future are, according to relevant experts, include the yield potential and

superior agronomic characteristics of sunflower, the need for alternative crops in some areas of the country, excessive crushing capacity, and increased demand for edible oils as well as health benefits of sunflower oil.

He informed that the potential for expansion of sunflower in Tanzania is good, and much land is suitable for growing sunflower, adding that, sunflower production in the country may also have potential for long term expansion.

"There is a great wealth of unexplored genetic material for use in improving sunflower," he assured.

As per the 2020 map by sunflower production through atlasbig.com shows Ukraine, Russia Federation, Argentina, China, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Hungary, United States of America, France and Tanzania have been named as the most countries with

production and yield as well as sunflower harvested areas. The source also ranks Tanzania as the leading sunflower producer in Africa.

The seed production at TARI-Ilonga also involves rouging, pollination, and seed stocks maintenance. The seed stock maintenance increases the seed quantity and maintains precisely the specific characteristics of the parent stocks used in seed production.

"A basic requirement in the increase of parental stocks is familiarity with their plant types so that a typical plant can be eliminated entirely. The rouging programme involves the removal of off type plants which often are difficult to identify positively because of the normal variation in the variety. Thus, TARI-Ilonga has well-established producers for the production of quality seed," he said.



Legal and Human Rights Centre legal assistant Prisca Shoo (R) presents books on human rights and gender-based violence to Kahama district commissioner Anamringi Macha at the climax of the commemoration of '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence' held in Kahama yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Shaban Njia

Human Rights Day: We should mobilise resources to address global problems - Parhiala

By Guardian Reporter

THE Human Rights Day is observed every year on the 10th December - the day the United Nations General Assembly adopted, in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims the inalienable rights which everyone is entitled to as a human being - regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status.

According to Paulina Parhiala, the Norwegian Church Aid, Country Director said international days, like the Human Rights Day, are occasions to educate the public on issues of concern, to mobilise political will and resources to address global problems, and to celebrate and reinforce achievements of humanity.

The theme of today is "Recover Better - Stand Up for Human Rights". It related to the global COVID19 pandemic and the need to build the world back better by ensuring that the human rights and central to recovery efforts. We need to apply human rights by tackling systematic and intergenerational inequalities, exclusion, and discrimination.

COVID19 has deepened poverty, strengthened division and inequalities, and deepened structural discrimination. We simply need to end discrimination of any kind, address inequalities, encourage participation and solidarity and promote sustainable development.

Children and young people have the same general human rights as adults, but also specific rights - which draw particular attention to special protection and care to minors. The child rights focus on children as individuals. They are not owned by the parents or the state, nor are they people-in-the-making - they have equal status and equal rights.

While children are individuals, they are also need providing, protection and participation as they grow towards independence. They have a right to an adequate standard of living, health care, education, play and recreation. They have also a right to protection from abuse, neglect, exploit-



ation, or discrimination.

It is important that children's views are heard and considered in political processes. They have also a right to participate in communities and have programs and services for themselves. They should be heard on issues which affect them now or which will affect them in the future.

Three in ten girls in Tanzania are married before their 18th birthday. In fact, Tanzania is among the countries with highest numbers of children under the age of 18 who have been married. In some areas over half of the girls are married as children.

The consequences of child marriage are documented, including health risks, risks of gender-based violence, including marital rape and early end of education including limited opportunities of returning to school after marriage, pregnancy or drop out.

Poverty is the leading reason for child marriage in Tanzania. While income generating reasons might encourage families to marry their children, the children may see marriage also as the only way out of hunger or poverty. Similarly, "family honour" may be a reason for child marriage. Other harmful cultural prac-

tises may also provoke child marriages, even abduction, rape or forced marriages.

Tanzania has committed to eliminate child, early and forced marriages by 2030 in line with the target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals. It continues to be important to review the proactiveness of the Tanzanian government, as Tanzania is evaluated through the Universal Period Review next year in the UN Human Rights Commission.

Tanzania has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child already in 1991 which sets a minimum age of marriage of 18 and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1985 which obligates states to ensure free and full consent to marriage.

Last year, Tanzania also committed to review the Marriage Act and key legal and institutional frameworks by 2025 to address gender inequality. The National Plan of Action to End Violence against Women and Children addresses the need to end child marriage and set the target to reduce child marriages.

It is evident that these goals are far to reach unless we work together to achieve them.

APRM commends Tanzania for maintaining peace, human rights

By Henry Mwangonde

THE African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) has commended Tanzania for successes achieved in maintaining peace and tranquility, human rights and a union that has lasted for more than 50 years.

Tanzania has also been hailed for the use of one national language- Kiswahili, and steps taken to address challenges in the provision of social services.

Speaking during a National Validation Workshop which was deliberating on the progress report of implementation of APRM Tanzania National Programme of Action, lead expert Dr Rehema Twalib said the main aim is to have a direct engagement with national stakeholders on the progress made in addressing governance challenges which were identified in the APRM Tanzania Base Report of 2013.

"The report has commended Tanzania for the provision of free education, infra-

structure development, construction of health centers among others," she said.

He said Tanzania has also been commended for putting up strong efforts in financial inclusion as well as participation in economic growth.

Apart from commending Tanzania, the report also outlines some areas of improvement including conflicts between pastoralists and farmers as well as land owners and investors.

The APRM is an African Union's (AU) democratic and governance agenda. It is an African-owned self-monitoring mechanism, which was adopted by African Heads of States and government in 2003 as per peer learning and self-assessment mechanism enshrined with the framework of the Partnership for African Development (NEPAD).

The review is on four thematic areas which are democracy, political governance, economic governance and manage-

ment.

Tanzania presented its APRM base report which was submitted to heads of state and government participating in the mechanism in January 2013, in Ethiopia in which Tanzania committed itself to address challenges that were identified, through medium term expenditure frameworks of ministries departments and agencies.

Annual progress reports have been prepared covering areas such as union matters, land related issues, gender equality, provision of social services including education, health, energy, water, information, technology and others.

Tabling the report in the said national validation workshop is in compliance with the agreed APRM principles, and to a large extent, symbolizes the government's continued engagement and commitment towards addressing the challenges identified in the APRM report.



ZARA Tours mountain guide Faustine Chombo (C) leads a team of members of Tanzania People's Defence Forces, Journalists and Tanzania National Parks (Tanapa) officers towards Mount Kilimanjaro's Uhuru Peak, where they hoisted the national flag in celebrating the 59th anniversary of Tanganyika's Independence - December 9. Left is the convoy leader Col Martin Msumari. Photo: Correspondent James Lanka

Quality education to spur development, eradicate poverty - Catholic archbishop

By Correspondent Joseph Mwendapole

THE Coadjutor Archbishop of Dar es Salaam, Jude Thaddeus Ruwa'ich has urged countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to invest heavily in quality education of their people so as to eradicate ignorance and poverty and thus stimulate development.

In his keynote address during the St. Joseph University of Tanzania (SJUIT) 13th graduation held in Dar es Salaam this weekend Archbishop Ruwa'ich said education was among the essential areas that needs more investments to fight various challenges facing communities.

"We will not be able to battle ignorance, poverty and diseases if we will not invest heavily in provision of quality education to our people, this is a very critical area which also needs combined efforts from both the government and stakeholders," he said.

He also called on university graduates to be reliable agents of change by utilizing well the skills and knowledge they acquired to bolster the country's development.

He said that graduating from a university or college is an important milestone in life so getting involved in nation building was key.

He urged them to translate into actions, the value addition they received in their tenure of studies.

He said he was happy to hear that the college is implementing a programme to prepare students to establish new innovative projects and then register them as a company. This will also help reduce the employment crisis by providing job opportunities to their fellow young people.

"This initiative is very important and is in line with the current needs of the country's industrialization vision, President John Magufuli has been encouraging young people on self-reliance. My call to the college management is to increase investment in this programme so as to support more students to produce more innovative graduates to serve the nation," he said.

Archbishop Ruwa'ich further urged Tanzanians to join the varsity because it is one of the best universities determined to imbibe knowledge and honing skills to the youth and prepare them to face global challenges.

"Those joining the Tanzanian workforce should work together with other stakeholders to address and find solutions as the graduates are capable of enabling realization of the industrialization drive," he



Archbishop Jude Thaddei Ruwa'ichi (2nd-R) of the Dar es Salaam archdiocese of the Catholic Church presents a gift to civil engineering graduate Juma Tindwa at the 13th graduation ceremony of St Joseph University in Tanzania held at Kibamba in suburban Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Joseph Mwendapole

'Climate-fuelled La Niña will drive millions into hunger in East Africa'

By Guardian Reporter

EAST African countries including Tanzania, South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda are likely to suffer from below average rainfall starting this December as a result of a strong La Niña, which could lead in millions more people going hungry in 2021.

Lydia Zigomo, Oxfam in Horn, East, and Central Africa Regional Director, said: "the forecasted dry season will be the last straw for many, devastating their remaining crops and cutting their lifeline of food and income."

Zigomo added: "The incredible resilience of the most vulnerable people

across the Horn, East, and Central Africa is being tested to breaking point by a combination of disasters that are not of their making.

Urgent action is needed to provide the assistance desperately needed by millions of hungry people, she said.

She added that world leaders must also commit to more ambitious cuts in carbon emissions to prevent an even more catastrophic rise in global temperatures.

Rich polluting industrial nations need to provide more climate finance to help poor communities - and particularly farming communities - adapt to a changing climate.

She said leaders should also support vulnerable

countries with new sources of international finance for loss and damage caused by more extreme and erratic weather.

La Niña refers to cooler than usual ocean temperatures in the eastern part of the Pacific Ocean, which occurs on average every 3-7 years, and usually affects temperatures, precipitation, and storm patterns in many parts of the world. In East Africa, La Niña results in drier than usual seasons.

Over 50 million people are in need of immediate food assistance in the Horn East and Central Africa, with numbers expected to rise significantly as the region braces for harsh, climate fuelled La Niña conditions, said Oxfam today.

The warning comes as world leaders prepare to meet for a virtual Climate Ambition Summit today.

The climate crisis is causing erratic weather patterns across the world including longer and more severe droughts across the Horn, East and Central Africa region.

It is likely to increase the frequency and strength of La Niña events. Any rainfall that does come is likely to arrive in heavier bursts devastating crops by flooding or washing away recently planted seeds and seedlings.

Farmers, who make up almost 80 per cent of the region's population, have already been hit hard by severe floods and the biggest

desert locust swarms in 70 years - both supercharged by the climate crisis - as well as the economic fallout of Covid-19 pandemic.

Since January, locusts have caused \$8.5 billion worth of damage across the region including to nearly 100,000 hectares of cropland in Somalia, an estimated 200,000 hectares in Ethiopia and about 70,000 hectares in Kenya, starving livestock and causing food shortages.

Noor Maalim Abdi, a Kenyan farmer, said: "We used to have three meals a day, but with the locusts and Covid-19, not anymore. For now, we sell our animals to sustain our families but with the curfews and lockdown it's not easy. Our movement

is restricted."

A Somali farmer who works with Oxfam, Abdi-laahi Wayrah said: "The locusts destroyed our crops at the time we were expecting to harvest. I've never seen infestations like this before, and the saddest thing was that we couldn't do anything about it."

"Then Covid-19 came, and because of the lockdown, seed and pesticides prices went up. We could not afford to buy these necessary things. We don't have enough food at the moment, but we're trying to rebuild again," said Wayrah.

Tanzania, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and South Sudan were responsible for less than 0.2 percent of the global carbon emissions be-

tween 1990 and 2015.

The top 10 most polluting countries, including US, China and Japan were responsible for 500 times more carbon emissions in the same period.

Oxfam and its partners are supporting more than 897,000 people in Ethiopia, Uganda, South Sudan, Somalia, and Tanzania with food, clean water, sanitation, cash assistance and seeds.

Oxfam has also reached 3.5 million people in September and 2.6 million in October with Covid-19 related support.

The total cumulative emissions of South Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda between 1990 - 2015 amounted to only 0.89GtCO₂.



Ardhi University vice chancellor Prof Evaristo Liwa (2nd-L) presents an award to graduand Jasmine Mndeme (R) for outstanding performance. This was at the university's graduation ceremony held in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Left is deputy VC (academic) Prof Gabriel Kassenga. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala

Africa needs \$9bn to procure, distribute 1.4 billion doses of Covid-19 vaccines - WHO

ABUJA

THE World Health Organisation (WHO) has said Africa will need at least \$9bn to procure and distribute 1.4 billion doses of Covid-19 vaccines.

The Immunisation and Vaccines Development Programme Coordinator, WHO, Dr Richard Mihigo, said this on Thursday at the WHO Africa online press briefing on ramping up preparedness for Covid-19 vaccine roll-out in Africa.

Mihigo stated that there was a

need to ensure an equitable and timely distribution of the vaccines.

Mihigo said, "We will definitely need to vaccinate between 60 to 70 per cent of the African population."

"So, if you consider that we have about 1.2 to 1.3 billion people on the African continent and you take 60 per cent of that with the assumption that you will need maybe two doses per population, we are talking about close to 1.3 to 1.4 billion vaccine doses that will be needed to immunise 60 per cent of the

people in Africa to reach a herd immunity."

Speaking further, Mihigo explained that it is not just about the cost of the vaccines but the cost of delivering them and ensuring that they get to the right locations.

He added that there were no guarantees that there would be enough supplies before the end of 2021. The WHO official stated, "So, if we compute that number with the preliminary information that we are getting with these vaccine manufacturers because it is not

only the cost of the vaccines. There are also additional costs that are needed to deliver those vaccines."

"We know very well that the preliminary rough estimation that is being done, we may need up to \$9bn. So, this is a lot of money, a lot of funding that will be needed. First of all, we are not sure that we are going to get enough supply to immunise everybody by the end of 2021. This may spill over to the year after but also to mobilise such an amount of money, I think it will be an additional challenge."

Join government, stakeholders efforts towards ending GBV - call

By Guardian Correspondent

A CALL has been made to Tanzanians to join efforts by the government and stakeholders towards ending gender based violence (GBV) especially sexual corruption at secondary schools, colleges and universities.

Tanzania joined other countries around the globe in marking the 16 days of activism against gender based violence whereas the local campaign theme was 'End Gender Based Violence - Change Begins with Me'

The global theme was 'Orange the World: Fund, Respond, Prevent, Collect', highlighting the increased need to address violence against women and provide essential services for survivors.

Speaking in Dar es Salaam yesterday during a conference to educate young girls on the impact of sexual corruption as well as evaluation of a campaign dubbed 'Safari Salama' which targeted school girls, advisor of the Women Fund Tanzania Trust technical committee, Dr Dinah Mmbaga, said it is the responsibility of every individual to ensure protection of girls especially those at school.

The conference was organised by an NGO known as WAJIKI, based in Dar-es-Salaam. WAJIKI is well known for its concern against the sexual abuse of school children and other minors.

The meeting was attended by the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB), motorcycle and commuter bus riders, parents, religious leaders, and village and ward executive officers.

"This war has to be fought by every Tanzanians; we cannot win

if efforts towards curbing GBV are only left to activists, NGOs and the government. We must join our hands to ensure the safety and protection of our girls," said Mmbaga.

She said commercial commuter bus and motorbike drivers were invited at the meeting because they are used to entice the girls by offering them free transport, plus a small amount of cash in order to divert the minors from their routes and take them home.

The fight against sexual abuse against schoolgirls should be supported by everybody eager to check the moral decay in the society. She urged parents to find time to talk to their female children on the implications of early sexual affairs.

She added that some parents give priority to the pursuit of materialism while abandoning their core-parenting tasks.

WAJIKI Executive Director, Janeth Mawiza said research shows that sexual abuse of primary and secondary schoolgirls is on the increase.

"This has prompted activists to embark on awareness campaigns to enlighten commercial bus drivers, identified as the largest group of unscrupulous men who like to meddle with the students, and have been known to impregnate some of them," said Mawiza.

PCCB Head of Public Education in Kinondoni District, Rose Mayala, urged students and parents to directly report such cases to her office. She noted that sexual corruption is difficult to combat since it is done in total secrecy.

"Reporting such incidences to our office will help in tracing the culprits," she said.



Shabani Mlongakweli, a representative of humanitarian aid association Haki, speaks at a seminar on goat farming for widows and women with disabilities held at Ndala in Nzega District earlier this week. The goats are a donation by the association, part of whose mission is to empower women economically. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Government advised to invest in young people

By Correspondent Theresia Victor

THE government has been urged to invest in young people as an effective way to meet the country's development agenda.

Chief Executive Officer, Elimika Wikiendi, Paschal Masalu said that investment in young people would see the country realising its development priorities since youth can massively contribute in economic development.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) present a unique challenge for countries around the world but they also bring some of the biggest investment opportunities for generations in which young people need to explore.

Government's decision to invest in young people will not only be a success to them, but the country at large.

"We have a very capable and dependable youth and if we assist them, the country is bound to reap benefits since they are still young and energetic enough to work towards steering economic development in the country," he noted.

He also encouraged youth to create their own businesses to boost their income and improve their wel-

fare noting that it is possible to graduate from poverty even without being included in formal employment.

According to Masalu youth are only required to cultivate a culture of savings to beef-up their capital to be able to start small businesses.

He said the organisation works to provide young people with business education which includes management skills. He said there are so many opportunities for youth, but they only need to be assisted to tap on them accordingly.

Elimika Wikiendi Communication and Advocacy Officer, Nyan-gubu Mtogoro reminded youth on the power of networking insisting it is the best way for them to meet their investment potential in specific areas.

"As youth, you should not stay indoors waiting to be given capital by the government, you must start saving and establishing networks," he said urging them to grab investment opportunities in the country.

Youth of the United National Association (YUNA) official Humphrey Evarist said that there is still need for knowledge to be impacted on youth who want to establish their own business as most still lack business skills as well as market exposure.

Agricultural council calls upon private sector to use investment opportunities

By Guardian Correspondent

THE Agricultural Council of Tanzania (ACT) has called upon the private sector to make use of investment opportunities as announced by President John Magufuli.

ACT Managing Director, Timoth Mmbaga made the remarks in Dodoma yesterday when opening a symposium for agriculture stakeholders in the coun-

try saying the government has shown the way and it is time for the private sector to wake up and grab the chances.

"As the private sector we need to wake up and be serious about investment because there are people who have been given farms but there is nothing they are doing with them," said Mmbaga.

He said if the private sector was to invest in agriculture, there are a num-

ber of opportunities to sell their crops abroad hence improving the country's economy.

He said Tanzania is endowed with good weather and arable land suitable for agricultural activities, the thing that makes it among the countries with sufficient food stock. The agriculture sector employs over 70 percent of Tanzanians.

He said currently the political willingness is high

on investment saying the directive by the president to the new Minister of Agriculture; Prof Adolf Mkenda was a sign that the government is serious on improving the agriculture as well as attracting more investment in the sector.

One of the stakeholders Marck Magila said agriculture is one of the sectors which can be helpful if fully utilized saying the problem was that most of Tanzanians were doing agriculture

after failing in other areas.

Recent signs of transformation in Tanzania's agricultural sector offer encouraging opportunities for acceleration of growth, job creation and poverty reduction, if urgent steps are taken to improve the sector's policy and regulatory environment and investments.

In the recently released 13th Tanzania Economic Update, "Realising the Potential of Agriculture for In-

clusive Growth and Poverty Reduction," the authors underscore the importance of having supportive public policies and spending which crowds in more private investments needed to catalyse a nascent agricultural transformation.

Back in June 2018, President Magufuli launched the 13trn/- Agricultural Sector Development Programme's Second Phase (ASDP II), which he said would accelerate the country's indus-

trialisation drive.

Magufuli said with the thriving agricultural sector, the country stands a greater chance of having strong economy that will spark growth in other sectors.

President Magufuli said ASDP II will be executed efficiently with superb results, reminding that agricultural revolution was what was termed as the best catalyst in economic revolution.

Environmental management generates income, improves quality of life in 3 districts

By Guardian Correspondent

KNOWLEDGE is power, so the saying goes, and for communities in Kilwa, Kilosa and Rufiji districts the knowledge to conserve and manage forests has enabled them to earn money, improve the quality of their lives and alleviate poverty at family level.

This has been made possible through implementation of the community-based forest management programmes (CBFM) supported by Tanzania Forest Conservation Group (TFCG), Mtandao wa Jamii wa Usimamizi wa Misitu (MJUMITA), Tanzania Natural Resources Forum (TNRF), WWF-Tz and other conservation organisations. CBFM activities have been going on for about 10 years.

TFCG is working with communities in seven districts of Liwale, Nachingwea, Kilosa, Kilolo, Ruangwa, Morogoro and Mvomero to help them conserve and manage village forests and ultimately realise tangible communal and individual benefits.

WWF and Mpingo Conservation and Development Initiative (MDCI) are doing similar activities in 11 villages in Kilwa District while MJUMITA is working with communities in 450 villages in 30 districts.

Take Nanjilinj A in Kilwa District, for example, before 2012 when the village forest was yet to be surveyed and villagers knew little about sustainable conservation, the village earned just about 30m/- annually from sale of forest products, with the bulk of the products being harvested and sold illegally. Corruption was also rife.

Today the village conserves and protects a total of 83,538 hectares of forest comprising Mbumbila A and Mbumbila B. The village government has put in place a harvesting plan that enables them to realise tangible benefits while ensuring that the forest thrives.

As a result the village's income from forest resources has increased from 30m/annually to 130,000/- annually within a span of seven years. "This is an increase of about 77 percent of income earned from forest resources," says Mohammed Musa Mkalimaga, chairperson of the village natural resources committee.

"Before the introduction of CBFM, there was rampant illegal logging and harvesting of forest products because villagers had no mandate and they did not realize any financial gains whatsoever. There was nothing like sustainable harvesting as forest resources were free for all," he adds.

The adoption of CBFM provides opportunity for villagers to conserve and protect their forest resources and acquire knowledge on preparing harvesting plans. With assistance from NGOs focusing on conservation, the village government has secured a good market for the world renowned price wood, Mpingo, a major product from their forests.

Perhaps the most important issue is not how much money the village collects, rather how the money is spent



(L-R) Acting Rufiji District Forest Officer Robert Kiondo, Forestry Expert Cassian Sianga, Mtanza-Msona Village Chairman Ismail Lusozzo and TFCG Government Liaison and Capacity Building Officer, Simon Lugazo admiring a 35m/- worth tractor bought recently by the village government. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

with the view to improve lives of the villagers and, in due course, alleviate poverty at family level.

Initially the village government focused on improving social services in the areas of education, health and supply of safe water. These would provide communal benefits and in the long run, raise quality of lives of the villagers.

"Until last year we had spent about 90m/- on construction of four classrooms, a teachers' office, a teacher's house, one pre-primary classroom and provided 40 desks to Nanjilinj A primary school," says Mohamedi Mussa Mkalimaga, chairperson of the village government.

Having built the infrastructure for a good learning environment, the village government moved on to meet the basic needs of pupils in the village so as to improve their performance in school. The aim was to create conditions that would raise the quality of education in Nanjilinj A and other villages.

The village government has continued to provide 100,000/- to every pupil from Nanjilinj A and Nanjilinj B who is selected to join second-

ary schools. This aims at relieving parents with the burden of buying requirements for their children, bearing in mind that some of the parents find it difficult to raise that money.

A total of 61 pupils have benefited from the programme which has cost the village government about 6m/-.

The village government has also spent about 2m/- for buying uniforms for 323 primary school pupils.

"We want to make sure that no child in the village fails to go to school for lack of money to buy this or that. Parents still have to meet some of the costs but our plan is to spend more on the education sector as we earn more money from sale of forest products," explains Mkalimaga.

In efforts to improve the health sector Nanjilinj A village government has built a latrine for the village primary school and bought 20 mattresses and 40 bed sheets for the village dispensary.

The government gives 50,000/- to every woman in the village who gets pregnant to enable women to buy various items required for

delivery of the newborn in a bid to promote safe motherhood.

Mosi Hasan Kikope is one of the beneficiaries of the programme, she says, "We are happy with this programme because we don't have to worry about our needs when we are ready to deliver. Initially the village government offered 30,000/- to every pregnant woman but now they have raised the amount to 50,000/-."

So far the village has spent 14m/- for the programme which has benefited 280 women and there are plans to raise the amount as income from sale of forest products increases.

The village government has also purchased equipment to drill wells in a bid to improved supply of safe water. Currently it has drilled six deep wells and rehabilitated three others, all of which supply enough water to meet the needs of the community.

In order to create employment through investment, the village has built a guest house and furnished it with beds, mattresses and bed sheets. The guest house provides employment to some youths who work as cleaners and attendants. Others do laundry work.

"It is important to note that five percent of the income we get from forest conservation goes to Kilwa District Council. This means that our efforts to conserve forests gives the council two benefits; one is that we reduce their burden to fund education, health, water and other social services for the village.

The other is that we contribute to their annual budget; our support stands at about 40m/- annually," says chairman of the natural resources committee, Sabiamu Poto.

Mtanza-Msona village government in Rufiji District said that CBFM is also changing lives although sustainable harvesting of the village forest that began as recently as 2016 following awareness and educational campaigns on conservation conducted by various NGOs.

Among other things, the campaigns focused on educating villagers on conservation and building their capacity to own and manage the forest in a manner that would make them realise sustainable gains.

The sale of timber, poles and logs

earned the village an annual income of about 30m/-. Four years down the road the village now earns 100m/- annually and the best is yet to come.

"We have embarked on improving social services in the village with the small amount of money that we collected. We still have a long way to go," says the village government chairman, Ismail Said Lusozzo.

Last year the village bought 45 chairs and 40 tables for the village secondary school and installed electricity in three teacher's houses and one house of a medical staff at the village dispensary. They have also bought a tractor.

Chairperson of the Village Natural Resources Committee, Salma Issa Wamba says the training must be a continuous activity because there is always new knowledge about conservation of forests and how it can raise more income for the community and for individuals.

"Members of the natural resources committee frequently change for various reasons. Some relocate to other villages, others pass away and others simply opt out. This calls for frequent training and education to the new members and updating old members on conservation issues. We still look upon our partner organisations to support these activities," she says.

Kilwa District Officer, Njaba Lyatura says that CBFM enables communities to conserve forests in their natural state so that custodians and stewards may benefit beyond financial gains.

"The community based forest management system allows villagers to own and manage forest resources within their village. It gives them mandate to draw harvesting plans and implement the same so that they realise tangible benefits which enable them to alleviate poverty at family level," he says.

Kilwa District Acting Executive Director, Godfrey Jafary says awareness of conservation among communities is very high because villages have improved social services from sale of forest products.

"But CBFM has created employment for the youth throughout the forest value chain and this has greatly reduced poaching and illegal logging," he says.

SATURDAY 12 DECEMBER 2020

Taking A New Look
At The News
ESTABLISHED IN 1995

Today, poverty prevails as the gravest human rights challenge in the world

HUMAN Rights Day is celebrated annually across the world on 10 December every year. The date was chosen to honour the United Nations General Assembly's adoption and proclamation, on 10 December 1948, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the first global enunciation of human rights and one of the first major achievements of the new United Nations. The formal establishment of Human Rights Day occurred at the 317th Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on 4 December 1950, when the General Assembly declared resolution inviting all member states and any other interested organisations to celebrate the day as they saw fit. [1][2]

The day is normally marked both by high-level political conferences and meetings and by cultural events and exhibitions dealing with human rights issues. Besides, it is traditionally on 10 December that the five-yearly United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights and Nobel Peace Prize are awarded. Many governmental and non-governmental organisations active in the human rights field also schedule special events to commemorate the day, as do many civil and social-cause organisations.

Human Rights Day is the day in 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The formal inception of Human Rights Day dates from 1950, after the Assembly passed resolution

inviting all states and interested organisations to adopt 10 December of each year as Human Rights Day. The popularity of the day can be shown by the fact that the commemorative Human Rights Day stamp issued by the United Nations Postal Administration in 1952, received approximately 200,000 advance orders.

When the General Assembly adopted the Declaration, with 48 states in favour and eight abstentions, it was proclaimed as a 'common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations', towards which individuals and societies should 'strive by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance'. The measure was received by both advocates and critics alike as 'being more declarative than legislative, more suggestive than binding.'

Although the Declaration with its broad range of political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights is not a binding document, it inspired more than 60 human rights instruments which together constitute an international standard of human rights. Today the general consent of all United Nations member states on the basic Human Rights laid down in the Declaration makes it even stronger and emphasises the relevance of Human Rights in our daily lives.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights, as the main United Nations rights official and his Office plays a major role in coordinating efforts for the yearly observation of Human Rights Day:

L.Victoria commission should harness fishing industry to enhance livelihoods

LAKE Victoria is one of the African great lakes. The lake was named after Queen Victoria by the explorer John Hanning Speke, in his reports, the first Briton to document it. Speke accomplished this in 1858, while on an expedition with Richard Francis Burton to locate the source of the Nile River. This expedition was financially sponsored by the Royal Geographic Society.

Lake Victoria is Africa's largest lake by area, the world's largest tropical lake, and the world's second-largest fresh water lake by surface area after Lake Superior in North America. In terms of volume, Lake Victoria is the world's ninth-largest continental lake., It occupies a shallow depression in Africa.

The lake includes many species of fish that inhabit nowhere else, especially cichlids. Invasive fish, such as the Nile perch, have driven many endemic species to extinction.

Geologically, Lake Victoria is relatively young at about 400,000 years old. It formed when westward-flowing rivers were dammed by an up thrown crustal block. During its geological history, Lake Victoria went through changes ranging from its present shallow depression, through to what may have been a series of much smaller lakes.

Geological cores taken from its bottom show Lake Victoria has dried up completely at least three times since it formed. These drying cycles are probably related to past ice ages, which were times when precipitation declined globally. Lake Victoria last dried out about 17,300 years ago, and it refilled 14,700 years ago as the African humid period began.

It receives 80 per cent of its water from direct rainfall. It also re-

ceives its water additionally from rivers, and thousands of small streams. The Kagera River is the largest river flowing into this lake, with its mouth on the lake's western shore.

In 1927-1928 Michael Graham conducted the first ever systematic Fisheries Survey of Lake Victoria. In his official report of the expedition, Graham wrote that "The ngege or satu Tilapia esculenta, is the most important food fish of the lake, whether for native or non-native consumption. No other fish equals it in the quality of the flesh. It is convenient size for trade, travels well and is found in much greater numbers than other important fish.

Starting in the 1950s, several species have been introduced to Lake Victoria where they have become invasive and a prime reason for the extinction of many endemic cichlids. Among the introductions are several tilapias: redbreast redbelly Nile and blue-spotted tilapias.

Members of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) have called on East African Community (EAC) member states to come up with investment plans so as to earn \$800 million (about 2trn/-) annually, saying this is the potential resource worth of the basin.

Regional legislators made this affirmation at recently describing the lake as the largest underutilized blue economy asset "whose wealth can jointly be exploited and shared among EAC member states," as they endorsed a vital bill aimed at the protection of the vast water body.

Rwanda member Fatuma Ndagiza told the House that Lake Victoria held the prospect of generating over US \$800million to the regional economy comprising of six member states so far.

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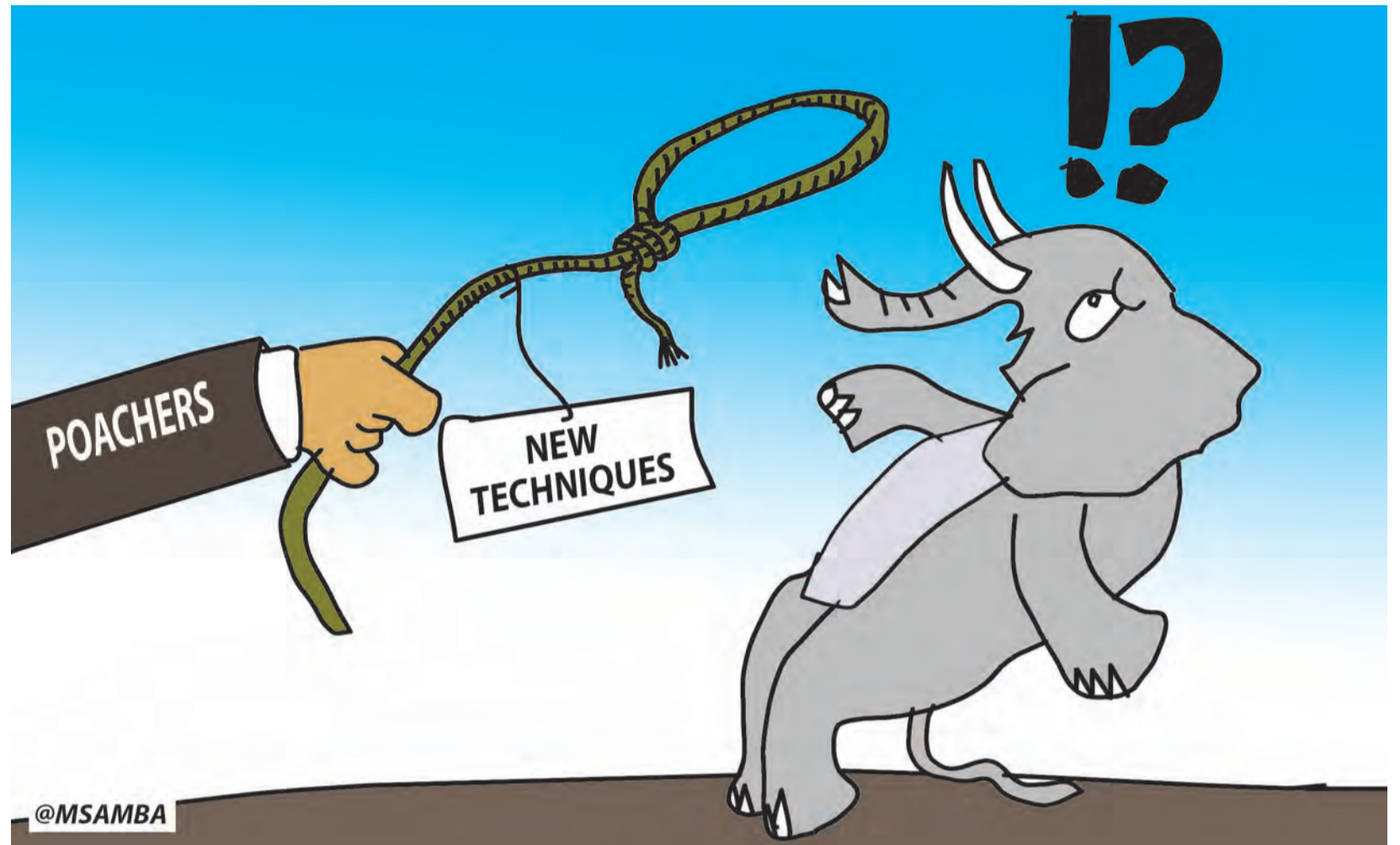
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The fourth industrial revolution is the future: Is South Africa ready?

By Jackie Nagtegal

WHEN it comes to strategising to reinvigorate South Africa's economy, there are multiple discussions on how to implement the future-forward ways of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. It's a shiny prospect for the country. But is South Africa ready for this widespread overhaul and fundamental shift, and will human dignity always be prioritised?

"Future" and "revolution": two words that strike fear in the hearts and minds of many. The former leaves a bitter aftertaste of uncertainty and the latter conjures up images of conflict. However, for others, these words instil hope, and provide the opportunity to transform countries on social and economic levels.

There is often a misconception that the Fourth Industrial Revolution's (4IR) focus on tech-driven change will result in a dystopian future devoid of a people-first system. But there is a growing school of thought that believes in the opposite. By harnessing the power of converging technologies, all key players in a society will be empowered to build an inclusive, human-centred future.

Reading a recent Gazette, I was not only relieved to see the government proclaim its support for the 4IR but, crucially, mandate itself as the custodian, too. More importantly, there was a strong understanding of the 4IR's goal in our local context. That is, to not merely implement various sophisticated technologies across economic sectors, but also to ensure the outcomes lend themselves to transforming South African communities and improving the livelihoods of people. Ultimately, as Minister of Communications Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams maintained, it's about creating an "inclusive, economically vibrant society".

Creating technological artefacts and digital systems is not the sole objective of the 4IR; it's more about injecting those assets, systems and solutions into various eco-

nomics and giving South Africa a much-needed financial edge. The 4IR can become a scaffold for a better future for all.

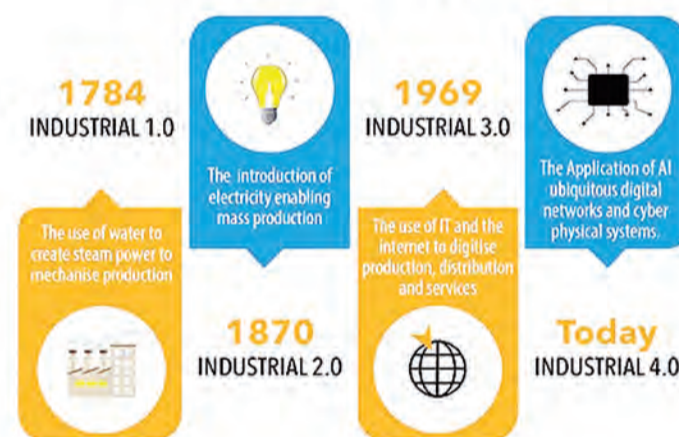
The use of automation, robotics, artificial intelligence and a digitally enabled workforce will, for example, change the mining sector radically. There will be a vast increase in mineral wealth, thanks to the maximisation of mineral extraction, reduction of mining hazards, enhancement of safety for workers and accuracy of data collection. When it comes to accessing the remaining mineral reserves, which are too deep in the ground for humans to extract safely, robotics can be deployed. The use of automation and digital rock face mapping can determine which rocks are mineral-rich and just how much can be mined from them.

Similarly, the agricultural sector will undergo a significant overhaul. For example, the combination of artificial intelligence and big data will allow for "precision agriculture", resulting in better crop health monitoring, harvest time diagnosis and soil moisture measurement, to name but a few. To preserve seed and plant resilience, biotechnology and agronomics will come into play and directly enhance food production, quality and security (all benefits for current and future generations). Then, of course, on the always-important topic of water conservation, automated monitors and sensors will help ensure only the required amount of water is used for growing crops.

Speaking of water usage, the health and sanitation sector will benefit from the 4IR, thanks to the introduction of smart meters that will give detailed and accurate info regarding use. Furthermore, intelligent solutions could be implemented to provide safe drinking water for communities in South Africa.

With all of this in mind, it is also easy to envision how 4IR technologies can

The 4th Industrial Revolution



help improve service delivery within government spheres, using artificial intelligence and data analytics. This will be of service to the health sector, environmental sector and education sector to deliver optimum results.

Finally, in the manufacturing sector, 4IR technologies and processes can help this shrinking industry by driving prices down, lowering production costs and increasing product output. This will help rebuild the industry so that it can compete with global alternatives. The manufacturing industry can boom if there is state-led research, which incorporates advanced technology and building of new material.

Of course, it would be remiss to not adopt a critical lens and consider everything in a uniquely South African context. We don't have to look too far to encounter a few speed bumps on the road to the revolution. After all, any radical overhaul needs a solid base to build upon. Is our country ready?

Right out of the gate, there is the issue of a lack of coherent and consistent policy regarding the adoption and implementation of 4IR processes. This means acquiring permits for future-forward construction or development will be challenging and potentially off-putting. What's more, from a legislative perspective, the provisions often seem to be at odds, so anyone looking for clarity regarding the road ahead might be left scratching their head in confusion. Uncertainty is never an ideal building block.

Second, the absence of skills and increasing unemployment are significant hurdles for the expediting of the implementation of the 4IR in South Africa. Elementary or unskilled workers comprise the largest share of the country's workforce, which necessitates widespread upskilling or reskilling. Not to mention, the South African labour market is a cause of concern, as 4IR requires skilled workers, techni-

cians and professionals, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Without the necessary skilled labour force, any mention of the 4IR would be all talk and no action, and no action equals low productivity and increased economic strain.

Third, there is an infrastructure and innovation shortfall. Key industry players continue to implement antiquated approaches and methodologies to run their businesses, and the same can be said about the government. What's clear is that we also need to see the connection between the reluctance to embrace innovative, tech-driven strategies and methods and fragile and old-fashioned infrastructure. A shift in mindset is essential for the elimination of high operating costs, ineffective administrative and management processes, ageing equipment and outdated machinery.

In preparing to embrace the 4IR, the government set up a Presidential Commission to report on how South Africa can forge forward in light of 4IR. These are some of the critical recommendations that stood out for me:

To participate fully in the 4IR, there is a need to invest in human capital. Learners must be thoroughly equipped to acquire knowledge, considering the speed of accreditation, flexibility and mobility of learners and remote delivery of content. New skills need to be introduced at primary, secondary and tertiary level in subjects such as science, technology engineering, robotics, programming, and artificial intelligence data analytics.

Furthermore, South Africa needs to prepare for future jobs that may not even exist currently. However, this is only possible if there is an extensive application of futuristic thinking in the corporate, government and education sectors.

But this futuristic thinking will stagnate if there isn't a support system around it. Therefore, South Africa needs to accelerate building infrastructure that is in line with the digital space and way forward. Central to access and participation of citizens in 4IR is access to the internet. This is now considered an essential service. The goal is to have 100% accessible broadband connectivity that meets the needs of the country in terms of cost, speed and quality.

Duplication of infrastructure in business and government must be eradicated. It is of interest to restructure the information communication and technology governing bodies to align with new technological trends. Additionally, industries must be modernised to accommodate a sophisticated network between different economic sectors.

Improving mental health in the newsroom plays vital role

By Neil Clark

THE coronavirus pandemic has been tough on journalists. It is a sad and negative topic to keep reporting on. It is also a lonely time. Lots of us are in constant Zoom meetings but in-person, meaningful interactions are rare.

Decades of newsroom culture have also reinforced the message that it is 'not cool to talk about your feelings', that it is part of the job to 'put up and shut up'. However, when journalists are not well they cannot properly tell the stories that matter to their readers and viewers.

At a recent (December 8) Newsrewired session, an expert panel shared practical tips around taking care of our colleagues and ourselves when we are feeling low.

It is ok not to be ok

Hannah Storm, CEO of the Ethical Journalism Network, said the pandemic has forced the journalism industry to redesign and reinvent itself in a short period of time and develop conversations around mental health.

Suddenly, we were faced with new pressures and we started to be more open to seeking help even though, as an industry, we are historically not good at admitting vulnerabilities.

"I don't think vulnerability is the right word because when we say 'I need help', that's not being vulnerable - that's actually saying 'I'm being strong and I'm admitting that something is happening to me'," Storm said.

She opened up about her own mental health and her diagnosis of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) in an article for the Poynter Institute earlier this year and since then, the support for her work around mental health in the newsroom has not ceased to grow.

"I decided to talk about my experiences, which are connected to my professional life and my personal life," she said, adding: "To recognise that it is ok to say things aren't ok is important because if we get the support and help we need, we can do a much better job. To provide and receive mental health support, talking, listening and acknowledging someone's suffering are paramount."

Check in and check out

Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, Sky Sports News assistant editor Manjiri Kulkarni set up a mental health support scheme in her newsroom. A personal experience with a relative who struggled with his mental health made her realise that most people just need someone to check in on and say 'are you all right?'.

So for the past two years, a dedicated well-being team working across Sky Sports and Sky Sports News



set up initiatives such as drop-in sessions or presentations from guest speakers at lunchtime. But the most important thing was that every newsroom has at least one person to go to when work or life get a bit too much.

Kulkarni encouraged people to look out for each other and to check in but also make sure to check out. "Take that moment to switch off even for ten minutes and go for a walk or play with the cat," she advised.

But how do you check on someone without being awkward or intrusive? "It is just about being a friend," she said, adding that one only needs to ask people if they are all right, not to solve their problems.

She elaborated: "The example that I always give is that if I have had a really bad day, I commute downstairs and I tell my husband about it. I do not want him to tell me what to do. I want him just to listen to me so that I can have that rant or get that off my chest and I just feel so much better."

'Are you sure?'

Jon Birchall, audience and content director (sport) at Reach, understands the importance of having the right kind of support in the workplace, having suffered from mental health issues since he was a teenager.

He explained that communication is key when it comes to looking after your colleagues, adding that

listening is as important as talking, and there is not one perfect way of having conversations.

Newsrooms would benefit from creating less judgmental, compassionate culture, in which mental wellbeing is treated in the same way as any other health issue. One good starting point is to follow up every 'I'm good, thank you' with 'Are you sure?'.

"Often people will put on the brave face and say 'yeah, I'm fine'. It's when you ask the second question to double-check... that you never know what that might open up," said Birchall.

It is important to give people autonomy and a voice. Birchall stressed that whether you are a junior reporter or senior editor,

when it comes to mental health, we all have to be there for each other.

Mental health day off

Global news agency Reuters has an established structure to support newsroom staff's mental health, that including a peer support network. Simon Robinson, global managing editor and one of the founders of the network, recently took over the mental health strategy at the agency.

Originally intended to support war correspondents and reporters at natural disaster sites, the scope of the programme is now much larger and the pandemic only made Reuters staff come up with innovative solutions to new mental health challenges.

Bringing people together from the two hundred locations around the world was very important. Initiatives included a virtual choir, a book club and art lessons every few weeks to help staff feel less isolated while working from home.

"You have to focus on something else that's quite different. This is a very focused window of creativity and it allows people to share and chat," Robinson said.

Another initiative that came from parent company Thompson Reuters was a Mental Health Day Off, a company-wide holiday that allowed most staff to switch off around the World Mental Health Day (October 10).

Journalists could also take part in sessions covering topics like parenting while working from home, which was very well received.

"We are at an interesting point where newsroom cultures are changing very quickly and the pandemic has accelerated that," he said.

The challenge now is to keep that momentum going as new remote workers are joining news organisations and relationship-building is getting harder.

Agencies

Last Farewells 2020: Some famous faces dead this year

LONDON

THE latest Last Farewells graphic shows some of the famous faces who have died thus far this year.

From the world of politics: Qaboos bin Said Al Said, Hosni Mubarak, John Lewis, John Hume, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.

From the world of sport: Kobe Bryant, Stirling Moss, Jack Charlton, Diego Maradona, Paolo Rossi.

From the world of science and business: Katherine Johnson, Lee Kun-Hee, Chuck Yeager.

From the arts and entertainment: Kirk Douglas, Mirella Freni, Kenny Rogers, Irrfan Khan, Little Richard, Christo, Ian Holm, Olivia de Havilland, Chadwick Boseman, Diana Rigg, Kenzo Takada, Eddie Van Halen, Sean Connery.

Qaboos bin Said Al Said, Sultan of Oman, died on January 10 at age 79. After overthrowing his father in a coup d'état in 1970, Qaboos implemented a policy of modernisation and brought an end to Oman's international isolation.

US basketball legend Kobe Bryant died in a helicopter crash in California on January 26 alongside his daughter Gianna (13) and seven other people. Bryant (41) a five-time NBA champion, played for the LA Lakers throughout his career.

Kirk Douglas, one of the last survivors of Hollywood's golden age, died on February 5 at the age of 103. His muscular intensity made him a commanding screen presence in movies such as Spartacus, Lust for Life and Paths of Glory.

Mirella Freni, an outstanding soprano in the great Italian operatic tradition, died on February 9 aged 84. Her voice was ideally suited to lighter lyric roles such as Susanna in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Mimi in Puccini's *La Bohème*.

Pioneering mathematician Katherine Johnson, who calculated rocket trajectories for NASA's early space missions including John Glenn's orbit of Earth and the Apollo 11 moon mission, died on February 24 at age 101.

Hosni Mubarak, former Egyptian president who was the autocratic face of stability in the Middle East for nearly 30 years before being forced from power in the Arab Spring uprising of 2011, died on February 25 aged 91.

US country music legend Kenny Rogers died on March 20, aged 81. The triple Grammy winner topped pop and country charts during the 1970s and 1980s, with songs including *The Gambler*, *Lucille* and *Coward of the County*.

British motor racing legend Stirling Moss died on April 12 at age 90. He is widely regarded as one of the greatest Formula 1 drivers of all time, even though he never won the World Championship.

Actor Irrfan Khan, who enjoyed art house acclaim in his native India and crossover-success in major Hollywood films like *Life of Pi*, *Slumdog Millionaire* and *Jurassic World*, died on April 29 from a rare form of cancer. He was 53.

Rock 'n' roll pioneer Little Richard died on May 9 at age 87. Hits like *Good Golly, Miss Molly*, and *Tutti Frutti*, with its lyric "awopbaloobop



Hosni Mubarak

alopbamboom", influenced musicians from Elvis Presley and the Beatles to Elton John.

Bulgarian-born artist Christo, who with his late wife Jeanne-Claude was best known for wrapping buildings, including Berlin's Reichstag, and other famous landmarks in reams of fabric, died May 31 aged 84.

Renowned British stage and screen actor Ian Holm, best known in recent years as Bilbo Baggins in *The Lord of the Rings* films, died aged 88. Other notable movies included *Chariots of Fire* and *Alien*. Football star Jack Charlton died on July 10 aged 85. He won the World Cup with England in 1966 and made a record number of appearances for Leeds United, before a successful ten-year stint managing the Republic of Ireland team.

John Lewis, a key figure of the US Civil Rights movement, died on July 17, aged 80. His beating by state troopers at Selma in 1963 shocked the nation and helped pass the Civil Rights Act. He went on to serve 17 terms in the House of Representatives.

Olivia de Havilland, a double Oscar winner and one of the last remaining stars from Hollywood's golden age, died on July 26, aged 104. She was the last surviving cast member from the 1939 epic *Gone with the Wind*.



Kobe Bryant

Nobel Laureate John Hume, a driving force behind the 1998 Good Friday Agreement that brought decades of deadly sectarian violence to an end in his native Northern Ireland and beyond, died on August 3 at age 83. Chadwick Boseman, best known as Black Panther in the Marvel superhero franchise, died on August 28, aged 43. He also played figures such as baseball great Jackie Robinson in *42*, and soul singer James Brown in *Get on Up*.

Diana Rigg, British actress best known as Emma Peel in the TV series *The Avengers*, Olenna Tyrell in *Game of Thrones* and the only woman to marry James Bond - in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* - died on September 10 at age 82.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a liberal icon who served 27 years on the US Supreme Court, died on September 18, aged 87. An outspoken advocate of gender equality and civil rights, she was known affectionately as the Notorious RBG.

Fashion designer Kenzo Takada died in Paris on October 4 at age 81, from Covid-19. His bright colours and jungle-inspired prints made him the first Japanese designer to gain prominence on the exclusive Paris fashion scene. Eddie Van Halen, the virtuoso guitarist whose complex harmonics and innovative solos created some of the most distinctive riffs in rock history, died of cancer on October 6 at age 65.

Lee Kun-Hee, South Korean businessman who



Katherine Johnson

turned his father's modest company, Samsung, into an economic powerhouse that became the world's largest producer of smartphones, died on October 25 at age 78. Scottish actor Sean Connery died on October 31 at age 90. He was the first to portray fictional British agent James Bond on the big screen, appearing as 007 in seven films. He won an Oscar in 1988 for his role in *The Untouchables*.

Football legend Diego Maradona, regarded as one of the greatest players in the history of the game, died on November 25 at age 60. He inspired Argentina to World Cup glory in 1986 after scoring two of the sport's most famous goals.

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, French president from 1974 to 1981 and who is credited with transforming postwar France and encouraging European integration, died on December 2 at age 94 from complications linked to Covid-19.

Chuck Yeager, the US test pilot who in 1947 was the first person to break the sound barrier in a Bell X-1 experimental rocket plane, died on December 7, aged 97. His feat was later immortalised in Tom Wolfe's *The Right Stuff*.

Italian football hero Paolo Rossi, who scored a memorable hat-trick against one of the best-ever Brazil teams en route to World Cup glory in 1982, died on December 9 at age 64.

Graphic News

No option for African countries but to take balanced approach to the energy transition

By NJ Ayuk in Johannesburg

AFRICA stands at a precarious juncture, where the transition from fossil fuels to renewables intersects with the economic benefits of a strategically managed oil and gas industry.

Down one road, the continent expands exploration and production of its vast natural gas and oil reserves to bring electricity, fuel and financial power to millions.

Down the other, it yields to pressure to help achieve climate targets, including outright bans on fossil fuels that would eliminate funding for natural gas projects.

Is it possible to put one foot on each path? Absolutely. Doing what's best for Africa and what's right for the environment do not have to be mutually exclusive. Some form of balance is always possible.

On a continent where millions of families are using traditional, hazardous biomass for cooking, where 600 million people lack access to reliable electricity, the idea of leaving valuable oil and, especially, natural gas, in the ground seems neither practical, palatable nor appropriate.

In fact, as the African Energy Chamber's newly released African Energy Outlook 2021 says, beyond the calamity created by Covid-19, in the short-term, the drive to curb carbon emissions is one of the conventional oil and gas industry's biggest challenges - and one of Africa's, too.

Curbing emissions is a noble and essential goal. The problems associated with climate change aren't something we can look on from afar and let someone else worry about.

After all, Africa is considered more vulnerable to the effects of climate change than many other areas, especially since so much of the population depends on regular rainfall to grow food crops.

With a warming planet bringing drought and dust storms to one part of the continent and floods to another, affecting the quality of life and livelihoods, we know first-hand how important climate justice is. We also understand that it's our responsibility as global citizens to participate in energy transition. Within reason, that is.

Energy transition, the so-called path from fossil-based to zero carbon, cannot be applied with a broad brush. What will work in Norway isn't always feasible in Namibia. What makes for sensible policy in London isn't necessarily pragmatic in Lagos.



For one thing, Africa uses so little energy now; our emissions from oil and natural gas are minimal. In fact, the World Economic Forum estimates that if all of sub-Saharan Africa tripled its electricity consumption overnight using only natural gas, the additional carbon dioxide would be equivalent to just 1 per cent of global emissions.

Admittedly, as rising incomes and population growth propel energy demand in Africa - we have the fastest growing population in the world, as well as the youngest - greenhouse gas emissions are likely to increase as well. That is, unless we follow an intelligent, modern energy plan that incorporates renewables along with natural gas.

There's room for both, as well as need: while solar power and wind can help provide electricity to fill the current and impending power void, neither can furnish feed stocks for industry, diesel for transportation, or process heat for manufacturing.

Solar power has great potential

Harnessing a renewable resource for electricity is something African has history with. We have been using hydropower for decades. It makes sense, then, that we can transfer our experience to the adoption of solar power.

In fact, when it comes to solar power, the future - pardon the pun - seems bright. Africa has already made considerable progress using solar photovoltaics (PV) to capture and convert abundant sunlight into ample energy.

South Africa, for example, has eight of the ten largest solar plants in Africa - while the continent's largest is in Morocco.

At the same time, we have also seen

advances in bringing off-grid, home-scale solar systems to rural villages in sub-Saharan Africa.

The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) has suggested that, with the right policies in place, by 2030 Africa should be able to generate more than 70 gigawatts (GW) of solar PV capacity. Considering that 1 GW could realistically power 300,000 American homes, that's a significant figure.

But is it enough?

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), demand in Africa today is 700 terawatt-hours (TWh), with the vast majority - more than 70 per cent - of the total derived from North African economies and South Africa. But the IEA predicts that by 2040, the fastest demand growth will come from sub-Saharan nations.

However, can solar scale up to meet accelerated needs in time? Without natural gas in the energy mix - especially without the gas-to-power initiatives that are part of the 2030 Roadmap - will people remain in the dark? And what can be done to take natural gas off the banned fossil fuels list?

We must curb wasteful gas flaring

The biggest concern about the continued use of natural gas comes down to one word: flaring. Flaring is the practice of routinely burning off associated natural gas that is produced from the reservoir during oil production.

Flaring is often done for technical, safety or regulatory reasons, but there's no denying that routine flaring, which happens when the economics do not support using the natural gas, is a waste of a precious resource.

And even though nearly all - 99 per cent - of natural gas is combusted when flaring is done under the right circumstances, when there are problems with the flame or other operating conditions, flaring can create a significant environmental problem.

Estimates from satellite data put the amount of carbon dioxide released into the air by flaring at 300,000 tonnes per year. And, unfortunately, that

figure is on the rise: between 2018 and 2019, the total increased by 3 per cent.

It's worth noting, however, that most of the increase during that period came from three countries - the United States, Venezuela, and Russia. Specifically, emissions during gas flaring rose by 23 per cent in the US alone.

Venezuela's total increased by 16 per cent and Russia's was up by 9 per cent. If you include Iran along with the other three, just four countries were responsible for 45 per cent of all global gas flared between 2017 and last year.

By contrast, in the rest of the oil-producing world, gas flaring has declined - down by approximately 10 per cent between 2012 and the first quarter of this year. That includes Nigeria, where flaring has dropped by 70 per cent over the last two decades, and Angola, where reducing flaring is part of a programme meant to capture natural gas and convert it into liquefied natural gas (LNG) for export.

Angola's state-owned Sonangol has partnered with four oil and gas majors, Chevron, BP, Eni and Total, to develop a US\$12 billion offshore project to produce 5.2 million tonnes of LNG per year.

It's heartening to know that five African countries - Algeria, Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Gabon, and Nigeria - are among the nations, companies and organisations that have joined the World Bank's Global Gas Flaring Reduction Partnership (GGFR). This forward-thinking group is dedicated to identifying and overcoming the barriers to flaring reduction on a country-by-country basis.

Through research, sharing best practices and advancing flare measurements and reporting, GGFR is equipping the world to live with natural gas, the fossil fuel with the lowest carbon footprint, rather than try to live without it.

We can find a balance

Like GGFR, the African Energy Chamber seeks to balance what on the surface may seem like competing interests. While their mission is to make plentiful natural gas even cleaner so that it remains a viable alternative in tomorrow's modern energy mix, we (AEC) would like to see a diversified energy industry in Africa where people and local businesses benefit from both fossil fuel activities and clean energy production.

We have only to look as far as Kenya to find a pertinent example. The nation, which is home to east Africa's largest solar generation plant, derives 93 per cent of its electricity from renewables.

Along with wind and hydropower, solar is responsible for increasing the proportion of the population with access to electricity from 63 per cent in 2017 to 75 per cent today - a nearly 20 per cent increase in just three years.

As renewables become increasingly affordable, it is likely that wind and solar development will continue, although for now, it's tough to find investors and financing to bring new projects online.

Economics are also at the heart of Kenya's new oil and gas developments - and in a positive way. With the discovery of the massive Turkana fields in the nation's north-western region, Kenya has an opportunity, albeit one that may be years away, to grow its oil and gas service sector, continue its new

role as an oil exporter, and further diversify its economy.

Legislation regulating oil exploration and production as well as outlining revenue sharing will help local communities as much as they protect the government and companies.

This isn't time to leave resources stranded

As the AEC has stated, we are all for a diversified energy mix and are looking forward to seeing cleaner energy developments surface across Africa. Currently, however, solar and wind projects rely on global value chains, which limits their ability to support local jobs, business opportunities and capacity building.

Until this can be resolved, the renewable energy industry simply cannot offer the continent the same value as a strategic approach to our oil and gas industry.

Natural gas production is particularly important, not only because of the role it can play in alleviating energy poverty but also because of its potential to be monetised, to facilitate infrastructure development, and to foster the creation and strengthening of other sectors.

And that, in turn, can lead to even more jobs, business opportunities and economic growth for African communities.

Africa needs natural gas to light the way in both a literal and figurative sense. Our future is at stake, and we need to make our voices heard.

We can curb emissions without cutting off a pathway to economic growth for the 20 African nations that have natural gas reserves. We can embrace clean energy without missing out on a critical means of giving more African households and businesses access to electricity. That's a message we can't let others drown out. The road to energy transition might be bumpy for all of us, but the idea of banning all fossil fuels makes it exceptionally treacherous, if not impassable, for Africa.

NJ Ayuk is Executive Chairman of the African Energy Chamber, CEO of Century Energy Law Group, and the author of several books about the oil and gas industry in Africa, including Billions at Play: The Future of African Energy and Doing Deals.

Africa expected to see a subdued economic recovery till 2022

NAIROBI

GHANA, Senegal and Uganda have just met virtually with international financial partners and risk analysts to discuss the most urgent risks and mitigation solutions at ATI's annual roundtable.

Analysts noted that Africa is expected to see a subdued economic recovery in 2021 and not likely to reach 2019 growth levels till 2022. Debt defaults will likely affect a small subset of countries with little chance of contagion spreading to other countries in the region.

At the ATI (African Trade Insurance Agency) Annual Investor Roundtable, investors, risk analysts and African governments weighed in on the prospects for the region to recover from the impacts of Covid-19.

Manuel Moses, ATI's newly appointed CEO, opened the session by emphasizing the importance of partnerships to help African economies recover from this unprecedented pandemic.

He also noted ATI's focus on lending more support to the most vulnerable economies, which the company plans to do through rapid membership expansion in the coming months with the support of partners like the European Investment Bank and the African Development Bank (AfDB).

The session revealed sev-

eral key factors that should guide the continent's recovery. Notably, one of the striking features of the pandemic's impact is that, unlike previous economic shocks that left their mark largely on commodity-dependent countries, for example, this pandemic is affecting a broader swathe of countries including more diversified economies and those reliant on tourism and the aviation sectors.

The International Monetary Fund estimates that US\$345 billion will be required in the next three years to help countries fully recover from the economic impacts of Covid-19.

Meanwhile, the most comprehensive debt support initiative - the G20's debt service suspension initiative (DSSI) - will only provide US\$6.5 billion to eligible countries through to June 2021. The tangle of non-traditional financing sources, from the Middle East and Asia, for example, is adding even greater complexity to the debt issue.

Analysts also noted that there aren't really any surprises given that countries likely to be the most resilient are those, such as Senegal and Uganda, which had sound fiscal and monetary policies in place before the pandemic while countries that were already vulnerable before the pandemic are predicted to fare worse with average debt burdens rising to 60 per cent of GDP in 2020 compared to



40 per cent in 2015.

Additional highlights from the session include a proposition that Africa was spared significant health impacts, but vigilance is still needed.

Pangea-Risk founder and CEO Dr Robert Besseling noted that, so far, the Covid-19 pandemic seems to have impacted mostly North and Southern Africa. Each region accounts for one-third of the cumulative infections, with Egypt and Morocco bearing the brunt of most of the infections in the North while South Africa alone accounts for as many infections in the Southern region.

However, daily rates show that Africa as a whole, including countries in the East and West, are well on their way to experiencing a second wave. Currently, there are 2.2 million cumulative infections - with 300,000 active.

It was also noted that debt default contagion is limited to a few countries and has not spread. Speakers said that rating actions have been measured and focused on where risks are highest and most press-

ing, which tend to be the less dynamic performers in the Single B category.

This year has seen Moody's take the most ratings actions, 20 in total since 2016, focused on a small subset of countries, where the Covid-19 shock exacerbated pre-existing credit weakness prior to the pandemic - leaving these countries more susceptible to shocks and possible negative ratings.

By the incoming year, six African countries are expected to record government gross debt over 100 per cent of GDP, while debt burdens overall were expected to rise then stabilise by 2021/2022 above 60 per cent of GDP.

The most vulnerable countries are well known to the markets and have had pre-existing challenges. Given the isolated nature of current defaults, the general trend does not show any threat of regional spread or contagion.

The challenge, going forward, is that these countries don't have a historic track record of stabilising such a rise in debt levels. Fiscal consolidation and revenue

generation will be some of the factors needed to improve their credit quality over time.

African governments are meanwhile seeing the need to treat countries individually. In laying out their strategies, the participating government representatives from Ghana, Senegal and Uganda all highlighted their uniqueness, which they felt should be a key factor in any discussion with partners interested in supporting post-Covid-19 recovery efforts on the continent.

The other key issue to emerge is that these countries are proactively putting in place strategic recovery plans that are both a continuation of their efforts to build sustainably while also laying the groundwork to cushion their economies against future shocks.

Senegal, for instance, as mentioned by Khalifa Sarr, an Advisor to the Minister of Economy, Planning and International Partnerships, is ranked as second out of 36 countries globally for their Covid-19 response.

This could not have been achieved, noted Sarr, if the government hadn't implemented a US\$1.7 billion economic & social resiliency programme in early April this year, representing 7 per cent of their GDP.

Sarr also called on the international community to recognise that not all debt is equal. This socio-economic programme, he noted, is credited for saving thousands of lives and strengthening social infrastructure that will protect against future pandemics while adding to the next phase of their recovery programme aimed at attracting the private sector through a new PPP

framework and policies that will ease bureaucracy for investors.

Uganda has also taken a proactive stance, despite being in the midst of presidential election campaigns. Moses Kaggwa, the Director of Economic Affairs in the Ministry of Finance, said that the country is expected to grow by 2.9 per cent this year and by between 3.5 and 4 per cent in 2021 - one of Africa's top performers.

And with a focus on generating jobs within the agricultural sector, which accounts for the employment of 70 per cent of the population, they are ramping up value addition of some of these exports in addition to domestic tourism while the Uganda Development Bank is bridging the current financing gap to manufacturing and agribusiness.

Combined, these measures are expected to aid in the country's post-pandemic recovery in a way that impacts a majority of the population.

Ghana, with a well-diversified economy, was likewise helped by stable cocoa prices and a resurgent interest by investors in gold.

According to Samuel Arkhurst, the Chief Economics Officer and Director of Treasury and the Debt Management Division, this countered the effects of the downturn in oil prices.

In addition, Ghana implemented a cash programme that will stabilise the economy in the short-term and revitalise all sectors as the country emerges from the pandemic.

Arkhurst added that Ghana is fully committed to its medium-term debt strategy and expects to return to the Eurobond market this coming year.

Agencies

Fuel tankers start rolling into Zambia

By Guardian Reporter and

Agencies

OVER 400 fuel tankers and trucks carrying various goods and other merchandise into Zambia have started crossing the border at Nakonde from Tanzania following a joint border meeting held at Tunduma on Thursday night which was chaired by Muchinga Province Minister Malozo Sichone.

The over 400 fuel tankers including about 450 In-transit IT vehicles have been marooned at Tunduma in Tanzania for the past 6 days following protests by Tanzanian truck drivers and drivers of IT vehicles who were protesting against alleged harassment by Zambian authorities and individuals.

A crew from ZANIS this morning around 06:00 hours found fuel tankers crossing

into Zambia from Tanzania

Meanwhile, Muchinga Province Minister Malozo Sichone told ZANIS at Nakonde this morning that the joint meeting held last evening between the region administration of Songwe in Tanzania and Muchinga in Zambia, concluded to allow the movement of fuel tankers and other trucks to start crossing into Zambia.

Sichone said the partial agreement was to allow Zam-

bia not to face a shortage of essential goods such as fuel and medicine.

The Provincial Minister added that a full agreement will be effected this evening after a scheduled joint meeting that was held last evening which agreed in principle to start releasing IT vehicles.

"We were in a serious situation in Zambia because some of the vehicles marooned on the Tanzanian side included

fuel tankers and we therefore agreed that fuel tankers and other trucks carrying goods and other merchandise should be allowed to cross into Zambia.

Sichone said the normal operations at the Nakonde/Tunduma border were expected to normalise within the next 24:00 hours.

And Nakonde Member of Parliament Izukanji Siwanzu was happy that the border

standoff has been resolved.

Siwanzu thanked the provincial minister for resolving the situation that he said had a huge economic effect on the country's economy.

"As area members of Parliament for Nakonde, I am happy that the border standoff has been partially resolved and by tomorrow normal operations are expected," said MSiwanzu.

And Muchinga Truck Driv-

ers Association of Zambia Chairperson for Richard Chola also commended the provincial minister for resolving the border standoff.

Chola appealed to all stakeholders to give both Zambia and Tanzanian authorities' time to completely end the standoff.

"We are happy with what has been resolved so far. This standoff was going to harm our economy," said Chola.

Polio vaccine candidate likely to end mutation risk - studies

By Inga Vesper

A NEW polio vaccine that could tackle mutated strains of the disease has passed phase II clinical trials, according to two studies published in medical journal The Lancet.

The vaccine, called nOPV2 and administered orally, is the first that works against poliovirus type 2, a mutated form of the virus that has been responsible for outbreaks in Africa and Asia.

The development follows a surge in cases of type 2 poliovirus and amid warnings that millions of children are missing out on vital vaccinations as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"A vaccine is only as good as the number of people it can reach."

Poliovirus type 2 – also known as circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus – developed from an existing oral vaccine and is causing around 90 per cent of around the world.

For this reason, the type 2 component of the existing polio vaccine was withdrawn from use in May 2016. Despite this, globally recorded type 2 poliovirus transmissions increased from 71 in 2018 to 784 so far in 2020, most of these in Pakistan, Afghanistan and parts of Sub-Saharan Africa.

The nOPV2 vaccine has been tested in 1,200 adults, children and infants and has received an Emergency Use Listing from the World Health Organization (WHO), meaning it can be deployed in global health emergencies. It

will now be used in the field to combat polio outbreaks in central Africa until enough studies have been done to approve it for wider use.

According to Ricardo Rüttimann, the vaccines unit director for Fighting Infectious Diseases in Emerging Countries, a group based at the University of Miami in the United States, the next stage of approval could happen as soon as mid-2021.

Rüttimann told SciDev.Net that the vaccine's arrival was timely, as there was great concern in the medical community about existing polio outbreaks, and the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on vaccination programmes. According to the WHO, at least 80 million infants around the world have missed out on important immunisation this year, including against polio.

"All vaccine programmes worldwide were heavily impacted during the pandemic," said Rüttimann. "Safer vaccines generate better compliance and improve coverage, which translates into more effectiveness."

The nOPV2 vaccine was tested among children in Panama, where it was proven to have lower stool shedding than existing polio vaccines – a rare problem where a newly immunised person passes some of the virus in their stool. This can put carers of infants at risk of infection if the carers are not immunised against the disease.

Ilse de Coster, vaccine researcher at the University of Antwerp and a re-



searcher for the polio study, said: "To stop type 2 polio outbreaks, high-quality immunisation campaigns with oral polio are used to reach every child, but this always carries the small risk to seed new cVDPV (circulating vaccine-derived polio virus) circulation."

"NOPV2 is a modified version of the existing type 2 vaccine that clinical trials have shown provides comparable protection against type 2 poliovirus, while being more genetically stable and less likely to revert to a form that can cause paralysis."

The new vaccine candidate may also help alleviate another problem – that of vaccine hesitancy. The fact that a component of the existing vaccine had to be withdrawn due to the risks of creating

mutated polio strains has reportedly made parents around the world more reluctant to get their children immunised.

Claudia Martinez, research programme manager for the Access to Medicine Foundation, said: "New strains from vaccines can cause concern for parents. The necessity to ensure vaccines are safe and effective has to be paramount concern."

Martinez said the new vaccine was "very encouraging", but cautioned that global health organisations and governments must remove remaining barriers to ensure it can take full effect. According to the foundation, these include shaping markets so that enough vaccine doses are produced and sold

at affordable prices, and improving transport and storage facilities.

"A vaccine is only as good as the number of people it can reach," added Martinez.

De Coster also stressed the importance of high uptake, adding: "The most important tool to eradicate polio globally is immunisation at high coverage. Only sufficiently high coverage can stop the circulation by preventing the weakened virus passing between individuals."

EU leaders clinch deal on tougher 2030 climate goal



BRUSSELS

EUROPEAN Union (EU) countries struck a deal on the bloc's new climate target on Friday after haggling through the night at a summit in Brussels, pulling the political trigger on a policy revamp to make every sector greener.

Leaders from the 27-country bloc agreed to cut their net greenhouse gas emissions at least 55 percent by 2030, from 1990 levels, upgrading an existing target to cut by 40 percent this decade.

The new target aims to put the EU on track to reach net zero emissions by 2050, a deadline scientists say the world must meet to avert the most catastrophic impacts of

climate change.

"Europe is the leader in the fight against climate change. We decided to cut our greenhouse gas emissions ... at least 55% by 2030," European Council President Charles Michel, who chaired the talks, said in a tweet. "It puts us on a clear path towards climate neutrality in 2050," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said of the new target.

For Brussels, the deal offers a chance to assert its climate leadership on the global stage. The EU will present its target at a United Nations virtual summit of world leaders on Saturday.

The target is a hard-won political compromise between wealthier, mostly western

and Nordic EU countries that want more ambitious climate action, and eastern states with coal-dependent power sectors and energy-intensive industries that wanted specific conditions attached to emissions cuts.

Poland held out alone until dawn for a deal that would guarantee promised funding from the EU carbon market for poorer countries would not be reduced.

It also sought assurances that future national emissions-cutting targets, set by Brussels for certain sectors, would be based on gross domestic product – meaning that less prosperous states would be required to cut less.

A majority of countries had opposed these demands on grounds that they would

pre-empt detailed policy proposals the EU's executive Commission will make to deliver the target.

Those proposals will overhaul the EU carbon market, speed a shift to electric vehicles and aim to mobilise the huge low-carbon investments needed – including a requirement for extra energy sector investments of 350 billion euros (\$424 billion) a year this decade.

The "at least 55 percent" target is as-good-as-final, but will need approval from the European Parliament, which supports a more ambitious 60 percent emissions cut.

"They are setting us up for a tough negotiation," said Jytte Guteland, parliament's lead lawmaker on the issue.

'Number of displaced people overshoots 80 million mark in 2020'

KINSHASA

THE number of people forced to flee their homes passed 80 million in 2020, the UN refugee agency said in a report released Wednesday in Geneva.

According to UNHCR's Mid-Year Trends report on forced displacement, the figure includes 45.7 million internally displaced people (IDPs), 29.6 million refugees and others forcibly displaced outside their country, and 4.2 million asylum seekers.

The report said persecution, conflict, and human rights violations were the main factors forcing people to flee.

Violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Somalia and Yemen all contributed to driving new displacements in the first half of 2020.

"We are now surpassing another bleak milestone that will continue to grow unless world leaders stop wars", said Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

The Sahel region, which is battling a brutal militant insurgency, has also seen fresh displacement according to the report.

The UNHCR said plans to resettle refugees were affected by the outbreak of the coronavirus.

The report adds that at the peak of the first wave of the pandemic in April, 168 countries and regions fully or partially closed their borders, with 90 countries and regions making no exception for people seeking asylum.

As a result, only 17,400 refugees were resettled in the first six months of 2020, half the figure of 2019

Niger's elections are unlikely to break the political deadlock

BY ORNELLA MODERAN AND HABIBOU SOULEY BAKO

ON 13 and 27 December, some 7.4 million Nigeriens vote in the country's local, legislative and presidential elections. The polls could mark the first peaceful transfer of power between two elected presidents - a potentially significant outcome for a country that has seen four coups since independence in 1960 and repeated interruptions of its democratic processes.

But political dialogue has stalled over the past five years, and divisions have depended over the individual candidates running for election rather than the country's needs. This situation threatens the prospect of a peaceful handover after the coming polls.

Outgoing President Mahamadou Issoufou, who served two terms, isn't standing for re-election. His decision is in line with Niger's 2010 Constitution but is still noteworthy considering that third terms are common in West Africa.

Opposition parties are calling out an electoral process in which they didn't fully participate, as they declined to sit on the central bodies making up the National Independent Electoral Commission. Nevertheless, the polls are being met with enthusiasm and the race has never been so crowded. Of the 41 presidential candidates presented, 30 were validated. Women are noticeably missing from the contest, with all applications made by men.

It is not the first time the authenticity of Nigerien leaders' citizenship is being questioned

But political dialogue is still deadlocked. The problem goes back to the previous elections in 2016, which Issoufou won. The main opposition leader Hama Amadou was barred from running over his links to a criminal case which he always claimed was a political conspiracy. Back then, part of the opposition refused to take part in a government of national unity and withdrew from political consultation bodies such as the National Council for Political Dialogue (CNDP).

Five years later, the situation remains tense. The upcoming presidential race reveals deep political divisions, with a focus on the personal backgrounds of leading candidates at the expense of Niger's governance, security and development challenges.

Amadou's application was again reject-



As the polls approach, deep divisions focus more on candidates' personal backgrounds than Niger's security and development challenges. File photo

ed over the same criminal case as in 2016, which revived frustrations. The fact that the ruling party's candidate and key government figure, Mohamed Bazoum, could run despite controversy over his nationality of 'origin' made things worse. Questions have been raised about whether he was born from Nigerien parents, as a way to disqualify him from the race.

A court decision on 3 December closed the case for now, although an appeal is possible. But suspicions around Bazoum's citizenship highlight the need to modernise Niger's civil registration system. This would help to quickly deal with such debates in future, allowing energy to be refocused on what candidates are offering voters.

Reform of Niger's civil registration system will have more than administrative value

It's not the first time the authenticity of leaders' citizenship is being questioned. Former presidents Mahamane Ousmane and Mamadou Tandja underwent the same treatment. Given the recurrence of such controversies, civil registration reform has more

than administrative value. It could prevent certain political conflicts by improving the veracity of documents legally required to run for office.

A reliable registration system would also strengthen public belief in future voter registers. It would smooth the administration's functioning and individuals' access to their civil rights. Given the ongoing security crisis in Niger, a sound civil register would also improve the country's capacity to track suspects, as changing identity would be harder.

A law dealing with a stronger civil registration system was adopted in 2019, reflecting the government's commitment to upgrading Niger's public records capacity. The incoming government will need to maintain momentum and ensure the legislation is implemented.

The task may seem daunting, given the size of Niger's territory (1 267 000 km² - the sixth largest country in Africa) and the accumulated backlog. But the electoral commission's mobile court hearings between 2018 and early 2020 showed that results are possible.

The campaign took civil registration services to people even in remote areas and delivered over 5.8 million civil status documents in just a few months.

Many Nigeriens, especially in rural areas, don't see the need to update their civil documentation

The country's next administration needs to approach the task with consistency and determination. Sustaining national investments in education and registration campaigns is crucial considering that many Nigeriens, especially in rural areas, don't see the need to keep their civil documentation up to date.

Constructive and frank dialogue between the main political groups will also be needed to deal with the full spectrum of Nigeriens' concerns. These include transparency and integrity of public action, especially since multiple corruption scandals have surfaced in recent months.

A redistribution of power after the elections may help to reinvigorate the National Council for Political Dialogue, which the op-

position lost interest in after January 2016. Failing that, Article 69 of the Constitution could be used to set up a Council of the Republic to prevent and resolve institutional and political crises through consensus. But this precious governance tool will only be effective if it is convened by a legitimate president.

The next government should expect growing demand from citizens for participation and accountability, particularly from Niger's overwhelmingly young people population. The fact that University of Niamey students organised a series of open meetings for presidential candidates to engage with students this year is telling. It sends a clear signal about young people's aspirations for more transparent and responsive governance.

AGENCIES

China-ASEAN relationship exemplary in building community with shared future for humankind

By He Yin

THE relationship between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has grown into the most successful and vibrant model for cooperation in the Asia-Pacific and an exemplary effort in building a community with a shared future for mankind.

Themed "Building the Belt and Road, Strengthening Digital Economy Cooperation," the 17th China-ASEAN Expo (CAEXPO) was held from Nov. 27 to 30 in Nanning, capital of south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

This year's expo, held both online and offline, set up 5,400 booths in the venue and attracted more than 1,500 enterprises.

A total of 86 investment cooperation projects were signed at the event, with a total value of 263.87 billion yuan (\$40.13 billion), up 43.6 percent year on year, the highest in the CAEXPO history.

The enormous vitality of the CAEXPO fully indicated the huge potential for cooperation between China and ASEAN countries.

At the opening ceremony of the 17th China-ASEAN Expo and China-ASEAN Business and Investment Summit, Chinese President Xi Jinping said that "Under the new circumstances, China continues to regard ASEAN as a priority in its neighborhood diplomacy and a key region in high-quality Belt and Road cooperation. China supports ASEAN's community-building, supports ASEAN centrality in East Asian cooperation, and supports ASEAN in playing a bigger role in

building an open and inclusive regional architecture."

Xi called on China and ASEAN to enhance strategic mutual trust and further synergize development plans, elevate economic and trade cooperation and facilitate an early and full recovery of the regional economy, enhance innovation in science and technology and deepen cooperation on the digital economy, and strengthen cooperation against COVID-19 and enhance capacity building in public health.

Xi's proposals, which focus on both immediate and long-term needs, sparked heated discussion in ASEAN countries.

The proposals are of important significance for building a closer ASEAN-China community with a shared future and chart the course for the future development of the ASEAN-China relationship, said Aksornsri Phanisharn, an adviser to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee of Thailand.

China and ASEAN countries, connected by the mountains and rivers, share close affinity and a long-standing friendship. Among ASEAN's dialogue partners, China has been number one on many fronts. China was the first to join the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, the first to forge strategic partnership with ASEAN, the first to start free trade area (FTA) negotiations with ASEAN, and the first to give unequivocal support for ASEAN centrality in East Asian regional cooperation.

In 2013, President Xi announced an initiative for China to work with ASEAN countries for a 21st Century



Women try Thai skin care products at the 17th China-ASEAN Expo in Nanning, south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Nov. 28. File photo

Maritime Silk Road and for a closer China-ASEAN community with a shared future.

Seven years on, China and ASEAN enjoy growing connectivity, deepening economic integration, robust business ties, and closer people-to-people exchanges.

Over the past seven years, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has borne fruit in ASEAN countries. China and ASEAN countries are further synergizing the BRI with ASEAN's development plans and steadily advancing the China-Laos Railway, the China-Thailand Railway, the Jakarta-Bandung Railway and other major projects.

China will work with ASEAN to implement the China-ASEAN Joint Statement on Synergizing the Belt and Road Initiative and the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025. To be specific, more efforts will be made to build the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor, strengthen cooperation on infrastructure connectivity including railways, highways, ports, airports, power and communications, speed up the development of existing economic corridors

and key projects, and continue to develop the China-ASEAN Multimodal Transport Alliance. It is a general trend and an aspiration of the people to forge closer ties between the two parties.

New achievements in economic and trade cooperation are being made by China and ASEAN. Since the establishment of the China-ASEAN FTA 10 years ago, the trade volume between China and ASEAN rose from \$292.8 billion in 2010 to \$641.5 billion in 2019, and in the first three quarters of 2020, it reached \$481.8 billion, up 5 percent from the same period of last year, making ASEAN China's largest trading partner for the first time.

The economic and trade cooperation between the two sides has significantly promoted their development and prosperity.

The recently signed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership is conducive to enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness of the region, promoting regional economic recovery, allowing the Asia-Pacific to remain

the bellwether in this regard, and further boosting the confidence of both sides in economic and trade cooperation.

The digital economy represents the future direction of global development and an important area for cooperation between China and ASEAN.

This year is designated the China-ASEAN Year of Digital Economy Cooperation. Both sides will work together to seize the opportunities presented by a new round of scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation, tap into complementarity and pursue mutually beneficial cooperation. China and ASEAN can create more highlights of cooperation in such areas as smart city, 5G, artificial intelligence, e-commerce, big data, blockchain and telemedicine to help nurture new drivers for social and economic development of the two sides.

China has always developed relations with ASEAN countries in accordance with the principle of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness. As a Chinese saying goes, neighbors wish each other well just as family members do.

As China continues to expand opening-up to the outside world and increasingly fuels a worldwide recovery with its own economic rebound, China-ASEAN cooperation will enjoy still greater prospects.

Next year will mark the 30th anniversary of China-ASEAN dialogue relations. People in the region hope to see that the two sides will join hands to take the China-ASEAN strategic partnership to a higher level and forge a closer China-ASEAN community with a shared future, so as to inject more stability and certainty into the regional situation, inject new momentum into regional development and advance their well-being.

People's Daily

BUSINESS

OUTSTANDING

Apex High: 'We showed we are willing to do whatever it takes'

COVID-19

SA companies may require staff to be vaccinated before returning to work

JOHANNESBURG

Businesses exploring mandatory vaccination policies to ensure the health and safety of their workforces will need to tread carefully: although employers have an obligation to ensure a safe workspace, employees have the right to security and control over their bodies – and that tension could end up in the Constitutional Court.

The predicament has been analysed in detail by one of the country's largest law firms, Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr (CDH), as South Africa awaits the local rollout of a Covid-19 vaccine. With clinical trials entering advanced stages, and South Africa partnering with a global access initiative to secure supply, it seems likely that a vaccine will be administered, in a phased approach, midway through 2021.

While mandatory vaccinations may be rare, examples exist both in South Africa and abroad. As noted by CDH, compulsory yellow fever vaccinations are required when travelling to certain African and South American countries with high transmission rates. And while there's no law enforcing the immunisation of children in South Africa, most public and private schools require proof that prospective pupils have been vaccinated. But children cannot be denied admission to such institutions if they are not vaccinated, because institutional codes are superseded by the Constitution, experts say.

As has been done by other nations in the past, within the context of diseases like smallpox and polio, the South African government may implement a mandatory vaccination policy for the coronavirus, but it too will need to satisfy constitutional requirements. In the meanwhile, or alternatively, com-

panies – especially those that employ large workforces in confined spaces – are likely to investigate enforcing vaccination.

"The gist behind mandatory vaccination is that employers have an obligation to protect their employees and maintain a healthy and safe working environment," say CDH's Imraan Mahomed, Riola Kok and Rethabile Mochela. Section 36 of the Constitution allows for individual rights to be limited for the greater good of the nation, as long as restrictions are reasonable.

But South Africa's Bill of Rights allows employees to object on several grounds. An employee may refuse to accept the vaccine for medical reasons, if its proven to have harmful side effects or if irrefutable scientific evidence points to immunity through exposure when the person has already tested positive for Covid-19.

Young employees, with no comorbidities, who have been advised against getting vaccinated by their physicians may also object. "Employees may also object to being vaccinated on the basis that the vaccines may include substances such as swine, whose consumption is prohibited for religious reasons," says CDH.

If an administered vaccine has negative health effects, whether in the short or long term, employers who have authorised a mandatory programme are at real risk of legal liability. Employers have also been urged to take careful note of the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), which regards private medical information, including a history of vaccinations, as confidential. On this basis, employees may object to answering certain vaccine-related questions, forcing an employer to apply for consent.



Renate van der Westhuizen, principal of Apex High School in Elsies River in Cape Town, addresses staff and pupils.

CAPE TOWN

"We will do whatever it takes. We've been saying it for three years, and this year we showed our pupils we really will," says Renate van der Westhuizen, principal of the school. The school has been voted the News24 Super School 2020 for its Covid-19 "keep learning" initiatives. More than 20 000 News24 readers voted in the inaugural competition.

When President Cyril Ramaphosa announced that schools would reopen in June while the country's Covid-19 outbreak was still very much at its peak, the teachers at the school did not blink. Every single staff member said they wanted to continue teaching immediately, says Van der Westhuizen.

A no-fee, dual-medium public school in Eertse River, Cape Town, Apex High managed to move all classes online while ensuring that all 900 pupils had devices and internet access. Classes were initially held on Facebook where teachers used the interactive features to motivate pupils. When, after a week pupils started to drop off, they realised that the data costs were becoming too much.

With the help of their collaboration partner, non-profit organisa-

tion Acorn Education, they created a data free website where pupils could access all lessons on their phones, completely free. To make this possible, teachers had to keep lessons compact and only upload videos of 3mb and smaller.

"The teachers had to really think what they wanted to say and compress it in such a way as not to compromise the rigour of our lessons," says Van der Westhuizen. "We didn't cut anything out of the curriculum and completed the entire year's work."

Apex High School has an extended school day of eight hours so that teachers can have the maximum amount of contact time with pupils and make up for any knowledge gaps they may have when they enter the school at Grade 8. Grade 8s and 9s go to the computer lab three times per week to focus on math and home language education.

The school opened four years ago and will have its first matric cohort next year. It aims to have a 100% pass rate, something that very few no-fee schools in the Western Cape have managed to achieve. It currently has roughly 900 pupils and has already received 1 500 applications for next year.

"We spend a lot of time on

school culture and discipline and on getting buy-in from the kids. We didn't want to lose that during the lockdown and worked very hard to motivate the kids," says Van der Westhuizen.

"It took a while, but we are producing good academic results and our kids are starting to act differently, because we really try to instil our school's seven values, which are compassion, responsibility, authenticity, integrity, excellence, respect and grit." Like most schools, they set up WhatsApp groups for different classes and pupils to keep in touch.

Van der Westhuizen recorded a voicenote every morning to send to register teachers, which would, in turn, be sent to parents. In it she would speak about Covid-19, the importance of wearing a mask and social distancing and why they encouraged pupils to adhere to lockdown rules. Each teacher also called regularly called their pupils to make sure they coped academically, socially and emotionally. They awarded pupils who worked hard with gold stars and published it on Facebook.

Leading from the front

While the school deals with the same social issues as other schools in the area, including gangsterism, it proactively tackled concerns

around ways to keep their pupils connected and motivated to learn from home. "Our kids face the same challenges as other kids in the area, but we don't hold them to that standard," says Van der Westhuizen.

"I think we must change the way we lead our schools. You cannot be a principal that does admin in her office all day. You have to be instructional and lead by example. You have to be out there spending time on school culture, looking at the data, coaching teachers to be leaders. And if the kids are not learning, you should change the way you teach. Flip the classroom a little, let the kids do the heavy lifting."

Dr Abraham de Villiers, head of education at Acorn Education, Apex High School's collaboration partner, said the school showed what can be done with a positive mindset, persistence and willingness. "Their efforts meant very few learning hours were lost."

Bronagh Casey, spokesperson for the Western Cape department of education, congratulated the school on being named News24 Super School 2020. "It is wonderful that they have been recognised for their achievements and initiatives during this very tumultuous year," she said.

Stress during pregnancy hurts children's lungs

NAIROBI

Asthma is among the common respiratory conditions that affect children. And its severe symptoms may prevail into adulthood.

The ailment usually causes people's airways in the lungs to narrow and get inflamed. This makes breathing difficult for those with the condition. Aside from shortness in breath, other symptoms of the disease include chest tightness or pain, wheezing, coughing and sleep problems.

For some people, asthma may just cause minor symptoms. But for others, the condition can be a major problem that interferes with daily activities. It may also lead to life-threatening breathing complications brought about by asthma attacks. What causes asthma is still unknown. And this is a concern for many parents who are constantly looking for ways to protect their children from harm.

"I have seen the pain that the condition causes parents and those with it. My niece has it and is constantly in hospital, with breathing problems. My sister has had to spend a lot of money to help with managing the disease and preventing severe symptoms," says Annette who has witnessed first-hand the consequences of the ailment through the experiences of her elder sister's child. "You can't tell whether the child you give birth to, will have the disease or not. But it would be nice to know if there's something that parents can do to prevent the condition," she says.



Depression and anxiety in mums-to-be are linked to a heightened risk of asthma and poorer lung function in their children.

A new study published in the *Thorax Journal* offers some insights into the role mothers can play to reduce the risk of their offspring developing the condition. According to the research, depression and anxiety in mums-to-be is linked to a heightened risk of asthma and poorer lung function in their children.

Based on the results of the study, the researchers note that the risk of developing respiratory disease – such as asthma in later life – is likely programmed in the womb, and not necessarily influenced by as yet unmeasured genetic, social or environmental factors. During the study, the researchers brought on board will-

ing parents – pregnant women and respective fathers – who were monitored keenly, together with their unborn baby.

Upon delivery, the researchers continued to monitor the well-being and health status of those children. This gave them a rare opportunity to be able to track life from early preg-

nancy onwards, as the children grew up in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

Asthma status

The degree of overall psychological distress, depression and anxiety experienced by each parent in the second term of pregnancy and three years after the birth, was also assessed accordingly. In addition, the researchers monitored the lung function of their offspring (3,757 in total) when they were 10 years old. They also sought to obtain information on their asthma status.

At the end of the research period, the results of the study revealed that children of mothers that suffered from mental health challenges (psychological distress and symptoms of anxiety or depression) during pregnancy had an increased risk (between 45 per cent and 92 per cent) of suffering from asthma. Overall, they were also likely to have poor lung health. Factoring in fathers' psychological distress during pregnancy did not change this association.

"There are plausible biological explanations for the findings. These include excess production of various hormones prompted by psychological distress that interfere with foetal lung development," note the researchers.

Aside from lung health problems, stress during pregnancy has also been linked to low immunity among affected children. This can also be the reason why they are susceptible to diseases affecting the lungs such as asthma or pneumonia.

Indeed, a recent study published

in the *Clinical & Experimental Allergy Journal* revealed that high stress levels experienced by expectant mothers could affect the production of immunoglobulins (antibodies) that play an essential role in the body's immune system.

Managing stress

Due to the adverse effects of stress on the well-being of children, mothers are advised to deliberately embrace recommended approaches for reducing or effectively managing stress during pregnancy. They include embracing healthy diets, getting sufficient sleep, exercising and staying positive amid the physical, psychological and emotional strain experienced during pregnancy. Performing deep breathing exercises, each day, can also help to calm the body and relieve stress.

Mothers are advised against responding to stress in negative ways such as withdrawing from people, sleeping to escape problems, skipping meals or eating junk food, and using alcohol and tobacco. They are urged to surround themselves with loving and supportive people, as well as to reach out for help when feeling overwhelmed by the pregnancy.

Opening up and talking about the challenges with trusted family members, relatives and friends is also helpful. Nevertheless, pregnant women are encouraged to seek professional help from doctors or health practitioners if stressful experiences become persistent and overwhelming.

ENTERPRISING

Rwandan female entrepreneur is on course to raise \$490,000 in funding

KIGALI

It is estimated that over 400 million Africans, who live mainly in rural areas are without clean water.

In order to help bridge this gap, Water Access Rwanda - a social enterprise committed to eradicating water scarcity by providing appropriate technologies for durable access to water, is on a mission to raise more capital with a goal of covering 12 countries by 2030.

With 70,000 serviced daily via its safe water mini-grids, WARwanda is setting high ambitions to service over 30 million people in the next 10 years and create over 13,000 jobs, greatly multiplying its current reach.

Despite running an innovative and lucrative product portfolio, the company has been bootstrapping with most of its operating cash directly sourced from revenues and time to time complemented by grants won through challenges and competitions. Christelle Kwizera, the founder of Water Access Rwanda said there is generally a lack of financing available in the ecosystem for innovative start-ups.

"At WARwanda, we are pushing boundaries with all our services and products, and unapologetically design for the bottom of the pyramid living on less than \$5 per day. We thus easily miss out on funds looking for more established and predictable business models," she said.



Christelle Kwizera, the founder of Water Access Rwanda.

"The water sector requires very patient capital but offers massive impact return together with the capital return. I feel like raising money for such a niche sector while also being a black female founder was much harder," she added.

Kwizera revealed however that they were able to find a great investor, 3rd Creek Foundation, a US based private family foundation whose vision is a world without poverty. The foundation makes grants and impact investments,

most often in initiatives that target job creation, income improvement, or increased household savings for people experiencing extreme poverty.

"The investor believes in what we do and is busy pulling in others to invest in us. It is important to note that we are getting this funding from foundations who have now opened impact investment arms instead of being grant-only, it fits in our deep belief that we can create business models that deliver

profit and impact and can be sustained by the market at scale," Kwizera remarked.

Gwen Straley, Executive Director of 3rd Creek Foundation said they are investing in Water Access Rwanda because the organisation has a strong track record supporting communities with accessible, affordable and safe water.

She said, increasing clean water accessibility has a real impact on individual livelihoods, particularly for women, who are often burdened with the responsibility of collecting water. When women recover that time and energy, (sometimes multiple hours per day) from using a WARwanda water point, they access more independence to work on other necessities or ambitions.

"We are impressed with Christelle and her team's dedication to building out WARwanda's vision, serving disenfranchised communities, and commitment to transparency. We hope other funders will consider supporting this endeavour to make clean water accessibility ubiquitous throughout the region."

"As a very small foundation, we want to ensure our investment dollars serve our partners and their communities in the most impactful way. By evaluating a new partner/project, and thereafter making an early stage investment. Our aim is to attract additional funders to the table, ideally catalysing additional funding to support solutions to ending global poverty. So while other investors may be discouraged from being the first to invest, we often see an incentive to be first - or at least early," Straley noted.

DISASSOCIATE

SA alcohol industry withdraws brand support for festive season events

CAPE TOWN

Police minister Bheki Cele visited the Bellville taxi rank in Cape Town on Thursday morning. His visit was to launch the festive season readiness campaign as we move closer to the holiday season.

The South African alcohol industry says, in support of the government's efforts to curb the spread of Covid-19, it has decided to withdraw brand support for festive season events. "The sector has, therefore, decided to withdraw support for or associating its brands with naming rights for major entertainment events for which an events licence is required," it said in a statement this week.

The statement was issued by FTI Consulting on behalf of, among others, the South African Liquor Brand owners Association (SALBA) and Liquor Traders Formations, a coalition of liquor traders in South Africa comprising the National Liquor Traders Council and Liquor Traders Association of South Africa. The industry said its members would also not associate themselves with activities which had the potential of attracting crowds that exceeded the regulations of 50% capacity.

The industry has called on consumers, customers and event organisers to avoid gatherings that did not conform to Covid-19 health and safety regulations; mainly wearing masks and social distancing. The chairperson of SALBA, Sibani Mngadi, who represents the industry, urged people to download the Covid-19 Alert SA mobile app and make use of the hotline to report any violations.

"The summer season is a time for social gatherings, celebrations and attending events, which can be super-spreader events and carry a huge risk of transmission of the virus. "As a nation, we simply cannot afford this. Let's work together to limit the negative effects of excessive alcohol consumption and ensure a safe and responsible environment for all," Mngadi said.

ACTIVISM

End Sars protests: The Nigerian women leading the fight for change

LAGOS

Rinu Oduala is 22 years old and outspoken - Nigeria's government feels so threatened by her that her bank account has been frozen. She was among tens of thousands of young Nigerians, including many women, who made history with the protests that swept the country in October against police brutality.

Ms Oduala was one of the first to take to the streets after a video went viral of a man allegedly being killed by the notorious Special Anti-Robbery Squad (Sars), sparking what became known as the EndSars demonstrations. She set up camp outside the Lagos governor's office on 7 October, demanding the police unit be disbanded.

As a media strategist, she knew how to rally people on social media to join her - organising blankets for people who ended up sleeping outside the state government buildings for 72 hours before police attacked them.

With her 172,000 Twitter followers, she is one of several women who have shaken the Nigerian establishment to its core over the last six weeks. Her EndSars activism saw her Twitter account get the blue verified badge.

Today she is part of a panel in

Lagos sitting at a judicial inquiry into police abuse - one of the key demands of the protesters after the president disbanded the unit. But she is concerned about her security and is one of 20 protest organisers to have their funds frozen by the central bank early in November.

"It's disheartening that our good intention of ending police brutality would make us get tagged as terrorists," she told the BBC. The central bank says it sought a court order to block the accounts for 90 days in order to find out the source of their funds. Ms Oduala says her lawyers are challenging the order.

"This is just the beginning" Another female EndSars activist - lawyer Modupe Odele - had her passport confiscated last month. She had offered legal aid to those arrested during the demonstrations. And last week, the website of the Feminist Coalition - a group set up by around 10 women in July to fight for gender equality, which became active during the EndSars protests - was blocked inside Nigeria and it is not clear who was behind the move.

During the protests the non-governmental organisation raised \$385,000 (£290,000) through crowdfunding and spent part of the money on legal services for those protesters who were arrested,

to pay medical bills for those wounded, to provide private security at protest points and daily refreshments.

The group says the rest of the funds are to be used to provide support, including mental health counselling, for victims of police brutality and the families of those who died. It also hopes to sponsor a memorial for those killed by the police.

"This is just the beginning of a youth awakening in Nigeria, of things that we can do to improve the state of the country," Fakhriyyah Hashim, a co-founder of Feminist Coalition, told the BBC. "We will continue to do this, especially in the lives of women," she said.

Nigeria may be a very patriarchal society, but women have always been vocal in demanding change, most notably during the anti-colonial struggle. So the organising power of the women on the EndSars frontlines should not surprise the authorities.

In 1929 the Aba women's riots - also referred to as the "Women's War" - were sparked by plans to tax southern market women. Over two months, thousands of women were involved in protests that saw colonial shops and banks attacked and courts burnt down. In the end the colonial administrators backed down.

Eighteen years later,

Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, mother of the famous Afrobeat star Fela Kuti, successfully mobilised thousands of women against more proposed taxes to be levied on small traders.

Dubbed the Lioness of Lisabi, she became a firm advocate for women's suffrage and an important figure in the fight for independence. The estimated 20,000 women who joined her

Abeokuta Women's Union were known for their persistence, never giving up until achieving their aim. "The history of Nigeria has had a lot of women come out to fight and push for their rights. Those battles strong women before us fought have been downplayed," said Ndi Kato, a gender activist who participated in the EndSars protests.



Nigerian women protest against police brutality in Lagos recently.

ADVICE

Covid in the car: Science says keep all four windows open

JOHANNESBURG

A new study has found that the safest way for two people to lower the risk of transmitting Covid-19 while travelling in a car, is with all four windows down and the passenger seated as far as possible from the driver - in the rear seat and on the opposite side to the driver.

The study by research hub Science Advances tested scenarios where a driver or passengers are most likely to be at risk of transmitting or catching highly infectious respiratory diseases, like Covid-19 or influenza. The vehicle that was used in the test was a sedan that is typically used by e-hailing services in South Africa. The

study results do not apply to trucks, trains, minibus taxis and buses.

Three better than two Researchers investigated the risk of transmission with all four windows up - as well as four other scenarios with either one or two windows closed. The risk of droplet transmission was highest when all four windows

were closed and the car's air conditioning system was being used.

The findings also show that travelling with three windows open was much better than two. But the study also revealed that choosing the correct windows to be open or closed played a role in the risk of transmission. Closing the window where the person

who is not infected is sitting, involves the lowest risk after the option of all the windows being open.

"These results will have a strong bearing on infection mitigation measures for the hundreds of millions of people driving in passenger cars and taxis worldwide, and potentially yield to safer and lower-risk approaches to

personal transportation," the authors say in a press release.

According to the Uber app services, passengers should sit at the back in order to lower the risk of transmission. However, the e-hailing service does not advise passenger on which side of the car they should be seated.

The study recommends that it should be on the

opposite side of the driver. Everyone should wear a mask to lower the probability of spreading the virus. In government guidelines, minibus taxis and trains should have the windows open for good ventilation in order to decrease the chances of passing on the virus to the next person.

FESTIVITY

Finnair launches \$10 Business Class virtual flights to see Santa

HELSINKI

When it comes to getting in the holiday spirit, you can't do much better than a visit to see Santa in his cabin in snowy Lapland. And this Christmas, a Finnish airline is giving families the chance to do exactly that.

Finnair is set to operate eight virtual-reality 'flights' departing Helsinki and flying north to Santa's home town of Rovaniemi. Using VR technology, travellers will 'fly' in Business Class aboard one of the airline's A350 aircraft. The jets are being decked out with festive decorations and cabin crew will be serving virtual holiday-themed drinks.

There's no luggage restrictions on these special flights but with demand to see Santa Claus on Christmas Day set to be high, flights are likely to be busy. Finnair advises travellers that they should be ready to share their row with some familiar festive characters.

The 30-minute flights will traverse starry skies and pass the Northern Lights before landing in Rovaniemi. Guests can then cross the Arctic Circle and step inside Santa's workshop, where Mr Claus himself will be waiting, fresh from his Christmas Eve duties.

Tickets for the flights cost \$10, with all profits going to Unicef. They are available to purchase on the Finnair website. Other



A 2020 Finnair advertisement depicts one of the airline's most frequent fliers.

than a mobile phone or a laptop, no special equipment is needed to board the flight, although travellers who use VR headsets will have an extra advantage. The holiday flights will be broadcast as a live-stream. Travellers will get a link and an access code to join the flight when they make a book-

ing and, with various departure times on the schedule, all travellers need to do is make sure they log on in time for take-off. Developed alongside a Finnish VR studio called Zoan, the festive flights are Finnair's first foray into the world of VR flying. For Laura Olin, Zoan's chief operating officer, the most important thing when working with Finnair was ensuring that while technology was the basis for the flight, it was made available to as many people as possible.

"Most people don't have VR headsets, so the Finnair VR flight is browser-based. It'll offer a 360° view, so you can look around your seat at all times, but you can use your computer, your phone or a headset where you can utilise a browser if you have one."

Finnair is also happy to welcome as many travellers as possible on to these special winter flights. "The benefit of virtual flying is that we're not limited to any capacity," says Tiina Tisari, vice president of Finnair

customer experience and products. "That means an unlimited number of customers can climb aboard and take their kids to see Santa this holiday."

Santa's favourite airline Finnair is Santa's preferred airline, having flown with the Finnish airline for more than 20 years. The first Santa Claus liveried Finnair jet took to the skies in 1984 and the airline became "the official carrier of Santa Claus" four years later.

Each year, in the lead-up to Christmas, Mr Claus usually joins Finnair on a winter tour of Europe and Asia in partnership with the Santa Claus Foundation. In 2020, things are looking a little different. Santa has spent most of the year at home thanks to travel restrictions and the global pandemic. But don't worry, Father Christmas is first in line to receive the Covid-19 vaccination, so he'll be able to safely make his sleigh ride visits to children across the world on Christmas Eve.

RELIEF

Don Trump's recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara raises hope

RABAT

Moroccan King Mohammed VI had a telephone conversation on Thursday with both US President Donald Trump and President of the Palestinian National Authority, Mahmoud Abbas.

During the first phone conversation, President Trump informed King Mohammed VI of the promulgation of a presidential decree on the decision of the United States of America to recognize, for the first time in history, the full sovereignty of the Kingdom of Morocco over the entire region of Moroccan Sahara.

In this context and as the first concrete expression of the US position, President Trump has decided to open a consulate in Dakhla, with a primarily economic vocation, to encourage American investments and contribution to economic and social development.

On this occasion, the Sovereign expressed, in his personal name and on behalf of all the Moroccan people, to the American President, his deep gratitude to the US for the historic position. "His Majesty the King also conveys his sincere thanks to the US President and his team for this frank and unambiguous support to the Moroccan Sahara," a statement from the Royal Palace stated.

Such support strengthens the powerful strategic partnership between the two countries and raises it to the level of a true alliance that encompasses all fields. "This constructive position of the United States of America reinforces the dynamics of the consecration of the Moroccan Sahara, confirmed by the positions of support by a group of friendly countries,

as well as by the decisions of many countries to open consulates in Morocco's southern provinces," King Mohammed VI's statement added.

It also comes after the decisive and effective intervention of the Royal Armed Forces in Al Guer-guarat area, to maintain security and stability in the Moroccan territory and to ensure the free movement of people and goods with the brotherly African countries. Meanwhile, King Mohammed VI also informed the Palestinian President of the content of the telephone call that he had with President Trump, stressing that the position of the Moroccan government in supporting the Palestinian cause remains unchanged as since days of his father, the late King Hassan II.

The Sovereign assured that Morocco supports the two-state solution and that the negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli parties are the only way to reach a final, lasting and comprehensive solution to the conflict. In his capacity as Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee, an offshoot of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, King Mohammed VI has never ceased to insist on the need to preserve the special status of the city of Al Quds Asharif and to respect the freedom to practice religious rites for followers of the three monotheistic religions, as well as the Muslim aspect of Al-Quds Asharif and the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

"The Sovereign also stressed that Morocco has always placed the Palestinian question at the same level as the question of the Moroccan Sahara," the Royal Palace statement added.



King Mohammed VI of Morocco (right) and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.



ISIDINGO MONDAY - FRIDAY STARTING 7:30 PM

ITV	MONDAY 07 Dec	TUESDAY 08 Dec	WEDNESDAY 09 Dec	THURSDAY 10 Dec	FRIDAY 11 Dec	23:30	00:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	12:00	12:30	13:00	13:30	14:15	15:00	16:00	16:20	17:00	18:00	18:15	19:00	19:30	20:00	21:00	21:30	22:10	00:30	05:30	6:00	6:40	7:30	8:00	8:55	9:00	9:30	9:55	10:00	10:30	10:55	11:00	11:55	12:00	12:30	13:00	13:30	14:00	14:15	15:00	16:30	17:00	18:00	18:15	19:00	19:30	20:00	21:00	21:30	22:15	23:00	23:30	00:30	06:00	07:00	09:00	10:30	13:00	14:00	14:15	16:00	16:30	17:00	17:30	18:00	19:00	20:00	21:00	21:30	22:45	23:15	06:00	07:00	09:00	13:00	14:00	16:00	16:30	17:00	17:30	18:00	19:00	20:00	21:00	21:30	22:45	23:00	06:00	07:00	09:00	13:00	14:00	16:00	16:30	17:00	17:30	18:00	19:00	20:00	21:00	21:30	22:45	23:00	06:00	07:00	09:00	13:00	14:00	16:00	16:30	17:00	17:30	18:00	19:00	20:00	21:00	21:30	22:45	23:00																							
23:30 The Base	5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi	5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi	5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi	5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi	5:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi	23:30 The Base	00:30 DWTW	10:00 Watoto wetu	10:30 Usafiri wako rpt	11:00 The Base	12:00 Al Jazeera	12:30 Kipindi Maalum rpt: Tanesco	13:00 Jagina rpt	13:30 Rock City marathon rpt	14:15 Telenovela rpt: (Piel Salvaje)	15:00 Meza huru	16:00 Igizo rpt: Mizengwe	16:20 Igizo: Mtego	17:00 Shamsam za Pwani	18:00 Jiji Letu	18:15 Mapishi	19:00 Jungu Kuu	19:30 Shika Bamba	20:00 Habari	21:00 Art and lifestyle	21:30 ITV TOP 10	22:10 Isidingo rpt	00:30 DWTW	05:30 Uwanja wa Mazoezi	6:00 HABARI	6:40 Kumekucha	7:30 HABARI	8:00 Kumekucha Michezo	8:55 Habari z a saa	9:00 Kumekucha Kishindo	9:30 Isidingo	9:55 Habari za saa	10:00 Watoto wetu	10:30 Shamba lulu rpt	10:55 Habari za saa	11:00 The Base rpt	11:55 Habari za saa	12:00 Al Jazeera	12:30 Wanawake na uhuru rpt	13:00 Arts & lifestyle rpt	13:30 Tanzania yetu	13:55 Habari za saa	14:00 Kipindi Maalum rpt:	14:15 Telenovela rpt: (Piel Salvaje)	15:00 Meza huru	16:30 Watoto Wetu	17:00 The Base	18:00 Jiji Letu	18:15 Mapishi	19:00 Usafiri wako	19:30 Isidingo	20:00 Habari	21:00 Malumbano ya hoja	21:30 The Base	23:30 The Base	00:30 DWTW	06:00 Al Jazeera	07:00 Morning Jam (Via Capital Radio)	09:00 Lete Raha (Via Capital Radio)	13:00 Telenovela rpt: Lover her to death	14:00 Club 101 (via Capital Radio)	16:00 Series rpt: Itohan	16:30 Capchat rpt	17:30 Meza huru	19:00 Innovation	20:00 Series: Itohan	20:45 Telenovela: Lover her to death	21:30 Capital Prime	22:00 Turning the spotlight rpt	22:30 Eco@Africa	23:00 Al Jazeera	06:00 Al Jazeera	07:00 Morning Jam (Via Capital Radio)	09:00 Lete Raha (Via Capital Radio)	13:00 Telenovela rpt: Lover her to death	14:00 Club 101 (via Capital Radio)	16:00 Series rpt: Itohan	16:30 Capchat rpt	17:30 Meza huru	19:00 Innovation	20:00 Series: Itohan	20:45 Telenovela: Lover her to death	21:30 Capital Prime	22:00 Turning the spotlight rpt	22:30 Eco@Africa	23:00 Al Jazeera	06:00 Al Jazeera	07:00 Morning Jam (Via Capital Radio)	09:00 Lete Raha (Via Capital Radio)	13:00 Telenovela rpt: Lover her to death	14:00 Club 101 (via Capital Radio)	16:00 Series rpt: Itohan	16:30 Capchat rpt	17:30 Meza huru	19:00 Innovation	20:00 Series: Itohan	20:45 Telenovela: Lover her to death	21:30 Capital Prime	22:00 Turning the spotlight rpt	22:30 Eco@Africa	23:00 Al Jazeera	06:00 Al Jazeera	07:00 Morning Jam (Via Capital Radio)	09:00 Lete Raha (Via Capital Radio)	13:00 Telenovela rpt: Lover her to death	14:00 Club 101 (via Capital Radio)	16:00 Series rpt: Itohan	16:30 Capchat rpt	17:30 Meza huru	19:00 Innovation	20:00 Series: Itohan	20:45 Telenovela: Lover her to death	21:30 Capital Prime	22:00 Turning the spotlight rpt	22:30 Eco@Africa	23:00 Al Jazeera	06:00 Al Jazeera	07:00 Morning Jam (Via Capital Radio)	09:00 Lete Raha (Via Capital Radio)	13:00 Telenovela rpt: Lover her to death	14:00 Club 101 (via Capital Radio)	16:00 Series rpt: Itohan	16:30 Capchat rpt	17:30 Meza huru	19:00 Innovation	20:00 Series: Itohan	20:45 Telenovela: Lover her to death	21:30 Capital Prime	22:00 Turning the spotlight rpt	22:30 Eco@Africa	23:00 Al Jazeera	06:00 Al Jazeera	07:00 Morning Jam (Via Capital Radio)	09:00 Lete Raha (Via Capital Radio)	13:00 Telenovela rpt: Lover her to death	14:00 Club 101 (via Capital Radio)	16:00 Series rpt: Itohan	16:30 Capchat rpt	17:30 Meza huru	19:00 Innovation	20:00 Series: Itohan	20:45 Telenovela: Lover her to death	21:30 Capital Prime	22:00 Turning the spotlight rpt	22:30 Eco@Africa	23:00 Al Jazeera

WORLD

UK PM warns of 'strong possibility' of no deal with EU

LONDON / BRUSSELS

BRITISH Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Thursday warned of a "strong possibility" that Britain and the European Union (EU) will fail to strike a post-Brexit trade agreement.

Speaking from Downing Street, Johnson said "now is the time" for businesses and the public to prepare for that outcome, the BBC reported.

Nonetheless, the prime minister pledged to "keep going" and "go the extra mile" to seek an agreement with the EU.

"The UK has been incredibly flexible," he said. "We tried very hard to make progress on all sorts of things."

However, he said: "I do think that we need to be very, very clear. There's now a strong possibility, a strong possibility that we will have a solution that's much more like an Australian relationship with the EU than a Canadian relationship with the EU."

Australia trades with the EU largely on the World Trade Organization (WTO) terms.

"That doesn't mean it's a bad thing; there are plenty of ways that we can turn that to the

advantage of both sides," said Johnson.

"Now is the time for the public and for businesses to get ready for Jan. 1, because believe me there's going to be change either way," he added.

The emergency meeting in Brussels between Johnson and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to seek a post-Brexit trade deal ended Wednesday evening without breakthrough as "very large gaps remain" between the two sides, according to Downing Street.

The two leaders have agreed that their negotiating teams will continue discussions over the coming days and a firm decision about the future of the talks should be taken by Sunday. Both sides have said significant differences remain on three critical issues: level playing field, governance and fisheries.

The trade negotiations are at a crucial stage as time is running out for both sides to secure a deal before the Brexit transition period expires at the end of the year.

Failure to reach a free trade agreement means bilateral trade will fall back on WTO rules in 2021.



British Prime Minister Boris Johnson

In Brussels, the European Commission on Thursday proposed a back-up plan which aims to ensure, among others, the basic reciprocal air and road connectivity between the EU and the UK if the two sides fail to cut a post-Brexit trade deal.

"Negotiations are still ongoing. However, given that the end of the transition is very near, there is no guarantee that, if and when an agreement is found, it can enter into force on time," said von der Leyen in a commission press release.

While she stressed that the commission would continue to do its utmost to reach a mutually-beneficial agreement with the UK, there was now significant uncertainty whether a deal will be in place with just three weeks to go.

The set of contingency measures were designed to prepare for all eventualities, including not having a deal in place with the UK on Jan 1, 2021.

The main purpose of the plan is to ensure basic reciprocal air and road connectivity between the EU and the UK, as well as allowing for the possibility of reciprocal fishing access by EU and UK vessels to each other's waters.

It proposes that basic air transport will continue for six months provided the UK agrees to reciprocate. The same applies to access for road haulage.

An interim fisheries regulation is put forward to allow continued reciprocal access by EU and UK vessels to each other's waters until the end of 2021, or until a fisheries agreement with the UK has been concluded.

"Readiness and preparedness are now more important than ever. Disruption will happen with or without an agreement between the EU and the UK on their future relationship," said von der Leyen.

"This is the natural consequence of the United Kingdom's decision to leave the Union and to no longer participate in the EU Single Market and Customs Union," she added.

Xinhua

270m people face starvation, says WFP as it receives Nobel Prize

OSLO

SOME 270 million people worldwide - equivalent to the combined populations of Germany, Britain, France and Italy - stand on the brink of starvation, the head of the United Nations' World Food Programme said on Thursday upon receiving the Nobel Peace Prize.

The WFP, which has coordinated medical logistics during

the coronavirus pandemic, was announced winner of the award for 2020 in October.

"Because of so many wars, climate change, the widespread use of hunger as a political and military weapon, and a global health pandemic that makes all of that exponentially worse - 270 million people are marching toward starvation," David Beasley said from the WFP headquarters in Rome, upon receiving the No-



bel medal and diploma. "Failure to address their needs will cause a hunger

pandemic which will dwarf the impact of COVID. And if that's not bad enough, out of that 270 million, 30 million depend on us 100% for their survival," he added.

Instead of the usual ceremony at the Oslo City Hall before dignitaries including Norway's King Harald, WFP officials stayed in Rome due to the coronavirus pandemic.

They are expected to travel to Oslo at a later stage to de-

liver the traditional Nobel lecture.

The remaining Nobel awards - for medicine, physics, chemistry, literature and economics - which are traditionally handed out in Stockholm - have also been moved online.

The ceremonies are held every year on Dec 10, the anniversary of the death of Swedish industrialist Alfred Nobel, who founded the awards in his 1895 will.

Agencies

Water management project returns sound ecology to city in NE China

THANKS to a major water management project that connects rivers, lakes and ponds, Baicheng of northeast China's Jilin province has been witnessing increasingly improving ecological environment.

The project, initiated in 2013, has connected 124 reservoirs and bogs with pump stations and water channels. It stores the surplus water resources from rivers during flood season in natural bogs and wetlands, so as to expand the city's water area, form a water system and smoothen water circulation.

Baicheng, located in the west of the Nenjiang River Plain, is home to over 700 natural bogs. However, years of droughts had cut off 7 of the city's 8 major rivers since 2000. Besides, the city's wetland area contracted by 40 percent, and 90 percent of the bogs dried up.

Momoge wetland of Baicheng's Zhenlai county had shrunk 70 percent by size, and the number of white cranes



having a rest there on their way to the south for winter was once only around 500, said Pan Shengyu, president of a local photography association, who once worried that he would have no bird picture to take once the wetland disappeared.

According to him, Yangsha Bog, a relatively large bog in Zhenlai county, almost dried up before 2010. Pan told the People's Daily that the bottom of the bog had been salinized, and even the wind was sandy.

Fortunately, the water management project has returned favorable ecology to Momoge wetland, where wild ducks are swimming and foraging today in the reeds and bogs on the two sides of the roads there. Besides, the wetland is also frequently visited by geese.

"I discovered 5 snow geese recently, which were rare in the past years," Pan said.

At the northeast corner of Zhenlai county, the water of Nenjiang River is pumped up to a main channel, which has

an elevation of 8 meters and stretches 50 some kilometers in latitudinal direction in the northern part of the county. The water is transmitted to Yangsha Bog, making it a reservoir that covers over 4,000 hectares, and is also sent to irrigation areas, wetlands and the city through sub-channels. The remained water goes back to Nenjiang River in the southern part of the county.

A total of 73,333 hectares of wetland have been restored or improved in Momoge with the water from the Nenjiang River. In addition, nearly 300 bird species have been resting or breeding there in recent years, including over 3,800 white cranes that stop there for two or three months each year.

The project has restored and improved 640 square kilometers of wetland in Baicheng, recovering 70,000 hectares of grassland and reeds and reducing over 370,000 hectares of desertification land. It has brought a turnaround to the city's vulnerable ecology.

Besides, the project also does a favor for the irrigation of surrounding farmland. Thanks to the project, the maximum underground water level in Baicheng has been lifted 1.02 meters in the city, which has revitalized 15,000 irrigation wells and increased nearly 550 million cubic meters of irrigation water. The coverage of rice fields in the city also went from around 130,000 hectares in 2013 to today's 210,000 hectares. The city also experienced crop harvests in seven consecutive years, and made a name for its quality farm produces.

A research station was established at the Niuxin Taobao Wetland as an effort to explore eco-agriculture, successfully developing a farming mode that breeds crabs in race paddies and reeds. The reed production on this once-alkalized wetland had dropped to 350 tonnes, but now the wetland has turned into a source of income for many local farmers.

People's Daily

Visible to the naked eye: Kremlin slams Big Pharma's ploy to smear Russia's COVID vaccine

MOSCOW

GLOBAL pharmaceutical companies are using disreputable methods to undermine Russia's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters yesterday.

"These aspirations [to discredit the Russian vaccine] are seen not only in the Kremlin. They are visible to the naked eye, as they say," he insisted. According to Peskov, "competition is fierce."

"It is good when this competition is fair, and for that matter there shouldn't be much competition in this market," he stressed. He noted that "this is a whole different ballgame since competition here is being politicized, and dirty tricks are being used to discredit the vaccine."

Peskov stressed that Russia's first coronavirus vaccine Sputnik V was "reliable, good and eagerly sought after." "Some countries and their large pharmaceutical companies indeed stoop to disreputable methods at times in order to prevent the appearance of our vaccine in various countries, and this is well known," the Kremlin spokesman emphasized.

He declined to specify who exactly was using such methods, explaining that it would be enough to read some recent news reports.

Earlier yesterday, Russian Defense Ministry Spokesman Igor Konashenkov said that a smear campaign against the Russian COVID-19 vaccine bankrolled from abroad was in progress.

According to Konashenkov, "a series of pseudo-analytical investigations" and false "eyewitness" testimony about the alleged danger of the Russian vaccine or rejection of the vaccination, including in the Russian Armed Forces, is being spun along social networks and Russian-language Internet resources funded by foreign grants.

Russia's Sputnik V vaccine

On August 11, Sputnik V registered by Russia became the world's first coronavirus vaccine. The vaccine was developed by the Gamaleya National Research Center of Epidemiology and Microbiology.

Its post-registration trials began in Moscow on September 7, with volunteers receiving the first vaccine on September 9. A total of 40,000 people are involved in the program, 10,000 of them have received a placebo instead of the anti-COVID jab.

Based on interim research results, the effectiveness of the Sputnik V vaccine exceeds 95% on the 42nd day after the first dose, provided that a patient gets the second dose.

Agencies

ICC prosecutor calls for more cooperation from Sudan

UNITED NATIONS

THE prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Fatou Bensouda, on Thursday called for more cooperation from Sudan.

Bensouda (pictured) said she stressed, in her trip to Sudan in October, the urgent need for ICC investigators to be given access to the territory of Sudan. "I reiterate this call and urge this Council to impress upon Sudan the urgent need for my investigators to access its territory and in particular, to conduct investigative missions in Darfur without further delay," she told the UN Security Council in a briefing.

"It had been my hope that my team would have traveled to Sudan in November for an operational assessment mission to pave the way for fully-fledged investigative activities immediately thereafter. Unfortunately, this mission was postponed at the request of the Sudanese authorities."

Unless the mission is rescheduled soon, the ICC investigators risk losing a golden opportunity to directly engage with victims and witnesses, in situ, for the first time and to ensure their evidence is made available to the judges at Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al-Rahman's confirmation of charges hearing, currently scheduled for Feb. 22, 2021, she said. Abd-Al-Rahman, also known as Ali Kushayb, was transferred to the ICC on June 9, 2020, following his voluntary surrender to the authorities in the Central African Republic.

He made his initial appearance before an ICC pre-trial chamber on June 15, which scheduled the confirmation of charges hearing for Dec. 7, 2020. The hearing has since been postponed to Feb. 22, 2021.

Sudan's immediate facilitation of access to its territory would demonstrate to victims, to the Sudanese people and to the international community that Sudan seriously intends to implement the principles adopted in the Juba Peace Agreement and the Security Council's resolution which referred the situation of Darfur to the ICC, said Bensouda.

Xinhua



US executes Brandon Bernard, over objections from several jurors in his trial

WASHINGTON

THE United States executed convicted felon Brandon Bernard on Thursday, despite objections by some of the jurors in his trial who pleaded with the Trump administration to show mercy, the federal Bureau of Prisons said.

Bernard's death marked the ninth execution since Attorney General William Barr resumed the use of the federal death penalty earlier this year following a 17-year hiatus.

Bernard was convicted in 2000 along with an accomplice, Christopher Vialva, of carjacking and murdering Todd and Stacie Bagley, married Christian youth ministers from Iowa, on the Fort Hood army base in Texas.

At the time of the crime, Bernard was 18 years old. Vialva kidnapped and shot the couple at close range as they lay inside the trunk of the car. Afterwards, Bernard set the car on fire. The Justice Department executed Vialva on Sept. 24.

"I'm sorry," a media witness quoted Bernard as saying, shortly before the execution. "That's the only words that I can say that completely capture how I feel now and how I felt that day."

Five jurors from the trial of the two men had backed Bernard's clemency petition, saying his lawyers did a poor job defending him at trial. Though they still agree that both Bernard and Vialva were guilty, they said Bernard did not seem to have intended to kill the

Bagleys.

Attorneys for Bernard say that through their own investigation, they discovered prosecutors withheld crucial information that could have proven Bernard was a low-level member of a youth gang, making him less of a threat in the future to re-offend.

"TERRIBLE MISTAKE"

His fight for clemency garnered the attention of celebrity Kim Kardashian, who on Twitter pleaded for the government to show mercy.

"Brandon made one terrible mistake at age 18. But he did not kill anyone, and he never stopped feeling shame and profound remorse for his actions," his attorney Robert

Owen said.

The American Civil Liberties Union has been fighting to at least temporarily halt all federal executions due to pandemic concerns.

His effort comes after the spiritual adviser to former inmate Orlando Hall contracted COVID-19 after he traveled to the federal death chamber at the prison in Terre Haute, Indiana for Hall's November execution.

Since then, the Justice Department has revealed in court filings that at least eight, or 20%, of the Bureau of Prison staff who participated in Hall's execution, have since tested positive for COVID-19.

The U.S. Supreme Court on Thursday evening denied a stay of execution for Bernard,

with its three liberal justices dissenting.

"Today, the court allows the federal government to execute Brandon Bernard, despite Bernard's troubling allegations that the government secured his death sentence by withholding exculpatory evidence and knowingly eliciting false testimony against him," wrote Justice Sonia Sotomayor in her dissent.

"Bernard has never had the opportunity to test the merits of those claims in court. Now he never will."

Several more inmates are set to be executed before Joe Biden takes office on Jan. 20, including Alfred Bourgeois, who is scheduled to be executed on Friday for torturing and killing his young daughter, according to a Justice Department summary of the case. **Agencies**

Morocco joins other Arab nations agreeing to normalise Israel ties

WASHINGTON / RAMALLAH / JERUSALEM / UNITED NATIONS

ISRAEL and Morocco agreed on Thursday to normalize relations in a deal brokered with US help, making Morocco the fourth Arab country to set aside hostilities with Israel in the past four months.

It joins the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Sudan in beginning to forge deals with Israel, driven in part by US-led efforts to present a united front against Iran and roll back Tehran's regional influence.

In a departure from longstanding US policy, President Donald Trump agreed as part of the deal to recognize Morocco's sovereignty over the Western Sahara, a desert region where a decades-old territorial dispute has pitted Morocco against the Algeria-backed Polisario Front, a breakaway movement that seeks to establish an independent state.

President-elect Joe Biden, due to succeed Trump on Jan 20, will face a decision whether to accept the US deal on the Western Sahara, which no other Western nation has done. A Biden spokesman declined to comment.

While Biden is expected to move US foreign policy away from Trump's "America First" posture, the Democrat

has indicated he will continue the pursuit of what Trump calls "the Abraham Accords" between Israel and Arab and Muslim nations.

Trump sealed the Israel-Morocco accord in a phone call with Morocco's King Mohammed VI on Thursday, the White House said.

"Another HISTORIC breakthrough today! Our two GREAT friends Israel and the Kingdom of Morocco have agreed to full diplomatic relations - a massive breakthrough for peace in the Middle East!" Trump wrote on Twitter.

Mohammed told Trump that Morocco intends to facilitate direct flights for Israeli tourists to and from Morocco, according to a statement from Morocco's royal court.

"This will be a very warm peace. Peace has never - the light of peace on this Hanukkah day has never - shone brighter than today in the Middle East," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a statement, referring to a Jewish eight-day holiday starting on Thursday night.

Israel's major airlines announced on Thursday evening that they are preparing for the launch of direct flight routes to Morocco.

Israel's leading airline El Al said in a statement that "we will begin prepara-



This combination of file pictures created on December 10, 2020 shows Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (left) speaking during a joint press conference in Jerusalem on November 19, 2020; US President Donald Trump (center) arriving to speak at the Operation Warp Speed Vaccine Summit in Washington on December 8, 2020; and Morocco's King Mohammed VI delivering a speech to mark the 19th anniversary of his accession to the throne in Al Hoceima on July 29, 2018. (AFP)

tions for operating direct flights to the city of Casablanca, subject to obtaining all the necessary approvals from the authorities.

Israir, the second largest Israeli airline, also said it plans to launch a flight route to Morocco, which will include a daily flight.

A senior Palestinian official condemned the normalization deal between Morocco and Israel, stressing that it is "unacceptable and harmful to the Palestinian issue."

"Normalizing ties with Israel will harm the Palestinian cause," Nabil Shaath, adviser to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas for international relations, said in a press statement.

He stressed that the Palestinian leadership will always reject such "unacceptable agreements."

Russia wants to introduce visa-free entry with Mexico

MOSCOW

RUSSIA is interested in striking a bilateral agreement with Mexico to grant citizens of the both states visa-free entry when travelling, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in his article marking the 130th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between Russia and Mexico.

"We are working on improving the legal and treaty basis of the Russian-Mexican relations," he stressed.

"We are interested in signing a full-fledged agreement on introducing visa-free entry for trips of citizens of the two countries which would come to be a symbolic agreement in the context of increasing numbers of tourist and business exchanges."

In January 2017, Mexico introduced simplified entry rules for Russian citizens.

Russian tourists only need to obtain an e-permit to stay in the country for up to 180 days, while some citizens don't require any visas at all.

Agencies



We are interested in signing a full-fledged agreement on introducing visa-free entry for trips of citizens of the two countries which would come to be a symbolic agreement

Xinhua

US administration accused of politically meddling with response to COVID-19 pandemic

WASHINGTON

A U.S. House panel on the COVID-19 pandemic on Thursday accused the U.S. current administration of politically meddling with the country's response to the public health crisis.

"I am deeply concerned that the Trump Administration's political meddling with the nation's coronavirus response has put American lives at greater risk," James Clyburn, chairman of the House Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis, said in a letter to the administration's top

health officials.

Clyburn also said the panel is concerned that some officials "may have taken steps to conceal and destroy evidence of this dangerous conduct," while urging cooperation in the investigation of the allegations.

The letter, addressed to Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Alex Azar and Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Robert Redfield, came days after the subcommittee's transcribed interview with Charlotte Kent, chief of the Scientific

Publications Branch and Editor-in-Chief of the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report at CDC.

During the interview, Kent stated that she was instructed to delete an Aug. 8 email sent by then-HHS senior advisor Paul Alexander to her, Redfield, and HHS Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Michael Caputo, adding that she was informed that the direction to delete the email came from Redfield.

The email from Alexander demanded that CDC insert new language in a previously published scientific report on coronavirus risks

to children or "pull it down and stop all reports immediately," according to Clyburn's letter.

"I was instructed to delete the email," Kent said in the interview. "I went to look for it after I had been told to delete it, and it was already gone." When asked who deleted the email, she replied, "I have no idea ... I considered this to be very unusual."

Federal law requires the heads of federal agencies to preserve records, including emails. Neither Azar nor Redfield has responded to the allegations.

More than 15.5 million people in

the United States have been diagnosed with COVID-19, with some 291,000 deaths, according to latest tallies by Johns Hopkins University on Thursday. The country on Wednesday set a new record for single-day deaths from the virus, with 3,054.

"We are in the timeframe now that probably for the next 60 to 90 days we're going to have more deaths per day than we had at 9/11 or we had at Pearl Harbor," Redfield said during an event hosted by the Council on Foreign Relations on Thursday.

Xinhua

China-ASEAN cooperation eyes on digital economy

DIGITAL economy has gradually become a focus of the cooperation between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in recent years. As drivers of China-ASEAN Free Trade Area, the China-ASEAN Expo (CAEXPO) and relevant summits are constantly enriching the content of digital economy in forums, meetings and exhibitions, so as to lay a solid foundation for China-ASEAN digital economy cooperation.

For instance, state-of-the-art products of the internet, big data and artificial intelligence (AI) industries, such as smart robots, intelligent management systems of unmanned aerial vehicles, satellite remote sensing systems, as well as virtual reality products introducing meteorological knowledge, are exhibited at the Advanced Technology Exhibition section at the CAEXPO every year, attracting huge numbers of visitors.

A series of high-end forums are also held by the CAEXPO, building a bridge of cooperation that gathers consensus and align development strategies.

The China-ASEAN E-commerce Summit that was initiated since 2014, as well as relevant e-commerce forums,



A 5G-powered unmanned aerial vehicle of China Telecom is showcased at the China-ASEAN AI Summit held in Nanning, south China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, Sept. 7, 2019. File photo

have kept their focus on cross-border and rural e-commerce issues.

They launched a series of high-level dialogues and implemented a batch of e-commerce projects, including a cross-border trade facilitation platform between China and ASEAN and a China-ASEAN cross-border e-commerce industrial park in Nanning, south China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

The 12th CAEXPO held in 2015 started the construction of the China-ASEAN Information Harbor. Since then, the China-ASEAN Information

Harbor Forum has developed into a routine activity of the CAEXPO, becoming an important platform for digital economy cooperation between the two sides. Propelled by the forum, a series of digital economy cooperation mechanisms have been established between China and ASEAN countries, and a batch of major projects have been put into operation, such as a fund for the China-ASEAN Information Harbor, the China-ASEAN Information Harbor Digital Economy Alliance, as well as an industrial ecosystem established under the China-ASEAN Information Harbor.

Apart from high-level forums, the CAEXPO also held professional exhibitions to showcase the development of digital technologies, offering a window of cooperation for participants.

At the 15th CAEXPO, Chinese tech giant Huawei presented future scenarios of a micro smart city, as well as new experiences of 5G network, demonstrating the profound changes to be brought by the infusion between 5G and traditional industries such as housing, automobile, and manufacturing. Chinese e-commerce platform JD.com exhibited its smart logistics system composed of unattended warehouses, delivery stations, drones and UAVs. Thailand-China Technology Transfer Center brought its technologies in cosmetics, farm produce and dietary supplements.

This year marks the ASEAN-China Year of Digital Economy Cooperation.

The 17th CAEXPO held a series of activities under the theme of "Building the Belt and Road, Strengthening Digital Economy Cooperation," so as to comprehensively promote the in-depth cooperation between China and ASEAN countries in digital economy.

People's Daily

WHO says community involvement key to seamless launch of COVID-19 vaccine in Africa

NAIROBI

AFRICAN governments should embark on proactive engagement with local communities to boost uptake of COVID-19 vaccine once they are deployed in the continent, a senior World Health Organization (WHO) official said on Thursday.

Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional director for Africa said that involving communities at every stage of the vaccine's roll-out will help dispel misinformation that could undermine inoculation of high-risk groups.

"The success of any immunization campaign hinges on communities' trust and acceptance," Moeti (pictured) said in a statement issued in Nairobi.

"It is vital that we equip them with the right information, allay any fears and address concerns," she added.

A ten-point vaccine readiness tool for 47 countries in the WHO African Region found that efforts to boost community engagement stood at only 12 percent as opposed to the 80 percent threshold.

The assessment tool found that community involvement ahead of COVID-19



vaccine launch was given lethargic attention yet it was critical to boost its acceptance in the sub-Saharan African region.

"Vaccines are our best hope of ending this pandemic. While all the efforts being made for successful immunization campaigns are critical, without community support they can easily founder," said Moeti.

She said that strategic engagement with communities will help them gain better understanding of COVID-19 vaccine, its safety, efficacy and possible side effects.

According to Moeti, WHO is encouraging African countries to strengthen surveillance, regulation, training and monitoring systems in order to ensure the roll-out of the vaccine is devoid of

glitches.

Richard Mihigo, coordinator of the WHO Immunization and Vaccine Development Program, said that multilateral institutions have partnered with governments and industry to promote access to COVID-19 vaccine in Africa.

"We have started working with African countries to prepare for logistics, infrastructure and adequate financing in order to ensure the vaccine is easily available to priority groups like healthcare workers," said Mihigo.

He said that grassroots-based advocacy is key to ensure that African communities have confidence in COVID-19 vaccine ahead of its roll-out expected next year.

Xinhua

Ahead of UN climate summit, urgent calls to 'fix the future'

LONDON

WHEN the Paris Agreement on climate change was finalized after two weeks of fraught negotiations and years of past failures, diplomats hugged and shed tears of joy. They had haggled over verb tenses, cut deals, and in the end, brought 196 countries into the accord.

Five years later, governments are lagging far behind in implementing the deal, struck on Dec 12, 2015. Annual greenhouse gas emissions hit a new high last year. And climate change impacts are intensifying, from the thawing Arctic to raging wildfires in Australia and the US West.

"Emissions are not being reduced at the rate that science says we need," said Alden Meyer, a longtime veteran

of the UN talks and an analyst for the E3G climate change think-tank.

The Paris Agreement aims to hold the rise in average global temperatures to "well below" 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels, and preferably 1.5C -- a threshold beyond which climate impacts are projected to sharply intensify.

Temperatures have already risen by more than 1C since pre-industrial times, and scientists say that the world's fossil fuel-dependent economies will have to undergo wholesale transformation to bring those goals within reach. As delegates prepare for

a one-day online UN climate summit on Saturday, negotiators point to signs of progress: rapid advances in renewable energy, growing appetite for greener investments, and pledges on emissions by the European Union and China. US President-elect Joe Biden has vowed to rejoin the accord.

"Am I optimistic? Yes, by choice, and by evidence," said Christiana Figueres, a Costa Rican diplomat who played a key role in brokering the Paris deal as then executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

'Fix the Future'

The Paris accord makes no specific mention of the fossil fuels responsible for the bulk of planet-warming emissions. But the implication in the 25-page text is clear: the world needs to rapidly end the 250-year reign of coal, oil and natural gas.

Pledges so far to reduce emissions put the world on track for a catastrophic 3C or more of warming this century, with countries planning to produce double the amount of fossil fuels needed to hit the 1.5C target in the next decade alone. Scientists say it is now imperative that the world halve carbon emissions over

the next 10 years. And government action still falls far short of that.

"If you look at the immediate action that we need right now, it's like we are still in a state of denial," Swedish activist Greta Thunberg told reporters on Tuesday.

At the summit on Saturday, diplomats will be watching for signs that countries are preparing to ramp up climate efforts ahead of a major round of UN climate talks in Glasgow due to take place in November 2021.

"What we have to do is translate what we can do into what we will do - and that is where many of us worry,"

said British climate economist Nicholas Stern.

Perhaps the most encouraging sign for the Paris deal is the number of countries that have begun to pledge to slash carbon emissions to net zero -- meaning they will release only as much as they remove from the air -- by 2050.

"We are seeing the payoff of the push we all made in Paris," said Meyer. "Net-zero was a radical concept not too long ago."

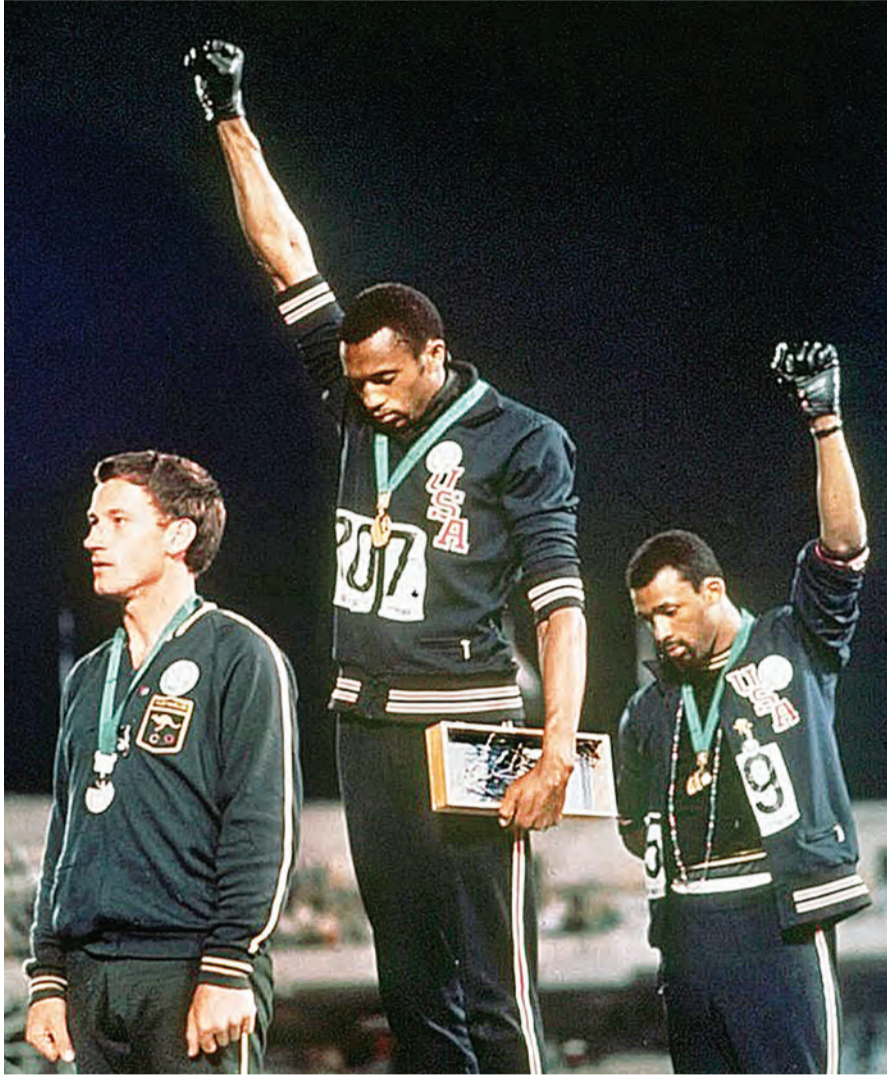
Britain and the European Union adopted the target last year, and China - the largest emitter - surprised many in September by announcing of goal of net-zero by 2060. Sub-

sequent pledges by Japan and South Korea mean more than 50% of global emissions are now under net-zero targets, UN officials say.

READ MORE: Japan: US withdrawal from Paris Agreement very regrettable
Assuming Biden adopts a similar goal after he takes office in January, and that governments do far more to keep existing pledges, warming could be held to 2.1C by 2100, according to research network Climate Action Tracker here.

Experts say governments now have a fleeting opportunity to harness massive post-pandemic economic recovery packages to accelerate the transition to cleaner energy. So far, however, much of that money has been spent supporting the status quo.

Agencies



In this Oct. 16, 1968, file photo, U.S. athletes Tommie Smith, center, and John Carlos extend gloved hands skyward in racial protest during the playing of national anthem after Smith received the gold and Carlos the bronze for the 200 meter run at the Summer Olympic Games in Mexico City. Australian silver medalist Peter Norman is at left. The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee heeded calls from American athletes, announcing Thursday, Dec. 10, 2020, that it won't sanction them for raising their fists or kneeling on the medals stand at next year's Tokyo Games and beyond. (AP Photo)

Olympics on tight timeline to chart new path on protest

By EDDIE PELLIS

FOR generations, the IOC knew exactly where to look for key support of its ban against protests at the Olympics.

In 1968, it was the U.S. Olympic Committee that sent home its own athletes, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, when they raised their fists while on the medals stand at the Mexico City Games.

In 2019, it was the same organization that placed its own athlete, Gwen Berry, on probation for doing the same after her win at the Pan-Am Games.

This week, the American federation put the IOC on notice: It is no longer the IOC's partner when it comes to enforcing the contentious Rule 50. The USOPC is now heeding the calls from many of its own athletes and will no longer punish them for kneeling or raising fists or any other kind of acceptable demonstration at the Olympics.

"When you sit in my seat, you have to make decisions that you think are on the right side of history," said CEO Sarah Hirshland. "And I believe we're on the right side of history."

But there are details to iron out, and they strike to the heart of how much change is truly possible between now and next July, when the Tokyo Olympics are scheduled to take place.

High on the list: What can athletes demonstrate about, and what will an acceptable demonstration look like?

"That becomes a difficult situation," said Harry Edwards, the activist who helped brainstorm the gestures by Smith and Carlos 52 years ago. "Because you could very easily get into a thing of trying to outdo someone else and it ends up having nothing to do with the spirit of the issue."

That confusion helps explain the calculated response to the USOPC that came from the IOC in the form of a short release from the head of its athlete commission, swimmer Kirsty Coventry of Zimbabwe.

Well aware that the protest rule can't stay as-is for the foreseeable future, Coventry and the IOC are in the process of surveying athletes across the globe for their thoughts about possible changes. She said the majority of the respondents believe in the right of free speech, which is "respected" at the Olympic Games (but only in certain

settings) and "express support for preserving the ceremonies, the podium and the field of play."

Though Coventry's committee is still accepting feedback, and won't make any final decisions until early next year, she's previewing a far less radical adjustment to Rule 50 than the U.S. contingent would like.

American athletes have been reeling from a summer of unrest over police violence against Black people in the United States. Every major sports league has agreed to change policies to give their players a bigger platform to discuss race and social injustice.

But U.S. sports leagues and the Olympics are very different creatures. The Olympics are a behemoth that counts America as only one of 206 countries who are members.

Some of the biggest members are among the IOC's most important partners – China, for instance, hosted the 2008 Olympics and will do so again in 2022 – and they don't share the same concerns or values about free speech or racial injustice as do the United States and many of its closest allies.

"Many have also recognized the practical question of how to choose between the opinions of hundreds of issues from different angles across the world," Coventry said of her survey respondents. "We can see that it would be very difficult to make such a judgment without dividing the athlete community across all 206 NOCs."

Moushaumi Robinson, who led the U.S. athletes group that pressed for the changes, said she understands the complexities. Her group continues to discuss them to try to come up with solutions.

"A lot of us just want to be able to say 'I may not agree with you but I respect that you have a voice,'" she said. "And we want to be able to express it without someone punishing you for it."

All of which leads Edwards to believe that Thursday's move by the USOPC and its athletes is a sign of progress – not necessarily a huge leap but another step.

"This is an ongoing struggle, and it's going to continue to be a struggle," he said. "And what today reflects is that this generation of athletes is more than willing to do their part."

AP

Tokyo Games sponsors pay \$3.3 billion, but more still needed

TOKYO

DOMESTIC sponsors have already contributed a record of \$3.3 billion to help pay for the Tokyo Olympics. That's at least twice as much as any previous Games.

But it's still not enough.

Now they're being asked to pay millions more to cover some of the soaring costs of the one-year postponement.

This comes as Japanese businesses are battered by the COVID-19 pandemic, raising doubts about re-investing in an Olympics that may be short on fans, but long on pandemic-related rules to discourage tourists, sightseeing and spending.

"We are in the process of asking for additional sponsorship (payments) from our partners," organizing committee CEO Toshiro Muto said last week as he detailed why the postponement will cost organizers and Japanese taxpayers an extra \$2.8 billion. "The sponsors have expressed the willingness to contribute to the Games next year. But they have not



A TV monitor displays Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games mascot Someity in Tokyo, Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2020. Domestic sponsors have already contributed a record of \$3.3 billion to help pay for the Tokyo Olympics. That's at least twice as much as any previous Games. It's still not enough. Now they're being asked to pay millions more to cover some of the soaring costs of the one-year postponement. (AP Photo)

specified an amount." None of the nearly 70 domestic sponsors is saying "no" – at least publicly – to an Olympics backed by Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, and driven by Japan's powerful advertising conglomerate Dentsu Inc., the official marketing agency for the Tokyo Olympics.

Dentsu helped land the Olympics, lined up the sponsors, and stands to profit with the Olympics opening on July 23, 2021.

Little arm-twisting may be needed to keep sponsors on board. Harmony and consensus are valued in Japan, and this stretches to the corporate world. It's best

illustrated by this Japanese saying: The nail that sticks up gets hammered down (Deru kugi wa utareru).

Pulling off the Olympics is viewed as a national project, a matter of honor and saving face. Doubts expressed behind the scenes are unlikely to trickle to the surface. Some sponsors might offer additional "in-kind" payments – contributions not made in cash – but there has been little open dissent and few contract details made public. In the end, any shortfall is likely to be made up by taxpayers.

Among the domestic sponsors is Japanese airline ANA, which post-

ed losses of \$1.8 billion through the first half of the fiscal year, and travel agency JTB with losses of \$750 million in the same period. Also on board is the financial services company Nomura, both Narita and Haneda airports, food makers such as Kikkoman and Ajinomoto, and the SkyTree tower. The Japanese media, charged with covering the Olympics, are also on in droves including top newspapers Mainichi, Nikkei, Yomiuri, and Asahi.

Associated Press contacted a dozen sponsors and almost all refused to comment. A Tokyo Gas spokesperson said that organizers had advised against speaking to the

media. One of few on-the-record comments came from instant noodle maker Nissin, which has registered 63% profit growth recently as people stuck at home turn to quick meals.

"We will continue with our preparation toward a safe and secure Olympics while paying heed to further developments," spokesman Tomonao Matsuo said. He said no decision had been made on the renewal.

The Tokyo Olympics have become very expensive. A University of Oxford study says they are the most costly Summer Olympics on record.

The official cost of putting on the Tokyo Olympics is \$12.6 billion in the latest budget. But a government audit last year said it was probably twice that much, and this was before the added cost of the delay. This is all public money except for \$5.6 billion from the privately funded organizing committee budget. Domestic sponsors make up about 60% of this income.

AP



Mercedes' Valtteri Bottas during the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix practice at Yas Marina Circuit in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates yesterday. REUTERS

Verstappen edges Bottas in Abu Dhabi practice as Hamilton makes quiet return

ABU DHABI

RED Bull's Max Verstappen pipped Valtteri Bottas to top the timesheets in Friday's opening Formula One practice session for the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix as Lewis Hamilton made a quiet return to action.

The Dutchman set a time of one minute, 37.378 seconds to go 0.034 seconds quicker than Bottas with Hamilton 1.3 seconds slower in fifth.

The 35-year-old Hamilton, who missed last week's Sakhir Grand Prix after testing positive for COVID-19, suffered brake problems that sent him back to the garage just three laps after he hit the track.

The Briton was back out with half the 90-minute session still to run.

Yet Hamilton, who has already wrapped up a record-equalling seventh world title, set his best time on the slowest hard tyres compared to the quickest softs used by Verstappen and Bottas.

Frenchman Esteban Ocon, fresh from having secured his maiden Formula One podium last week in Sakhir, was third for Renault.

Red Bull's Alexander Albon, who spun on what would have been his quickest lap, was fourth.

Lance Stroll was sixth for Racing Point ahead of team mate Sergio Perez.

The Mexican, who celebrated an emotional first Formula One win last week, is carrying power unit-related penalties and is set to start Sunday's race from the back of the grid.

Daniil Kvyat was eighth for AlphaTauri ahead of team mate Pierre Gasly.

Kimi Raikkonen rounded out the top-10 for Alfa Romeo.

Mick Schumacher, son of seven-times champion Michael, made his grand prix weekend debut, taking over Kevin Magnussen's Haas. The 21-year-old German, who will make his race debut with the U.S.-owned team next year, was 18th.

George Russell, who stood in for Hamilton in Sakhir and nearly won on his Mercedes debut, was back in his Williams. The Briton was 16th.

Daniel Ricciardo's Renault stopped on the track with a fuel pressure problem in an otherwise uneventful session, which teams largely used as a test to try out minor tweaks to the rules that are set to come in next year.

Meanwhile, Williams are a race away from their worst Formula One campaign since the 1970s but Canadian driver Nicholas Latifi said he felt no extra pressure to deliver points in this weekend's Abu Dhabi season-ender.

The former champions have not scored since now-departed Pole Robert Kubica was promoted to 10th place at Hockenheim in July last year.

"There's no difference between getting one point and finishing 10th in the constructors' (championship) and getting zero points and finishing 10th," Latifi told reporters in a video conference.

"It doesn't change much on that side of things."

Williams, the third most successful team in terms of championships won with nine constructors' crowns and seven drivers' titles, enjoyed periods of dominance in the 1980s and 1990s but have not won a cham-

ionship since 1997.

Their last race win was in 2012 and they scored one point in 2019, despite having the same engines as champions Mercedes.

Not since 1977, when only the top six finishers scored points, have they drawn a season-long blank.

"Unfortunately the fact is we just don't have the outright pace to get the points finish on merit if other cars in front don't have some sort of issues," said Latifi. "That's the reality of it."

"On the other side, the reality is we have made a massive step forward this year and even though there was a points finish last year, the car was much worse. It was a bit of a fluke that the points finish arrived."

Team mate George Russell, who scored his first F1 points and set the fastest lap in Bahrain last weekend as a stand-in at Mercedes for seven times world champion Lewis Hamilton, will be back at Williams this weekend.

He can at least bring back useful experience but it will be of more use next season to a team that changed ownership in August when U.S.-based private investment firm Dorilton Capital took over from the founding family.

"The guys at Mercedes work at such a high level, every single detail and they leave no stone unturned and it pays dividends," Russell said before Mercedes confirmed Hamilton was returning from COVID-19 isolation.

"There's a number of things that I can go back to Williams with, being a better driver, more confidence and a few things that will help push the team forwards."

REUTERS

'No time to mope:' Inter Milan seek Serie A lift after Euro flop

MILAN

INTER Milan turn their focus back to Serie A after their Champions League flop with a trip to Cagliari awaiting on Sunday following their group stage exit midweek.

"There's no time to sit and mope," warned captain Samir Handanovic with his side out of Europe after finishing bottom of their Champions League group.

Antonio Conte's side are second in Serie A, five points behind leaders AC Milan, with the two city rivals trying to deny Juventus a 10th consecutive league title.

"We have to focus on the league and the Coppa Italia," urged Handanovic.

In his second campaign, Conte now has no choice but to deliver a 19th 'Scudetto' to Inter and first since 2010.

The former Juventus and Chelsea manager took Inter to second in Serie A and the Europa League final in his first season.

A third consecutive group stage exit was a shock for Conte's expensively-assembled side, who are the top scorers domestically with 26 goals in 10 games.

Inter have spent nearly 300 million euros (\$363 million) in the past two years on new signings and their exit from Europe will hit hard.

"There's a lot of regret," said Conte.

"We haven't had much luck in the Champions League given certain incidents and refereeing decisions."

AC Milan are riding high as they also target a 19th Scudetto and first since 2011.

Top scorer Zlatan Ibrahimovic could return against Parma after a muscle injury ruled him out of their last two league games.

Juventus, Lazio and Atalanta return to league action having all secured their passes to the Champions League knockout rounds.

Juventus, six points behind Milan in fourth, travel to lowly Genoa after their confidence-boosting 3-0 win at troubled Barcelona in which Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice.

"Playing like this, we have nothing to fear until the end of the season," the triumphant Portugal captain said after the game.

Seventh-placed Lazio host Hellas Verona, who are just one point behind the Roman club, with Atalanta, in ninth, hosting Fiorentina.

Tuscan side Fiorentina are hovering above the relegation zone and hoping for a first win since October 25 against Atalanta, who have taken just five points in their last six games.

AFP

Bayern star Lewandowski eyes league milestones at Union Berlin

BERLIN

ROBERT Lewandowski, the German league's top-scorer, can make his 200th Bundesliga appearance for Bayern Munich in Saturday's tricky away match at FC Union, where Germany's leading clubs have struggled in the past.

Lewandowski could claim two milestones in Berlin as he is two short of scoring 250 Bundesliga goals for both Bayern and ex-club Dortmund.

Lewandowski has shaken off a leg knock which ruled him out of Wednesday's 2-0 home win over Lokomotiv Moscow in the Champions League with the holders already through to the last 16 as group winners.

"I assume that he is 100 per cent fit," Bayern coach Hansi Flick before they headed to Berlin.

Lewandowski, the Bundesliga's top-scorer for the last three seasons, once again leads the way with 12 goals so far.

Two of his closest rivals - Dortmund's Erling Braut Haaland, who has 10 goals, and Leverkusen's Lucas Alario, on seven - are sidelined by knee injuries, victims of this season's dense fixture list.

Bayern hold a slim lead in the table and are just one point ahead of Bayer Leverkusen, who they face away the following weekend.

Union's eighth-match winning run was ended last Friday by a 3-1 derby defeat at Hertha Berlin.

To make matters worse, Union's top-scorer Max Kruse, who claimed five goals and four assists in November, misses the Bayern game with a torn hamstring.

Even without Kruse, Union coach Urs Fischer is looking forward to the "awesome task" of facing Bayern.

"We will try to be brave and get through the difficult phases. We must not lose the courage to attack," added Fischer, whose side are sixth.

Union's Swiss coach has just signed a contract extension, reportedly until 2023.

In the two years since his arrival, Fischer has turned Union into a side capable of tripping up sides at the top of the league.

Last season, both Dortmund and Muenchengladbach were first in the table when they lost at Union's packed Alten Foerster stadium, where Bayern laboured to a 2-0 win behind closed doors in May.

In recent home games, Union saw off strugglers Mainz 4-0, then Arminia Bielefeld 4-0 before Kruse netted twice in a 3-3 draw with Frankfurt a fortnight ago.

AFP

Solskjaer in the spotlight for Manchester derby

LONDON

MANCHESTER United's early Champions League exit means Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's position is back under scrutiny ahead of Manchester City's visit to Old Trafford for a game neither side can afford to lose.

The Manchester derby is the most eye-catching fixture during a Premier League weekend that includes a trip to Crystal Palace for leaders Tottenham and a date at Fulham for champions Liverpool.

AFP Sport looks at some of the main talking points ahead of the action.

Manchester derby Both Manchester clubs have recovered from slow starts to the campaign after having barely two weeks of pre-season due to European commitments in August.

Solskjaer's men, following a run of four straight league wins, can claim to be in the hunt for a first league title since Alex Ferguson's retirement in 2013 sent the Red Devils into a spiral of decline.

But the helter-skelter nature of some of those victories, allied to



Ole Gunnar Solskjaer



Pep Guardiola

shoddy defending that led to a 3-2 defeat to RB Leipzig in midweek, means the pressure is once again on the Norwegian.

A fourth defeat in six Premier League games at Old Trafford this season could see the Red Devils finish the weekend eight points off the leaders, albeit with a game in hand.

City are a point behind United, in seventh, but Pep Guardiola's men appear to be coming into form after recording a back-to-back league wins for the first time this season.

In stark contrast to

United's Champions League woes, City's serene progress into the last-16, with two games to spare, allowed Guardiola to leave Kevin De Bruyne and Gabriel Jesus in reserve for the derby.

"When you win it's always easy to go to the next game, it's easier to win again and again," said Bernardo Silva after Wednesday's 3-0 victory against Marseille.

"We want to keep the momentum going in a tough game against United on Saturday and we want to keep winning."

However, for all Unit-

ed's inconsistencies, Guardiola will be wary of their pace.

City were repeatedly undone by United's quickfire counter-attacks last season -- losing three of four meetings -- and have shown signs in defeats to Tottenham and Leicester this season that they have not resolved the issue.

Title race United and City are just two of five genuine title contenders, with Chelsea perched just two points behind Tottenham and Liverpool at the top of the table.

A slip in the standards

set by Liverpool and City in recent seasons promises the most open race for years.

New Chelsea signings Edouard Mendy, Ben Chilwell, Thiago Silva and Timo Werner are making a big impact for Frank Lampard's men, who are on a 17-game unbeaten run in all competitions, excluding the penalty shootout defeat to Tottenham in the League Cup.

The Blues can leapfrog Spurs when they travel to Everton on Saturday evening, with Tottenham seeking to extend their own unbeaten run in the league to 11 games at Crystal Palace a day later.

Tottenham have not won the league since 1961 but, in Harry Kane and Son Heung-min, currently have the most lethal strike duo in the league and have conceded just one goal in their past six league games.

Liverpool are well-placed, with their injury crisis easing.

Trent Alexander-Arnold started for the first time in a month on Wednesday, captaining his boyhood club at just 22 in the 1-1 Champions League draw against Midtjylland.

Arsenal struggles

Arsenal are the only member of the so-called "Big Six" who have lost touch with the top of the Premier League.

The Gunners are a lowly 15th in the table after their sixth defeat in 11 games at the hands of Tottenham last week.

The main problem for Mikel Arteta's men is the lack of goals -- only the current bottom three have scored fewer than Arsenal's 10 so far and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang has not found the net from open play in the league since the opening weekend.

But the Spaniard was buoyed by his side's reaction after the defeat to Spurs, saying he sees a team with "big belief".

Fixtures (all times GMT)

Today
Wolves v Aston Villa (1230), Newcastle v West Brom (1500), Manchester United v Manchester City (1730), Everton v Chelsea (2000)

Tomorrow
Southampton v Sheffield United (1200), Crystal Palace v Tottenham (1415), Fulham v Liverpool (1630), Arsenal v Burnley (1915), Leicester v Brighton (1915)

AFP

Real aim to end Atletico's unbeaten start in Madrid derby

MADRID

REAL Madrid, having avoided a disastrous Champions League exit, face city rivals Atletico today looking suddenly well-equipped to ruin their unbeaten run.

Karim Benzema scored twice against Borussia Muenchengladbach on Wednesday to end any fears that Real would fail to progress to the group stage after they had started the match with their hopes in the balance.

With Sergio Ramos back to lead the defence and Benzema clinical in front of goal, Real eventually went through as group winners with a comfortable 2-0 victory meaning they will avoid many of the big guns in the last 16 draw.

Coach Zinedine Zidane, whose job has been the subject of speculation after a turbulent start to the season, seems safe for now.

Atletico, who lead La Liga by a single point from the season's surprise package, Real Sociedad, also booked their ticket to the Champions League knockout stage with a composed 2-0 win against RB Salzburg in Austria.

Diego Simeone's side go into the last-16 draw as Group A runners-up behind reigning champions Bayern Munich.

While the city derby -- albeit without the fervent crowd such a game normally attracts to the Bernabeu -- will dominate headlines on Saturday, Barcelona's match against Levante on Sunday will also come under intense scrutiny.

Barca are in such disarray that they need a victory merely to steady the ship after

a morale-sapping 3-0 defeat to Juventus in the Champions League.

The Catalans still qualified for the last 16, but as group runners-up Lionel Messi and his teammates risk drawing one of Europe's big names.

After the tumultuous summer which almost saw Messi depart, Barca and new coach Ronald Koeman never seem to have recovered. They sit an unaccustomed ninth in the table with just 14 points from 10 games.

Goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen said a win against modest Levante, who have just three points fewer than the Catalans, was essential.

"In La Liga we are not where we want to be but we can claw back some points and that is the aim in the next few weeks."

"We're playing at home and we can't afford to drop a single point now."

Sociedad meanwhile take on Eibar on Sunday. Player to watch: Yannick Carrasco

The Belgian international returned from injury to score Atletico's second goal against Salzburg with a deft volley from Angel Correa's cross four minutes from time.

Simeone said after the Salzburg victory that he was becoming a key weapon for Atletico: "In the second half he was fantastic, his rhythm, his work-rate, he needs to carry on like that...when he's playing at that level he is an important player and gives the team something different."

Key stats
10 - Number of games Atletico have gone unbeaten since the start of the season

10 - Number of La Liga titles Atletico have won, compared to 34 for



Diego Simeone

Zinedine Zidane

Real Madrid and 26 for Barcelona
Fixtures (all times GMT)

Today
Valencia v Athletic

Bilbao (1300), Getafe v Sevilla (1515), Huesca v Alaves (1730), Real Madrid v Atletico Madrid (2000)

Tomorrow
Real Sociedad v Eibar (1300), Real Betis v Villarreal (1515), Elche v Granada (1730), Barcelona v Levante

(2000)
Monday
Celta Vigo v Cadiz (2000)

AFP

Gwiji by David Chikoko



Solskjaer in the spotlight for Manchester derby

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT, PAGE 19

Nicholls' battling ton rallies New Zealand on tough pitch

WELLINGTON

IT is unlikely Henry Nicholls will score a scratchier, more fortune-laden hundred, but runs are runs, and they're worth even more when they come on a green-top offering pace, bounce and seam movement.

Nicholls' innings ensured New Zealand wrestled control of the second Test away from West Indies, who had begun the opening day positively with their fast bowlers, led by Shannon Gabriel in his 50th Test, enjoying the help on offer at the Basin Reserve.

At stumps, New Zealand were 294 for 6, with Nicholls batting on 117.

Nicholls, who had come to the crease some ten minutes before lunch, survived a difficult period at the start of the second session, when Alzarri Joseph peppered him with short balls from over the wicket, pitching in the left-hander's blind spot outside leg stump and attacking the area between his hip and shoulder.

There was a top-edged pull that fell in no-man's land, a short-leg catch that didn't stick in Shamarh Brooks' hands, and a hooked six that could have been a catch at long leg had Jermaine Blackwood stayed on the rope rather than move some 10 yards in.

Then Gabriel and the debutant Chemar Holder, who had been the pick of West Indies' bowlers before lunch, returned and created a rash of chances that, on another day, would have earned them more than just one wicket between them.

On this day, both Gabriel - with a length ball slanted across him - and Chemar Holder - with a full one that straightened from around the wicket - found Nicholls' outside edge only for Darren Bravo to put him down both times at first slip.

All the luck notwithstanding, there was plenty to admire about Nicholls' innings, especially his discipline outside off stump, and the positive intent he showed when the ball was in his favoured areas, particularly against the short ball, ironically.

As his innings progressed, it felt as if his early wobbles against that form of attack had led West Indies to overuse it, erroneously, especially given that their successes early in the day had come via bowling full lengths.

Gabriel had been erratic at the start of the day, straying too full and often too straight to concede 21 in his first two overs, but once he settled into a rhythm, he kept asking difficult questions of New Zealand's batsmen.

Back at the top of the order following BJ Watling's return, Tom Blundell gave West Indies a clear challenge to bowl full at him with his method of camping deep in the crease.

Gabriel struck in the seventh over, finding a length that brought Blundell half-forward and bowling him through the gate with sharp inward movement.

Tom Latham had set the platform for a big New Zealand total in Hamilton with a 184-ball 86 that was distinguished by his willingness to leave on length.

There was even more bounce available in Wellington, and Latham left a fair few balls that whizzed six inches over the top of off stump as he moved serenely - save for a blow to the elbow from a Gabriel delivery that reared from a length - to 27.

But West Indies were also more willing to try and get him to drive, even if it meant serving up the occasional half-volley. They found the perfect line and length for him in the sixth over after the drinks break, courtesy Chemar Holder.

The ball was full enough to induce the drive without being full enough to feed the stroke. Then it straightened, and Latham, who was a little late getting his weight fully onto the front foot, edged behind.

That wicket brought Ross Taylor to the crease. Gabriel immediately reappeared, discomfiting Taylor with seam movement and extra bounce, hitting him on the chest before getting one to straighten in the corridor, producing a hard-hands jab that he edged behind.

At this point - New Zealand 78 for 3 and without Kane Williamson, 2.3 overs before lunch - it felt as if West Indies were slightly ahead. But through the rest of the day they let their control slip.

Apart from the overuse of the short ball, they would have also been disappointed with Jason Holder's display. Though he bowled more overs than any of his colleagues and ended the day as the only bowler with an economy rate below 3 an over, he presented surprisingly little threat in helpful conditions, often bowling a touch too short to get the edges, or a touch too wide to make the batsmen play. **AGENCIES**

Serengeti Giants Club trounces Ngorongoro Titans in 2020 TCA Super League



GP Pak Stars' Zafar Khan puts his batting prowess to show when his club confronted Shree Kutchi Leva Patel Sports Club in this season's Dar es Salaam Cricket (DC) Caravans T20 Cup tournament, which took place last month. Khan catapulted Serengeti Giants to victory over Ngorongoro Titans in a recent Tanzania Cricket Association (TCA) Super League's match, held in the city. PHOTO: COURTESY OF CARAVANS CLUB

By Guardian Reporter

SERENGETI Giants have picked their first win in the maiden Tanzania Cricket Association (TCA) Super League, walloping Ngorongoro Titans by seven wickets in an encounter which took place in Dar es Salaam mid this week.

Youngster Aaahil Jasani so far had a performance worth writing home about, once Ngorongoro Titans had won the toss and elected to bat in the clash, which took place at Leaders Club venue.

Ngorongoro Titans were skittled for 96 runs in 41 overs of the scheduled 50-over duel, with Jasani ending as the only batsman with significant batting performance, recording 36 runs which included a four.

They experienced a shaky start to their quest for an imposing score, given openers, Abhik Patwa and Abbas Adamjee, had a brief stay at the crease.

The two batsmen completely failed to make their presence felt, with Patwa notching three runs, whilst Adamjee recorded

two runs.

Patwa, an experienced all-rounder who is also one of the senior national team's key performers, had, as a result, a below par showing for Ngorongoro Titans for the second consecutive match.

The player, in his club's previous tie against Kilimanjaro Aces which took place last weekend, was dismissed for duck.

Arsalaan Premji, slotted in at number three, managed to hold his own against Serengeti Giants' bowling unit for several overs, ending with 16 runs which consisted of a four.

Youthful performer, Seif Athuman, and the side's skipper, Ashish Kamania, also had a frustrating day at the crease, exiting with three runs and four runs respectively.

Jasani later showcased his batting prowess and saw to it his team end the innings with respectable total,

notching 36 runs.

Ngorongoro Titans' pursuit of a convincing score was dealt a huge blow, considering the remainder of the side's batsmen were dismissed in quick succession.

Low order batsman, Tambwe Rashid, ended two runs short of double digit figure, with his score including two fours.

Youthful bowler, Issa Safari, had, for the second consecutive tie, put scintillating bowling showing for Serengeti Giants, in which he had three wickets and leaked 13 runs in five overs.

Safari had one maiden over in his five-over spell, posting an economy rate of 2.60.

Skipper Khan too showcased good displays during Serengeti Giants' turn with the ball, given he took two wickets and gave away 12 runs in six overs.

Serengeti Giants, later, chased Ngorongoro Titans' modest total with ease, dropping three wickets in 17 overs.

Despite facing a shaky start to the chase following early exits of openers, Jumanne Mohamed and Salmini Yusuph, the squad was unperturbed by the setback, thanks to Ejaz Aziz and Khan's exploits at the crease.

Another early dismissal of youthful player, Mohamed Omary, as well failed to weaken Serengeti Giants' resolve.

He was dismissed for duck after he was caught by Ngorongoro Titans' Rashid off Goodluck Andrew's bowling.

Aziz stepped up at the crease to forge a fourth-wicket stand with Khan and the duo catapulted Serengeti Giants to victory with their aggressive batting.

Aziz scored 33 runs not out, which included two sixes, whilst Khan ended as the team's top run getter, posting unbeaten 45 runs which included seven boundaries.

Ngorongoro Titans' spinner Rashid ended with an impressive bowling figure, as he had two wickets and gave away 34 runs in eight overs.

Serengeti Giants are currently placed third in the four-team league following the victory. They have posted net run rate of -0.2506, recording 209 runs and giving away 337 runs.

Tembo Warriors are leading the rest of the pack in the tournament given the team have won two games they have taken part in to collect four points.

Kilimanjaro Aces have been positioned second, two points below the tournament leaders, Ngorongoro Titans are rooted to the bottom of the competition's table with no point, given they have lost two matches they have featured in.

The national cricket governing body has organized the 50-over formatted event, which has brought together four clubs, with a view to boosting promotion of the sport at the domestic level.

The tournament, moreover, serves as part of the pathway for capped and uncapped players to stake claim in the senior national squad for international tournaments in 2021.

Muhongo all out to support traditional wrestling promotion



Sospeter Muhongo.

By Correspondent Sabato Kasika

MUSOMA Rural Constituency's Member of Parliament, Sospeter Muhongo, has stated he is seeking to back promotion of wrestling in his constituency after successfully supporting other sporting disciplines and cultural events.

Muhongo had, for the past few years, put his weight behind several competitions including boat race, traditional dances and choirs' competitions, which are taking place in the constituency.

He disclosed westling is one of sports disciplines, which attract great following in the world, and the game keeps on pulling more fans.

He stated he will put his focus on backing traditional wrestling, which

is much more familiar to sports fans in his constituency.

He noted sports help to boost unity in communities and, for that matter, he will continue working with wrestling stakeholders in the constituency to bring the sport back and see to it the sport enjoys the backing it accessed in the past.

"In the past five years, we have managed to bring such events like boat racing, choirs and traditional dances' competitions back, we are now setting our sight on traditional wrestling which had for many years plunged into oblivion in our constituency," he noted.

He was adamant he opted to ensure cultural and sports activities, which were almost non-existent, are successfully organized in his constituency.

He stated his constituency is, ultimately, hosting a variety of entertainment events every year.

He said: "We now have traditional dances and singing competitions, and boat racing, with winners walking away with cash prizes in a bid to boost people's passion for cultural activities."

He clarified next year will, among other initiatives, be a season dedicated to bringing traditional wrestling back, as a continuation of efforts to improve good relations and unity among Musoma Rural Constituency's people.

He stated: "In essence, I'm a sports stakeholder and I had already handed over sports equipment which include jerseys and footballs to outfits and schools in several villages in the constituency."

Flexibles by David Chikoko



DOCTORS ARE ACTUALLY HUMAN BODY MECHANICS

