



### National Pg 3

Mwinyi chairs Revolutionary Council



### National Pg 4

Minister warns scrap metal dealers



### National Pg 5

Police to reinforce security



### National Pg 5

Govt crackdown on illegal fishing



DC Edward Balele

## Over 6m hectares set for pastures by 2025

By Correspondent Marc Nkwame, Monduli

MORE than six million hectares of land specifically as grazing pastures will have been demarcated by the year 2025 as the country gears up to formalize the traditional livestock sector to become a strong economic pillar.

An official of the Ministry of Livestock Fisheries, Boniface Shija, said at a land occupancy certificate presentation here yesterday that the country has so far managed to establish mapped grazing areas taking up more than two million hectares of land, with the size set to triple in the next five years.

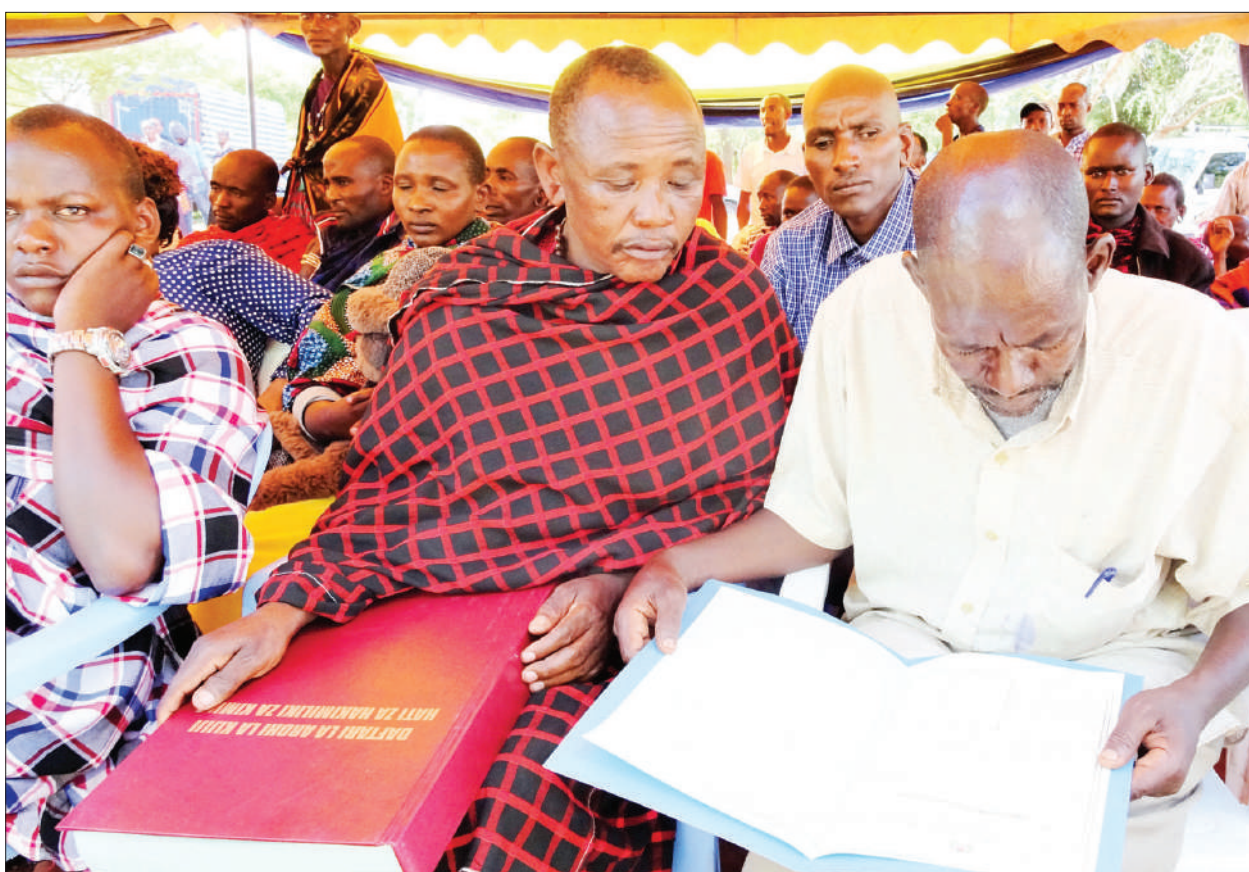
Shija was speaking at Lolkisale Ward of Monduli District, presenting certificates of demarcated and secured customary rights of occupancy for grazing areas, to nine villages in the ward.

The work is being carried out by the Grazing Land and Animal Feed Resources Development Division of the ministry, with villages presented with with the certificates

TURN TO PAGE 2

# Insurers map out COVID-19 impacts recovery pathways

By Henry Mwangonde



Village elders perusing through copies of customary land titles for grazing areas as well as the village land registry book shortly after being presented with the documents from the Ujamaa Community Resource Team (UCRT) by Monduli District Commissioner Edward Balele (not in picture) at Lemooti Ward. Photo: Correspondent Marc Nkwame

IT will take two to three years for the insurance sector to recover from the Covid-19 blow which reduced its revenues by 15-percent, it was revealed yesterday.

Speaking at an insurance sector end of the year retreat in the city, the Association of Tanzania Insurers (ATI) chairman Khamis Suleiman said the pandemic had a negative impact on the sector which is now struggling to recover.

In the first months of the pandemic the association suspended premiums to rescue some of its members who are on the verge of collapsing due to operational risks.

"We really have a tough task to reverse the situation. As of now studies we have conducted show that we have more than two years to return to the situation which we had in 2019," he said.

The task now is to raise the number of people with insurance knowledge and access but also reach out to sectors that employ the majority of people such as agriculture, he said.

Muyengi Zacharia, the director of planning, research and market development at the Tanzania Insurance Regulatory Authority (TIRA) said that there is need for collaboration among stakeholders to rescue the sector from the challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

He cited the principal task as to reach



**In the first months of the pandemic the association suspended premiums to rescue some of its members who are on the verge of collapsing due to operational risks**

intended goals put in place by the government, chiefly to increase access to insurance services by common citizens from four percent to 50 percent by the year 2030.

Other targets are to increase the contribution of the insurance sector to GDP from the current one percent to three percent by 2030.

Amir Kiwanda, the president of the Tanzania Insurance Brokers Association (TIBA) said the retreat was a tool for stakeholders to share ideas and discuss the way forward ahead of the New Year, with the meeting being organized by the Africa College of Insurance and Social Protection (ACISP).

"If we are to collectively address these challenges we need to work together in various available ways including Public Private Partnership (PPP)," he declared.

The government is now laying the groundwork for implementation of plans that will ensure the country reaches the target of 50 percent inclusion of adult Tanzanians in different insurance products by 2028, he stated.

Currently, around 15 percent of adult Tanzanians have access to more than one insurance product, on the basis of TIRA surveys, he added.

## COMPLAINTS

Page 3



## PROMOTIONS

Page 4



## PARASTATALS

Page 5



## Ministry: Crackdown on foreign teachers coming

By Guardian Correspondent, Dodoma

THE government intends to embark on a crackdown on foreign teachers working in primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities where they don't possess the necessary paperwork as well as work permits.

The minister for Education, Science, Technology and Vocational Training, Prof Joyce Ndalichako said here yesterday that the exercise will be conducted in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Office (Policy, Parliamentary Affairs, Labour, Employment, Youth and



**We aim at identifying all foreign teachers not having work permits**

the Disabled) as it is mandated with offering work permits for foreigners.

"We aim at identifying all foreign teachers not having work permits. We are aware of schools, colleges and universities that employ foreign teachers outside the required procedures. The bad thing is that most foreigners working illegally are in the education sector," she asserted.

She made the remarks when closing the annual general meeting of the Tanzania Heads of Secondary Schools Association (TAHOSA), a three day meeting to exchange views on different matters related

TURN TO PAGE 2

## Govt restores ban on donkey selling

By Guardian Correspondent, Babati

THE government has banned selling donkeys in a fresh move to boost the number of the domestic animals, lately threatened by high demand in China for traditional medicine called 'ejiao.'

Pauline Gekul (pictured), the Deputy Minister for Livestock and Fisheries announced the ban here on Tuesday when addressing the



Manyara Regional Consultative Committee (RCC).

The trade is wreaking havoc on rural economies that depend on donkeys for transport, she said, highlighting that donkey skins are used to make gelatin—a key ingredient of 'ejiao,' which is believed to improve blood circulation and treat conditions like anaemia, by precepts of Chinese traditional medicine.

The deputy minister asked people currently involved in donkey slaughter to find other occupations or engage in the cattle meat trade, elaborating that the number of donkeys in the country is estimated at

TURN TO PAGE 2



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Traffic police officer looks at a car crashed into a ditch along Goba road in the outskirts of Dar es Salaam yesterday. No one was injured. Photo: Correspondent Miraji Msala

## Govt restores ban on donkey selling

FROM PAGE 1  
600,000.

"Through the ministry, we'll contact factories that have been slaughtering donkeys they should stop, as a measure of protecting the animals," she declared.

In June 2017, the government banned the donkey skin trade, but lifted the ban again in February 2018, when licensing Fang Hua (Pty) Ltd to operate a donkey abattoir in Shinyanga Region.

Donkeys have been used as pack animals in Tanzania since

pre-colonial times, but this role is threatened by the high demand in China.

As many as 1.8m donkeys were either sourced legally or stolen and slaughtered for their skins worldwide last year, leaving donkey-reliant communities at the risk of impoverishment and loss of resilience.

The Donkey Sanctuary, an animal welfare organization, said recently that half the world's donkey population could be wiped out in the next five years, as millions are slaughtered for their

hides to meet the rising demand for traditional Chinese medicine.

It is estimated that 4.8m donkey hides a year are needed to satisfy the demand for a gelatin-based traditional medicine, 'ejiao.'

At the current pace, the global donkey population of 44m would be halved over the next five years, the report affirms.

Donkey populations in Brazil have declined by 28 per cent since 2007, by 37 per cent in Botswana, and by 53 per cent in Kyrgyzstan. There are fears donkey populations in Kenya and Ghana

are fast declining on account of skin trade.

The report shows how donkeys - many stolen from communities who rely on the animals for their livelihoods - are transported on long journeys without access to food or water, with up to 20 per cent dying on the route.

Broken legs were commonplace, with sightings of severed hooves and lower legs on the ground at offloading sites as donkeys are often dragged by their ears and tails, the report added.

## Ministry: Crackdown on foreign teachers coming

FROM PAGE 1

to provision of education in secondary schools and wider.

Prof Ndalichako said that she was in consultations with the Minister of State (PMO) for the portfolio, Jenister Mhagama to ensure the crackdown starts shortly. "We are not going to spare anyone; stringent measures will be taken against them," the minister underlined.

She urged secondary school heads to ensure proper supervision of the country's laws and report to the government whenever school owners bring foreign teachers without following the laid down procedures.

Measures against illegally employed teachers are meant to protect jobs for locals but also ensure schools, colleges and universities respect the country laws, she asserted, cautioning school owners against violating the terms of registration for their schools.

"Some owners have been turning their day schools to boarding schools simply because they have just constructed one or two structures and call them dormitories; this is unacceptable," said Prof Ndalichako insisting that they follow procedures to be granted permits to operate boarding schools.

She urged the school heads to make sure students are well taught throughout the year instead of waiting for national examinations to start teaching them after normal class hours.

The Tanzania Association of Managers and Owners of Non-Government Schools and Colleges (TamongSCO), colleges in the country says that there aren't enough trained primary school tutors who focused on English studies,

It says in a survey that by

December 2015, 3,500 teachers from Kenya, Uganda, Malawi and Zambia faced expulsion in a crackdown on illegal immigrants in the country, on account of the fact that schools are required to pay a \$2,000 fee for a two-year work permit required for foreign teachers.

Mwita Waitara, the Deputy Minister of State in the President's Office (Regional Administration and Local Governments), told the National Assembly last year that 3,089 expatriate primary school teachers were employed in the financial year that ended June 2019.

These additional teachers were still inadequate to meet the required teacher-pupil ratio of 1:40 as in some regions, one teacher handles up to 250 students, he added.



**Some owners have been turning their day schools to boarding schools simply because they have just constructed one or two structures and call them dormitories; this is unacceptable**

## Over 6m hectares set for pastures by 2025

FROM PAGE 1

listed as Lepurko, Nalarami, Moita-Kiloriti, Lengoolwa, Oldonyo; Lemooti, Lesimingori, Lengoluwa, Nafco and Lolkisale.

The villages occupy 101,080 hectares of land, while the demarcated grazing land shared between them reportedly measures 28,317 hectares.

The ongoing process of providing customary land titles to protect village grazing areas is being executed through the Ujamaa Community Resource Team (UCRT), with support from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in association with the United States International Development Agency (USAID).

The UCRT District Coordinator, Lawrence Makko noted that there were still some challenges, saying that ongoing border conflict between Engorika, Lengiloriti and Meserani-Bwawani villages has delayed the provision of certificates and titles to the areas.

"Herders are also facing the problem of invasive weeds that are stifling the growth of edible grass in the pastures," he said, noting further that drought driven water scarcity is another setback in otherwise positive developments among the nomadic pastoralists.

UCRT has also facilitated

surveying village boundaries; purchase and distribution of village land registry materials; establishment of village land councils and tribunals along with execution of physical internal zoning.

District Commissioner Edward Balele issued the documents of grazing land ownership to the village elders, cautioning them to ensure that they preserve the environment so that the pastures are sustainably maintained.

Last week the certificates were issued to seven other villages in Engaruka Ward, namely Baraka, Losirwa, Mbaashi, Irendeni, Upper Engaruka, Lower Engaruka and Oldoinyo Lengai that are mapped within 107,040 hectares of land. Grazing areas covered under the customary rights of occupancy measure over 53,404 hectares in total, officials noted.



**Herders are also facing the problem of invasive weeds that are stifling the growth of edible grass in the pastures**



Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation minister Prof Palamagamba Kabudi shows onions packing bags to Idete and Lumuma village residents who complained of being exploited by unscrupulous business people in Kilosa District, Morogoro Region at a public rally held recently. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

## Women must benefit from Africa's Free Trade Agreement

By Agencies

As the launch of the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) on January 1, 2021 nears, many countries on the continent are confident and optimistic of the opportunities that regional trading partnerships will bring.

However, many who are

reliant on cross-border trade for their livelihoods are women, according to Malabo Montpellier Panel member Ishmael Sunga, who is also the Chief Executive Officer of the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU).

He added that women have been disproportionately

affected by restrictions, border closures and curfews enforced due to Covid-19, alongside gender-based discrimination and violence." The AfCFTA will be one of the largest free trade areas in the world since the establishment of the World Trade Organization, covering a market of more than 1.2 billion people and up to U.S.\$3 trillion

in combined GDP, the Malabo Montpellier Panel said.

AfCFTA is likely to be a watershed for African regional and international agri-food trade, a new report by the Malabo Montpellier Panel has found.

The AfCFTA will be one of the largest free trade areas in the world since the establishment

of the World Trade Organization (WTO), covering a market of more than 1.2 billion people and up to US\$3 trillion in combined GDP. The agreement also creates the opportunity to increase intra-African trade by more than 50 per cent, adding an estimated US\$76 billion in income to the rest of the world.

"Lagging far behind other

major regions of the world like the EU in terms of trade between individual countries, the African Union and its member states have made a commitment to foster the links between domestic markets across the continent" said Ousmane Badiane, co-chair of the Malabo Montpellier Panel, which authored the report.





CRJE company sewer construction workers at Kurasini in the outskirts of Dar es Salaam install sewer pipes to transport wastewater out of structures and to a body of water or treatment facility. They dig trenches and insert the pipes, making sure they have correct angle and are connected watertight. Sewer construction workers also construct other elements of sewage infrastructure, such as manholes, and maintain and repair existing systems. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma

# Minister directs TCRA to address complaints from all phone users

By Henry Mwangonde

Communications and Information Technology (ICT) minister Dr Faustine Ndungulile has directed the Consumer Consultative Council for the Tanzania Communication Regulatory Authority (TCRA) to analyse and address complaints by users over being shortchanged on bundle packages.

The minister issued the directives during his tour to meet top officials from the council and the national ICT commission on how they can help the government to achieve technological development.

According to the minister, there have been complaints by users over being shortchanged by telecom operators saying there is need to address the matter with immediate effect.

The minister said users have been complaining about given less internet data or being overcharged when they purchase bundles.

"I have started with this one because the complaints are many especially on bundles because the government has been working on addressing complaints by Tanzanians," he said.

The minister asked the council to list down a number of complaints as well as solutions to them so that there is a gauge to measure how the council was operating.

"We want to see how many complaints have you received and how many have you worked on, which one are repeating themselves so that as a ministry we address them," he said.

He said the government has been working on ensuring that the sector contributes fully to the economy through building an industry that will be well regulated for security and development growth reasons.

Speaking on the matter, Executive Secretary for the Council Mary Msuya said the council has been receiving complaints over the matter saying it will address them with high speed. "We are heading towards a digital economy, the number of users is also increasing, therefore we need to change and come up with solutions to address such issues," he said.

For his part, the acting managing director for the national ICT commission Samson Mwela said they have started registering experts to ensure they are professional.

He added that already a framework has been formulated by the Information and Communications Technology Commission on how the professional body to be formed will be operating and has been sent to the central government for approval.

**I have started with this one because the complaints are many especially on bundles because the govt has been working on addressing complaints by Tanzanians**

By Guardian Reporter

## Dr Hussein Mwinyi chairs first Revolutionary Council meeting

ZANZIBAR President Dr Hussein Ali Mwinyi yesterday chaired the first meeting of the Revolutionary Council since he was sworn in after the October 28 2020 elections.

The meeting was held at the Revolutionary Council Conference Hall at State House and was also attended by the First Vice President Seif Sharif Hamad and the Second Vice President Hemed Suleiman Abdalla.

Others included the Secretary to the Revolutionary Council and Chief Secretary Dr Abdulhamid Yahya Mzee, cabinet ministers and the Zanzibar Attorney General Dr Mwinyi Talib Haji.

President Mwinyi convened the meeting according to the requirement of Article 45 (1) of the Zanzibar 1984 Constitution.

Dr Mwinyi was officially sworn in as Zanzibar President and chairman of the Revolutionary Council on November 2 2020 after his landslide victory in the elections.

Consequently, on December 7 Dr Mwinyi appointed Seif Sharif Hamad, the leader of the main opposition ACT-Wazalendo

as First Vice President in the Government of National Unity (GNU) and sworn him two days after.

In the cabinet meeting President Mwinyi pledged to make great efforts to preserve the Government of the National Unity (GNU) for the interests of all Zanzibaris.

# QNET

## QNET ADDRESSES ITS BUSINESS IN TANZANIA

QNET has recently come under media scrutiny over its business and operations in Tanzania. We take this opportunity to clarify our position. We pledge and reiterate our commitment to our customers in Tanzania in relation to operating our business according to local laws.

### About QNET

QNET is an international e-commerce based direct selling company headquartered in Hong Kong. Through our e-commerce portal [www.qnet.net](http://www.qnet.net), we sell exclusive high-quality health, wellness, and lifestyle products to customers around the world since 1998. In addition to offering great products, QNET also offers a direct selling business opportunity to customers who wish to become distributors of our products and earn commissions when their referrals buy products from QNET.

### QNET refers to these distributors as Independent Representatives (IRs).

#### What is Direct Selling?

Direct selling is a way of marketing and retailing goods and services directly to consumers, in their homes or in any other location away from permanent retail premises. Such sales are largely driven by word-of-mouth referrals. Products sold by direct selling companies have unique features, are very exclusive and are not available in malls or department stores.

The direct selling industry has been a thriving model of relationship-based marketing and sales for over 150 years. Approximately 100 million people around the world are involved in this industry in both part-time and full-time capacity.

### QNET's Business Model

QNET's business combines two major industries together, namely: e-commerce and direct selling. Any person, of legal age, can purchase a product from QNET and choose to take up the opportunity to become an IR. When IRs refer our products to others on our e-commerce portal and make a successful sale, they earn commissions from QNET.

Due to the borderless business opportunity and the extensive support provided by QNET to IRs in terms of training, business tools, customer support, and a full-fledged online virtual office to help them track their sales and earnings, many aspiring entrepreneurs find this to be an attractive opportunity to earn an additional income stream without the need to invest in operational overheads.

### QNET's Business in Tanzania

As an international e-commerce business, QNET has been shipping products to customers in Tanzania for several years now. However, it is only since late 2017 that many of our customers have become IRs of

our products.

Once QNET began to receive a steady stream of registrations on our e-commerce portal from Independent Representatives (IRs) in Tanzania, we partnered with a local entity in Dar es Salaam to represent us as our local agent with responsibly to handle all importation and customs clearance of products, payment of applicable duties, and managing of stock inventory. This arrangement continued till Covid19 reached severe levels of late.

QNET is currently exploring establishing a private LLC in Tanzania, however this process has been delayed due to ongoing travel restrictions as a result of Covid-19.

### QNET's Commitment to Tanzania

QNET is fully cognisant of the importance of Tanzania in the East Africa region and is keen to strengthen our presence in the country while demonstrating our commitment to the growth and development of the local economy.

In line with this, we recently launched a new jewellery line under our luxury products category using ethically sourced Tanzanite gemstones from Tanzania which are sold globally through our e-commerce platform.

For nearly two years now, QNET's CSR arm, the RYTHM Foundation has been

supporting a local non-profit to build water wells in the Iringa region that provides access to clean drinking water to thousands of villagers. The Foundation has also funded the set-up of a 50-acre farm where macadamia nuts and avocados are grown, and villagers are trained in modern farming techniques which provides them with a livelihood. Proceeds from the sale of the produce goes back to the community to help maintain the water wells in the region.

In addition to this, QNET has been regularly engaging with the local community through a number of on-ground initiatives. We have organised product expos to showcase our products and services, we have held media round table discussions to proactively present the company and our business model, we have actively contributed to a number of charitable drives during the month of Ramadan for the last several years.

We take this opportunity to assure our customers and the authorities that QNET is committed to continuing and conducting our business in full compliance with the laws and regulations of Tanzania. We always remain available to address any queries which arise and may be contacted through the contact information on our website.

**ASANTE, TANZANIA! WE ARE HERE TO SERVE.**



## RC calls for promotion of teachers in primary and secondary schools

By Guardian Correspondent, Tabora

TABORA Regional Commissioner Dr Philemon Sengati has said teachers in primary and secondary schools which had performed well in the national examinations should be promoted.

Dr Sengati made the statement here yesterday when inspecting the ongoing construction of classrooms at Mbirani primary school and Kamagi secondary school.

The Regional Commissioner urged the district administrative secretaries to make sure those appointed for the posts of head teachers and ward education officers were sourced from the best performing schools.

He said the aim is to have good leaders who are likely to improve the region's academic performance and ensure proper supervision of the schools.

In another development, Dr Sengati has called upon authorities in Sikonge District to make sure the ongoing construction of classrooms is completed by February 2020 to be able to accommodate all the selected Form One students for the 2021/2022 academic year. He said the newly constructed classrooms must have all the required furniture including desks.

Sikonge District Commissioner, Peres Magiri said the district is facing a shortage of 10 classrooms for Form One students selected to join secondary education in January next year.

He said the district's long plan is to spend 30m/- from its internal

revenues for construction of classrooms at Usunga, Tutuo and Igigwa secondary schools. He added that through the Education Programme For Results (EP4R) they have allocated 200m/- for construction of six classrooms and 10 pit latrines at different secondary schools.

Meanwhile, the RC assured investors of a creative business environment calling upon them to establish honey processing factories. He said the demand for honey packaging materials is also high, hence the need for investors to start manufacturing them.

He said they have allocated some 8.8 hectares of land for construction of small and medium scale industries. He said the area has a good road network to allow investors to transport their products smoothly.

The Sikonge District statistician, Gadi Mwatebela said they have agreed with the Tanzania Forest Services (TFS) to construct a honey processing factory at the cost of 719.7m/-, whereas the district will contribute 37.8m/-

He said they have so far received 462.5m/- of the funds, and that the construction work has already begun.

To ensure availability of raw materials, the district in collaboration with TFS has started to train beekeepers on modern beekeeping methods to improve production.

*He said they have so far received 462.5m/- of the funds, and that the construction work has already begun.*



Vodacom Tanzania Plc head of M-Pesa business Happiness Shuma (L) briefs journalists in Dar es Salaam while announcing a dividend of 3.9bn/- to M-Pesa customers between April and June this year which will benefit clients for this year's festive season. Right is the head of department M-Pesa strategic planning and reporting Nelusigwe Mwangota. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

## Minister calls for team spirit in Songea municipal councils

By Guardian Correspondent, Songea

STATE minister in the President's Office (Regional Administration and Local Governments) Selemani Jafo has called on the staff of Songea Municipal Council in Ruvuma Region to continue working together in order to increase revenue collections in the council. Jafo made the call here yesterday

when speaking to the staff of the council as part of his visit to inspect the implementation of various projects carried out by the council.

He said that in order for the council to be able to collect good revenues, council staff should work as one team, calling for heads of departments to motivate their junior staff to increase efficiency and realise their desired

dreams. "It's high time, heads of departments to create better working environments for staff to motivate them by providing fair recommendations that will make them be promoted," he suggested. "It is not good for you (heads of departments) and for the council to hide information of your staff. Let's stop from doing so for the development of our council," the minister said.

In another development, Jafo commended the municipal council executive director Tina Sekambo for supervising well development projects in the area including the 12bn/-ultra-modern Shuleyatanga Bus Terminal located few kilometers from Songea town centre.

The World Bank-funded project is in line with increasing population in Songea municipality



Mara Region coordinator of national programme on violence against women and children Neema Ibamba makes a presentation at a seminar involving women and children protection committees held in Butiama recently. Photo: Guardian Correspondent.

## A cry for health centre project money

By Guardian Correspondent, Songea

RESIDENTS Nakahengwa village in Songea District, Ruvuma Region have issued a one-month ultimatum to the leadership of the council to return funds amounting to 10m/- meant for the final construction of a health centre in the village.

The villagers said they need the money which was issued by the government to complete the project which is now dormant due to lack of funds.

Speaking during a tour by experts from the Social Accountability Monitoring (SAM), said the money was needed to complete construction of the

project which was key for their wellbeing.

The residents said they are tired of walking a distance of 35 kilometers to receive health services at Songea district hospital despite the government issuing funds for the construction of a hospital in their area.

The residents argued that the money was taken by the leadership of the district council without being consulted saying the silence raises questions on the proper use of the money.

They asked the executive director to ensure the money was returned with immediate effect to ensure the project was completed instead of letting them travelling

all the way to Songea.

One of the residents Romanus Komba (63) a member of the construction committee said the money was brought by the district council through the health committee to finish the project but it had been withdrawn without any information of the villagers.

He said during a last meeting between the district council and members of the village, there was a promise to return the money but up to now nothing had been done.

They further said whenever they followed up on the matter they were given disappointing answers and requested the office of the Regional Commissioner to

intervene.

In his remarks, the district medical officer for Songea Dr Geoffrey Kihale Kihale confirmed that there was such an amount of money meant for the project.

Dr Kihale said out of the money 2m/- has been used for purchasing furniture adding that the council had failed to return the remaining money due to other needs in the district.

Responding on phone, the executive director for the district Simon Bulenganija said the money was taken during the corona pandemic adding that it will be returned when things will be ok with the council.

## Minister cautions suppliers and dealers of scrap metal

By Guardian Reporter

DEPUTY minister in the Vice President's Office, Mwita Waitara has urged scrap metal traders to be honest and avoid engaging in vandalism.

Waitara made the call yesterday when he held a meeting with the traders in Mwanza whereby he insisted that the government recognises the business but there are some people who are vandalising infrastructure and selling them as scrap metal illegally.

He urged the traders to work with the government in exposing those who engage in destroying infrastructure and selling to them scrap metal as the act is tantamount to economic sabotage and they are tarnishing your image.

"If you work according to the law you have no problem with the government.

In addition, the Deputy Minister added that there is a need to advise the Minister of State in the Office in the Vice President's Office who is responsible for the permits to review the permits and if found to be revoked saying that it is holding back the development of the country.

Earlier visiting the Falcon plastic wastes recycling factory in Mwanza, he commended the investor's efforts in helping to clean up the environment by collecting the bottles.

"I would like to congratulate you very much as we will remember in June last year when we banned plastic bags you as a factory you collected the about eight tons.

"You help a lot to clean the environment and you provide jobs which means people when they collect these bottles they get whatever it is this job and I am very inspired you produce other products I see benches break tables instead of cutting down trees and destroying the environment," he said.

Deputy Minister Waitara is on a visit to the Lake Zone

Region with the aim of providing environmental education with officials from the Office of the Vice President and the National Environmental Management and Conservation Council (NEMC).

The government had in 2004 banned exports of all types of scrap metal after an investigation revealed that local scrap merchants are flouting measures requiring them not to export iron, steel, aluminum and brass scrap.

But some metal dealers have been loading containers with banned metals after telling government officials that they did not contain blacklisted material, a survey by the ministry of industries and trade had revealed.



**You help a lot to clean the environment and you provide jobs which means people when they collect these bottles they get whatever it is this job and I am very inspired you produce other products I see benches break tables instead of cutting down trees and destroying the environment**



# Govt announces new sustainable crackdown on unlawful fishing

By Guardian Reporter

THE government has announced a crackdown on fishermen engaged in illegal fishing, warning that this time the operation will be sustainable.

It says the crackdown would aim at all those engaged in illegal fishing practices wherever they might be and stern legal steps would be taken against them.

Mashimba Ndaki, the Livestock and Fisheries Minister made the announcement at a public rally at Mchinga 2 Village in Mchinga District in Lindi Region during his tour in the region.

He said the operation would be inclusive in all regions and districts with known illegal fishing activities.

"We want this operation to be sustainable, we want to completely eradicate illegal fishing practices which we think will now remain in history books," Ndaki said.

He added: "I warn all those engaged in illegal fishing, or those contemplating doing so, to start thinking doing other things because we shall have no mercy at all, we shall hunt for them everywhere and ensure they face the arm of the law."

He said despite huge government efforts against illegal fishing, the crimes still continue and that the government would not tolerate them anymore.

He also said there was need for the people in areas with

illegal fishing activities to work together with the government in eradicating them.

"I congratulate the people living along the Indian Ocean Coastal areas for exhibiting patriotism by working together with the government in fighting illegal fishing, especially dynamite fishing, and according to reports Lindi Region has controlled the crime by 100 per cent within this particular area," he said.

Ndaki called on firms which purchase seaweeds crop to immediately stop swindling seaweed farmers by using defective weighing scales.

He said his ministry will look into the procedures by working together with local councils to enable seaweed farmers add value to their crops instead of selling them as mere raw materials.

He said the time has come for farmers to benefit from their crops instead of being swindled by some middlemen.



**We want this operation to be sustainable, we want to completely eradicate illegal fishing practices which we think will now remain in history books**



MV Mbeya II docks at Mbamba Bay port during the tourism festival recently. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

## Police to reinforce security during year-end festivities

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbeya

POLICE in Mbeya Region has banned entertainment venues from organising shows for children popularly known as 'Disco toto' during year-end festivities on the grounds that the environment is not safe for minors.

Mbeya Regional Commander, Ulrich Matei announced the

ban yesterday when speaking to reporters on how the police force is organized to ensure festivities are held in a safe environment.

He urged parents, guardians, and the community at large to continue focusing on children against unsafe environments during year-end festivals.

He also encouraged people in the region to ensure that the

security of their properties is their responsibility. RC Matei called on local government leaders to team up with the police force in ensuring that their localities are safe.

"We'll also ensure that all borders such as Kasumululu and Tunduma and other entry points are well protected to control smuggling," he said.

Matei also warned drivers

to adhere to traffic rules and regulations when driving during the entire period of year-end festivities. "We're calling on drivers and road users to stick on traffic rules and regulations as the police force will be vigilant all the time of festivals."

He also revealed that Songwe International Airport (SIA) and Lake Nyasa beaches will be protected.



Arusha Regional Commissioner Idd Kimanta participates in construction of classrooms at Elerai secondary school on Tuesday. Photo: Correspondent Getrude Mpezya

## Dr Mpango irked by dismal parastatals' contribution to state consolidated fund

By Guardian Reporter, Dodoma

FINANCE and Planning Minister Dr Philip Mpango has given 9 days (December 22 to 31) to heads of public institutions and parastatal organisations to explain in writing the reasons for their institutions to contribute insignificant amount of money to the Government Consolidated Fund, non-contribution to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and disregarding the 60 per cent ceiling expenditure of their gross incomes according to statutory imperatives.

Dr Mpango issued the ultimatum here early this week during his meeting with heads of 236 government institutions and parastatal organisations countrywide as part of his meetings with various government institutions aimed at issuing fresh directives in their day to day performance aimed to boost government income.

"Your contributions to the Consolidated Fund are still not satisfactory. In FY 2019/20, contributions from government institutions and parastatal organisations was below 1 per cent, a very negligible amount compared with the government investment in your institutions," said Dr Mpango.

He instructed the Treasury Registrar, Athumani Mbattuka to ensure the required written explanations from heads of institutions reach him before December 31 while at the same time he announced the cancellation Christmas and New year leave for the officials to enable them implement his ultimatum.

The minister elaborated that Section 47 of the 2017 Finance Act as read with Section 8 of the Treasury Registrar Act (cap 370) as amended in 2015 require government institutions and parastatal organisations to contribute 15 per cent of their

gross incomes to the Consolidated Fund but there are still many institutions contributing less than the stated amount, while others do not contribute anything at all to the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

He also said Sections 46 (1) of the 2015 Finance Act and 10A of the Treasury Registrar Act (Cap 370) as amended in 2015 placed 60 per cent expenditure ceilings for the gross incomes of the non-commercial institutions, but warned that there are many institutions that continue to violate this legal requirement.

He directed the heads of the institutions to ensure they reduce unnecessary expenditures including large entourage of officials and board members visiting ongoing projects, saying this would enable them to contribute to the Consolidated Fund to enable the government to implement big community projects and other ongoing strategic projects.

He mentioned some of the projects as including the SGR railway project, the 2.115MW Julius Nyerere Hydro Power Project (JNHPP) on Rufiji River. He said all government departments involved in tax collection, including all local councils must make great efforts to increase revenue collection, both tax, and non-tax revenues to enable the government meet its obligations.

Dr Mpango praised the Treasury Registrar, Athumani Mbattuka for his supervision in reclaiming government assets, through the special government assets verification committee, that were under illegal ownership of private individuals.

"Until June 30 2020, a total of 1,562 assets were found to be held by private individuals illegally in 19 out of 26 Mainland regions. The assets include 862 buildings, 559 land plots, 43 farms, two companies, and 96 warehouses," explained Dr Mpango.

## At least 8 in 10 Africans ready to take Covid-19 vaccine

By Agencies

At least eight in 10 people would take a COVID-19 vaccine if it were deemed safe and effective, a survey shows.

The survey was conducted by Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), in partnership with the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM).

Conducted between August and December 2020, the survey interviewed more than 15,000 adults, aged 18 years and above, across 15 African countries: Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan,

Tunisia, and Uganda.

Data from the survey shows significant variations in willingness across countries and across the five regions in the continent, from 94% and 93%, respectively, in Ethiopia and Niger to 65% and 59%, respectively, in Senegal and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, attitudes toward accepting and uptaking vaccine have seen doubts about efficacy and safety spread by misinformation.

The has further exacerbated controversies around vaccines as a preventive measure against infectious diseases.

The study was therefore conducted to investigate public

knowledge and perceptions about the COVID-19 pandemic and COVID-19 vaccine, thus identifying knowledge gaps, cultural beliefs, and attitudes to inform interventions for pre-deployment of vaccines across the continent.

Importance, safety and efficacy Overall, willingness, or not, to take a COVID-19 vaccine depended mostly on trust in vaccines as well as perceptions of its importance, safety and efficacy.

Safety was of utmost consideration; on average 18% of respondents believed that vaccines generally are not safe and 25% percent believed that a COVID-19 vaccine would be unsafe.

Some of the respondents

expressed distrust for vaccines generally while others expressed distrust for a COVID-19 vaccine specifically.

Respondents who are older, those who know someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, and those who live in rural areas are more inclined to take a COVID-19 vaccine than younger people, those who have not seen COVID-19 affect anyone, and those living in urban areas.

Rejection of a COVID-19 vaccine appears to be linked to misinformation and disinformation, as most of those who said they would not take a vaccine believe that the disease is man-made, does not exist, or is exaggerated and does not pose a serious threat. **AGENCIES**



## Government to increase penalties for overloaded vehicles, ministry reveal

By Guardian Correspondent, Chalinze

DEPUTY Minister for Works and Transport Eng Godfrey Kasekenya said yesterday that the government intends to increase penalties for overloaded vehicles as part of measures to enforce weight restrictions and protect the roads.

Eng Kasekenya insisted on transporters to obey the set weight standards and traffic regulations by carrying cargo in accordance with their vehicle capacity. He said overloading has been contributing to most road damages across the country.

He urged transporters to stop overloading the vehicles insisting those violating the laws will be subjected to punishments and penalties set to be used from January next year.

Eng Kasekenya made the remarks during his official tour at the ongoing expansion of the road passing through the Vigwaza weighing bridge. He said completion of the road will reduce vehicle congestion and accidents.

The deputy minister called upon Tanzania technicians taking part in the project to take advantage of the job by working closely with foreign contractors to upgrade their skills. He said upgrading their skills would help them to secure jobs in other construction projects.

“We do not have reasons to continue using foreign contractors while there are qualified competent locals for the job. This is your opportunity to learn and upgrade skills,” he noted calling on the contractor to ensure timely completion of the project as well as value for money.

Tanzania National Roads Agency (TANROADS) Manager in Coast Region, Eng Yudas Msangi said the 17bn/- project which has been implemented since

September 2019 will be completed in a few coming months.

He added that the contractor failed to complete the job on time due to various reasons including the recent rains and shortage of cement. He said the government has given the contractor an additional 11 days to finish the remaining job and hand over the project to the government.

According to him, completion of the project which has now reached 80 percent would reduce transportation cost, control accidents and reduce traffic congestion.

Head supervisor at the Vigwaza weighbridge, Charles Ndyetabula said the weighing bridge has the capacity to weigh between 1200 and 1750 vehicles per day.

Chalinze Member of Parliament, Ridhiwani Kikwete said the project has provided jobs to many young Tanzanians including those from his constituency.

Last year, the government insisted on sticking to provisions of the newly-adopted East African Community (EAC) Vehicle Load Control Act, 2016 despite complaints from transporters.

Transporters lamented that the law will not only kick them out of the business but also make the Dar es Salaam Port less attractive especially to goods destined for Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states.

Passed in 2017, the law aims at protecting roads by curbing overloading. Vehicles with a gross weight of 3,500kg and over have to go through every weighbridge along respective routes. The weight in the axle of super single tyres has been lowered to 8.5 tonnes, from 10 tonnes. The law slaps a \$15,000 (about Sh35 million) fine or three-year jail term or both for contravening the weight rules.



Nyasa District Commissioner Isabela Chilumba (2nd L) on board a fishing vessel in Lundo island during the tourism festival held in Ruvuma Region recently. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

By Guardian Correspondent, Mbeya

FARMERS in southern highland regions have called upon the government to educate them on organic farming to avoid the use of industrial chemicals which can damage the soil.

Organic farming contributes to environmental conservation because it contributes in mitigating the greenhouse effect and global warming through its ability to sequester carbon in the soil.

They made the appeal on Tuesday this week during training on organic farming conducted at the Ministry of Agriculture Training Institute (MATI-Uyole) in Mbeya city. The training was conducted by MATI-Uyole in collaboration with Morogoro

## Farmers wants organic farming education for soil preservation

based Sustainable Agriculture Tanzania (SAT).

A farmer, Moses Mwaigomole, from Ndaga village in Rungwe District said that they have discovered that organic farming is the best agricultural method which has to be used by every farmer.

He said that a large portion of farming soil in southern highland regions have been damaged through the use of industrial chemicals in farming.

“We are told that organic farming helps in preserving the soil fertility and controlling soil

erosion. Most of us have damaged the soil out of ignorance,” he said.

Another farmer, Prisca John said they have been motivated to engage in organic farming because it uses natural fertilizers. She said farmers are likely to cut the cost of production because only a small amount of industrial fertilisers will be used at all the plants growing stages.

She added that once more farmers engage in organic farming, the regions will be food sufficient.

Training facilitator from SAT Morogoro, Hugo Kunguru said the aim of the training was to help farmers to improve crop production as well as preserve the soil.

“Organic farming will enable us to double production, but also increase income at family level,” said Kunguru, calling upon the benefited farmers to share the acquired knowledge with fellow farmers.

He said although the southern highland regions lead in food production countrywide, the level of soil damage is still high.



Petty traders conducting businesses on Dodoma city streets for the festive season yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Peter Mkwavila

By Polycarp Machira, Dodoma

## Dodoma RC urges district councils to complete constructions of classrooms

DODOMA Regional Commissioner, Dr Binilith Mahenge has directed all the district councils in the region to complete constructions of classrooms to accommodate the 7,000 more students who missed first Form One intake due to shortage of classrooms.

A total of 35,215 pupils passed the 2020 national primary education examination in the region but 28,070 only were selected to secondary schools in January 2021, leaving 7,145 missing out due to shortage of classrooms.

Speaking during the Regional Consultative Council (RCC) meeting here, Dr Mahenge urged the district council authorities to ensure they complete building of classrooms so that all students can join Form One next year.

Dodoma Region with eight councils is faced with a scarcity of 148 classrooms with Dodoma city leading with 52 classrooms, Chamwino (40), Kongwa (21), Mpwapa (12), Kondo (10), Chemba (8), Bahi (5) while Kondo Urban has no shortage at all.

The RC called on every district council to prepare adequately for the reporting of students, calling on district executive directors, council chairpersons and district commissioners to make sure all challenges are solved.

“Let us make the shortage of classrooms an endless agenda at our areas in effort to help improve provision of education in our region and not wait to build the classrooms during Form 1 intake”

he said.

On her part, the regional education officer, Maria Lyimo noted that the region has 193 secondary schools out of which 188 are government schools. She added that the demand for classrooms is 704 in the classrooms to students’ ratio of 1:50 as the existing classrooms are 536.

He said challenges in the 2021 Form One admission include infrastructure, furniture, classrooms, desks, tables and chairs among others while some schools are far away from residential areas, forcing students to travel long distances.

“The district councils are experiencing shortage of

classrooms and school furniture as the new academic year starts next month,” she said.

Lyimo added that the region has a target to increase national primary school examination pass rate to 95 percent by 2026 up from the current 76.19 percent in 2020.

For secondary education the plan is to ensure at least 50 percent of the students get between first and third divisions from the 29.77 percent in 2019.

Bahi District Executive Director, Dr Fatma Mganga noted that when it comes to education matters every stakeholder should play his or her role effectively to boost performance of schools in the region.

## TARURA calls for public support in roads maintenance

By Correspondent Michael Sikapundwa, Gairo

TANZANIA Rural and Urban Roads Agency (TARURA) in Gairo District, Morogoro Region has appealed to stakeholders to chip in roads maintenance to ease movement of goods and people in the hilly and mountainous district.

TARURA’s Eng Simon Nkulu made a call over the weekend to this paper as response to Mtega villagers at Nongwe ward, who pointed to poor roads in the area leading to huge losses of farm produce and hindering the movement of people looking for medication in Gairo town.

Nkulu said, it’s a time for other stakeholders to support TARURA so as to enable the agency to run routine and periodic maintenance since it receives only 600m/- annually from the government while the total number of roads kilometers since TARURA registered as an independent agency shot from 560 to 998 kilometers.

“Alternative means to protect roads is inevitable since one kilometer of surface dressing road costs 500 million/- which is temporarily maintenance due to nature of roads being slippery,” he disclosed.

He said, due to a meager budget, in financial year 2020/21, TARURA set 200 million for maintenance of culvert and bridges of Nongwe to Mtega with distance of 13.7 kilometers temporarily but the authority is planning for tarmac level construction since it’s slippery by nature due to clay soil.

He calls for the district council

to register new roads on time so as to enable TARURA’s authority to include them in financial year budgets, out of that there will be no maintenance.

He congratulated mitigation of climate change among the integrating Community Development Programme (ICDP) projects, Anglican Church in Tanzania (ACT) diocese of morogoro operates in two districts of Gairo and Kilosa which based on planting trees to over 1000 people, particularly those around higher land.

“Planting trees culture minimized road’s periodic maintenance, frankly speaking ACT plays great roles to help residents in protecting environment through planting trees and conducting human activities away from 60 meters from water sources and along the roads,” he congratulated.

Mtega’s village chairman, Nashon Makau, said poor roads hinder their dream of total curbing poverty in the area since soil supports the cultivation of beans, maize which feed residents in Gairo towns and benefit business middlemen along Dodoma and Morogoro highway.

“Government has to rethink about allocating enough budget to TARURA otherwise an individual poverty will be endless slogan, but another thanks go to ACT church who changed our mind set towards protecting an environment through modern agriculture and planting trees, since ACT started the programme two years ago my village have planted over 500 trees plus each household own trees’ nursery,” he explained.



# PS issues 14-day ultimatum to contractor for dam completion

By Guardian Reporter

THE Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Prof Elisante Ole Gabriel has given 14 days to ZECO, contractors for the refurbishment of the Kimokuwa Dam in Longido District, Arusha Region to complete project work.

The dam was being revamped for livestock drinking as well as for other human activities.

Prof Gabriel issued the directives yesterday during his inspection visit of the project and added:

“Originally the firm started well but of late it has become problematic as its work supervision is not up to standard resulting in many shortcomings in regard to the entire project.”

He also called on the contractor to satisfy itself on the strength of the dam’s walls because if they collapse, stern steps would be taken against them.

From the deficiencies, the PS gave the contractor 14 days to ensure they finalise the project, and that the Livestock and Fisheries Deputy Minister Pauline Gekul will not receive the project as had been arranged.

Prof Gabriel called on the local contractors to ensure they implement project work professionally in order to be trusted and respected by the government, because, he said, all project money comes from taxpayers.

Longido District Administrative Secretary Simba praised Prof Gabriel for his decision to inspect the project before being

handed over and added that the deficiencies were also spotted by district’s officials.

Simba also called on the contractor to work on all the deficiencies identified during the inspection so that herders and residents benefit from the dam.

Kimokuwa Village Chairman Kileli Olendere said the PS was right for not bringing the Deputy Minister to receive the dam as it was not complete, adding that the contractor must first work on the deficiencies identified.

ZECO Director, Zephania Umbuli said he has received the directives given by the PS and pledged to work on them within the 14 days given.

The refurbishment of the Kimokuwa Dam costing 511.9m/- was supposed to be completed November 25 this year, but the contractor asked for time extension to December 10 this year.



**Originally the firm started well but of late it has become problematic as its work supervision is not up to standard resulting in many shortcomings in regard to the entire project**



Mbeya Regional Commissioner Albert Chalamila (2nd L) gives orders to Songwe agriculture prison officers on better farming practices during his visit yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Nebart Msokwa

# Kabudi urge tomato, onion farmers to abandon traditional farming practices

By Guardian Correspondent, Kilosa

FARMERS producing horticulture products including tomatoes and onions in Morogoro Region have been urged to revolutionise their farming practices by abandoning traditional farming in order to satisfy markets demand including foreign markets.

Speaking to residents of Idete

and Lumuma villages in Kilosa District, Morogoro Region, the Kilosa Member of Parliament and Minister for Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation Prof Palamagamba Kabudi said the time has arrived for conducting intensive research on the type of onions and tomatoes grown in the region that would enable farmers get quality seeds for crops that would withstand longer periods of

time before reaching consumers. He said as for now many farmers work hard to produce these crops which cannot stay long before perishing.

He said the Fifth Phase Government has bought a special aircraft for airlifting goods to foreign markets and added that the 2020-25 CCM Election Manifesto requires the Foreign Minister and the country’s

ambassadors in foreign countries to look for markets for Tanzania’s various agricultural crops.

Some tomato and onion farmers in Idete and Lumuma villages appealed to the government to ensure farming inputs directly reach them instead of routing them through agents who in many cases increase prices thereof thereby reducing their incomes.



A traditional energiser vendor dubbed: 'Alkasusu' hunting for potential customers at Keko suburb in Dar es Salaam yesterday. Photo: Correspondent Jumanne Juma

# Deal with classrooms challenge, Silinde directs council directors

By Guardian Reporter, Dodoma

DEPUTY Minister of State in the President’s Office (Regional Administration and Local Government) David Silinde has directed all local council executive directors and respective education officers to deal with the classrooms shortage issue to enable all students selected to join Form One early next year do so.

He also called on them to give the matter utmost priority and ensure they supervise well the education infrastructures and funds issued by the government for classrooms construction.

The Deputy Minister issued the directives here yesterday when closing the 7th meeting for Regional and District Education Officers (REDEA).

He said officials should not let down President John Magufuli government’s efforts in the construction of education infrastructures to ensure the sector’s improvement.

“I trust this meeting will be beneficial to you as you have discussed basic issues in the education sector, you go and work on them,” the deputy minister said.

He further said when the

government continues with efforts in solving the challenge, they should ensure the issue was finalised via force account system.

In regard to teachers assigned to various areas, he said they are supposed to be received and shown their work stations.

He said 184 vehicles for education officers are expected to arrive on January 15 next year in various areas to facilitate supervision in the education sector.

He said the vehicles are the first batch, others will arrive in the second batch to ensure availability of transport for every education officer in each region and district.

REALG Permanent Secretary Joseph Nyamuhanga stressed on the officials to finalise classrooms construction before February 28 next year.



**I trust this meeting will be beneficial to you as you have discussed basic issues in the education sector, you go and work on them**

By Guardian Correspondent, Nyasa

NYASA District Commissioner Isabela Chilumba has called on residents of the district to increase coffee production by using modern quality seeds that yield better coffee crop to increase households’ and district’s income.

The DC was speaking recently during her one-day visit at Upolo and Luhangarsi wards in Mpepo Division in the district,

# Increase coffee production by using modern seeds, DC tell Nyasa farmers

the visit whose aim was to close militia training in Upolo Ward, to mobilise coffee cultivation and to prepare classrooms and school desks for the intake of Form I students early next year.

She explained that Nyasa District has many big farms that can increase coffee production as compared to neighbouring Mbinga District which is now a leading coffee producer, hence she

called on farmers, in Mpepo ward in particular to adopt modern quality seeds for cultivation.

She said the government has freely distributed 7,000 coffee seedlings aimed at increasing

coffee production.

In regard to the mobilisation for classrooms and school desks for the Form I students’ intake early next year, the DC called upon the people and officials at various

leadership levels to ensure every student who passed his/her examinations reports to school.

In Upolo Ward in the District, the DC closed militia training and called on those who passed to utilize the training gained in defending the country’s borders, not to allow foreigners coming in without permits, reminding them that the area was bordering Mozambique.



## The world is on track to achieve universal access to energy by 2030

**S**USTAINABLE Development Goal 7 is one of 17 Sustainable Development Goals established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. It aims to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. The goal has five targets to be achieved by 2030.

Though the goals are broad and interdependent, two years later the SDGs were made more actionable by a UN resolution adopted by the General Assembly. The resolution identifies specific targets for each goal, along with indicators that are being used to measure progress toward each target. The year by which the target is meant to be achieved is usually between 2020 and 2030. For some of the targets, no end date is given.

To facilitate monitoring, a variety of tools exist to track and visualize progress towards the goals. All intend to make data more available and more easily understood. For example, the online publication SDG-Tracker, launched in June 2018, presents available data across all indicators. The SDGs pay attention to multiple cross-cutting issues, like gender equity, education, and culture cut across all of the SDGs. There were serious impacts and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on all 17 SDGs in the year 2020.

For almost 1 billion people without access to electricity, the day ends when the sun sets. And it results in a staggering loss of economic and social potential, as well as disillusionment with governments that are viewed as incapable of providing basic public utilities, which contributes to political and security instability.

Economic development is impossible without access to affordable and reliable energy,

which is why in 2015, the United Nations included energy for all as one of the Sustainable Development Goals. While there has been significant progress over the past decade, the world is by no means on track to achieve universal access to energy by 2030.

The International Energy Agency projects that 700 million people will still lack access to energy by 2040, even with the adoption of new policies that accelerate electrification. This scenario would be an unmitigated failure for the global economy and for the hundreds of millions without equal opportunity to participate in the global economy. Ultimately, this would mean another generation of poverty, conflict, and lost opportunity globally.

Grid electrification of rural areas typically takes decades; raising electrification from 80-90 per cent to 100 per cent took approximately 20 years in Brazil, China, and Thailand, for example. For most who lack access to energy, distributed energy will be the best solution. In most cases it's cheaper than extending the central grid, can provide reliable, 24/7 electricity from day one, and can be deployed in months rather than years.

Myanmar is an excellent example of this opportunity: The average cost per connection is \$1,250 for a mini-grid, compared to \$2,200 for a grid connection, according to an upcoming study by Smart Power Myanmar. Even communities that are connected to the grid don't have reliable power for homes and enterprises; more than 50% of grid-connected customers lose power at least three times each week, often for two hours or more, according to the World Bank's multi-tier framework study.

## Africa can reinvigorate action to fight malaria

**T**HE World Health Organisation (WHO) is calling on countries and global health partners to step up the fight against malaria, a preventable and treatable disease that continues to claim hundreds of thousands of lives each year. A better targeting of interventions, new tools and increased funding are needed to change the global trajectory of the disease and reach internationally-agreed targets.

According to WHO's latest world malaria report, progress against malaria continues to plateau, particularly in high burden countries in Africa. Gaps in access to life-saving tools are undermining global efforts to curb the disease, and the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to set back the fight even further.

"It is time for leaders across Africa - and the world - to rise once again to the challenge of malaria, just as they did when they laid the foundation for the progress made since the beginning of this century," said WHO director-general Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "Through joint action, and a commitment to leaving no one behind, we can achieve our shared vision of a world free of malaria."

Malaria is a mosquito-borne infectious disease that affects humans and other animals. Malaria causes symptoms that typically include fever, tiredness, vomiting, and headaches. In severe cases it can cause yellow

skin, seizures, coma, or death. Symptoms usually begin ten to fifteen days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. If not properly treated, people may have recurrences of the disease months later.

The disease is widespread in the tropical and subtropical regions that exist in a broad band around the equator. This includes much of Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In Africa, it is estimated to result in losses of US\$12 billion a year due to increased healthcare costs, lost ability to work, and negative effects on tourism.

The risk of disease can be reduced by preventing mosquito bites through the use of mosquito nets and insect repellents, or with mosquito control measures such as spraying insecticides and draining standing water. Several medications are available to prevent malaria in travellers to areas where the disease is common.

The World Health Organisation has recently warned that deaths from malaria due to disruptions during the coronavirus pandemic to services designed to tackle the mosquito-borne disease will far exceed those killed by COVID-19 in sub-Saharan Africa. More than 409,000 people globally - most of them babies in the poorest parts of Africa - were killed by malaria last year, the WHO said in its latest global malaria report, and COVID-19 will almost certainly make that toll higher in 2020.

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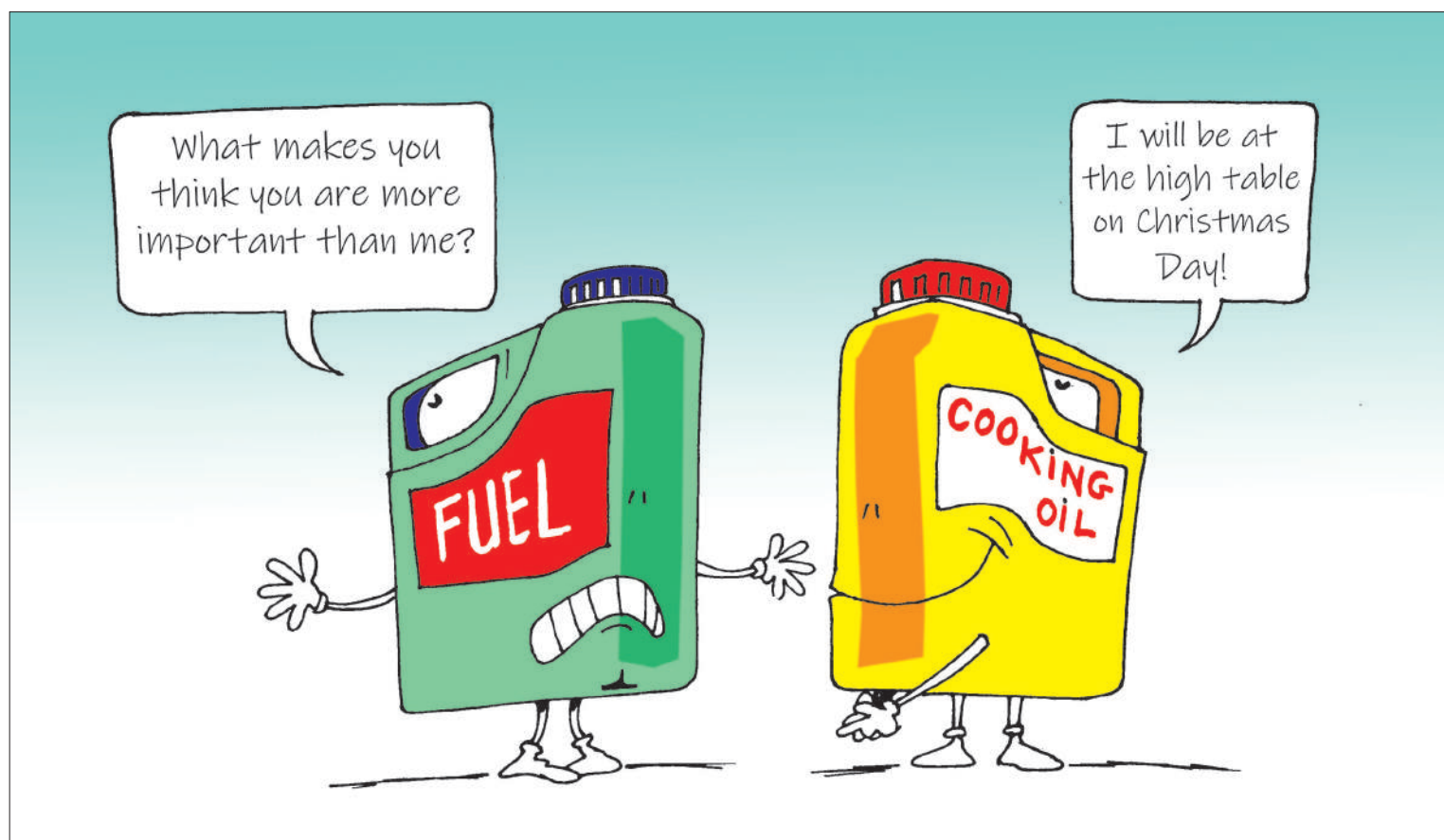
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By Sabdiyo Dido Bashuna

**T**HE race to limit the spread of Covid-19 has, through necessity, accelerated many other transformations that were already under way, including the digital revolution in African agriculture.

What had previously been a growing but limited shift towards the use of digital tools and technologies for food production and business has become a lifeline in the face of market restrictions, food insecurity and lockdowns. And among the biggest winners have been women.

Long since excluded from equal resources, from land rights to training, almost 90 per cent of African women with small and medium agricultural enterprises have taken up digital solutions during the pandemic, according to a recent survey. Figures from before the coronavirus outbreak indicated women previously accounted for just a quarter of registered users of digital solutions.

The challenge - and opportunity - now is to build on these gains, and translate participation in the digital marketplace into prosperity in the real marketplace.

Through leveraging the potential of digitalisation to level the playing field, African countries can unleash the potential of women in agriculture, who already represent 50 per cent of the workforce and own a third of the small and medium enterprises that produce, process and trade food.

The first benefit provided

## How the digital revolution can help level the playing field for African women in agriculture

by digitalisation is more equal access to markets, which has been the greatest limiting factor of the pandemic for almost three-quarters of women.

Even before the emergence of Covid-19, women tended to be limited to labour intensive, low value agricultural production activities rather than high-value activities but with market closures and restrictions related to COVID 19, many women have found themselves cut off from their normal business channels.

Online platforms have provided new opportunities for women to continue and grow their operations, with two-thirds taking to social media to market their products in new ways and reach broader audiences.

Increasing internet connectivity in rural areas, scaling up access to mobile technology and improving digital literacy would help more women in agriculture benefit from the digital revolution and enjoy greater market access.

Secondly, digitalisation offers the possibility of more widespread networking and training, particularly for rural women in remote areas where opportunities to participate in workshops or educational sessions are limited. Platforms like VALUE4HERConnect, Africa's first online portal for agricultural businesswomen, provide gender-responsive services such as a Women2Women community forum that allows women to learn

from one another and access mentoring and support services.

The service also offers a Women2Finance pillar and a capacity-building resource to help equip women with the skills, inputs and knowledge to grow their businesses.

Since launching last year, VALUE4HER has engaged more than 600 women across 27 countries and under the leadership of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), will support more women as part of plans to reach up to 5,000 women-led agribusinesses over the next five years.

Initiatives like this, which are designed specifically with women users in mind, will be vital in ensuring the digital dividend reaches African women.

Finally, growing levels of digitalisation offers women greater access to information and services when conventional channels are closed or off-limits, providing greater resilience to shocks and stresses, including the Covid-19 pandemic.

Digital technologies can help reduce the burden of agricultural labour and processing, which is particularly important for women, who continue to take on a greater share of domestic work. They can also help women increase their yields and build up financial resilience to minimise the impact of sudden disasters.

For example, Hello Tractor, a mobile app that allows farmers

to hire a tractor on demand, increases the accessibility of mechanised tools while overcoming the prejudice women face by allowing them to interact directly with service providers through a mobile device.

Meanwhile, e-verification tool eHakiki received a grant from AGRA last year for four pilots to help reach 100,000 farmers in Tanzania with a service to identify counterfeit products, helping to build the resilience of women farmers by ensuring the quality of their seeds, pesticides and fertilizers.

Women are a key pillar in Africa's food and agricultural systems, from taking charge of household nutrition to providing much of the labour on small-scale farms.

It is crucial, not only to the viability of these women's businesses but to local and regional food security, that the benefits of the digital revolution are extended to women as well.

This needs investment in infrastructure and resources

from both public and private sector, but it also needs dynamic partnerships to ensure the design of these services feature the unique needs of female farmers and entrepreneurs and that they are affordable and easy to use. Covid-19 may have ruptured business as normal but it has also disrupted longstanding inequalities, creating a chance to build back better.

By Special Correspondent

**I**N furtherance of its resolve to tackle the menace of pre-registered Subscriber Identification Module (SIM) cards in the country, the federal government has directed all the telecom operators in the country to demand the National Identity Number (NIN) of their customers within two weeks (December 16-30, 2020).

During a meeting of key stakeholders in the Communications industry held on December 14, 2020, the Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami, directed all network operators to disconnect any SIM card that is not synchronised with valid NIN by December 30, 2020.

Other decisions taken by stakeholders at the meeting include affirming the earlier directive to totally suspend the registration of New SIMs by all operators. All telecom operators must, from Thursday,

## Unrealistic deadline for SIM registration

December 16, 2020, require all their subscribers to provide valid National Identification Number (NIN) to update SIM registration records; and after the deadline, block all SIMs without NIN. It was also agreed that violations of this directive will be met by stiff sanctions, including the possibility of withdrawal of operating license.

It would be recalled that the minister had in September last year directed NCC to block all SIM cards not properly registered until they were fully registered. In March 2020, the number of improperly-registered SIM cards had dropped from 9.2 million to 2.2 million. Due to rising insecurity in the country, Minister Pantami again directed NCC last week to suspend activation of new SIM cards. This, he said, was not only to allow an audit of the Subscriber Registration database but also to verify and ensure compliance by Mobile Network Operators (MNO)

with the set quality standards and requirements as issued by the ministry and the commission.

Unlimited access to pre-registered SIM cards have always aided criminals to perpetrate and get away with their acts of kidnapping, banditry, armed robbery and terrorism. In recent weeks, cases of kidnapping, banditry, and insurgency heightened in parts of the country. Recent cases include the Zabarmari massacre in Borno State where over 40 farmers had their throat slit and the abduction of hundreds of schoolboys from Government Science Secondary School, Kankara, in Katsina State.

While subscribers who had NIN may only be required to update their SIM registration, others who do not have NIN would be required to first obtain it before updating their SIM registration; splitting the exercise into two stages for the latter group. The first group consists of Nigerians who

are residents of urban towns and cities where access to NIN is easy. On the other hand, the majority of mobile network subscribers in rural communities, in their huge numbers, are without NIN. Following the announcement of the deadline for updating SIM registration, applicants are reportedly being extorted at NIMC registration centres across the country.

There are complaints of racketeering as enrolment forms are allegedly being sold to applicants who are also asked to pay for the fuel used in running generators at various NIN registration centres. Aside from checking the alleged forms of corruption, there's need for NIMC not only to scale up its capacity but also to ensure that there are enough licenced enrolment agents to cope with the large number of applicants that would require NIN before updating their SIM registration.



PARIS

## Food culture in spotlight on UNESCO heritage list

Cuisine formed a notable portion of the latest inscriptions on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, with hawker food in Singapore and couscous traditions in North Africa being celebrated.

The two were among 29 elements inscribed when the intergovernmental committee for the safeguarding of the world's Intangible Cultural Heritage met virtually Dec. 14 to 19, hosted by Jamaica and chaired by the island's Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, Olivia "Babsy" Grange.

"This year ... the experience that we all had in sharing and experiencing the cultures of different countries made us realize that in spite of the pandemic, in spite of us being apart, we were still able to share in each other's culture, and what it did for all of us was to bring us closer together," Grange said at the end of the meeting.

The inscription of Singapore's "hawker culture, community dining and culinary practices in a multicultural urban context" marks the first time that the Southeast Asian island state has an element inscribed on the List.

Hawker culture is "present throughout Singapore", with these food centres seen as a kind of "community dining room", officials said. Here, people from diverse backgrounds dine and mingle, in an atmosphere of conviviality and enjoyment of the scents and flavours on offer.

Hawker centres grew out of street-food culture, housing cooks who provide meals in a bustling communal setting with different stalls. The centres have, however, seen closures and fewer customers because of the Covid-19 pandemic, making the 2020 inscription a bitter-sweet one.

The couscous submission - which focused on the knowledge, know-how and practices pertaining to the production and



Malay hawker prepares satay (seasoned and skewered meat grilled over hot charcoal). Photo: Mohamad Hafiz

consumption of the dish - was made by Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, and it naturally sparked an online debate about the absence of other countries that are known for this food, and about favourite recipes.

The inscription encompasses "the methods of production, manufacturing conditions and tools, associated artefacts and circumstances of couscous consumption in the communities concerned," according to UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).

Originating from the Berber culture of Algeria and Morocco, couscous is

now eaten around the world, accompanied by a variety of vegetables and meats - depending on the region, the season and the occasion.

It comes "replete with symbols, meanings and social and cultural dimensions linked to solidarity, conviviality and the sharing of meals," UNESCO said.

Food was also indirectly highlighted with the inscription of "Zlakusa pottery making, hand-wheel pottery making in the village of Zlakusa". This comprises the practice of making unglazed food vessels that are used in households and restaurants across Serbia, originating from a tiny village

in the west of the country.

Some gastronomes claim that dishes prepared in Zlakusa earthenware have a unique taste, and the pottery's "close association with the village of Zlakusa and its environs reflects its close link with the natural environment," the inscription stated.

Away from food, several music and art practices were also inscribed, and the meeting saw three elements added to the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, while another three were added to the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices.

The latter "facilitates the sharing of successful safeguarding experiences" and "showcases examples of the effective transmission of living cultural practices and knowledge to future generations," UNESCO said. Elements inscribed this year include the Martinique yole (a light boat), whose tradition goes back several centuries in the Caribbean.

The committee stated that a "spontaneous movement to safeguard these boats developed while they faced the threat of disappearing" and that the safeguarding programme has grown over the years. The main purpose is to "preserve the know-how of local boat builders", transmit expertise on sailing, and create a federation to organize major events.

In a year that has seen the cultural sector hit hard globally by the Covid-19 pandemic, the inscriptions brought some cheer to the 141 countries attending and the more than one thousand people participating in the virtual meeting. During an online press briefing on Dec. 18, committee chairperson Grange noted that Jamaica was of course also affected by the health crisis, but that the population was very "resilient".

"It impacted aspects of our culture, primarily the entertainment industry, and also various sectors in the creative industry," she said in response to a question. "It has impacted the economy ... and our creative people who depend on their creative works to earn an income. However, we were still able to take our music to the world, through technology."

Grange said that hosting the huge virtual meeting of the Intangible Cultural Heritage committee posed some technological challenges, but nothing that could not be overcome. She said it showed the importance of working together, of sharing cultures, and of finding ways to overcome obstacles to "ensure that we continue to use culture to unite the world."

This year saw the highest number of multi-country nominations - 14 inscriptions "testifying to the ability of intangible cultural heritage to bring people together and promote international cooperation," Grange said.

"These are great achievements for all of humanity," she declared, recalling her country's pride and the global celebration when reggae music of Jamaica was added to the List in 2018.

AGENCIES

NEW YORK

## The world in 2021

The year 2020 is ending with the world caught up in an unprecedented human and economic crisis. The pandemic has contaminated 75 million people and killed 1.7 million. With the lockdowns, the global economy has suffered the worst recession in 75 years, causing the loss of income for millions of people. In such a bleak environment, what will the new year bring? Whilst uncertainty is the only certainty, eight points are likely to be key in the year ahead:

### 1. A gradual but uneven recovery

With the deployment of vaccines and public support, high-income countries will be on the path to recovery from the second half of 2021. However, middle income and particularly low income countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America will see recovery delayed - unless the UN or China provide them with sufficient COVID19 vaccines and governments escalate public support. The more affected sectors - tourism, travel, hospitality, entertainment and labor intensive activities - will take longer to recover. China was the only country that experienced significant economic growth in 2020 and that trend will accelerate in 2021. International trade will rebound, but it will be a more "deglobalized" world, with diminished global supply chains and more local components.

### 2. More poverty and inequality in 2021

While a few have benefited from the pandemic such as online shops, remote tools/software, pharmaceuticals and medical services - the majority have not. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that 590 million full-time jobs were lost during the last half



of 2020. Numerous social protection measures have been implemented, but these are insufficient and poverty is increasing in all countries. With forty percent of the world population (3.3 billion people) living below the international poverty line of 5.5 dollars per day, the World Bank estimates that 150 million additional people will fall into extreme poverty by 2021. More public support and progressive taxation are needed to redress these trends. However, so far large corporations have benefited most from the trillions of dollars of COVID19 financial relief and assistance programs, contributing to growing inequalities. Poverty and inequali-

### 3. More public health but unnecessary austerity cuts

A positive aspect of the pandemic is that the world has realized the need for public health systems - generally overburdened, underfunded and understaffed after a decade of austerity (2010-20). While public health expenditure will continue to rise, many are concerned about the threat of new austerity cuts. The unforeseen costs of the pandemic have caused unprecedented levels of debt and fiscal deficits, and governments may resort to austerity cuts and reforms to public services, instead of

looking at alternatives to increase budgets such as wealth taxation, fighting tax evasion and illicit financial flows. Governments choosing austerity in 2021 should expect protests and social unrest, given the negative social impacts.

### 4. Digitalization and changes in the world of work

The pandemic has accelerated technological change at the workplace. More telework and less office time will prevent women from having to choose between work and family and make fathers more involved in household responsibilities. Studies suggest that 47 percent of US companies will let employees work from home full-time after the

pandemic. On the other hand, essential workers such as health workers, cleaning staff, delivery drivers or retail employees, will have more bargaining power in 2021, can press harder for better working conditions.

### 5. Redressing world disorder

US President-elect Biden will renew multilateralism, the Paris treaty and other international agreements, the defense of human rights and the interests of the Pax Americana. The UN will continue to struggle given low financing. Four years of Trumpism and fake news have left their mark upon the world, and despite democratic attempts to improve world order, 2021 will not yet see a reversal of the trend towards authoritarian nationalist governments - for this, more efforts will be needed to fight polarization, inequality and disinformation. Jihadism will continue to increase in Africa and South Asia.

### 6. An opportunity on climate change

The world would need to replicate the emissions reductions seen in 2020 during the next decade to curb global warming to 1.5 degrees by the end of the century. However, low oil prices may delay investment in alternative energy sources in 2021, even though these will replace fossil fuels in much of the world in the medium-term.

### 7. The risk of a new financial crisis will remain high in 2021

With industry and services stagnant, investments went to the under-regulated financial sector, where greater profits were to be made from speculation. Stock markets will remain volatile but likely buoyant, de-linked from the real economy. However, rising bankruptcies means that banking risks will increase significantly in 2021.

### 8. A new roaring 20s

After a year of lockdowns, people will want to make up for lost time and rush to parties, dinners, festivals, shows, sports and travel as soon as possible. The year 2021 may well flourish into a new summer of love, a creative existential time - carpe diem!

The debate on the possible ways out of the current crisis will continue throughout the year. This is an unprecedented crisis that still could have new turns, and governments are learning by doing. Overall, there are two options. One is the restoration of neoliberal policies, austerity and minimal public services eroding welfare, with limited taxation to the wealthy, that will lead to more inequality and social unrest. The other is a more democratic and socially progressive route, where public policies deliver to citizens, including equitable job-creating economic policies with social protection, financed by progressive taxation, the elimination of tax evasion and illicit financial flows. The coronavirus crisis could be turned into an opportunity to make the world a better, fairer place for all in 2021.



# Why transforming our food systems is a feminist issue

NAIROBI

In countries where women are most marginalized, discriminated under the law and where gendered norms prevent women from owning property and resources, people are also the hungriest. This is because gender equality and food systems are intertwined.

However, too often, we only focus on the roles that women play in production, processing, trading of food and in making decisions about consumption and purchase of food at household level.

A just and equitable food system will require the recognition of women as farmers, with rights to the land they cultivate, technologies that reduce the drudgery of agriculture and policies that ensure women can make a living wage from agriculture.

And while this is important, we must also focus on whether the food system as organized is just and equitable and whether it promotes the empowerment and livelihoods and health of women and girls.

The UN Food Systems Summit, to be convened by the UN Secretary General 2021, provides the world with a unique opportunity to reframe the global conversation on gender and food and ask the hard questions of how the food system can be structured in a just and equitable way.

## Reframing gender and food systems

While there is recognition that food systems transformation is a political, economic and environmental issue, we must also recognize it as a gender justice issue; stark gender inequalities are both a cause and an outcome of unsustainable food systems, unjust food access, consumption and production.

Tackling gender injustice and truly empowering women is not only a fundamental prerequisite for food systems transformation but also a goal.

So, what should a gender just and equitable food system look like?



Women farmers clearing farmland in Northern Bangladesh. File photo

A gender just and equitable food system is one which guarantees a world without hunger, where women, men, girls and boys have equal access to nutritious, healthy food, safe food, and access to the means to produce, sell and purchase food.

It is a food system where the roles, responsibilities, opportunities and choices available to women and men - including unpaid caregiving and food provision - are not predetermined at birth but are developed in line

with individual capacities and aspirations.

It is a food system where countries, communities and households and individual men and women are equipped to produce enough food for their own populations through environmentally sound processes, while also being able to participate in gender-equitable local, global and regional food trading systems.

So as food systems transform, the goal should be to ensure

that they transform in ways that are equitable, that ensure meaningful engagement and benefits to all, women, boys, girls, men, indigenous groups amongst others.

## Towards a just and equitable food system

A just and equitable food system requires a rethinking of the role of women as producers and consumers and a move from "what are women's contributions in agriculture" toward

"how can food and agricultural systems transform in ways that are equitable and that empower women".

Achieving this will require systemic innovations in the food system and the use of a feminist lens.

First, at agricultural production level, a just and equitable food system will require the recognition of women as farmers, with rights to the land they cultivate, technologies that reduce the drudgery of agriculture and policies that ensure women can make a living wage from agriculture.

Women in many different contexts continue to have their rights to independent control of land denied, and access to agricultural inputs, credit, and other essential resources due to cultural norms, assumptions by governments and programs that farmers are male, because 'men are the providers'.

A global movement like the "Me Too" movement that raises the consciousness and triggers action towards women's rights to resources and to a living wage in agriculture is needed.

Second, it will require trade, market and finance policies and processes that do not discriminate against women, and that explicitly engage women in formulation and implementation.

For example, the African Continental Free Trade Agreement - AfCFTA - framework agreement includes an objective of gender equality that recognizes the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in an integrated continental market. Monitoring of this

Third, it will require gender standards that include workplace dignity for women and equal pay with monitoring and accountability mechanisms for the food

industry, whether large farms, food factories or the service industry. In the US, women food processing workers made 74 cents to the dollar men earned in 2019.

And in 2018, ILO put a spotlight on sexual violence, harassment and poor workplace conditions of women workers in commercial agriculture. Such standards are being discussed in some industries such as the garment industry.

For example, the Gender Working Group at ISEAL aims to improve the working conditions of women in textile and apparel supply chains by promoting tailored, evidence-based strategies, tools and systems, with lessons that will be more broadly applicable to other standard organizations.

And finally, it will require strengthening and amplifying the voices of women in all levels of the food system. This will require funding women smallholder farmers organizations, women business networks, women workers unions, women's consumer organizations to engage at different levels and in different conversations to influence food systems.

And for the industry, it will require adoption of a set of principles or a women and food systems manifesto for women's representation and inclusion in food system, similar in nature to the Chef's manifesto.

Our food systems need to change to nourish all in a sustainable way that protects our planet. Equally important is that they must be just and equitable and guarantee the needs and priorities of those that depend on them, including women.

AGENCIES

By Marianne Thamm

While he might believe he is above the law, Jacob Zuma still clearly fears it.

There were a few trapdoors in the original regulations guiding the Commission of Inquiry into State Capture and promulgated by Zuma shortly before he resigned, under duress, as president of South Africa in February 2018. First, the regulations did not make provision for consequences for a witness refusing to answer questions and second, implicated persons were protected from prosecution for any wrongdoing exposed at the commission.

Lipstick on a pig, in other words. In January that little loophole was closed when a new subregulation was inserted stating that anyone who wilfully hindered, restricted or obstructed the chairperson or any officer would be guilty of an offence.

Then in June the gap was further sealed by another amendment allowing law enforcement agencies to access evidence given at the commission.

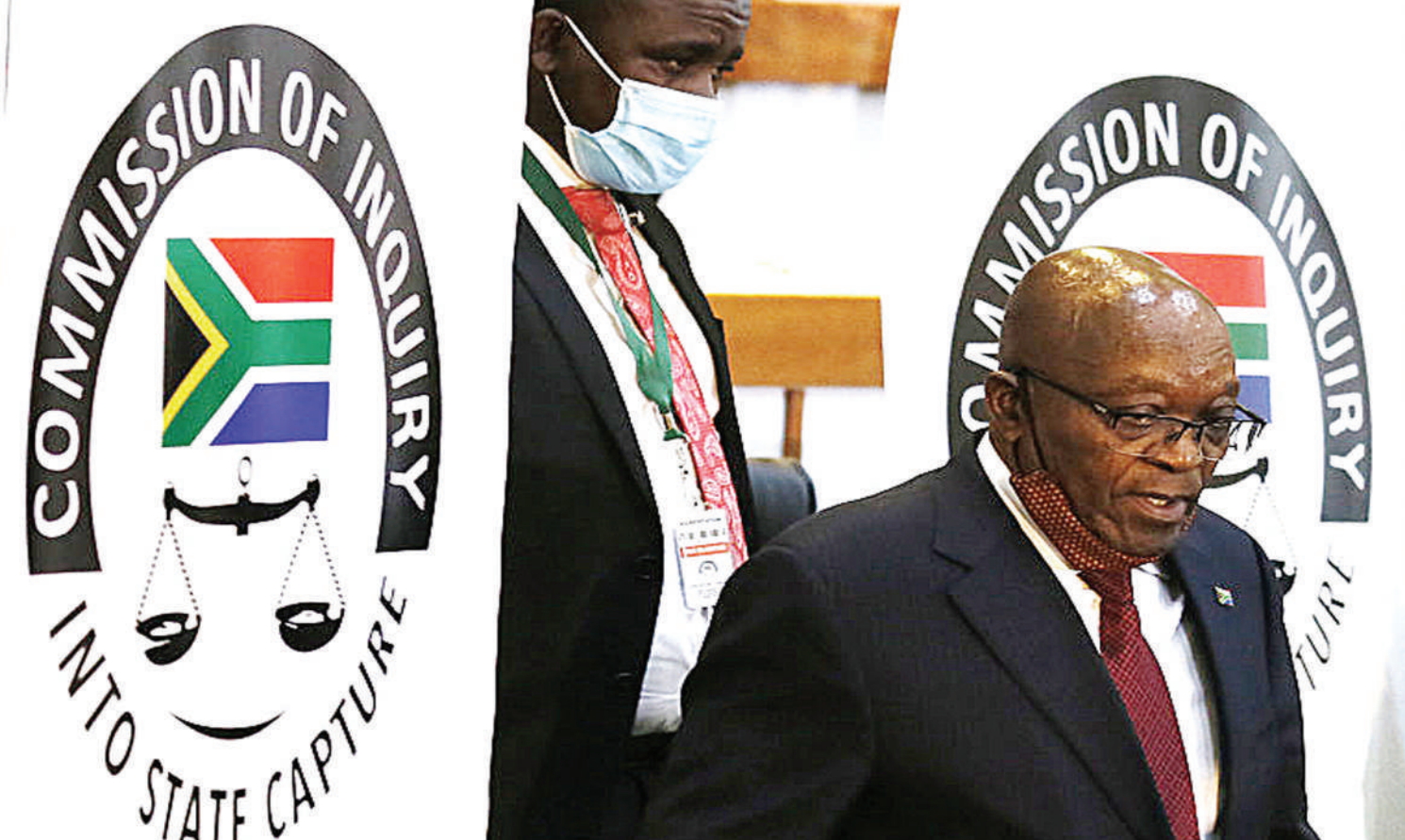
With those two emergency exits out of range Zuma, the selling of socks aside, was always going to go for broke.

The man really does believe he is above the law. Like Trump, like Nixon, Zuma established an imperial presidency in conflict with the duties of presidential office in a constitutional democracy.

The highest court found him to be a constitutional delinquent, so there is no surprise that the former president does not respect the law and is a threat to democratic principle.

Zuma, at present, has been implicated by no less than 34 witnesses who have publicly placed him at the centre of a political project aimed at capturing the institutions of the

## Jacob Zuma - The artful dodger



Former president Jacob Zuma at the state capture commission of inquiry during his application that deputy chief justice Raymond Zondo must recuse himself in the inquiry. File photo

SA state to divert billions in public funds to a criminal political and business elite. This under the guise of Radical Economic Transformation.

From the country's national airline to its power utility, from its railroads to its ports, from its mines to its hospitals to its dairy farms, no corner was left unscathed as the project rolled out during Zuma's term as president between 2009 and 2018.

Zuma's considerable borer beetle network began to insert itself within the institutions of democracy; the justice system, law enforcement, the National Prosecuting Authority, the State Security Agency, Intelligence, Revenue and Correctional Services, Home Affairs and the ANC itself. No province was left

unaffected, no municipality, no district. Everything would be eaten from the inside out.

When those in the network faced potential exposure, weapons of choice were costly legal processes paid for by a bottomless public purse.

From SARS to SAPS to IPID to the DPCI to the NPA, officials found themselves sidelined, set up, bound by legal red tape, crippling costs, bogus private investigations and reports with tailor-made negative findings. Zuma, like Nixon and Trump, has been ruthless in saving his own skin and discarding friends and enemies in equal measure.

In Zuma's case this would include wives, one who was falsely accused of poisoning him and another who has

been excommunicated from the marital household.

It was former comrade and later Minister of Intelligence Ronnie Kasrils who described Zuma as "tricky, sly, cunning, deceitful and manipulative". This is evidenced by an April 2020 revelation by Zuma, in yet another last-minute bid in the Constitutional Court to stay his corruption prosecution with regard to the arms deal, that he would have been happy to take the stand in 2005 against his financial adviser, Schabir Shaik, if he [Zuma] were granted immunity.

No one has wriggled more vigorously over the boiling pot of justice than Jacob Zuma.

The courts are his domain. From challenging rape charges to countless

attempts to halt his prosecution for corruption, to attempting to dodge personal responsibility for the upgrades to his private home at Nkandla, he knows the heat, he thrives on the sizzle, as do his supporters. Zuma tried some flames in July 2019 when he first appeared at the commission, wounded and paranoid, accusing agents, spies and enemies of conspiring against him and his supporters. Accusations are always vague and all-encompassing.

This week, on Tuesday, 15 December, the same day his legal team informed the commission that Zuma would not be opposing its Constitutional Court bid, the former president launched his own Pretoria High Court challenge to Deputy Chief Justice Zondo's refusal to recuse himself as chair of the commission.

Zondo has approached the apex court to compel Zuma to appear before the commission between 18 and 22 January, and 15 and 19 February 2021, to defend himself and answer to serious claims.

Zuma might be counting on dragging back the hands of time with the hope that the commission will come to a shuddering halt in March 2021 when it is expected to complete its work.

The deadline was extended to compensate for the Covid-19 pandemic and the concomitant delays and this might very well happen again.

But a showdown at the Zondo Commission awaits, one way or another.

Whatever the outcome of Zuma's challenges, the Zondo Commission of Inquiry has allowed millions of South Africans to witness, first-hand, and from the mouths of those who were there, what the Zuma presidency and those who aided and abetted it, did to South Africa.

To say nothing of what it did to tarnish the star of the African National Congress rendering it, for now, more of a criminal organisation masquerading as a political party.

Zuma's choice of silence over accountability to the commission is evidence that while he might believe he is above the law, he still fears it and that is all that matters, for now.

AGENCIES



# Giving antimalarial medicines to children during the rainy season reduces malaria deaths

By Special Correspondent

GIVING antimalarial medicines to children monthly during the rainy season cut malaria deaths in children by 42 per cent, making a case for wide implementation in malaria-endemic African regions, a study found.

In 2012, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued guidelines for implementing intermittent monthly drug administration, also known as Seasonal Malaria Chemoprevention (SMC), in areas of high transmission that occurs during particular seasons to help prevent malaria in children under five years old.

Malaria killed 643,000 people globally in 2019 and more than half of these were children under five, with the majority of the deaths occurring in West and Central Africa,

according to a press release on the study.

The study evaluates SMC implemented in the Sahel region – Burkina Faso, Chad, Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Niger and Nigeria – in 2015 targeting about 3.6 million children and an additional 7.6 million children in the seven countries in 2016.

This study showed that high, equitable coverage was achieved [on the whole], but coverage varied, with some countries achieving better coverage than others.”

Paul Milligan, Professor, Epidemiology, Medical Statistics, UK-based London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Burkina Faso and Gambia achieved better coverage than Nigeria thanks to the two countries’ established District Health Information Software systems for malaria

surveillance during the study period, researchers found.

“Each monthly treatment provided a high degree of protection for four weeks, reducing malaria incidence by 88 per cent during that time,” Milligan adds.

According to the study published this month (05 December) in The Lancet, data collected from outpatient clinics also showed that malaria cases reduced by 25 per cent in Nigeria in 2016 while in Gambia it went down by 55 per cent in the same year.

Milligan adds that when the WHO recommended SMC in 2012, countries in West and Central Africa were quick to adopt the new strategy, but there were obstacles to implementing it widely, including a shortage of quality-assured medicines and lack of funding.

The UNITAID-funded project sought to scale-up implementation of SMC on a large scale in the seven countries, to demonstrate the effectiveness of the intervention and to evaluate safety, feasibility, and effects of large-scale use on drug resistance.

In 2015, about 12.5 million treatments – combinations of antimalarial medications amodiaquine and sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine – were administered over four monthly cycles between July-August and October-November. The programme reached about 3.2 million children who were aged between three months and five years. In 2016, about 25.1 million treatments were administered by more than 47,000 distributors to 6.9 million children.

Milligan says that monitoring showed that drug-resistant infec-

tions were uncommon although some selection for resistance to sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine occurred. Serious side-effects were rare.

These findings, according to Milligan, should support efforts to ensure that SMC programmes reach all children in areas of West and Central Africa with highly seasonal transmission of malaria to help prevent the many thousands of unnecessary child deaths each year from malaria.

“Drug resistance is a threat, and continued molecular monitoring is needed to provide early warning of loss of effectiveness, and pharmacovigilance [monitoring of drug safety] needs to be strengthened,” he tells SciDev.Net.

Elizabeth Juma, principal research officer and public health specialist at the Kenya Medical

Research Institute, tells SciDev.Net: “Studies are under way to see whether there may be more areas where this can be applied, other than in the Sahel”.

As with many health interventions, reaching every person has challenges such as insufficient funding to recruit, train and supervise community health workers and purchase adequate medicines, Juma explains.

“Sometimes finding all the children is a challenge,” she adds, citing nomadic populations and those who become displaced because of insecurity or natural calamities.

Juma says that increased community engagement and availability of adequate resources to reach all those who need SMC could help fight malaria in Africa.



## Women entrepreneurs in East Africa empowered to explore EAC Common Market

By Special Correspondent

OVER 50 women entrepreneurs in East Africa have been empowered to tap into the East African Community (EAC) Common Market. The regional market consists of over 177 million consumers. This comes after the East African Women in Business Breakfast Meeting held at Weru Weru Lodge in Kilimanjaro, Tanzania.

Mary Ngechu, East African

Business Council (EABC) Board Director & the Chief Guest at the Women Breakfast Meeting held under the theme intra-EAC trade and investment opportunities said, “Women should boldly tap into the opportunities availed by the EAC regional integration by engaging in cross borders trade and value addition.”

She further emphasized that access to finance and low level of knowledge on cross border trade regulations & opportunities

are among challenges facing businesswomen in the region.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the cash flow of women in business at a greater scale compared to their male counterparts, as most of them own Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). This has increased due to the measures to curb the outbreak of COVID-19 in the region such as lockdown, curfews and restrictions on the free

movement of cargo and people. The women also deliberated on realigning their business models to tap into new opportunities such as manufacturing face shields, soap, adopting online & social media stores and digital payments.

Complex tax regimes and Non-Tariff Barriers continue to hinder women to engage proactively in cross-border trade forcing them to use

informal routes.

With support from TradeMark East Africa (TMEA) the East African Business Council (EABC) champions trade and gender issues under its flagship platform, the East African Women in Business platform. The platform brings together businesswomen from all the EAC Partner States with a mission of positioning and catalyzing participation of women in the EAC inclusion process.

Increased movement and interactions as well as slack observance of public health measures such as physical distancing and wearing of masks are some of the factors behind the upsurge in cases. Gatherings such as political rallies or in close settings have also contributed to the rise in infections.

“The rising COVID-19 infections and the holiday season present a worrying mix,” said Dr Richard Mihigo, the Immunization and Vaccine Development Programme Coordinator at WHO Regional Office for Africa. “Preventive measures must be tightened up to not only limit the risks of infections during the festive season but stand as permanent barriers against the spread of COVID-19. Complacency has no place in the fight against this pandemic.”

While many countries have improved COVID-19 response, including

diagnosis, testing remains low across the region.

In the past four weeks, only eight countries surpassed the critical benchmark of carrying out at least 10 tests per 10 000 population per week. Testing is crucial to understanding the pandemic trend and guiding response.

Over the recent months, lockdowns and movement restrictions instituted by many governments in the region have been eased. To strengthen COVID-19 response as cases are reported in many locations, WHO is urging countries to carry out assessments at the subnational level and identify high-risk areas so that local governments can adjust their public health measures accordingly and be agile in their decision-making.

“Trying to revive economies and livelihoods devastated by the pandemic while striving to limit the spread of COVID-19 is a very tough balancing act,” said Dr Nsenga Ngoy, the Emergency Response Programme Manager at WHO Regional Office for Africa. “But we cannot emphasize enough how important it is not to let our guard down. The likelihood of an increase in cases in the coming weeks can be averted by doubling down our efforts.”

WHO continues to support countries to maintain strong public health measures, decentralize response and step up preparedness for the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines as soon as they become available.

Dr Mihigo and Dr Ngoy spoke today at a press conference by WHO. They were joined by Mr Thabani Maphosa, Managing Director of Country Programmes, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

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## KfW strengthens social protection in Asia and Africa

By Special Correspondent

POOR people in developing countries and emerging economies face an existential threat in the corona crisis.

However, government assistance is often inadequate. KfW and BMZ are therefore supporting countries in stabilising and expanding social systems.

Sars-Cov-2 has the world in its grip. The virus threatens people’s health and lives. All countries are combating the epidemic with restrictions on everyday life, which is causing economic setbacks. In economically weak countries, this hits in particular the ones who are already among the poorest. According to World Bank estimates, the Corona crisis will lead to an increase in extreme poverty in the world for the first time in 20 years. Extreme poverty is defined as a person who has less than 1.90 USD a day. According to the United Nations (UN), up to 100 million people could fall into extreme poverty in the first year of the pandemic. The World Bank considers an increase to up to 150 million people in 2021 possible.

According to a UN report, about half of the estimated new poor live in South Asia, a third in sub-Saharan Africa. Corona measures including shutdown or border closures have a par-

ticularly devastating effect on informal and precarious workers, day labourers, migrant workers, street traders. They lose their livelihoods as a result of the various restrictions. And only 29 per cent of the world’s population have any form of social security, according to a report by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Strengthening and expanding social security systems in poor countries is therefore of particular importance in these pandemic times. KfW and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) are supporting economically particularly vulnerable groups in a number of African and Asian countries during the corona crisis, as recent examples from India, Jordan, Mauritania, Niger and Mali show.

KfW is providing a total of EUR 460 million for this purpose in India on behalf of the BMZ. Subsidised loans in this amount are spread over a two-phase COVID-19 programme, the total cost of which the Indian government estimates at around USD 23 billion.

In a first step, food was distributed to up to 800 million and cash to 320 million people who were in existential danger due to the consequences of the pandemic. The emergency aid

also benefited workers in the informal sector, who make up about 90 per cent of the Indian labour market. Targeted support was provided for the nine million migrant workers, most of whom are not sufficiently integrated into social security systems. In addition, health insurance was provided for people working in the healthcare sector. The majority of beneficiaries are women.

In the second phase of the programme, which is now underway, the Indian government wants to improve the social safety net. Currently, there are still more than 460 different state systems for the transfer of cash and non-cash benefits to the needy in the country with 1.4 billion inhabitants. The provision is mostly targeted at the rural population, while low-income groups in urban centres and migrant workers do not have access to these support services.

The Indian government, advised by the World Bank, wants to make the social system more efficient and flexible with a far-reaching reform. For example, migrant workers should be able to claim social benefits regardless of their place of origin. In order to distribute aid in a more needs-based manner, federal states and territories will be empowered to draw on national

financing instruments. KfW is also using funds from the BMZ’s Corona emergency aid in Jordan to support particularly poor people. The second wave of infection in autumn hit the Kingdom much harder than the first. In relative terms, the country with its ten million inhabitants has more COVID-19 infected persons and deaths than Germany.

KfW is providing EUR 50 million to the Jordanian national social assistance fund NAF for the Arab Government Excellence Award-winning social protection programme Takaful, specifically for its COVID-19 special programme with a total need of EUR 119 million. Around 100,000 impoverished households will receive monthly cash transfers averaging EUR 118 for up to one year to help them survive. The money transfers reach the households via regular bank accounts or so-called e-wallets, an electronic payment system operated via smartphone. Here, too, the transfers primarily go to informal workers who have lost their jobs in the wake of the Corona crisis and do not receive social benefits. However, formal workers who have become unemployed and are not receiving payments due to gaps in their insurance coverage can also benefit.

Jordan’s social system is also

# Stronger action needed as African countries see steady COVID-19 rise

BRAZZAVILLE

COVID-19 cases in the African region have risen steadily over the past two months, underscoring the need for reinforced public health measures to avert a surge in infections, particularly as people gather or travel for end-of-year celebrations.

Since mid-October, an average of 46 000 cases per week have been recorded in the 47 countries in the World Health Organization (WHO) African region compared with about 29 000 cases per week between early September and early October. Ten countries in the region have reported the highest number of cases, accounting for 88% of new cases in the past month. However, seven countries have recorded a steady decline in cases over the past four weeks.

Increased movement and interactions as well as slack observance of public health measures such as physical distancing and wearing of masks are some of the factors behind the upsurge in cases. Gatherings such as political rallies or in close settings have also contributed to the rise in infections.

“The rising COVID-19 infections and the holiday season present a worrying mix,” said Dr Richard Mihigo, the Immunization and Vaccine Development Programme Coordinator at WHO Regional Office for Africa. “Preventive measures must be tightened up to not only limit the risks of infections during the festive season but stand as permanent barriers against the spread of COVID-19. Complacency has no place in the fight against this pandemic.”

While many countries have improved COVID-19 response, including

diagnosis, testing remains low across the region.

In the past four weeks, only eight countries surpassed the critical benchmark of carrying out at least 10 tests per 10 000 population per week. Testing is crucial to understanding the pandemic trend and guiding response.

Over the recent months, lockdowns and movement restrictions instituted by many governments in the region have been eased. To strengthen COVID-19 response as cases are reported in many locations, WHO is urging countries to carry out assessments at the subnational level and identify high-risk areas so that local governments can adjust their public health measures accordingly and be agile in their decision-making.

“Trying to revive economies and livelihoods devastated by the pandemic while striving to limit the spread of COVID-19 is a very tough balancing act,” said Dr Nsenga Ngoy, the Emergency Response Programme Manager at WHO Regional Office for Africa. “But we cannot emphasize enough how important it is not to let our guard down. The likelihood of an increase in cases in the coming weeks can be averted by doubling down our efforts.”

WHO continues to support countries to maintain strong public health measures, decentralize response and step up preparedness for the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines as soon as they become available.

Dr Mihigo and Dr Ngoy spoke today at a press conference by WHO. They were joined by Mr Thabani Maphosa, Managing Director of Country Programmes, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.



# Indigenous leaders want traditional knowledge to be centrepiece of New Global Biodiversity Framework

UNITED NATIONS

The picturesque Mahuat River in Dominica is one of 8 communities that make up the Kalinago Territory - a 3,700-acre area on the Caribbean island's east coast that is home to the Kalinago people, the largest indigenous group in the Eastern Caribbean. It is where 19-year-old Whitney Melinard calls home. Melinard is among a rising group of Dominica's Kalinago youth, using their voices and platforms to speak out on issues affecting their people.

The Kalinago people have a chief and a representative in the House of Assembly, but some of their longstanding concerns mirror those of other indigenous groups, who for the first time have a say in a major biodiversity framework that is expected to be signed by 190 countries next year. This week, indigenous leaders from Asia, the Arctic, Latin America and the Caribbean met virtually to discuss the outcomes of a Dec. 1-3 meeting on the post-2020 biodiversity plan, which will guide protection of animals, plants and vital ecosystems for the next ten years. The leaders want concrete action to respect traditional knowledge at the center of the plan, something leaders committed to ensuring over the last ten years, but failed to do. For Kalinago youth like Melinard, this call is urgent.

"Governments must work with us to protect and preserve the natural environment by firstly acknowledging and respecting that fact the indigenous peoples around the globe have always resided in perfect harmony with mother nature. With this in mind, we need strengthened collaboration and consultation between their agencies and our com-



Members of Dominica's Kalinago community, the largest indigenous group in the Eastern Caribbean, on a tour with government officials at a recent event in the Kalinago Territory. Photo: Allison Kentish

munity especially when making decisions that will affect our environment. By so doing, the Kalinagos will be able to contribute to the decision-making process," Melinard told IPS.

Indigenous people live where 85 percent of the world's biodiversity is located and the leaders say it is therefore critical that they are part of any major conservation plan. Senior Policy Advisor of the Forest Peoples Programme, Joji Carino says the international community has failed to deliver on some key promises of the 2011-2020 Strategic Plan of the Convention of Biological Diversity, particularly provisions to integrate traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous communities in conservation and sustainability initiatives. She says the world

cannot afford to get the new framework wrong.

"A common message is that global biodiversity targets have not been met, with abundant evidence about how our current systems are unravelling the Earth's support systems. The target on traditional knowledge was similarly unmet, with only ten percent of parties reporting inclusion in the national biodiversity strategies and action plans," she said.

Indigenous leaders say their people continue to fight for land rights as they face displacement due to activities such as mining and development. They say the COVID-19 pandemic presents an ideal time to reflect on interconnectedness and approach biodiversity from a resilience-based, indigenous-inclusive

perspective.

In an interview with IPS, international public lawyer and Indigenous Peoples' rights expert Viviana Figueroa said she is optimistic about the way forward. She says the world is recognising the contribution of indigenous people as guardians of the natural world. She warns however that while traditional knowledge is critical to saving the planet, indigenous rights must be respected.

"Target 19 (of the post-2020 framework) is saying that indigenous people should make traditional knowledge available for policy makers and the public and we're saying traditional knowledge is not in the public domain. It is held by indigenous people and can only be accessed if there is an agreement to share this knowledge," she said,

adding "at the same time we are losing our traditional knowledge because of conflicts and destruction of nature and we need a commitment from countries to support us to maintain and transmit this knowledge. Thanks to this knowledge we can conserve and protect the forests. Many of our brothers and sisters have lost their lives in the protection of nature."

The leaders say in indigenous people continue to be characterised as backward. They argue that respected for their people should also include land rights and are calling on governments to make secure land tenure a reality for them. For some indigenous communities, living on communal lands leads to displacement from their ancestral homes. For the Kalinago in Dominica, land ownership could bring access to more opportunities for security and upliftment.

"Having land titles would place every single Kalinago on a level playing field with majority of other Dominicans. A land title can lead a Kalinago to become economically independent, by either investing in a business or to access financing to pursue educational goals. This can be done while maintaining the integrity of our space," Melinard told IPS.

The Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework is based on the premise that urgent action is needed globally 'to transform economic, social and financial models, so that the trends that have exacerbated biodiversity loss will stabilise in the next 10 years and allow for the recovery of natural ecosystems in the following 20 years, with next improvements by 2050 to achieve the vision of living in harmony with nature by 2050.' Indigenous leaders like Joji Carino, the goals are necessary and attainable, but not in the absence of the indigenous community.

"So from the evidence, it shows that unless indigenous peoples are empowered and our knowledge truly respected, meaning to say we're also at the table when, for example, development plans or spatial planning is happening, then we will go down the road of business as usual."

AGENCIES

NEW YORK

Crístian Samper is working for the Wildlife Conservation Society, an organization that concerns itself with the health of wildlife all over the globe. And he warned - even before the Covid-19 pandemic - about the dangers of a viral pandemic.

Excerpts from the interview:

**Q: Now how exactly is wildlife health linked to the spread of Covid-19?**

**A:** We have to remember that Covid-19, like many other diseases, is a zoonotic disease. We are a species that shares the planet with millions of other species and all of them have viruses. As a matter of fact, we estimate there are probably more than 700,000 viruses with zoonotic potential out there and, from time to time, some of those viruses will switch animal species and sometimes jump over to humans.

We have been interested in wildlife health for a long time because of our work in the conservation of endangered species. We have to remember that almost three-quarters of the viral diseases that we have acquired as humans originate in animals. Understanding the numerous human-wildlife interfaces is critical in terms of preventing future pandemic diseases as well.

**Q: At a conference in October last year, your organization revised the One Health approach, which you call the Berlin Principles. What is this more holistic approach to health about?**

**A:** In 2004, we organised a conference in New York, where we brought together communities that usually don't interact. You've got the whole wildlife and conservation groups, and you've got a whole human health and medical community. Most of the time we don't talk to each other.

Out of that meeting came a set of what at that point were called the Manhattan Principles, which were introducing this concept of One Health.

The good news is that the general

## 'We might have Covid-21 or Covid-22 coming our way'



The World Health Organization (WHO) is working closely with global experts, governments and partners to rapidly expand scientific knowledge on this new virus, to track the spread and virulence of the virus, and to provide advice to countries and individuals on measures to protect health and prevent the spread of this outbreak. File photo

approach of recognising the linkages between human health, wildlife health, livestock health and ecosystem health have gained traction. We see it being used more and more by different groups, including the World Health Organization.

But we did feel it was important to update these principles because so much has changed over time, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). That led to the conference that we held a year ago in Berlin.

We brought over 250 experts from these different communities together and that's where we adopted the Berlin Principles. They are ten core practices that we, as a society, need to embrace to be able to recognise these interlinkages.

**Q: Your organization recently published a paper on how ecological degradation more broadly increases the risk of pandemics and viruses spreading. How is the way we treat nature more broadly linked to increased risks in that regard?**

**A:** That's correct. One of the things that we are advocating is the importance of the protection of what we call intact forests and intact ecosystems. Once you go into an area and you start degrading them or opening them up, you're disrupting the whole equilibrium between the various species.

As you increase the rate of deforestation in some areas and people move in there, you're increasing the human-wildlife interface. The likelihood that humans are coming into contact with different kinds of animals increases dramatic ally.

So, one of the best things we can do is protect some of these mainly intact ecosystems out there - forests and other systems. That would not only help with conservation but it would reduce human-wildlife interface - and therefore reduce the likelihood of pathogen spillovers with pandemic potential.

**Q: In the very specific case of Covid-19, what should have happened to prevent the virus from spreading in the first place?**

**A:** This is directly tied to

the issue of commercial wildlife trade and wildlife consumption. WCS recommends stopping all commercial trade in wildlife for human consumption (particularly of birds and mammals) and closing all such markets. Rigorous enforcement of existing laws, regulations, and international treaties that deal with wildlife trade and markets is critical necessary, but this is simply not enough.

A new paradigm is needed if we are to avoid a pandemic such as the one we are experiencing today. Beyond that, you need to monitor better. You need to know what viruses are out there and you need to clean up your supply chains the best we can.

The issue is, right now as we speak, there are many other coronaviruses out there in wildlife being consumed by humans - and any one of them could jump. So, we might have a Covid-21 or Covid-22 coming our way and we need to strengthen the surveillance systems, reduce deforestation and stop all commercial trade in wildlife for human consumption (particularly of birds and

mammals).

**Q: China and Vietnam have actually taken steps to ban wildlife trade and markets. So, have the lessons from the coronavirus pandemic been learned at least in some parts of the world?**

**A:** I'm hopeful. We were encouraged that China actually did put in place a temporary ban on wildlife markets when the Covid-19 outbreak happened.

And the good news is that China has now taken steps to permanently close a lot of the wildlife markets for human consumption. Now, there are some important loopholes in this. There are still issues around Chinese medicine and some other elements that are, of course, very important cultural traditions and practices. That's something that has to be dealt with separately.

Vietnam also made an announcement in this regard. The Prime Minister of Vietnam said that they want to close the wildlife markets. The information we have is that that hasn't really translated into action yet. We're hopeful that it may but clearly the signal at the top was important. There are other countries, like Indonesia and others in the region, that are considering this right now.

And let me just mention one other thing that's important. We've made an important distinction in our statements and policies. We're specifically talking about commercial markets for wildlife for human consumption. We understand that wildlife is very important for subsistence and local livelihoods in many communities.

The data indicates that if

you're directly harvesting some wildlife for local consumption in the wild, the likelihood of transmission is much, much lower. The problem is when that wildlife is taken to a supply chain, to markets into the cities, that's where the number of viruses increases dramatically. So, we don't propose a blanket ban and certainly we don't intend to negatively impact local livelihoods in the wild areas.

**Q: That perfectly leads me to my last question. In a recent piece, you wrote that "protection and conservation" should not be seen "as a competing interest to economic and social development". How should we then understand the relationship between the two?**

**A:** There's always been this false dichotomy of either conserving something or using it. What we're realising is that nature provides so many services to us, whether it's clean water, clean air, food. We all rely on nature, whether it's directly using it in the wild or by the products and the goods and services that we all use every day.

But the challenge is that many of these ecosystem services are not valued by markets. That's what's led to their destruction, their mismanagement.

Issues like keeping forests intact is important in terms of preventing pathogen spillovers at human-wildlife interfaces and reducing the likelihood of pandemics. We have more and more science showing that mature forests are also capturing carbon at a very fast rate, so they're actually helping combat climate change. There are so many dimensions around this, and we're just starting to pull together all these pieces of the value added by nature.

Conservation not only impacts livelihoods but helps with broader geopolitical issues. For example, one of the things that we've been advocating very strongly is to strengthen protected areas in the Sudano-Sahel region in Africa, as anchors of good governance. This will also help improve governance and build communities that are much more stable.

This way you're going to help prevent migration, you're going to reduce the impacts of climate change to most of these people and you're going to reduce political conflict. All of this stems the wave of refugees that end up in Europe and other places. So, investing in nature, investing in conservation and supporting local livelihoods is a way of dealing with issues of security and migration too.

AGENCIES





Thursday 24 December 2020

## Banks lending to the private sector takes dip in third quarter of 2020

By Francis Kajubi

CREDIT extended by commercial banks to the private sector for financing production activities during the third quarter of this year slid back to almost September 2018 levels.

Bank of Tanzania's Quarterly Economic Bulletin for the year

ended September 2020, indicated that banks' appetite to extend loans to the private reduced to 5.2 percent or about 8.2trn/- of total loan portfolios.

The report shows that in September 2018, banks only extended loans to the private sector at five percent of the aggregate portfolio which translated into approximately 8trn/-. By December 2018,

Tanzania Private Sector Foundation's chair, Angelina Ngulula.



the loans leap-frogged to 10.5trn/- before peaking at 16.8trn/- by March 2019.

The report added that financing

recovered to 16.90trn/- by September 2019 before setting a record of 18.5trn/- by December of the same year. The Central Bank report fur-

ther noted that in March this year lending to the private sector dipped to 13trn/- before collapsing to 9.5trn/- in June this year.

"The slow growth of private sector credit was largely attributed to loan repayment and subdued demand for new loans from commercial banks. During the year ended September 2020, financing fell to only 5.2 percent compared to 9.3 percent during a corresponding period in 2019," the report stated.

However, in response to the sustained accommodative monetary policy, BoT said interest rates charged on loans and those offered on deposits by banks eased in the period under review compared to the corresponding period of 2019.

"The overall lending interest rates decreased to an average of 16.49 percent from 16.7 percent in the preceding quarter and 16.88 percent recorded in the corresponding quarter of the previous year," the BoT report read.

The Quarterly Economic Bul-

letin report further asserted that one-year lending interest rate averaged 15.37 percent during the period down from 16.18 percent and 16.34 percent in the preceding quarter and corresponding quarter of 2019, respectively.

Meanwhile, overall time deposits interest rate and 12-months deposits interest rate averaged 6.52 percent and 8.13 percent during the period under review compared to 6.75 percent and 8.04 percent in the preceding quarter, and 7.27 percent and 8.87 percent in the corresponding period of 2019, respectively.

"In line with these developments, the spread between one-year deposits interest rate and one-year lending interest rate narrowed to an average of 7.24 percentage points in the quarter ending September 2020, from 8.14 percentage points and 7.47 percentage points in the previous quarter and corresponding period in 2019, respectively," the report noted.

## Safaricom cuts low value M-Pesa fees in CBK deal

NAIROBI

Safaricom has cut low value M-Pesa transaction fees by up to 45 per cent in line with a deal agreed with the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) that ended free mobile phone money transactions of up to Sh1,000.

It will now cost Sh6 to send between Sh101 and Sh500, down from Sh11. Transactions of between Sh1,501 and Sh2,500 will cost Sh32 down from Sh41. The telco is betting on volumes to cover for the low fees after the waiver of charges on M-Pesa transactions cost the telco giant Sh9 billion in the six months to June.

The CBK rejected bankers' push to reinstate fees on transfer of cash between accounts and mobile phone wallets, even as it ended free M-Pesa transactions. Safaricom said yesterday the lower fees was in line with an agreement with the banking regulator.

"As guided by the Central Bank of Kenya and taking into account the Principles on the Pricing of Mobile Money Services, we have taken the decision to reduce our M-Pesa tariffs by up to 45 per cent for lower value transaction bands," said chief executive Peter Ndegwa. It cut the cost of sending money for transactions below Sh15,000 but failed to comment on withdrawal charges.

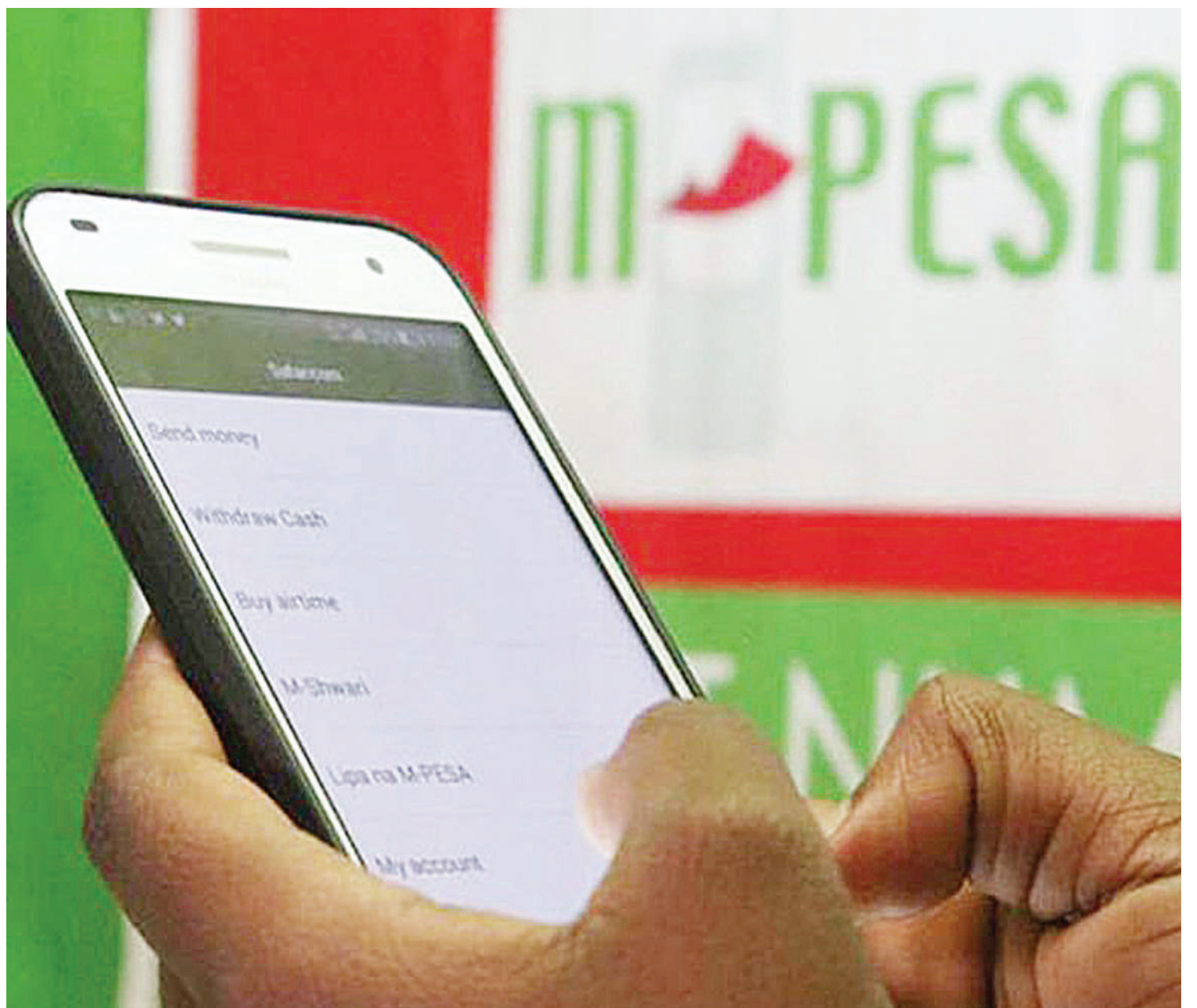
The reliefs on mobile phone payments

were introduced from March 16 to encourage cashless payments on mobile phones as part of efforts to contain the spread of the coronavirus. The CBK said since the waiver was introduced the monthly volume of person-to-person transactions increased by 87 per cent between February and October 2020.

Over this period the volume of transactions below Sh1,000 increased by 114 per cent, while 2.8 million additional customers are using mobile money. Business-related transactions also recorded significant growth over the same period. Safaricom said the free M-Pesa transfer cost it Sh9 billion in the six months to June, which saw the firm report a six percent drop in net profit to Sh33.07 billion – the first fall in nine years.

At Sh9 billion, the estimated revenue loss is equivalent to 25 per cent of the Sh35.88 billion Safaricom made from the M-Pesa platform in the six months to September and 7.2 per cent of total revenue in the same period.

The telcos revealed the new tariffs after CBK moved to end the waiver on free M-Pesa transactions below Sh1000. Safaricom said the new cheaper fees would cover 90 per cent of transactions. All transactions of Sh100 and below will remain free and all M-PESA customers will continue to enjoy free mobile money services between M-Pesa and bank accounts.



An M-Pesa user withdraws cash from a Safaricom agent.

## Nigeria's fintech scene booms despite economic woes

LAGOS

The Covid-19 pandemic, oil price slump and civil unrest have hammered Nigeria's economy this year, but the tech start-up scene in Africa's most populous country has continued to thrive. Yabacon Valley, an area of Lagos which took its nickname from the US tech hub, hosts hundreds of banks, IT companies and start-ups.

The number of internet users in the country is surging, hitting 140 million people in June. Nigerian start-ups are capitalising on this shift, raising \$747m last year, according to Partech African. Leading the way are fintech firms, as entrepreneurs look to serve the 40% of Nigerians that are remain unbanked and meet gaps in the market that have not been met by incumbent providers.

Tunde Kehinde, chief executive



Tunde Kehinde, chief executive and co-founder of Lidya.

and co-founder of Lidya, a Nigerian start-up providing loans to small and medium-sized enterprises, said at a recent TechCrunch event that "fintech is really top of mind right now."

It's a really exciting time for

tech start-ups, Mr Kehinde added, as they can "operate with a blank slate," developing products and services for African consumers without being held back by "legacy infrastructure" or technology.

Since being founded in 2016,

Lidya has expanded to offer its services in four countries outside Nigeria. Other Nigerian fintechs that have drawn investors' attention, include mobile money service Opay, payment app Palmpay and challenger bank Kuda, which have all raised large sums of money since November 2019.

Most notably, Lagos-based Inter-switch received \$200m of funding from US payments group Visa to value it at more than \$1bn and become Nigeria's first home-grown unicorn, while another start-up, Paystack, was acquired for a reported \$200m by Silicon Valley-based payments giant Stripe.

**Africa's springboard**

Aaron Fu, the head of growth at Catalyst Fund, a fintech-focused venture capital (VC) firm and incubator, says that companies can become "incredibly large and

successful by only being in Nigeria", making it the go-to market to expand operations for start-ups founded in other African countries and internationally. "Nigeria is increasingly becoming the gateway into the African start-up world for most landing into the continent for the first time," he adds.

The opportunity afforded in the financial services sector is also reflected in foreign direct investment (FDI) figures. Investment monitor FDI Markets tracked 44 greenfield FDI projects in Nigeria's financial services sector between 2014 and 2019, making it the most active sector alongside business services during the period.

Inter-switch, Nigeria's 'poster boy' fintech unicorn, founded in 2002, decided to revive its VC arm in October 2020 to invest in Nigeria and other African tech hubs as they have matured. Despite a thriving

start-up ecosystem with investment pouring in, Nigeria's regulatory and macroeconomic climate has room for improvement.

"The frequency and duration of recessions in Nigeria is contributing to concern for most general partners," said Gozie Chigbue, the director of funds and capital partnerships at CDC Group, the UK's development finance institution, at a recent African Private Equity and Venture Capital Association (AVCA) event.

On top of Nigeria entering its second recession in five years, the business climate still lags its west African peers. In the World Bank's 2020 Ease of Doing Business ranking, Nigeria ranked 131 out of 190 countries, held back by poorly developed transport and energy infrastructure, and inefficiencies in both the judicial and dispute settlement systems.



# Twelve take home 28m/- prizes in NMB's 'MastaBata' campaign

By The Banker Reporter

TWELVE people have been awarded prizes worth over 28m/- after emerging winners of a monthly promotion run by NMB Bank Plc. The campaign dubbed 'MastaBata Sio Kikawaida' saw customers win smartphones, fridges, flat screens and microwaves worth 2.4m/- each.

Speaking during the monthly draw to award winners yesterday, NMB Mlimani City Branch Manager Irene Masaki said the Mastabata promotion is aimed at encouraging and motivating customers to use NMB MasterCard when paying for goods or services through Point of Sales (PoS), QR Code or Internet purchase commonly known as e-commerce and it will run for three months.

Among the customers who won prizes during the draw include Happy Luka Pallangyo, Masunga Jasila, Francis Julian and Rose Marealle to name but a few. The draw was run in watch of officers from the Gaming Board of Tanzania.

"More than 200m/- worth prizes are to be won in the three month's promotion which includes customers paying using NMB MasterCard QR as part of campaign," Masaki adding that over three million NMB customers stand a chance to win different prizes with the grand prize being a fully paid three days trip for two to Serengeti, Ngorongoro and Zanzibar.

"This is exclusive to existing and new NMB customers," she said explaining that during the promotion, there will be weekly draws that will see 40 lucky winners every week walk away with 100,000/- each, monthly winners where 12 lucky



NMB Bank's Online Influencer, Nancy Sumari making a call to one of the 'MastaBata' monthly draw winners that was held yesterday at Mlimani City branch in Dar es Salaam. From left is a representative from Gaming Board of Tanzania, Pendo Mfuru and the bank's manager card centre, Sophia Mwamwitu. Photo courtesy of NMB.

ones will take home brand new Samsung Galaxy Note 20 phones.

The grand prize winners will also be given an option of deciding between the Safari or a range of prizes from smart TV set to fridges. NMB is the first bank in Tanzania to issue a

secured EMV (Chip and Pin) MasterCard with contactless technology and pioneered the largest roll out of contactless MasterCard payment cards in the market to date.

Contactless technology allows consumers to make fast, secure and

more convenient payments, and is ideal for quick payment environments where speed and convenience matter most such as taxis, buses, major retailers, grocery stores and fuel stations.

# 'Financial inclusion is not a silver bullet'

JOHANNESBURG

There is growing appreciation of financial inclusion and its role in economic development. Tied closely to this is the role of mobile money and its contribution to promoting financial inclusion and development. This is according to Clayton Hayward, CEO and co-founder of Ukheshe, a SMME digital banking platform provider.

Hayward says South Africa remains highly regulated with licensed banks being the only institutions that can offer e-money services. This creates a major hurdle, limiting roll-out not only locally, but also in West Africa.

In a 2019 report, GSMA said that globally registered mobile-money services rose from just one in 2001 to 290 in 2019 and that total registered users globally topped the 1-billion mark in 2019. Of the transaction value totalling R469 million, Southern Africa accounts for only 2% and in 2020, GSMA says that there are still 800 million people in the region that remain disconnected to mobile internet.

"Closing the digital divide has never been more important. It is vital for the longevity of an economy that has been placed under tremendous strain due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Africa needs technology and mobile money innovations to help bridge this gap and connect the disconnected," says Hayward.

Financial inclusion is not a silver bullet according to Hayward. He says that internet access and mobile wallets will not magically



Clayton Hayward, CEO and co-founder of Ukheshe.

create a sustainable economy: "It is up to industry and government to stimulate small business development, which can then be supported by digital money propositions."

Hayward believes that COVID-19

will ultimately result in a long term shift to contactless and digital payment solutions making the digital divide a significant issue: "Over the past year, we have seen immense growth in the uptake of cashless systems and we anticipate

that the trend will continue, if not gain more momentum. But that said, there remains no doubt that the market needs to address the divide with a greater sense of urgency if the economies are to survive and then thrive."

# Fitch upgrades FNB, Standard Bank, Nedbank, Absa and Investec

JOHANNESBURG

Ratings agency Fitch has upgraded the national long-term ratings of five South African banks, saying their creditworthiness has improved relative to other credit in the country, including that of the government and state-owned entities. FNB,

Standard Bank, Nedbank, Absa and Investec have also achieved a stable outlook.

Despite the sovereign risks, "Fitch believes the banks have significant headroom to withstand current pressures on the operating environment," the ratings agency said in a note on Tuesday. "The South African

banks' company profiles, management and strategy, and risk appetite remain key strengths."

The stable outlook reflected its belief that "the banks' relative creditworthiness to other domestic issuers" is unlikely to change over a one- to two-year period" and that South Africa's "national rating scale relativ-

ities are unlikely to change in the event of a sovereign downgrade." It said the ratings could be upgraded further "if the banks continue to perform satisfactorily while other leading domestic issuers experience increased stress."

Factors that could lead to the negative ratings actions include

downside risks resulting "from a weakening in the banks' standalone credit profiles, especially any material deterioration in asset quality, profitability and capital if this is not accompanied by a simultaneous weakening in the operating environment and the credit profiles of other domestic issuers."

# Mission impossible for MTN in Nigeria?

LAGOS

MTN is in a race against time to get about half its subscribers to comply with the Nigerian government's stipulation that their Sims be connected to their ID numbers by the end of the year.

This follows minister of communications & digital economy Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami giving mobile operators two weeks from 16 December to get the West African country's 200 million mobile subscribers to register their national identification numbers with their Sims.

The latest ruction in the group's largest market saw its share price fall over 7% to R61.44 on Thursday. The problem is that there are only about 42 million Nigerians with ID numbers. Of this, about half are MTN subscribers. According to MTN's latest quarterly update, it has about 75 million subscribers.

Outgoing MTN Nigeria CEO Ferdi Moolman cautioned during a conference call with investors that the "full verification process" of how much of its subscribers have ID numbers still needs to be done and that it is just assuming that half of them did not have them.

In spite of the challenges, the minister, the Nigerian Communications Commission, the National Information Technology Development Agency and the National Identity Management Commission were committed to the registration process.

Blocked

"After the deadline, all Sims without NINs (ID numbers) are to be blocked from the networks," they warned in a statement. MTN Group CEO Ralph Mupita put on a brave face during the call with investors, saying it is working with the Nigerian authorities and the new rules could benefit the operator over the long term as the company would improve its "know-your-customer" processes. Even so, by its own admission, MTN acknowledged it won't meet the deadline. Despite getting a licence to register ID numbers and 14 000 devices to do so, it can only process four subscribers an hour.

With the deadline clearly going to be missed, mobile operators are now lobbying for a six-month extension. The operators' call in this regard has been echoed by the country's lawmakers, who passed a resolution on Wednesday in the house of representatives calling for a 10-week extension.

MTN, which has had numerous disputes - costing into billions of rands - with the Nigerian authorities over the years, was at pains to say it was working closely with said authorities. It is even on a state-led task team, which will assess if the implementation can be done in two weeks. Incoming MTN Nigeria CEO Karl Toriola said if the deadline is extended, it could register all its subscribers in as little as four months.

Moolman said the Nigerian government is not blind to the challenges the operators face. "Although the statement (put out by the authorities) is very harsh and very direct, the Nigerian government is not insensitive to the challenges faced in the country." Though MTN's earnings are certain to be hurt if it is forced to deregister a large portion of its subscribers, it pointed out that there some factors that mitigate against this loss. Mupita said the majority of its business is generated by its "higher value" subscribers, who either have ID numbers or are easy to register.



MTN Nigeria CEO Ferdi Moolman.

NEWSINDEPTH



# Destination Tanzania should now capitalise on sports, medical tourism

By Godwin Semuny

TANZANIA records an estimated 1.5 million tourists annually, accounting for 17 percent of gross domestic product, more than two million direct jobs and is the highest foreign exchange earner bringing over US\$2 billion annually (about 4.6trn/-).

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, international tourist arrivals to Africa grow at around five percent per annum with close to 1.4 billion visitors. Africa's top tourism destinations are Morocco, with around 11 million arrivals and South Africa with around 10 million tourist arrivals annually.

If you look closely at the figures, you will notice that destination Tanzania which is blessed with unrivalled natural attractions from the breathtaking Indian Ocean coastline, national parks to Africa's highest peak in Mount Kilimanjaro, ought to have more significant numbers than what is currently garnering.

It is time to repackage our tourists' offerings by adding more value and creating a new competitive edge. You will agree that Morocco has nothing astronomical to get ten times the tourists than what Tanzania is getting. There are some other areas that we can tap to add value to our tourists' packages; sports and medical tourism, immediately come to mind.

Sports tourism is a diamond in the rough



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Today, sport is regarded as the world's largest social phenomenon. And, tourism is on its way to becoming one of the world's most significant industry—

an optimal combination of the two, tourists from all over the world dance to your tunes.

Whether it's the World Cup, the Olympics, Global Marathons,

Tennis, Golf, Formula One, NBA Finals, or a mere "El Clásico" soccer match between Real Madrid against Barcelona in Spain, more and more tourists are now interested in travelling to new destinations, just for sporting activities.

In 2018 the sports tourism industry was worth \$1.41 trillion, and this figure is expected to increase to approximately \$5.72 trillion by 2021. This is a whopping 41 percent growth in only four years. This is a diamond in the rough.

For Tanzania, it is about time to capitalize on this booming industry because it's an area that can yield instant success in staging world-class marathons. For the year 2021, Tanzania has registered 97 marathons that will take part in different parts of the country.

I firmly believe that time has come to turn them from 'fun runs' to internationally recognized races. It is time to ensure at least three of our marathons, especially those in tourist hotbeds such as Kilimanjaro and Zanzibar, are organized to international standards to attract international participants.

In Ethiopia, for instance, every November, they hold races named 'Great Ethiopian Run,' which attract close to 37,000 participants, the majority being foreigners. We already have a blueprint in Kili-Marathon that attracts close

to 12,000 athletes annually. It is time to build on it by creating a memorable experience for the runners. Strategically, the event can be turned from the current one-day event to a week-long festival that includes music and park tours.

On the other hand, beach-based sports such as beach soccer and volleyball can also attract international attention if well organized and promoted. The beach soccer competitions are comparatively cheaper in terms of investments, but the returns could be quite significant. This tournament can be arranged parallel with the annual 'Sauti za Busara' concert in Zanzibar to rip tourists from both the music and sports worlds. It is time to contemplate hosting CAF Beach Soccer Tournament.

Medical tourism is the new norm. Over the past few years, Tanzania has transformed the health sector with investment in specialized services, which has reduced the number of patients seeking medical treatment abroad. Records show that the country used to refer between 200 and 300 patients abroad annually, but the number has since dropped to less than 60. The health sector's significant improvements could open doors to become a minor medical tourism area for neighbouring countries.

Tanzania can borrow a leaf from

India's medical tourism industry, which is estimated to grow by 200 percent next year, hitting \$9 billion mark. India receives close to 240,000 foreign tourists annually on medical grounds. A significant percent of them come from African countries. With the improvement in Tanzania's renowned medical establishments, it will be comparatively cheaper for people from most African countries to opt for the country as a preferred destination.

On several occasions, we have heard of significant improvements at the Jakaya Kikwete Cardiac Institute (JKCI) and Ocean Road Cancer Institute, which can handle complicated cases which were once referred abroad. The two giants also receive patients from neighbouring countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Comoro, Uganda, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, and Burundi. The horizons can be broadened.

Tourism is undoubtedly amongst the leading pillars of our economy in terms of employment and earnings. However, with the market dynamics and sizeable competition from the world over, we ought to be more creative and vigilant in increasing value for tourists to pick destination Tanzania from available alternatives.

# Wealthy Kenyans move cash from small banks' shaky safes

NAIROBI

Small banks have lost more than half of accounts holding above Sh100,000 as wealthy savers moved their cash to large lenders in the wake of three mid-sized financiers being placed under receivership after failing to meet their obligations. The Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) data shows that small banks controlled 5.84 per cent of accounts with more than Sh100,000, down from 13.26 per cent in 2017 as depositors sought safety in larger institutions.

The 21 small banks – classified by CBK as low-tier – had 90,572 quality accounts last year compared to 210,047 in 2017. In contrast, the top nine banks added 461,555 accounts with more than Sh100,000 between January 2016 and December 2019.

Depositors and investors in Kenya were rattled three years ago when the CBK took control of three mid-sized lenders – Chase Bank, Imperial Bank and Dubai Bank – after the banks ran into financial trouble. This triggered panic withdrawals from smaller banks and shift of cash to the larger lenders that were considered stable in what was dubbed "flight to quality."

The Kenya Deposit Insurance Corporation (KDIC) – an independent State agency that manages deposit refunds in collapsed banks – last July raised compensation for depositors in collapsed banks to Sh500,000 from Sh100,000 to help ease the discomfort with the small banks. KDIC chief executive Mohamud Mohamud says Kenyans had become risk-averse after the placement of three banks under receivership in 2015 and 2016, hurting small lenders.

"Our role together with National Treasury and CBK is now to create a level playing ground where all banks will be viewed as safe and sound to avert such scenarios of depositors moving money to what they view as large banks," said Mr Mohamud. "The revision of the cover and introduction of risk-based premiums is a way of collapsing the view of banks as small or big and encourage depositors to confidently put money in any bank."

The low compensation had exposed wealthy savers to higher losses in the event of bank closures because the refund was not adjusted to take into account changing economic realities over the three decades. The increase in compensation of up to Sh500,000 was the first rise in 30 years.

Out of the three lenders placed under receivership, Dubai is facing liquidation but Chase Bank and Imperial Bank had their good loans and deposits transferred to State Bank of Mauritius (SBM) and KCB respectively.

KDIC says the increase from Sh100,000, which has remained constant since 1989, will cover about 99 per cent of the depositors from the current 90 per cent. The low compensation had exposed



Kenya Deposit Insurance Corporation's CEO, Mohamud Mohamud.

wealthy savers to higher losses in the event of bank closures because the refund was not adjusted to take into account changing economic realities over the three decades.

The top nine banks including KCB, Equity, Co-operative Bank and NCBA Group now account for 81.96 per cent of the total accounts holding in excess of Sh100,000, up from 78.8 per cent a year earlier. Equity leads with 347,787 accounts followed by KCB (253,958), Co-operative Bank (241,260), Absa (108,177) and Standard Chartered Bank with 71,645. Medium sized ones' share of quality accounts has reduced from 15.12 per cent to 12.2 per cent over the same period.

Capital-constrained and loss-making Spire Bank led the pack in losing quality savers, with accounts holding more than Sh100,000 dropping by 823 or 30.5 per cent to 1,875. Other banks which lost quality accounts include Paramount

(392), Guardian (38), Consolidated Bank (34) and Jamii Bora Bank (35).

Consolidated Bank is grappling with meeting minimum regulatory capital levels while Jamii Bora Bank, which had capital and liquidity breaches, has since been acquired by Cooperative Bank and renamed Kingdom Bank. The share of bank accounts holding more than Sh100,000 dropped to 2.49 per cent last year, reflecting the cash flow problems in an economy plagued by job cuts and growing income inequality.

CBK data show that the share of the high quality accounts dipped from 2.62 per cent in 2018 and 3.94 per cent in 2014. The fall came despite the number of bank accounts holding more than Sh100,000 having increased by 105,639 last year to 1.55 million. But the share was squeezed by the sharp rise in new bank accounts by 7.1 million or 12.7 per cent to 62.3 million.

# Foreign investment in China reaches 94pc of 2019 levels

BEIJING

For all the talk of an economic decoupling between China and the US and its allies, foreign companies continue to pour money into the Asian nation.

The coronavirus pandemic and trade tensions have highlighted the risks of over-reliance on China, prompting several countries to consider diversifying supply chains, with a potential knock-on effect on investment.

Yet the latest official data from China shows that hasn't happened. New foreign investment is on track to set another record in 2020, hitting 94 per cent of last year's total by the end of November, according to Commerce Ministry data released this week.

Not only is that helping to drive the economic rebound, but with China reducing barriers to investment and the economy the only major one likely to grow this year, investment is set to continue flowing into the country.

"US and other foreign firms will continue to invest in China as it remains one of the most resilient economies during the global pandemic and as future growth potential there remains stronger than most other major economies," said Adam Lysenko, an analyst at Rhodium Group who researches Chinese investment.

The investment boom comes despite continued political uncertainty for foreign firms. The Trump administration has ratcheted up tensions in recent months, placing restrictions on Chinese businesses, especially in the technology sector. China's policy toward the incoming Joe Biden administration is still unclear. And an investment treaty between the European Union and

China hasn't yet been signed, although it's getting close.

China is making a bigger effort to boost foreign investment. The government this week published a shortened list of sectors in which market access is restricted, and also said some international businesses would be able to tap financial support.

Despite the outbreak of the pandemic and the unprecedented economic contraction in the first quarter, almost 19,000 new foreign firms were set up in the first seven months of the year, officials said in August.

The automobile industry is one that's seen increased activity. China was already the world's biggest car market before the coronavirus, and although sales are expected to fall for a third year this year, global companies are looking to Chinese demand to boost their fortunes.

In the financial sector, companies such as UBS AG, Daiwa Securities Group and Goldman Sachs Group have either taken control of their joint ventures in China, or are looking to do so as the industry is further opened up.

At the same time, a record \$214 billion in foreign funds have poured into higher-yielding Chinese bonds and stocks this year. The currency is likely to continue to appreciate next year on those flows, even as the US sanctions Chinese firms, works to stop pension funds investing in Chinese companies, and passes legislation that could stop them listing on US stock exchanges.

Recent business surveys show many European and American companies are staying put in China, despite increasing calls from various politicians to diversify their operations or return home. More than three quarters of the 200-plus US manufacturers in and around Shanghai said they didn't intend to move production out of China, according to a September survey.

The governments of Japan, South Korea and Taiwan have implemented policies to help reduce their economies' reliance on Chinese supply chains and production, but with mixed results so far. Taiwan has a long-term plan to attract capital back home from China, though companies continue to boost their investment into the mainland as well.



Japan's new ambassador in Beijing, Hideo Tarumi.



## WORLD

## Trump threatens to not sign COVID-19 bill, wants bigger stimulus checks

WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT Donald Trump threatened on Tuesday to not sign an \$892 billion coronavirus relief bill that includes desperately needed money for individual Americans, saying it should be amended to increase the amount in the stimulus checks.

U.S. government operations are being funded on a temporary basis through Dec. 28, waiting for the \$1.4 trillion in federal spending for fiscal 2021 that is also part of the bill.

Failure to either pass another stopgap bill or override a possible Trump veto of the legislation could result in a partial government shutdown. The threat by the outgoing Republican president, who has less than a month left in office, throws into turmoil a bipartisan effort in Congress to provide help for people whose lives have been upended by the pandemic.

"The bill they are now planning to send back to my desk is much different than anticipated," Trump said in a

video posted on Twitter. "It really is a disgrace."

The U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate both passed the legislation overwhelmingly on Monday night.

Trump said he wants Congress to increase the amount in the stimulus checks to \$2,000 for individuals or \$4,000 for couples, instead of the "ridiculously low" \$600 for individuals that is in the bill.

Trump also complained about money provided for foreign countries, the Smithsonian Institution and fish breeding, among other spending that is in the part of the legislation to fund the U.S. government.

"I'm also asking Congress to immediately get rid of the wasteful and unnecessary items from this legislation, and to send me a suitable bill, or else the next administration will have to deliver a COVID relief package. And maybe that administration will be me," said Trump, who has continued to push baseless claims that he won re-election in November.



President Donald Trump

Trump, who will leave office on Jan. 20 when President-elect Joe Biden is sworn in, did not use the word "veto" in his statement.

The 92-6 vote in the Senate and the 359-53 vote in the House both are well over the two-thirds majority needed to override a presidential veto, though some Republicans might balk at overriding a veto if Trump used that power.

A bill can be amended if congressional leadership wants to do so. If they don't, Trump's choices are to sign the bill into law, veto it, or do nothing and let it become law.

If the bill is amended, doing so by Dec. 28 could be very difficult. It took months for the parties to agree to the thousands of elements in not only the coronavirus aid part, but the \$1.4 trillion agreement to fund much of the

U.S. government.

Even if leadership wants to amend the bill, it still would have to be voted upon by the full House and Senate. Also, many Republicans might balk at the \$2,000 direct payments because that would boost the cost of the bill to well over \$1 trillion.

Two years ago, a record-long, 35-day government shutdown was sparked when Congress sent Trump a government spending bill it thought he would support, only to see him reject it over what he said was insufficient funding for building his vaunted U.S.-Mexico border wall.

Trump also said a two-year tax break for corporate meal expenses was "not enough" to help struggling restaurants.

The White House did not signal any objections to the legislation before it passed and gave every expectation

## Ministry blasts US for visa policy attacks

By Zhou Jin

BEIJING slammed the United States on Tuesday for using visa policy as a weapon to disrupt normal bilateral people-to-people exchanges, and it vowed to take necessary and legitimate measures to safeguard its interests.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin made the remarks after US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced on Monday that Washington was imposing additional visa restrictions on Chinese officials over alleged human rights abuses.

Earlier this month, the US had announced visa restrictions on Chinese officials in the United Front Work Department as well as sanctions against 14 vice-chairpersons of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress.

Over the past four years, the US has repeatedly imposed visa restrictions on Chinese personnel under the pretext of issues relating to Hong Kong, the Tibet autonomous region and the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region affairs, as well as human rights and religion, Wang said at Tuesday's daily news conference.

China opposes and deplores such practices, which severely interfere in China's internal affairs and harm bilateral relations, he said.

On Dec 10, the ministry announced reciprocal sanctions against US officials and personnel for their egregious behavior on Hong Kong issues, and it revoked US diplomatic passport holders' visa exemptions for temporary visits to Hong Kong and Macao.

"We urged the US to correct its wrongdoings and cancel the so-called visa sanctions," Wang said.

Also at Tuesday's briefing, Wang objected to the US Congress passing acts with negative content concerning China.

On Monday, the US Congress passed a US\$2.3 trillion spending bill for fiscal 2021 that included provisions for the Taiwan Assurance Act of 2020 and the Tibetan Policy and Support Act.

Tibet, Taiwan and Hong Kong issues are China's domestic affairs, concern Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity, and brook no foreign interference, Wang said.

He warned Washington to refrain from signing into law and putting into practice the negative clauses and acts that target China and damage its interests.

## Virus mutation from overseas not found in China, CDC says

By Wang Xiaoyu

A MUTATED novel coronavirus circulating overseas has not been found in China, and Chinese researchers are closely monitoring virus mutations and examining new steps to cope with them, according to a senior disease control official.

Feng Zijian, deputy director of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, said that no evidence of the mutations has been found in genomic sequencing data from virus samples taken from infected incoming travelers, contaminated imports arriving in China or other sources in the country.

"The China CDC is keeping a close eye on mutations and analyzing their risks and their potential to become mainstream in the future as well as devising targeted preventive measures," he said in an interview with China Central Television on Monday evening.

Concerns about virus mutations were thrust into the spotlight recently when the United Kingdom announced over the weekend it would impose strict new lockdowns in response to a new variant that appears to accelerate the transmission of the coronavirus.

Feng said a series of disease control measures taken



it," he said.

Feng said the incidence rate of COVID-19 infections in the UK has soared in recent weeks and the proportion of the mutated strain among all cases is climbing rapidly, which speaks to the stronger transmissibility of the new strain.

However, he said more research is needed to evaluate the new strain's pathogenicity its ability to cause infected people to show symptoms and its impact on the overall death rate.

More efforts will also be devoted to measuring the new strain's response to antibodies triggered by vaccines, he added.

Zhang Wenhong, director of the Center for Infectious Diseases at Fudan University's Huashan Hospital in Shanghai, said the novel coronavirus is an RNA virus that mutates frequently during replication.

Thousands of mutations have already arisen but only a few are likely to be substantial and will change the virus significantly, he said in a post released on the microblogging platform Weibo on Tuesday.

Zhang added that before mass vaccination is rolled out, it is highly unlikely that the virus will develop mutations that could render vaccines currently undergoing

## Coronavirus reaches end of Earth as first outbreak hits Antarctica

SANTIAGO

The coronavirus has landed in Antarctica, the last continent previously free from COVID-19, Chile's military said this week, as health and army officials scrambled to clear out and quarantine staff from a remote research station surrounded by ocean and icebergs.

Chile's armed forces said at least 36 people had been infected at its Bernardo O'Higgins base, including 26 army personnel and 10 civilian contractors conducting maintenance at the base.

The permanently staffed research station, operated by Chile's army, lies near the tip of a peninsula in northernmost Antarctica, overlooking a bay often dotted with icebergs.

Base personnel "are already properly isolated and constantly monitored" by health authorities

in Magallanes, in Chilean Patagonia, the army said, adding there had so far been no complications.

Research and military stations in Antarctica - among the most remote in the world - had gone to extraordinary lengths in recent months to keep the virus out, canceling tourism, scaling back activities and staff and locking down facilities.

Researchers with the British Antarctic Survey estimate about 1,000 people at 38 stations across the frozen continent had safely navigated the southern hemisphere winter without incident. But an uptick in travel to and from the region this spring and early summer have heightened infection risk.

An Army press officer said the first COVID-19 cases had been reported in mid-December, when two soldiers fell ill.



An Air Force doctor checking the temperature of a staff at the Eduardo Frei Antarctic base, at the Fildes Peninsula, west of King George island, on May 10, 2020. (File photo)

The Magallanes region, one of the closest populated areas to Antarctica and take-off point for many boats and planes headed

to the continent, is among the hardest-hit in Chile.

Much of the area, blasted by cold winds off the ocean, moun-

tains and glaciers, has been under quarantine restrictions for months.

Chile's Navy reported it too had detected three cases of COVID-19 among 208 crew members of a ship that had sailed in the Antarctic region between Nov 27 and Dec 10.

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Chile's Navy reported it too had detected three cases of COVID-19 among 208 crew members of a ship that had sailed in the Antarctic region between Nov 27 and Dec 10. **Agencies**

## Historic success of eradicating absolute poverty in Xinjiang should hit the headlines

THOUGH people from all walks of life expect to know a story exactly how it unfolds, many media outlets are failing them in learning the full truth. People expect the media to remain objective while running news, be it positive or negative, going beyond any sort of partiality and bias.

However, the media have a long history of deviating from the canons and principles of journalism, leading to the development of terms like yellow journalism, tabloid journalism, and checkbook journalism over the years. In the age of globalization, they appear to have broken all records of partiality in disseminating news.

In this case, Xinjiang is an unambiguous example of how the media is obsessed with negative stories, be

it true or false, of a specific region to serve the interests of the parties they have aligned themselves with. In doing so, the media can't even make time to look at pieces of positive news regularly unfolding in Xinjiang under their very nose.

Many media are constantly producing negative news about Xinjiang. Never have they told the world that the region is achieving tremendous successes in all sectors including economic, social, environmental, and security, seemingly reluctant to give coverage of the outstanding achievements of the Chinese government in Xinjiang.

As is typical, the news of the eradication of abject poverty in Xinjiang has lately failed to draw the media's

attention. Though they would undoubtedly have "talked up" the news if it had happened in any other country except for China. Thanks to alternative media, especially social media platforms, the success stories of Xinjiang in poverty eradication is now on everyone's tongue.

The world has already learned that Xinjiang has bidden farewell to absolute poverty. The last 10 impoverished counties, including Shache, Moyu and Akto, in the autonomous region have managed to end abject poverty. People in the once-poverty-hit counties now have stable access to education, medical care, and other civil amenities. Following the poverty eradication from the last counties, more than 3.08 million registered im-

poverished residents in Xinjiang have shaken off absolute poverty.

It was not an easy task to eradicate abject poverty from the region. Though Xinjiang has beautiful scenery and abundant resources, it had a relatively backward economy. Its southern part has long been one of the contiguous poverty-stricken areas in China, but the tremendous and outstanding historic feats are attributed to the Communist Party of China (CPC). The party has undertaken a series of major decisions and arrangements that have put Xinjiang in a special position to ensure its steady and sound economic development over time.

The CPC has initiated the new philosophy of innovative, coordinated,

green, and open development for the benefit of all, bringing about a historic change in the overall development of Xinjiang.

Under the philosophy, top priority is being given to the needs of the people, allocating over 70 percent of the regional budget expenditure for ensuring and improving people's livelihood in recent years. For the same reason, the party has also promoted major livelihood programs relating to employment, education, healthcare, and social security.

The Xinjiang government has mobilized more than 1.12 million civil servants to establish kin-like relations with 1.69 million households of those in poverty. The civil servants have conducted "relative-visit week"

activities regularly, in which they have wholeheartedly and effectively helped people solve difficulties in production and life.

As a result, from 2014 to 2019, a sound economic momentum was sustained with an average annual GDP growth rate of 7.2 percent in Xinjiang. The living standards of local people have significantly improved with an average annual growth of 9.1 percent in residential per capita disposable income. During this period, affordable housing projects in rural areas had assisted over 675,600 impoverished households, putting an end to the time when poverty-stricken rural residents had to live in dilapidated houses.

People's Daily



## UN Security Council decides to shut down Darfur mission

UNITED NATIONS

THE Security Council on Tuesday adopted a resolution to terminate the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) from Dec 31, 2020.

Resolution 2559, which won unanimous support of the 15-member council, requests the UN secretary-general to commence the drawdown of UNAMID personnel on Jan 1, 2021, and to complete the withdrawal of all UNAMID personnel by June 30, 2021, except those required for the mission's liquidation.

According to the resolution, the Security Council authorized, for the duration of UNAMID's drawdown and liquidation, the retention of a guard unit from within UNAMID's existing footprint to protect UNAMID's personnel, facilities and assets.

It urged the Sudanese government to fully and swiftly implement the National Plan for Civilian Protection to protect civilians in Darfur, and underscored the need to build confidence among local communities in the ability of the rule-of-law institutions to deliver justice, ensure accountability and provide legal protection for vulnerable communities.

It called on the Sudanese government, at all levels, to cooperate fully with the United Nations and the African Union during UNAMID's drawdown and liquidation in order to ensure the orderly and safe withdrawal of the mission.

According to the resolution, UNAMID and its follow-on presence in Sudan - the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan - are called upon to closely cooperate via the established coordination mechanism to determine the modalities and timelines for the transition of responsibilities where the two missions have common strategic objectives and priorities in Darfur.

Under the resolution, the UN secretary-general is to provide the Security Council with an assessment on lessons learned from the experience of UNAMID no later than Oct 31, 2021.

UNAMID was established by the UN Security Council in July 2007 to help maintain and mediate peace in the western Sudanese region of Darfur, which had been plagued by a war between Sudanese government forces and the indigenous population since 2003.

Xinhua



A displaced Sudanese woman walks past a UN-African Union mission to Darfur (UNAMID) vehicle at the Kalma camp for internally displaced people in Darfur's state capital Niyala on Oct 9, 2019. (File photo)

## China's rising global influence recognized, more believe cooperation with Beijing should be deepened - GT poll

AS the world faces rising uncertainty and unilateralism, the influence of China has been gradually recognized across the world, with more countries eyeing deeper cooperation with Beijing on several key areas, including economy, technology and healthcare, according to the latest survey conducted by the Global Times poll center.

The poll gathered 16,431 responses from 16 countries, including China, the US, the UK, France, Russia, Spain, South Korea, Japan, India and South Africa from October 23 and 30. This is the 9th annual global public opinion survey by the poll center.

Roughly 60 percent of respondents believe that China's international influence has risen in recent years, and such view is shared by a majority of those surveyed in most countries, except Japan.

More than half of Japanese respondents chose the opposite, increasing 14.3 percentage point.

When asked in which fields does your country need to further strengthen communication and cooperation with China in the next few years, 35.7 percent believe the economy should be on top of the list, followed by technology, diplomacy and healthcare.

Compared to the previous three years' polls, the world's expectation in cooperation with China has been enriched, and shifted from paying "excessive attention to economic cooperation." For example, 34.4 of those who surveyed believe their countries should join hands with China on technology.

Those who pin high expectations on cooperation with China on economy, technology and healthcare are mainly developing countries, such as Ukraine, Kenya and Indonesia, while developed countries' respondents are hoping for more cooperation with China in the diplomatic field.

The poll also asked, "If global governance needs to be led, demonstrated, coordinated, and guaranteed by one or two countries, which of the following countries would you prefer?"

31.1 percent preferred the US, and 17.1 percent chose China. The proportion who chose the US and China increased by 4.7 percent and 3.6 percent, respectively, compared to last year.

The proportion of those who chose China has been steadily increasing in the past three years, from 11.5 percent in 2018 to 17.1 percent this year. In contrast, those who voted for the US and France has been declining.

Respondents from developing countries tend to agree more on "responsibility of superpowers," which was defined by the poll as: major countries should take up their due responsibilities, including maintaining world peace, promoting economic development, strengthening multilateral cooperation, helping small and medium-sized countries, providing global public goods, meeting global challenges, promoting the progress of human society and so on.

Global Times

## China envoy asks for efforts to revive Iran nuclear deal

UNITED NATIONS

A Chinese envoy on Tuesday called for efforts to bring the Iran nuclear deal back on the right track and asked the United States to rejoin the agreement as early as possible.

The Iran nuclear deal is an important achievement of multilateral diplomacy endorsed by Security Council Resolution 2231, is legally binding, and should be effectively implemented, said Geng Shuang, China's deputy permanent representative to the United Nations.

To preserve the July 2015 agreement is to uphold multilateralism, maintain peace and stability in the Middle East, safeguard the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, and the international order underpinned by international law, he told the Security Council.

The US unilateral withdrawal from the deal in May 2018, its continued maximum pressure on Iran, and its undermining the efforts of parties to uphold the agreement are the root causes of the current predicament of the Iranian nuclear issue, he said.

This year, the United States has openly pushed in the Security Council for the extension of the arms embargo against Iran, demanded to invoke a snapback mechanism and unilaterally announced the reinstatement of international sanctions against Iran. In disregard of the views of the international community, the United States staged several farces, he noted.

Faced with the unreasonable demand of the United States, the overwhelming majority of Security Council members adhered to an objective and fair stand, refused to endorse the US position, and did not recognize that the US actions had any legal, political, and practical effects, he said.

The rotating presidents of the Security Council also concluded that they were in no position to take any action on the US request for a snapback. This represents a resounding rejection of bullying by fairness and justice, unilateralism by multilateralism. It reflects vividly



Geng Shuang, China's deputy permanent representative to the United Nations

the support of the international community for justice and multilateralism, he said.

At present, the situation on the Iranian nuclear issue is pregnant with important changes and faced with new opportunities and challenges.

All parties should maintain calmness and restraint, resolutely implement the agreement, resolve differences through dialogue and consultation, and restore the balance of rights and obligations under the agreement, he said.

On Monday, a foreign ministers' video teleconference on the Iranian nuclear issue was successfully convened.

The parties reaffirmed their commitment to safeguarding the agreement and Security Council Resolution 2231, ensuring their complete and effective implementation, recognizing the prospect of the United States rejoining the deal and agreeing to make joint efforts to positively address the US return as soon as possible, he said.

The foreign ministers' meeting has sent a positive and strong message to the world. All parties

should seize the opportunity to

speed up engagement and consultations, strengthen diplomatic efforts, and move the deal back to the right track as soon

as possible. The most urgent task at the moment is for the United States to mend its ways,

rejoin the agreement unconditionally at an early date and return to full compliance, he said.

China understands that certain countries have concerns about issues such as regional security.

Yet linking them directly to the agreement and demanding the reopening of negotiations on it will create new obstacles and add new complications to the issue, said Geng.

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, on the Oct. 20 Security Council

debate on the Gulf region, proposed the launch of a multilateral dialogue platform for the region. China is willing to link its initiative with similar ones from

Russia and others, learn from each other and form synergies, he said.

Security Council members and regional countries can use this as a basis, earnestly engage in dialogue and discussion, gradually accumulate momentum so as to strive for a consensus that addresses the legitimate concerns of all parties -- in response to the expectations of

the international community, he said.

China hopes that the secretary-general and the UN Secretariat will

continue to promote and facilitate the diplomatic efforts from all parties and continue to play an

important role in helping resolve the Iranian nuclear issue, he said.

China has always been committed to maintaining the authority of the Security Council resolutions and the effective-

ness of the Iran nuclear deal. China will continue to stand on the right side of history, firmly uphold

multilateralism, and work with all parties concerned to make unremitting

efforts to promote the political and diplomatic settlement of the Iranian nuclear issue and safeguard peace and stability in the Gulf region.

The July 2015 deal was between Iran and the six world powers of Britain,

China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States. Washington withdrew from the agreement in May 2018, hampering its implementation.

Xinhua

## No Brexit trade deal yet as serious issues remain, UK minister says

BRUSSELS/LONDON

THE United Kingdom and the European Union (EU) have still not clinched a Brexit trade deal to avoid a turbulent split in just eight days time because of serious disagreements about competition and fishing, a British minister said yesterday.

The United Kingdom casts off into the unknown on Dec 31 after a stormy 48-year liaison with the Franco-German led project which sought to bind the ruined nations of post-World War Two Europe into a global power.

Since formally exiting the EU on Jan 31, the UK has been negotiating a free trade deal with the bloc in an attempt to ease its exit from the single market and customs union at the end of this year.

Thus far, no deal has been done and both sides have given an exhausting array of conflicting signals that indicate, variously, that a deal is imminent, that talks have far to go and that a disorderly no-trade deal exit could be on the cards.

"I'm still reasonably optimistic but there's no news to report to you this morning," British Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick told Sky News amid speculation in London that a deal could be announced on Wednesday.

"There's still the same serious areas of disagreement whether that's on fisheries or the level playing field," he said. "But at the moment there isn't sufficient progress. It isn't a deal that the prime minister feels he can sign us up to."

Ultimately, Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who is grappling with a deepening COVID-19 outbreak and a border crisis at Europe's busiest truck port, will have to decide if the narrow deal on offer is worth signing up to.

Walking away might elicit applause



European Union's chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier

from many Brexit supporters at home but would trigger severe trade disruption and end the EU divorce in acrimony.

An accord would ensure that the goods trade which makes up half of annual EU-UK commerce, worth nearly a trillion dollars in all, would remain free of tariffs and quotas.

Deal time?

The EU is making a "final push" to strike a trade deal with Britain, although there are still deep rifts over fishing rights, chief negotiator Michel Barnier said on Tuesday before meeting EU ambassadors in Brussels.

Barnier told the closed-door gathering that the UK's latest offer on sharing out the fish catch from British waters from 2021 was "totally unacceptable", according to EU diplomats who spoke on condition of anonymity.

A senior diplomat said the EU's latest offer on fish was its final one, and added that there was still concern around regulating production standards and state aid to ensure corporate fair play.

The sources said Britain has offered a 35 percent cut over three years in the value of the bloc's catch for demersal fish, like the

sole, that live close to the sea floor or the shore.

But that would not cover pelagic fish like the mackerel that live in open waters, where the catch would be subject to annual negotiations.

EU officials and diplomats said the bloc could be willing to cut the value of its fish catch in British waters by around 25 percent.

The sources said there was no clarity on the crucial zone stretching six to 12 nautical miles from UK shores where many smaller French or Belgian vessels fish. The loss of such access could not be compensated in the open seas.

The sources also said the length of the fisheries transition regime was also an obstacle, as was the question of EU retaliation if London excludes its vessels from British waters afterwards - something that Britain says is excessive.

The UK wants to gradually curb EU access to its fishing waters over three years, while the bloc is proposing six years, to give its fishing industry longer to adjust.

The EU needs at least four days to carry out procedures ensuring any agreement is applied from Jan 1, EU diplomatic sources said, meaning a deal is needed by early next week to avoid trade ruptures.

While EU sources said an agreement was getting closer, they warned it might not come in time.

"The EU will not close its door to the UK, and remains ready to negotiate even beyond the 1st of January," said an EU diplomat.

Calls between Johnson and Ursula von der Leyen, head of the executive European Commission, which is negotiating with Britain on behalf of the member states, will take place as needed, EU officials said.

"I can't imagine that we won't find a deal," Austrian Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg told the country's APA news agency in an interview on Tuesday.

Agencies

## More than one third of Russians plan on getting vaccinated - survey

MOSCOW

MORE than one third of Russians (38%) plan to take the COVID-19 vaccine, according to a survey carried out by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center.

"As many as 38% of respondents are going to get vaccinated against the coronavirus, with the most of them over 60 years old, the most vulnerable group for the virus (49%), as well as Russians aged from 45 to 59 (44%). A total of 52% do not want get the jab, this share is higher among young Russians aged from 25 to 34 (70%)," according to the survey.

The most frequent reasons for coronavirus vaccine hesitancy are poor study of the vaccine (23%), distrust and fear of vaccination (16%), and health condition (13%). Furthermore, 9% of residents do not believe in the vaccine's effectiveness.

The vast majority of respondents (84%) who plan to get the shot, prefer the domestic vaccine, whereas another 7% want to get vaccinated with a foreign one. A total of 29% are going to take the vaccine this year, 13% - in January 2021, 12% - in February, 9% - in March.

In general, 97% are aware of mass vaccination against the coronavirus with a Russian vaccine to varying degrees. Some 58% of respondents know a lot about the vaccination, while 39% are informed but without going into details. A total of 3% heard about the COVID-19 vaccination campaign for the first time.

"The long-awaited vaccination campaign against the coronavirus in Russia has started! Not everyone knows about it yet, but a significant part of Russia's population is going to participate. Those who have not yet made such a decision are refraining due to uncertainty about the vaccine's effectiveness and the willingness to see how it works in practice."

Agencies

## China to make AI deliver greater benefits to society

FACIAL recognition technology has been applied in more and more scenarios, including payment, entering railway stations, and unlocking intelligent terminals.

Thanks to technological progress, facial recognition is deeply integrated into the fields of public services, urban governance and security. For example, extensively used in government services, facial recognition has saved the time needed for handling government affairs.

Local governments in China use road safety cameras to detect traffic violations by scanning people's faces. The facial recognition technology is also applied to highly crowded places such as airports and shopping malls for the sake of security.

In the fight against COVID-19, thermometers supported by facial recognition have been widely applied, greatly improving the efficiency of body temperature measurement.

Besides, AI-related industries based on facial recognition are witnessing rapid growth, and creating opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship.

According to statistics, China is now home to more than 10,000 facial recognition-related companies, with 1,161 enterprises registered in the first three quarters of this year.

The country's facial recognition market size is expected to reach 10 billion yuan (\$1.53 billion) by 2024.

However, some users worried about the rampant leakage and abuse of their information caused by facial recognition. As biometric information related to faces can be very unique, the wide application of facial recognition may lead to problems including excessive use of the technology, and lack of uniform standards and data security.

The China Consumers Association, the country's consumer rights watchdog, said

in a report that 10 out of 100 mobile apps that it reviewed were suspected of collecting excessive personal data about the users.

Such problems make it necessary to be more cautious about the storage, sharing and application of massive facial data.

Human face is key information in the era of big data due to its uniqueness and anti-counterfeiting performance, and the facial recognition technology enjoys broad prospects for development.

Therefore, China should approach relevant technologies with a rational attitude. It should not be afraid of adopting facial recognition, just as one must not give up eating for fear of choking on food, as a Chinese saying goes. Meanwhile, the country needs to specify rules, improve institutions, intensify regulation, and close loopholes such as personal information leakage in time.

According to a survey, people worrying about the security risks of facial recogni-

tion focus more on the opaqueness and uncertainty in the collection and use of information in some scenarios that are not clearly stipulated by the law. For example, many people have been concerned about whether the original facial information will be retained by the collector and how it will process such data.

For that matter, China needs to keep pace with the times to adjust laws and regulations, and clearly define the ownership of facial data and the right to use, manage and transact such data.

The country should also develop standards and regulatory rules commensurate with technological development in time so that the entire society can collect, use, and store facial data more rigorously. Only in this way can it effectively protect the rights and interests of individuals and promote the healthy development of related industries.

People's Daily





Minister for Information, Culture, Arts and Sports, Innocent Bashungwa (R), pictured with the ministry's Permanent Secretary, Hassan Abbas (L), and Dar es Salaam Regional Commissioner, Abubakar Kunenge, at a festival, known as 'Xtra Uni Bash', that was organized by one of the city's radio stations last weekend. The Serengeti Breweries Limited (SBL) backed the event via Guinness Smooth brand. PHOTO: CORRESPONDENT

## Guinness Smooth spices up 'Extra Uni Bash' extravaganza in Dar

By Guardian Correspondent

SATURDAY, December 19, 2020 will remain etched into the memory of many entertainment lovers, more so university students in Dar es Salaam.

After an entire year of swotting, Clouds Media Group came up with a music extravaganza, 'Extra Uni Bash', that was a welcome refresher for the fatigued students. The bash was supported by various companies and brands including the new Guinness Smooth beer.

Great music took the air as Disk Jockeys (DJ) Zero, DJ Sinyorita, DJ D'Ommy and many other high-profile DJs regaled the students with fantastic beats that resonated well with the mood of the students who were hungry for entertainment. The concert that was well-attended brought the power of music in bringing people together and providing the much-needed cathartic relief.

The youthful Minister for Information, Culture, Arts and Sports, Innocent Bashungwa, who graced the event could not hide his feelings. In a joyous and excited mood, he thanked the organizers and sponsors including the new Guinness Smooth for organizing such an enthralling bonanza.

"Kudos to Clouds FM and partner sponsors for this wonderful concert. I know the concert specifically targets the youths and as a young man, I'm also very glad to be part of this great event. Organizing such an event is not a simple task and I once again commend all those who thought of this event," Bashungwa said.

The minister told the concert attendees that Bongo Flava, which is the most popular music among young people in Tanzania, is growing exponentially in the country and the genre is as well as spreading beyond the country's borders, gaining similar popularity in neighbouring countries such as Kenya and Uganda.

He stated: "Bongo Flava music is now part of our culture and thousands of youths are making their living out of this music."

"I would like to express my sincere appreciation once again to all the sponsors for extending their generous support to this event, their investment is firing up the popularity of Bongo Flava genre across the region and beyond," he added.

He reaffirmed the government's commitment to work with other stakeholders in raising the bar for Bongo Flava music to enable more youths to benefit from it and also get international recognition.

"We will work with other stakeholders and organize high profile concerts that meet international standards in order to popularize our music globally," Bashungwa promised.

With Guinness Smooth being the official alcoholic drink at the bash, the event saw such popular artistes like Weusi, Bill Nas, Lulu Diva, who is also Guinness Smooth brand ambassador, taking to the stage and ensuring the revelers went frenzied with excitement.

Similarly, the upcoming artistes were also given an opportunity to display their skills.

Commenting on Guinness Smooth's sponsorship for the event, Serengeti Breweries Limited (SBL)'s Innovation Manager, Bertha Vedastus, said Guinness Smooth particularly targeted youthful partakers, a major reason as to why it was proud to be part of the event that brought the youths together.

"The new Guinness Smooth is designed for the youth and you can hardly separate youngsters from music. Music is also an ideal recruitment tool. When you want to get to the youth for instance, music is your first point of call as it allows you to be distinctive and credible, which is why we're here," Bertha explained.

According to Bertha, Guinness Smooth is the latest addition to the Guinness family. It has a distinctively smooth and refreshing taste with the perfect balance of flavours that are ideal for enjoyment while catching up with friends. The new drink has all the refreshments of a stout, with the fine character of Guinness.

Crafted with Tanzanian consumers in mind, Guinness Smooth is a new expression of Guinness developed by Guinness master brewers, local and international, to deliver an exciting and stand out beer that is perfect for social occasions.

"Guinness has a long tradition of brewing extraordinary beers. Guinness Smooth continues our commitment to bringing consumers flavorful beers they can enjoy on all occasions. Therefore, for something delightful and refreshing to enjoy when catching up with friends, be refreshed by Guinness Smooth," she enthused.

## Miss Tanzania 2020 winner meets parents with children suffering from dementia

By Correspondent Nassir Nchimbi

ROSE Manfere, winner of this year's Miss Tanzania pageant, recently met people, whose children are suffering from dementia, in Dar es Salaam.

The meeting aimed at celebrating Christmas with them by providing gifts to the children and reminding the children's parents and guardians that they should not hide them.

The guardians, Rose noted, should see to it the children get out and take part in events involving youngsters, the same way children, who do not suffer from the disease, do.

She insisted on meeting the government and talking about helping the children especially in accessing treatment and having education.

She said the fact that seeking help for children with dementia



Miss Tanzania 2020 winner, Rose Manfere (2nd L), hands over gifts to children with dementia in Dar es Salaam recently in preparation for Christmas celebration. Rose met the children and their parents in the day. Looking on (L) is The Look Company's Director Basilla Mwanukuzi, whose firm coordinates Miss Tanzania pageant. PHOTO: CORRESPONDENT

is one of her projects will prompt her to see to it she becomes a good ambassador for the children.

"I have high hopes for those with dementia and I believe I will be a good ambassador for them and make sure I talk to the government so that these children can be better prepared," she noted.

She also said that

the meeting sought to encourage the parents to opt out of hiding the children and take them out.

"I have come here to educate and encourage parents to opt out of feeling bad about having these children and to also take these children out, not only to watch movies but also attend various events so that they can play

with their peers and feel like normal people," she said.

Director of the Institute for Child Welfare, Hilda Nkabe, stated hosting a festival for children with dementia seeks to educate parents to opt out of locking them in.

She disclosed the community should moreover be aware of the problem and should

not be surprised when they meet the children.

A Specialist in Pediatric Diseases for Children at Muhimbili National Hospital, Edward Kija, said there is a great need for the society to ensure that children with the ailment regularly play with their peers.

He said the events build the children's confidence, teach them various issues and create good relationships between parents and the youngsters, seeing to it they have the opportunity to take the children out and walk with them.

"Awareness of the condition has been increasing every year, since we started treating these children the awareness was low but great efforts made by the government and various institutions have helped to boost the society's knowledge on the disease," he said.



Morogoro's junior tennis players pictured after the completion of this season's Jubilee junior tennis tournament which was held at Arusha Gymkhana Club (AGC) over the weekend. The youngsters excelled in the tournament. PHOTO: COURTESY OF MOROGORO TENNIS CLUB

## Dar, Iringa boxers set for non-title bouts

By Guardian Reporter

DAR ES SALAAM professional boxer, Salai Mabo, has a chance to prove his worth, given he is set to trade punches with Iringa's Udeze Masoud, in a six-round non-title Lightweight bout, which will take place in Iringa on January 1.

Veteran boxing coach, Omari Yazidu, the fight's coordinator, disclosed it will take place at Mid Town Hall in Makambako.

Yazidu noted Makambako-based boxers, Vanessa Mwan-

pasi and Lidya Mdetele, will lock horns in the only fight involving female boxers, slated for the same day at the venue.

He stated the four-round, non title Light Welterweight fight will be the day's undercard.

The coordinator pointed out the bouts will offer boxing enthusiasts in Makambako an opportunity to enjoy their beloved sport, whilst giving the participating boxers platform to showcase their potential.

Yazidu expressed his sincere regards to Norbert Secondary

School's Director, Saloni, who has backed the fights, for his willingness to effectively play part in boosting boxing promotion in Makambako.

He stated the town's boxing lovers will, moreover, have opportunity to witness an exciting action tomorrow, as Mafinga's Tizo Nyololo will face Yona Kayuni, who is based Makambako, in a non-title 76kg bout.

The Mid Town Hall, he disclosed, will as well play host to the Friday bout.

With the boxers currently not featuring in the boxing rating issued by Boxrec, a network which keeps records of professional boxers all over the world, they stand to make their way into the ratings, if they will perform well in their respective fights.

The boxers' ability to post good results in the coming bouts will moreover improve their chances of landing major bouts at the domestic level.

## Official costs of Tokyo Olympics up by 22% to \$15.4 billion

TOKYO

THE official cost of the postponed Tokyo Olympics has increased by 22%, the local organizing committee said Tuesday in unveiling its new budget.

In an on-line news conference, organizers said the Olympics will now cost \$15.4 billion to stage. This is up from \$12.6 billion in last year's budget.

The added \$2.8 billion is the cost of the one-year delay. Added expenses come from renegotiating contracts and measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Olympics are to open on

July 23, 2021. The Paralympics follow on Aug. 24.

Audits by the Japanese government over the last several years, however, show the costs are higher than officially stated and are at least \$25 billion.

Tokyo said the Olympics would cost about \$7.5 billion when the IOC awarded the games in 2013. A University of Oxford study earlier this year said Tokyo is the most expensive Summer Olympics on record.

Japanese government entities are responsible for all of the costs except for \$6.7 billion in a privately funded operating budget.

"The IOC and TOCOG (Tokyo organizing committee) want the public budget to appear as small as possible not only to guard against public criticism, but also to not discourage future candidate cities," Franz Waldenberger, director of the German Institute for Japanese Studies in Tokyo, wrote in a recent paper examining Olympic costs.

Waldenberger noted that the Tokyo city government and branches of the central government use the Olympics as "a window of opportunity to obtain additional" funding.

Organizers in October an-

nounced cost reductions of \$280 million, cutting out frills including hospitality offerings. However, no cuts have been made to the sports program with a full complement of 11,000 athletes and tens of thousands of officials, judges, and sponsors expected to attend.

Decisions about fans and preventive measures for the pandemic are expected to be rolled out in 2021.

Japan has controlled COVID-19 better than most countries with just over 2,800 deaths attributed to the virus. But new cases have been rising for a month, adding to public skepticism about the Olym-

pics. In a telephone poll of 1,200 published this month by Japanese broadcaster NHK, 63% said the Olympics should be postponed or canceled. On the opposite side, 27% said the Games should be held. The poll was conducted on Dec. 11-13.

The IOC and local organizers have said the Olympics will be canceled if they cannot be held this time.

Local organizers are trying to recover some of the rising costs by coaxing more revenue from domestic sponsors. About 70 sponsors have already contributed a

record of \$3.3 billion, driven by Dentsu Inc. the marketing agent for the Tokyo Olympics.

The Nikkei newspaper reported last week, citing unnamed sources "familiar with the matter," that 15 top-tier domestic sponsors will add an estimated \$150 million to their contributions. It said Japan Airlines, the airline ANA, and the Tobu Skytower were considering contributions.

Nikkei is also a Tokyo Olympic sponsor along with Japan's other leading newspapers Yomiuri, Mainichi, and Asahi. Several regional papers are also sponsors.

AP



## Messi breaks Pele's all-time record for club goals

BARCELONA

BARCELONA's Lionel Messi has overtaken Brazil legend Pele to become the player to score the most goals for a single club after taking his tally to 644 on Tuesday.

The record-breaking goal came in the second half of Barca's 3-0 win at Valladolid, with Messi taking the ball in stride off a nifty flick from Pedri for a finish into the corner of the net.

Pele struck 643 competitive goals for Santos during an 18-year stay with the Brazilian club. He left for the New York Cosmos in 1975 and until Messi's goal, the record had stood ever since.

Gerd Muller came closest to matching Pele's one-club goal-scoring feat. The former Germany international netted 565 times for Bayern Munich between 1964 and 1979. The top five is completed by Fernando Peyroteo (Sporting CP 1937-49, 544 goals) and Josef Bican (Slavia Prague 1950s, 534 goals).

"When I started to play football, I never thought I would break any record. Especially not the record held by Pele that I now hold," Messi wrote on Instagram after Tuesday's game. "I can only give thanks to everyone that has helped me throughout the years, my teammates, my family, my friends and everyone that supports me every day."

The only other active player still in the top 10 is Cristiano Ronaldo, who scored 450 goals for Real Madrid. The Juventus striker is 10th behind Jimmy McGrory (Celtic 1922-37, 522 goals), Jimmy Jones (Glenavon 1951-62, 517 goals), Uwe Seeler (Hamburg 1953-72, 507 goals) and Eusebio (Benfica 1961-75, 473 goals).

Messi's Barcelona goals have been spread across 16 years in the club's first team. He scored his first professional goal in 2005 against Albacete as a 17-year-old.

Along with Ronaldo, who played for Manchester United before Madrid and Juve, Messi has taken goal scoring to new heights over the past decade. Everyone else in the top 10 has been retired for at least 40 years.

Messi reached his zenith in the 2011-12 season, Pep Guardiola's final year in charge of Barcelona, when he scored 73 goals in all competitions. That tally was sandwiched in between 53 the previous season and 60 the season after.

The Argentina forward has scored more than 50 goals in a season on six occasions, including 58 in 2014-15 when he won his second Treble as a Barca player.

However, it looked like Pele's record would be left to stand this past summer when Messi pushed for a move away from Barcelona after 20 years in Catalonia.

Messi believed a clause in his contract, which expires in 2021, allowed him to leave for free but eventually backed down when it became apparent the only way to try to invoke the clause would have involved a legal battle with the club.

If he had left, he would have done so having scored 634 goals for Barca's first team.

(Agencies)

## FIFA files criminal complaint against Blatter over museum

GENEVA

FIFA has filed a criminal complaint against former president Sepp Blatter over the finances of its loss-making soccer museum in Zurich.

Soccer's governing body said on Tuesday it suspected "criminal mismanagement by FIFA's former management and companies appointed by them" to work on the museum -- long seen as a pet project of Blatter's -- in a renovated and rented city center building.

The FIFA World Football Museum opened in 2016 after \$140 million of soccer money was spent refurbishing the 1970s office building to also include 34 rental apartments.

It was meant to open around May 2015, when Blatter won a fifth presidential election, but was delayed until after he left office amid pressure from American and Swiss investigations of international soccer officials.

Blatter committed FIFA to a rental contract with the building's owner, insurance firm Swiss Life, that requires paying \$360 million through 2045 at above market rates, soccer's world body said.

FIFA said its criminal complaint following an external audit of the project was delivered by hand to canton (state) prosecutors in Zurich.

"That audit revealed a wide range of suspicious circumstances and management failures, some of which may be criminal in nature and which therefore need to be properly investigated by the relevant authorities," FIFA deputy secretary general for administration Alasdair Bell said in a statement.

The Zurich prosecution office acknowledged receiving the complaint without giving more details.

Blatter's lawyer, Lorenz Erni, said in a statement: "The allegations are baseless and are vehemently denied."

Blatter risks investigation at local level while already a suspect in two criminal proceedings opened by federal prosecutors into how he spent FIFA's money as president.

AP

## Liverpool topping the league at Christmas is ominous for rivals

By Mark Ogden, Senior Writer, ESPN FC

LIVERPOOL are top of the Premier League table at Christmas. On the face of it, that's no great surprise considering the comprehensive manner of their title triumph last season, which saw Jurgen Klopp's side crowned champions with an 18-point margin over runners-up Manchester City, but securing the Christmas No. 1 spot this time around is a bigger achievement that it initially appears.

It hasn't all been plain sailing to the top, as first-choice defensive pairing Virgil van Dijk and Joe Gomez have been ruled out for months with serious knee injuries and a succession of first-team regulars were sidelined following positive COVID-19 tests. New signings Thiago Alcantara and Diogo Jota also have been hit by injuries, and there was the unforgettable 7-2 defeat at Aston Villa in October -- the heaviest loss suffered by any reigning Premier League champion -- that hinted at problems ahead.

Despite these bumps in the road, Liverpool are four points clear at the top and strong favourites to retain the title, just a year after winning it for the first



Liverpool have lost just once in 14 Premier League games this season, maintaining their place at the top despite injuries to several key players. (Agencies)

time since 1990. They have, so far, overcome all of the challenges that had threatened to derail the defence of their title, and the failure of any of their challengers to build a convincing argument of their ability to last the pace makes it difficult to foresee anything other than Liverpool crowned champions again in May.

Liverpool are looking ominous, and it's perhaps time to suggest that Klopp's team is on course to become one of the Premier League greats, not because of their successes, but because of the way they have dealt with the setbacks to maintain their position at the top.

Klopp's team are unquestionably the dominant force in English football right now. Champions League winners in 2019 -- a year after being

beaten finalists against Real Madrid in Kiev -- and Premier League champions in 2020, plus the UEFA Super Cup and FIFA Club World Cup winners last season, this Liverpool side has won the biggest trophies and overhauled Pep Guardiola's record-breaking Manchester City side.

At times during that charge to the top, it became a straightforward exercise to predict Klopp's team. They rarely suffered injuries or suspensions; in a sense, consistency became the team's 12th man. But that has changed this season and the loss of Van Dijk in October, when the Dutch defender suffered a cruciate ligament injury during the 2-2 draw at Everton, looked like being a hammer blow. After all, Liverpool's rise

could be virtually traced back to Van Dijk's arrival from Southampton in January 2018, so how would they cope without his authority and leadership at the back?

When Gomez then injured a knee tendon on England duty in November, it compounded the loss of Van Dijk. All of a sudden, Klopp was faced with being without his two best centre-halves, potentially for the rest of the season. But Liverpool have lost just once in 15 games since Van Dijk's injury -- a Champions League defeat against Atalanta, a game in which Klopp made wholesale changes -- and the likes of Nat Phillips and Rhys Williams have stepped up alongside Joel Matip, along with makeshift centre-half Fabinho, to enable the team to

remain on course.

It's been a similar story in midfield. Thiago has started just one Premier League game since his summer arrival from Bayern Munich, and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain's cameo against Crystal Palace on Saturday was his first appearance of the 2020-21 season. Fabinho has been forced to drop into defence and captain Jordan Henderson also spent a month on the sidelines. But Georginio Wijnaldum has filled the gaps in every league game and 19-year-old Curtis Jones has shown himself to be a star of the future in recent weeks, producing a series of outstanding performances while deputising for his more experienced teammates.

In attack, Jota made an instant impact following his summer switch from Wolves, with nine goals in all competitions before suffering a knee injury earlier this month -- his contributions kept Liverpool on track while Sadio Mane and Roberto Firmino struggled for early-season goals.

Every issue that Liverpool and Klopp have had to address this season has been solved by the performances of squad players who had perhaps been underestimated prior to the campaign. Whenever the Reds' fringe players

have been drafted in, they have performed so well that the more established stars haven't been missed, which is why Liverpool are now such a force to be reckoned with.

Liverpool's depth is unmatched in the Premier League and they have the winning mentality and experience to go with it, so they will take some shifting from the position they now find themselves in at the top of the Premier League. Still, it must be stressed that Christmas has come early this season -- literally -- with the delayed start to the campaign ensuring that most teams have played four fewer games than they would ordinarily have amassed by this stage.

Twelve months ago, Liverpool were 10 points clear of second-placed Leicester, having played one game fewer than Brendan Rodgers' side, and they are threatening to pull away again. Nine times in the past 12 seasons, the leaders at Christmas have gone on to win the Premier League. Liverpool had been the side to let it slip on those three occasions when it didn't happen, but they didn't falter last season and remained top all the way until the end of the pandemic-interrupted campaign.

## Martinelli one of the only signs of hope for dire Arsenal

By James Olley, Senior Writer, ESPN FC

IT says everything about the crisis at Arsenal these days that a teenager can make his first start in nine months, touch the ball 11 times and come off injured after 49 minutes yet still be their best player by some distance.

Gabriel Martinelli was the brief flicker of light on another dismal evening for Mikel Arteta as Manchester City ran out easy 4-1 winners at the Emirates to move into the EFL Cup semifinals. Darkness envelops the Gunners these days, so much so that Martinelli's enterprise and endeavour stood out like a beacon.

"Gabi [Martinelli] has a unique energy and a way to transmit his passion for the game. I think he plays the game in a different way to any other player so it is hard to compare him", said Arteta afterward. "But it is great to have him back, to bring that spirit, that fight and after such a long time [out] to play against this opponent, the way he did it I think in the first half, it is something to be really proud of."

At one point while palpably limping with the ankle injury which eventually forced his substitution, he still moved quicker than Alexandre Lacazette, whose first-half equaliser should not mask another performance bereft of so many basics including application and energy.

This was in fact the problem with many of this starting line-up. Centre-back Shkodran Mustafi does not want to play for Arsenal any-



Gabriel Martinelli was Arsenal's lone bright spot in their cup exit to Man City, the 19-year-old making an impressive first start after nine months out injured. (Agencies)

more and is really committed to that stance by failing to mark anyone in his vicinity; Gabriel Jesus opened the scoring inside three minutes finding space to meet Oleksandr Zinchenko's pinpoint delivery with embarrassing ease.

Midfielder Dani Ceballos will be returned to Real Madrid when his loan spell ends and that time looks like it cannot come soon enough. Left-back Sead Kolasinac is also likely to depart having almost left in the summer. Lacazette too if a buyer can be found.

"We have to turn it around or we are in big trouble. It is the moment which will decide our season", said Arteta after the defeat. "I am focused on the fighters and going against a really difficult opponent."

"I see a lot of fighters. We are looking at options, players coming in and out. It's a really complicated window with the pandemic."

Goalkeeper Runar Alex Runarsson is just starting out on his Arsenal career but he is woefully short of the required level, a third-stringer at best, and af-

He showed his class, too, and importance given Arteta's attacking style is so focussed on accurate crossing, producing two excellent deliveries from the left flank -- one with each foot just for good measure -- the second of which Lacazette buried with the efficiency Arteta has been calling for.

Arteta has been keen to keep pressure off young Martinelli's shoulders but although he only touched the ball 11 times and took on one player according to Opta, it was his sheer willingness to graft that sparked Arsenal into life.

And each time the Spaniard bemoans a lack of clinical finishing among his forwards, Martinelli's record of 10 goals from 15 starts (and 12 substitute appearances) feels more significant. Arteta was so desperate to keep Martinelli involved that he began the second half despite hobbling through the final minutes of the first and walking off with blood seemingly seeping through his right sock.

He lasted four minutes, replaced by £72 million signing Nicolas Pepe, who continues to look half the player for 10 times the price. Martinelli cost just £6m from Ituano in July 2019 but that shrewd acquisition is very much an exception to Arsenal's recent business, and Arsenal count to pay the price for poor recruitment on nights like this.

City undeniably picked a stronger team with Pep Guardiola clearly placing some value in attempting to secure this trophy for the third consecutive season, but Arsenal still had three players out there signed for £46.5m, £35m and £23m. This was not an Under-23s line-up but one that relied on a squad depth that is simply without the requisite quality.

Arteta was understandably disappointed with how the game unravelled. "We conceded a really soft goal after one or two mins. At the moment we are, it's difficult against a really good opponent."

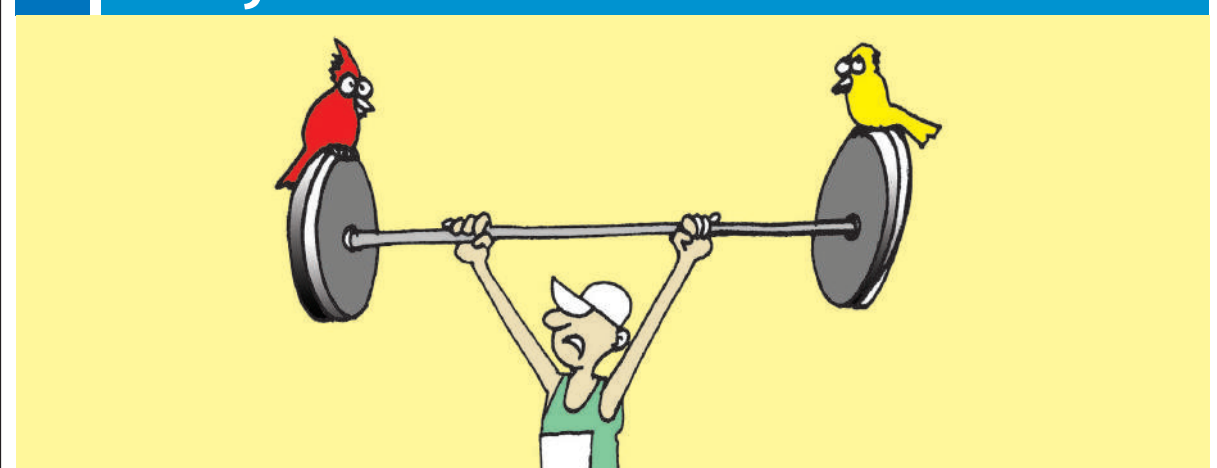
"We got back into the game and scored a really good goal and had a spell of 25 mins where

we were the better team. We conceded a second and against a team like that they really penalise you. After that, we were chasing it."

Harsh truths are needed for Arsenal to emerge from this slump. An extended cup run may have papered over the cracks just as it appeared last season's FA Cup Final success did -- and arguably their three wins in the latter days of Arsene Wenger's reign did too, given this is a club aspiring to challenge for the Premier League and Champions League.

There will be no EFL semifinal early in the New Year and that should be a good thing, giving Arteta time to work with his players on the training ground to iron out flaws that currently seem immovable. Having Martinelli available in the coming weeks would no doubt help considerably. But the rest of Arsenal's squad needs to make sure that even in this rusty condition, Martinelli doesn't stand out as the sole hope.

Gwiji by David Chikoko





# Dar Combine Girls clinch 2020 TCA Women Regional League silverware

## SPORT

Liverpool topping the league at Christmas is ominous for rivals

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT, PAGE 19



Dar Combine Girls cricket team

By Guardian Reporter

**D**AR Combine Girls have clinched the 2020 Tanzania Cricket Association (TCA) Women Regional League's trophy with 16-run win over Uluguru Stars in the final, which took place at Usagara venue in Tanga on Tuesday.

It turned out to be a second piece of silverware to be won by a Dar es Salaam side in women cricket competitions in the country this season.

Dar es Salaam's other club, Academy Girls, lifted this season's TCA Women Premier League's trophy last month.

In the Tuesday final, Dar Combine Girls had an opportunity to bat first and they made the most of the innings given they posted 104 runs for seven wickets in 20 overs.

Experienced all-rounder, Mwanaidi Ibrahim, who

opened the team's innings, put stellar displays, surpassing a half century mark to score 53 runs.

The performer, who is equally the senior national women team's key player, put her aggressiveness to show, clearing the boundary on eight occasions.

She mercilessly tormented Uluguru Stars' bowlers, posting six boundaries and two sixes.

Mwanaidi's exploits were so far the most impressive performance, whereas the squad's other experienced player, Saida Hamisi, scored 11 runs which consisted of a boundary.

They had a wobbly start to their quest for a good total, given opener, Irene Kasembe, was sent back to the pavilion early on with five runs to her name.

Mwanaidi though saw to it the side weather Uluguru Stars bowlers' pressure, putting good knocks which boosted her team's total.

There was not much to write home

about, when it came to Dar Combine Girls' batting displays after Saida's brief spell, as four of the club's batters faced early dismissals.

Low order batter, Swaumu Aziz and Zena Hassan, wrapped up their side's innings, with Swaumu notching six runs not out and Zena posting eight runs not out.

Perice Zakayo had most wickets for Uluguru Stars, ending her spell with three wickets and conceding 26 runs in four overs.

Posting 105 runs to come out with victory happened to be a tall order for Uluguru Stars, they recorded 88 runs for the loss of six wickets in 20 overs.

They had to contend with early exits of their openers, Mwanaidi Ammy and Fatuma Omary, with Mwanaidi notching four runs and Fatuma managing six runs.

Shufaa Hamza and Perice attempted to push the Morogoro team's score, recording 12 runs apiece.

Sonia Chachala stood out of the rest of the squad's performers, notching 27 runs not out, which included three fours. She closed Uluguru Stars' innings with Adolphina Jeremia that notched five runs not out which consisted of a four.

The clash's eventual winners' experienced spinner, Zena, managed to foil Uluguru Stars' chase, in which she took two wickets in four overs.

The TCA-organized league, which began last weekend, gears towards raising cricket's standard at the domestic level.

The national cricket governing body's information officer, Atif Salim, had noted that nine sides battled it out in the showpiece.

The teams were put into Group A and Group B and the top squads in the two groups made it to the showpiece's final.

Group A had Twiga Girls, Kilumeru Girls, Nyanza Queens, Uluguru Stars and Academy Girls, SUA Queens, Arusha Girls, Dar Combine Girls and Simba Queens were in Group B.

Uluguru Stars ended at the top of Group A's log with victory in four matches they featured in.

They booked a place in the final in grand fashion given they were the group's only team with an unbeaten spell, notching 465 runs and giving away 352 runs.

Academy Girls, Kilumeru Girls, Twiga Girls and Nyanza Queens finished second, third, fourth and fifth respectively.

Dar Combine Girls were also in great form, ending as the Group B's top side with victory in three outings. They recorded 196 runs and leaked 190 runs to sail through to the final.

Simba Queens, Arusha Girls and SUA Queens ended second, third and fourth respectively to effectively miss out on making it to the final.



Imani Trishawn McGee-Stafford

## US basketball player graces women basketball clinic in Dar

By Correspondent Nassir Nchimbi

AMERICAN basketball player, Imani Trishawn McGee-Stafford, who turns out for Dallas Wings in USA's Women National Basketball Association (WNBA) League, is expected to grace a one-day training camp at the Don Bosco basketball courts at Upanga in Dar es Salaam today.

Imani will train all participating young and adult female basketball players aged 15-30 for the purpose of encouraging women to play basketball and develop talent for young girls participating in basketball in Tanzania.

Tanzania Basketball Federation (TBF) president, Phares Magea, said the training will be free for all female basketball players in the mentioned ages.

Magea stated the stadium doors will be open from 9am in order to complete registration procedures early on.

Magea had a message for guardians and parents with children who have strong passion for basketball, saying the federation is ready to cooperate with the guardians to nurture the youths' talent.

He disclosed: "The federation would like to invite parents and guardians to encourage our young women during this ongoing training to build the capacity of our young people to become good players for our nation."

"The federation also urges all stakeholders, basketball enthusiasts and the sport's leaders to make this training a success for our young girls," he disclosed.

Imani is a native of Los Angeles, California, she stands tall at 6ft 7 inches in height and she is also the sister of the NBA League's Cleveland Cavaliers' JaVale McGee, who he joined the team this season from the current NBA League champions, Los Angeles Lakers, where he won his third NBA League title last season with the side.

Before being drafted into the WNBA, Imani played college basketball at the University of Texas in Austin where she was later drafted 10th overall by the Chicago Sky in the 2016 WNBA Draft.

In her rookie season, she was ranked seventh in the league in blocks per game and was named to the WNBA All-Rookie Team.

In her first playoff game, she broke the WNBA playoff rookie record for blocks in a game with 6. Midway through the 2017 season, Imani McGee-Stafford was traded to the Atlanta Dream along with teammate Tamera Young in exchange for Jordan Hooper and a first-round draft pick.

She continued on with Atlanta in 2018 before joining the Dallas Wings for the 2019 season.

She also had an Overseas career, where she played for the Bnot Hertzeliya in Israel during the 2016-17 season. Between November and December 2017, she played in China for Beijing Great Wall of the Women's Chinese Basketball Association.

She returned to China a year later, where she played for the Liaoning Flying Eagles between October and November 2018. In February 2019, she had a four-game stint in Turkey with Adana Basketbol.

## Dar boxer braces for tough world title fight

By Guardian Reporter

TANZANIAN professional boxer, Ibrahim Mgendera 'Class', has to stretch his muscles in order to win his World Boxing Federation (WBF) international Lightweight title fight against Malawian pugilist, Dennis Mwale, slated for January 29 next year at the Next Door Arena, Masaki in Dar es Salaam.

The two boxers will face off in the fight organised by boxing promotion company, Jackson Group Sports Company, under the WBF and Tanzania Professional Boxing Regulatory Commission (TPBRC)'s sanction.

The Jackson Group Sports Company operates under the company's founder and Chief Executive Officer, Kelvin Twissa, with Azam Media Limited sponsoring the fight.

Mwale's record shows that since he joined the game in 2017, the boxer is yet to either lose any bout or participate in a fight, which was declared draw, with perfect eight wins.

He has, in three of his bouts, won by Technical Knockout (TKO) and five fights were won on points. Mgendera's record stands at 24 wins and six losses.

Mwale posted TKO victory in a fight against Khaya Busakwe which took place at



Tanzanian professional boxer, Ibrahim Mgendera.

Turfontein Race Course in Johannesburg, South Africa on August 31 last year. Mwale won by the TKO in the fifth round of the bout.

He also won by TKO in the fifth round of a bout against South African boxer, Thanduxolo Gatyeni, which took place at John Barrable Hall, Benoni on June 29 last

year.

Mwale garnered his third TKO win in a fight against Sifison Khuzwayo, which took place at Kempton Park Indoor Sports Arena, Kempton Park, on December 2, 2017, he defeated Khuzwayo in the fourth round.

Similarly, records show

the boxer, who is currently based in South Africa, has fought many fights outside Malawi.

Most of his fights were staged in South Africa and he is one of the most feared boxers in professional boxing in South Africa.

Twissa said that preparations for the coming

bout are progressing well and all boxers, which will participate in the day's bouts are preparing for the day, known as 'Jackson Group Fight Night'.

He disclosed: "We are now in preparation ahead of the bout and I call on sponsors to join us in developing the game."

## Flexibles by David Chikoko

